

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum 16 November 2007

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The Alliance launched its Key Priorities and Election Charter in Parliament House on 20 September 2007. These documents, together with other election related material, can be found on the 'Election Section' of the Alliance website at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/election/?IntCatId=24>.

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COALITION HEALTH PLAN CONTINUES TO DISAPPOINT RURAL VOTERS

The Coalition's Plan for Better Public Hospitals and Health Care was announced on Thursday evening with no fanfare, perhaps because it is little more than a compilation of pre-election announcements. It does however indicate an encouraging change in rhetoric relating to collaboration with the States, and useful proposals for more detailed and disaggregated reporting on the performance of individual hospitals. The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/election/coalition%20plan%2017%20november.pdf> and is reprinted below.

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RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH - IT'S TIME FOR LEADERSHIP

With two weeks to go before the federal election, both major parties need to show real leadership on rural and remote health, according to Professor John Wakerman, Chair of the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA). The full text of the statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/election/scorecard%20release%208%20november.pdf> and is reprinted below.

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NT HEALTH COMMITMENTS MUST GO FURTHER

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has acknowledged the commitment of the major political parties to improving health services in the Northern Territory and Northern Australia. The full text of the Alliance statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/election/remote%20and%20infrastructure%207%20November.pdf> and is reprinted below.

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DEMOCRATS SOLID ON RURAL HEALTH - BUT WILL THE MAJOR PARTIES' MAJOR PROPOSALS HELP

As a result of their rural health policy launch, the Democrats are now scoring 15 out of 20 on the Alliance's election scorecard. The extra points result from the Democrats' commitments on a plan for the rural and remote health sector, new primary health care and mental health care centres, and HECS reimbursement schemes and other programs promoting access for students from rural areas to medical and allied health courses. The full text of the Alliance statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/election/democrats%20and%20super%20clinics.pdf> and is reprinted below.

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9th NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE - PROCEEDINGS OUT NOW!

7 - 10 March 2007, Albury, New South Wales

Those unable to attend the 9th National Rural Health Conference in Albury (7-10 March 2007) should take heart. The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has comprehensively updated its website by adding post-Conference information to keep you informed about the state of health in Australia's rural and remote areas.

For instance a Conference Communique highlights the two burning issues that remain even after 17 years of fruitful discussion - the lower rate of Indigenous life expectancy and the insufficient focus within national research programs on rural and remote health and wellbeing.

The NRHA invites you to download the Communique at a keystroke by visiting

<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/conferences/?IntCatId=9> and clicking on the Visit the Conference hotlink.

The revised website also contains a downloadable copy of the 18 priority recommendations covering matters such as Indigenous health, arts-in-health, the health workforce and research to help rural communities cope with the health and social effects of the drought.

A full set of 250 Conference recommendations is also available. They provide a snapshot of current thinking on rural and remote health issues identified by delegates in March 2007 under the theme Standing up for Rural Health: Learning from the past - Action for the future.

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RAMUS 2008 APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

The 2008 round for RAMUS applications is now open. Apply Online Now at <https://www.nrha.net.au/ei/rs.esp?id=51&scriptid=ramlogin>

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RDAA STATEMENTS

[Farmers, consumers, councils and doctors -- joint call for urgent action on rural health](#)

4 November 2007

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Farmers,%20consumers,%20councils%20and%20doctors%20--%20joint%20call%20for%20urgent%20action%20on%20rural%20health%20--%20November%202007.pdf

[A big interest rise needed on rural health](#)

7 November 2007

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/A%20big%20interest%20rise%20needed%20on%20rural%20health%20--%20October%202007.pdf

[Rural women forced to labour in front of ED patients and visitors: rural doctors urge federal action](#)

12 November 2007

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Coonabarabran%20maternity%20unit%20--%20November%202007.pdf

[Rural voters deserve 'Me Too' politics too](#)

14 November 2007

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Rural%20voters%20deserve%20'me%20too'%20politics%20too%20--%20November%202007.pdf

[Health needs of 7.5 million Australians ignored twice in one week](#)

