

other aspects of life between rural and metropolitan areas, like infrastructure, access to services, the availability of work, and distribution of professionals.

In the meantime, there is an opportunity in Cairns between 17 and 20 May to see how we are currently going in terms of health and quality of life, and to consider what we have learned since the 9th Conference in Albury two years ago.

Despite the constrained fiscal environment, there will be around 900 delegates at the conference in Cairns. Proceedings begin on Sunday morning, 17 May, with a special community skills day for students, citizens and health professionals; an Indigenous workshop being convened by NACCHO; a special training workshop on HIV and sexually transmitted infections presented by the Australian Society of HIV medicine; and a workshop for people who want to improve their chances of having their manuscripts accepted by refereed journals.

The main conference starts with a welcome to country at 3:45 p.m. on Sunday at the Convention Centre. It kicks off with four keynotes before the welcome reception, including one on "a health workforce for the times" presented by Joshua Tepper, from Canada.

Paul Lucas, Deputy Premier and Minister for Health, will officially open the conference on Monday morning and will be welcomed by Ian Wronski, from James Cook University, Principal Sponsor of the 10th Conference.

On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday there will be five concurrent sessions in which some 130 20-minute papers will be presented, along with half a dozen special workshops and an arts in health stream.

There will be a substantial exhibition providing information, contacts and resource materials from a range of rural health organisations and companies.

The keynote sessions will include one on the special challenges of servicing remote areas, led by Fred Chaney, some of the staff of the Katherine West Health Board, and John Wakerman from the Centre for Remote Health.

Another keynote session will deal with the political and social determinants of health in rural areas, and feature Monique Begin, one time Canadian Health Minister, Christine Bennett from the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, and Fran Baum, a member of the World Health Organisation's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health.

Robyn Williams, from the ABC Science Show, will MC the conference. Other special guests include John Kerin, Australia's longest serving Minister for Primary Industries, Paul Sinclair from the Australian Conservation Foundation, and Janine Watts who combines a position as a director of nursing in Western Australia with stand-up comedy and other artistic achievements.

Senator Jan McLucas, previously on the Cairns City Council, now Parliamentary Secretary for Health, will represent the Australian Government and receive the recommendations on Wednesday afternoon 20 May.

There will be up to a hundred health science students at the conference, and quite a focus on some of the implications of climate change for health and health services. There will be something for all professions and disciplines interested in rural and remote health, and people to hear from and talk with from right around the nation.

We look forward to seeing many of you in Cairns in just two weeks' time.

Further Contact: Lyn Eiszele - Conference Manager: (02) 6285 4660 Marshall Wilson -
Media: 0419 664 155
<http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

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APRIL 2009 E-NEWS FROM THE NRHA

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COMMUNITY DAY TO KICK START RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

The health of individuals and families in rural and remote Australia will take centre stage on Sunday 17 May, when the 10th biennial National Rural Health Conference gets underway in Cairns.

The full text of the Alliance statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/mediareleases/mr%20community%20day.pdf> and is reproduced below.

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STUDENTS TO LEARN ABOUT BETTER RURAL HEALTH

Have you ever wondered how well you could survive in the Australian bush? Could you find first aid items in the surrounding environment? How would you treat poisoning from snake, spider or marine stinger? Can you build a camp oven, cook a damper or make drinking water when none appears to be available?

Students from the National Rural Health Students' Network will present a session on bush survival skills at A healthy place to be: Community Skills Workshop at the Convention Centre in Cairns on 17 May, preceding the 10th National Rural Health Conference which starts on the same day.

The full text of the Alliance statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/mediareleases/cairns%20local%20re%20nrhsn%20workshop%20sessions.pdf> and is reproduced below.

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RURAL HEALTH CHALLENGES ARE HIGHLIGHTED ON-LINE

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has published a new series of Fact Sheets aimed at highlighting the current state of health in rural, regional and remote Australia. They provide up-to-date information on critical aspects of health in rural areas and are available by accessing the Alliance website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

The full text of the Alliance announcement is at http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/mediareleases/nrha_mr_30-04-09.pdf and is reproduced below.

