

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum – 15 August 2003

In this issue:

- \* Telstra decision poses risks for country people
- \* Call for Reviewers – “Australian Journal of Rural Health”
- \* National Illicit Drug Strategy - Non Government Organisation Treatment Grants Programme Stage 2
- \* Postgraduate Scholarships Announced for Rural and Remote Health Professionals
- \* Controversy Continues over National Health Care Summit
- \* AMA proposes scholarships to attract young doctors to country Australia
- \* National Advertising Campaign to Inform Indigenous Australians about the PBS
- \* Contribution and subscription information and disclaimer

+++++

### NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ALLIANCE MEDIA RELEASE

4 August 2003

#### Telstra decision poses risks for country people

The Federal Government's latest policy proposals for rural telecommunications are welcome, but do not constitute a valid case for privatising Telstra. This is one of the conclusions of a paper released today by the National Rural Health Alliance.

The main issue is not whether services are currently 'adequate' - however that is defined. It is whether rural services can be 'future-proofed'. As Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson has said, the test will be in 10 or 15 years' time.

There can be no doubt that rural telecommunications are improving and that Commonwealth policy initiatives over the past six years have been very significant in promoting this improvement. This is true in relation to all four dimensions of telecommunications of importance to rural Australians - fixed voice telephony, mobile telephony, dial-up Internet access, and availability of broadband.

Nevertheless there remain some deficiencies in rural - and indeed non-rural - telecommunications that continue to require policy attention. The full privatisation of Telstra poses significant risks for this policy attention and for the further development and maintenance of rural telecommunications.

Logically, the rural sector should therefore continue to reject Telstra privatisation. It should continue to seek the redress of remaining current telecommunications issues, and commitments to future 'equivalence' with Telstra still in public hands.

It is to be hoped that the further measures offered to improve rural telecommunications are not dependent on the passage of full privatisation. Telecommunications are an essential economic and social infrastructure in rural and remote areas, and are becoming even more important in the context of the so-called 'information economy'.

Further information: Gordon Gregory, Executive Director, NRHA, (02) 6285 4660

The discussion paper is available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au> or from the Alliance.

+++++

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)

+++++

Call for Reviewers – “Australian Journal of Rural Health”

The “Australian Journal of Rural Health” is a multidisciplinary refereed journal, and since its inception in 1993, has contributed to the accumulation of knowledge of rural health in Australia. The Journal aims to establish a national and international reputation for the quality of its scholarly discourse and value to rural health professionals.

The Journal is now seeking interested rural health professionals to review submitted papers prior to publication. The aim of a Reviewer is to ensure submissions are professionally written and scientifically rigorous and to critically review manuscripts according to the Journal's guidelines. Reviewers will also be required to advise the Editor on the suitability for publication of submitted manuscripts.

Expressions of interest, or further enquiries should be forwarded to:

Juliane Ward,  
Editorial Assistant - AJRH  
Faculty of Health  
University of Newcastle  
University Drive  
Callaghan NSW 2308  
Ph: (02) 4921 6005  
Fax: (02) 4921 2020  
Email: [AJRH@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:AJRH@newcastle.edu.au)

For more information about the Journal, including author instructions, subscriptions and online availability, visit <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journals/ajr/>

+++++

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)

+++++

From: Kate.Jorgenson@health.gov.au  
Subject: National Illicit Drug Strategy - Non Government Organisation Treatment Grants Programme Stage 2

As part of the National Illicit Drug Strategy, funding has been allocated to continue the Non Government Organisation Treatment Grants Programme. The Programme aims to provide funding to Non Government Organisations (NGOs) to establish and expand services for treating illicit drug problems with a particular emphasis on filling geographic and target group gaps in the coverage of existing treatment services, including youth, women with children, Indigenous Australians and those in rural and regional areas. Funding of \$65.1 million has been allocated to continue the programme. Of this, \$19 million is available for Stage 2 of the Programme, commencing in the 2003/04 financial year and ceasing on 30 June 2006.

Under this funding, consideration will also be given to applications that address the emerging issues of the provision of services for people with comorbid mental health and drug use problems and psychostimulant users.

Any NGO can apply for a grant under the programme. Applications for funding must focus on treatment services for users of illicit drugs in an identified area of unmet need. Applications for funding can cover a multiplicity of treatment service types provided in a variety of settings including residential and non-residential.

The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing is seeking applications from NGOs which can:

- \* Provide evidence that the proposed treatment service model will meet the needs of the identified target group and is based on good practice in the delivery of this treatment type (as identified by research or independent expert opinion).
- \* Demonstrate that consultation has occurred with the local community and other key stakeholders, including potential client groups that the services will target.
- \* Demonstrate that the organisation has the experience and expertise to provide the proposed intervention for the identified target groups.
- \* Demonstrate that the organisation has the capacity and experience to work with the providers of related services such as other alcohol and other drug services, clinical, welfare, housing, mental health services, children's and youth services.
- \* Demonstrate that the proposed service is consistent with State/Territory Government strategic plans and service delivery standards/guidelines in dealing with the problems of illicit drug use.
- \* Demonstrate that the organisation has the capacity and experience to:
  - plan service delivery;
  - set clear measurable and achievable objectives;
  - develop strategies to achieve the objectives;
  - collect statistical data;
  - monitor and provide reports on the activities of the service; and
  - undertake a service evaluation.
- \* Show evidence of the financial viability of the organisation and a realistic budget for the project.

