NRHA STAKEHOLDERS' SURVEY: HAVE YOU FILLED IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE YET?

The Alliance and the Department of Health have commissioned an external evaluation of the Alliance, being conducted by Urbis. They would like your views please.

Please complete the online stakeholder survey about the Alliance and its activities.

The survey takes around 10-15 minutes, and is completely anonymous and confidential - with the results going to Urbis for analysis, not to the Alliance Office. If you don't have good internet access or would prefer to complete a hard copy, you can download a hard copy from our website (http://www.ruralhealth.org.au) or phone us and we'll post one to you.

If you have any queries about the evaluation, email Urbis at nrha@urbis.com.au

The survey will be online until 21 January 2008, and we'd appreciate it if you would complete the it.

Thanks for your assistance.

Leanne Coleman
Office Manager
HEALTHY HORIZONS OFFERS BLUEPRINT FOR NEW NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH PLAN

A national rural health plan is essential if the Rudd Government is to deliver on its promise to improve health outcomes for Australia's rural communities. The full text of the Alliance statement is at http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/healthy%20horizons%20and%20rural%20health%20plan%2014%20january.pdf and is reprinted below.

USE BUDGET AS A RURAL HEALTH EQUALISER

The May federal Budget should be used to help equalise the economic and social conditions between rural Australians and their metropolitan counterparts. The full text of the Alliance statement is at http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/use%20budget%20as%20rural%20health%20equaliser.pdf and is reprinted below.

NZ STUDY SHOWS DECLINE IN RURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE

A national survey of rural health care providers across the Tasman shows an ageing workforce in which a significant number of doctors, practice nurses and pharmacists are preparing to leave rural practice by 2010. The full text of the Alliance statement is at http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/nz%20workforce%2015%20jan%202008.pdf and is reprinted below.

CLIMATE CHANGE HEALTH ALERT FOR RURAL AUSTRALIA

Mounting evidence of global warming has led experts to warn of likely adverse health effects to many Australians who live in rural and remote areas. The full text of the Alliance statement is at http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/climate%20change%20health%20alert%208%20jan%202008.pdf and is reprinted below.

From: Don Perlgut <ceo@rhef.com.au>
Subject: HIV/AIDS Update: Holding the Ramparts - Rural Health Education Foundation satellite broadcast - Tuesday 29th January 2008

HIV/AIDS Update: Holding the Ramparts
Rural Health Education Foundation
LIVE Satellite Television Broadcast
In 1982, the first case of HIV/AIDS was diagnosed in Australia. Since that time, health professionals, government agencies and community groups have all battled against the disease. While the description of ramparts conjures images of sword fighting on the battlements of an ancient castle, the determined fight against HIV/AIDS has also had significant casualties, with more than 26,000 people contracting HIV and 6723 confirmed AIDS-related deaths in Australia by the end of 2006.

Awareness and education initiatives, often consumer-driven, have "held the ramparts", slowing the spread of HIV/AIDS. Historically, Australians are five times less likely to die from AIDS than their American counterparts, however recently our HIV infection rates have been increasing from 645 cases in 1999 to 963 in 2006.

This program explores the current prevalence of HIV/AIDS and the reasons for the current increased infection rate. Recent developments in treatment options including prophylactic treatments, combination antiretroviral therapies, and treatment regimes are covered. The vital role of counselling and support is discussed, particularly in rural and remote Australia where access to services is limited. The program also looks at anticipated future developments in management and treatment.

Learning Outcomes
After viewing the program, participants will be able to:
* Identify the current prevalence and trends of HIV infection and progression to AIDS in Australia
* Identify current recommended treatment options and access methods
* Recognise current national testing guidelines and notification procedures
* Understand the role of primary care and other professionals in the holistic care of potential and recognised HIV/AIDS patients, including:
  * Awareness and prevention education
  * Pre and post test discussions
  * Referral and ongoing support