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WANTED: MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS TO TAKE PART IN THE PILOT OF THE EDUCATION PROGRAM IN CANCER CARE (EPICC) at the 10TH National Rural Health Conference

By attending the EPICC Pilot Workshop on Monday 18 May at 4.50pm, you will have the opportunity to review each module of the program to see how this education program will help you provide better cancer care to your patients. Leading cancer specialists and program developers will be on hand to discuss program content and you will be able to directly evaluate EPICC.

EPICC aims to improve the quality of cancer care in rural and regional Australia by providing greater opportunities for noncancer specialist medical practitioners (general practitioners, gynaecologists, surgeons, general physicians, etc) to increase their knowledge of cancer management.

Available online, EPICC will provide access to cancer education and information through five broad topics: General principles of cancer care, Side effects of cancer treatment and symptom management, Oncologic emergencies, Psychosocial care and Follow up.

COME AND TEST DRIVE THIS LATEST PROGRAM

Register your interest to attend the Pilot Workshop today by contacting EPICC Project Manager, Ms Kevin Comlossy, on kcomlossy@moga.org.au or 02 9256 9656
<http://www.epicc.org.au>

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NATIONAL CONFERENCE A MAJOR OPPORTUNITY FOR RURAL HEALTH

Convenor of the 10th National Rural Health Conference, Owen Allen, said that with two weeks to go, over 800 delegates are registered for this major rural health event to be held in Cairns.

"It's an opportunity for those of us concerned about the state of health in rural and remote Australia to make sure that our concerns are not pushed aside by the admittedly huge distractions from the financial crisis, wars on foreign soil and swine flu," Mr Allen said.

The Alliance statement will be available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au> and is reproduced below.

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WORKING ON THE LINKS BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

The Garnaut Climate Change Review released last year made two things very clear. The first is that Australia has a high level of exposure and sensitivity to the impacts of global warming. It has a fragile ecology, and many businesses and communities that will face significant adjustments from changes in the patterns of weather and natural disasters. Biodiversity on land, in rivers and wetlands, coastal estuaries and deep oceans is under threat.

The Alliance statement will be available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au> and is reproduced below.

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CONFERENCE TO CONSIDER GOLD STANDARD FOR RURAL DIABETES CARE

As is well known, diabetes is a significant health issue for people living in rural Australia and especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Death rates due to diabetes are significantly higher in areas outside major cities. The prevalence of reported diabetes increases significantly with increasing remoteness, with rates in remote areas being more than five times as high as in major cities.

The Alliance statement will be available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au> and is reproduced below.

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From: Janelle Webb <janelle.webb@nbocc.org.au>
Subject: Applications now open for seeding grants to improve local breast cancer care

Community groups, volunteer organisations and health providers in regional, rural or remote areas are invited to apply for a seeding grant of up to \$10,000 to fund innovative and sustainable new projects that improve access to support local women with breast cancer.

Information on how to apply for a seeding grant, and the application form can be found on National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre's website
<http://www.breasthealth.com.au/pinkpony>

Seeding Grant applications close Wednesday 13 May 2009.

Please contact National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre directly if you require information:
Phone: 02 9357 9414, Email: janelle.webb@nbocc.org.au

Janelle Webb
Project Assistant
National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre
Level 1, Suite 103, 355 Crown Street SURRY HILLS NSW 2010
Telephone + 61 2 9357 9414 Facsimile + 61 2 9357 9477 <http://www.nboocc.org.au>

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CALLING ALL RURAL PHARMACISTS IN AUSTRALIA

The services provided by rural and remote pharmacists are vital to the health and well-being of their communities. Yet despite multiple incentive programs, the shortage of pharmacists in rural and remote Australia continues to be a major problem.

As a result RhED Consulting Pty Ltd, commissioned by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, is undertaking a landmark Australian national rural research project on rural workforce issues specific to pharmacy.

Our aim is to understand what fulfils and motivates a pharmacist to work and stay in rural practice so we can ensure rural Australians continue to receive the best access to pharmacists and the services they provide.

