

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum – 23 May 2003

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NRHA STATEMENT ON THE FEDERAL BUDGET

The NRHA welcomed Budget confirmation of more undergraduate medical places and GP Registrar training positions for rural areas, and an increased focus on prevention in the health system. The full text of the NRHA statement is reprinted below.

The Government's summary of the Budget's rural health measures is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/budget2003/fact/hfact6.htm> and the rural and regional Budget statement is available at http://www.dotars.gov.au/dept/budget/regional/2003_2004/index.aspx

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NRHA STATEMENT ON ALP BUDGET RESPONSE

The ALP's down-payments on Medicare and bulk-billing would retain the basic principles of Medicare and include positive differentiation for rural areas. The full text of the NRHA statement is reprinted below.

Mr Crean's Budget response is available at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0503/20004489.html>

The AMA comment on the ALP Budget response is that the ALP's Medicare package is an improvement on the Government's 'A Fairer Medicare' package, but falls short of addressing all the access and affordability issues confronting general practice in Australia. The AMA statement is available at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-5MK8YY>

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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

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From: Paige-Elise Reade <paige@dare.com.au>
Subject: Common Colds Need Common Sense campaign

As a member organisation of the National Prescribing Service (NPS), you may be aware that we are this year running the third annual Common colds need common sense campaign, to reduce the amount of unnecessary antibiotics prescribed and taken for the common cold or flu.

It is GPs that are making the difference in regards to antibiotic prescriptions in Australia - in the last eight years, antibiotic prescriptions have dropped by 18 per cent but Australia remains one the world's biggest users of antibiotics.

Our website for this educational campaign (www.gottacold.com) will go live with new information on Monday 19 May, and provides excellent advice that doctors can download for patients on how to try to avoid catching the cold and flu, as well as credible information on how to treat these viruses with common sense: rest up, drink up and treat the symptoms. Another GP service available will be a downloadable symptomatic management pad.

There remains a long way to go until we reach appropriate levels of antibiotic prescribing and your help on this important health issue is appreciated.

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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

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Indigenous health: it's time for a change
[Extract from Article in eMJA by LA Peachey. The full article is available at http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/178_10_190503/pea10171_fm-2.html]

The medical profession has long recognised its social contract to Indigenous Australians, and we can easily start to fulfil this contract by attending to our own backyard. For proportionate racial representation in the medical profession in Australia, we should have about 1260 Indigenous doctors; however, there are no more than 55. All have graduated since 1983 and more than half from the one medical school. Had the other nine medical schools made the same effort to recruit and train Indigenous doctors, we would now be much closer to the racial equity goal of 1260 doctors.

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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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AUSTRALIAN RURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

[Extract from RIRDC on-line - to subscribe email the editor, Murray Hansen at murray.hansen@rirdc.gov.au]

The Australian Rural Leadership Program is designed for men and women who will lead rural and regional Australia into the future. It provides a forum where participants will develop leadership skills and increase their knowledge and understanding by sharing ideas and experiences and exploring contemporary issues. The closing date for applications for Course 11 is June 30. More information <http://www.rural-leaders.com.au/whatsnew.htm#Wanted> and the application form at http://www.rural-leaders.com.au/arl_downloads.htm

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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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From: Ann Bazeos <Ann.Bazeos@health.gov.au>
Subject: National Chronic Disease Self-management Workshop - preliminary notification and call for papers

Sharing Health Care Initiative
12th, 13th & 14th November, 2003
Venue: Hilton on the Park, Melbourne

This Workshop is designed to promote chronic disease self-management activity both here in Australia and overseas by examining the progress, learnings and successes of the 12 National Sharing Health Care Initiative demonstration projects along with a range of other Australian and international chronic condition self-management projects and research activity.

The Workshop will explore the challenges and enablers for the integration of chronic condition self-management more broadly within the Australian health care system.

The broad range of presentations and workshops will be of special interest to GPs and Divisions of GP, nurses, allied health professionals, Aboriginal Health Workers, health provider organisations, consumer groups and organisations, Commonwealth, State/Territory health policy makers and

administrators, private health insurance policy makers and administrators, and health trainers and educationists.

All nominations including a brief ½ page abstract should be e-mailed to Ms Daphne Shakespear on daphne.shakespear@health.gov.au by 30 June 2003 or contact (02) 6289 8689. Acceptances will be notified by 31 July 2003. Please watch our website <http://www.chronicdisease.health.gov.au> for more details

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From: Josie Brooker <JBrooker@doh.health.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: ACHSE NSW Upcoming Events

Information on these and other events available on our website
<http://www.achse.org.au/nsw/upcoming.html>

Wednesday, 21 May
Essential Illawarra Update
Where: Conference Rooms 1 & 2, Level 8, Wollongong Hospital, Crown Street, Wollongong
Time: 10:00am - 11:00am
Topic: Strengthening Health Care in the Community
Speaker: Janet Anderson, Director Primary Health & Community Care, NSW Health Department

Thursday, 29 May
ACHSE Emerging Health Managers interACTIVE Forum and Networking Group
Where: PricewaterhouseCoopers, 201 Sussex Street, Sydney
Time: 5:30pm for 6:00pm
Topic: Launch Event with Guest Speaker Mr Pat Grier, Managing Director, Ramsay Health
If you are an emerging health manager, you will not want to miss this one!!

