

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum – 20 June 2003

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MORE NURSES WORKING SHORTER HOURS HARDER

More than half of Australia's employed nurses are working part-time - revealing a trend towards shorter hours and a decrease in the supply of nursing, according to a new report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

“Nursing Labour Force 2001” shows the number of employed nurses increased by 3.6 per cent from 216,696 in 1993 to 224,595 in 1999. The increase was accompanied by an increase in the proportion of nurses working part-time, from about 47 per cent to 54 per cent in that period.

The AIHW statement is available at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/media/2003/mr030606.html> and the full publication at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm?type=detail&id=8782>

The Australian Nursing Federation described these figures as showing the crisis in nursing had worsened, because the number of full-time equivalent nurses fell from 1,074 per 1,000 population in 1993 to 1,018 in 1999. The ANF statement is at http://www.anf.org.au/news_media/media_2003/news_press_030606.html

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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: Zyg Kulesza <zkulesza@ozemail.com.au>
Subject: Australian Healthcare Association website – <http://www.aushealthcare.com.au>

The Australian Healthcare Association (AHA) is a non-profit industry association of hospitals and health services. Up until 1996 we were known as the Australian Hospitals Association. AHA has been providing services to the industry for over 50 years. AHA works to enhance the management, quality and accessibility of healthcare for all Australians. Our Vision is "to be nationally and internationally

regarded as a leading contributor to the achievement of excellence in the development of health policy and practice."

This site has many unique services that have been provided for the benefit of our members and the general public who are interested in the healthcare industry.

- * Just Health Jobs - one of Australia's largest sites for vacancies in the health industry averaging over 500 jobs
- * Just Health Consultants - Australia's largest directory of consultants and specialised service providers who provide services to Australia's \$60 Billion hospital and healthcare industry
- * Just Health Tenders - Australia's largest site for health industry tenders, expressions of interest, requests for proposal
- * Australian Health Review (AHR) - Australia's foremost peer reviewed journal for decision makers in the Australian health care industry and other quality publications available on line
- * Events and Conferences Australia's largest site for health related conferences and seminars
- * News - Australia's largest site for health related news averaging over 100 media releases
- * Six Free Mailing Lists to keep up to date with developments in the health industry
- * Linked Sites - over 200 links to health related websites

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From: Public Health Association of Australia <phaa@web1.maven.com.au>
Subject: PHAA Website

The PHAA website has been revamped and you will notice that the home page is totally different and more user friendly. The new website address is <http://www.phaa.net.au>

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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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HOLISTIC APPROACH NEEDED TO FIX ABORIGINAL HEALTH, SAYS NACCHO CHAIR

Australia needs a mainstream health system that supports and nurtures a holistic approach to Aboriginal health according to the Chairman of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), Mr. Henry Councillor.

“You can’t fix these issues medically,” Mr. Councillor added when speaking to the Aboriginal health Worker National Conference in Adelaide. “They require community advocacy and action. They require a mainstream health system that supports and nurtures such an approach.”

Mr. Councillor said in the 30 or more years since it began, the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector and the empowering of Aboriginal health workers had been a phenomenal success. We now have more than 120 such services around Australia. They work because Aboriginal people trust them and the care provided is culturally appropriate.

“Today 70 percent of the staff now working in our sector are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

Mr Councillor then announced that NACCHO had settled on national definitions for Aboriginal Health Workers and Aboriginal Primary Health Care Practitioners - definitions that were long overdue.

The full text of the NACCHO statement is at <http://www.naccho.org.au/AHWConfspeech.html>

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ALLIANCE PROPOSAL REJECTED

(Extract from The Courier Mail, June 18, 2003)

THE Howard Government has rejected calls for the creation of a special federal-state commission to oversee the reform of Australia's health system. Last night, Health Minister Kay Patterson said the proposal from Australian Health Reform Alliance would create an unnecessary new layer of administration and come at a significant cost to taxpayers.

The Alliance called for the establishment of the commission, which would draw up a reform agenda to tackle what it described as the crisis in the nation's health system, particularly in relation to issues of access and availability. The Opposition welcomed the proposal.

But Senator Patterson said the money spent establishing the commission would be better used improving health services.

The Alliance, a coalition of 25 groups including doctors and consumer lobbyists, also called on the federal and state governments to delay signing the latest Australian Health Care Agreements - the five-year funding arrangement for the nation's health systems. The Federal Government has offered the states \$42 billion over the next five years, conditional on them matching the funding. The states and territories have rejected the offer and will meet tomorrow to discuss the issue.

The Courier Mail article is at http://www.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,4057,6613886%255E421,00.html

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HOPES DASHED FOR IMPROVEMENTS FROM THE ESTENS REPORT

(Extract from newsletter of Small Enterprise Telecommunications Centre Ltd – SETEL, 8 June 2003)

Hopes for improvements in telecommunications in regional rural and remote areas based on the recommendations of the Estens Report (the 2002 Report on Telecommunications Services in regional and remote areas), have received a major blow.

