



NATIONAL RURAL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE INC.

Media Release

29 October 2009

Finding creative ways to encourage healthy ageing in the bush

Academics from the United States and Britain, together with the heads of three key Australian agencies, will gather in Canberra next month to discuss creative ageing for Australians who live in rural and remote areas. They are due to participate in a Public Seminar at the CSIRO Discovery Centre, ANU, on Tuesday 17 November.

The overseas contingent comprises Susan Perlstein, Director of Education and Training at the National Centre on Creative Ageing in Washington DC; Mike White, Senior Fellow in Arts in Health at the Centre for Medical Humanities at the University of Durham, and Alison Clough, Director of the Pioneer Projects and Looking Well Centre at Bentham, both in the United Kingdom.

“Research shows that staying engaged in creative activities significantly improves overall health and helps to alleviate the depression that can afflict older people whose activities are restricted by the tyranny of distance,” said Gordon Gregory, Executive Director of the NRHA, which is organising the half-day event.

“Given the ageing profile of rural and remote Australia we need to develop a new paradigm where, instead of seeing ageing as loss, we see it as something that involves gain. A growing body of research now shows that the ageing brain is not all a story of decline: It’s not ‘use it or lose it’ – it’s ‘use it and improve it’.”

Figures show Australia has an ageing population due largely to sustained low levels of fertility combined with increased life expectancy. Twelve per cent of the population in major cities are elderly, compared with 14 per cent in regional and 7 per cent in remote areas. Thirty-five per cent of Australians aged 65 and older live outside major cities where access to aged care, health care and ancillary services is limited.

Next month’s Seminar, *‘From creative ageing to end-of-life in rural and remote Australia’*, will see speakers provide evidence of the positive contributions local and outreach arts programs can make for creative ageing – and as support for overworked carers.

Dr Jenny May, Chair of the NRHA, will open the seminar in the CSIRO Discovery Centre at 9am by providing facts and figures on the ageing of rural Australia. She will be followed by the overseas speakers and Margret Meagher of Arts and Health Australia.

Joan Hughes, CEO of Carers Australia, will discuss some of the findings from the recent survey of carers in rural NSW, and Donna Daniell, of Palliative Care Australia, will describe how the challenge of end-of-life care can be met in rural and remote areas. Rosemary Young, CEO of Frontier Services, will describe some of the successes and ongoing barriers to aged care in very remote areas.

Contacts

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