

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

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E-NEWS FROM THE ALLIANCE: NOVEMBER 2007

Scorecard continued to be updated in the final weeks of the Election Campaign
There has been considerable interest in the Alliance's Election Scorecard which you can find on the 'Election Section' page of our website at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/election/?IntContId=244&IntCatId=24>.
The Alliance's Election Charter and media releases can also be found there.

Applications for RAMUS 2008

The 2008 round for RAMUS applications is now open. You can apply online from the Scholarships page of the Alliance's website at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/scholarships>. Applications close 5pm AEDST, 14 January 2008.

Policy work

The Alliance's recent policy work has of course focused on the election campaign. Once the election is over, it will be important to keep the incoming government accountable to the commitments made which will impact on the health of people in rural and about areas, and also to maintain the pressure on issues where commitments have not as yet been made. One immediate priority will be to follow up on the recommendations from the Senate Inquiry into the patients' assisted accommodation and travel scheme. After the election the Alliance will

pick up its work again in relation to issues like benchmarking services in towns of various sizes; improving the research effort and evidence based on rural and remote health; the nursing and allied health workforce; mental health and dental health; and the future for small remote Indigenous communities. Indigenous health and the future sustainability of rural and remote communities will remain key priorities for consideration.

Media work at the NRHA

The Alliance is heavily involved in the media work during the election campaign and given the presence now of Marshall Wilson, the Alliance's first Media Officer, we will maintain media activity. There will be many key issues to sort through following the rush of commitments and issues canvassed during the campaign. The Alliance will continue to provide the views of its 27 member bodies on both strategic and longer-term reform issues, as well as immediate challenges relating to service delivery, access and the health workforce.

Co-located bodies

The Alliance is currently co-located with SARRAH - one of its Member Bodies. SARRAH have outgrown their current space but we are pleased they will be remaining close by moving downstairs at number 10 Campion Street in Deakin. The Alliance is also looking forward to once again having the HCRRA Project Officer resident in the Alliance office.

Australian Journal of Rural Health

Under the leadership of Editor James Dunbar and Deputy Editor Prasuna Reddy the Australian Journal of Rural Health goes from strength to strength. Another themed edition is planned for the first half of 2008 following the very successful one (on mental health) published in April 2007. The four Journal Associates of the AJRH are now ARNM, CRANA, the National Rural Faculty of the RACGP, and SARRAH. ACRRM and ARHEN are also closely involved with the AJRH and have advisers to its Board of Management. Further details about the AJRH can be obtained from ajrh@ruralhealth.org.au and manuscript submissions can be made to <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ajrh>

The Commonwealth's support

The NRHA receives core financial support from the Department of Health and Ageing. Its current triennium ends on 30 June 2008 and negotiations will begin soon for a new funding period.

Conferences in 2008: Nutrition, Scientific Symposium and SARRAH

The Alliance is managing three Conferences in 2008: the National Nutrition Networks Conference (11-14 March 2008, Alice Springs), the Inaugural Rural and Remote Health Scientific Symposium (6-8 July 2008, Brisbane) and the 2008 SARRAH Conference (27-30 August 2008, Yepoon). Details of the Nutrition Networks Conference can be found on the Alliance's website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au> and information on the SARRAH Conference can be found at on SARRAH's website at <http://www.sarrah.org.au>

The Alliance on-line

The Alliance continues to rely heavily on its IT capabilities and web presence. The RAMUS application process is available online, as is the submission of abstracts and the registration process for most of our Conferences. You can be assured the Alliance makes every effort to protect the information given to it online and has up-to-date security measures in place to protect this information. We will also continue to make sure that those without adequate access to the internet have the option of receiving our material in hard copy.

