

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum 7 November 2008

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### MELBOURNE CUP DAY FOR RURAL MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIPS

The running of the Melbourne Cup coincides with student applicants for the 2009 round of the Rural Australia Medical Undergraduate Scholarship (RAMUS) Scheme coming under starter's orders. The full text of the Alliance statement is at

[http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/mediareleases/media\\_release\\_4\\_november\\_2008.pdf](http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/mediareleases/media_release_4_november_2008.pdf)

and is reproduced below.

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### NURSE PRACTITIONER SCHOLARSHIPS: OTHER BARRIERS REMAIN

The Rudd Government's decision to provide \$2.1 million in scholarship funding for some rural nurses to train as nurse practitioners is a welcome step towards improving the health and wellbeing of people in rural and remote areas. The full text of the Alliance statement is at

<http://www.ruralhealth.org.au> and is reproduced below.

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## EXTRA TRAINING PLACES FOR GPs WILL HELP MEET NEEDS

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has welcomed the government's decision to increase the number of general practice training places by 75 next year and a further 100 in 2010. It particularly supports the extra allocation to the Remote Vocational Training Scheme (RVTS) from 2011 for medical practitioners in more isolated communities. RVTS enables doctors to train for general practice Fellowship by distance education so that they can continue servicing the community in which they live. The full text of the Alliance statement is at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au> and is reproduced below.

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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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 Eiszle - Conference Manager: (02) 6285 4660  
Marshall Wilson - Media: 0419 664 155  
<http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

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RDAА STATEMENTS

Rural doctors welcome extra GP training places  
5 November 2008

[http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/GP%20training%20places%20--%20additional%20places%20--%20November%202008.pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/GP%20training%20places%20--%20additional%20places%20--%20November%202008.pdf)

Overseas trained doctors make valuable contribution  
31 October 2008

[http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/RDAА%20media%20release%20-%20OTD%20-%2031Oct08.pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAА%20media%20release%20-%20OTD%20-%2031Oct08.pdf)

No primary care strategy without a workforce  
31 October 2008

[http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/RDAА%20media%20release%20-%20Primary%20Care%20Strategy%20-%2031Oct082.pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAА%20media%20release%20-%20Primary%20Care%20Strategy%20-%2031Oct082.pdf)

Fund extra GP training places to meet demand, doctors urge Government  
29 October 2008

[http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/GP%20training%20places%20--%20October%202008.pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/GP%20training%20places%20--%20October%202008.pdf)

Exceptional rural Queensland doctor recognised with inaugural memorial award  
27 October 2008

[http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/ACRRM%20RDAА%20Peter%20Graham%20Cohuna%20Award%20--%20October%202008.pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/ACRRM%20RDAА%20Peter%20Graham%20Cohuna%20Award%20--%20October%202008.pdf)

Two medical students "making a real difference" in rural health win Medical Student of the Year Award

27 October 2008

[http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/Westpac%20RDAA%20Medical%20Student%20of%20the%20Year%20Award%20--%20Jeremy%20Wells%20and%20Andrew%20Webster%20--%20October%202008.pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Westpac%20RDAA%20Medical%20Student%20of%20the%20Year%20Award%20--%20Jeremy%20Wells%20and%20Andrew%20Webster%20--%20October%202008.pdf)

Dedicated Thursday Island doctor wins Rural Registrar of the Year Award 2008

27 October 2008

[http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/Westpac%20RDAA%20ACRRM%20Rural%20Registrar%20of%20the%20Year%20--%20Oscar%20Whitehead%20--%20October%202008.pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Westpac%20RDAA%20ACRRM%20Rural%20Registrar%20of%20the%20Year%20--%20Oscar%20Whitehead%20--%20October%202008.pdf)

"Quintessential rural GP" wins Rural Doctor of the Year award

27 October 2008

[http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/RDAA%20Rural%20Doctor%20of%20the%20Year%20Award%202008%20--%20Mark%20Zagorski%20--%20October%202008.pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAA%20Rural%20Doctor%20of%20the%20Year%20Award%202008%20--%20Mark%20Zagorski%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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155 Cremorne Street

