

NRHA eforum 25 May 2007

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum 25 May 2007

In this issue:

- * Will the PM reshape the nation's health landscape?
- * Rural Families should be as FITT as any others - but need special consideration
- * Population Health Congress 2008
- * RHEF Broadcasts
- * Update on Rural Critical Care Conference
- * NSW Rural Mental Health Conference
- * MEDICARE EASYCLAIM
- * Indigenous Doctors Call on Medical Profession to Unite on Indigenous Health
- * Report raises questions about remote road safety
- * 10th International Paediatric and Child Health Nursing Conference
- * Nurses: The silent forgotten majority in rural and remote healthcare
- * Time To Remove the Barriers Preventing Indigenous Australians Getting Equal Access To Quality Health Care
- * New articles in Rural and Remote Health
- * Australian doctor crisis deepens - DRS
- * Nurse shortage addressed in the Riverina
- * Rural Health on the ABC
- * The health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women: A snapshot, 2004-05
- * What's On
- * Contribution and subscription information and disclaimer
- * Full text of "Rural Families should be as FITT as any others - but need special consideration"
- * Full text of "Will the PM reshape the nation's health landscape?"

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WILL THE PM RESHAPE THE NATION'S HEALTH LANDSCAPE?

The Prime Minister has this week delivered a speech outlining how his Government intends "to reshape the nation's education and training landscape". There are many - including the Alliance - who would like him to apply the same national leadership to Australia's health system. The full text of the Alliance statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/reshaping%20the%20nations%20health%20landscape.pdf> and is reprinted below.

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RURAL FAMILIES SHOULD BE AS FITT AS ANY OTHERS - BUT NEED SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

On 15 May - the UN's International Day of the Family - let's consider the special needs of families in country areas beset by economic and climatic uncertainty and the worst drought in living memory.

This year's slogan for National Families Week (13-19 May) is FITT Families - Families

Investing In Time Together. This is an idea that will resonate particularly strongly with rural families at a time when they are under such pressure from drought, water shortages and the uncertainties associated with climate change. Investing in time together is an important issue for a family's health and wellbeing, as delegates to the 9th National Rural Health Conference heard recently.

The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/families%20week%2014%20may.pdf> and is reprinted below.

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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.

As well as an exciting range of speakers, this congress will have major trade displays for companies and products which will have a significant future role in addressing governmental and individual lifestyle responses to environmental and nutritional issues.

The Population health Congress 2008 will be held in the Brisbane Convention and exhibition Centre - one of Australia's best conference venues.

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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RHEF BROADCASTS

The Rural Health Education Foundation will broadcast three new, short programs on Wednesday 6 June 2007 dealing with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Indigenous Mental Health and Rheumatic Fever. The three programs, airing from 8pm (EST), are: Drinking for Two? - 8.00pm, 26 minutes. Rheumatic Fever - 8.26pm, 6 minutes. Indigenous Mental Health: An Interview with Professor Ernest Hunter - 8.32pm, 16 minutes. In addition to the initial airing on Wednesday 6 June, all three programs will be re-broadcast on the Foundation's satellite network on Friday 8 June from 12.30pm (EST). See the broadcast timetable for details. For information about these programs please click on the program title above or visit the Foundation website <http://www.rhef.com.au>

Better Access to Mental Health Care pre-recorded satellite broadcast
Presented by Rural Health Education Foundation Funded by Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing This program explores the Better Access Initiative and
discusses what it means for the General Practitioners, paediatricians, psychiatrists,
psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists who assist people with mental
health disorders. Case studies illustrate the practical application of the Better Access
Initiative in the clinical setting, and an expert panel discusses the consequences for rural and
remote GPs and allied health practitioners. For more details visit the
<http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/711/711.html>

"Syndrome X": Update on Metabolic Syndrome - LIVE satellite TV broadcast Tuesday 22nd
May 2007 (repeated Friday 25th May 12:30pm EST)
Produced by the Rural Health Education Foundation Funded by Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing
In April 2005 the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) developed and published a
consensus worldwide definition of metabolic syndrome. It is defined as central obesity in
concurrency with any two of the following factors: raised triglycerides, reduced HDL
cholesterol, raised blood pressure or raised fasting plasma glucose. This program discusses
the changes made to the definition and the implications of these changes for both
practitioners and patients. Key areas discussed in the program include prevention, treatment
and management of metabolic syndrome in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.
Program information can be found by clicking
<http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/706/706.html> Contact: Rural Health Education Foundation
via email rhef@rhef.com.au or telephone (02) 6232-5480.