Partyline

The next edition of Partyline should be out in March 2008. We are always keen to receive articles from readers. Contributions should be around 50-100 words and can be sent to partyline@ruralhealth.org.au by Friday 20 January 2008. Electronic versions of Partyline are always available in the 'Publications' section of our website at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/publications/?IntContId=57&IntCatId=6>

friends of the Alliance in 2008

Membership of friends of the Alliance is for a calendar year and tax invoices for 2008 will be sent out soon so please consider joining in 2008. Keep an eye on the friends page of our website for up-to-date information about friends <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/friends/?IntCatId=4>

eforum

Please accept our apologies for some problems with the transmission of the eforum over recent months. Hopefully they are now fixed. If you find you've accidentally been removed from the list in the clean-up, all you need to do is subscribe again. Please let us know if you experience any problems receiving eforum in the future. Eforum contains articles about rural health that have been submitted via our website. The articles are collated by a moderator and emailed to subscribers each fortnight. This list of people is in addition to those on the Alliance's mailing list so if you wish to receive eforum you need to subscribe separately. There is also an eforum archive on our website where you can view past editions of eforum: <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/eforumarchive/?IntCatId=19>. You can also subscribe or contribute to the Alliance's fortnightly eforum from the front page of the Alliance's website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

10th National Rural Health Conference

The 10th National Rural Health Conference will be held in Cairns on 17-20 May 2009. Keep an eye on our website for up-to-date information about the Conference. The first announcement will be the Call for Abstracts in early 2008.

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OPTIMISM OVER 'NEW ERA' IN RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH

The Chair of the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA), Professor John Wakerman, says people in rural and remote Australia will welcome the prospect of a new era in rural and remote health. The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/election/optimism%20over%20new%20era.pdf> and is reprinted below.

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MISSED OPPORTUNITIES ON "BIG TICKET" HEALTH ITEMS

Despite a six-week campaign that saw the Coalition and Labor promise billions of dollars for health and related services, the Democrats and Greens ranked highest on the National Rural Health Alliance's (NRHA) Election Scorecard ahead of the poll.

The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/election/final%20election%20scorecard%2022nov.pdf> and is reprinted below.

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INCOMING GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Some of the major policies the new Federal Labor Government committed itself to during the election campaign include:

- * Building Australia's Prosperity - Federal Labor's New National Broadband Network <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0307/mscomfinloo210.php>
- * More Education Opportunities For Indigenous Students In The Northern Territory Under A Rudd Labor Government <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/msedutia050.php>
- * Indigenous Economic Development Statement http://www.alp.org.au/download/indig_econ_dev_statement.pdf
- * 9,250 Extra Nurses To Take Pressure Off Australia's Hospitals <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1007/mseduthealoo170.php>
- * Federal Labor Plan To Get Remote Aboriginal Children To Enrol In School <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0707/msedutfcsloo010.php>
- * New Directions: Indigenous children <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0507/msedutfcshealoo270.php>
- * Federal Labor's Additional \$20 Million Boost To Improve Health Services In The Northern Territory <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/msheaia050.php>
- * Federal Labor To Introduce Medicare Teen Dental Plan <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/mshealoo110.php>
- * Federal Labor Announces National Men's Health Policy <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/mshea050.php>
- * Labor's Policies On Women's Health <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1007/mshea290.php>
- * Labor Supporting Rural Health <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1007/mshea262.php>
- * Federal Labor's Approach To Mental Health <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1007/mshea080.php>
- * Labor Supports The Drive For Maternity Reform <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0907/mshea280.php>
- * Labor To Improve Health Services For Rural & Regional Australia <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0907/msheard120.php>
- * Labor's GP Super Clinics In The Community <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0807/mshealoo260.php>
- * Taking Responsibility - Federal Labor's \$2 Billion National Health And Hospitals Reform Plan <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0807/mshealoo230.php>
- * Regional Development for a Sustainable Future policy document http://www.alp.org.au/download/071120____regional_development_for_a_sustainable_future.pdf
- * Rudd Labor Government's Plan For Northern Australia <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/mslooNA030.php>

