

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum 5 December 2008

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ROUNDTABLE CALLS FOR TEAM APPROACH IN RURAL HEALTH

The Rural Health Workforce Roundtable which met at Parliament House in Canberra welcomed COAG's recent major investment in health and intends to work with both State and Commonwealth governments to influence the implementation of new programs. The full text of the Alliance statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/mediareleases/roundtable%20media%20release.pdf> and is reproduced below.

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November 2008 E-news from the NRHA

NRHA Survey

The Alliance is currently conducting a brief survey to find out the ways in which our website is used and how our contacts prefer to receive information from us. The survey can be found at www.ruralhealth.org.au - it should only take 2-3 minutes and your assistance in completing it would be greatly appreciated.

10th Conference: Registrations open in December

Planning is underway for the 10th National Rural Health Conference to be held in Cairns, 17-20 May 2009 and online registrations will open in December. More than 400 abstracts have been received and work is continuing with the Conference Advisory Committee on program, administrative, arts-in-health and funding aspects of the event.

e-satchels now available

Organisations intending to promote their services at the 10th National Rural Health Conference can book an e-Satchel insert now. There will be no provision for hardcopy flyers to be inserted in Conference satchels. For a nominal fee, you can provide an e-flyer to promote your company, agency, service or products. With your e-flyer in the 10th Conference e-satchel it will be accessible to all visitors to the Conference website, and the e-satchel will be promoted to all contacts on the Alliance's database. Your organization's flyer and logo will remain on the 10th Conference website together with a direct link to your own website. For further information see the Alliance's website.

Review of maternity services

Health Minister Nicola Roxon has launched a discussion paper and review of maternity services. Over 130 maternity services in rural and regional areas have closed in the last decade and the matter is of significant concern to the Alliance and its Member Bodies. The Alliance was represented at a series of roundtable consultations held in October. People in rural and remote areas will be pleased to know that the roundtables gave a high priority to maternity services issues for rural women and their families. The discussion paper itself and further details of the review are available on the Department of Health and Ageing's website.

Other key policy work

The Alliance will be producing a submission to the Department's review of classification systems (RRMA etc). It will continue to promote the case for a National Rural Health Plan to take the place of *Healthy Horizons*. It is working on a position paper on the sustainability of small rural and remote communities. PATS remains an important issue for follow-up and action. The Alliance is also giving priority attention to work for improved oral and dental health in rural and remote areas and is pleased to note Minister Roxon's keen interest in that matter.

Australian Journal Rural Health - December issue

Mental health is a prominent theme in the December issue. Deputy Editor David Perkins' editorial draws on an original article in the issue which surveys general practitioners' management of patients with mental health conditions in rural north-western New South Wales. Other articles examine farm suicides in South Australia and the mental health of farmers in Southern Queensland. The issue also looks at cancer management issues, expanding the role of paramedics, and young driver restrictions, and there is an interesting case study of four rural towns and the critical health infrastructure needed for refugee resettlement in rural Australia.

NOW OPEN: Scholarships for rural students studying medicine

The 2009 application round for the Rural Australia Medical Undergraduate Scholarship (RAMUS) Scheme opened on 4 November 2008. The Scheme is open to medical students from rural and remote areas who have a demonstrated financial need. RAMUS scholarship holders receive unbonded scholarships worth \$10,000 a year while completing a standard medical degree at their chosen university. The RAMUS Scheme supports a total of 550 ongoing scholarships and up to 115 scholarship places are available in 2009 - so not all applicants who are eligible will receive a scholarship. Applications must be submitted by 5pm on 19 January 2009. To access an online application form, or find further details about the RAMUS Scheme, go to

<http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

New Chair elected for *friends* Advisory Committee

Janie Smith was recently elected Chairperson of the friends of the Alliance Advisory Committee and, in this capacity, will sit on the NRHA Council. Janie has been actively involved nationally in remote, rural and Indigenous health as a practitioner, academic, researcher and policy writer for almost thirty years.