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From: Jane Howorth - ECC Information Desk
Subject: Update on Rural Critical Care Conference

The 2007 Rural Critical Care Conference is taking place in Ballina NSW, 24 - 25 August.
Special 'early' registration rates are available up to 15 June 2007.

Further info is available on the conference website <http://www.ruralcriticalcare.asn.au>

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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. Closing date for
abstracts is 15 June.

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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MEDICARE EASYCLAIM

Medicare Easyclaim, the EFTPOS-based claiming system that lets practices and patients process their Medicare claims electronically and on the spot, is due to rollout from July 2007. As Medicare Australia talks to more and more practices about this additional claiming channel, they are assembling a list of frequently asked questions. To find out more, visit <http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/easyclaim> or call 1800 700 199.

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9TH NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

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

Media Statements from the Conference are as follows:

- * From the 9th Conference: plans for rural and remote health - http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/9th%20conf_plans%20for%20rr%20health%2015%20march.pdf
- * 9th Conference: the rural health sector recommits to action - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/conference%20media%20with%20communique%20and%20recs%2015%20march.pdf>
- * Good health - not just about giving up smoking and taking up exercise - http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/good%20health%20_%20smoking%20and%20exercise.pdf
- * Top Performers in Rural Health Care Honoured - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/top%20rural%20health%20performers%20%20honoured.pdf>
- * Grumpy old men perform secret men's business - and more - in Men's Sheds - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/grumpy%20old%20men.pdf>
- * Country Australians deserve an equal share in Australia's wealth - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/8%20march%20country%20australians%20deserve%20equal%20share.pdf>
- * Health Reform, Health Professionals and Service Planning - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/070307%20health%20reform%20health%20professionals%20day%202%20%207%20march%2020071.pdf>
- * Rural Health - It's All Happening in Albury at opening of 9th National Rural Health Conference - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/070307%20media%20notification%207%200%20march%20nrh%20conference.pdf>

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

- <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/ajr>

The April 2007 issue of the journal is available online now at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/toc/ajr>. This is a special thematic issue on mental health, with a particular focus on the provision of services in rural and remote Australia relating to the prevention and management of mental health issues. Articles include:

- * The cost of change on the land
 - * headspace: National Youth Mental Health Foundation: Making headway with rural young people and their mental health
 - * Internet-based mental health programs: A powerful tool in the rural medical kit
 - * Disadvantage and discontent: A review of issues relevant to the mental health of rural and remote Indigenous Australians
 - * Securing and retaining a mental health workforce in Far Western New South Wales
 - * Use of social network analysis to describe service links for farmers' mental health
 - * Evaluation of a stress management course in adult education centres in rural Australia
 - * Prevalence of psychological distress, anxiety and depression in rural communities in Australia
 - * Natural disasters, climate change and mental health considerations for rural Australia
 - * Challenges faced by general practitioners and allied mental health services in providing mental health services in rural Queensland
 - * Mental health issues and resources in rural and regional communities: An exploration of perceptions of service providers
- Grazing
- * From the Journal Associates
 - * Book Review

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INDIGENOUS DOCTORS CALL ON MEDICAL PROFESSION TO UNITE ON INDIGENOUS HEALTH

In the latest Medical Journal of Australia (MJA), the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) and its co-authors challenge the Australian medical and health community to unite in their actions to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health to coincide with celebrations for the 40th Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum this Sunday 27 May.

The full text of the AIDA statement is at http://www.aida.org.au/res/File/Press%20releases/MJA_Articles.pdf and the MJA issue on indigenous health is at http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/186_10_210507/contents_210507.html

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

and support the work of the National Rural Health Alliance.

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REPORT RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT REMOTE ROAD SAFETY

A new report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) examines transportation-related injuries and deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

The report, Injury of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people due to transport 1999-00 to 2003-04, showed that Indigenous Australians had more than twice the rate of fatal injury in transport accidents, 26 per 100,000 population compared with 11 per 100,000 population for non-Indigenous Australians.

