

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum – 11 April 2003

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NRHA STATEMENT ON 7TH CONFERENCE – FROM THE ENERGY TO THE ACTION

Some of the energies and commitment of the rural and remote health sector were demonstrated in Hobart recently when 930 people attended the 7th National Rural Health Conference. Immediately after the Conference, a planning meeting began to take forward the recommendations. Representatives from national bodies involved with health outcomes developed statements on eleven key issues.

A full text of the NRHA statement is reprinted below.

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Interested in becoming a “friend” of the Alliance? Become more involved with the work of the Alliance by becoming a “friend”. “friends” support the Alliance by being an integral part of the Alliance’s policy and evaluation process. They also receive other benefits. For more information on membership see <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

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DIALOGUE CONTINUES WITH PRIME MINISTER ON RURAL HEALTH ISSUES

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) has given the Prime Minister, the Minister for Health and Ageing and senior government officials a first hand account of the impact of declining bulk billing and medical workforce shortages in rural Australia.

‘This is the second time in recent weeks that RDAA has been invited to discuss the issues with the Government, as it considers changes to health policy, and in particular, Medicare’, RDAA President, Dr Mackey, said.

'While recognising that some elements of the proposal have merit, such as the increase to medical student and registrar numbers, RDAA has called on the Government to include a higher incentive for bulk billing in the smaller rural and remote towns of fewer than 10 000 people. This would recognise the unique difficulties faced by communities in these more remote areas and allow more rural doctors to consider opting into the scheme', Dr Mackey said.

A welcome variation to the Government's proposed package is the increase in funding to rural medical practices to assist with proposed online billing arrangements. This assistance payment has been increased to \$1000 for these practices.

The full text of the RDAA statement is available at  
[http://www.rdaa.com.au/discussions\\_still\\_taking\\_place\\_with\\_pm.htm](http://www.rdaa.com.au/discussions_still_taking_place_with_pm.htm)

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PARTYline is the official newsletter of the National Rural Health Alliance. Keep up to date with rural health policy information and good news stories on living and working in the rural health community. Available online on <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au> or receive a hard copy by emailing [michele@ruralhealth.org.au](mailto:michele@ruralhealth.org.au)

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From: Pat Sparrow <[psparrow@agedcare.org.au](mailto:psparrow@agedcare.org.au)>  
Subject: "In Their Homes" – important resource for rural and remote home care workers

Aged and Community Services Australia has published an informative and easy to understand handbook for home care workers, called "In Their Homes;Caring for people as individuals".

"In Their Homes" has been written to help all paid home care workers and registered nurses who provide personal care, care around the home, nursing care or a combination of activities to people in their own homes. "In Their Homes" could also be useful for volunteers such as Meals on Wheels workers.

The authors, Megan Stoyles and Patrick Flanagan, consulted widely amongst workers, clients and providers in research and writing "In Their Homes". In particular, they were aware of the special needs and challenges facing those working in rural and remote areas. Many workers lack formal training, work in isolation from other workers and face security, confidentiality and extra work issues in providing their care. They heard of a provider in far north Qld who had to interview and appoint someone 800 kms away, sight unseen, over the phone, and had no opportunity to provide a background to home care standards and experiences.

Megan and Patrick traveled to South Australia, Alice Springs, Darwin, Kakadu, Tiwi Island, and Cairns, to talk to workers and workshop the book. They also sent drafts out to many other remote providers in other states to receive their input.

"In Their Homes" is a companion volume to "In Their Shoes", a handbook for residential aged care workers. Both are of value to workers and providers in rural and remote areas. They provide an introduction to this work, and can be used in training and orientation.

Single copies of each cost \$7.50 each ( incl. GST and postage) while 10 copies are only \$60. Order forms and details available from the ACSA website <http://www.agedcare.org.au> or email [agedcare@agedcare.org.au](mailto:agedcare@agedcare.org.au) or phone 03 96863460 fax 03 96863453

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BUSH CRISIS LINE - 1800 805 391

Bush Crisis Line is a twenty-four hour confidential telephone support and debriefing service for multi-disciplinary remote and rural health practitioners and their families. It is staffed by qualified psychologists with remote and cross-cultural experience, is toll free and available from anywhere in Australia. For more information [http://www.crana.org.au/pandp\\_bcl.html](http://www.crana.org.au/pandp_bcl.html)

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From: Carmen Hinkley <[carmen.hinkley@mhca.com.au](mailto:carmen.hinkley@mhca.com.au)>  
Subject: RHEF - rural youth suicide

The Rural Health Education Foundation program on Tuesday 15 April will be on youth suicide in rural areas.