Discounted registration for *friends* of the Alliance

Financial members of friends of the Alliance will be able to register for the 10th Conference at a discounted rate. Details of all registration fees will be available on the Conference website in December. You can find a membership form on the friends page of the Alliance's website.

friends at the 10th - please donate something from your home town

friends who attend the 10th Conference are invited to contribute an item of produce or a souvenir from their home town for a special hamper. All *friends* at the Conference will go into a draw for the hamper and the winner will be announced at the Conference.

friends Photographic and Poetry Festival - start clicking/writing!

The very successful *friends* photographic festival is returning to the 10th Conference and this time there will be a poetry competition as well. Keep an eye on the *friends* page of the Alliance's website for details to be announced soon.

Please keep in touch with us on all things rural.

<http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

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10th NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE
17-20 May 2009, Cairns, Qld

Bumper interest shows Cairns the place to be in '09

Over 400 abstracts have been received for the presentation of papers, posters and workshops at next year's 10th National Rural Health Conference in Cairns.

The number reflects the high level of national interest in the health of the people of rural and remote Australia.

The papers have come from all parts of Australia from people with a wide range of backgrounds

- as consumers, managers, practitioners and researchers. Each one provides a different perspective on health outcomes and the health services available - including the way they are delivered and their current availability in rural and remote areas.

As part of its ongoing commitment to the Closing the Gap campaign, and as with previous National Rural Health Conferences, the conference committee will give special consideration to papers submitted by Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. First-time presenters will also get special support at the conference.

"It's hard to tell whether the extraordinarily high level of interest is due to the poor state of health in the bush, or to the major opportunities for strategic reform that are now beginning to open up in rural and remote areas," said Conference Convenor Owen Allen.

Either way, following their assessment by an independent panel, about 120 of those who submitted abstracts will gain a spot on the busy four-day conference program, which starts on 17 May 2009 at the Cairns Convention Centre.

"We are considering ways to ensure that those whose abstracts narrowly miss out can remain involved in the Conference," said Mr Allen.

Themes for the conference in Cairns are:

- * overcoming Indigenous and non-Indigenous disadvantage by achieving greater health equity between country and city
- * constructing a resilient response to both political and environmental climates
- * demanding community consultation on health issues
- * collaborating to make health programs 'fit for service' and
- * celebrating the successes and failures of 20 years in rural and remote health.

"Even with the program yet to be finalised, it promises to become a rural health showcase for the nation," Mr Allen said.

Further Contact:

Lyn Eiszele - Conference Manager: (02) 6285 4660

Marshall Wilson - Media: 0419 664 155

<http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

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From: Alice Cullam

Subject: Hundreds Walked for Better Health

More than 35,000 West Australians from 170 schools, 80 workplaces and 50 community groups participated in over 300 walk events across the state, during Walk Week - *Walk There Today* from 3 to 9 November 2008.

The aim of Walk Week - *Walk There Today* is to raise awareness of the many benefits of

walking and to encourage West Australians to be more active by walking for transport, health, recreation and the environment. For further information visit <http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/wa>

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RDAA STATEMENT

Rural doctors welcome Minister's decision to grant permanent visa to Horsham doctor
26 November 2008

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Rural%20doctors%20welcome%20Minister's%20decision%20to%20grant%20permanent%20visa%20to%20Horsham%20doctor%20--%20October%202008.pdf

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The Australian Journal of Rural Health is a multidisciplinary journal, which aims to facilitate the formation of interdisciplinary networks to build and advance rural practice for all health professionals.

Get published in the *Australian Journal of Rural Health!*

The Journal welcomes short reports and letters to the editor as well as review articles, original research articles and clinical perspectives. For useful tips on submitting your manuscript, read the FREE editorial, *How to get published in the Australian Journal of Rural Health*. Manuscripts can be submitted online at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ajrh> Manuscript Central or posted to AJRH.

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December 2008 issue now available. Contents include:

Editorial - Mental health academics in the university departments of rural health: Roles and contributions

Suicides on farms in South Australia, 1997-2001

Young driver restrictions: Does the evidence support them?