The AIHW statement is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2007/mr20070524.cfm> and the full report is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10472>

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PARTYline Newsletter

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

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

Latest Issue: Number 29, March 2007

In This Issue

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

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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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LIFELINE'S JUST ASK - 1 300 13 11 14

Your Rural Mental Health Information Service

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

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NURSES: THE SILENT FORGOTTEN MAJORITY IN RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTHCARE

Nurses make up an astonishing 50% of the 350,000 health professionals working in Australian health service industries. In rural and remote Australia, nurses are the most widely distributed of all health professionals and the most consistent contributor to health service delivery. Yet, they consistently attract the least attention by the Federal, State and Territory Governments, according to the Council of Remote Area Nurses (CRANA) and President of Australian Rural Nurses and Midwives (ARNM).

While the inclusion of initiatives around mental health nurses in the 2007 Federal Budget will result in a vital increase in services to rural and remote areas, two key rural and remote nursing groups are left asking, is that all?

Council of Remote Area Nurses (CRANA) President Christopher Cliffe said that in remote health, successful recruitment and retention of nurses is the difference between whether communities have access to health care services or none at all.

Dr Jane Mills, President of Australian Rural Nurses and Midwives (ARNM) said that "Nurses and midwives are the backbone of rural health service delivery, filling in gaps in the absence of doctors, often with little recognition and minimal professional support. ARNM is disappointed with the lack of budget allocation for developing this core workforce group. The well recognised shortage of doctors in rural practice increases reliance on the rural nursing and midwifery workforce."

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TIME TO REMOVE THE BARRIERS PREVENTING INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS GETTING EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE

AMA President, Dr Mukesh Haikerwal, has said that access barriers to health care are a major contributor to continuing poor health outcomes for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.

The inequity of access to health care experienced by Indigenous Australians is highlighted in "Institutionalised Inequity: Not Just A Matter of Money", the sixth AMA Indigenous Health Report Card.

Dr Haikerwal said it is shameful that in a prosperous modern society, an Indigenous child born in Australia today can expect to die 17 years before a non-Indigenous child.

The AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-73EVH8> and the full report at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-73EVGV>

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NEW ARTICLES IN RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH

'Alexandra District Ambulance Service through the eyes of a medical student'
This letter gives an Australian medical student's reflections on his experience with a rural volunteer ambulance service.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=679>

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AUSTRALIAN DOCTOR CRISIS DEEPENS - DRS

Two thirds of Australia is not adequately serviced by GP's. More than 65 per cent of Australia has been designated as "areas of workforce shortage", meaning the number of GPs is below the accepted figure of one-to-1400 people. The full text of the DRS statement is at <http://www.drs.org.au/media/2007/media170507.htm>

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BUSH CRISIS LINE - 1800 805 391

Bush Crisis Line is a twenty-four hour confidential telephone support and debriefing service for multi-disciplinary remote and rural health practitioners and their families. It is staffed by qualified psychologists with remote and cross-cultural experience, is toll free and available from anywhere in Australia. For more information <http://www.bushcrisisline.org.au>

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NURSE SHORTAGE ADDRESSED IN THE RIVERINA

(Extract from FarmOnline, free registration at <http://www.farmonline.com.au>)

Celebrating International Nurses Day (May 12) the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) has hailed the first phase of a pilot program in the NSW Riverina to encourage nurses into general practice to address growing workforce shortages a complete success. The full article is available at http://www.farmonline.com.au/news_daily.asp?ag_id=42420

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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>)

Aborigines comprise 25pc of jail population

A Bureau of Statistics report suggests Indigenous people were last year 13 times more likely than non-Indigenous people to have done time in prison.
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200705/s1922344.htm>

Report reveals Aboriginal women's health inequality

A Bureau of Statistics report shows Indigenous women are about one-and-a-half times more likely to be overweight than non-Indigenous women.
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200705/s1922498.htm>

OUTBACK DEPRESSION SITUATION NEAR CRISIS POINT, HEALTH CONFERENCE TOLD (7.30 Report: 16/05/2007)

<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2007/s1925070.htm>

UK DOCTORS TARGETED FOR COUNTRY PRACTICE (The World Today: 11/05/2007)