Richmond Vic. 3121

Tel: +61 (0)3 9274 3100

Fax: +61 (0)3 9274 3101

E-mail: [melbourne@johnwiley.com.au](mailto:melbourne@johnwiley.com.au)

October 2008 issue now available. Contents include:

Editorial - Occupational therapy practice in rural and remote South Australia

Profile of occupational therapy practice in rural and remote South Australia

Influences on medical students' decisions to study at a rural clinical school

Geographical variation of incidence of cutaneous melanoma in Queensland

Physical activity of young people in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Region: An exploratory study

The oral health status and treatment needs of Indigenous adults in the Kimberley region of Western Australia

Subjective well-being, sociodemographic factors, mental and physical health of rural residents

Increasing community participation in an Aboriginal health service  
Health knowledge acquisition by rural women with chronic health conditions: A tale of two Web approaches  
Royal Flying Doctor Service 'field days': A move towards more comprehensive primary health care  
Improving mental health capacity in rural communities: Mental health first aid delivery in drought-affected rural New South Wales  
Short Report - Rurability: Community support for rural families managing acquired brain injury Grazings  
Community work injuries: Country style  
PHC RIS: Health for all or health for some? Remembering Alma Ata : 'Health for All' 2008  
General Practice and Primary Health Care Research Conference  
From the Journal Associates - SARRAH: Provision of allied health services to regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

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 11 November, 8 pm  
821a: Step by Step: Indigenous Kids 6-12 yrs  
Channel 4

Friday 14 November, 12.30 pm  
821a: Step by Step: Indigenous Kids 6-12 yrs  
Channel 23

Tuesday 18 November, 8 pm  
822: Sugar in the Bush: Rural and Remote Diabetes  
Channel 4

Friday 21 November, 12.30 pm  
822: Sugar in the Bush: Rural and Remote Diabetes  
Channel 23

Tuesday 25 November, 8 pm  
821b: Deadly Steps: Indigenous Youth

Channel 4

Friday 28 November, 12.30 pm  
821b: Deadly Steps: Indigenous Youth  
Channel 23

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 Strok  
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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*Partyline*, the Newsletter of the National Rural Health Alliance, 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](mailto:nrha@ruralhealth.org.au) Subscription is free.

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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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#### 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>

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#### AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS DOCTORS' ASSOCIATION SUBMISSION TO THE MATERNITY SERVICES REVIEW BOARD

The poor status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and the 17-year life expectancy gap is well documented. The burden of disease experienced by Indigenous Australians is estimated to be two and a half times greater than the burden of disease in the wider Australian population. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience higher death rates than non-Indigenous Australians across all age groups, from all major causes of death. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have historically advocated for a holistic approach to health care. It is important that the Indigenous view of holistic health be reflected in a health system which provides a seamless transition between primary, secondary and tertiary health care services for Indigenous mothers. The full text of the AIDA Submission is at [http://www.aida.org.au/pdf/AIDA\\_Maternity\\_Services\\_Review.pdf](http://www.aida.org.au/pdf/AIDA_Maternity_Services_Review.pdf)

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#### AIHW REPORTS

Eye problems in children are as common as allergies and asthma

Eye disorders are the most common long-term health problem experienced by children along with allergies and asthma, according to a report "Eye health among Australian Children" released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The report found there were more than 411,000 children with long-term eye disorders in Australia. Overall, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children had a similar rate of eye hospitalisations to other Australian children. But within that figure, hospitalisations for infections and eye-related injuries were more common among Indigenous children', he said.

The AIHW media release is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2008/mr20081107.cfm> and the full report is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10660>

Younger women and women living in remote areas more likely to have neural tube defect affected pregnancies

Younger women and women living in remote areas are more likely to have neural tube defect (NTD) affected pregnancies than older women and women living in major cities according to a report "Neural tube defects in Australia" released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

The AIHW media release is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2008/mr20081105.cfm> and the full report is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10576>

#### Dental reports

Waiting time for an appointment for a dental visit was lower for dentists at major city locations (1.6 weeks) compared regional/remote locations (3.9 weeks). A lower percentage of dentists at major city locations (17.0%) perceived themselves to be busier than they would prefer to be compared to dentists at regional/remote locations (33.7%).