14 November 2007

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Health%20needs%20of%207.5%20million%20Australians%20ignored%20twice%20in%20one%20week.pdf

[Rural Doctors welcome ALP Primary Care Strategy](#)

17 November 2007

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAA%20RELEASE%2017_11_07.pdf

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RURAL EDUCATION FORUM AUSTRALIA ELECTION CHARTER 2007

Shining a Spotlight on Education in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia

People living in rural Australia are entitled to, and urgently need, better access to quality education and training so they can achieve their potential and contribute towards the social, economic, political and cultural life of our nation. The prolonged drought, which is impacting on much of rural Australia, accentuates the fundamental importance of governments ensuring that children, students, families and communities, can access essential education and training entitlements.

See the full Election Charter at

<http://twmadmin.telstra.com/data/portal/00004397/content/41826001190856805794.pdf>

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From: Dr Raymond Mullins

Subject: **Australia's \$7 Billion Allergy Burden and Long Wait for Help**

An Access Economics Report on Allergic Disease in Australia was launched at the annual scientific meeting of the Australasian Society for Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA - <http://www.allergy.org.au>) meeting in Fremantle, Western Australia on Tuesday 13 November 2007. The report, commissioned by ASCIA and performed by Access Economics (<http://www.accesseconomics.com.au>) describes the economic cost of allergic disease, changing epidemiology and examines workforce issues related to dealing with recent increase in some disorders.

The cost of allergies to the Australian economy is more than \$7 billion per year, and most Australians face a wait of up to 18 weeks to see a specialist. The report, 'Economic Impact of Allergies', outlines how the financial cost of allergies in 2007 was \$7.8 billion, with lost productivity and health system expenditure the major contributing factors. The estimated cost to Australians who suffer from allergy due to reduced quality of life (the "burden of disease") is estimated at \$21.5 billion, approximately double the estimated figures for arthritis (\$11.7 billion) and hearing loss (\$11.7 billion).

The full text of the statement is at <http://www.allergy.org.au/content/view/324/76/>

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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, and regular issues of PARTYline newsletter. 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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DEATHS IN AUSTRALIA, 2006

(ABS Cat 3302.0)

There were 133,700 deaths registered in Australia in 2006, approximately 3,000 (2.3%) more than the number registered in 2005 (130,700). The standardised death rate in 2006 (6.0 deaths per 1,000 standard population) was the lowest on record. Over the past 20 years life expectancy has improved by 5.8 years for males and 4.3 years for females. A boy born in 2004-2006 can expect to live 78.7 years while a girl can expect to live 83.5 years.

Male life expectancy was lowest in Kimberley SD in Western Australia (68.2 years), followed by Northern Territory Balance SD (68.3 years) and North West SD in Queensland (70.9 years). Female life expectancy was also lowest in Kimberley SD in Western Australia (72.9 years), Northern Territory Balance SD (74.3 years) and North West SD in Queensland (76.9 years).

There were 2,300 deaths registered in Australia in 2006 where the deceased person was identified as being of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both origins (Indigenous). Experimental Indigenous life expectancy at birth for 1996-2001 is estimated to be 59.4 years for males and 64.8 years for females.

Details at

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/C67A858BA00CB846CA2568A9001393C6?OpenDocument>

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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

Partyline No 31 is now available. It contains articles from the Minister for Health and Ageing and Shadow Minister for Health, as well other material related to the election. It includes success stories in health service delivery in rural areas, reports on the Croc Fest and Garma Festival, community health education programs and other resources and news. Included with Partyline is a hardcopy of the Alliance's Key Priorities document as well as our 2008 calendar.

The electronic version of Partyline is also available in the 'Publications' section of our website at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/publications/?IntContId=57&IntCatId=6>

If you don't receive Partyline but would like to, send your contact details to nrha@ruralhealth.org.au and let us know if you'd prefer a hard copy in the mail or email notification of its availability on the webpage.

