

In this issue:

- * New AMA President
- * www.mirrijini.com
- * Two New Medical Schools and 234 Extra Medical Students
- * Extracts from ABC Health-Updates
- * World's First Online Hospital Reaches 1,000 Queensland Children
- * Contribution and subscription information and disclaimer

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NEW AMA PRESIDENT

In his first Press Conference, new AMA President Dr Bill Glasson had some sharp words to say about the Federal Government's bonded scholarships scheme for rural doctors. Dr Glasson described the scheme as "industrial blackmail".

"It's immoral, and it's one issue that I really want to take up very strongly with the government because I just think it's, I think it's unconstitutional, and our students are really ropable about it - and I don't blame them. The solutions to the rural problems is not conscription. There's no point in having a doctor going rurally who doesn't want to be there.

"I was born in the bush, I service the bush, and I know what the bush needs, and it doesn't need a whole load of unfunded conscripted doctors. What it needs, an environment out there that would encourage people to actually go and want to work out, work up there. I think the Townsville experiment with the JCU medical school, will be a very good example where most of those students will end up practicing in provincial or rural areas," Dr Glasson said.

The full transcript of Dr Glasson's remarks is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-5N5BJA>

Dr Glasson was born in Winton in Western Queensland in January 1953. His parents operated a remote property, while his father was also a member of the Queensland Parliament and a cabinet minister. Bill was initially schooled by correspondence before boarding at the Church of England Grammar School in Brisbane.

After completing a three year Diploma of Applied Science - Optometry he entered the University of Queensland on a bonded scholarship. He completed his first year residency at Princess Alexandra Hospital, before his second year on a relieving circuit of Tara, Dalby, Miles, Taroom, Jandowae.

Bill then commenced his ophthalmopathy training. Following graduation in 1980 he went to England. He returned to Australia at the end of 1988 and began private practice at Wickham Terrace and Maroochydore. In the subsequent couple of years he expanded into the rural outreach services at Kingaroy, Longreach, Blackall, Barcaldine, Winton, Birdsville, Bedourie and Boulia. He ceased private practice at Maroochydore in 1999, but has opened a clinic on Norfolk Island.

His full cv is available at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WOOD-5N45H9>

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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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www.mirrijini.com

The Tiwi Health Board set a precedent in establishing the first Aboriginal owned pharmacy in Australia to have access to the special arrangements introduced under Section 100 of the Health Act.

You are invited to visit <http://www.mirrijini.com> - the story of the Tiwi Health Board pharmacy project and how it can now be extended to other remote health clinics in Australia.

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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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TWO NEW MEDICAL SCHOOLS AND 234 EXTRA MEDICAL STUDENTS

The Federal Government has given in-principle agreement to a new medical school at Notre Dame University in WA and a new medical school on the Gold Coast as part of its allocation of 234 extra medical school places for next year - taking the total to 1704 students starting medicine in Australia.

Health Minister Senator Patterson said Tasmania had also received 21 extra places, taking its new medical places to 83 in 2004. The Northern Territory, which has no medical school, has received special consideration with an extra 14 places at Flinders University in Adelaide, the majority of which are to be set aside for NT students.

In addition to existing programs, under the Government's A Fairer Medicare an additional 234 Australian medical school places will be made available for the start of the 2004 university year. Universities in New South Wales and the ACT (including the new medical school at ANU due to start in 2004) will receive funding for a combined total of 94 additional student places, Victoria 10 extra, Queensland universities will be able to offer 50 extra students a place in a medical school, Western Australia's allocation is 45 extra, South Australia and the NT combined 14 additional places and 21 extra places will be funded in Tasmania. This represents a 16% increase in total places across Australia.

All new medical school places created through A Fairer Medicare will be bonded for six years to work in areas of workforce shortage upon completion of medical training. Senator Patterson said that "the

need for more doctors in rural and remote and some outer-metropolitan areas of Australia is widely recognised, and many communities have identified having a local doctor as high on their list of health priorities. These measures will help address the emerging shortages in the medical workforce, particularly in outer metropolitan and rural areas.”