Dental practice activity by geographic location

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10668>

Dentist labour force projections, 2005-2020

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10671>

Oral health and access to dental care by cardholder and insurance groups

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10667>

Patterns of tooth loss in the Australian population 2004-06

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10534>

Projected demand and supply for dental visits in Australia: analysis of the impact of changes in key inputs

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10536>

Projected demand for dental care to 2020

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10539>

#### Medical practitioner supply up, but primary care doctor supply falls

The overall supply of medical practitioners in Australia rose between 2002 and 2006, while the primary care doctor supply fell, according to a report "Medical labour force 2006" released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). Major cities (at 332 FTE per 100,000) had the largest supply of medical practitioners, followed by inner regional areas (at 184) and outer regional areas at 154 FTE. In contrast, the variation in supply of primary care practitioners was smaller across major cities, and inner and outer regional areas at 98, 87 and 86 FTE respectively.

The AIHW statement is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2008/mr20081031.cfm> and the report is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10620>

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PEACE PRIZE WINNER'S LESSONS FOR CLOSING THE GAP

Dr Mick Adams, chair of NACCHO, the national peak body of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and the instigator of the Close the Gap campaign has congratulated Professor Patrick Dodson as this year's winner of the Sydney Peace Prize in recognition of his long commitment to and advocacy of the human rights of Aboriginal people. The full text of the NACCHO statement is at

<http://www.naccho.org.au/Files/Documents/Media%20Release%20Prof.%20Dodson's%20Lessons%20for%20Closing%20the%20Gap%206-11-8.pdf>

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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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#### AUSTRALIAN EMPLOYMENT COVENANT

The Rudd Government has signed the Australian Employment Covenant. Andrew Forrest and his steering committee are encouraging Australian employers to join with Australian Government and Indigenous Leaders in addressing Indigenous unemployment with real jobs. At the launch, the Prime Minister also announced the Australian Government will provide \$400,000 in immediate assistance to the AEC to establish a call-centre to take inquiries from interested employers and for a communications and marketing strategy. The full text of the Prime Minister's statement is at [http://www.pm.gov.au/media/release/2008/media\\_release\\_0574.cfm](http://www.pm.gov.au/media/release/2008/media_release_0574.cfm)

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#### KEY STEP TOWARDS BETTER PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Health Minister Nicola Roxon has called for public submissions to respond to the new discussion paper on Australia's first ever National Primary Health Care Strategy. The discussion paper, "Towards a National Primary Health Care Strategy", can be downloaded from the Department's website at <http://www.health.gov.au/primaryhealthstrategy>

Submissions can be made by emailing [nphcs@health.gov.au](mailto:nphcs@health.gov.au), or by writing to  
National Primary Health Care Strategy  
Secretariat  
MDP 94 GPO BOX 9848  
Canberra ACT 2601

More information on how to make submissions is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/primaryhealthstrategy>

The statement by Nicolar Roxon is at  
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr08-nr-nr144.htm>

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#### BUSH CRISIS LINE - 1800 805 391

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

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#### OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY - ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE: A SNAPSHOT, 2004-05 (ABS 4722.0.55.006)

High body mass was the second highest contributor to the burden of disease and injury in Australia in 2003, accounting for 11.4% of the total burden of disease and injury among Indigenous Australians. High body mass is associated with ischaemic heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and asthma. These three conditions were among the five leading causes of the burden of disease for both Indigenous males and females in 2003. Of the estimated 218,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in 2004-05, around one in three (63,900 or 29%) were overweight, and a further 67,700 (31%) were obese. While similar proportions of Indigenous men and women were in the combined overweight/obese category (62% compared with 58%), Indigenous women were significantly more likely than Indigenous men to be obese (34% compared with 28%). After adjusting for differences in the age structure of the two populations, Indigenous men were 0.8 times as likely as non-Indigenous men to be overweight and 1.6 times as likely to be obese. The corresponding rate ratios for women were 0.9 and 2.2. The full publication is available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4722.0.55.006?OpenDocument>

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#### RURAL HEALTH ON THE ABC

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

Govt urged to close Aboriginal medical centres income gap  
Western Australia's Health Minister says he wants the Federal Government to close the income gap between doctors working in the mainstream and those working in Aboriginal medical centres.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/25/2401148.htm>

#### Government flags long-term NT intervention phase

The Federal Government's announced its keeping the Northern Territory intervention in place for another 12 months, before moving to what it calls a "long-term, development phase".