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CONTINENCE AND MEN'S HEALTH

Rural Health Education Foundation national satellite network Date: Tuesday 27th November 2007 Repeated: Friday 30th November

Funding under the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing's National Continence Management Strategy

This program aims to help health workers increase their understanding of the issues relating to continence for men and the need to be aware of incontinence issues that relate to a range of specific conditions and health problems. The program provides strategies for engagement, early intervention, treatment and incontinence management. It focuses specifically on dealing with problems related to continence and men's health in rural and remote areas. It also explores strategies to overcome stigma and engage male patients and clients in their own treatment.

Information on the program can be found by visiting <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/718a/718a.html>

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LIFELINE INFORMATION SERVICE - 1300 13 11 14

Your Rural Mental Health Information Service

Lifeline's Information Service 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.lifeline.org.au/infoservice> and further information is available at infoservice@lifeline.org.au and <http://www.lifeline.org.au>

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INDIGENOUS HEALTH NEEDS SIGNIFICANT NATIONAL SOLUTIONS

AMA President, Dr Rosanna Capolingua, has said that the health of Indigenous Australians has been forgotten in this election campaign. Dr Capolingua said that the health challenges facing Indigenous Australians require national solutions with significant funding commitments. "Our national goal must be to close the 17-year gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders and the rest of the Australian population," Dr Capolingua said. The full text of the AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-78Y5VE>

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AMA HAS THE INITIATIVE TO ADDRESS RURAL HEALTH CRISIS

AMA President, Dr Rosanna Capolingua, has urged the major parties to copy the AMA's rural health policies to give country Australians some hope that the next Federal Government will resolve the widespread crisis confronting rural health services. Dr Capolingua said there has been relative silence on rural health this election campaign while rural and regional communities watch the range and quality of their health services further erode. The full text of the AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-78R26Y>

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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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MORE FOCUS ON INDIGENOUS ORAL HEALTH

The Australian Dental Association (ADA) calls on the Liberal and Labor parties to place a greater focus on the oral health of Australia's indigenous population during this election campaign. Initiatives that the ADA has been calling for include: funding for oral health training for Aboriginal health workers, vocational training assistance for Aboriginal dentists, additional higher education places to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in oral health, steps to improve diet, improved access to dental care, and increased access to fluoridated water supplies. The full text of the ADA statement is at <http://www.ada.org.au/newsroom/article,documentid,104326.aspx>

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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>)

Major parties' health policies lacking: report

A pre-election review has found that both major political party's health policies are "fractured" and that neither side has paid enough attention to Indigenous health. The report, published in the Medical Journal of Australia, says neither party has a cohesive strategy to deal with major challenges such as the ageing population and the shrinking medical workforce. Report author Professor Stephen Leeder says so far the approach has been piecemeal. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/11/04/2081164.htm>

Future of Rural Health on Australia Talks (Radio National)

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/australiatalks/stories/2007/2082180.htm>

GOVT ADMITS RURAL DOCTORS SCHEME FALLING SHORT (PM: 06/11/2007)

<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2007/s2083470.htm>

TRACKING THE INTERVENTION (Four Corners: 05/11/2007)

In Canberra's eyes the rolling scandal of child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities demanded action, swift and certain. So the Federal Government grabbed control of 73 Territory bush communities, dispatching soldiers, police and squads of doctors and nurses. Is it working?

<http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/content/2007/s2079819.htm>

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LABOR SUPPORT FOR ALLIED HEALTH IN RURAL AREAS

A Rudd Labor Government will provide \$2.5 million over three years for the establishment of an Australian Allied Health Rural and Remote Clinical Placement Scholarship Plan. This plan will provide a much-needed boost to the allied health care workforce in rural Australia. Federal Labor's plan will provide rural clinical placement scholarships for students in allied health disciplines such as psychology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and podiatry, starting in the 2009 academic year.