Wednesday, 2 July
Evening Forum: Decision Support Systems
Where: Northern Sydney Education Centre, Macquarie Hospital, Wicks Road, North Ryde
When: 6:00pm for 6:30pm - 8:30pm
Topic: Decision Support Systems

Friday 25 - Saturday 26 July
Human Error in Medicine Residential Workshop
Where: Crown Plaza Terrigal
Time: 8:00am - 5:00pm

Friday 1 - Saturday 2 August
Measuring Patient Based Health Outcomes Workshop
Where: Northern Sydney Education Centre, North Ryde
Time: 9am - 5pm

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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 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.

This issue is going to 1,604 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 BUDGET RELEASE

13 May 2003

Medicare + Workforce + Prevention: A ‘Lifestyle Prescription’ for Good Rural Health

The NRHA welcomed Budget confirmation of more undergraduate medical places and GP Registrar training positions for rural areas, and an increased focus on prevention in the health system. It hopes the training places will be part of a ‘measured and supported initiative’ to help consumers with a better distribution of GPs and other health professionals. But the Alliance sees the universal health insurance system as a key part of a regional health strategy, and does not support the current proposals for Medicare and bulk-billing.

Dr Nigel Stewart said the Budget was as expected. “We appreciate that there is \$200 million for 2003-04 under the Regional Health Strategy that was announced in Budget 2000. One of our tasks in the Alliance is to make sure that special attention to the needs of people in rural and remote areas is effective and sustained. We would like to see Medicare boosted so that it provides direct support to all people in more remote areas and to the rural health workforce overall,” he said.

“We will be using the Budget’s emphasis on ‘prevention’ to encourage the Government to build on its rural initiatives for nursing, pharmacy, and allied health – and to work with the States on oral health. This would be valuable for health promotion. The debate about Medicare is vital - but we’ll also keep pressing the role of other health professionals in primary care and illness prevention,” Dr Stewart said.

“Medicare’s achievements in rural and remote areas have been limited mainly by the under-supply of GPs. This could get even worse because of continuing concerns about procedural practice by rural GPs.

“The proposed changes on bulk-billing will not fix this year’s indemnity or morale problems, and they will not build the rural health workforce overall,” Dr Stewart said. “Co-ordinated primary health care can be enhanced by more direct means, including in more remote areas. The Medicare system could

cover the work of psych. nurses for mental illness and physiotherapists for musculoskeletal illness - to provide a more cost-effective system overall.”

The Alliance believes that alternatives exist for increasing the rate of bulk-billing, for instance through a meaningful increase in the rebate and the possibility of differential rural rebates. These should be subject to further discussion, according to Dr Stewart.

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FULL TEXT OF NRHA STATEMENT

21 May 2003

ALP’s Budget ‘Down-Payments’ Potentially Valuable for Rural People

Nigel Stewart, Chairperson of the NRHA, said that Simon Crean’s Budget Reply speech last week included several proposals that would be welcomed by people in rural, regional and remote areas. “We are pleased at the ALP’s commitments on Medicare. The promises on the environment, lifelong education and children are also dear to our hearts and closely related to health status,” Dr Stewart said.

The ALP’s down-payments on Medicare and bulk-billing would retain the basic principles of Medicare and include positive differentiation for rural areas. “We’re on the record as saying that a meaningful increase in the rebate and differential rural rebates should be considered. Last week’s proposals from Simon Crean would achieve this.”

“We are also happy to see the ALP would retain the workforce proposals from the Government’s Medicare package: new undergraduate places for medicine, Registrar positions and more practice nurses. There is no reason to tie rural workforce measures to new arrangements for bulk-billing,” Dr Stewart said.

Lifelong learning is also of vital interest to country people. Education and educational access are closely related to health status and the Alliance looks forward to more details on what Mr Crean called Labor’s ‘comprehensive plan for lifelong learning’.

Dr Stewart also highlighted the Opposition Leader’s reference to children. “Investing in children would be a great boost to health overall. Promises of a safe and healthy future for children resonate with country people, many of whom are faced daily with uncertainty and poor access to services. We would support a National Commissioner for Children with wide-ranging responsibilities relating to investment and health, as well as safety.”

Another priority for rural people highlighted by Simon Crean was the environment. “The health of the Murray-Darling Basin has national implications. Labor’s proposal is important both for its own sake and as an example of the sort of long-term investment and leadership that rural people want. The health of people in rural areas is determined by rural infrastructure, incomes and jobs – as well as access to health services,” Dr Stewart said. “The Murray is an urgent, widespread and symbolic challenge.”

Overall the ALP’s commitments focus on a number of the issues of importance to the NRHA and people in rural, regional and remote areas. “These are good ideas that ought to go beyond Party-political Budget statements”, Dr Stewart said.

