

**National Rural Health Alliance E-forum
21 December 2007**

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E-News from the Alliance: December 2007

Best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy 2008 from everyone at the National Rural Health Alliance.

NRHA External Evaluation : online Questionnaire!

Please don't forget to fill out the NRHA External Evaluation Questionnaire at <http://www.ys2.net.au/surveys/nrha.asp>. It will be available online until early January. You can also download a hardcopy from the front page of our website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>, or phone us and we'll put one in the mail to you.

Applications for RAMUS 2008 - NOW OPEN

Applications are now being called for the 2008 round of the Rural Australia Medical Undergraduate Scholarship Scheme (RAMUS). People can apply online from the Scholarships page of the Alliance's website: <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/scholarships>
Applications close 5pm AEDST, 14 January 2008.

National Nutrition Networks Conference (NNNC 08) - Alice Springs, 11-14 March 2008
This important conference will see over two hundred of those working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nutrition and health meeting for three days to share ideas and programs to help improve health outcomes for Indigenous people. It is being managed by Indigenous health and nutrition workers and has support from the State, Northern Territory and Australian Governments. The NRHA is providing administrative support for the event. A link to the NNNC 08 website can be found on the Alliance website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au> and registrations are now open.

Follow-up on Election Campaign commitments

The Alliance has written to the Prime Minister and to Minister Roxon about some of the work in train following the election of the new government.

The immediate concerns for people in rural and remote areas include the health issues selected for attention by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), establishment of the new Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, work by State/Territory and Australian Governments on the next Australian Health Care Agreements, and the three-stage approach announced by the Prime Minister to health workforce shortages in rural and remote areas. The Alliance is particularly hopeful that the new AHCA's may be the vehicle through which improvements to the patients' travel and accommodation schemes are agreed between governments.

Partyline No 31

The next edition of Partyline will be out in March 2008. We are always keen to receive articles from readers. Contributions should be around 50-100 words and can be sent to partyline@ruralhealth.org.au by Friday 20 January 2008.

Electronic versions of Partyline are available in the 'Publications' section of our website at: <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/publications/?IntContId=57&IntCatId=6>

friends of the Alliance in 2008

Membership of *friends* of the Alliance is for a calendar year and tax invoices for 2008 have been emailed to everyone on our database. If you didn't receive one but want to join there is a form on the friends page of our website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

10th National Rural Health Conference

The 10th National Rural Health Conference will be held in Cairns on 17-20 May 2009. The first formal announcement will be the Call for Abstracts in May 2008.

Please keep in touch and we look forward to working with you again in 2008.

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ALLIANCE BACKS PM'S ACTION PLAN ON RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has backed a proposal by Prime Minister Rudd to implement an immediate action plan to improve the supply of health professionals in rural and remote areas. The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/alliance%20backs%20pm%20action%20plan%2011%20dec%202007.pdf> and is reprinted below.

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"AUDIT" OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS SHORTAGES

Extract from the Prime Minister's announcement, 7 December 2007, available at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1207/dsiagrfsforpm070.php>

"The other part of our concern as an incoming Government of Australia and helping rural Australia is this. It goes to the core challenges of the adequacy of the supply of rural doctors and nurses. I know enough about rural Australia to know that there is a real problem here. No matter which rural community I visit in New South Wales, Victoria, in the West or here in Queensland, there is a problem of supply of rural doctors and nurses. That's why, this morning I discussed this with the Health and Ageing Minister, Nicola Roxon. And what we propose to do is this: we will conduct now an immediate audit of the shortage of doctors and nurses and other health professionals in rural Australia, number one. Number two: we will examine the reasons for these shortages.

"And three: we'll be asking the Department of Health and Ageing to provide us with a range of options for attracting and retaining health professionals in rural Australia. You see, you can't expect people to come out and farm these parts of Australia unless you've got basic health services. The Commonwealth is uniquely responsible for the adequate training of doctors and nurses but the Commonwealth is responsible for allocating enough university places were that to be the case. Therefore, I want to get to grips with this within the first week of us forming this Government by commissioning that work through the Federal Department of Health and Ageing. And the Federal Minister, Nicola Roxon, we'll be announcing our intention to do this at a meeting of State and Territory Health Ministers, which is being held today in Hobart."