If you are a rural pharmacist or pharmacy student, please help by filling out a short survey and/or participating in a focus group or interview. Visit <http://www.rhed.com.au/pharmacy> for more details or to access surveys online by the end of June.

Contact Dr Janie Smith, Director of RhED Consulting Pty Ltd at janie.smith@rhed.com.au / (02) 6680 3998.

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Short Reports

Factors influencing the practice choices of Australian medical students: A feasibility study
Meeting rehabilitation service needs in rural and remote Australia: A focus group workshop
with rehabilitation service health care providers

Grazings

PHC RIS: Practice nurses - Enhancing primary health care services in rural Australia

Life and ageism

Book Review - A Textbook of Rural Health

From the Journal Associates

Wide-ranging policy work at the National Rural Health Alliance

ARNM: Merger between the Australian Rural Nurses and Midwives and Royal College of
Nursing, Australia

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

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RURAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOUNDATION UPCOMING PROGRAMS (From
<http://www.rhef.com.au/upcoming-programs/>)

- Tue 12 May 8 pm 910a: Caring for Women with Ovarian Cancer, Part 1 Channel 4
- Fri 15 May 12.30 pm 910a: Caring for Women with Ovarian Cancer, Part 1 Channel 23
- Tue 26 May 8 pm 908: Mulling It Over: Cannabis Intervention in Primary Health Care
Channel 4
- Fri 29 May 12.30 pm 908: Mulling It Over: Cannabis Intervention in Primary Health Care
Channel 23
- Tue 9 Jun 8 pm 909: Women in General Practice Channel 4
- Fri 12 Jun 12.30 pm 909: Women in General Practice Channel 23
- Tue 16 Jun 8 pm 910b: Caring for Women with Ovarian Cancer, Part 2 Channel 4
- Fri 19 Jun 12.30 pm 910b: Caring for Women with Ovarian Cancer, Part 2 Channel 23

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POLICY NEWS

Working in disadvantaged communities

Residents of socioeconomically disadvantaged locations are more likely to have poor health than residents of socioeconomically advantaged locations and this has been comprehensively mapped in Australian cities. These inequalities present a challenge for the public health workers based in or responsible for improving the health of people living in disadvantaged localities. The purpose of this study was to develop a generic workforce needs assessment tool and to use it to identify the competencies needed by the public health workforce to work effectively in disadvantaged communities.

<http://apo.org.au/research/working-disadvantaged-communities>

Is 'Close the Gap' a useful approach?

There is widespread enthusiasm for the Australian government's commitment to 'Close the Gap' in Indigenous disadvantage, health status and life expectancy. Yet despite the rhetoric, the pursuit of statistical equality for Indigenous Australians is not a novel or particularly promising approach. It is also an approach that reduces Indigenous Australians to a range of indicators of deficit, to be monitored and rectified towards government-set targets. This illustrates a substantial imbalance in power and control over the Indigenous affairs agenda in Australia, which is the 'gap' that must be addressed for the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians to improve.

<http://apo.org.au/research/close-gap-useful-approach>

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AIHW REPORTS

Numbers of Indigenous GPs, registered nurses and health students all rising

In recent years there have been increases in the number of Indigenous medical practitioners, Indigenous registered nurses, Indigenous students enrolled in health courses and Indigenous people with post-school qualifications in health, according to an AIHW "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health labour force statistics and data quality assessment". Findings from the report include the number of Indigenous GPs doubled between 1996 and 2006, from 41 to 82, and the number of registered Indigenous nurses rose by 71% between 1996 and 2006 to 1,135 nurses.

The AIHW statement is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2009/mr20090423.cfm> and the full report is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10684>

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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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BROADBAND FAST-TRACK FOR REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

The Rudd Government is fast-tracking a \$250 million investment in backbone fibre optic transmission links - the broadband highways that connect the nation's cities, towns and rural areas to the wider world.