The full text of the statement by health spokesperson Nicola Roxon is at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/mshea171.php>

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CURRENT ISSUE OF eMJA, 5 November 2007

(Available at <http://www.mja.com.au/>)

- Health and the federal election, 2007
- Challenges in health and health care for Australia
- Good health systems, getting better
- Taking leadership - tackling Australia's health challenges
- A mandate to strengthen the health system
- The media and prostate cancer screening
- The modern cigarette, an unregulated disaster
- Australia needs an expanded immunisation register for further improvements in vaccine delivery and program evaluation
- Australia urgently needs a federal government body dedicated to monitoring and preventing sports injuries
- "The news is [not] all good": misrepresentations and inaccuracies in Australian news media reports on prostate cancer screening
- The management of primary cutaneous melanoma in Victoria in 1996 and 2000
- Trends in hospitalisation rates for road traffic injuries in child motor vehicle passengers in New South Wales, July 1998 - June 2005
- Barrett's oesophagus and columnar metaplasia: saying what we mean
- Pituitary masses: the importance of a multidisciplinary approach
- Autoimmune hepatitis following infliximab therapy for ankylosing spondylitis
- Hypernatraemia and rhabdomyolysis
- Rising poverty is bad for our health
- The need for leadership in global health
- Medical students, medical schools and international health

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FEDERAL LABOR'S COMMITMENT TO JOBS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The Shadow Minister for Industry, Innovation, Science and Research, Senator Kim Carr, the Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, Jenny Macklin, and the Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Affairs, Warren Snowdon, released a policy paper detailing the foundations for the development of an Indigenous Economic Development Strategy by a Rudd Labor Government. A \$10 million Remote Enterprise Centre will be established in Alice Springs to provide know-how, mentoring and support that helps small to medium businesses succeed. Federal Labor also announced a range of new measures to improve education opportunities for Indigenous students. The full text is available at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/msiaind050.php>

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RURAL HEALTH ON THE WEB

(From Google Alert, <http://www.googlealert.com>)

Center for Rural Health, University of North Dakota School of ...
Housed at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences in Grand Forks, North Dakota, the Center for Rural Health connects resources ...
<http://ruralhealth.und.edu/>

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FEDERAL LABOR ANNOUNCES NATIONAL MEN'S HEALTH POLICY

Shadow Minister for Health Nicola Roxon has announced that a Rudd Labor Government would develop a National Men's Health Policy. Federal Labor acknowledges that too little attention has been given to men's health needs. Some health issues - like prostate cancer - affect only men while other health issues - such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and injuries - affect more men than women. The Men's Health Policy will also address specific groups of men who experience higher morbidity and mortality rates, including Indigenous men and men living in rural and remote communities. The full text of the statement by Nicola Roxon is at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/mshea050.php>

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UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, SCHOOL OF RURAL HEALTH, 2007 RESEARCH CONFERENCE

The University of Melbourne, School of Rural Health, invites you to participate in the 3rd Annual Shepparton Research Conference on Tuesday 27th November 2007 from 9am to 5pm.

The research conference, entitled: "Moving Forward: Rural Research & Knowledge Transfer" is intended for individuals and organisations with an interest in rural health, including general

practice, primary health care, integrated care and population health, research and evaluation.
Register online at
<http://www.ruralhealth.unimelb.edu.au/announcements/conference/index.htm>. A hardcopy of
the registration pack can be obtained by emailing the Conference Secretariat.

Pauline Venn Conference Secretariat pvenn@unimelb.edu.au Ph: 03 5823 4532

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From: Jane Howorth - ECC Information Desk
Subject: NSW Rural Mental Health Conference

This year's NSW Rural Mental Health Conference is taking place in Batemans Bay, 3 - 5
December 2007, hosted by the Greater Southern Area Health Service. Further information on
the conference website <http://www.rmhconference.com> or by contacting
info@eastcoastconferences.com.au, tel 02 6650 9800.

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"DISADVANTAGE AND DIVERSITY" - AUSTRALIA'S WELFARE 2007
CONFERENCE
Thursday 6 December, The Marque Hotel, 102 Northbourne Avenue, Canberra

"Disadvantage and Diversity", a one-day conference to be held in the nation's capital, will
provide a forum for debate and discussion on some of the issues facing Australia's Welfare.
Topics covered will include ageing and aged care, children, youth and families, welfare
service resources, and the dynamics of homelessness. if you would like to register your
interest to receive further information please contact the conference coordinator by telephone
or email - Alison Diamond, Tel (02) 6244 1287, Fax (02) 6244 1299, Email
conference2007@aihw.gov.au

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DIVERSITY IN HEALTH CONFERENCE

The Diversity in Health 2008: Strengths and Sustainable Solutions Conference (DIH 2008)
will be the major event in diversity health in Australia for 2008.

