

NRHA eforum 13 April 2007

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum 13 April 2007

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[NRHA JOINS THE WORK TO CLOSE THE GAP AND TO DEMAND INDIGENOUS HEALTH EQUALITY](#)

Cathy Freeman, Tom Calma, Henry Councillor, Ian Thorpe, Gary Highland and Jeff McMullen were the speakers in Sydney today at the launch of Australia's largest ever campaign to improve Indigenous health. The campaign brings together the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), Oxfam, Olympic greats, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) and over 35 other organisations that signed the Open Letter to parliamentarians and the Australian public late last year. The Letter called for equal health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within twenty-five years and today's launch is the next step.

The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/close%20the%20gap%204%20april.pdf> and is reprinted below.

The Federal Opposition Labor has called on all levels of government to end the blame game on Indigenous health, saying that we must make a bipartisan national commitment to bring Indigenous health up to the standards other Australians enjoy. The full text of the statements by health spokesperson Nicola Roxon is at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0407/msheaia020.php> and <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0407/msheaia040.php>

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[STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS TO COLLABORATE CLOSELY ON IMPROVED PATIENTS' TRAVEL SCHEMES](#)

The NRHA has warmly welcomed the decision of the Senate, on the motion of Senator Judith Adams, to refer an inquiry into the operation and effectiveness of Patient Assisted Travel Schemes to the Senate Community Affairs Committee. The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/pats%20national%20inquiry%201%20april.pdf> and is reprinted below.

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WOUND MANAGEMENT: A HOLISTIC APPROACH AND PRACTICAL SKILLS UPDATE

LIVE satellite TV broadcast Tuesday 8th May 2007 (repeated Friday 11th May 12:30pm EST). Produced by the Rural Health Education Foundation Funded by Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing

This program provides GPs, nurses, pharmacists, podiatrists, Indigenous Health Workers and other health professionals with the latest wound management skills appropriate for a setting with limited resources. It features practical tips and skills demonstrations. It also discusses the need to take into account various factors about the patient, the patient's family and living conditions. Program information can be found by clicking <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/705/705.html>

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DIAGNOSIS AND MANAGEMENT OF ACUTE RHEUMATIC FEVER (ARF) AND RHEUMATIC HEART DISEASE (RHD)

The National Heart Foundation of Australia (NHFA) and the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand (CSANZ) have released Australia's first national evidence-based review for the diagnosis and management of Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) and Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD). RHD remains a significant cause of cardiac disability and death amongst Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with incidence rates among the highest in the world. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are up to eight times more likely than non-Indigenous Australians to be hospitalised for ARF and RHD and are nearly 20 times more likely to die from these conditions.

The NHFA and CSANZ have jointly developed this evidence-based review to assist policy makers and health professionals, including medical, nursing, allied health and Aboriginal Health Workers address the diagnosis and management needs of ARF and RHD in Australia. A series of quick reference guides for health professionals and the full evidence-based review is available for downloading from the National Heart Foundation website at <http://www.heartfoundation.com.au/index.cfm?page=43>. Printed copies can also be ordered through Heartline on 1300 36 27 87 (local call cost) or email heartline@heartfoundation.com.au

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9TH NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE, 7-10 MARCH 2007, ALBURY NSW

The National Rural Health Alliance has published on its website (<http://9thnrhc.ruralhealth.org.au/registration/?IntCatId=2>) the full set of 250 recommendations from delegates at the 9th National Rural Health Conference held in Albury last month.

Media Statements from the Conference are as follows:

- * [From the 9th Conference: plans for rural and remote health](#) - http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/9th%20conf_plans%20for%20rr%20health%2015%20march.pdf
- * [9th Conference: the rural health sector recommit to action](#) - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/conference%20media%20with%20communique%20and%20recs%2015%20march.pdf>
- * [Good health - not just about giving up smoking and taking up exercise](#) - http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/good%20health%20_%20smoking%20and%20exercise.pdf
- * [Top Performers in Rural Health Care Honoured](#) - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/top%20rural%20health%20performers%20%20honoured.pdf>
- * [Grumpy old men perform secret men's business - and more - in Men's Sheds](#) - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/grumpy%20old%20men.pdf>
- * [Country Australians deserve an equal share in Australia's wealth](#) - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/8%20march%20country%20australians%20deserve%20equal%20share.pdf>
- * [Health Reform, Health Professionals and Service Planning](#) - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/070307%20health%20reform%20health%20professionals%20day%202%20%207%20march%20071.pdf>
- * [Rural Health - It's All Happening in Albury at opening of 9th National Rural Health Conference](#) - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/070307%20media%20notification%207%20%20march%20nrh%20conference.pdf>

