

## NRHA eforum 5 October 2007

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum 5 October 2007

In this issue:

- \* Rural health workforce fails to register among election priorities
- \* Coalition's slow start on rural health election commitments
- \* Drought relief welcome, but what is the future for the bush?
- \* "Ice" - Out in the Cold - LIVE satellite TV broadcast Produced by the Rural Health Education Foundation
- \* Growth in health expenditure is slowing
- \* RDAA Statements
- \* Statements by the Indigenous Doctors Association
- \* Rural Health Education Foundation program on Overseas Trained Doctors - 4th December 2007
- \* New article in "Rural and Remote Health"
- \* Rural Health on the ABC
- \* Rural Health on the Web
- \* Beating about the bush - Leeder
- \* What's On
- \* Contribution and subscription information and disclaimer
- \* Full text of "Drought relief welcome, but what is the future for the bush?"
- \* Full text of "Coalition's slow start on rural health election commitments"
- \* Full text of "Rural health workforce fails to register among election priorities"

+++++

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

+++++

### RURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE FAILS TO REGISTER AMONG ELECTION PRIORITIES

Hospital administration and substantial programs to assist autistic children featured prominently among health proposals released this week by both major political parties. But all sides of politics failed to advance the core issues that specifically affect the wellbeing of people in rural and remote communities. This week's NRHA Election Scorecard shows the Democrats ahead on points, followed by Labor and the Greens, while the Liberal/National coalition continues to lag.

The full text of the NRHA statement is at and is reprinted below.

+++++

**COALITION'S SLOW START ON RURAL HEALTH ELECTION COMMITMENTS**

The Federal Coalition has made a slow start in announcing relevant policies that relate directly to improving poor health outcomes in the bush.

Just weeks ahead of a federal election, the first National Rural Health Alliance scorecard, shows the Democrats well ahead on points, followed by Labor and the Greens.

The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/mediareleasescorecard270907.pdf> and is reprinted below.

+++++

**DROUGHT RELIEF WELCOME, BUT WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR THE BUSH?**

The announcement of a major extension of drought support for farmers should be welcomed by all Australians. Agriculture is a major contributor to Australia's economic and social wellbeing. Drought and climate change are having and will continue to have an impact on many rural regions, increasing the uncertainty surrounding many small rural towns. This situation underlines the importance and urgency of an independent national inquiry into the sustainability of rural and remote communities. While additional drought relief measures are welcome, we must also recognise that the status and future of agriculture is only one of the determinants of income, health and wellbeing in rural Australia.

The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/drought%20relief%20-%20strategic%20future%2026%20september.pdf> and is reprinted below.

+++++

**"ICE" - OUT IN THE COLD - LIVE SATELLITE TV BROADCAST PRODUCED BY THE RURAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOUNDATION  
Tuesday 23rd October 2007 (repeated Friday 26th October 12:30pm EST)**

Funded by Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing

Crystal Methamphetamine or "Ice" is a growing problem in Australia. As a long-acting stimulant, "Ice" causes significant strain on the cardiac, respiratory and nervous systems. Effects include suppressed appetite, interference with sleeping behaviour, mood swings and unpredictability, and tremors and convulsions. "Ice" can also cause erratic, violent behaviour among its users, including acute psychosis. Long-term effects include stroke, coma and death, as well as chronic psychotic disorder. This creates a myriad of problems for the individual, family, and community.

This program aims to help health workers increase their understanding of the range of effects of crystal meth or "Ice". The program provides strategies for treatment, management, and dealing with problems related to use of illicit drugs such as "Ice" in rural and remote areas. Finally, it explores various strategies to build resilience and preventing substance abuse, particularly among young people.

Program information can be found by clicking  
<http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/714/714.html>  
Contact: Rural Health Education Foundation via email [rhef@rhef.com.au](mailto:rhef@rhef.com.au) or telephone (02) 6232-5480

+++++

### GROWTH IN HEALTH EXPENDITURE IS SLOWING

Total health expenditure in Australia grew by over 7% between 2004-05 and 2005-06 to \$87 billion or \$4,200 per person according to a new report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

Head of the Institute's Expenditure and Economics Unit, Mr John Goss, said health expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) was 9.0%, down slightly from 9.05% the previous year, and up from 7.5% in 1995-96.