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NEW HEALTH MINISTER

The new Federal Health Minister is Nicola Roxon, MP for the Melbourne seat of Gellibrand. She was Opposition Health spokesperson since December 2006. Details are at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/members/member.asp?id=83K>

Mr Anthony Albanese has been appointed Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Local Government. He is the Member for the seat of Grayndler in Sydney. Details are at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/members/member.asp?id=R36>

Jenny Macklin is the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. She is the Member for Jagajaga in Melbourne. Details are at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/members/member.asp?id=PG6>

On the Opposition side

* the new Health spokesperson is Joe Hockey, Member for North Sydney. Details are at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/members/member.asp?id=DK6>

* Former Health Minister Tony Abbott is spokesperson for Families, Community Services, Indigenous Affairs and the Voluntary Sector. Details are at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/members/member.asp?id=EZ5>

* John Cobb is spokesperson for Regional Development and Water Security. He is the Member for Parkes in western NSW. Details are at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/members/member.asp?id=AN1>

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TAKING A BREATH: ASTHMA MANAGEMENT FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

Pre-recorded satellite TV broadcast (also available to web stream and download audio)

Produced by the Rural Health Education Foundation

Tuesday 11th December 2007 8pm AEDT (repeated Friday 14th December 12:30pm AEDT)

Sponsored by National Asthma Council Australia with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing

This program investigates asthma among Indigenous Australians, risk factors and differential diagnostic tools, including spirometry. With a focus on culturally appropriate information, topics include the role of asthma action plans in the patient self-management, current medications and use and access to devices. Recently, Indigenous-focused awareness programs have been developed to provide appropriate education to patients and their families and communities, with a view to improving management outcomes. Integral to effective asthma management is a coordinated approach from all health workers including Aboriginal Health Workers, General Practitioners, Practice Nurses and other health professionals.

Program information, panellists, resources and detailed broadcast times can be found by clicking <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/720/720.html> Contact: Rural Health Education Foundation via email rhef@rhef.com.au or telephone (02) 6232-5480.

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From: promotions@rhef.com.au

Subject: National Indigenous Television to broadcast nine Rural Health Education Foundation programs

The National Indigenous Television service (NITV) will soon broadcast nine programs on Indigenous health which have been produced by the Rural Health Education Foundation.

The programs commence on Sunday 2nd December 2007, at 11.00am each day:

- * Dec 2nd: Aboriginal Health Workers and Chronic Disease Management
<http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/404/404.html>
- * Dec 9th: Breathing Easy: Respiratory Disease in Indigenous Children
<http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/316/316.html>
- * Dec 16th: Palliative Care for Indigenous People
<http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/407/407.html>
- * Dec 23rd: Keep Safe <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/606/606.html>
- * Dec 23rd: Grow Strong <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/607b/607b.html> (at 11:30am)
- * Dec 30th: Start Strong <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/607a/607a.html>

With the following programs to be screened early in 2008:

- * Talking Together - Contemporary Issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health: HIV, Hepatitis and Sexual Health <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/305/305.html>
- * Overcoming Barriers to Screening of Cervical and Breast Cancer in Indigenous Women
<http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/313/313.html>
- * Chronic Renal Disease <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/508/508.html>

About National Indigenous Television (NITV) <http://www.nitv.org.au> is a new 24 hour television service established by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to improve the lives of Indigenous peoples. With the very best of Australian content in our programs, the service aims to inform, entertain and educate, preserve Indigenous languages, tell Indigenous stories and showcase the rich diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and creative talent from all over Australia.

NITV can be viewed on Foxtel, Austar (channel 180) or through the Optus Aurora satellite service. Most Rural Health Education Foundation sites can view the programs through their satellite receiving equipment.

For details about all Foundation programs on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, go to <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/groups.html#Aboriginal>

For more information, contact the Rural Health Education Foundation on (02) 6232 5480 or rhef@rhef.com.au

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9th NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE - PROCEEDINGS OUT NOW!