<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2007/s1920923.htm>

'DRY TOWN' ALICE RAISES VIOLENCE CONCERNS (The World Today: 10/05/2007)

<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2007/s1919664.htm>

AMA renews call for Indigenous health progress

A new study shows Indigenous people with diabetes are now younger and more overweight than they were in the last study five years ago, prompting the Australian Medical Association to renew its calls to improve Indigenous health.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200705/s1927811.htm>

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THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT
ISLANDER WOMEN: A SNAPSHOT, 2004-05
(ABS Catalogue 4722.0.55.001)

Indigenous women are more likely than non-Indigenous women to be unemployed, to have carer responsibilities for children other than their own, to receive welfare payments and to have finished school at an earlier age. Indigenous women are also more likely to be a victim of violence and to live in communities where violence is prevalent. Nevertheless, four in ten Indigenous women reported their health as excellent or very good in 2004-05. Holistic health approaches, including those that encompass spirituality and connections to family, community and country, and the sharing of Indigenous women's knowledge, skills and networks have been identified as important components in addressing the health disadvantages experienced by many Indigenous women. The full ABS publication is available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4722.0.55.001?OpenDocument>

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

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

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

For program and registration details visit <http://www.rdaq.com.au/conference> or call 07 3105 7800

Kelli Dopson
Event Manager RDAQ Conference 2007
Tel: 07 3105 7800 Fax: 07 3105 7801
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GPO Box 2523, Brisbane, Qld 4001

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AHCRA National Health Reform Summit 2007

The Australian Health Care Reform Alliance is holding a National Health Reform Summit '**Reform in the Australian Health Sector**' on 30-31 July 2007 in Canberra. Program and

online registration are available at <http://www.healthreform.org.au/>

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From: Joy Burch
Subject: FW: 2007 Mount Isa Remote Health Conference 24-26 August 2007 - Call For Abstracts

Every two years Mount Isa hosts a conference aimed at bringing together people with an interest in all aspects of health in remote Australia. Previous events in 2003 and 2005 were immensely successful with attendees finding the presentations 'focussed and relevant' and many going on to indicate their willingness to attend again.

The purpose of this year's event is to provide a forum for information exchange and debate about issues relevant to remote health with a particular focus on the following themes:

- * Clinical practice in remote areas;
- * Population Health including Indigenous health;
- * Workforce supply, education and training;
- * Research outcomes such as innovation in health service delivery.

This conference is convened by the Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health in collaboration with a range of stakeholders including, Queensland Health, the Royal Flying Doctors Service, James Cook University, Oxfam, North and West Queensland Primary Health Care and the Mount Isa City Council. Through involvement of such a wide range of remote health organisations the multidisciplinary nature of this conference is assured.

Once again the Mount Isa Remote Health Conference promises to be a fantastic event and, through its small size and limited registrations, represents a great opportunity to establish networks with other remote health professionals.

Details are available at <http://micrrh.jcu.edu.au/conferences-workshops/remotely-interested/>

Abstracts close 8 June 2007

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web: <http://www.arhen.org.au>
journal: <http://www.rrh.org.au>

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

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

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From: Kate Morrison sjp@unsw.edu.au
Subject: Anti-Poverty Week

The main aim of Anti-Poverty Week (14th - 20th October) is to raise awareness of poverty and hardship around the world and within Australia.

Poverty and severe hardship affect more than a million Australians. Around the world more than a billion people are desperately poor. In Anti-Poverty Week help fight poverty and hardship.

Why not organise a display, stall or award? Maybe a workshop, lecture or forum? How about a fundraiser, fact sheet or petition? For more information and ideas, visit <http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au>, email apw@antipovertyweek.org.au or call 1300 797 290.

Kate Morrison
National Coordinator
Anti-Poverty Week 2007
1300-797-290
apw@antipovertyweek.org.au
<http://www.antipovertyweek.org.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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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 14 May 2007

Rural Families should be as FITT as any others - but need special consideration

On 15 May - the UN's International Day of the Family - let's consider the special needs of families in country areas beset by economic and climatic uncertainty and the worst drought in living memory.

This year's slogan for National Families Week (13-19 May) is FITT Families - Families Investing In Time Together. This is an idea that will resonate particularly strongly with rural families at a time when they are under such pressure from drought, water shortages and the uncertainties associated with climate change. Investing in time together is an important issue for a family's health and wellbeing, as delegates to the 9th National Rural Health Conference

heard recently.