More details by Health Minister Nicola Roxon is at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr07-nr-nr002.htm>

A statement by Rural Health Workforce Australia welcoming the announcement is at http://www.rhwa.org.au/site/index.cfm?PageMode=indiv&module=NEWS&page_id=95310&leca=184

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RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE HEALTH: A STUDY ON MORTALITY

Preventable conditions such as coronary heart disease and traffic accidents were two of the main reasons for the higher death rates in regional and remote areas, according to a new report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

'We found that death rates were about 10% higher in regional areas, and as much as 70% higher in very remote areas,' said Sally Bullock of the AIHW's Population Health Unit.

The AIHW media release is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2007/mr20071218.cfm> and the full publication is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10520>

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HEALTH MINISTERS URGED TO WORK TOGETHER TO ASSIST RURAL PATIENTS

The peak national body for rural and remote health has called on Federal and State Health Ministers to work collaboratively to provide better financial support for patients forced to travel long distances for essential health care. The full text of the Alliance statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/media%20release%20dec%2013%20health%20agreements.pdf> and is reprinted below.

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HEALTH REFORM COMMISSION MUST DEAL WITH RURAL AND REMOTE ISSUES

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has called on the Government to ensure that the new National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission demonstrates a good understanding of the challenges in rural and remote health. The full text of the Alliance statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/health%20and%20hospitals%20reform%20commission.pdf> and is reprinted below.

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JANUARY FEBRUARY TIMETABLE RURAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The Rural Health Education Foundation will be broadcasting four programs over the months of January and February 2008. All details including program information, panellists, broadcast times and other viewing options can be found on the Foundation's website <http://www.rhef.com.au> or contacting the Foundation office on 02 6232 5480.

- HIV/Aids Update: Holding the Ramparts - Live Tuesday 29th January 8:00pm AEDT (repeated Friday 1st February 12:30pm AEDT)
- Continence: Children and Adolescents - pre recorded Tuesday 12th February 8:00pm AEDT (repeated Friday 15th Feb 12:30pm AEDT)
- Improving Bowel Continence - pre recorded Tuesday 19th February 8:00pm AEDT (repeated Friday 22nd Feb 12:30pm AEDT)
- An Ounce of Prevention: MBS Item 717, the 45-49 year old health check - pre recorded Tuesday 26th February 8:00pm AEDT (repeated Friday 29th February 12:30pm AEDT)

Note the Continence: Children and Adolescents, Improving Bowel Continence and previously broadcast Continence and Men's Health are all part of a series that will be available on DVD or VHS video. Contact the Foundation to order your copy continence@rhef.com.au

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RUDD AND Blich GOVERNMENTS TO DELIVER CAPE YORK WELFARE REFORM

Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin and the Queensland Premier Anna

Bligh met today to finalise an historic agreement to work together to help improve the lives of Queenslanders living in remote Indigenous communities.

Premier Bligh said the time had come to work even harder to tackle the problems caused by drug and alcohol abuse in remote communities. Ms Macklin said both Governments had committed to moving ahead as quickly as possible with the welfare reform trials in four Cape York communities - Aurukun, Hopevale, Coen and Mossman Gorge.

The full text of the statement is at
<http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/MMS/StatementDisplaySingle.aspx?id=55862>

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From: Edmondson Marion
Subject: AWHN Summit Proceedings

Attached is the link to the papers and discussion that occurred at the National Women's Health Summit in Canberra on September 20 1997.
<http://dev2.digitalink.com.au/womenshealth/index.html>
user: womenshealth
pass: net

Thank you for your attendance and participation on the day. A paper compiling the response to the discussion paper - Women's Health: The New National Agenda is currently being developed and will be available in late February 2008. In addition to highlighting the responses to the paper, the document will map the next steps to be undertaken by AWHN and its supporters.