<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2008/s2399641.htm>

Intervention has 'failed to boost doctors'

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) has warned the shortage of doctors in the Northern Territory's remote Aboriginal communities is worsening.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/24/2400079.htm>

Report confirms NT intervention created panic

<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2008/s2402541.htm>

Country task force hears rural health worries

The Prime Minister's Country Task Force has heard rural health and attracting doctors to the bush are among the biggest concerns facing outback Queensland.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/27/2402289.htm>

Treasurer says more funds needed to combat indigenous disadvantage

The Northern Territory Government says a new report on Indigenous spending will help evaluate how much of an impact the Federal Intervention is having.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/28/2403077.htm>

Nationals call for regional dental scholarships

The federal Nationals will lobby the Federal Government to set up financial assistance for regional students wishing to study dentistry.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/28/2403382.htm>

OCKHAM'S RAZOR: Aboriginal health

Sunday 2 November, 8.45am, Radio National

Health director of the Jimmy Little Foundation and filmmaker Don Palmer tells us that kidney disease amongst Aboriginal people in Central Australia runs somewhere between 30 to 50 times the national average. Nearly 200 people are stuck on dialysis in this area alone and there are 200 more identified as pre-dialysis. The Pintupi people created art works raising over a million dollars and they now have a dialysis machine of their own which does away with the need to travel vast distances for treatment.

<http://abcmail.net.au/t/300910/614869/910/0/>

Communication barriers exacerbating Indigenous health issues

<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2008/s2409271.htm>

KIDNEY DISEASE AMONGST ABORIGINAL PEOPLE (Ockham's Razor: 02/11/2008)

Health director of the Jimmy Little Foundation and filmmaker Don Palmer says kidney disease amongst Aboriginal people in Central Australia runs somewhere between 30 to 50 times the national average. Nearly 200 people are receiving dialysis treatment in this area alone.

<http://abcmail.net.au/t/308395/614869/5891/0/>

Govt rarely accountable on Indigenous concerns: Stanley

Governments are not taking enough responsibility for health and social outcomes in Aboriginal communities, according to leading Aboriginal advocate Fiona Stanley.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/06/2412659.htm>

Another country health plan released

The South Australian Government has released another plan for country health services.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/06/2412004.htm>

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## BUILDING AUSTRALIA'S HEALTH WORKFORCE - SCHOLARSHIPS FOR NURSE PRACTITIONERS

The Australian Government is investing \$2.1 million to help build the nation's nurse practitioner workforce. Nurse practitioner scholarships of up to \$15,000 per annum for two years, targeted specifically at nurses in rural and remote areas, will be provided for up to 20 nurses to upgrade their skills to practice as nurse practitioners. The full text of the announcement by Health Minister Nicola Roxon is at

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr08-nr-nr139.htm>

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CURRENT ISSUE OF eMJA, 3 November 2008

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

From the Editor's Desk: "On the one hand ... but on the other hand ..."

Editorials

Understanding gastroenteritis in elderly residents of aged-care facilities

Good Medical Practice: developing an Australian code

Research

Drinking by professional Australian Football League (AFL) players: prevalence and correlates of risk

Vaccination and screening of medical students: results of a student health initiative

Health Care - The pathway to dementia diagnosis

Indigenous Health - Research

Effect of smoking among Indigenous and non-Indigenous mothers on preterm birth and full-term low birthweight

The roles of socioeconomic status and Aboriginality in birth outcomes at an urban hospital

"All they said was my kidneys were dead": Indigenous Australian patients' understanding of their chronic kidney disease

Viewpoint

Rational thromboprophylaxis in medical inpatients: not quite there yet

Current models of child and adolescent mental health service delivery

Clinical Update - Avoiding common problems associated with intravenous fluid therapy

Medical Education - The rising tide of medical graduates: how will postgraduate training be affected?