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Manuscript submissions to The Australian Journal of Rural Health can now be made online through Manuscript Central. Easy and fast submission process; track the progress of your article at any time; safe and secure site. Simply log on to <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ajrh> to submit your manuscript today and share the wealth of your knowledge. Full author instructions and guidelines can be found at the AJRH homepage - <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/ajr>

The February 2007 issue of the journal is available online now at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/toc/ajr>. Articles include:

- * Consideration of the determinants of women's mental health in remote Australian mining towns
- * Double-bundle reconstruction of the anterior cruciate ligament
- * Medical students and rural general practitioners: Congruent views on the reality of recruitment into rural medicine
- * Use of clinical placements as a means of recruiting health care students to underserved areas in Southeastern Ontario: Part 1 - Student perspectives
- * Use of clinical placements as a means of recruiting health care professionals to underserved areas in Southeastern Ontario: Part 2 - Community perspectives
- * 'Shared Care - Shared Dream': Model of shared care in rural Australia between mental health services and general practitioners
- * Medical clinic facilities and doctor characteristics: What older rural men value
- * Health professional partnerships and their impact on Aboriginal health: An occupational therapist's

and Aboriginal health worker's perspective

- * Cultural and communication awareness for general practice registrars who are international medical graduates: A project of CoastCityCountry Training
- * Informing rural and remote students about careers in health: The effect of Health Careers
- * Short Reports
- * Grazing

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INDIGENOUS SMOKING RATE THREE TIMES AVERAGE

Around half (52%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were smokers, compared with just over 17% for the general population, according to a recent report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The report, *Statistics on drug use in Australia 2006*, summarises the major statistical collections on drug-use in Australia. It contains information on the use of tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs and pharmaceuticals and examines the effects of drugs on health and crime. It shows that the decline in smoking rates over the past three decades means Australia now has one of the lowest smoking rates among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, with Australia ranked fourth lowest behind the United States, Sweden and Canada.

The report showed that while smoking rates have declined, drinking patterns have remained relatively unchanged over the last fifteen years and the use of various illicit drugs have either declined or remained stable.

In 2004, close to 40% of Australians aged 14 and over had used an illicit drug in their lifetime, with marijuana the most commonly used illicit drug. Almost 10% reported using methamphetamine at least once, and 3% had used it in the past 12 months.

The AIHW statement is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2007/mr20070412.cfm> and the full report at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10393>

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Join friends of the Alliance in 2007. By joining friends you will receive the updated CD 'Rural and Remote Health Papers 1991-2007', a 2007 friends certificate, regular issues of PARTYline newsletter, and be eligible for a discounted registration at the 9th National Rural Health Conference to be held in Albury next month. Membership of friends would also give you the opportunity to be involved more closely with the Alliance's information dissemination and policy work. You will become part of a group of people who contribute to and support the work of the National Rural Health Alliance.

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RURAL DOCTORS CELEBRATE MEDICARE CHANGES TO INCLUDE RURAL MEDICAL COLLEGE STANDARDS

Rural doctors across the nation are celebrating today after the introduction of a much anticipated Government policy to allow graduates of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) to be fully recognised for their high quality care to patients. The full text of the ACRRM statement is at <http://www.acrrm.org.au/main.asp?NodeID=278>

The AMA has welcomed the decision - the full text of the AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-7259FQ>

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PARTYline Newsletter

The Alliance's newsletter, PARTYline, is a means of exchanging information between those with an interest in rural health, including friends of the Alliance, health consumers, health professionals, students and policy makers. Contributors report on their personal rural experiences, on programs with which they have been involved, provide information on new initiatives and resources, and it is a vehicle for opinions on rural health issues and events.