7 - 10 March 2007, Albury, New South Wales

Those unable to attend the 9th National Rural Health Conference in Albury (7-10 March 2007) should take heart. The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has comprehensively updated its website by adding post-Conference information to keep you informed about the

state of health in Australia's rural and remote areas.

For instance a Conference Communique highlights the two burning issues that remain even after 17 years of fruitful discussion - the lower rate of Indigenous life expectancy and the insufficient focus within national research programs on rural and remote health and wellbeing.

The NRHA invites you to download the Communique at a keystroke by visiting <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/conferences/?IntCatId=9> and clicking on the Visit the Conference hotlink.

The revised website also contains a downloadable copy of the 18 priority recommendations covering matters such as Indigenous health, arts-in-health, the health workforce and research to help rural communities cope with the health and social effects of the drought.

A full set of 250 Conference recommendations is also available. They provide a snapshot of current thinking on rural and remote health issues identified by delegates in March 2007 under the theme Standing up for Rural Health: Learning from the past - Action for the future.

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NACCHO STATEMENTS

Aboriginal Health and Health Workforce Sector Unite to Tackle Aboriginal Health
<http://www.naccho.org.au/Media/mediareleases/MediaRelease191107.html>

[NACCHO elects new Chair and Deputy Chair](http://www.naccho.org.au/Media/mediareleases/newchair22112007.html)

<http://www.naccho.org.au/Media/mediareleases/newchair22112007.html>

[In hope NACCHO congratulates Rudd](http://www.naccho.org.au/Media/mediareleases/Media_release_re_new_government_26112007.html)

http://www.naccho.org.au/Media/mediareleases/Media_release_re_new_government_26112007.html

[No Minister focused on Aboriginal issues](http://www.naccho.org.au/Media/mediareleases/Media_release_re_new_rudd_minister_29112007.html)

http://www.naccho.org.au/Media/mediareleases/Media_release_re_new_rudd_minister_29112007.html

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RAMUS 2008 APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

The 2008 round for RAMUS applications is now open. Apply Online Now at
<https://www.nrha.net.au/ei/rs.esp?id=51&scriptid=ramlogin>

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RDAAs STATEMENTS

Rural doctors welcome Labor victory

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Rural%20doctors%20welcome%20Labor%20victory%20--%20November%202007.pdf

Rural doctors welcome Rudd commitment to country Australia

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Rural%20doctors%20welcome%20Rudd%20commitment%20to%20country%20Australia%20--%20November%202007.pdf

Rudd urged -- ask rural MPs to visit local doctors and hospitals too

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Rudd%20urged%20-%20ask%20rural%20MPs%20to%20visit%20local%20doctors%20and%20hospitals%20too%20--%20November%202007.pdf

Rural Doctors applaud Roxon appointment

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAA%20RELEASE%2029_11_07.pdf

Victorian Government assistance needed in Philip Island

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAA%20RELEASE%2005_12_07_cowes.pdf

Scrapping of interviews could mean committed rural students miss out on medical school

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Scrapping%20of%20interviews%20could%20mean%20committed%20rural%20students%20miss%20out%20on%20medical%20school%200--%20December%202007.pdf

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

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PARTYline Newsletter

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

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

Partyline No 31 is now available. It contains articles from the Minister for Health and Ageing and Shadow Minister for Health, as well other material related to the election. It includes success stories in health service delivery in rural areas, reports on the Croc Fest and Garma Festival, community health education programs and other resources and news. Included with Partyline is a hardcopy of the Alliance's Key Priorities document as well as our 2008

calendar.

The electronic version of Partyline is also available in the 'Publications' section of our website at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/publications/?IntContId=57&IntCatId=6>

If you don't receive Partyline but would like to, send your contact details to nrha@ruralhealth.org.au and let us know if you'd prefer a hard copy in the mail or email notification of its availability on the webpage.