The Federal Government has decided to pull back its support for recommendations to introduce new technologies for example, faster Internet services that are already available in cities. Upgrading of such services, are now being referred to as “future proofing”. According to Lindsay Tanner, the opposition spokesman on communications this latest move is blackmailing regional Australia by linking improvements in telecommunications to the sale of Telstra.

SETEL Comment. More frequently we are hearing the declaration that “on the whole the Government received a big tick from the Estens report” and also that the *raison d’etre* for the report was primarily to assess the adequacy of current telecommunications services. But so too for Dick Esten’s consideration was how best to ensure future equity between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas - the 6th term of reference. In fact an entire chapter was devoted to the 6th term of reference and 6 of the 39 recommendations dealt with this criteria.

The questions now arise: Was this (Estens) inquiry some type of costing exercise as well as a “test of the waters” for the Government?

Or perhaps on a more fundamental issue: What intent is there for developing strategies to ensure that non-metropolitan areas do keep abreast with the level of services provided in metropolitan areas, rather than continually playing catch up support from large handouts (which have now run out)?

The withdrawal of funds for “future proofing” will be a major blow for small businesses, which in turn provide the “glue” or link within communities in remote rural and regional areas. These businesses need to be at the forefront not the backside of telecommunications innovations. This emphasizes the need for leadership and guidance so that small businesses can be encouraged to skill-up in telecommunications.

This latest development does however explain why there were no references at all to the Estens report in the 2003 budget.

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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>)

QUEENSLAND, CATTLE AND Q FEVER: FEATURE AND FACT FILE

Q fever is a highly infectious and in some cases serious disease that is carried by animals and passed to humans. In this new feature, Matthew Liddy looks at the prevalence of Q fever in Queensland farmers, and details a new vaccination program. The Q fever Fact File lists the sources of the disease, plus ways to prevent the spread of infection, including immunisation.

<http://www.abc.net.au/health/regions/features/cattleqfever/default.htm>

http://www.abc.net.au/health/regions/library/qfever_ff.htm

DODSON CALLS FOR 'EXTREME' ACTION TO STOP BRUTALITY (The Public Record: 16/06/2003)

Respected Aboriginal leader, Professor Mick Dodson, has called for extreme action to stop what he calls the increasing brutality against Aboriginal women and children. Head of the Australian National University's Institute for Indigenous Australia, Dodson says violence in Aboriginal communities is increasing and if the same thing was happening in white communities there would be community outrage. This is an edited transcript of a speech to the National Press Club.

<http://www.abc.net.au/public/s878051.htm>

LANDLINE: RFDS Flight

Sunday June 22, 12pm, ABC TV

The Royal Flying Doctors Service (RFDS) is one of the world's most remarkable medical services, and is celebrating 75 years of service this year. To people living in the isolation of the vast Australian outback, it's an angel of mercy - nowhere more so than in Western Australia, where the RFDS covers an area the size of western Europe. But there's no government funding to buy new planes and the charity is struggling to make ends meet. Unfortunately the celebration of the RFDS's past is being marred by the consternation about its ability to cope with the demands of the future.

<http://www.abc.net.au/landline/default.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: Wendy Lorincz <wendy.lorincz@gpcg.org>

Subject: GPCG Annual Conference

The General Practice Computing Group (based in Canberra) is holding its Annual Forum 2003 on Saturday 9 August in conjunction with the Health Informatics Expo at Darling Harbour.

The GPCG Management Committee has representatives from the RDAA and ACRRM and as such there will be a focus on GPs in rural and remote areas together with issues around infrastructure and communications.

See <http://www.gpcg.org/forum2003/> for further details on the Forum and draft Program.

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COMMUNITY STRENGTH CAN STOP SUICIDE

The whole community can play a role in the prevention of suicide, the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Kay Patterson said when launching CommunityLife, a Commonwealth-funded program that guides communities in developing appropriate suicide prevention activities at the 10th Annual Suicide Prevention Australia National Conference in Brisbane.

"More than 2,500 Australians of all ages, cultural backgrounds and all walks of life take their life each year, and many more attempt to," Senator Patterson said.

CommunityLife provides a necessary network, developed in collaboration with Suicide Prevention Australia, Auseinet (Australian Network for Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health) and the Telethon Institute of Child Health Research. The Commonwealth has provided \$700,000 in funding for the first phase of this initiative.

The full text of Senator Patterson's statement is at <http://www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2003/kp/kp03089.htm>

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GOVT CLAIMS INDEPENDENT REPORT CONFIRMS REGIONAL POLICY DIRECTION

A new Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics (BTRE) report confirms that the Federal Government's approach to regional policy is based on international best practice, according to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services, John Anderson.

Releasing Government Interventions in Pursuit of Regional Development: Learning from Experience, Mr Anderson said that the report analysed Australian and international government regional policy interventions and provided a valuable insight into what did and did not work in addressing regional development issues.

"This independent report shows that a policy approach that facilitates local investment and business activities in targeted regions, capitalises on local knowledge and resources, and promotes links between industry, government and communities is most likely to be successful," he said.

Mr Anderson's statement is available at http://www.ministers.dotars.gov.au/ja/releases/2003/june/a64_2003.htm and the report can be accessed at <http://www.btre.gov.au/recent.htm>

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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 1,629 email addresses. Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

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