'Our health to GDP ratio is comparable to New Zealand, is more than the UK, and is considerably lower than the USA, which in 2005 was 15.3% of GDP,' Mr Goss said.

The report, "*Health expenditure Australia 2005-06*", shows that after adjusting for inflation, total health expenditure increased 3.1% in 2005-06, compared to annual average growth in the decade to 2005-06 of 5.1%.

The areas of expenditure that showed relatively high real increases (after allowing for inflation) were research (7%), public hospital services (6%), community health (5%), aids and appliances and other health practitioners (4% each). The most noticeable slowing in real expenditure growth was in medications. This increased by just 1.6% in 2005-06, against an annual average real increase of 8.6% over the last decade.

The full text of the AIHW release is at  
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2007/mr20071005.cfm> and the publication is at  
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10474>

+++++

### 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.

+++++

## RDAA STATEMENTS

### Rural Workforce Crisis Contagious

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) is extremely concerned by events which suggest the workforce crisis affecting rural Australia is worsening and also spreading into the centres of our major cities.

[http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/RDAA%20RELEASE%2027\\_09\\_07%20workforce%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAA%20RELEASE%2027_09_07%20workforce%20(2).pdf)

### RURAL MEDICAL WORKFORCE CRISIS

Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) President, Dr Peter Rischbieth, and Australian Medical Association (AMA) President, Dr Rosanna Capolingua, have launched a joint proposal of essential measures required to resolve the medical workforce crisis facing rural communities across Australia.

[http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/RDAA-AMA%20workforce%20incentives%20--%20media%20alert%20--%20October%202007.pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAA-AMA%20workforce%20incentives%20--%20media%20alert%20--%20October%202007.pdf)

### Health Debate Must Focus on Workforce

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) is concerned the Federal Government's plan to introduce community management of public hospitals is creating a distraction from the main problem in Australian healthcare and will do little to improve health outcomes for rural Australians.

[http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/RDAA%20RELEASE%2003\\_10\\_07%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAA%20RELEASE%2003_10_07%20(2).pdf)

Medical bodies call for rescue action on rural doctor crisis

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and Australian Medical Association (AMA) are urging the Government to commit to a major rescue package of rural-specific support incentives to get more doctors working in country Australia. [http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/Rural%20Release%20v4.pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Rural%20Release%20v4.pdf)

+++++

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

- \* The Northern Territory can provide hope for the future
- \* Where is the evidence that rural exposure increases uptake of rural medical practice?
- \* Informing rural and remote students about careers in health: Factors influencing career decisions
- \* Diabetes risk factors, diabetes and diabetes care in a rural Australian community
- \* Improving access to and outcomes from mental health care in rural Australia
- \* Where do I go from here: We've got enough seniors?
- \* Self-reported confidence and skills of general practitioners in management of mental health disorders
- \* Cardiovascular risk levels in general practice patients with type 2 diabetes in rural and urban areas
- \* Supporting an emerging workforce: Characteristics of rural and remote therapy assistants in Western Australia
- \* Grazings
- \* From the Journal Associates

+++++

#### STATEMENTS BY THE INDIGENOUS DOCTORS ASSOCIATION

Indigenous doctors place Referendum, Rights and Respect back on the national agenda

<http://www.aida.org.au/news.php?id=50>

Leaders in Medical Education commit to stronger workforce in Indigenous health

<http://www.aida.org.au/news.php?id=49>

+++++

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.