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WHAT'S NEW IN REGIONAL STATISTICS, DECEMBER 2007 (ABS Cat 1386.0)

In this issue there is information on the Review of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification, the release of additional 2006 Census data and planning and consultation commencing on content and procedures for the 2011 Census. Other developments include the release of the Children and Youth Statistical Portal, on 8 October 2007. This portal is a pilot project of the National Data Network and contains a range of publicly available information resources related to children and youth from a range of national and state organisations and the ABS. In this issue we also take a closer look at the Census Community Profile Series as well as highlighting two recently released publications: Patterns of internet access in Australia, 2006 (cat. no. 8146.0.55.001) and Regional Statistics, Northern Territory, 2007 (cat. no. 1362.7). Both of these publications contain regional level information that may be of interest to users of small area data.

In the meantime, work is continuing on updating and improving the National Regional Profile (NRP) due for release in February 2008. The NRP is a key output of the Rural and Regional Statistics Program which brings together a range of ABS and non-ABS data available at the small area level for regions across Australia.

The publication is available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/B7E6B5D64D66EFD9CA2573A7001343C0?OpenDocument>

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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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AUSTRALIA MUST MOVE ON KEY CRISES NOW, NEW REPORT SAYS

The 2007-08 State of the Regions report focuses on climate change and its implications and

impact on Australia's diverse regions. The Report provides a useful overview of international, Commonwealth, state and territory greenhouse policies, as well as critically discussing some of the regional impacts of potential abatement measures and carbon taxes. The Victoria shire of Mount Alexander is presented as a specialist case study. Details are at <http://www.alga.asn.au/policy/regdev/sor/>

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NEW ARTICLES IN RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH

Assessment of readiness to prevent type 2 diabetes in a population of rural women with a history of gestational diabetes'

How can we help a vulnerable rural population avoid diabetes mellitus? This pilot study from Victoria Australia uses the transtheoretical model of behaviour change to evaluate the possibility of diabetes prevention.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=802>

'Retrospective bibliometric review of rural health research: Australia's contribution and other trends'

This review from a team of medical academics in rural New South Wales, Australia, used the power of electronic data sets to track the trends in rural health publications since 1990 in Australia, Canada and the United States. It's not a race but, hey folks, the number of rural health publications are increasing every year and Australian authors are nosing to the front!

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

'Rural children's perceptions of child farm safety printed communication strategies'

Children are commonly thought of as the victims of farm injuries but they are also active agents for identifying and preventing hazard risks and accidents. The authors of this article conducted focus groups with Australian rural children to determine the comprehension and attractiveness of three promotion tools addressing child farm safe. The results will surprise you - and make you rethink how to design communication programs.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=734>

'Developing sustainable models of rural health care: a community development approach'

What do we really 'need' to ensure the community feels happy with the healthcare services available in their town? This study elegantly demonstrates that what might be perceived as satisfactory by one community is inadequate to another. The words of the community members is this Australian qualitative article should be read especially by capital-city-based health service planners.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=818>

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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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AWARDS SHOWCASE EXCELLENCE IN INDIGENOUS HEALTH CARE

The winners of the inaugural 2007 National Excellence Awards in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health were announced on 22 November by the Department of Health and Ageing.

The awards highlight excellence, innovation and leadership in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector. They are designed to showcase and celebrate the achievements of individuals and organisations in bridging the gulf between the health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and other Australians.