Lessons from Practice - Disseminated *Saksenaea vasiformis* in an immunocompetent host

Notable Cases - Zygomycosis due to *Saksenaea vasiformis* caused by a magpie peck

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### RECRUITING AND DEPLOYING DOCTORS IN THE NT

The Australian Government has established the Remote Area Health Corps (RAHC) to recruit and deploy doctors, nurses and allied health workers in remote Northern Territory Indigenous communities. The full statement by Health Minister Nicola Roxon is at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr08-nr-nr141.htm>

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### AUSTRALIAN RURAL HEALTH EDUCATION NETWORK EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The ARHEN Board of Directors is seeking applicants for the position of Executive Officer of the organisation. The Executive Officer, in liaison with the Board, is responsible for all aspects of the operational management of ARHEN, including strategic planning , corporate management, high level discussions, coordination of the *eJournal of Rural and Remote Health* and management of workflows, finances, and staff. The position is located in Canberra. The salary range is circa \$80000-90000 per annum. The appointment is initially for two years, with a three-month probation period; and the option of secondment from another organisation may be considered. For further information and selection documentation, visit the ARHEN website at <http://www.arhen.org.au> or contact Vicky Newman on 02 6282 2166 or ARHEN Chairperson, Associate Professor Sue Kilpatrick, on 03 6324 4000, [sue.kilpatrick@utas.edu.au](mailto:sue.kilpatrick@utas.edu.au). Applications addressing the selection criteria are to be emailed to [eo@arhen.org.au](mailto:eo@arhen.org.au) by close of business Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November.

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### NACCHO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NACCHO will be holding our Annual General Meeting from 11 to 14 November 2008 at Cable Beach Club Resort, Broome Western Australia. For further information please contact Elaine Lomas on 02 6248 0644 or by email to [elaine@naccho.org.au](mailto:elaine@naccho.org.au).

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### SYMPOSIUM - CREATING CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE IN TRAINING DELIVERY IN REMOTE AND RURAL AUSTRALIA

Tue, Nov 18th, 2008, 5:00pm- 4:00pm

What does the Skilling Australia for the Future Policy initiative mean for rural and remote Australia and how can we make it work? 18 and 19 November 2008, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Darwin

The Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council (CS&H ISC) invites you to this special symposium to discuss the real issues around building and sustaining skills development in rural and remote areas through exploration of the challenges and opportunities provided by the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. The symposium will bring together a range of influential stakeholders from industry and VET to ask the hard questions around meeting industry demand for skills development in the bush and examine the Commonwealth Government's Skilling Australia policy and its ability to deliver real outcomes for rural and remote Community Services and Health Industry enterprises.

Further information at <http://www.cshisc.com.au>

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ANNUAL CONFERENCE WOMEN'S HOSPITALS AUSTRALASIA  
*'Minding our P's and Q's! Partnerships and Quality in Women's Healthcare'*  
Wed 19 November - Friday 21 November 2008  
Manly Pacific Hotel Sydney NSW  
<http://www.wcha.asn.au>

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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](mailto:grovesc@winshop.com.au) (do not "reply" to this email - send contributions to [grovesc@winshop.com.au](mailto: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](mailto:grovesc@winshop.com.au)

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

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Media Release  
4 November 2009  
Melbourne Cup Day start for rural medical scholarships

Today's running of the Melbourne Cup coincides with student applicants for the 2009 round of the Rural Australia Medical Undergraduate Scholarship (RAMUS) Scheme coming under starter's orders.

RAMUS scholarship holders receive unbonded scholarships worth \$10,000 a year while completing a standard medical degree at their chosen university. The scheme is open to medical students from rural and remote areas who have demonstrated a financial need.

"RAMUS supports a total of 550 ongoing scholarships with up to 115 scholarship places available in 2009 - so not all applicants who are eligible will receive a scholarship," said RAMUS Manager, Susan Magnay.

The RAMUS Scheme is funded by the Australian Government and is designed to assist students with a rural background to study medicine. The financial support it offers helps successful applicants overcome financial barriers to study, such as the cost of living away from home or moving away from family support structures.

Under the Scheme's mentorship program RAMUS scholars are paired with experienced medical practitioners in rural or remote areas. Since it began in 2000 more than 1400 RAMUS scholarships have been awarded, with some 750 recipients having already graduated in medicine.