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MEDICINE IN AUSTRALIA: BALANCING EMPLOYMENT AND LIFE (MABEL)
The Australian Longitudinal Survey of Doctors (The University of Melbourne)

This new longitudinal survey will improve understanding of how changes in the working lives of Australian doctors are influencing the provision of healthcare. The health workforce is now a key focus of government policy. The ever-increasing demand for health care, the ageing of the medical workforce, the increase in the number of women entering medicine and changes in doctors preferences in relation to their work life balance, all have an impact on the ability of the health care system to provide high quality and accessible health care. Despite this, there is little knowledge or understanding of how and why doctors make decisions about such things as how many hours they work, their location of work (including decisions about working in rural and remote areas) or when to leave the medical workforce and retire. These decisions have important implications for the populations access to health care and therefore their health status and the quality of care received

Contact
Professor Anthony Scott
Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research,
The University of Melbourne
Email: a.scott@unimelb.edu.au

Web: <https://mabel.org.au>

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NACCHO STATEMENTS

Mr Rudd today is the day to sign

http://www.naccho.org.au/Media/mediareleases/media_relese_re_international_human_rights_day_10122007.html

NACCHO WELCOMES PMs CALL TO COAG

http://www.naccho.org.au/Media/mediareleases/mediarelease_re_rudd_visit_to_nt_171207.html

NACCHO WELCOMES NEW COMMITMENT TO INDIGENOUS REFORM

The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation is pleased to see the continuing seriousness with which Mr Rudd is treating Aboriginal issues. COAG's commitment to a partnership between all levels of government to work with Indigenous communities to achieve the target of closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage contains a concrete commitment to: closing the life expectancy gap within a generation; halving the mortality gap for children under five within a decade; and having the gap in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade. <http://www.naccho.org.au>

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INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA - EXTRACT FROM COAG COMMUNIQUE, 20 DECEMBER 2007

COAG agreed the 17 year gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians must be closed. COAG today agreed to a partnership between all levels of government to work with Indigenous communities to achieve the target of closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. COAG committed to:

- § closing the life expectancy gap within a generation;
- § halving the mortality gap for children under five within a decade; and
- § halving the gap in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade.

COAG recognised the pathway to closing the gap is inextricably linked to economic development and improved education outcomes. COAG also specifically addressed the importance of tackling the debilitating effect of substance and alcohol abuse on Indigenous Australians.

The Commonwealth agreed to double the \$49.3 million in funding previously provided by COAG in 2006 for substance and alcohol rehabilitation and treatment services, particularly in remote areas. The States and Territories, in turn, committed to complementary investments in services to support this initiative.

These will include, but are not limited to, strengthened policing of alcohol management plans and licensing laws and additional treatment and family support services. COAG has also agreed that States and Territories will report transparently on the use of their Commonwealth

Grants Commission funding which is on the basis of Indigenous need funding for services to Indigenous people.

The full COAG statement is at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1207/ms200.php>

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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

PM's acknowledgement of rural doctor shortage welcomed

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/PM's%20acknowledgment%20of%20rural%20doctor%20shortage%20welcomed%20--%20December%202007.pdf

Rural Health must be on COAG Agenda: Doctors

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAA%20RELEASE%2014_12_07%20COAG.pdf

Higher death rates underline need for special focus on rural health

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Higher%20death%20rates%20underline%20need%20for%20special%20focus%20on%20rural%20health%20--%20December%202007.pdf

Go for good health in 2008, doctors urge rural Australians

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAA%20Release%2020_12_07_Christmas%20health%20message.pdf

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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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INDIGENOUS DOCTORS: HEALING REQUIRES JUSTICE

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) has described Judge Sarah Bradley's verdict in the recent Aurukun case as 'deeply troubling'. The full text of the AIDA statement is at

http://www.aida.org.au/res/File/Press%20releases/AIDA%20media%20release_181207.pdf

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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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RURAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOUNDING DVD & VIDEO RESOURCES AVAILABLE FREE

The Rural Health Education Foundation has several health education DVDs or Videos available for free. Click on the links below or send your request to the Foundation (contact details below).

Chlamydia: Combating the Epidemic
Available Now

Better Access to Mental Health Care
Available Now

Over the Seas and Into the Bush - Overseas Trained Doctors in Rural Australia (order now - available February 2008)

Another Shade of Blue - Depression in Older Australians
(order now - available February 2008)

Contenance Series http://www.rhef.com.au/order/order_718.html (order now - available

March 2008

The distribution of all programs has been funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. Each program includes a facilitator Learning Guide to assist in education and training. All programs are accredited or endorsed by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, the Royal College of Nursing Australia, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and the Australian Physiotherapy Association, as well as other organisations.