PARTYline has a print circulation around Australia of 13,000 and is also available on-line below. PARTYline readily accepts contributions from readers - articles (up to 500 words) and photographs can be sent to partyline@ruralhealth.org.au

Latest Issue: Number 29, March 2007

In This Issue

- * the urgency of dental workforce shortages
- * evaluation of the Rural Health Strategy
- * the new viability supplement for rural aged care
- * the new Rural Allied Health Undergraduate Scholarships, including interviews with two of the first round recipients
- * day-to-day living amid the Victorian bushfires
- * the award winning Naiyu 'Swim for Life' project
- * rural and remote workforce promotion
- * closure of Bourke pre-school
- * the Australian Health Care Reform Alliance Summit in July
- * a lift-out describing aspects of the NRHA's Budget Submission
- * program information for the 9th National Rural Health Conference in Albury (7-10 March), and
- * reader's photos on the theme "Country kids having fun".

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IEMMA TAKES HAMMER TO RURAL MEDICINE: AMA

Chair of the AMA Rural Reference Group (AMARRG), Dr David Rivett, said has accused NSW Premier, Morris Iemma, of "taking a hammer to rural medicine" for not matching Commonwealth funding to help build a new medical school at the University of New England (UNE). The full text of the AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-6ZW7M4>

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LIFELINE'S JUST ASK - 1 300 13 11 14

Your Rural Mental Health Information Service

Lifeline's Just ask is a rural mental health information service. Information provided includes: referral to services and web sites, printed material and a range of self help resources. The self-help resources focus on practical steps to help promote mental health in a range of areas. For information and copies of resources call or visit <http://www.justask.org.au> and further information is available at national@lifeline.org.au and <http://www.lifeline.org.au>

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From: MJA Automatic notification system [mailto:emjabounce@ampco.com.au]
Subject: eMJA update - 2 April 2007

The 2 April 2007 issue of the Medical Journal of Australia is now online at <http://www.mja.com.au/>

Editorials

- * Challenges and change in medical training: the Australian Curriculum Framework for Junior Doctors
- * Ice: cool drug or real problem?

Research

- * Amphetamine-related presentations to an inner-city tertiary emergency department: a prospective evaluation
- * Hospital separations for cannabis- and methamphetamine-related psychotic episodes in Australia
- * General practice placements for pre-registration junior doctors: adding value to intern education and training
- * Obesity and early complications after cardiac surgery

Obituary

- * Dr Alexander Gonski

Health Care

- * Australian general practice and pandemic influenza: models of clinical practice in an established pandemic

Medicine and the Law

- * Late-term abortion: what can be learned from Royal Women's Hospital v Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria?

Book Review

- * Poetry and the art of medicine

Viewpoint

- * Maternal mortality and psychiatric morbidity in the perinatal period: challenges and opportunities for prevention in the Australian setting

Snapshot

- * Sézary syndrome and otitis externa

Trials on Trial

- * Putting results of a clinical trial into perspective

Lessons from Practice

- * Accidental paracetamol poisoning

Diagnostic Dilemmas

- * What may underlie recurrent purpura fulminans?

Letters

Supplement

- * The 11th National Prevocational Medical Education Forum
- * Preparing interns for practice in the 21st century
- * Changing postgraduate medical education: a commentary from the United Kingdom
- * Australian Curriculum Framework for Junior Doctors
- * Prevocational medical education at the coalface: report from the 2006 national junior medical officer and director of clinical training/registrars forums

- * Equipping our front-line managers: a national program for the professional development of registrars
- * An urgent challenge: new training opportunities for junior medical officers
- * Community and general practice terms for prevocational junior medical officers: experience and development in South Australia and Western Australia
- * Principles-based accreditation: the way forward?
- * The new curriculum framework and assessment practices: current challenges for postgraduate years 1 and 2
- * What do junior doctors want in start-of-term orientation?

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RURAL HEALTH ON THE WEB
(From Google Alert, <http://www.googlealert.com>)

[SD Office of Rural Health](#)

Use this page to find out about recruitment of health professionals, assistance to facilities such as hospitals and rural health clinics, helping interested ...
<http://www.state.sd.us/DOH/rural/index.htm>

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[INTEGRATED EYE HEALTH PROJECT FOR CENTRAL AUSTRALIA](#)

The Australian Government will spend \$184,000 over the next 12 months to develop an improved model to deliver eye care for people in Central Australia. The full text of the statement by Health Minister Tony Abbott is at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr07-ta-abb028.htm>

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NEW ARTICLES IN RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH

'Making a difference: education and training retains and supports rural and remote doctors in Queensland'
94% of rural doctors recognise that the provision of and access to continuing medical education in rural areas is a vital factor in the retention of rural doctors and helps with feelings of professional isolation. Dr Colin White and colleagues present new research in their paper.
<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=700>

