



## Behind the Budget

Where rural health is concerned, there were three main contextual issues for the recent Federal Budget. They were the 'tax cuts versus services' debate, the lapsing programs in the Regional Health Strategy, and big picture reform of the health system.

Since the previous edition of *PARTYline* there has been still more evidence that the majority of Australians would have preferred increased Government expenditure on services like health and education to tax cuts. The size of the tax cuts surprised some commentators and it is possible that responses to the 'Which would you prefer?' question would have been different had the size of the tax cuts been included.

Never mind the polling. Even without it there is a very good case for increased Government expenditure on key services. The 'Services First' Coalition, among others, has made the case clear by



focusing on some of the main service inequities and deficiencies, the effects of which are borne disproportionately by those on low incomes and other disadvantaged groups, including the people of country areas.

- The proportion of doctors' consultations that was bulk-billed fell from 78% in 2000 to 66% in 2003, and average Medicare gap fees rose from \$10 to \$14.
- Public schools receive one-third of Commonwealth funding to educate 70% of the nation's students. Many schools are unable to afford basic repairs and are forced to increase class sizes.
- Over 70,000 eligible applicants missed out on first-round university offers for 2004. Over 40,000 applicants to

TAFE courses cannot get a place due to a freeze on federal funding.

- There are 174,500 parents on waiting lists for childcare places, and childcare fees have risen by 25% in the past 18 months.
- 298 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are located 100km or more from the nearest hospital and 15% of these do not have access to a GP.
- Public housing waiting lists grew by 15% between 1990 and 2001: from 195,000 to 223,290 households.

The second important background matter for rural health was the fact that the twelve programs comprising the Regional Health Strategy were all technically lapsing. They were put in place as part of

### in this issue:

- ▶ Election 2004 and "PARTYline goes to the polls"
- ▶ Local government's growing role in rural health
- ▶ Indigenous oral health
- ▶ Supporting transitions for nurses
- ▶ Investing in rail trails

























# It's All Right

**www.itsallright.org** – a new SANE website for young people with family or friends affected by mental illness.

It is estimated that 85 per cent of us will be affected by mental illness at some time in our lives – either directly or through family or friends. One in four young people aged between 18 and 24 will develop a mental disorder. Thirty thousand young people in Australia have a parent with a mental illness – and many of them have a primary care role.

**www.itsallright.org** provides young people with a fun way to learn about mental illness, in a language they can understand. The website helps 13 to 17 year-olds with information, advice and referral to support agencies, through a friendly story-based website.

SANE Australia is a national charity helping people affected by mental illness. Its Executive Director, Barbara Hocking, says there is a growing recognition of the need to educate young people about mental illness. Better understanding of the conditions can make all the difference to health outcomes.



The website is designed to appeal to teens and has a funky interface. The story of four fictional characters is told through entries in their online diaries (blogs), as they meet at a group for young people with families affected by mental illness. The blogs are updated weekly.

The site was developed in consultation with young people who have a family member with a mental illness. Helplessness, confusion, guilt, anger, sadness, embarrassment, fear and conflicting emotions of love and resentment are some of the feelings young people have when someone they care about is mentally ill.

Sixteen year-old Dan Halloran says there have been some very hard times with his mother in and out of hospital: "Mum's schizophrenia has robbed me of a lot of time other kids have with their mums. Young people need help to understand what's going on because they still love the person with the illness and the person loves them."

Professor Fiona Stanley, Board Member of the Telstra Foundation, which gave a grant to develop the website, said: "I'm very pleased that the Telstra Foundation has supported the site's development as it's so important we make sure this type of information is presented positively and in a way that is accessible to young people".

"I think this website is a wonderful initiative by SANE. It's a great site for young people to learn about mental illness and to start to understand and support those who are dealing with its challenges every day," she said. ❖



## Australian Journal of Rural Health

### Telling your story

Do you have a rural health story to tell? Have you learnt something in your rural health experiences that might be valuable to others?

The AJRH is brightening its look with a new full-colour cover and also increasing the scope of its content. In addition to the original research articles for which it is highly regarded, the AJRH is now seeking letters to the Editor and contributions of shorter articles with the same relevance to rural, multi-disciplinary health provision.

"Grazings" is a new column for short reflections, humorous or philosophical pieces. Obituaries, practice pointers or clinical tips will also be accepted. Just keep in mind that the Journal has a multi-professional readership with a rural interest.