+++++

From: Don Perlgut  
Subject: Rural Health Education Foundation program on Overseas Trained Doctors - 4th December 2007

The Rural Health Education Foundation is currently developing a program of overseas trained doctors (OTDs) in Australia that will be broadcast on the 4th December 2007, entitled Over the Seas & Into the Bush - Overseas Trained Doctors in Rural Australia. See this website page for more information about the program: <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/719/719.html>

The program will look at the various challenges and opportunities faced by OTDs. It will also present insights from supervising doctors, and the various parties involved, such as the regional training providers, accreditation bodies, and professional organisations.

As part of the development of the program we are seeking input from OTDs by way of completing an online survey. The more responses we get the more adequately we can cover their issues.

The Foundation is keen for you could share information email with any OTD/IMGs within your network to encourage them to go on to our website and complete a quick survey. <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/719/719s.html>

There is also an opportunity for people to register their interest in the program.

+++++

#### 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](mailto: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.

+++++

**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](mailto:infoservice@lifeline.org.au) and <http://www.lifeline.org.au>

+++++

**NEW ARTICLE IN "RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH"**

**'Training rural and remote therapy assistants in Western Australia'**

Therapy assistants, often solely responsible for the delivery of therapy health services to rural clients, are an essential part of the Australia rural health workforce. This project report that documents a scheme for their appropriate training is long overdue, and may be applicable to other states - and countries - outside its West Australian origin.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=774>

+++++

**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>

+++++

**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>)

**MERSEY HOSPITAL BOSS REJECTS FED GOVT PLANS (The World Today: 25/09/2007)**

<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2007/s2042734.htm>

## IMMIGRATION MINISTER BLAMED FOR LACK OF OVERSEAS DOCTORS (The World Today: 21/09/2007)

<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2007/s2039708.htm>

## MEDICARE LOOP HOLE HURTS COUNTRY DOCTORS (Stateline South Australia: 21/09/2007)

<http://www.abc.net.au/stateline/sa/content/2006/s2042729.htm>

## HEAVY LOBBYING ON RURAL HEALTH

Jane Bardon (national resources reporter)

The Federal Health Minister says rural Australians will never to be able to expect the same level of health services as their city counterparts under the Coalition. Tony Abbott has delivered the message to a rural health alliance forum at parliament house in Canberra. But is Labor offering anything better?

If there's a good time to get new spending commitments, it's during an election campaign. So rural health groups have increased to fever pitch lobbying for more money, to address what they're calling a crisis shortage of doctors and crumbling infrastructure.

## Doctors want election spotlight on Indigenous intervention

A peak Indigenous health body wants the intervention in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory to be a major priority in the lead-up to the federal election.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/09/29/2046933.htm>

## FAR NORTH QLD LEADS WAY FOR BUSH MIDWIVES (Landline: 30/09/2007)

The closure of maternity units across rural and regional Australia is becoming far too familiar. Narrabri in Northern New South Wales is the latest centre to receive the bad news. The nearest maternity service will be now be two hours away. However one regional area is bucking this national trend and many now see the Far North Queensland experience as a model for the future.

<http://www.abc.net.au/landline/content/2006/s2043816.htm>

## \$300m needed to entice doctors to the bush: AMA

The Australian Medical Association has launched an ambitious bid for more rural doctors and is calling on both sides of politics to support it.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/10/05/2051872.htm?section=justin>

## Health enters election debate

With the election approaching, rural health has been in the spotlight this week.

A Federal Government plan to introduce community management of public hospitals has had a mixed reception.

Catholic Health Australia says the model works well in its hospitals in country areas.

But the Rural Doctors Association says there may not be enough finance, management and medical specialists available in all areas to run hospitals.

David Rivett, from the Australian Medical Association, says changing hospital management won't deal with under-funding. "In a lot of rural hospitals it'll be a good thing but just changing the bureaucracy isn't going to provide any solutions, we need a real funding boost to get doctors and staffs out to country Australia and maintain facilities so their quality workplaces. Just having more and more bureaucrats, or

changing bureaucrats at the helm isn't going to provide any real solutions."

#### Rural doctors launch election wish list

Health groups have given the Federal Government a proposal to ease the critical shortage of rural medical staff.