The international conference will be held at the premier conference site at the Sydney
Convention and Exhibition Centre, from 10-12 March 2008. DIH 2008 will bring national
and international leaders in the health industry together to showcase new and innovative
approaches to providing quality health care for Australia's diverse communities. The
conference will consider, review and develop strengths and sustainable solutions in the
overall approach to health and well-being of culturally and linguistically diverse
communities.

To register or to find out more about this momentous event, please go to:
<http://www.dhi.gov.au/conference>. Brochures can be downloaded off the website or you can
contact the Conference Secretariat on Tel: +61 2 9840 3800 Fax: +61 2 9840 3319, or email:
dhi@swahs.health.nsw.gov.au

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2008 National Nutrition Networks Conference - registration now open

The National Nutrition Networks '08 Conference
11 - 14 March 2008
Alice Springs Convention Centre, Northern Territory

This conference will be of interest to those working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nutrition. Mark these dates in your diary now!

Register now! Visit the 2008 National Nutrition Networks Conference website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/conferences/nnc2008/home.html>

The National Nutrition Networks Conference
PO Box 280
DEAKIN WEST ACT 2600
Phone: 02 6285 4660
Fax: 02 6285 4670
Email: conference@ruralhealth.org.au or register@ruralhealth.org.au

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The World Congress of Health Professions
Perth, March 26th to 29th, 2008.
Call for Registrations

You are invited to register for the World Congress of Health Professions, to be hosted by the Metropolitan Allied Health Council Inc and the Allied Health Alliance of WA at the Perth Convention Centre in Perth, March 26th to 29th 2008.

The title of the congress is "The Future Now : Challenges and Opportunities in Health". The congress philosophy is to open possibilities for health professionals from around the globe, inclusive of all cultures and disciplines, through the dissemination of information, the development of networks and forums, and the evolution of cultural and professional exchange.

The Congress has five themes:
Global Challenges and World Health
Innovations in Service Delivery
Workforce and Training Developments
Demands and Opportunities
The Impact of New Technology on Health Care

Who should attend: Allied Health, Diagnostic and Scientific Professionals, Medical Practitioners, Nurses, Health Educators & Researchers, Clinical Managers, Health Executives, Community Based Clinicians, Population Health Professionals, Policy Makers, Private Health Industry Providers and Health Promotion Practitioners.

This is a great opportunity for us to share our achievements and learn from others at home and abroad during this exciting period of reform and significant change.

The Organising Committee of the World Congress of Health Professions invites registrations for the congress. The registration brochure and registration form are available at <http://www.worldhealthcongress.org>

Queries about registration should be directed to Events WA on 9248 5788.

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From: Emma Grayson

Subject: 10th International Paediatric and Child Health Nursing Conference

The 10th International Paediatric and Child Health Nursing Conference is to be held at the Holiday Inn Esplanade and Darwin Entertainment Centre, Northern Territory, from Wednesday, 30 April to Friday, 2 May 2008. The conference is being hosted by the Australian Confederation of Paediatric and Child Health Nurses. The conference is expected to attract between 200 and 400 delegates from across Australia and abroad.

Through the implementation of the theme "Crossing barriers", this conference aims to illustrate that barriers can and must be crossed to improve health outcomes for children and young people. The conference aims are: to advance paediatric and child health nursing's contribution to health care and facilitate the dissemination of evidence highlighting effective nursing interventions to arise the profile of the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration to identify future directions for paediatric and child health nursing to provide a forum that stimulates debate and collegiality.

For more information, to register your expression of interest or to download the call for abstracts, please visit the conference website at <http://www.ipchnconference.com.au> or by contacting the conference secretariat via email at info@ipchnconference.com.au or by telephone +61 7 3858 5503.

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ETHICAL RESPONSIVENESS - 2008 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Stamford Grand, Adelaide, 23-25 May 2008

You are invited to attend the third national conference for the Australian College for Child and Family Protection Practitioners in Adelaide.