The Department's statement is at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr07-dept-dept007.htm>

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RURAL HEALTH ON THE ABC

(From ABC Rural Newsletter, <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/default.htm> and Health Updates, <http://www.abc.net.au/health/maillinglist.htm>)

Your wine raises funds for RFDS

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

Preventing injury or death from quad bikes

They look safe but when not operated safely they can lead to serious accidents and even death. Reporter Kim Honan takes on quad bike training. <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/content/2007/s2106010.htm>

Water, health and IR issues lost Coalition key regional seats

Labor's new MPs in key regional seats have attributed their wins to voter concern about the Coalition's handling of industrial relations, rural health and water shortages. <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/content/2007/s2101010.htm>

Regional Australia still losing out on broadband

New figures show there's still a big digital divide between rural and urban areas. The Australian Bureau of Statistics says more than 60 per cent of city homes have web access, compared to 40 per cent for rural areas. Forty per cent of city homes are connected to broadband, compared to 24 per cent in remote Australia. The ACT has the highest percentage of homes with the net at 75 per cent, and Tasmania the fewest, at 55 per cent.

Little time for rural volunteers

A national survey of volunteers is aiming to improve support for rural families who help out emergency services. This week celebrated the 12th International Volunteers Day, but for many Australian rural towns volunteer numbers are at an all-time low. La Trobe University's

Sean Cowlshaw says there's very little known about the demands of volunteering for the emergency services. He says the survey's initial findings suggest time pressure is putting people off. "One of the pressures that they are listing as a reason for resigning is the fact that, on top of everything else, it's taking time away from my family," he says. "These family pressures are meaning that it's not a viable option for me to give my time for free to respond to emergencies, however much I might like to do so."

MENTAL HEALTH EXPERTS DISCUSS RURAL ISSUES

Keva Gocher (Bega, NSW)

The nationwide drought is prompting a new response in rural mental health. 260 practitioners and experts from around the country gathered at Bateman's Bay in southern New South Wales this week to trade ideas on supporting rural communities. The initiatives discussed included services for farmers and isolated older men.

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MORE BABIES, OLDER MUMS, CAESAREANS

There were 15,214 more babies born in Australia in 2005 than there were in 2004, and the upward trends in both maternal age and caesarean sections are continuing, says a report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

'In 2005, 267,793 women gave birth to 272,419 babies, which is almost 6% higher than the previous year,' said Dr Elizabeth Sullivan of the AIHW's National Perinatal Statistics Unit, based at the University of New South Wales.

The report, Australia's mothers and babies 2005, says women who gave birth in Australia in 2005 had an average age of 29.8 years compared with the average of 28.6 years in 1996. 'For first-time mothers, the mean age was 28 years in 2005 - about a year and a half older than first time mums in 1996,' Dr Sullivan said.

The rise in caesarean sections also continued in 2005, with 30.3% of women giving birth by caesarean section, compared with 19.5% in 1996.

The report also presents, for the first time, data that ties maternal socioeconomic status to outcomes such as birthweight. 'From the figures we have, "socioeconomic advantage" is definitely an advantage in terms of outcomes as well,' Dr Sullivan said. 'Poorer outcomes such as preterm birth and low birthweight were more common in the less advantaged groups,' she said.

Other findings in the report include that 3.7% of women who gave birth were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.

The AIHW statement is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2007/mr20071123.cfm> and the full report is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10527>

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CURRENT ISSUE OF eMJA, 19 November 2007

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

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

Current issue: 19 November 2007

From the Editor's Desk: Medical staff and the hospital

Tissue plasminogen activator for ischaemic stroke: highly effective, reasonably safe and grossly underused

Performance monitoring in Australia and England: from scandals to action

Intravascular catheter bloodstream infections: an effective and sustained hospital-wide prevention program over 8 years

Where to seek help for a mental disorder? National survey of the beliefs of Australian youth and their parents

Mycobacterium ulcerans infection: factors influencing diagnostic delay

Comparison of crystalline methamphetamine ("ice") users and other patients with toxicology-related problems presenting to a hospital emergency department

A protocol-driven model for the rapid initiation of stroke thrombolysis in the emergency department

Identifying variations in quality of care in Queensland hospitals

Clinical experience of the first digital mammographic unit in Australia in its first year of use

Monitoring antiepileptic drug therapy with serum level measurements

Serum sodium valproate testing: is it appropriate?