Read more <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0409/mscoit230.php>

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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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RURAL RESEARCH PROJECT UNDERWAY

(Extract from Pharmacy News, 30 April. View the full article at http://www.pharmacynews.com.au/articles/Rural-research-project-underway_z479278.htm)

A landmark research project will aim to address problems with Australia's rural pharmacy workforce. While a third of Australians live in rural and remote areas, less than a quarter of pharmacists practice there. The rural pharmacy workforce is also unevenly distributed between states and remains a significantly ageing workforce, with the average age of a rural male community pharmacist being 56 (46 for female).

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has commissioned Rural Health Education Development Consulting to examine the feasibility of tracking the rural pharmacy workforce after graduation and identify the impact that existing rural incentive programs have on retention.

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BUSH CRISIS LINE - 1800 805 391

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

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RURAL HEALTH ON THE ABC

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

Regional hospitals neglected: NT Opposition

The Northern Territory Opposition says the Government is neglecting regional hospitals in its Budget spending plans.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/30/2556961.htm>

Indigenous healthcare staff vital: Abbott

The Federal Opposition's Indigenous affairs spokesman says there will be better Aboriginal health outcomes if more Indigenous people are employed in the sector.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/28/2554698.htm>

Counsellors join flying doctor

Two flying counsellors have recently joined the Broken Hill Royal Flying Doctor Service, to help people in remote communities.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/28/2554377.htm>

A world-first study comparing child health across Australia, New Zealand , Canada and the US has found similar discrepancies between the health of the countries' indigenous and non-indigenous youth.

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/australian-news/5513440>

<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2008/s2548395.htm>

Indigenous housing funds target NT, Qld

The Federal Government has finalised the list of which Aboriginal communities will benefit from its \$5.5 billion program to improve housing in remote areas.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/21/2548709.htm>

Report finds rural health underfunded

A Victorian health group says the Government needs to commit a decade's worth of funding to fix problems in rural health services.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/17/2545726.htm>

Indigenous oral health project 'must be extended'

The Australian Dental Association says addressing oral health care in remote Aboriginal communities is key to closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancy.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/18/2546378.htm>

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RDAА NEWS

Rural health must be a priority as Rudd Cabinet finalises Budget 2009-10

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Rural%20health%20must%20be%20a%20priority%20as%20Rudd%20Cabinet%20finalises%20Budget%202009-10.pdf

23 April 2009

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ARTICLES IN "RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH"

'There should be more help out here! A qualitative study of the needs of Aboriginal adolescents in rural Australia'

What health care do Australian rural Aboriginal adolescents want and need - and who is most likely to successfully provide it? This study provides a timely reminder that assumptions are often unhelpful.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=1137>

'The influence of a continuing education program on the image interpretation accuracy of rural radiographers'

In technology-driven specialties such as radiology, specialists no longer live in rural communities. Although an x-ray report may be just a "click" away, when a doctor on-call is confronted with a patient and an x-ray, it is reassuring to be able to discuss that x-ray with an on-site colleague. In rural areas that colleague is likely to be a radiographer. This study looks at ways of providing training for rural radiographers so they can assist with image interpretation.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=1145>

'Education to improve cancer care in rural South Australia'

A lack of knowledge about contemporary cancer care may prevent rural GPs from being involved in the cancer care of their patients. This is problematic for rural families who may need to make regular round trips of hundreds of kilometers for routine cancer treatment. This education program from South Australia represents a first step in engaging with local rural clinicians in the care of rural cancer patients.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=1147>

'Developing competencies for remote and rural senior allied health professionals in Western Australia'

Defining key competencies for professional practice is a challenge for every health profession. Although this eloquent Australian study concerns senior rural allied health

professionals, it identifies many competencies common to differing professional groups.
<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=1115>

'Survey of a videoconference community of professional development for rural and urban nurses'

A common issue for rural and remote health professionals is the lack of access to continuing education and an associated sense of professional isolation. Are videoconferencing communities the answer? This small study from Australia identifies some practical issues and raises a question about knowledge acquisition.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=1134>

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From: Alan Staines As Chair of the Conference Organising Committee and Director of The Salvation Army Hope for Life Program - I invite you to attend and participate at the 2nd Australian Postvention conference that is being held at the Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre commencing Thursday, 21st - Saturday, 23rd May 2009.