Panellists include:
Chair: Dr Norman Swan, Presenter of the Health Report on ABC Radio National.
Professor Sharon Lewin, Director, Infectious Diseases Unit, The Alfred Hospital, Melbourne
& Immediate Past President, Australasian Society for HIV Medicines (ASHM) Dr Miriam Grotowski, General Practitioner, Tamworth, NSW Mr Russell Levy, Pharmacist, St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney Mr Rob Lake, CEO, People living with HIV/AIDS, NSW

Broadcast details on the Foundation's satellite network:
This live program will be broadcast on Tuesday 29th January 2008 on Channel 4 at:
- 8.00pm in ACT, NSW, TAS & VIC - 7.30pm in SA
- 7.00pm in QLD
- 6.30pm in NT
- 6.00pm in WA (and repeated in WA on Channel 23 at 8.00pm)
Repeated on Friday 1st February on Channel 23 at:
- 12.30pm in ACT, NSW, VIC & TAS
- 12 noon in SA
- 11.30 in SA
- 11.00 in NT
- 10.30am in WA

This program will be web streamed after the live broadcast and will also be available as a downloadable audio MP3 file. For more details visit the http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/801/801.html program page.

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

JANUARY FEBRUARY TIMETABLE RURAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The Rural Health Education Foundation will be broadcasting four programs over the months of January and February 2008. All details including program information, panellists, broadcast times and other viewing options can be found on the Foundation's website http://www.rhef.com.au or contacting the Foundation office on 02 6232 5480.

HIV/Aids Update: Holding the Ramparts - Live Tuesday 29th January 8:00pm AEDT (repeated Friday 1st February 12:30pm AEDT)
Continence: Children and Adolescents - pre recorded Tuesday 12th February 8:00pm AEDT (repeated Friday 15th Feb 12:30pm AEDT)
Improving Bowel Continence - pre recorded Tuesday 19th February 8:00pm AEDT (repeated Friday 22nd Feb 12:30pm AEDT)
An Ounce of Prevention: MBS Item 717, the 45-49 year old health check - pre recorded Tuesday 26th February 8:00pm AEDT (repeated Friday 29th February 12:30pm AEDT)

Note the Continence: Children and Adolescents, Improving Bowel Continence and previously broadcast Continence and Men's Health are all part of a series that will be available on DVD or VHS video. Contact the Foundation to order your copy continence@rhef.com.au

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

2008 NATIONAL NUTRITION NETWORKS CONFERENCE

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

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


The National Nutrition Networks Conference PO Box 280 DEAKIN WEST ACT 2600
Phone: 02 6285 4660
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL MEETING COMMUNIQUE


AIHW REPORTS


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 Editorial Office Australian Journal of Rural Health 550 Swanston Street Carlton VIC 3053

February 2008 issue now available. Contents include: Climate change and the rural health workforce Effect of climate change on Australian rural and remote regions: What do we know and what do we need to know? Health and wellbeing of older people in Anglo-Australian and Italian-Australian communities: A rural-urban comparison Rural temperament and character: A new perspective on retention of rural doctors Trichomonas vaginalis in Vanuatu How do registered nurses define rurality?


+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

RDAAA STATEMENTS

Elective surgery funding should not just be for city hospitals
14 January 2008

Doctors call for surgery to restart in Bourke as part of NSW's $43 million elective surgery grant
15 January 2008

RDAAA Budget Submission 2008
18 January 2008

Rural Doctors' Budget Submission Targets Workforce Crisis Solutions
18 January 2008

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

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

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

From: Gabrielle du Preez-Wilkinson <gedpw@ozemail.com.au>
Subject: Healthy Systems: Hopeful Futures

21st - 24th February 2008
Novotel Twin Waters Resort Noosa, Queensland
Major Themes: Leadership, Medical Management, Clinical Governance This conference is aimed at clinicians and clinician managers in provincial and rural areas. For more information, contact Gabrielle dPW on 0408 980 825 or gedpw@ozemail.com.au

PARTYline Newsletter

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

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

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

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

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


Ballarat's doctor shortage is worse than ever, says a general practitioner. The crisis has prompted Carn Brae Clinic's Dr Frank Marton to renew calls for a GP register, showing which doctors are taking new patients. Dr Marton says it's extremely distressing to see people wandering from practice to practice begging for help.