The program will provide information on youth suicide in rural Australia, highlighting:

- \* the current status and prevalence of youth suicide in the rural Australian community;
- \* causal chain of suicide and the first signs of those at risk of suicide
- \* intervention and prevention strategies and ongoing management approaches,
- \* the role a GP can play in rural communities, in particular methods to encourage open communication,
- \* information on the Commonwealth Government's Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care Initiative; and
- \* the involvement of family and community support networks.

The program will be chaired by Dr Norman Swan, Presenter of the Health Report on ABC Radio National. Other panel members include Professor Ian Hickie, Psychiatrist, CEO, Beyond Blue; Noel Trevaski, Community worker, Rotary, Goulburn; Professor Graham Martin Director, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Qld and Royal Brisbane Hospital and President of Suicide Prevention Australia; and Dr Julie Thompson, General Practitioner, Warragul VIC and Chair of 'Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care' initiative Implementation Advisory Group, Victoria.

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The “Australian Journal of Rural Health” is a refereed journal with a national and international reputation for quality scholarship. Its focus is multi-disciplinary and it includes articles of interest to general practitioners, nurses, allied health professionals, pharmacists, health administrators, universities and rural health units. Reduced rates apply to members of some organisations. For more information see <http://www.blackwell-science.com/ajr>

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**THE FARM HEALTH & SAFETY JOINT RESEARCH VENTURE**  
(Extract from Rural Industries R&D Corporation “Shaping the Future”, Summer 2003,  
<http://www.rirdc.gov.au/pub/summer03.html>)

Australian farmers suffer a higher death and injury rate than the general population, with around 150 people dying in farm accidents each year. Children are especially vulnerable to death and injury on farms, most commonly through drowning and vehicular accidents.

Major sources of farm work-related injury include tractor, motorcycles and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) accidents, chemical exposure, noise-related hearing damage, animal-related injury and respiratory diseases from exposure to air-borne contaminants.

The Joint Research Venture is managed by RIRDC on behalf of its partners, as the Grains Research and Development Corporation, Meat & Livestock Australia, Australian Wool Innovations Ltd, Sugar R&D Corporation, Cotton R&D Corporation, Dairy R&D Corporation and Horticulture Australia Ltd.

Its goal is “Enhanced wellbeing and productivity in rural industries through improved OHS status of Australian agriculture delivered by the establishment of safe systems of work on farms”.

To date the Farm Health & Safety Joint Research Venture has conducted research into issues concerning chemical use on farms, fire safety, safe use of farm machinery, development of occupational health and safety (OHS) guidelines, and the development and maintenance of comprehensive data on farm injury and death.

To order a free brochure on the FH&S Joint Research Venture, contact RIRDC’s Human Capital, Communications and Information Systems sub-program. For more information contact the Research Manager Dr Roslyn Prinsley on 02 6272 4033, email [roslyn.prinsley@rirdc.gov.au](mailto:roslyn.prinsley@rirdc.gov.au) or visit the website at <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/farmhealth>

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## RIRDC REPORT ON FARM MACHINERY REGULATORY REVIEW

The issue of farm machinery safety is both complex and challenging, according to a recent report by the Rural Industries R&D Corporation. No single policy instrument is likely to be wholly effective but a number of strategies have been identified which in combination are likely to prove much more effective than any one operating in isolation. While education, training and information play crucial roles, so too, should positive incentives, and, in extreme cases, prosecution.

The full report is available at <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/HCC/02-169.pdf> and a summary at <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/HCC/02-169sum.html>

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From: Wal Taylor <[w.taylor@cqu.edu.au](mailto:w.taylor@cqu.edu.au)>  
Subject: Call for papers - ITiRA2003 Conference: 5 - 7 November in Caloundra, Queensland, Australia

The Organising Committee of the Information Technology in Regional Areas Conference (ITiRA) invites submission of papers for its 2003 Conference.