The conference "Connectedness - A Link to Hope" provides a wonderful opportunity for delegates throughout Australia and New Zealand to network and share together their experience and knowledge.

We are privileged to have international guests and invited Australian speakers who are well known in Australia and internationally for their research and practice in postvention. International and Australian presenters include Prof Ian Webster, Prof Graham Martin, Dr Judith Murray, Dr Sheila Clark, Dr Frank Campbell, Dr Michelle Linn-Gust, Dr Kari Dyregrov, Dr Scott Poland, Prof Onja Grad and Darrell Henry (indigenous psychologist).

The conference will bring together family and friends who have been bereaved by suicide; the indigenous, teachers, youth workers, social workers, mental health professionals, general practitioners and medical personnel, clergy, emergency services personnel, researchers, service providers and funeral service personnel.

The Postvention Conference Healing and Remembrance Ceremony will be held on Saturday afternoon. The Ceremony is a unique event that is the heart of the conference and provides an opportunity for individuals, families, friends and conference delegates to come together in

strength, light and community to share and be supported in our grief as we honour and remember our loved ones and connect through Living Hope.

For further information conference program registration, visit conference manager's website at <http://www.hotelnetwork.com.au> and <http://www.suicideprevention.salvos.org.au>

Alan Staines, OAM (Envoy)
Director, The Salvation Army Suicide Prevention - Bereavement Support Services

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National Palliative Care Week - 24 - 30 May 2009
<http://www.palliativecare.org.au>

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9th WONCA RURAL HEALTH WORLD CONFERENCE
June 12-14, 2009
Heraklion, Crete, Greece
<http://www.ruralwonca2009.org/>

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National Motor Neurone Disease conference
Sydney, June 23
A limited amount of travel grants may be available for NSW registrants
The website url is <http://www.mndnsw.asn.au/htmdocs/conference.htm>

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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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General Practice & Primary Health Care Research Conference 2009: Driving Change
15-17 July, Melbourne VIC

This conference is a must for anyone with an interest in primary health care research, evaluation and development. It will provide essential opportunities for researchers, decision makers, practitioners and consumers to share ideas, form collaborations and network with speakers and other delegates.

<http://www.phcris.org.au/conference/2009>

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Catholic Health Australia 2009 National Conference - Hand in Hand Hotel Grand Chancellor
Hobart, 17 - 19 August 2009 <http://www.cha.org.au/>

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7th Australasian Conference on Safety and Quality in Health Care
6-9 September 2009
Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre
Darling Harbour, Sydney

<http://www.aaqhc2009.org.au>
aaqhc2009@tourhosts.com.au

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The Rural Medicine Australia 2009 Conference

Conference Hosts:

Rural Medicine Australia 2009 is the tenth annual conference jointly hosted by the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), and the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA). This year, we welcome the participation of the Rural Doctors Association of Victoria (RDAV) and the National Rural Medical Family Network.

Rural Medicine Australia 2009 will present outstanding opportunities for doctors and other health professionals working in rural and remote medicine to connect with colleagues, learn new skills, share their knowledge - and enjoy a brief respite from the pressures of work.

The conference sessions and workshops will emphasise practical skills and knowledge with immediate application to the demands of rural medicine. The conference welcomes other professionals - including allied health workers and government representatives - who share the commitment to quality health care for Australians living in rural and remote communities.

Rural Medicine Australia 2009 will run from Thursday, 29 October to Sunday 1 November 2009 in Melbourne.