It was Rhonda Galbally who reminded people at the conference of the importance of the social and community determinants of health. Evidence from major longitudinal studies shows that having a sense of hope and of control over one's life contributes more to a person's good health than health-related behaviours. The recent Budget initiative to provide additional mental health services in rural areas was welcome, but it should remind us that it would be better to invest in both effective health promotion as well as services to manage poor mental health. The prospect of better health should be an incentive to invest in things like rural economic development, drought recovery, housing, public and community transport, and family services in rural and remote areas.

National Families Week is an opportune time to revisit recommendations from the 9th Conference to improve the health and wellbeing of families in rural and remote Australia. The Government was urged to invest in research into the impacts of the current drought and water shortages in order to provide a basis for supporting behaviours that will build personal, family and community resilience.

Urgent consideration should be given to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The Alliance would encourage all people who support this key social challenge to throw their weight behind the Close the Gap campaign being led by the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and Oxfam. Another key issue affecting rural families is the closure of rural maternity services. Delegates at the 9th Conference urged State and Territory governments to reverse this trend and to re-establish such units where they had closed. The need for mothers to travel long distances to deliver their babies imposes significant personal, financial and health costs on healthy families.

Finally, there is the opportunity for people to help improve patients' accommodation and travel assistance schemes. Submissions can be made to the Senate Inquiry into these programs, and are due with the Committee Secretary by 25 May. The Alliance's submission will argue for greater uniformity in the state and territory schemes for patients' travel and accommodation, and sufficient investment in them to ensure that all eligible families can be assisted.

Patients' accommodation and travel schemes should not be seen as an optional extra but as the only fair means by which people in more remote areas can access a range of specialist services, such as those for the management and treatment of cancer. The schemes should have eligibility criteria that are flexible enough to take account of particular family circumstances. Good health and wellbeing is the aspiration of most families. It is achievable through a combination of healthy lifestyle choices and intervention as necessary from health practitioners. In their endeavours to maintain health and wellbeing, rural families are faced with more challenges than their city counterparts.

Adoption of the recommendations from the 9th Conference would remove some of this added burden, and introduce strategies for reducing the health divide between rural and other Australians.

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Media Release, 17 May 2006

Will the PM reshape the nation's health landscape?

The Prime Minister has this week delivered a speech outlining how his Government intends "to reshape the nation's education and training landscape". There are many - including the Alliance - who would like him to apply the same national leadership to Australia's health system.

It is commonly agreed that although Australia's health system is good overall, there are some population groups that are very poorly served. It is also agreed that one of the main areas for improvement is the relationship between the Commonwealth and States/ Territories.

The Prime Minister has this week shown himself willing to use funding provided to the States for education as a lever in joint Commonwealth/State work on education. There is a strong case for similar leverage to be applied through the Australian Health Care Agreements (AHCAs), due to be negotiated for a new round beginning 1 July 2008. Under these Agreements the Commonwealth will provide more than \$50 billion to the States over four years for public hospitals.

There is an opportunity for the Commonwealth Government to improve health outcomes with a stronger position on health funding. Agreements should be written into the new AHCAs about joint expenditures on mental health, say, and health promotion, and school dental clinics. The AHCAs should include additional funding for States and Territories which reach agreed and meaningful targets - in particular those that relate to improved health for selected population groups.

The idea is not for the Australian Government as the major collector of taxes to 'bully' the States, but rather to make major financial flows dependent upon outcomes. This would provide incentives for the States through which they could receive additional funds. The Alliance would obviously like such targets to include some that relate to the delivery of services and to health outcomes in rural and remote areas.

The current debate on reform of the Australian health care system has vital implications for some of Australia's most urgent social challenges. Chief among these is the question of how to provide equivalent health for Indigenous peoples within a generation. Health reform will also help lead to a fair go in health services and equivalent health outcomes for people in rural and remote areas.

We encourage the Prime Minister to extend the approach to education outlined this week to the health sector, and to work collaboratively with States and Territories on how the AHCAs can be a framework for improved health outcomes, reduced cost- and blame-shifting, and more public accountability for health services and health outcomes.

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