To receive your free DVD or VHS video copy of any of the above programs order:

* online by clicking <http://www.rhef.com.au/order/order.html> or

* email the Foundation at rhef@rhef.com.au or

* fax a request to (02) 6232-5484 specifying:

1. the programs you want

2. your preferred format DVD or VHS video and

3. your contact details - providing your name, organisation, postal address, contact telephone number and email address.

* call (02) 6232 5480

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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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From: Paula Howard

Subject: Men's Health Checklist

I am the Men's Health Project Officer for Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health. We have a resource in the form of a brochure called the "Men's Health Checklist" which provides a list of health checks throughout the lifespan that men should undertake. It is a preventative health measure and is available from us for free (possibly a small postage cost though). We would like to get this resource out and into rural areas. Please contact me if you would like some copies.

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NEW ARTICLES IN RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH

'The accidental mentor: Australian rural nurses developing supportive relationships in the workplace'

A supportive workplace is a pre-requisite for happy and productive staff, wherever they work. Trying to better understand the nature of our working relationships is an ongoing

challenge. This interesting qualitative study describes how rural nurses support one another in the workplace. It brings to life additional understanding of what it takes for people to learn how to work well together.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=842>

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From: Rogan McMahon-Hogan
Subject: National Deafness Summit 08

The Deafness Forum of Australia is pleased to announce that registrations are now open for the 2008 National Deafness Sector Summit which will be hosted in Canberra 24-25 May 2008. These biennial summits are a fantastic opportunity for disability professionals, carers and the Deaf and hearing impaired community to learn about new developments in the sector, a chance to discuss issues, network and catch up with old friends. The previous summit held in Perth in 2006 was very successful, and we look forward to more success in 2008. Further information is available through the Deafness Forum Website, <http://www.deafnessforum.org.au>, or via email info@deafnessforum.org.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.bushcrisisline.org.au>

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DENTAL HEALTH OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN WORSENS

Levels of dental decay have increased among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in recent years, particularly among those aged less than seven years, according to a report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). The AIHW media release is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2007/mr20071214.cfm> and the full report is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10411>

Related AIHW reports are available on Water fluoridation and children's dental health: The Child Dental Health Survey, Australia 2002 (<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10535>), Social determinants of oral health: conditions linked to socioeconomic inequalities in oral health in the Australian population (<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10568>) and Geographic distribution of the Australian dental labour force, 2003 (<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10532>)

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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>)

Your wine raises funds for RFDS

The multi-talented Bush Telegraph audience produced a remarkable wine earlier this year after growing the grapes and setting down a vintage of shiraz. Our shiraz is called "Orange Red" and our rival team from Orange Tafe has produced a less complex drop called "The Graduate". The wines are on sale and all money raised will go to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/telegraph/content/2006/s2092920.htm>

Doctors welcome audit

The Rural Doctors Association is welcoming Federal Government plans to audit the number of doctors and nurses in rural areas, to determine the extent of shortages. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd says the Health Department will then develop a range of options to encourage more medical staff to work in country areas. RDA president, Peter Rischbieth, is hoping the work can be done within six to 12 months. "It's essential to be able to have the workforce to be able to deliver these services now and working in the next 12 to 24 months," he says. "If we keep on losing our doctors and nurses through retirement and we don't get the right support services to get our younger Australian graduates to come and join us, by the time the audit's been completed it may be too late to support the workforce and provide those important services that rural Australians deserve".

MERSEY HOSPITAL SERVICES UNRESOLVED (PM: 19/12/2007)

<http://abcmail.net.au/t/61392/614869/1443/0/>
<http://abcmail.net.au/t/61392/614869/1444/0/>

TRACHOMA PROGRAMS FAIL INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS (Health & Medical News: 19/12/2007)

<http://abcmail.net.au/t/61392/614869/1445/0/>

ALCOHOL AND EDUCATION MAJOR ISSUES IN FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH: EXPERT (AM: 18/12/2007)

<http://abcmail.net.au/t/61392/614869/1446/0/>

ATHERTON CANCER DIAGNOSES PROMPT OFFICIAL PROBE (PM: 18/12/2007)