The Australian Medical and Rural Doctors Associations say new measures to increase the number of doctors in the country - and hold on to them - are urgently needed.

They say at least 1,000 new doctors are required.

Rural Doctors' President Peter Rischbieth says they're calling on both Labor and the Coalition to commit to two new rural incentive payments.

"One is a rural isolation payment, and the other one is a rural procedural and emergency

on-call loading payment. These payments should also be part of a component of funding

which will require them to do after-hours and emergency work and hospital work. At the

moment, we're going to the Federal Government with a proposal that this needs to be funded and this may be in the vicinity of \$300 million per year."

#### MIXED REACTION TO HOSPITAL SHAKE-UP PLAN

Jane Bardon (National Rural Reporter)

There's been a mixed response from rural health organisations to the Federal Coalition's plan to bring in community boards to administer public hospitals. The coalition's election pledge would effectively reduce the power of State Labor Governments to control hospital management. But rural health groups say the policy is no substitute for extra funding.

#### AUTISM PLEDGES WILL HELP REGIONAL AREAS

Robin McConchie (Brisbane, QLD)

Both Labor and the Coalition have made election promises this week to help children and families cope with Autism. It's a particular problem in regional areas, with little specialist care available. Labor is promising to set up six specialist autism child care centres, while the Prime Minister says the Coalition would provide a \$190 million package for early intervention and training. Judy Brewer is a NSW farmer, a mother of two and the partner of former deputy prime minister Tim Fisher. Their eldest son Harrison was diagnosed with autism at the age of four, 10 years ago. Since then, she's been working to get the issue of autism on the political agenda.

+++++

#### 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 - 1 October 2007:

From the Editor's Desk: Personal responsibility for health

The future of medical museums: threatened but not extinct

Humanising medical practice: the role of empathy

Hospital costs of older people in New South Wales in the last year of life  
Suicide risk among recently released prisoners in New South Wales, Australia  
Postpartum haemorrhage occurrence and recurrence: a population-based study  
National standard for health assessment of rail safety workers: the first year  
A spilled gallstone  
Disclosure of genetic information to at-risk relatives: recent amendments to the  
*Privacy Act 1988* (Cwlth)  
Reforming medical education in the United Kingdom: lessons for Australia and New  
Zealand  
Antifungal agents  
Why are community psychiatry services in Australia doing it so hard?  
Apparent spontaneous complete regression of a multifocal malignant mesothelioma of  
the pleura  
Tropical pulmonary eosinophilia: a rare cause of cough in immigrants to Australia  
Early Intervention in Youth Mental Health

+++++

#### RURAL HEALTH ON THE WEB

(Courtesy of GoogleAlert, <http://www.googlealert.com>)

##### Center for Rural Health

Rural Assistance Center School of Medicine & Health Sciences University of North  
Dakota, 1905-2005. <http://www.med.und.edu/depts/rural/> -

##### Journal of Rural Health

The Journal of Rural Health, a quarterly journal published by the NRHA, offers  
original research encompassing evaluations of model and demonstration ...  
<http://www.nrhapress.com/pubs/sub/JRH.html>

##### Welcome to the Institute of Rural Health (IRH)

The Institute of Rural Health, whose objective is to optimise the health of rural  
communities, is based in Mid Wales to act as an UK based centre of ...  
<http://www.irh.ac.uk/>

##### Rural Health Care - USAC

This is the basic introduction page to the two audiences served by the rural health care  
program.  
<http://www.rhc.universalservice.org/>

+++++

#### BEATING ABOUT THE BUSH - LEEDER

An unintended consequence of the federal government's multibillion dollar subsidy of  
private health insurance is the shift of public money for health care away from rural  
and remote health care towards the city.

The Commonwealth has made several worthwhile attempts to improve services in the  
bush in the past decade, including incentive payments to general practitioners in rural

areas who bulk bill, program support for trainee general practitioners and an extensive network of training facilities for medical students, assistance to the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the Rural Chronic Disease Initiative and more. Nevertheless, the main game is the provision of public health services, including hospital care, as the Commonwealth's intervention in Devonport Hospital suggests they recognise.