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

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

ARTICLE IN "RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH"

"Sorry' - in word and actions. Improving health in rural and remote Indigenous communities' Despite the rhetoric of media and policy statements, addressing Indigenous health inequalities is not an impossible task. There are proven solutions. This letter from a former medical officer in an Aboriginal community suggest the principles that will underlie effective change. http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=876

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

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

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

RURAL HEALTH ON THE ABC
(From ABC Health Updates, http://abcmail.net.au/t/73489/614869/1366/0/)

GOVERNMENT MEETS TODAY TO REVIEW INDIGENOUS INTERVENTION (AM: 17/01/2008) http://abcmail.net.au/t/73489/614869/1585/0/

THE 'THRIFTY GENE' HYPOTHESIS AND INDIGENOUS HEALTH (Health Report: 14/01/2008) Thirty years ago geneticists came up with the 'thrifty gene' hypothesis - the idea that high rates of diabetes and obesity in Indigenous populations could be explained by a gene specific to these groups. A study by Australian and American researchers dispels the 'thrifty gene' hypothesis, suggesting that high rates of chronic disease are rooted in social disadvantage, rather than a genetic pre-disposition. But not everybody agrees. (Repeat broadcast) http://abcmail.net.au/t/73489/614869/1598/0/

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

CURRENT ISSUE OF eMJA, 7 January 2008
(Available at http://www.mja.com.au/)

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA): "missing the wood for the trees" What's hanging around your neck? Pathogenic bacteria on identity badges and lanyards Written advice can provide a safe and acceptable alternative to new patient assessment for selected referrals to haematologists Do advertisements in clinical software influence prescribing? The effect of advertising in clinical software on general practitioners' prescribing behaviour Commercialism, choice and consumer protection: regulation of complementary medicines in Australia Paying for costly pharmaceuticals: regulation of new drugs in Australia, England
and New Zealand Does Enhanced Primary Care enhance primary care? Policy-induced dilemmas for allied health professionals National health reform needs strategic investment in health services research Burden of disease and injury in Australia in the new millennium: measuring health loss from diseases, injuries and risk factors Chikungunya virus infection in travellers to Australia Should Australia lift its ban on low nitrosamine smokeless tobacco products?
Repealing Australia's ban on smokeless tobacco? Hasten slowly The clinical utility of ultrasonography for rotator cuff disease, shoulder impingement syndrome and subacromial bursitis ?-Hydroxybutyrate poisoning from toy beads Nurofen Plus misuse: an emerging cause of perforated gastric ulcer

DIVERSITY IN HEALTH CONFERENCE

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

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

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


You are invited to register for the World Congress of Health Professions, to be hosted by the Metropolitan Allied Health Council Inc and the Allied Health Alliance of WA at the Perth Convention Centre in Perth, March 26th to 29th 2008.

The title of the congress is "The Future Now : Challenges and Opportunities in Health". The congress philosophy is to open possibilities for health professionals from around the globe, inclusive of all cultures and disciplines, through the dissemination of information, the development of networks and forums, and the evolution of cultural and professional exchange.

The Congress has five themes:
Global Challenges and World Health
Innovations in Service Delivery
Workforce and Training Developments
Demands and Opportunities
The Impact of New Technology on Health Care

Who should attend: Allied Health, Diagnostic and Scientific Professionals, Medical Practitioners, Nurses, Health Educators & Researchers, Clinical Managers, Health Executives, Community Based Clinicians, Population Health Professionals, Policy Makers, Private Health Industry Providers and Health Promotion Practitioners.

This is a great opportunity for us to share our achievements and learn from others at home and abroad during this exciting period of reform and significant change.

The World Congress of Health Professions Organising Committee is pleased to announce that EARLY BIRD REGISTRATIONS have been extended to JANUARY 31st 2008.

To register for the Congress please visit http://www.worldhealthcongress.org/info-registration.php. Queries about registration should be directed to Events WA on 9248 5788.

