



NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ALLIANCE INC

Media Release

21 October 2003

New Leadership Team for NRHA

The NRHA has a new Executive team, led by Ms Sue McAlpin, an allied health professional working at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales.

“The next twelve months will see a most important Federal Budget for rural and remote health,” Ms McAlpin said. “There is also the prospect of a Federal Election in that period or soon after it. So there is much to be done to make sure that rural and remote health issues remain firmly on the national agenda.”

Deputy Chairperson is Shelagh Lowe, a physiotherapist from St Marys in Tasmania. Dr Jane Greacen, CEO of the Rural Workforce Agency of Victoria, and representing the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, was re-elected Treasurer and Lynne Sheehan was elected Secretary. Ms Sheehan is CEO of the Mater Misericordiae Hospitals at Rockhampton in Central Queensland.

The Executive also includes Dr Nigel Stewart, Jon Lane, Associate Professor John Wakerman and Ms Myra Pincott. Dr Stewart is Immediate Past Chairperson and a Regional Paediatrician at Port Augusta in South Australia. Jon Lane is a fifth year medical student at the University of Tasmania; Dr Wakerman is Director of the Centre for Remote Health in Alice Springs, a University Department of Remote Health; and Myra Pincott is National President of the Country Women’s Association of Australia.

Ms McAlpin emphasises the importance of a unified and focused approach to the rural and remote health challenges facing Governments and the Alliance. “We must always retain a patient-centred view of health policies and programs. In our negotiations and collaboration with governments, the Alliance must represent the real interests of rural people and their communities, not the interest of any particular health profession.”

“In terms of its governance and structures, the Alliance is stronger now than at any previous time,” Ms McAlpin said. “We are therefore in a better position than ever before to take the positions expected of us by people in regional and remote areas. We will work hard in the lead-up to the Federal Budget and the Election.”

“We owe a major debt to Nigel Stewart for three years of leadership of the Alliance, and to the ongoing commitment and skills of its staff. The Council and its Executive, with support from our Member Bodies, will ensure that the Alliance remains safe, strong and at the cutting edge of work to improve the health of people and communities in rural and remote areas,” Ms McAlpin said.

Further information (bios are attached): Sue McAlpin, Chairperson 02 6933 2684
Gordon Gregory, Exec. Director 02 6285 4660

**Brief Biographies of Executive of NRHA
October 2003**

Sue McAlpin – Chairperson

Sue has represented the Australian College of Health Service Executives (ACHSE) on Council of the NRHA for the past two years. Currently Sue is the Chair of the ACHSE Rural Special Interest Group, and the Vice President of the NSW State Branch Council for the ACHSE.

Sue has an allied health background and postgraduate qualifications in health service management. During her career to date Sue has undertaken roles in clinical and community health as well as health service management. The majority of her career has been spent working in a rural setting.

Sue presently holds positions at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga as Senior Lecturer and Course Coordinator in Nutrition and Dietetics, while at the same time undertaking a PhD in rural health.

Shelagh Lowe – Deputy Chairperson

Shelagh is APA Representative and Convenor of the Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health Taskforce of the Health Professions Council of Australia (ARRAHT of the HPCA). She is also Tasmanian representative on the National Rural Issues Committee of the Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA) and SARRAH Representative on the Tasmanian Rural Health Partnership.

Shelagh is a physiotherapist from the east coast of Tasmania, providing sole physiotherapy services at the St Marys Community Health Centre and St Helens District Hospital. Shelagh graduated from Cumberland College of Health Sciences in 1980 and has worked in rural and remote Tasmania since February 1983. Originally employed in a 12 month locum position, a significant factor in her decision to stay in Tasmania is her marriage to Tasmanian, David, and their three teenage sons. She became ARRAHT delegate to the National Rural Health Alliance in April 2000.

Through her role on ARRAHT, Shelagh is involved in the management of the National Rural and Remote Allied Health Advisory Service in Canberra and the Australian Government Rural and Remote Health Professional Scholarship Scheme, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aging. Shelagh has been Deputy Chair of the NRHA for the past two years.

Jane Greacen - Treasurer

Dr Jane Greacen is currently a rural general practitioner in Bairnsdale and the Chief Executive Officer of the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV). She is also the current Treasurer on the Board of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM).