Solutions to the problem of rural and remote health care require national policy changes, including compensation for the effects of investment in private health insurance subsidies. This is the proper domain of Commonwealth health policy and it would be good to see the problem recognised and proposals advanced for its remedy. And how wonderful it would be if public debate was resurrected, and governments rediscovered how critical to the health of the body politic public debate can be.

Stephen Leeder is professor of public health and community medicine at the University of Sydney, and co-director of the Menzies Centre for Health Policy. The full text of this article is at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=6423>

+++++

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 33<sup>rd</sup> 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/>

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

+++++

### 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](mailto:apw@antipovertyweek.org.au)

+++++

### Climate Change and Human Health Conference

Tuesday 16 and Wednesday 17 October 2007

Park Hyatt Hotel, Melbourne, Australia

<http://www.healthclimate2007.com>

+++++

From: Scott Wagner

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

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

+++++

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

ACRRM and RDAA will hold their AGMs at the Rydges Eagle Hawk Resort, Federal Hwy, Canberra ACT 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/>

+++++

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

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

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

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

Pauline Venn Conference Secretariat [pvenn@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:pvenn@unimelb.edu.au) Ph: 03 5823 4532

+++++

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](mailto:info@eastcoastconferences.com.au), tel 02 6650 9800.

+++++

#### "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](mailto:conference2007@aihw.gov.au)

+++++

#### DIVERSITY IN HEALTH CONFERENCE

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

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

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

3319, or email: [dhi@swahs.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:dhi@swahs.health.nsw.gov.au)

+++++

From: Julie-Anne McWhinnie  
Subject: Preliminary Notice re National Nutrition Networks Conference 08

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

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

A call for abstracts will follow in the week of 8th of October, closing 26th October. Further details will follow.

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

+++++

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](mailto:info@ipchnconference.com.au) or by telephone +61 7 3858 5503.

+++++

**ETHICAL RESPONSIVENESS - 2008 NATIONAL CONFERENCE**  
Stamford Grand, Adelaide, 23-25 May 2008

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

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

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

Important dates  
Abstracts due 31 December 2007  
Acceptance notified by 25 January, 2008  
Early bird Registration closes 7 March, 2008

The Conference secretariat is based at the Mackay Offices of Relate Human Services, PO Box 1401, Mackay 4740, Phone 07-49575400 Fax 07-49575488  
Email: [accfpp@bigpond.net.au](mailto:accfpp@bigpond.net.au)  
<http://www:relatehumanservices.com.au>

+++++

**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

+++++

#### 10th National Rural Health Conference

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

+++++

#### 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.

+++++

#### MEDIA RELEASE

26 September 2007

Drought relief welcome, but what is the future for the bush?

Yesterday's announcement of a major extension of drought support for farmers should be welcomed by all Australians. Agriculture is a major contributor to Australia's economic and social wellbeing. Drought and climate change are having and will continue to have an impact on many rural regions, increasing the uncertainty surrounding many small rural towns.

This situation underlines the importance and urgency of an independent national inquiry into the sustainability of rural and remote communities. While additional drought relief measures are welcome, we must also recognise that the status and future of agriculture is only one of the determinants of income, health and wellbeing in rural Australia.

Other key questions include how rural and remote communities should prepare for the impact of climate change. How will the increasing disparity between booming minerals export regions and drought-affected pastoral areas be handled? What is the future for Indigenous outstations? Will small pastoral communities survive beyond this worst drought in living memory? And if some will not, how should we prepare for this eventuality?

The NRHA believes a major national rethink on these issues is urgently needed, as is agreement about the future of many small rural and remote communities.

"Although we are a health Alliance, it is quite deliberate that our first priority in the election campaign is to seek bipartisan political support for an independent national inquiry into the sustainability of rural and remote communities," said NRHA Chair, Professor John Wakerman.