10th INTERNATIONAL PAEDIATRIC AND CHILD HEALTH NURSING CONFERENCE

The 10th International Paediatric and Child Health Nursing Conference is to be held at the Holiday Inn Esplanade and Darwin Entertainment Centre, Northern Territory, from Wednesday, 30 April to Friday, 2 May 2008. The conference is being hosted by the Australian Confederation of Paediatric and Child Health Nurses. The conference is expected to attract between 200 and 400 delegates from across Australia and abroad.

Through the implementation of the theme "Crossing barriers", this conference aims to illustrate that barriers can and must be crossed to improve health outcomes for children and young people. The conference aims are: to advance paediatric and child health nursing's contribution to health care and facilitate the dissemination of evidence highlighting effective nursing interventions to arise the profile of the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration to identify future directions for paediatric and child health nursing to provide a forum that stimulates debate and collegiality.

For more information please visit the conference website at http://www.ipchnconference.com.au or by contacting the conference secretariat via email at info@ipchnconference.com.au or by telephone +61 7 3858 5503.


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

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

Early bird Registration closes 7 March, 2008

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

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

From: Rogan McMahon-Hogan <rogan.mcmahon-hogan@deafnessforum.org.au>
Subject: National Deafness Summit 08

The Deafness Forum of Australia is pleased to announce that registrations are now open for the 2008 National Deafness Sector Summit which will be hosted in Canberra 24-25 May 2008. These biennial summits are a fantastic opportunity for disability professionals, carers and the Deaf and hearing impaired community to learn about new developments in the sector, a chance to discuss issues, network and catch up with old friends. The previous summit held in Perth in 2006 was very successful, and we look forward to more success in 2008. Further information is available through the Deafness Forum Website, http://www.deafnessforum.org.au or via email info@deafnessforum.org.au

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

INAUGURAL RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM
6-8 July 2008, Brisbane

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

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

The Population Health Congress 2008 will be held on July 6-9 in the Brisbane Convention and exhibition Centre. Regular updates on Congress 2008 will be available at http://www.populationhealthcongress.org.au - log on to register your interest.

Enquiries:
Conference Coordinators
PO Box 139
Calwe ll ACT 2905
Ph (02) 6292 9000
congress2008@confco.com.au
2008 SARRAH CONFERENCE
27-30 August 2008, Yempo. Details can be found on SARRAH's website at http://www.sarrah.org.au

10th NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE
The 10th National Rural Health Conference will be held in Cairns in May 2009. Keep an eye on our website at http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/conferences/docs/10thNRHC/10thNRHC.htm for up-to-date information about the Conference. The first announcement will be the Call for Abstracts in early 2008.

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.

Media Release
14 January 2008
Healthy Horizons offers blueprint for new national rural health plan

The peak lobby group for rural and remote health says a national rural health plan is essential if the Rudd Government is to deliver on its promise to improve health outcomes for Australia's rural communities.

Gordon Gregory, Executive Director of the National Rural Health Alliance, says many of the pieces are already in place for such a plan. "The Alliance believes the best way forward on rural and remote health will be to endorse a collaborative redesign of Healthy Horizons 2003-2007," he said.

Healthy Horizons is the current national framework for rural and remote health. It has the major advantage of having been jointly agreed by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and by the Alliance on behalf of rural health consumers and providers.
"People in rural and remote areas have been well served by Healthy Horizons 2003-2007, but it is essentially a passive reporting template, without expenditure or outcome targets. Incorporating such targets into the new plan will be in line with the Prime Minister's call for evidence-based policy," Mr Gregory said.

The Alliance is urging Federal and State/Territory health departments to move quickly to develop and endorse a revised Healthy Horizons as the new national rural health plan.

"A national plan has the potential to give country people visible and accountable targets for the provision of health services in rural areas. It will put a stop to the ad hoc and piecemeal approach which has caused distress, frustration and inequity in rural health," he said.

"The new plan can provide the broad strategic agenda necessary to effect better health and a more sustainable future for rural communities. The Alliance is ready to back a major collaborative effort with the Rudd Government to get the plan up and running.