Dates: 5 - 7 November 2003  
Venue: Rydges Oasis Resort, Caloundra, Queensland, Australia  
Deadline for the submission of full papers: 30 May 2003

Further details available at <http://itira.cqu.edu.au/2003> or please email [enquiries-itira2003@cqu.edu.au](mailto:enquiries-itira2003@cqu.edu.au)

The ITiRA 2003 Conference explores strategies that link ICT enhanced economic, social and cultural development efforts with emerging opportunities in such areas as electronic commerce, community and civic networks, telecentres, electronic democracy, on-line participation, self-help and virtual health communities, advocacy, cultural enhancement and others. We see ITiRA 2003 as being of interest to practitioners, and policy makers in both developed and developing countries, and are particularly interested to share ideas across practice, research and policy. Hence, ITiRA 2003 encourages submissions for double blind refereed papers as well as practitioner case studies and policy development.

### Tracks

- \* Community Informatics
- \* IT for Developing Countries
- \* Indigenous Voices on IT for Indigenous Peoples
- \* IT for Regional Culture, Media and the Arts
- \* IT for Regional Education and Training
- \* IT for e-Democracy
- \* IT for Regional Health
- \* IT for Regional Industry and e-Commerce
- \* IT for Tourism in Regional Areas
- \* IT for Social Marketing in Regional Areas

Important Dates:  
Full papers due: 30 May 2003  
Notification of Acceptance: 12 July 2003  
Final papers due: 15 August 2003

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## GOVT NEEDS TO ACT TO FIX ABORIGINAL HEALTH CRISIS

Aboriginal leaders Henry Councillor and Geoff Clarke today called on the Prime Minister to intervene and make a commitment to fix what they described as “the national crisis in Aboriginal health”. The full text of the statement is available at <http://www.naccho.org.au/govtfix.html>

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From: Elizabeth Sturgeon <Elizabeth.Sturgeon@hunter.health.nsw.gov.au>  
Subject: ARCHI Toolkit Seminar: Innovations in Health Service Delivery in Rural and Remote Australia

Innovations in Health Service Delivery in Rural and Remote Australia  
29-30 May 2003  
Australian War Memorial Telstra Theatre, Treloar Crescent, Campbell ACT

### Aims of Seminar

- \* To showcase innovations projects with demonstrated outcomes in health service delivery in rural and remote Australia
- \* To facilitate information sharing among health professionals working in rural and remote Australia
- \* To provide information about strategic directions in relation to innovations in health service delivery in rural and remote Australia.

ARCHI is supported by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing and is auspiced by Hunter Area Health Service.

Email [Admin@archi.net.au](mailto:Admin@archi.net.au) Phone 02 4985 3165 Fax 02 4985 3164 <http://www.archi.net.au>

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## PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION REPORT ON COMPLIANCE COSTS FOR GPs

The costs to GPs and their practices from Commonwealth programs are significant, but there is scope to reduce them, according to a report released by the Productivity Commission.

The report, “General Practice Administrative and Compliance Costs”, provides estimates of the additional costs borne by GPs and their practices associated with Commonwealth programs that affect them. Under the Commission’s base case, costs to GPs resulting from a range of Commonwealth programs are estimated to have been about \$228 million in 2001-02 (averaging \$13 100 per GP working at least one day per week).

The Productivity Commission media statement is available at <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/studies/gpcompliance/finalreport/mediarelease.html> and the report is available at <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/studies/gpcompliance/finalreport/index.html>

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Extract from ABC Health-Updates, April 10, 2003  
(Health-Updates is a weekly alert about recent ABC health coverage now available online.  
Information on how to subscribe can be found at <http://www.abc.net.au/health/subscribe.htm>)

**WELLINGTON AIMS TO LOSE A TONNE (Landline: 06/04/2003)**  
While there's still a romantic image of the lean, weathered Aussie from the bush, the reality is far different. In fact, country Australians are fatter, less fit and suffer from far greater health problems than their city cousins. One New South Wales town is trying to turn that around with an ambitious program to lose a collective tonne of weight. <http://www.abc.net.au/landline/stories/s821418.htm>

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### ABS POPULATION FIGURES

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has released its annual estimates of population for Local Government Areas as at June 2002. The Main Features of the publication, which outlines the most rapidly growing and declining areas, is available at

<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs%40.nsf/b06660592430724fca2568b5007b8619/797f86dbd192b8f8ca2568a9001393cd!OpenDocument>

The ABS has also released estimates of the number of indigenous Australians by Statistical Local Areas (in most cases, Local Government Areas) at June 2001. Unfortunately, the data has only been released in electronic form without a summary available on the ABS website. Further information is available from the ABS.