Information available at <http://www.acrrm.com.au/>

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Year of the Blood Donor 2009

An anticipated doubling of demand for blood and blood products within 10 years has led the Australian Red Cross Blood Service to launch a nationwide recruitment drive in 2009 Year of the Blood Donor. The Blood Service is appealing for more than 100,000 new blood donors this year, in addition to the 40,000 who registered across Australia to give blood in the week after the Victorian bushfires.

http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/news/Year_of_the_Blood_Donor_2009

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Healing Our Spirit 2010

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers and researchers are advised to start planning now for Healing Our Spirit Worldwide The Sixth Gathering, which is due to take place on the island of Honolulu in Hawaii from 3 to 10 September 2010. The goal of Healing Our Spirit Worldwide (HOSW) is to celebrate the diverse and unique cultural strengths, knowledge and talents of Indigenous peoples around the world, with a particular focus on successes, best practices and common issues in health, healing and addictions.

The Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health is a proud supporter of and committed participant in the gathering, which will be hosted by native Hawaiian healthcare organisation Papa Ola Lōkahi (<http://www.papaolalokahi.org>).

Event organisers are now accepting abstracts, presentations and proposals for the sharing of cultural practices and performing arts. These need to be submitted by 8 September 2009 via the link on the home page of the HOSW website (<http://www.hosw.com>).

For more information:

Maria Halkitis - Contract Manager, 08 8943 5020

Mick Gooda - CEO, 0409 688 403

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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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Media Release
22 April 2009
Community Day to kick-start rural health conference

The health of individuals and families in rural and remote Australia will take centre stage on Sunday 17 May, when the 10th biennial National Rural Health Conference gets underway in Cairns.

Leading in to the Conference itself is a special community workshop on the Sunday, designed to provide skills and insights to high school students, carers and other local people, and early Conference delegates.

"The Community Skills Workshop is a more hands-on opportunity for people, especially from North Queensland, to learn about their own health and developments in the region - and to learn or practise health-related skills," said Owen Allen, Convenor.

The skills workshops will cover issues relating to personal health, caring, palliative care, managing multiple medications, and how to write on health for the media.

Lesley Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation, will discuss leadership in rural areas. Barbara Dennis from Carers Queensland will talk about self-care for carers, while a team from the National Rural Health Students' Network will pass on bush survival skills and techniques in first aid.

The Community Skills Day will also include three keynote addresses. Dr Dennis Pashen, Director of the Mt Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health, will describe how the health sector works and how people can influence its direction into the future.

Alison Taylor, Principal Demographer with the Queensland Department of Infrastructure and Planning, will discuss current and future demographic change in Far North Queensland. And Liz Hanna from the ANU will consider some of the local effects of climate change.

"The Sunday program has been structured so that people will be able to enjoy the festivities while having a picnic lunch, they can sing along with our combined choir OutLoud or interact with the circus group known as the Blackrobots," Mr Owen said.

People can register for the Community Skills Day and the 10th National Rural Health Conference at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

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Media Release
29 April 2009
Students to learn about better rural health

Have you ever wondered how well you could survive in the Australian bush? Could you find first aid items in the surrounding environment? How would you treat poisoning from snake, spider or marine stinger? Can you build a camp oven, cook a damper or make drinking water when none appears to be available?

Students from the National Rural Health Students' Network will present a session on bush survival skills at A healthy place to be: Community Skills Workshop at the Convention Centre in Cairns on 17 May, preceding the 10th National Rural Health Conference which starts on the same day.

Conference convenor, Atherton physiotherapist Owen Allen, said students from the students' rural health club at James Cook University will also lead two other sessions.

"One will be of particular interest to high school students considering a health career. Health club members will outline various means of entry into health courses, as well as a range of scholarships that can make health sciences more accessible for rural students," he said.

There are also plans for some practical hands-on fun.

In another session pharmacy students will provide information for people needing to manage multiple medications, with tips on how to simplify the medication regime to suit lifestyle and how to access community and government programs that provide support.

Health students will also participate in mainstream sessions at the 10th National Rural Health Conference, which runs from 17-20 May.

Registration forms for the Community Skills Workshop and the main program are at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

Mr Owen said the Community Skills Workshop is free to students, Conference delegates and those not in the paid workforce. For everyone else the cost is \$22.

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Media Release
30 May 2009
Rural health challenges are highlighted on-line

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has published a new series of Fact Sheets aimed at highlighting the current state of health in rural, regional and remote Australia.