"Seven million Australians currently don't have local access to the primary health and hospital care they need. Systemic reform is required, but it will be constrained by limiting factors, including acute and potentially long-term workforce shortages. These issues, and the threats and opportunities that come with reform, will need to be the subject of careful planning and consultation," Mr Gregory said.

"Country resilience is currently being sorely tested. The Alliance believes rural and remote health challenges will be more effectively met as part of a collaborative planned national approach to rural and remote health."

++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++ ++++++++

Media Release
17 January 2008
"Use Budget as rural health equaliser' says lobby group

The May federal Budget should be used to help equalise the economic and social conditions between rural Australians and their metropolitan counterparts, says the peak national body for rural and remote health.

Despite the need for fiscal responsibility, the country is sorely in need of infrastructure investment in non-metropolitan areas and there is also the vital need to build the human capital and service base of rural and remote communities, according to the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA).

"The health of country people stands to gain substantially from the Treasurer's commitments to deliver modern infrastructure and a world-class broadband network, and to end the blame game between Federal and State governments," the Alliance's Executive Director, Gordon Gregory, said in a pre-Budget submission to the Treasurer, Wayne Swan.

Mr Gregory said rural and remote communities would support rationalisation of services if there is evidence they can be provided more effectively by other means. However, given their
relatively poor health outcomes and access to services, country people are expecting increased Budget allocations overall.

He said targeted expenditures on human health and wellbeing in country areas are sound investments as workforce shortages hamstring national productivity and output. Better health and wellbeing will lift workforce participation and productivity rates, including in the mineral and mining sectors, while bolstering traditional agricultural areas suffering severe hardships.

Mr Gregory warned that meeting the current rural and remote health challenges will also require improvements to the training, support and distribution of the health workforce. This would contribute to the Government's own goal of improving the national skills base.

"Given the recent sustained economic growth, now is a good time to invest in the nation's workforce, help protect country communities, point the way for health services and other interventions, and enable rural people to share in national prosperity," Mr Gregory said.

Media Release
8 January 2008
Climate change health alert for rural Australia

Mounting evidence of global warming has led experts to warn of likely adverse health effects to many Australians who live in rural and remote areas.

"Health effects from climate change will stem from increased temperatures, irregular distribution of precipitation, air pollution and infectious diseases," warns a paper presented by Dr Peng Bi, from the Department of Public Health at the University of Adelaide.

Published in the January issue of the Australian Journal of Rural Health, the paper predicts altered weather patterns will bring changes in the distribution of vector-borne diseases, such as Ross River and Barmah Forest viral infections, food-borne diseases and variations in daily mortality and hospitalisation rates, emergency department visits and the use of ambulances services.

"Studying the effects of climate change in Australian rural and remote regions is extremely important because of the unequal access to health care by those who live there. Moreover, most of the country's Indigenous people live in remote regions and they could be more vulnerable as a direct result of global warming," Dr Bi wrote.

The paper, which was jointly researched with Professor Kevin Parton from the School of Rural Management at Charles Sturt University, NSW, predicts climate change will affect the eco-system to trigger extreme events such as heatwaves, droughts, flooding, cyclones and landslides. This will impact on food production by disrupting agricultural cycles.

"Australian society, especially rural regions, is becoming more vulnerable to natural disasters, at least in terms of economic costs, and these disasters are primarily climate-related.

Rural and remote regions play an important role in the nation in terms of crops and pastoral production, biodiversity, environmental security and heritage protection," the paper says.
It suggests a broader approach needs to be taken to identify impact scenarios across a number of indicators, including agricultural and food productivity, population health and social/economic development.

Furthermore, the paper says identifying and exploring relevant adaptation and mitigation strategies will be crucial for planners to gain a clearer understanding of the overall impact of climate change on regional Australia.

"Such responses might include changes in physical structure of resource management systems like reservoirs, changes in the operation of these systems, a range of socioeconomic actions such as pricing and marketing mechanisms, community education and health promotion campaigns."

The results from such integrated study will expand existing knowledge and provide important information to government agencies and local communities for policy making, sustainable development planning and local community education campaigns to mitigate adverse consequences.

