

NRHA eforum 24 August 2007

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum 24 August 2007

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ENDING BLAME GAME GOOD FOR RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH

Professor John Wakerman, Chair of the National Rural Health Alliance, welcomed the health system reform plan announced today by Kevin Rudd and Nicola Roxon. The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/news/?IntCatId=8> and is reprinted below.

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RURAL HEALTH GROUP DEMANDS FAIR ACCESS TO NEW TECHNOLOGY

The peak body for rural and remote health care supports the Federal Government's \$2.5 billion funding for 'next generation' medical technologies - on the provision that those from the bush have equal access without added financial hardship.

"Everyone knows that people in rural and remote Australia suffer worse health outcomes than those in the city," Professor John Wakerman, Chair of the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA), said. "In addition, they also have poorer access to health services - and higher out-of-pocket expenses when they do have access."

The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/news/?IntCatId=8> and is reprinted below.

The announcement of the fund by Health Minister Tony Abbott is at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr07-ta-abb105.htm?OpenDocument>

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RURAL HEALTH ALLIANCE TO KEEP TALLY OF POLITICAL COMMITMENTS

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has developed a five-pronged strategy ahead of the Federal Election to improve health outcomes in the bush. NRHA Chair, Professor John Wakerman, said the health situation in rural and remote areas is now so critical that the Alliance has developed a comprehensive action plan which it will ask all sides of politics to support. The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/news/?IntCatId=8> and is reprinted below.

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RURAL HEALTH PRIORITIES: NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ALLIANCE

The Alliance is seeking clear undertakings from all political parties in support of rural health. The NRHA will develop a scorecard and evaluation of the parties on each of these issues and provide it to rural Australians at an appropriate time prior to the election. The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/news/?IntCatId=8> and the summary is reprinted below.

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CALL FOR NATIONAL RURAL AND REMOTE AREA HEALTH PLAN

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has called on political parties to commit to a national plan for rural and remote communities - and to a new national plan for health. The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/news/?IntCatId=8> and is reprinted below.

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FEDERAL LABOR'S \$2 BILLION NATIONAL HEALTH AND HOSPITALS REFORM PLAN

Federal Labor will establish a \$2 billion National Health Reform Plan over four years to improve Australia's health system and ensure better health services for patients in hospitals. Federal Labor's National Health Reform Plan will have two central elements:

1. \$2 billion in investments to deliver improved health outcomes for patients in Australia's health care and hospital system.
2. A commitment that a Rudd Labor Government will seek to take financial control of Australia's 750 public hospitals if State and Territory Governments have not begun implementing an agreed National Health Reform Plan by mid-2009.

Details are at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0807/mshealoo230.php>

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) welcomed elements of the package, but is concerned by its failure to outline specific plans for improving access to local health services in rural communities across Australia. The RDAA's immediate past president, Dr Ross Maxwell, said: "The gap between rural and metropolitan healthcare provision in Australia continues to widen. Rural Australia has lost 50 per cent of its maternity services alone during the past decade, yet rural health receives only one mention in Labor's 27-page statement." The full text of the RDAA statement is at

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAA%20RELEASE%2023_08_07%20Labor.pdf

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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>. The Call for Abstracts closing date is 5 September 2007. 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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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.

But wait there's more...

The new-look site includes colour headshots of each of the 20 keynote speakers, including transcripts of what they said and audio accounts that allow you to better gauge how each one was delivered.

The quality lineup includes the keynote address of Federal Health Minister, Tony Abbott, as well as Senator Kate Lundy, the Shadow Minister for Health Promotion. Other guest speakers included Rhonda Galbally, Steve Clark, Philip Davies and John Menadue, among others.

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

- * Analysis to synergy: Why coordination of rural initiatives at metropolitan universities is important and timely
- * Harnessing a University to address rural health workforce shortages in Australia
- * Acute rheumatic fever: Adherence to secondary prophylaxis and follow up of Indigenous patients in the Katherine region of the Northern Territory
- * Evidence-based use of medications in patients with coronary artery disease in a rural Australian community
- * Rural adolescents experiencing an urban transition
- * Detecting depression in the aged: Is there concordance between screening tools and the perceptions of nursing home staff and residents? A pilot study in a rural aged care facility
- * Rural public dental practice in Australia: Perspectives of Tasmanian government-employed dentists

- * 'I don't want to be in that big city; this is my country here': Research findings on Aboriginal peoples' preference to die at home
- * Ocular health status of rural dwellers in south-western Nigeria
- * Short Reports
- * Grazings
- * From the Journal Associates

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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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MEDICARE CHANGES DEMANDED FOR RURAL EMERGENCIES