'Caring for Australia's most remote communities: obstetric services in the Indian Ocean Territories'
The Indian Ocean Territories of Australia do not immediately come to mind as important examples of the impact of the lack of workforce and declining services for remote Australians. This novel paper looks at the impact the lack of obstetric services has had on the Christmas and Coco Islands over the last decade. In doing so, Roach et al. provide an article that may be relevant to many other remote communities on mainland Australia.
<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=699>

'What does it take? The influence of rural upbringing and sense of rural background on medical students' intention to work in a rural environment'
In this article Somers et al. try to quantify what makes first year medical students "rural origin" and thus more likely in their future medical careers to work in rural areas. The data presented in this article are even more important to ensure that the outcome of the Australian Government's decision to invest by doubling the number medical student places leads to rural communities having the medical

workforce they need in the future.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=706>

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INDIGENOUS CHILD HEALTH CHECK ROADSHOW IN ALICE SPRINGS

A new roadshow to promote the Australian Government's Child Health Check to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities was launched in Alice Springs on 4 April. The full text of the statement by Health Minister Tony Abbott is at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr07-ta-abb029.htm>

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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.bushcrisisline.org.au>

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RURAL HEALTH ON THE ABC

(From ABC Rural Newsletter, <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/default.htm> and Health Updates, <http://www.abc.net.au/health/maillinglist.htm>)

Abbott acknowledges Indigenous health challenge
Federal Health Minister Tony Abbott has acknowledged more needs to be done in the area of Indigenous health. A report released by the Menzies Research School shows life expectancy for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory has increased by 14 years for women and eight years for men since the 1960s. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200704/s1887403.htm>

AUSTRALIA SLAMMED FOR STATE OF INDIGENOUS HEALTH (AM: 02/04/2007)

<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2007/s1887111.htm>
<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2007/s1887941.htm>
<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2007/s1887940.htm>
<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2007/s1887431.htm>

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From: Cross, Michelle <MCROSS@pc.gov.au>
Subject: Productivity Commission ROGS 2007 Indigenous Compendium

The Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision's publication Report on Government Services 2007 : Indigenous Compendium is available from the Productivity Commission's website.

The publication gathers together data drawn entirely from the previously released 'Report on Government Services 2007'. This report is available on the website only <http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/rogs/compendium2007/index.html>

Michelle Cross
Media and Publications
Productivity Commission

LB2, 35 Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003
Ph: 03 9653 2244
Fax: 03 9653 2303
email: mcross@pc.gov.au

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From: Relate Human Services <relate@bigpond.net.au>
Subject: ACCFPP Conference 2007

You are invited to attend the second national conference for the Australian College for Child and Family Protection Practitioners in Melbourne - 19 to 21 May 2007 at the Victoria Hotel, Little Collins Street.

The conference theme "Borders and Bridges" reflects the broad contexts of Australian child and family practice. Diverse state data collection systems and differences in risk and safety assessment supply the foundation of a lack of systematic planning. Workforce roles are similar but skills and qualifications are not truly comparable. Different levels of non-government and government services across the three tiers of government add to the complexity. The ACCFPP aims to build bridges between agencies and professions to minimise the impacts of poverty and mental illness on Australian families and children.

The Conference secretariat is based at the Mackay Offices of Relate Human Services, PO Box 1401, Mackay 4740, Phone 07-49575400 Fax 07-49575488 email: accfpp@bigpond.net.au
<http://www.relatehumanservices.com.au>

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From: Alan Staines <alanstaines@optusnet.com.au>
Subject: Inaugural Australian Postvention Conference, USNW - Sydney, Thursday 24th-26th May

The Inaugural Australian Postvention Conference is being held at the USNW - Sydney, Thursday 24th-26th May. Details of the Conference program with registration and a call for abstracts are listed on our website at <http://www.hotelnetwork.com.au/conferences/conferences#postventionconference>. An email can be sent to postvention@hotelnetwork.com.au

Invited presenters who are all experts in the field include Dr Frank Campbell (USA), Dr Adrian Hill (Canada), Prof Annette Beautrais (New Zealand), Dr Karl Andriessen (Belgium) and Michelle Linn-Gust (USA). Australian presenters include Dr Sheila Clark, Dr Judith Murray, Chief Inspector Gary Raymond and Professor Peter Bycroft.