The Editorial in the same January issue of the AJRH, written by Dr Grant Blashki, Senior Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne, says the health system will need to monitor and respond to the threat of infectious diseases in some vulnerable regions and provide support for communities likely to bear the brunt of more frequent droughts in coming decades.

"A particular challenge will be to support those communities most vulnerable to climate change, which tends to coincide with regions already under-serviced such as rural and regional areas. Mounting an appropriate adaptive response to climate change will require strong and sustained support of Australia's rural health workforce," Dr Blashki warns.

The joint paper by Dr Bi and Professor Parton can be found through the URL address http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1440-1584.2007.00945.x

Media Release
15 January 2008
NZ study shows decline in rural health workforce

A national survey of rural health care providers across the Tasman shows an ageing workforce in which a significant number of doctors, practice nurses and pharmacists are preparing to leave rural practice by 2010.

The groundbreaking study also reveals New Zealand's rural workforce suffers similar problems to its Australian counterpart, including a scarcity of locally trained doctors and work overload which impacts on family and social life.
The joint study by Dr Felicity Goodyear-Smith, from the Faculty of Medical Health Sciences at the University of Auckland, and Dr Ron Janes, from the Wairoa Medical Centre in Hawkes Bay, appears in the January 2008 issue of the Australian Journal of Rural Health.

It shows that 73 per cent of rural general practices in New Zealand are GP-owned with 41 per cent staffed by a single-doctor and 32 per cent by a lone doctor and single nurse. One practice was staffed by 12 doctors and nine nurses.

The study provides a snapshot of rural doctors, practice nurses and pharmacists in New Zealand as at November 2005 and warns of a worsening shortage in all three categories.

Key contributing factors include workplace ageing, growing numbers of female GPs who work fewer hours than their male counterparts, graduates seeking a better work/lifestyle balance and increased health care needs of the country's expanding geriatric population.

Other findings are that the majority of rural GPs in New Zealand are men of whom 78 per cent are aged over 40. Fifty seven per cent of female doctors are under 40 and none of them sampled were still practising over 60 years of age.

The study also revealed that 76 per cent of male doctors work full time, compared to 37 per cent of their female counterparts, while almost 80 per cent did after-hours oncall work with a wide range of roster frequencies.

Of the 28 rural GPs sampled who were over 60, 68 per cent still worked full time and 36 per cent had no plans to retire before 2010.

It also raised concern that five single-practice GPs who responded to the survey were responsible for providing services to more than 5,000 patients - but with an increased number of practice nurses.

"In some rural localities where GP recruitment has been especially problematic, practices are coping with GP shortages with the greater use of nurses in the team," the article reports.

It also shows that 28 per cent of rural practice nurses participated in after-hours oncall. They ranged from being available 24 hours a day seven days a week to occasional evenings or weekend sessions.

The inaugural study found the majority of rural pharmacies operated as small businesses, 33 per cent with one pharmacist and 32 per cent with two. Thirty five per cent of respondents in this category provided after-hours on-call service seven days a week while 16 per cent shared rosters with other pharmacies.

The picture is of the younger generation of GPs working significantly less hours and intending to move on or retire from rural practice at a much younger age than their older colleagues. Less than 50 per cent of rural GPs were NZ-trained.

"With minimal rural exposure, training and role models, it is not surprising that few new medical graduates choose rural practice. Unless this trend changes NZ will continue to depend on other countries to supply the majority of its rural GP workforce."
The fact that 25 per cent of the country's ageing rural practice nurse workforce is planning to leave within five years compounds the problem, as does the fact that few young nurses are choosing to work in rural areas.

This means the shortage of rural practice nurses will occur simultaneously with the decline in rural doctor numbers.

"Action is needed now to dramatically increase the number of medical, nursing and other health students choosing rural careers. These students need more exposure to rural training and living if rural New Zealand is to continue to have equal access to quality primary health care," the report concludes.

The joint paper can be found through the AJRH URL address http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1440-1584.2007.00949.x

Click on the link below to be removed from the mailing list http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/admin/emaillist/remove.asp?ID=de129546598951296