Jane's specific areas of interest include equitable access to health care, the supply of medical workforce to Aboriginal medical services, and the support of education and training for and by rural doctors.

Dr Greacen is a qualified Occupational Physician with a Masters in Public Health and she has worked as a Senior Lecturer at the Monash University School of Rural Health until 1998 when she transferred to RWAV. Jane has previously held the positions of Director of Program Development and Training for the Victorian Accident Rehabilitation Council and Chief Medical Officer and Group Manager WorkHealth, for the Public Transport Corporation, Victoria. Within the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) Jane established the DHS GP unit and was Assistant Director of Primary Care.

Lynne Sheehan – Secretary

Originally from Brisbane, Lynne and her family are long-term residents of Central Queensland. Lynne's qualifications include a Bachelor of Health Science (Nursing) from Central Queensland University, with Certificates in Midwifery and General Nursing. She is currently enrolled in a Master of Business Administration and is a Member of the Australian College of Health Service Executives.

Lynne has 25 years' experience in both the public and private acute health care sectors, the majority of which has been in Central Queensland. Prior to appointment eight years ago to the position of Chief Executive Officer of the Mater Rockhampton, Lynne had extensive experience in Executive Nurse Management roles including as a Director of Nursing. She continues in her present role of Chief Executive Officer of the Mater Hospitals in Rockhampton, Gladstone and Yeppoon.

Lynne holds a number of Committee positions in the Queensland health sector and is closely involved with a number of programs in Central Queensland that are funded by the Australian Government. She is Chair of the Rural Catholic Hospitals Forum (operating under the auspices of Catholic Health Australia) which she represents on Council of the Alliance.

Jon Lane – Ordinary Member of the Executive

Jon is currently a senior medical student enrolled at the University of Tasmania, Hobart. He lives on 12 acres about 20 mins out of town with his wife, two little girls, a house cat, two dogs, three horses and a pony, and a couple of beef cattle. He has previously been the President of RUSTICA, the Tasmanian Undergraduate Rural Health Club, and having sat on far too many committees at a state level he thought it might be fun to sit on a national level one for a change. Apart from his life as a student and rural health advocate, Jon teaches part time at the University in Human Biology, and has been a member of the Army for the last 13 years as well. His other main passions include food (both the cooking and eating of), and fishing, which he feels he gets to do far too little of.

Myra Pincott - Ordinary Member of the Executive

Myra Pincott was born in Sydney, grew up in the Central West of NSW, before moving with her family to the Riverina. After her marriage, Myra and husband Hugh farmed in partnership for over thirty years, in both northwestern New South Wales and Central Queensland, until a serious illness convinced Hugh that he should retire. Three of their four adult children are scattered throughout Queensland, with one son in the far north of Western Australia. Only one has returned to the land, with a cattle grazing property on the Atherton Tableland, which also is home to his racehorses.

Myra sees herself as typical of women of her generation, where home and children were observed priorities, with strong support for the children's activities, both social and sporting. Severe drought in the mid sixties saw a need to seek off-farm employment - this was with the Department of Education, in administration and as a TAFE Evening College teacher and Supervisor. Myra was also a casual journalist with the ABC, hosting two women's interest programmes out of Tamworth.

Myra was a member of the Queensland steering committee for the Year of the Outback, and was appointed as an Ambassador. She has also served on Ministerial Rural Advisory Councils relevant to Rural Communities, Rural Health, Rural Industry Training, Farmsafe, Women of Vision in Agriculture, Women's Cancer Screening Services, and on the Advisory Council for the establishment of the Central and Southern Rural Schools of Clinical Studies. There has now been a progression to these areas and many others at federal level.

Myra has also been awarded the Centenary Medal for service to the Country Women's Association, and Rural Communities.

She is currently National President of the Country Women's Association of Australia having served three years as Queensland State President.

John Wakerman - Ordinary Member of the Executive

Associate Professor Wakerman is Director of the Centre for Remote Health, Northern Territory. He is a Public Health Medicine specialist and general practitioner, with a background in the provision of remote primary health care services, both as a medical practitioner and senior manager. He has special interests in remote health services research and teaching management. He has also had substantial international experience as a public health and health service management consultant.