The conference theme "Ethical Responsiveness" reflects the broad contexts of Australian child and family practice. Workers in the child and family welfare sectors are generally ethical and responsive. This conference celebrates the work done by both statutory and non-government agencies alike in supporting vulnerable children, young people and their families. As debates continue within the child and family welfare system about the effectiveness of strategies to support vulnerable children, the professions are instead struggling to reconcile the need for appropriate supportive relationships with clients against ever increasing compliance bureaucracy. This conference supports the presentation and testing of practice frameworks and is interested in hearing about approaches which make a real difference to people's lives. Conversely presentations on practice issues are also

welcomed to improve the evidence base of the profession.

On behalf of the organising committee we invite you to submit an abstract for evaluation for presentation at the Conference. Abstracts are due by December 31, 2007.

Important dates

Abstracts due 31 December 2007

Acceptance notified by 25 January, 2008

Early bird Registration closes 7 March, 2008

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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POPULATION HEALTH CONGRESS 2008

A Global World - Practical action for health and Well-being

Come to Brisbane and join in Australia's population health event of the decade. Four organisations are working together to provide a line-up of international and national speakers that promises to be excellent.

The Population health Congress 2008 will be held on July 7-9 in the Brisbane Convention and exhibition Centre. Regular updates on Congress 2008 will be available at <http://www.populationhealthcongress.org.au> - log on to register your interest.

Enquiries:

Conference Coordinators

PO Box 139

Calwe ll ACt 2905

Ph (02) 6292 9000

congress2008@confco.com.au

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10th National Rural Health Conference

The 10th National Rural Health Conference will be held in Cairns in May 2009. Keep an eye on our website for up-to-date information about the Conference. The first announcement will be the Call for Abstracts in early 2008.

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CONTRIBUTION AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND DISCLAIMER

The NRHA e-forum is published fortnightly. 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). Contributions received by the Friday of publication will be

included in the e-forum.

The NRHA e-forum is edited by a third party moderator, Jim Groves. 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
6 November 2007

Democrats solid on rural health - but will the major parties' major proposals help?

As a result of their rural health policy launch in Ballarat last week, the Democrats are now scoring 15 out of 20 on the Alliance's election scorecard. The extra points result from the Democrats' commitments on a plan for the rural and remote health sector, new primary health care and mental health care centres, and HECS reimbursement schemes and other programs promoting access for students from rural areas to medical and allied health courses.

Meanwhile Labor has 12 points out of 20, and the Coalition six.

The new clinics being proposed by Labor and the Coalition are welcome initiatives but seem largely targeted at outer metro areas and major regional centres.

It appears that only regional and outer metropolitan centres will have the population to qualify for one of the new GP clinics. This means there will need to be complementary incentives for medium sized and small communities if they are to be able to provide the services to which their residents are entitled.

Although there may be more GPs trained and available in the long run, in the short term it is a zero sum game. There are only so many GPs available and, if there are no systematic reform measures for rural and remote areas, the result will be a redistribution of doctors to regional centres rather than an improvement in services and access overall.

Many rural GPs are already providing round-the-clock on-call service but it seems they will only be eligible for the full Coalition Family Emergency Medical Centre funding if they open their surgeries 24 hours a day 7 days a week or a smaller grant if they stay open to 11pm. This would be a physical impossibility for a small country practice.

The Alliance would like to see a comprehensive health care plan for all parts of rural and remote Australia, rather than piecemeal announcements.

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Media Release
7 November 2007

NT health commitments must go further

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has acknowledged the commitment of the major political parties to improving health services in the Northern Territory and Northern Australia.

Labor has committed to an integrated Better Regions program that will play an important part in improving health and health services for people in rural and remote areas. This will include support for super clinics and hospitals in Cairns, Bundaberg, Gladstone and Emerald, with extra renal dialysis facilities across the Territory and a \$10 million commitment towards remote clinics in the NT.

For its part the Coalition has promised a major upgrade of services at the Royal Darwin Hospital for specialist cardiac care.