Antidepressants and suicide in young people

A professional kitesurfer with multiple liver lesions

Magnetic resonance imaging for paraneoplastic dermatomyositis

Arrhythmogenic left ventricular false tendon

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HEALTH CARE IS IMPROVING IN OECD COUNTRIES BUT BETTER MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC DISEASES IS NECESSARY - ONLY HALF OF DIABETICS GET NEEDED EYE SCREENING

The quality of medical care, measured by the provision of recommended interventions or actual health outcomes, is improving in OECD countries. "Health at a Glance 2007" shows that advances in diagnosis and treatment mean that, across OECD countries, only 10% of people hospitalised after a heart attack now die within 30 days of being admitted to hospital, down from 20% in the 1980s. And only 10% of patients admitted to hospital following ischemic stroke die there within 30 days thanks to more treatment to dissolve blood clots and the establishment of new stroke units. Details of the OECD publication are at http://www.oecd.org/document/50/0,3343,en_2649_201185_39614578_1_1_1_1,00.html

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NT INDIGENOUS INITIATIVE SHOULD BE REVIEWED AND HEALTH CHECKS EXTENDED NATIONALLY

AMA President, Dr Rosanna Capolingua, has urged the new Government to bring forward its promised review of the Northern Territory Indigenous initiative and look to extend the

successful health programs nationally to benefit all Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. The full text of the AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-79DVB6>

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DIVERSITY IN HEALTH CONFERENCE

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

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

To register or to find out more about this momentous event, please go to: <http://www.dhi.gov.au/conference>. Brochures can be downloaded off the website or you can contact the Conference Secretariat on Tel: +61 2 9840 3800 Fax: +61 2 9840 3319, or email: dhi@swahs.health.nsw.gov.au

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2008 National Nutrition Networks Conference - registration now open

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

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

Register now! Visit the 2008 National Nutrition Networks Conference website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/conferences/nnc2008/home.html>

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

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The World Congress of Health Professions
Perth, March 26th to 29th, 2008.
Call for Registrations

For more information, to register your expression of interest or to download the call for abstracts, please visit the conference website at <http://www.ipchnconference.com.au> or by contacting the conference secretariat via email at info@ipchnconference.com.au or by telephone +61 7 3858 5503.

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

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

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

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

Important dates

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

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

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

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POPULATION HEALTH CONGRESS 2008
A Global World - Practical action for health and Well-being

Come to Brisbane and join in Australia's population health event of the decade. Four organisations are working together to provide a line-up of international and national speakers that promises to be excellent.

The Population health Congress 2008 will be held on July 7-9 in the Brisbane Convention and exhibition Centre. Regular updates on Congress 2008 will be available at <http://www.populationhealthcongress.org.au> - log on to register your interest.

Enquiries:
Conference Coordinators
PO Box 139
Calwe ll ACt 2905
Ph (02) 6292 9000
congress2008@confco.com.au

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2008 SARRAH Conference, 27-30 August 2008, Yepoon. Details can be found on SARRAH's website at <http://www.sarrah.org.au>

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

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CONTRIBUTION AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND DISCLAIMER

The NRHA e-forum is published fortnightly. Contributions are sought on any topic relevant to rural health concerns. Please send contributions to the moderator at grovesc@winshop.com.au (do not "reply" to this email - send contributions to grovesc@winshop.com.au). Contributions received by the Friday of publication will be included in the e-forum.

The NRHA e-forum is edited by a third party moderator, Jim Groves. As such, the Alliance does not control postings and the contents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Alliance. Nor do postings necessarily reflect the view of Jim Groves or any organisation he is associated with. Jim Groves can be contacted at grovesc@winshop.com.au

Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

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NRHA Media Release, 22 November 2007
Missed opportunities on 'big ticket' health items

Despite a six-week campaign that saw the Coalition and Labor promise billions of dollars for health and related services, the Democrats and Greens ranked highest on the National Rural Health Alliance's (NRHA) Election Scorecard ahead of Saturday's poll.