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia says the Medicare system is discriminating against rural GPs and it wants the Federal Government to fix it. RDAA chief executive, Stave Sant, says Medicare does not pay for multiple doctors to attend emergencies, only providing the rebate to one doctor in an emergency. The full text of the RDAA statement is at http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAA%20RELEASE%2017_08_07%20Yarrowonga.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 Edition 30 includes:

- * highlights from the 9th National Rural Health Conference, including reviews of keynote addresses, in-depth discussion of health reform, the role of the arts in achieving good health, impressions from delegates, student voices, policy impact of recommendations, rural health winners, and pictorial highlights
- * equal health within a generation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- * responses to Budget 2007-08

- * writing for publication
- * telling your rural health story
- * rural health news
- * resources
- * dates for your calendar.

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NACCHO DEMAND REAL INVESTMENT TO CLOSE THE LIFE EXPECTANCY GAP

<http://www.naccho.org.au/Media/mediareleases/NACCHO-delegation-demand-real.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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NEW ARTICLES IN RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH

'Core drivers of quality: a remote health example from Australia'

How does context influence practice in remote communities? This article from Victoria, Australia, sets out a theoretical model for answering this important question. <http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=611>

'The researcher development program: how to extend the involvement of Australian general practitioners in research?'

The researcher development program is a relatively new Australian Government initiative intended to increase research capacity in the field of primary health care. This report from the New South Wales Northern Rivers University Department of Rural Health tells us a little of their plans and describes what has been a successful national initiative.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=776>

'An innovation in Australian dental education: rural, remote and Indigenous pre-graduation placements'

Seeing is believing. As many articles in Rural and Remote Health have demonstrated, giving health students an opportunity to experience rural practice is educationally rewarding and is an effective workforce recruitment strategy. This paper from the Centre for Rural and Remote Oral Health in Western Australia may be the first to document the value of rural placements for dental students.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=703>

'GP perceptions of workforce shortage in a rural setting'

The shortage of GPs in rural and remote Australia is well known to readers of this Journal. Is this just the whinging of a profession that has had it pretty good in recent years? This study from a regional centre in New South Wales, Australia, suggests otherwise. Using a unique before-and-after design, the researchers find the local GPs are very sensitive to increases in the total GP workforce. The addition of a modest number of extra GPs and surgeries, among other workforce changes, improved their perception of their workload. This suggests that monitoring GP perceptions could be a value tool in workforce planning.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=720>

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From: James Dunbar

Subject: RE: "Rural Australia 'hit hard by obesity'"

eforum is misinformed. MJA stuffed up the designations so that this research done entirely in the bush except for the blood analyses at Flinders has been attributed to Melbourne. Hard for folks to believe that bushies can do research? Ouch!

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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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Top bush doctor to chair regional telco review

Former president of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Bill Glasson, will head a new government taskforce to review the progress of the Government's upgrades of telecommunications services in rural Australia and its recommendations will determine how the interest earned from the \$2 billion Communications Fund will be spent.

The announcement by Communications Minister Helen Coonan is at

http://www.minister.dcita.gov.au/media/media_releases/dr_bill_glasson_to_chair_regional_telco_review

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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>)

The head of Reconciliation Australia says the Commonwealth's Emergency Response Bill for Northern Territory Aboriginal communities tramples on Indigenous property rights. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/08/12/2002707.htm>

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

Rapid online publication, 20 July 2007
HIV diagnoses in Australia: diverging epidemics within a low prevalence country

Current issue: 20 August 2007
[From the Editor's Desk: The health care happiness factor](#)
[Interventions to halt child abuse in Aboriginal communities](#)
The National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme) Bill 2007: reform or fracture?
Skin cancer: changing paradigms of practice and medical education
Skin cancer surgery in Australia 2001-2005: the changing role of the general practitioner
Diagnosing skin cancer in primary care: how do mainstream general practitioners compare with primary care skin cancer clinic doctors?
Asthma among school children in the Barwon region of Victoria
Issues for clinicians training international medical graduates: a systematic review
John Charles Proctor Cone
Preventing suicide after traumatic brain injury: implications for general practice
Loss of chance: a new development in medical negligence law
Reference pricing, generic drugs and proposed changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme
Reference pricing for pharmaceuticals: is the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement affecting Australia's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme?
Three cases of endometrial cancer associated with "bioidentical" hormone replacement therapy
A giant splenic artery aneurysm
Use of thoracic computed tomography by general practitioners

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POPULATION DISTRIBUTION, ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AUSTRALIANS
(ABS Cat 4705.0)

At 30 June 2006, the Indigenous estimated resident population of Australia was 517,200 or 2.5% of the total population. In terms of absolute numbers, New South Wales (148,200) and Queensland (146,400) had the largest Indigenous estimated resident populations followed by Western Australia (77,900) and the Northern Territory (66,600).