A 2007 survey of scholarship holders showed that 92 per cent of respondents confirmed RAMUS participation had increased their intention to practise medicine in rural or remote Australia. Almost all agreed that the scholarship had significantly enhanced their capacity to complete their studies.

Applications for the 2009 RAMUS intake must be submitted by 5pm on 19 January 2009.

To access an online application form, or find further details about the RAMUS Scheme, prospective applicants should visit the National Rural Health Alliance website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

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#### NRHA MEDIA RELEASE

Nurse practitioner scholarships: other barriers remain  
6 November 2008

The Rudd Government's decision to provide \$2.1 million in scholarship funding for some rural nurses to train as nurse practitioners is a welcome step towards improving the health and wellbeing of people in rural and remote areas.

"This is a long overdue recognition of the quality skills and potential community benefits of nurse practitioners, especially included in collaborative models of team care," said Dr Jenny May, Chair of the National Rural Health Alliance.

"Nurse practitioners are advanced practice nurses with highly developed skills and knowledge that allows them to provide extended clinical services, working independently or within multidisciplinary teams," she said.

A 2007 survey of nurse practitioners, which achieved an 85 per cent response rate, identified only eight working in rural areas while only about 75 per cent of them were actually working as nurse practitioners. Nevertheless, the profession offers great potential and the Alliance is a staunch advocate of moves to increase this number. The decision to provide rural nurses with scholarships of up to \$15,000 a year for two years to upgrade their skills is, therefore, a significant policy breakthrough.

But there are other issues as well as financial barriers. Nurses in more remote areas have difficulty in studying, due to poor information technology and little or no back-up for study leave. Some remote area nurses may also feel that there is no advantage to be gained from nurse practitioner authorisation at present. This would likely change if they had direct access to MBS and PBS provider numbers.

In announcing the scholarship funding, Health Minister Roxon described nurse practitioners as "the great unrecognised successes of Australia's health care system". The Minister also acknowledged the responsibility they have for complex decisions about patient care in a range of areas, including emergency departments, community health centres and mental health services.

The Alliance would like to see the Government negotiate with State and Territory counterparts for the establishment of additional nurse practitioner positions, particularly in rural and remote locations.

"More positions will allow communities and other health workers to take full advantage of the advanced skills and knowledge of nurse practitioners," Dr May said.

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#### NRHA MEDIA RELEASE

Extra training places for GPs will help meet needs  
7 November 2008

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has welcomed the government's decision to increase the number of general practice training places by 75 next year and a further 100 in 2010. It particularly supports the extra allocation to the Remote Vocational Training Scheme (RVTS) from 2011 for medical practitioners in more isolated communities. RVTS enables doctors to train for general practice Fellowship by distance education so that they can continue servicing the community in which they live.

Dr Jenny May, Chair of the Alliance, said that communities such as Balranald and Hay in southern New South Wales are among those to have benefited from the RVTS.

"For the increases in training places to translate into more GPs for rural and remote areas, still

more will need to be done. We need more accredited options for vocational training for general practice in rural areas and, after completion, enhanced rewards for practitioners who choose to work in rural areas," Dr May said.

"At the moment the practice infrastructure required to train GPs and other professionals is often lacking in rural towns and there needs to be further investment in buildings, records and support staff for the primary care team," Dr May said. "The Government's current plans for infrastructure spending provide a great opportunity for such new health investment."

"GP registrars undertake much of their vocational training in accredited general practices. But current payments for the instruction and supervision roles taken on by GPs leave them out of pocket when they choose to teach rather than to see patients," she said. "As the Minister has said, Rural Clinical Schools will continue to play a key role with Regional Training Providers and in engaging existing GPs in the training program."

"GP training should continue in Aboriginal Medical Services and private hospitals, where they exist, as long as good supervision is available."

While GP trainers need to supervise, teach and mentor trainees, other experts can also be involved. For example podiatrists can undertake training on foot care, business managers on practice administration, nurses and paramedics on wound care, and nurse practitioners in their areas of specialty.

"After additional training places, the next challenge is to ensure that sufficient vocationally-trained GPs choose to work in rural areas," Dr May said.

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