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From: Kelli Dopson <kdopson@healthworkforce.com.au>
Subject: 18th Annual RDAQ Conference: Shifting Sands, Changing Tides: the next generation

18th Annual RDAQ Conference: Shifting Sands, Changing Tides: the next generation
7-10 June 2007, Rydges Capricorn Resort, Yeppoon

Join us on the Capricorn Coast for the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland Conference to develop your skills and have your say on the future of rural health. Topics include Workforce solutions, Maternity services, Medico-political forum, Indigenous women's health, Mental health, Barriers facing IMGs, Cardiology, Toxicology, Musculoskeletal medicine, Acute behavioural emergencies, and much much more.

REGISTER NOW for discounted rates!
For program and registration details visit <http://www.rdaq.com.au/conference> or call 07 3105 7800

Kelli Dopson
Event Manager | RDAQ Conference 2007
Tel: 07 3105 7800 | Fax: 07 3105 7801
kdopson@healthworkforce.com.au
<http://www.rdaq.com.au>
GPO Box 2523, Brisbane, Qld 4001

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From: Nicky Reavell <nicky@pallcare.org.au>
Subject: 9th Australian Palliative Care Conference

Partners Across the Lifespan

Palliative Care Victoria in conjunction with Palliative Care Australia is hosting the 9th Australian Palliative Care Conference. It will take place at the Melbourne Convention Centre, Victoria Australia from Tuesday 28 to Friday 31 August 2007.

The conference website is <http://www.iceaustralia.com/apcc2007>

Palliative Care Australia
PO Box 24
Deakin West ACT 2600
Ph: +61 2 6232 4433
Fax: +61 2 6232 4434
<http://www.pallcare.org.au>

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From: Michael Blair <blamel@ozemail.com.au>
Subject: Australian College of Mental Health Nurses 33rd Annual International Conference

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses is to hold its 33rd Annual Conference in Cairns in 2007.

The theme for the conference, "Mental Health Nurses: Making Waves", not only illustrates the tropical location of the 2007 conference, it is also intended to reflect the idea that historically derived factors influencing development in Mental Health Nursing, reach out and influence others with related concerns.

Waves convey ideas of movement and change. History evolves as events change. Its influence on the future changes with developments that are based on the lessons learnt and experienced. As a wave rolls through, its predecessor is completely changed and yet waves are comprised of those that have come before. Our theme challenges presenters to address related topics. We know that mental health issues will remain important to communities and individuals in the years and decades to come. Mental health nursing is challenged to make waves and to be a key player in this expanding sphere.

The ACMHN Inc., through its national Conferences, local seminars, educational functions, scholarships and awards, has enjoyed a long and productive relationship with key sponsors. We hope that existing sponsors will take this opportunity to continue a mutually rewarding relationship, and that new groups will be inspired to join us.

The Web site URL for persons to express an interest in attending or sponsoring the conference is <http://www.astmanagement.com.au/anzcmhc7/>

All those persons that express an interest in attending via the web site will go into the draw for a free registration to the conference.

The conference will be held at the International Hotel in Cairns from the 8th to the 12th of October 2007.

For further information contact:
Mick Blair
Co-convenor
ACMHN Inc. 33rd International Conference 2007

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From: Scott Wagner <scott.wagner@ncahs.health.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: NSW Rural Allied Health Conference 2007, Dubbo, October 18-19

Details are at <http://www.nswrahc.com>. The call for abstracts is now open. Feel free to contact me to discuss.

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From: Mcalpin, Susan <SMcalpin@csu.edu.au>
Subject: International Rural Network World Rural Forum

The International Rural Network World Rural Forum, India, Late Jan-Early Feb 2008: Innovation for Sustainable Local Development.

The main focus of the Forum will be on innovation in education, health, resource management, governance, and sustainable development to improve the quality of life of rural people and reduce rural poverty and social exclusion.

The forum will be based in the beautiful rural town of Udaipur, Rajasthan, which is also the home of IRN Board Member Lakshmi Murthy.

The Forum will involve five days, with at least one day (or equivalent) in local field visits to see the relevant work of NGOs etc. There are likely to be optional additional visits after the Forum either to the famous Institute of Rural Management in Anand, Gujarat and/or to the equally famous Birla Institute of Technology in Pilani, Rajasthan.