Cervical cancer risk factors and predictors of cervical dysplasia among women in south-west Nigeria

Mental health of farmers in Southern Queensland: Issues and support

Critical health infrastructure for refugee resettlement in rural Australia: Case study of four rural towns

Lung cancer: An exploration of patient and general practitioner perspectives on the realities of

care in rural Western Australia

General practitioners' management of patients with mental health conditions: The views of general practitioners working in rural north-western New South Wales

Expanding the role of paramedics in northern Queensland: An evaluation of population health training

A rural/urban comparison of the roles of the general practitioner in colorectal cancer management

Short Reports

Improving inpatient management of community-acquired pneumonia in remote northern Australia

Do patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease receive smoking cessation advice and interventions in rural Crete? Report from a medical audit study

Mothers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes towards their obese and overweight children living in rural north-west of New South Wales

Doctor and physician assistant distribution in rural and remote Texas counties

Further information at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/loi/ajr>

Students and researchers keen to learn more about the changing facts surrounding Indigenous health are encouraged to consult the 2008 'virtual issue' of the prestigious *Australian Journal of Rural Health*. Freely available through the website <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/loi/ajr> readers can access 22 key reports published in the last decade covering some of the most pressing topics in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

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RHEF UPCOMING PROGRAMS

(From <http://www.rhef.com.au/upcoming-programs/>)

Tuesday 9 December, 8 pm

823: The Journey Back: Rehabilitation After Stroke
Channel 4

Friday 12 December, 1.30 pm

823: The Journey Back: Rehabilitation After Stroke
Channel 23

Tuesday 16 December, 8 pm

611: Clinical Toxicology: Bites and Stings
Channel 23

Friday 19 December, 12.30 pm

611: Clinical Toxicology: Bites and Stings
Channel 23

Tuesday 27 January 2009, 8 pm

901: A is for Asthma: Managing Asthma in Primary School Kids
Channel 4

Friday 30 January 2009, 12.30 pm

901: A is for Asthma: Managing Asthma in Primary School Kids
Channel 23

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AIHW REPORTS

New information on Gestational Diabetes in Australia

The risk of being diagnosed with gestational diabetes increases with age - from 1% among 15-19 year old women to 13% among women 44-49 years of age. Women born in Southern Asia are at particularly high risk with an incidence rate 3.4 times the rate of Australian-born women.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were diagnosed with gestational diabetes at a rate 1.5 times as high as other Australian women and had a higher risk across all age groups.

The AIHW statement is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2008/mr20081203.cfm> and the full report is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10640>

Hospital procedures for diseases of the digestive tract in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians

Hospitalisation rates for diseases of the digestive system are lower among Indigenous peoples compared with other Australians. However, of those who are hospitalised with a disease of the digestive system, Indigenous people are less likely to have a procedure recorded than other Australians. The aim of this study was to examine patterns of undergoing a procedure for diseases of the digestive tract once in hospital for Indigenous Australians compared with other Australians, after adjustment for a number of explanatory variables.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10628>

Projection of Australian health care expenditure by disease, 2003 to 2033

The report projects health and residential aged care expenditure for the period 2003 to 2033.

Total expenditure on health and residential aged care is projected to increase from 9.3% of GDP in 2002-03 to 12.4% of GDP in 2032-33.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10692>

Top injuries leading to hospitalisation: falls for women, road crashes for men

About 356,000 injuries in 2004-05 were serious enough to result in hospitalisation. The vast majority (86%) of these community injuries, or injuries typically sustained in the home, workplace or street, were unintentional. The rest were considered to be intentional, such as assault or self-harm. The leading causes of these unintentional injuries were falls (36%) and road crashes (14%).