Alliance chairperson, Professor John Wakerman, welcomed Labor's commitment of increased funding to remote services in the Territory. "But what we really need is a national plan and extra funding for infrastructure and services across the board - not a piecemeal effort focused on one State or Territory," he said.

"Labor has already committed to a rural and remote health plan as part of its strategic health reform agenda, and we hope to hear from the Coalition about a national health policy and a rural/remote health plan.

"We would like a plan that provides funding for primary health care right across remote Australia, as well as multi-professional health infrastructure funding for small rural communities," Professor Wakerman said.

"We are also still waiting to hear from both major parties about specific rural workforce measures, like increased scholarships for people from rural and remote areas to study health sciences, and a national undergraduate student placement program."

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Media Release

8 November 2007

Rural and remote health - it's time for leadership

With two weeks to go before the federal election, both major parties need to show real leadership on rural and remote health, according to Professor John Wakerman, Chair of the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA).

"There is too much focus on specific electorates rather than national plans and policies. With the election almost upon us, rural voters are entitled to expect the Coalition and Labor to reveal their overarching approach to the development and sustainability of rural and remote communities," he said.

"People in rural and remote electorates are thirsty for leadership and a vision for improved and more equitable access to services in the bush. Voters want their surplus invested in improved services, not more tax cuts.

"A country is more than just an economy. Where is the vision and plan for a better country?"

Professor Wakerman said many elements are affecting the future of non-metropolitan communities and the socio-economic characteristics of rural people. They include drought, water shortages, climate change, loss of services, an unprecedented mining boom, degraded infrastructure, the prospect of relocation of agricultural production and aspects of Indigenous affairs such as the future of outstations.

"The Australian government will need to consider all of these elements in order to provide certainty for businesses and communities in the bush," Professor Wakerman said.

His comments come with the release of today's Alliance Election Scorecard that shows the Coalition - with a mere six points out of a maximum 20 - still lagging badly behind other parties. The Liberal/National parties are the only ones not yet to have committed to work with the States and Territories in agreeing to a national health policy and plan.

Such a collaborative approach would put an end to 'the blame game' and begin work to reform Australia's health system by tackling jointly, within a national framework, challenges relating to workforce supply and distribution, hospitals, access and equity.

Professor Wakerman repeated the call for a national rural undergraduate placement scheme to help attract students to rural and remote areas as an investment in our future rural workforce.

"University Departments of Rural Health are another valuable and successful national program and should be extended to all regions," Professor Wakerman said.

The revised scorecard shows the Greens and Democrats heading the tally with 15 out of a possible 20 points, Labor on 10 followed by the Coalition on six points.

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Media Release

17 November 2007

Coalition health plan continues to disappoint rural voters

The Coalition's Plan for Better Public Hospitals and Health Care was announced on Thursday evening with no fanfare, perhaps because it is little more than a compilation of pre-election announcements. It does however indicate an encouraging change in rhetoric relating to collaboration with the States, and useful proposals for more detailed and disaggregated reporting on the performance of individual hospitals.

The Plan includes the promise of additional Coalition support for the Rural and Regional Building Fund for residential aged care places, and for transition care places.

However, the Liberal and National Parties have missed the opportunity to hit some of the targets that are important to rural people, who have been promoting for some time a range of modest but effective measures that would improve health outcomes in the bush. These include undergraduate scholarships for rural students, a national rural health plan and an integrated rural placement scheme.

This Coalition plan has no new support for health infrastructure in small towns, for national investment in Indigenous and dental health, or for the rural aspects of mental health services.

Like Labor, the Coalition has still not committed to an inquiry into the sustainability of rural and remote Australia.

The Coalition's election announcements fail to recognise the urgent need to respond to the major demographic and workforce challenges already facing the rural sector and its health services.

This will disappoint the one-third of Australia's population who live in rural, regional and remote areas. They know that their poor access to health services is getting poorer, their out-of-pocket costs are increasing, and services for mental health, dental health, cancer, patient travel and birthing are becoming even more elusive.

As a result of the plan announced on Thursday, the Coalition's score on the Alliance's election scorecard has improved to seven out of a possible 20. The Democrats still lead with 16, the Greens have 15 and Labor has 12.

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