Among the Indigenous population in 2006, 463,900 or 90% were estimated as being of Aboriginal origin only, 33,100 or 6% were of Torres Strait Islander origin only, and 20,200 or 4% were of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin.

Almost one in three people in the Northern Territory (32%) were estimated to be of Indigenous origin. In all other states/territories less than 4% of people were estimated to be of Indigenous origin.

Between 2001 and 2006, the Australian Indigenous estimated resident population increased by 58,700 or 13%.

In 2006, the majority of Indigenous people in Australia lived in Major Cities (31%). The remaining Indigenous population was evenly distributed across Inner Regional (22%), Outer Regional (23%) and Remote/Very Remote Australia combined (24%).

States with a relatively high proportion of Indigenous people living in Major Cities included South Australia (48% of the total state Indigenous usual residence count), Victoria (48%) and New South Wales (42%). In contrast, 81% of the Indigenous population counted in the Northern Territory lived in Remote/Very Remote areas. Likewise in Western Australia, 41% of the Indigenous population lived in Remote/Very Remote areas.

The publication is available at
<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/14E7A4A075D53A6CCA2569450007E46C?OpenDocument>

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From: Nicky Reavell
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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11th Annual Chronic Diseases Network Conference Learning for Living"
30th & 31st August 2007, Darwin

The 11th Annual Chronic Diseases Network Conference is being held in Darwin at the Holiday Inn Esplanade on 30th & 31st August 2007.

The CDN conferences have a loyal following of Aboriginal Health Workers, Remote Area Nurses, District Medical Officers, GP's, Administrators, Researchers and Policy Makers. We anticipate between 250-300 delegates from across the NT and interstate.

Information from:

Christine Connors The Best Conference & Events Company

Rachael McGuin GPO Box 2541

Marie Hodsdon Phone: 08 8981 1875

Sharon Manhire Fax: 08 8941 2815

Joanne Blayney Email: info@thebestevents.com.au

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ARRWAG INDIGENOUS HEALTH WORKFORCE FORUM ON 31 AUGUST 2007

Australian Rural and Remote Workforce Agencies Group
2007 National Policy Forum on Indigenous Health Workforce Issues
FREMANTLE, WA, 31 AUGUST 2007

Contact:

Ph: 03 9662 2625

Fax: 03 9662 4830

Email: forum@arrwag.com.au

<http://www.arrwag.com.au/site/index.cfm?display=32645>

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3rd Annual Australian Nurse Practitioner Association Conference
21-22 September 2007
Sheraton Hotel, Perth, WA
For more information, visit <http://www.dconferences.com.au/anpa07>

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THE LIME CONNECTION II "CULTURES ACROSS THE INDIGENOUS HEALTH SPECTRUM: ACHIEVING BETTER OUTCOMES"

The Medical Deans of Australia and New Zealand (Medical Deans) and the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA) announces The LIME Connection II conference, held in Sydney from Sunday 23rd to Tuesday 25th September, 2007.

Leaders in the field of Indigenous medical education and practice will present their experiences and share innovative approaches through a mix of keynote addresses, oral and poster presentations, group discussions and a public lecture. Topics will include:

- * reviewing medical schools' progress towards implementing the curriculum framework and Indigenous student initiatives
- * learning and sharing with other health science disciplines, postgraduate medical

- education bodies, medical colleges and divisions
- * defining cultural safety in Australian health and medical education
- * looking toward the future to examine what's possible and where we go from here

For further information, please visit the LIME Connection II web site at <http://www.limenetwork.net.au/conference/welcome>

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From: Michael Blair
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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ANTI-POVERTY WEEK

Help fight poverty and hardship in Australia and overseas. Organise an activity during the Week - 14-20 October 2007 - big or small, local or national. FOR INFO & IDEAS, see <http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au> OR CONTACT US AT 1300 797 290; or apw@antipovertyweek.org.au

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Climate Change and Human Health Conference
Tuesday 16 & Wednesday 17 October 2007
Park Hyatt Hotel, Melbourne, Australia
<http://www.healthclimate2007.com>

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From: Scott Wagner
Subject: NSW Rural Allied Health Conference 2007, Dubbo, October 18-19

Details are at <http://www.nswrahc.com>.