The AIHW statement is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2008/mr20081127.cfm> and the full report is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10658>

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The next edition of Partyline, the Newsletter of the National Rural Health Alliance is now available. It scrutinises the current range of government reviews and workforce initiatives and looks at future investment in rural health in the light of the current economic environment. Pat Anderson speaks candidly about making a difference in Aboriginal health and Justine Caines reflects on the current Maternity Services Review. There is a focus on the 10th National Rural Health Conference in Cairns next year, a beyondblue feature, NRHA news and letters and stories from readers.

Partyline No. 34 is available in hard copy and online - go to <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>, then to Publications, then Partyline.

If you would like to subscribe to Partyline please email your contact details to nrha@ruralhealth.org.au Subscription is free.

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STATEMENTS BY THE NATIONAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED HEALTH ORGANISATION

COAG: A significant step towards Closing the Gap
<http://www.naccho.org.au/Files/Documents/NACCHO%20Media%20Release%20-%20301108.pdf>

Aboriginal men to benefit from new policy
<http://www.naccho.org.au/Files/Documents/08-11-28%20Media%20Release%20Aboriginal%20men%20to%20benefit%20from%20new%20policy.pdf>

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Join *friends* of the Alliance now for 2009 and get discounted registration for the 10th Conference in Cairns in May. People who pay the *friends* fee after 1 September are members for the whole of the following calendar year. *friends* members will also receive the updated CD 'Rural and Remote Health Papers 1991-2009' (due out in late 2009), connection with the Alliance's policy work and regular issues of the *Partyline* newsletter.

Above all, membership of *friends* gives you the opportunity to support the Alliance and its work.

The *friends* Advisory Committee is: Alicia Eaton (Vic), John Ferguson (Qld), Jane Fisher (ACT), Janet Fletcher (NT), Pauline Glover (SA), Nigel Jefford (WA), Marie Lally (SA), Suzanne Little (Qld), Irene Mills (WA), Beth Smith (TAS), Janie Smith (NSW), Janet Struber (NT), David Templeman (ACT), David Thompson (Vic) and Robin Toohey (NSW). Members of

the Committee are soon to elect a Chairperson, who will be a Member of the NRHA Council.

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RAMUS SCHOLARSHIPS - APPLICATIONS FOR 2009 ARE NOW OPEN

Apply online now! At <https://www.nrha.net.au/ei/rs.esp?id=84&scriptid=RAMLOGIN>
Applications close 5:00pm AEDST 19 January 2009. Late applications will not be accepted

To be eligible you must:

- * be an Australian citizen or permanent resident of Australia
- * have lived in an Australian rural area for a defined minimum period of time. A minimum of five consecutive years, or eight cumulative years from your fifth birthday up to the time you enter medical school
- * be studying full-time in an accredited Australian medical degree. You can apply for RAMUS if you are applying to study medicine or if you are already enrolled, and in any year of your medical studies. Accredited medical courses include both undergraduate and graduate-entry courses.
- * be a member of, or agree to join, your university's student rural health club

Further information at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/scholarships/?IntContId=14716&IntCatId=7>

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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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ENDING THE CYCLE OF VULNERABILITY - AMA INDIGENOUS HEALTH REPORT CARD 2008

The Australian Medical Association has released its AMA Indigenous Health Report Card in Canberra - focusing on Indigenous children and the discrepancies in their health outcomes. According to the Report Card, compared with their non-Indigenous Australian counterparts, Indigenous children were:

- * More likely to be stillborn, to be born pre-term, to have low birth weight, or die in the first month of life
- * Two to three times more likely to die in the first year of life
- * 11 times more likely to die from respiratory causes
- * At a much higher risk of suffering from infectious and parasitic diseases, respiratory and circulatory problems, hearing loss, rheumatic fever, dental caries, injuries and clinically-

significant emotional and behavioural difficulties

* Nearly 30 times more likely to suffer from nutritional anaemia and malnutrition up to four years of age

* Cared for by substantially fewer adults, who had serious health risks themselves.

The AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-7LRVBR> and the report card is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-7LQVQP>

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AUSTRALIAN ORGAN DONOR REGISTER ONLINE

The Australian Organ Donor Register is Australia's only national organ and tissue donor register and serves as a lifeline to the people on the organ transplant waiting lists. Register online at <http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/public/services/aodr/register.jsp> to be an Australian Organ Donor now!

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COAG MEETING 29 NOVEMBER

Health and Ageing

COAG agreed to an historic package of reform to the health and hospital system. The measures agreed will mean that the Commonwealth will provide \$64.4 billion in funding over five years for the State health systems, an increase of \$22.4 billion over the previous Australian Health Care Agreements. This includes a \$1.1 billion health workforce package. A further package to take the pressure off public hospitals has also been agreed. Further details are provided at [Attachment A](#) to the communiqué.

Indigenous Reform

COAG has previously agreed to six ambitious targets for closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians across urban, rural and remote areas:

This now joined by a new National Agreement on Indigenous Reform and two new National Partnership payments which cover the areas of Economic Development (\$228.8 million - \$172.7 million Commonwealth funding and \$56.2 million State funding over five years) and Remote Service Delivery (\$291.2 million over six years). Further details are provided at Attachment D to the communiqué.

COAG agreed to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) which captures the objectives, outcomes, outputs, performance measures and benchmarks that all governments have committed to achieving through their various National Agreements and NPs in order to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

The full communiqué is at http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/index.cfm

The Close The Gap coalition has congratulated the Council of Australian Governments on taking substantial steps towards making health equality for Indigenous Australians a reality. The Coalition statement is at http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/media/media_releases/2008/141_08.html

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) has also congratulated COAG for delivering a comprehensive and meaningful package to Close the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The AIDA statement is at <http://www.aida.org.au/news.asp?id=42>

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BUSH CRISIS LINE - 1800 805 391

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

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RURAL HEALTH ON THE ABC

(See <http://www.abc.net.au/health/healthyliving/yourhealth/ruralregionalhealth/>)

PALM ISLAND FORCED TO GO DRY (PM: 01/12/2008)

<http://abcmail.net.au/t/340618/614869/6408/0/>

Higher demand boosts flying doctor services

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) has expanded its services across south-eastern Australia, including Broken Hill, over the past year. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/12/02/2435115.htm>

PROF. FIONA STANLEY ON ABORIGINAL HEALTH (ABC Unleashed: 25/11/2008)

Former Australian of the year Professor Fiona Stanley has devoted much of her career to trying to improve the health of Aboriginal people, especially children. Delivering the annual Hawke Lecture in Adelaide recently, she discussed some of the causes of poor Indigenous health and outlined some strategies for improving it. <http://abcmail.net.au/t/335111/614869/6266/0/>
<http://abcmail.net.au/t/335111/614869/6267/0/>

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BOOST FOR RURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE

The Australian Government will boost the rural health workforce with \$2.7 million in grants to help support, train and educate health professionals. The funding will assist 22 health organisations in rural and remote communities around Australia. The grants will complement other Australian Government initiatives in the areas of rural and remote health and continue our commitment to the health workforce.

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr08-nr-nr170.htm?OpenDocument&yr=2008&mth=12>

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CURRENT ISSUE OF eMJA, 17 November 2008

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

From the Editor's Desk: Doctors as stars

Editorials

Reducing sudden death in young people in Australia and New Zealand: the TRAGADY initiative

Victoria's trauma care system: national implications for quality improvement

Conference Report

Quality use of medicines: what does it mean for you?

Research

A statewide system of trauma care in Victoria: effect on patient survival

Frequent attenders at emergency departments: a linked-data population study of adult patients

Long-term survival following chemoradiation for inoperable non-small cell lung cancer

Somatic symptoms, hypochondriasis and psychological distress: a study of somatisation in

Australian general practice

Health Care

Folate awareness and the prevalence of neural tube defects in South Australia, 1966-2007

What has happened with neural tube defects and womens' understanding of folate in Victoria since 1998?