They provide up-to-date information on critical aspects of health in rural areas and are available by accessing the Alliance website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

"This new series will be useful to everyone who wants information on the true state of health and welfare of the more than seven million Australians who live outside our capital cities," said Gordon Gregory, Executive Director of the NRHA.

Material posted so far provides facts on issues such as ageing in rural, regional and remote areas, the impact and importance of obesity and nutrition, and the incidence of cancer among those who live outside major metropolitan areas.

Several of the Fact Sheets are being prepared in collaboration with organisations with which the Alliance has close working relationships, such as the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia (COSA), Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) and the Rural Education Forum Australia (REFA).

The Fact Sheet on further education and health reminds us that education is a significant determinant of an individual's health through its impact on their employability, financial capacity and social wellbeing. It is also one of the keys to regional development and to the longer term sustainability of rural communities.

This puts into sharp focus the Fact Sheet on regional development, which describes how providing jobs and improving services and infrastructure contributes immeasurably to the social determinants of good health in rural communities.

Another in the Fact Sheet series is on health promotion and illness prevention. Because rural people display higher levels of chronic illness, have greater levels of premature death and face higher levels of risk than their city counterparts, rural Australia has much to gain from an increased emphasis on health promotion and illness prevention.

Other Fact Sheets are to be published, based on the Alliance's existing policy positions.

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Media Release

3 May 2009

National conference a major opportunity for rural health

Convenor of the 10th National Rural Health Conference, Owen Allen, said that with two weeks to go, over 800 delegates are registered for this major rural health event to be held in Cairns.

"It's an opportunity for those of us concerned about the state of health in rural and remote Australia to make sure that our concerns are not pushed aside by the admittedly huge distractions from the financial crisis, wars on foreign soil and swine flu," Mr Allen said.

"This major biennial event will see health care consumers, practitioners, service managers, researchers and policy makers from around the country gather to agree recommendations on the way forward," he said.

Robyn Williams, host of Radio National's Science Show, will be the Conference MC, introducing such speakers as Monique Bégin, one-time Canadian Health Minister, and John Kerin, Australia's longest serving Minister for Primary Industries.

In keynote addresses, Christine Bennett, Chairperson of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission will speak about the Commission's agenda for change; Rosemary Bryant, Chief Nurse and Midwifery Officer, will report on investment in rural maternity services; and Fred Chaney from the Remote Focus group and Desert Knowledge Australia will speak about the governance and service challenges of remote Australia.

Other keynote themes include health services planning, building resilience in Indigenous health students and staff and the role of new professions in finding new solutions.

Concurrent streams will focus on a range of issues as they relate to rural health, including recruitment and retention, schools, Indigenous community capacity, infrastructure, practice-ready health professionals, models of primary care that work, rural medical education, meaningful local consultation and effective local services.

There will be sessions on training the trainers, lessons from the NT emergency response, rural health policy, workforce and service redesign, and health professional innovation.

Focus will also be given to mental health, cancer, diabetes, men's health, women's health, maternity, child and family health, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health allied health and rehabilitation. An arts-in-health stream will promote story telling, capacity building, and wellbeing.

Registration and program are available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

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Media Release

3 May 2009

Working on the links between climate change and health

The Garnaut Climate Change Review released last year made two things very clear. The first is that Australia has a high level of exposure and sensitivity to the impacts of global warming. It has a fragile ecology, and many businesses and communities that will face significant adjustments from changes in the patterns of weather and natural disasters. Biodiversity on land, in rivers and wetlands, coastal estuaries and deep oceans is under threat.

The second and more positive conclusion reached by the Garnaut Review is that Australia has a high level of capacity to plan and respond to the impacts of climate change. Because of its great size and the wealth of its human and natural resources, with appropriate adjustments Australia can be a leader among those nations in the world able to benefit from new opportunities created by climate change.