The Democrats fared best with 17 points out of a possible 20, largely by recognising nine out of 10 priorities identified by the Alliance as being critical to improving rural and remote health. The only target the Democrats failed to hit was the need for a national inquiry into the sustainability of rural and remote communities.

The NRHA sees such an inquiry as essential background for successful reform of rural and remote health in the long term.

"Unless there is a clear understanding of what rural and remote communities will be like a decade from now, and how drought, economic boom and climate change will be dealt with, it will be very hard to plan rural health services for the future," said NRHA Chair, Professor John Wakerman.

He praised the Greens for scoring 15 points out of 20, and for being the only Party to recognise the need for a wide-ranging inquiry at a time when much of rural Australia remains in drought and health services in many parts of the bush are in serious decline.

Today's final pre-election scorecard shows that Labor also scored a pass, with 13 points out of 20, largely due to recognising the need for action in all but one of the priority areas. It scored well on the need for a national health policy to encompass a rural/remote health plan, for national investment in oral and dental health, and in committing to new scholarships for medical and allied health students.

By contrast the Liberal/National Coalition failed to register a positive response in four out of 10 priority areas identified as crucial by the Alliance. The Coalition failed to advance its total beyond last week's scorecard and ends up with seven points out of 20. While it scored one point for the collaborative planning with the states inherent in its public hospitals and health care plan, the Coalition did not score on the need for extra scholarships for medicine, nursing and allied health or a national rural undergraduate placement scheme.

Professor Wakerman said the Coalition's failure to register suggested that it still fails to recognise the frustration felt by country people about their current situation, and the seriousness of the service, workforce and infrastructure systems for health in the bush.

"The Alliance's final scorecard suggests that the health lifestyles of those in rural and remote Australia will continue to be compromised until our political leaders can agree on a comprehensive and coherent policy that works for people in rural areas as well as for those in our capital cities," Professor Wakerman said.

The Alliance hopes the incoming government, no matter its persuasion, will continue dialogue with key stakeholders to map out a health blueprint for the future.

"Australia can no longer afford to provide ad hoc policies on vital issues such as health, and in particular rural health. We expect a high priority be given to the health portfolio in the incoming government," he said.

The final scores on the election scorecard, out of a maximum of 20, are Democrats 17, Greens 15, Labor 13 and the Coalition 7.

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Media Release 27 November 2007
Optimism over 'new era' in rural and remote health

The Chair of the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA), Professor John Wakerman, says people in rural and remote Australia will welcome the prospect of a new era in rural and remote health.

"The Alliance is confident that Prime Minister-elect Kevin Rudd's commitment to constructive dialogue with the States will provide Australians with a national health system that includes a plan for improved rural and remote health," Professor Wakerman said.

Labor's campaign commitments offered grounds for optimism and will provide a solid platform to achieve equal health for people in rural and remote areas by 2020.

"Of particular significance for country people are the establishment of a Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, the collaborative development with the States and Territories of a single national health policy for Australia, and an explicit health policy and plan for rural, regional and remote areas," Professor Wakerman said.

He said the incoming government has also committed to a national primary health care strategy, as well as to improved public dental health services, GP super clinics and revised arrangements for the Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund.

Labor's promises on the health workforce include increased funding for John Flynn Scholarships, the Specialist Obstetrician Locum Scheme and the Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program, as well as a new rural allied health placements scholarship scheme.

"People in rural and remote areas are excited by these plans and the new agenda," he said. However, he cautioned that unanswered questions remain on the future of Indigenous health and on the need for mental health improvements in rural and remote areas.

Professor Wakerman confirmed the Alliance will work with the incoming Minister and the Department of Health and Ageing, as well as with other agencies and professional groups, to support improvements in the health and wellbeing of Australians who live in rural, regional and remote parts of the country.

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