Intravenous potassium chloride prescribing and administration practices in Victoria: an observational study

Position Statement - Infants with chronic neonatal lung disease: recommendations for the use of home oxygen therapy

For Debate - Australian Government health advisory groups and health policy: seeking a horse, finding a camel

Preventive Health - Australia: the healthiest country by 2020

Diagnostic Dilemmas - Headache of a diagnosis: frontotemporal pain and inflammation associated with osteolysis

Snapshot - An unusual cause of dyspnoea

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ARTICLES IN "RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH"

'The cost of healthy food in rural Victoria'

The cost of food has been skyrocketing across the globe, affecting food security and the capacity to have a nutritious diet. This study of food stores in large and medium sized rural towns in Victoria, Australia uses a new tool to identify population groups who may be vulnerable as a result of high food costs.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=1074>

'Advanced abdominal pregnancy: case report and review of 163 cases reported since 1946'

Advanced abdominal pregnancy can present special challenges for physicians in remote areas. This case report and review of the literature may help avoid potentially catastrophic complications for mother and baby.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=1087>

'Rural health roundtables: a strategy for collaborative engagement in and between rural communities'

Practical approaches, public health, health access improvements, and Rural Health Roundtables belong together. The authors describe a common sense approach within and between rural communities that can address a variety of routine, emergent, and future rural health topics.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=1054>

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What's New in Regional Statistics, Dec 2008 (ABS 1386.0)

- * Welcome from the Director of the Rural and Regional Statistics National Centre
- * An article showing how you can use data from the new version of the National Regional Profile to see changes in your region over time and compare your region to other regions, your State/Territory or Australia
- * An article highlighting the changes the ABS will be making to statistical geography in 2011
- * Information about an article on Interstate Commuters and details of the upcoming releases of Personal Income Tax Data
- * Recent 2006 Census releases such as the CDATE online tool, and the Estimated Resident Population DataPack. Other releases include Perspectives on Regional Australia: Population Turnover, and Population by Age and Sex: Regions of Australia
- * Recent releases such as Agricultural Commodities: Small Area Data, a range of Agricultural State Profiles, and Tourist Accommodation: Small Area Data
- * The recent releases of Water and the Murray-Darling Basin - A Statistical Profile, Water Use on Australian Farms, and Natural Resource Management on Australian Farms
- * Other News and Contacts

Available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1386.0?OpenDocument>

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NAIDOC Week celebrations for 2009 will be held from 5 to 12 July. Further information at <http://www.naidoc.org.au/>

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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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RURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE ROUNDTABLE

Media Release
3 December 2008

Roundtable calls for team approach in rural health

The Rural Health Workforce Roundtable which met at Parliament House in Canberra yesterday welcomed COAG's recent major investment in health and intends to work with both State and Commonwealth governments to influence the implementation of new programs.

In a statement issued after its meeting with Health Minister Nicola Roxon, Roundtable delegates welcomed COAG's renewed emphasis on accountability and agreed to work with governments on specific rural and remote performance indicators such as access to health services and professionals in those areas.

"Increasing the supply of health graduates is an important first step - and the challenge now is to convert this into extra professionals on the ground in rural and remote areas," said Roundtable Chair and Tamworth GP, Dr Jenny May.

"This will require professional, financial and social support for rural and remote practice. It is urgent that we overcome the serious health deficit that continues to exist in rural and remote Australia."

In her meeting with Roundtable delegates, Minister Roxon emphasised that some of the solutions sought on behalf of rural people could come from the work of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (NHHRC), the National Primary Health Care Taskforce and the Maternity Services Review.

Delegates raised with the Minister:

- * specific proposals for multidisciplinary education, training and placements;
- * HECs reimbursements for rural and remote service by health professionals, weighted for remoteness;
- * the need for improved rural and remote health infrastructure; and
- * support for team-based services which allow all health professions their full scope of practice.

The Rural Health Workforce Roundtable comprises fifteen national organizations representing rural consumers, GPs, nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals. Yesterday's Roundtable was convened by the National Rural Health Alliance and was attended by representatives of the twelve organizations listed below.