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ACRRM AGM and Conference - Friday 26 October to Sunday 28 October

ACRRM will hold its AGM in NSW on the weekend of 26-28 October 2007. A program of educational activities will also be held for practitioners, registrars and students. Information at <http://www.acrrm.org.au/>

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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. Registrations open 2 July 2007. Delegates can register online by accessing the School of Rural health website <http://www.ruralhealth.unimelb.edu.au> and clicking on the conference link after that date. A hardcopy of the registration pack can be obtained by emailing the Conference Secretariat.

The School of Rural Health welcomes your participation with papers, posters and

other presentations at this forthcoming conference. The call for Abstracts is now open and must be submitted via email to the Conference Secretariat by close of business Monday 3rd September, 2007. Please circulate to colleagues interested in research.

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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From: Mcalpin, Susan
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.

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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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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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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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
13 August 2007
Call for national rural and remote area health plan

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has called on political parties to commit to a national plan for rural and remote communities - and to a new national plan for health.

"There are plenty of opportunities for short-term solutions to the problems facing people in rural and remote communities," NRHA Chair, Professor John Wakerman, said today. "But it is vital that governments approach change for rural and remote

communities in the context of an agreed long-term plan," he said.

"There is no sense in introducing new models for health service delivery in small communities without any guarantee they will continue to exist," Professor Wakerman said.

"We need a broad independent national enquiry into the sustainability of rural and remote communities - how services are to be provided in areas of rapid growth and what support and compensation will be provided in communities that are not prospering. Many of those in the latter category are still suffering the effects of extended drought."

The NRHA has proposed a similarly long-term strategic approach to health services.

"We would like to see a national health policy and, within it, a national health plan that includes rural and remote components," said Professor Wakerman.

The plans must be agreed collaboratively between governments and have significant input from consumers and health service providers. They would clarify the role of the Commonwealth in areas that are currently the responsibility of the States, such as public hospitals, and provide the basis of measures to address the serious shortages of health professionals in rural and remote areas.

The NRHA also seeks a commitment from political parties to transform the current NT Indigenous health initiative into long-term, well-funded national programs involving ongoing consultation with community and Indigenous leaders.

The provision of oral and dental health services to rural Australians - and a better dental workforce - remain on the Alliance's list of key issues as discussed with parliamentarians in Canberra last week. Other issues discussed were ways to increase the supply of health professionals to rural areas through rural scholarships for nursing and allied health; a national rural health undergraduate placement scheme; and building up the multipurpose health infrastructure in smaller country towns.

The NRHA intends to evaluate the election proposals of the major parties against its priorities and provide the results to people in rural and remote areas prior to the election.

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Rural Health Priorities: National Rural Health Alliance

The NRHA is the peak national body for rural and remote health, comprised of 27 leading organisations committed to all aspects of the health of rural people and represented in all rural regions and communities.

The Alliance is seeking clear undertakings from all political parties in support of rural health. The NRHA will develop a scorecard and evaluation of the parties on each of these issues and provide it to rural Australians at an appropriate time prior to the election.

1. An Inquiry into the key issues affecting the sustainability of Australia's rural and remote communities. Inquiry to be conducted by an independent body such as the Productivity Commission.

2. National Health Policy. Development of a national health policy to address key issues such as:

- . the role of the Commonwealth in areas of the health sector that are currently the responsibility of the States, such as public hospitals; and
- . effective measures to address the acute and worsening maldistribution of health professionals away from rural and remote areas.

3. Indigenous Health. A clear commitment to transforming the current NT Indigenous health initiative into long-term, well-funded national programs involving consultation with community and Indigenous leaders.

4. Rural Dental Services. The provision of oral and dental health services to rural Australians - and a better dental workforce.

5. Improved Rural Based Training. Extend the number of rural scholarships for health professionals, particularly in nursing and allied health fields, and for a national rural placement scheme.

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MEDIA RELEASE

17 August 2007

Rural Health Alliance to keep tally of political commitments

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has developed a five-pronged strategy ahead of the Federal Election to improve health outcomes in the bush.

NRHA Chair, Professor John Wakerman, said the health situation in rural and remote areas is now so critical that the Alliance has developed a comprehensive action plan which it will ask all sides of politics to support.

"We intend to develop a scorecard to help us evaluate where each of the parties stands on key issues, which we will provide to rural Australians at an appropriate time before the Federal Election," he said.

The NRHA demands include:

- . an inquiry into key issues that affect the sustainability of Australia's rural and remote communities;
- . a national health policy to address the role of Commonwealth and States in the health sector - including on hospitals;
- . transformation of the current Northern Territory health initiative into a long-term, well-funded national program that involves consultation with community and Indigenous leaders;
- . extending oral and dental health services to rural communities and a commitment to improving the dental workforce; and

. improving rural-based training by extending the number of scholarships, particularly in the nursing and allied health fields, and through a national rural placement scheme.