<http://abcmail.net.au/t/61392/614869/1447/0/>

GROG BAN PRODUCES POSITIVE RESULTS (7.30 Report: 18/12/2007)

<http://abcmail.net.au/t/61392/614869/1448/0/>

QLD TO INVESTIGATE SUSPECTED CANCER CLUSTER (The World Today: 18/12/2007)

<http://abcmail.net.au/t/61392/614869/1449/0/>

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CARPARK BIRTH RENEWS CALLS FOR RURAL HEALTH OVERHAUL

(Extract from Farm Online, available at

http://www.farmonline.com.au/news_daily.asp?ag_id=47412)

The birth of a child in a rural hospital carpark, after the mother was refused admission due to

the absence of a mid-wife, has sparked new calls for a massive new investment in health services in the bush.

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CURRENT ISSUE OF eMJA, 19 November 2007
(Available at <http://www.mja.com.au/>)

Rapid online publication, 19 November 2007
̃-Hydroxybutyrate poisoning from toy beads

Current issue: 19 November 2007
From the Editor's Desk: Medical staff and the hospital
Tissue plasminogen activator for ischaemic stroke: highly effective, reasonably safe and grossly underused
Performance monitoring in Australia and England: from scandals to action
Intravascular catheter bloodstream infections: an effective and sustained hospital-wide prevention program over 8 years
Where to seek help for a mental disorder? National survey of the beliefs of Australian youth and their parents
Mycobacterium ulcerans infection: factors influencing diagnostic delay
Comparison of crystalline methamphetamine ("ice") users and other patients with toxicology-related problems presenting to a hospital emergency department
A protocol-driven model for the rapid initiation of stroke thrombolysis in the emergency department
Identifying variations in quality of care in Queensland hospitals
Clinical experience of the first digital mammographic unit in Australia in its first year of use
Monitoring antiepileptic drug therapy with serum level measurements
Serum sodium valproate testing: is it appropriate?
Antidepressants and suicide in young people
A professional kitesurfer with multiple liver lesions
Magnetic resonance imaging for paraneoplastic dermatomyositis
Arrhythmogenic left ventricular false tendon

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RURAL HEALTH IN YAHOO

Macklin, Scrymgeour not commenting on remote health funding
The Federal Government and Northern Territory Government are yet to comment on claims that a \$100 million Commonwealth funding commitment to remote health is on the rocks.
<http://au.news.yahoo.com/071210/21/157zh.html>

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WHAT THE FLYING DOCTOR ORDERED
(Extract from FarmOnline, full article available at
http://www.farmonline.com.au/news_daily.asp?ag_id=47380)

WOOLGROWERS can donate bales of wool to the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS)

through an initiative established by WA-owned and operated Westcoast Wools.

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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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Inaugural Rural and Remote Health Scientific Symposium, 6-8 July 2008, Brisbane.

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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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2008 SARRAH Conference, 27-30 August 2008, Yepoon. Details can be found on SARRAH's website at <http://www.sarrah.org.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
11 December 2007
Alliance backs PM's action plan on rural and remote health

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has backed a proposal by Prime Minister Rudd to implement an immediate action plan to improve the supply of health professionals in rural and remote areas.

NRHA Chairperson John Wakerman described the promised three-step plan, which includes

an audit of the shortage of health professionals in rural areas, as "a matter of great potential importance".

"We are delighted the Prime Minister has made this issue a high priority. The Alliance suggests the audit should include allied health professionals, dentists, health service managers and pharmacists, as well as doctors and nurses."

He said the maldistribution of dentists was particularly serious for rural and remote areas in the context of the government's intended plans for public dental health services.

"As well as dentistry, allied health must also be included in the audit because its evidence base is much poorer than the one we have for medicine," said Professor Wakerman.

In its proposal to assist government, the Alliance has pointed to trends in the numbers of entrants to Australia's health workforce that will make the shortage of skilled professionals even more serious in 15 years' time than it is today.

"This means the plan must do more than ensuring rural and remote areas attain their 30 per cent fair share of doctors, nurses and dentists. It will also be critical to push on with restructuring the health sector, including its workforce," Professor Wakerman said.