Grant Application guidelines and application forms are available from the State Office of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. The contacts are:

NSW: Ms Jane Ryan (02) 9263 3573  
VIC: Ms Meni Frawley (03) 9665 8926

WA: Ms Caroline Curtin (08) 9346 5441  
QLD: Ms Kylie Burton (07) 3360 2929  
SA: Ms Toni Prochazka (08) 8237 8008  
ACT: Ms Robyn Staniforth (02) 6274 5153  
TAS: Ms Keree Rose (03) 6221 1480  
NT: Ms Sue Morley (08) 8946 3405

Alternatively, these documents can be obtained from the Department of Health and Ageing Website (<http://www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/drugs/illicit/index.htm>).

Applications close on 19 September 2003. An original application and 3 copies must be submitted to the contact officer in your State by close of business on that date.

+++++

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>

+++++

#### POSTGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS ANNOUNCED FOR RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Rural and remote communities will benefit when more than 130 health professionals complete postgraduate studies funded under scholarships announced by the Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Kay Patterson.

"These scholarships, worth \$600,000 in total, have been provided under the Commonwealth Allied Health Rural and Remote Scholarships Postgraduate Scheme," Senator Patterson said.

"They have been awarded to a wide variety of health professionals from all over Australia, including physiotherapists, occupational therapists, social workers, speech pathologists, audiologists, optometrists, chiropractors and radiographers to assist them to further their professional development. The scholarships were awarded for a range of educational activities including obtaining postgraduate qualifications, short courses, clinical placements and attendance at conferences," Senator Patterson said.

The scholarship scheme is managed by the Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (SARRAH). More information on rural health scholarships is available at <http://www.ruralhealth.gov.au/scholarships/index.htm>. The full text of Senator Patterson's statement is at <http://www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2003/kp/kp03156.htm>

+++++

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>

+++++

### CONTROVERSY CONTINUES OVER NATIONAL HEALTH CARE SUMMIT

Health Minister, Senator Kay Patterson, has continued her attack on the National Health Care Summit to be held at the Old Parliament House in Canberra on August 17-19. Senator Patterson has claimed that the Summit “has been hijacked by NSW with the end result being a grab by the bigger States for a greater share of the health budget”.

Senator Patterson re-iterated her view that the key proposal of the summit – the Australian Health Care Reform Commission – is not in the best interests of Australians. "This costly proposal will saddle us with an unnecessary new layer of administration and create significant new costs for all Governments. This money would be better spent by putting it into health services," Senator Patterson said.

Senator Patterson’s statement is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2003/kp/kp03160.htm>

Meanwhile, Summit organisers have released the final program for the Summit, including sessions devoted to:

- \* What principles should underpin our Australian health care system?
- \* Funding our Health System: Improving the cost effectiveness of Australia's health care system
- \* Key Challenges for the Australian health care system?
- \* The way forward: specific policies to address the workforce crisis
- \* The Private Health Insurance Rebate
- \* Restructuring the bureaucracy of health care.

Information on the Summit is available at <http://www.healthsummit.org.au/>

+++++

### AMA PROPOSES SCHOLARSHIPS TO ATTRACT YOUNG DOCTORS TO COUNTRY AUSTRALIA

AMA President, Dr Bill Glasson, has written to the Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, proposing a scholarship scheme as a better way to attract doctors to country and outer urban Australia.

Dr Glasson said the scholarship scheme idea was warmly welcomed in a recent AMA survey of 700 medical students. The same students totally rejected the Government’s bonding scheme saying they would not have studied medicine if the bond was the only option they had.

“The AMA scholarship proposal would cost around just \$4 million a year for each group of 234 scholarship students,” Dr Glasson said. “Students would receive financial assistance to undertake their

studies in return for a commitment to work in areas of medical workforce shortage upon graduation – an approach that is consistent with past scholarship programs for teachers and other professionals.

“Compared to our scholarship proposal, the Government’s bonding scheme fails to respond to the needs of patients and areas of health need. Bonded medical places will not succeed in attracting doctors to rural, regional and remote Australia and keeping them there for the long-term because it is a system totally devoid of incentives,” Dr Glasson said.

The full text of the AMA statement is available at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-5QE53H>

+++++

### NATIONAL ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN TO INFORM INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS ABOUT THE PBS

The Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Kay Patterson has launched a national advertising campaign to inform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians about the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). The campaign features Australian Tennis legend Evonne Goolagong-Cawley.

Senator Patterson said the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander campaign would complement the non-Indigenous campaign by targeting Indigenous media and using specifically tailored Indigenous messages and imagery.

"The campaign highlights how important it is to follow your doctor and chemist’s instructions on how to take the medicine prescribed for you," Senator Patterson said.

Mrs Goolagong-Cawley said many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could not afford to access medication they need without the subsidies provided by the PBS. "It is important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are aware of the PBS and how it improves our lives because it is an important factor in improving the health of our community," she said.

The full text of Senator Patterson’s statement is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2003/kp/kp03161.htm>. People with questions about the PBS can call the PBS information telephone line on 1800 020 613 (freecall) or visit <http://www.health.gov.au/pbs>

+++++

### 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 2,238 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”.