The peak national body for rural and remote health, the NRHA comprises 27 groups that represent many thousands of rural consumers, doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, dentists, paediatricians, physiotherapists, ambulance officers, managers and pharmacists.

"The Alliance calls on political parties to commit to establishing an inquiry into the sustainability of Australia's rural and remote communities by an independent body such as the Productivity Commission," Prof Wakerman said.

The inquiry would canvass policies and programs to enhance the sustainability of these communities and the resilience of their people. People in rural and remote areas are subject to an unprecedented level of uncertainty from economic, climatic and political sources, with many unable to access the health services and health professionals they need.

The Alliance also seeks a commitment to develop, in collaboration with the States, a national health policy to address the responsibilities of governments in health and, under it, a national health action plan.

"The national health policy would provide the framework for governments' involvement in the health sector, and among other things the plan would improve the distribution of health services and health professionals across Australia, including to rural and remote areas."

In addition, the national health plan would accommodate existing strategies for particular population groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with poor mental health, as well as new plans for a national approach to health promotion and illness prevention.

The Alliance further calls for political commitment to address the inequitable distribution of health professionals away from rural and remote areas, which is becoming worse, and a policy to overcome the shortage of infrastructure to support an integrated primary health care services in towns of less than 7,000 people.

"There are many small towns in which it is not economically or clinically sensible to sustain stand-alone facilities," said Prof Wakerman.

Although current programs were in place provide to provide services to towns of less than 7,000 people, the shortage of 'multipurpose infrastructure' such as clinic buildings, staff accommodation and IT services is a barrier in smaller towns that require primary health care to be delivered by integrated teams.

Professor Wakerman called on political parties to commit to a collaborative effort with the States, which might be in the context of the negotiations for the next round of Australian Health Care Agreements, to overcome these infrastructure barriers in small country towns.

"It should result in both the Commonwealth and the State contributing resources for infrastructure, including through the sort of localised 'funds pooling' that already occurs with the Multi-Purpose Services program," he said.

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Media Release

23 August 2007

Rural health group demands fair access to new technology

The peak body for rural and remote health care supports the Federal Government's \$2.5 billion funding for 'next generation' medical technologies - on the provision that those from the bush have equal access without added financial hardship.

"Everyone knows that people in rural and remote Australia suffer worse health outcomes than those in the city," Professor John Wakerman, Chair of the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA), said today. "In addition, they also have poorer access to health services - and higher out-of-pocket expenses when they do have access."

"While the Alliance welcomes this initiative, which holds the promise that all Australians will receive the benefits of health and medical breakthroughs as new technologies come on line, additional funding must be found to underwrite the travel and accommodation costs for country people, many of whom have no local access to certain specialised services and little access to public transport.

"Support for patients' travel and accommodation will ensure consumers from rural and remote regions have reasonable and equitable access to the high-technology medical equipment to which they are entitled," Prof Wakerman said.

Much of the diagnostic testing, complex treatment and follow-up care which country people may require is currently only available at tertiary hospitals in major centres. A uniform standard of patient assisted travel between States and Territories would greatly improve the level of access to which country people are entitled as taxpayers.

Prof Wakerman was commenting on this week's announcement by the Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott, of the intention to introduce a Health and Medical Investment Fund that will generate ongoing annual returns which could be directed towards new facilities and cutting edge equipment to treat disease and save lives.

Decisions on this additional layer of Commonwealth spending will be made on Government advice from a panel of advisers, led by the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer, following a competitive grant application process.

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Media Release

23 August 2007

Ending blame game good for rural and remote health

Professor John Wakerman, Chair of the National Rural Health Alliance, welcomed

the health system reform plan announced today by Kevin Rudd and Nicola Roxon.

"Two weeks ago we were in Parliament House seeking a strategic national health policy to clarify governmental functions and relationships for the health sector. This announcement by the Opposition indicates their willingness to engage in the sort of systematic reform the Alliance has called for," Professor Wakerman said.

"People in rural and remote areas will also support the incorporation of preventative health care into the new Australian Health Care Agreements with the States and Territories.

"We are pleased to note that the reform process would be implemented collaboratively through COAG," he said.

Within an overarching national health plan, the Alliance would like to see a national rural and remote health plan that specifically addresses the high level of need and poorer access to health services, as summarised in the Medicare expenditure figures in the ALP document.

"We hope there will soon be bipartisan support for national health care reform," Professor Wakerman said.

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