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### SEVENTH NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

A reminder about Seventh National Rural Health Conference websites.

The Program is at <http://www.nrha.net.au/nrhpublic/publicdocs/conferences/7thNRHC/program.htm>  
The Communiqué and all recommendations are at <http://www.nrha.net.au/nrhpublic/publicdocs/conferences/7thnrhc/communique.htm?>

ABC radio's coverage of the Conference can be seen and heard at:  
<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/ruralhealth2003/stories/s798397.htm>  
<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/ruralhealth2003/>  
[http://www.abc.net.au/rural/ruralhealth2003/indexes/papers\\_default.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rural/ruralhealth2003/indexes/papers_default.htm)  
<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/telegraph/index/weekly.htm> - see Monday 3 March - the whole program was from the Conference

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## CONTRIBUTION AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND DISCLAIMER

The NRHA e-forum is edited by a third party moderator, Jim Groves. Contributions are sought on any topic relevant to rural health concerns. Please send contributions to the moderator at [grovesc@winshop.com.au](mailto:grovesc@winshop.com.au) or use the eforum contribution box at the NRHA website, <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

As such, the Alliance does not control postings and the contents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Alliance. Nor do postings necessarily reflect the view of Jim Groves or any organisation he is associated with. Jim Groves can be contacted at [grovesc@winshop.com.au](mailto:grovesc@winshop.com.au).

This issue is going to 1,568 email addresses. Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

To subscribe or unsubscribe, use the "sign up" box at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>. The archive of the newsletter is available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au> under "Publications & News".

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## FULL TEXT OF NRHA STATEMENT ON 7TH CONFERENCE – FROM THE ENERGY TO THE ACTION

28 March 2003

Some of the energies and commitment of the rural and remote health sector were demonstrated in Hobart recently when 930 people attended the 7th National Rural Health Conference.

Immediately after the Conference, a planning meeting began to take forward the recommendations. Representatives from national bodies involved with health outcomes developed statements on eleven key issues:

1. improving the status of Indigenous health, including through evaluations of the performance of 'mainstream health services' by community controlled Indigenous health services, greater use of joint planning forums, the employment of greater numbers of Indigenous people in health professions, Indigenous content in curriculums, and staff exchanges between the community controlled and mainstream health sectors;
2. an integrated plan for improving the rural and remote health workforce, and clear lines of responsibility for delivering on it;
3. work to develop a sustainable, equitable and high-quality placement system for students and short-term health staff in rural, regional and remote communities;
4. a rescue package for procedural medical services, based on collaboration between local, State and Commonwealth Governments, academia, the professional Colleges, and hospitals;
5. reassessment of the systems of classification used for funding and resource allocation in rural and remote health (RRMA, ARIA and ASGC);

6. endorsement of Conference's support for the seven goals and eight principles of Healthy Horizons Outlook 2003-2007;

7. endorsement of Conference's call for the implementation of the 7-Point Action Plan on Nursing in Rural and Remote Areas (and support for the proposal to convene a national meeting on issues affecting rural and remote allied health professionals);

8. a call for more work on the post-trauma crises associated with flood, drought and fire, and for additional investment in infrastructure and services enabling communities to rebuild;

9. a funded strategic approach to rural and remote health research, building on the existing infrastructure in rural, regional and remote areas, and driven by the agenda in rural areas so that the research is closely related to real health improvements;

10. the need for major rural, regional and remote investment in early intervention in child and adolescent health; and

11. a call for increased commitment to a comprehensive system of aged care and other services for the elderly in rural and remote areas.

About 65 representatives of national bodies and grassroots health workers prepared these statements in a day facilitated by Norman Swan.

These agreed issues will help set the agenda for rural and remote health for the next two years, especially for the Alliance itself. Already the Alliance has promoted the aged care proposals to a Federal Inquiry, and the research agenda to the NHMRC and the Department of Health and Ageing.

Full details about the 7th Conference and its recommendations are at [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au)

The 8th National Rural Health Conference will be in Alice Springs in April 2005.