The Alliance believes this will require urgent attention to so-called 'workforce redesign' to change the way in which health services are provided between health professional groups, ensuring similar standards of expertise and training for both rural and urban environments.

Professor Wakerman said action to ensure rural and remote people get their fair share of locally-trained health professionals will require continued incentives for students from country areas, supported rural placements for all students, and appropriate curricular and course structures.

"We should increase the focus on re-entry and upskilling programs for health professionals and emphasise retention as well as recruitment," Professor Wakerman said.

In a letter to the Prime Minister the Alliance has further emphasised the importance of a national approach to the disparate developments in rural and remote Australia.

"We have reiterated our concern for the sustainability of communities in rural and remote Australia. Some are threatened by long-term decline, loss of population, drought and climate change, and others by a rate of economic growth which has negative consequences for economic and social infrastructure," said Professor Wakerman.

"The Alliance is keen to be involved with the new Australian Government on these broad rural and remote community issues and takes comfort in the Prime Minister's early recognition of the need for urgent action on rural health issues."

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Media Release

13 December 2007

Health Ministers urged to work together to assist rural patients

The peak national body for rural and remote health has called on Federal and State Health Ministers to work collaboratively to provide better financial support for patients forced to travel long distances for essential health care.

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) says the patients' travel and accommodation schemes can be improved through the Australian Health Care Agreements (AHCAs).

These schemes are currently operated independently by State and Territory governments. However they lack uniformity in what they provide, in what amounts and under what circumstances. Preventive medicine, antenatal care and child health services, which can be critical for good health in later life, are not covered by the schemes. These inconsistencies and omissions create hardships for many rural people, including when family or carers might also require support.

A recent Senate Inquiry into patients' assisted travel schemes (PATS) recommended the AHCAs be used as a vehicle for improving the system through clear definition of eligible services and funding allocation and regular monitoring. The Inquiry also recommended the establishment of a taskforce to develop national standards for patient assisted travel.

Professor John Wakerman, Chair of the NRHA, says the matter is urgent in view of the looming deadline to agree on the next round of Australian Health Care Agreements. As more services are closed down in smaller towns, the more critical it is for governments to ensure that people do not forego health care because of prohibitive travel costs.

"Often the cheapest and clinically most effective way for rural patients to obtain sophisticated diagnostic testing, complex treatment and/or follow up care is to be assisted to travel to health facilities in major centres," Professor Wakerman said.

"The schemes should therefore play a major role in giving patients from rural and remote areas equal access to health services," he said. "It will be a great step forward if the States and Territories agree to include performance benchmarks and targets related to PATS in the new AHCAs."

"It is also our view that the schemes are generally under-funded at present," he said.

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Media Release

20 December 2007

Health Reform Commission must deal with rural and remote issues

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has called on the Government to ensure that the new National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission demonstrates a good understanding of the challenges in rural and remote health.

NRHA Chair, John Wakerman, says the Commission must remember that one third of all Australians live outside major cities and that, as a group, they experience poorer health outcomes, and have less access to health services while being exposed to a higher incidence

of risk factors than those in capital cities.

Professor Wakerman said the incoming Commission must reflect those facts by balancing the effort in its governing body, and in its staff, terms of reference and work priorities.

He said the Alliance is optimistic about the opportunity to improve rural health outcomes through the Reform Commission's proposed work relating to the Australian Health Care Agreements. This could include broader agreements and targeting of health resources outside the hospital sector, with potential to impact positively in areas such as mental health, school dental services and other national health priority areas.

"The new Commission will also play a key role in developing a long-term national health reform plan," Professor Wakerman said. "That plan will reduce the *ad hoc* approach to health services and benefit people in non-metropolitan areas.

"But of even greater significance is the Health Minister's proposal to ask the Commission to explicitly develop a long-term plan for improving rural health services. The three-stage proposal that has been set in train for improving the supply of health professionals in rural and remote areas will be an important part of such a long-term plan," he said.

These developments make the review of *Healthy Horizons 2003-2007*, of which the NRHA is a partner with the Australian, State and Territory governments, more important than ever. The opportunity now exists for purposeful collaboration to transform the existing framework for rural and remote health into a clear and effective plan for the future.

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