"There is no sense in being concerned about how to devise sustainable health services for rural and remote areas unless we can be sure that they will be there," he said. "Underpinning all of this is the key question about the extent to which governments will intervene to support non-farm industries and communities in rural and remote areas, provide alternatives to those forced off the land - or whether their future will be left to the free market," he said.

"The current unforgiving drought is affecting rural communities. But the city is also dependent on the bush. The effects will be felt throughout the country, now and in the future. The NRHA is pleased that all sides of politics are showing concern for our rural and regional communities. We would like this concern, which is currently focused on agriculture and the drought, to be extended to bipartisan support for a long-term vision for rural and remote communities," Prof Wakerman said.

+++++

Media Release

27 September 2007

Coalition's slow start on rural health election commitments

The Federal Coalition has made a slow start in announcing relevant policies that relate directly to improving poor health outcomes in the bush.

Just weeks ahead of a federal election, the first National Rural Health Alliance scorecard, released today, shows the Democrats well ahead on points, followed by Labor and the Greens.

Based on party election announcements to date and marked against priorities the Alliance considers critical to alleviating the current situation, the Liberal/National coalition has some ground to make up. This is despite recent major decisions on health from the Government.

A copy of the Election Scorecard is attached. It includes information on how points were allocated and criteria such as whether party policy statements met, or partly met, NRHA priority considerations.

"It is too early to gauge the total commitment of parties in addressing issues the Alliance views as essential. One of our particular concerns is the failure to date of all parties to acknowledge the need for an independent inquiry into the sustainability of rural and remote communities," said NRHA Chair, Professor John Wakerman.

"Although we are a health Alliance, it is quite deliberate that our first priority in the election campaign is to seek bipartisan political support for such an inquiry. There is no sense in being concerned about how to devise sustainable health services for rural and remote areas unless we can be sure that they will still be there in the medium and long term.

"Underpinning this is the extent to which governments will intervene to support or compensate non-farm industries and communities in rural and remote areas," Professor Wakerman said. "What is the future for Indigenous outstations? Will small pastoral communities survive beyond this worst drought in living memory? And if some will not, how should we prepare for this eventuality?"

The NRHA will update its scorecard regularly between now and the election as the parties announce policies that relate directly to rural and remote health issues. Details will be distributed nationally to inform voters of the essential issues for improving health outcomes for people in rural and remote areas.

+++++

Media Release  
4 October 2007

Rural health workforce fails to register among election priorities

Hospital administration and substantial programs to assist autistic children featured prominently among health proposals released this week by both major political parties. But all sides of politics failed to advance the core issues that specifically affect the wellbeing of people in rural and remote communities.

This week's NRHA Election Scorecard shows the Democrats ahead on points, followed by Labor and the Greens, while the Liberal/National coalition continues to lag.

"This week's twists and turns in the debate about drought support remind us all of the urgent need to agree, as a nation, on how we intend to deal with the uncertain future facing many communities and industries in rural and remote areas," said NRHA Chair, Professor John Wakerman.

"Support for those on the land (or leaving it) is one thing, but there also needs to be greater certainty about what the future holds for rural and remote businesses and communities not closely involved with agriculture. The parties should acknowledge the need for an independent inquiry into the sustainability of rural and remote communities."

The outcomes from this week's important debates about the nation's public hospital

system  
will also affect people in rural and remote areas.

"The challenges for public hospitals are not related only to finances," Professor Wakerman said. "The even harder issues relate to the roles hospitals should play in an improved health system, and the major imbalances between demand and supply of skilled health professionals.

These challenges can be best met in the context of a collaborative agreement between governments, consumers and clinicians about a national health policy and plan.

"Without such a plan, health decisions will continue to be made on an *ad hoc* basis. The rural health sector has not benefited fully from unprecedented budget surpluses over the years. There is no better time than the present to address critical health workforce shortages and the place of hospitals in the health system."

The NRHA will update its scorecard regularly between now and the election. Details will be distributed nationally to inform voters of the essential issues for improving health outcomes for people in rural and remote areas.

---

---

[Click here to be removed from the mailing list](#)