There is a close relationship between the economic health of country communities and the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the people who live in them. Australian scientists are playing a key role in studying the direct impacts of climate change on health, and what adaptive strategies can be adopted. Among other things, these studies focus on how climate change is likely to affect the distribution of infectious disease, and food and energy systems.

Australia's health sector is leading the way in some of these important areas and updates on progress will be provided at the 10th National Rural Health Conference in Cairns.

A group of researchers led by Brian Kelly, Helen Berry and Craig Hart will describe some of the evidence about the impact of drought on mental health. To its credit, the Government's national review of drought policy included the findings of an expert panel on the social impacts. In releasing that report Minister Tony Burke confirmed that the Government is committed to helping farmers to plan for the future and better prepare for climate change, as part of work to build a strong future for rural Australia.

Liz Hanna, from the climate change and health team at the Australian National University, will speak on both Sunday 17 May and in a workshop on Tuesday 19 May on the human, economic and demographic impacts of climate change in Australia over the coming years.

Erica Bell will discuss the competencies that the world's rural and remote general practitioners will need in a climate-changing world and how their education and training should be adapted to suit.

The Australian Conservation Foundation's Paul Sinclair will emphasise the urgent need to build Australia's social and ecological resilience to global warming. He will argue that the loss of native species and ecosystem degradation are inextricably linked to human health and wellbeing. He will make the case for remedial action to address the degradation of Australian ecosystems, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the capacities of people to care for their country.

The health sector and the individuals in it have key roles to play, with other sectors, in the nation's capacity to plan and respond to the impacts of climate change. One of the leading organisations in this respect is Doctors for the Environment, Australia (DEA), chaired by Michael Kidd and with members in all States and Territories. DEA's current priority is the health effects of climate change.

Graeme Horton, joint author with Tony McMichael of the DEA's Climate change health check, released for World Health Day in April 2008, will lead a workshop on the role of the health sector in mitigating the effects of climate change. Grant Blashki and Nick Towle will join with Graeme in outlining how health care can be provided in ways to reduce its environmental impact through such things as 'green clinics', 'green cities' and patient education. They will also outline the place of health professionals' advocacy on these issues.

The conference will result in recommendations on the links between climate change and health. Senator Jan McLucas, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, will represent the Government at the closing session, at which time conference recommendations will be finalised.

Conference registration and program are available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

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Media Release

3 May 2009

Conference to consider gold standard for rural diabetes care

As is well known, diabetes is a significant health issue for people living in rural Australia and especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Death rates due to diabetes are significantly higher in areas outside major cities. The prevalence of reported diabetes increases significantly with increasing remoteness, with rates in remote areas being more than five times as high as in major cities.

The 10th National Rural Health Conference in Cairns (17-20 May) will have a concurrent session devoted to improving diabetes care in rural and remote areas.

Conference Convenor, Mr Owen Allen, said that people living outside the metropolitan areas need and deserve equitable access to a skilled diabetes professional workforce.

"The papers in the diabetes stream will focus on this issue," he said.

"Jane Giles, with the benefit of sixteen years as a diabetes educator, will look at how support can be provided to rural and remote health professionals providing diabetes education and care. There will be a focus on capacity building within health services, the value of networks based on a 'hub and spoke' model, and the establishment of regional and local multidisciplinary networks.

"Peter Goss, an experienced paediatrician in Gippsland, will present findings from a study which showed the importance of a multidisciplinary model of diabetic services for children and young adults in rural settings. The study found that holistic child diabetes care can be successfully achieved in a rural setting with results comparable to large metropolitan units and with excellent patient and professional satisfaction.

"Bernadette Heenan, a diabetes educator, and her colleague Keely Naden, will present an informative case study showing the benefits to a young Indigenous man with type 2 diabetes from professional upskilling given to an Indigenous Health Worker. The successful outcomes involve Indigenous Health Workers, nurses, diabetes educators and diabetes specialists, early use of appropriate medications, and every available form of technology to communicate. The case study shows that achieving gold standard care is possible no matter where in Australia we live and work."

The conference runs at the Convention Centre in Cairns from 17-20 May 2009. Registration and program are available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>