The full text of Senator Patterson’s statement is at
<http://www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2003/kp/kp03081.htm>

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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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Extracts from ABC Health-Updates
(Health-Updates is a weekly alert about recent ABC health coverage now available online.
Subscription information is at <http://www.abc.net.au/health/maillinglist.htm>)

HEALTHY TOWN (New Dimensions Health: 03/06/2003)
Obesity rates in Australia are skyrocketing. But there is one Queensland town that is hoping to buck the trend by becoming more healthy.
http://www.abc.net.au/dimensions/dimensions_health/Transcripts/s871089.htm

MARSAT KETCHELL: KEEPING THE TORRES STRAIT HEALTHY (All In The Mind: 01/06/2003)
Born and bred on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait, Marsat Ketchell left home at the tender age of 15 to join the Royal Australian Navy. After 26 years of service he returned to his island home to become the first ever mental health worker, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, to be permanently based in the Torres Strait and Northern Cape York Peninsular region. Now he's part of a team, keeping islanders healthy in body and mind. <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/mind/s866570.htm>

AMA ISSUES DAMNING REPORT ON INDIGENOUS HEALTH (Public Record: 02/06/2003)
A new report by Australia's peak medical group has described as 'appalling' the standard of health care for Indigenous people. The report calls for an extra \$300 million in federal funding. This is an edited extract of speech by former AMA president Kerry Phelp. <http://www.abc.net.au/public/s869662.htm>
(The AMA statement is available at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-5N79YE>)

YOUR STORY: AIDS IN A COUNTRY TOWN
A mysterious wasting illness, a sudden transfer to the city, and returning to a small community with a stigmatised illness. John Quarrell describes living with AIDS in northern Tasmania.
<http://www.abc.net.au/health/regions/yourstories/countrytownaids.htm>

EVENT DIARY: Rural Health Week
Victoria, 19 June to 25 June 2003
The theme is Healthy Communities - Healthy People. The aim is to strengthen the profile of rural health, emphasising to the community the availability of services, resources and key programs to assist

rural and remote Victorians in achieving and maintaining good health and wellbeing.
<http://www2b.abc.net.au/abcdiary/event.asp?id=32080&display=fromtoday&gatewayid=221&presdir=health&PageRec=0>
(The Rural Health Week website is at http://www.vha.org.au/web/rhw_web/rhw_index.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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WORLD’S FIRST ONLINE HOSPITAL REACHES 1,000 QUEENSLAND CHILDREN
(Extract from “Regional Health Check”, May 2003. Available at <http://www.ruralhealth.gov.au/news/rhc.htm>)

Queensland has established the first online hospital in the world. Instead of travelling large distances, children in regional, rural and remote areas of Queensland have been able to access specialist services closer to home – making it more comfortable for the patient and more convenient for the family.

Over the past two years, the Royal Children’s Hospital (RCH) in Brisbane has used online communication techniques including video conferencing and email to provide specialist services to unwell children in their local environment. In a substantial number of cases, this service has saved a plane trip for the patient and the parent – a ride that can be traumatic if a child is ill and the parent worried.

One parent highlighted the ease of a tele-consultation. “Our appointment was so much easier. Normally we have to leave home at 3am for a 7am appointment at the RCH. This tele-service is excellent and is much easier and more convenient than travelling to Brisbane.”

The telepaediatric service is coordinated by the Centre for Online Health (hosted by the University of Queensland) and is a collaboration of Queensland Health (through RCH), the University and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, which provides funding through the Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program.

The service allows doctors in remote areas to send e-referrals to a centralised call centre in Brisbane. Once a referral is made to the call centre, a specialist consultation is arranged.

According to Professor Jennifer Batch, the Director of Endocrinology and Diabetes at the RCH, the service allows her to readily take her skills to isolated patients in need. “I have found that the telepaediatric service allows me to support local health professionals in providing the very best specialist health care for country children and their families.”

Since its inception, a broad range of paediatric specialty areas have been introduced to the service, including burns, diabetes, oncology, orthopaedics and cardiology. In the case of postacute burns care, more than 200 outpatient appointments have been conducted. This means the patient and family did not have to travel to the specialist centre in Brisbane. Instead, specialists from the burns unit were able to review scars via videoconference and discuss clinical management with local health professionals.