The date of the conference will be around the end of January or beginning of February 2008. If you are interested, please check out our website at <http://www.International-Rural-Network.org> and email Nicola.swan@btinternet.com to register your interest in keeping informed as soon as possible.

IRN Aims

Poverty and disadvantage is a common feature of rural areas and people across the world. This is explicitly recognised in the UN Millennium Development Goals. By providing a global forum for academics, practitioners, NGOs and policy makers concerned with sustainable rural development,

education and health, the IRN aims to stimulate exchange of knowledge, experience and ideas, and create regional and global support networks. In this way it helps to develop a storehouse of knowledge and expertise on rural concerns, and to raise the profile and policy impacts of rural people, their NGOs and other organisations aiming for local empowerment, engagement, and supporting activities including policies.

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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 (do not "reply" to this email - send contributions to grovesc@winshop.com.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

Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

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Media Release - 4 April 2007

NRHA joins the work to *Close the Gap* and to demand Indigenous health equality

Cathy Freeman, Tom Calma, Henry Councillor, Ian Thorpe, Gary Highland and Jeff McMullen were the speakers in Sydney today at the launch of Australia's largest ever campaign to improve Indigenous health. The campaign brings together the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), Oxfam, Olympic greats, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) and over 35 other organisations that signed the Open Letter to parliamentarians and the Australian public late last year. The Letter called for equal health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within twenty-five years and today's launch is the next step.

The NRHA, led by two of its Member Bodies, NACCHO and the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA), was a signatory to that Open Letter. Delegates at the recent National Rural Health Conference charged the NRHA to work with community and expert involvement to refine the rural and remote components of an action plan for equal health for Indigenous people within a generation. The plan will require new targeted funding from a range of governmental, private sector and community agencies.

Commissioner Tom Calma emphasised the need for individuals and communities to be responsible for their own actions but called on governments to guarantee the opportunities for such actions to succeed. "Equal health within twenty-five years is a feasible target," Mr Calma said. "To reach it we need bipartisan support, targets and timelines, and the allocation of resources."

Jeff McMullen spoke of the challenge as a national emergency that outranks global warming and terrorism. Chronic illnesses are threatening the future wellbeing of our Aboriginal peoples. "We have the science; this is about making it personal," he said.

All of us, as individuals, should do whatever we can to help *Close the Gap*.

Ian Thorpe agreed. "If every Australian knew what the situation is, we would do what needs to be done to fix it," he said.

People wanting to support this new campaign can add their hand to ANTaR's virtual Sea of Hands and send a message: go to www.antar.org.au

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Media Release 1 April 2007

State and Federal Governments to collaborate closely on improved patients' travel schemes

The NRHA has warmly welcomed the decision of the Senate, on the motion of Senator Judith Adams, to refer an inquiry into the operation and effectiveness of Patient Assisted Travel Schemes to the Senate Community Affairs Committee.

"This is the sort of national leadership the NRHA has been hoping for on this matter," according to John Wakerman, Chairperson of the Alliance. "We are confident that the States and the Northern Territory will support the findings of an inquiry into an issue of such importance to equity for health consumers in rural and remote areas," he said.

One of the key recommendations endorsed by the participants at the 9th National Rural Health Conference related directly to this matter. Twelve hundred delegates attended and it was agreed that:

"The Commonwealth Government should exercise leadership, including through a national inquiry, to develop more uniform and better funded patients' assisted travel schemes (PATS) in all jurisdictions. A rigorous, fully funded system designed to achieve cross-border equity and improved patient outcomes should be written into the Australian Health Care Agreements for endorsement of all jurisdictions."

John Wakerman paid tribute to the work of Senator Judith Adams in relation to patients' accommodation and travel. "Senator Adams has worked tirelessly to move this issue forward since she entered Parliament, and she has proved again to be a great friend of the rural and remote health sector," Dr Wakerman said.

The Alliance has published a paper on patients' accommodation and travel schemes, and their diversity and resourcing has been an issue of major concern for the organisation for many years. It will make a submission to the Inquiry and looks forward to collaborative work between governments on patients' travel and accommodation to improve access for people in country areas to essential specialist services.

The Alliance would like the next round of Australian Health Care Agreements to be a platform on which governments can strengthen their collaborative efforts to improve health in rural and remote areas - including through patients' travel.

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