If you have a good idea but have never written before, the AJRH Editorial team is happy to provide help and advice. Articles should run between 250 and 600 words, and should be sent to the Editor at [AJRH@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:AJRH@newcastle.edu.au). Complete author guidelines are at [www.blackwellpublishing.com/ajr](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/ajr). For a one month free trial go to [freetrial@blackwellpublishasia.com](mailto:freetrial@blackwellpublishasia.com) ❖







# Useful Websites

**Blackwell Publishing: Australian Journal of Rural Health:** the AJRH is a multidisciplinary refereed journal contributing to the accumulation of knowledge of rural health in Australia. [www.blackwellpublishing.com/ajr](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/ajr)

**Volunteering Australia:** the national peak body working to advance volunteering in the Australian community. [www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org)

**Rural Doctors Association of Australia:** Good Health To Rural Communities – Ten Point Plan, 24 March 2004 [www.rdaa.com.au](http://www.rdaa.com.au)

**The Matagouri Club:** is an undergraduate health science student club with a rural flavour at the University of Otago. [www.otago.ac.nz/matagouri](http://www.otago.ac.nz/matagouri)

**Rural and Remote Health:** The International Electronic Journal of Rural and Remote Health Research, Education, Practice and Policy [e-jrh.deakin.edu.au/home](http://e-jrh.deakin.edu.au/home)

**HealthInsite:** Through this site you will find a wide range of up-to-date and quality assessed information on

important health topics such as diabetes, cancer, mental health and asthma. [www.healthinsite.gov.au](http://www.healthinsite.gov.au)

**Volunteers for Isolated Students' Education:** VISE volunteers provide assistance to support the distance education of students in rural Australia, and domestic and personal support in the case of emergencies or when respite is necessary. [www.vise.org.au](http://www.vise.org.au)

**Pfizer Australia Health Report**  
[www.healthreport.com.au](http://www.healthreport.com.au)  
Issue 1: Depression, February 2004  
Issue 2: Parkinsons, February 2004  
Issue 3: Healthy Lungs, March 2004  
Issue 4: Healthy Kidneys, April 2004

**Australian Organ Donor Register:** [www.hic.gov.au/yourhealth](http://www.hic.gov.au/yourhealth)

**Australian Alcohol Guidelines: interactive quiz**  
[www.alcoholguidelines.gov.au](http://www.alcoholguidelines.gov.au)

**Falls Prevention for Older People**  
[www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/injury/falls/index.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/injury/falls/index.htm)

**Anti-Poverty Week:** In 2004, Anti-Poverty Week begins on Sunday 17 October and finishes on Friday 22 October. [www.antipovertyweek.org.au](http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au)

**Nuffield Farming Scholarships:** for Australian primary producers – “a world experience”. Applications for 2004 close 25 June. [www.nuffield.com.au](http://www.nuffield.com.au)

**Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency** is the independent body responsible for managing the accreditation and ongoing supervision of Commonwealth-funded aged care homes. [www.accreditation.aust.com](http://www.accreditation.aust.com)

**Australian Transport Safety Bureau,** Fatal Road Crash Database is presented by ATSB for public use and provides basic details of the road transport crash fatalities in Australia as reported by the police each month to the State and Territory road safety authorities. [tssu.atsb.gov.au](http://tssu.atsb.gov.au)

**Australian Government Budget 2004–05**  
[www.aph.gov.au/budget/2004-05/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/budget/2004-05/index.htm) ❖

# Rural Realities

The Bureau of Rural Sciences has shed some light on rural and regional Australia in *Country Matters: Social Atlas of Rural and Regional Australia*. See [www.brs.gov.au](http://www.brs.gov.au)

Overall, Australia's non-metropolitan population grew by 0.8% per annum between 1996–2001, compared with the average national growth rate of 1.1% per annum.

Unemployment rates in 2001 averaged 8.4% in non-metropolitan and 6.8% in metropolitan areas. The national average

was 7.4%. Rates well above average were recorded in Mount Morgan (23.4%), Tiaro (20.3%) and Bilinga (18.7%).

Youth unemployment was higher in non-metropolitan areas (15.9%) than metropolitan areas (12.8%). It was higher in populated coastal areas (18.1%) and Regional Cities (17.3%) than in populated inland areas (14.3%) and remote areas (9.9%).

Between 1996 and 2001 the number of people with a university qualification increased at a higher rate in non-

metropolitan than metropolitan areas (33.5% compared to 31.9%). There were some marked variations. Above average growth occurred in Regional cities (38.7%) and populated coastal areas (34.8%). Growth was below average in populated inland (29.8%) and in the remote region (26.2%).

In 2001, there was a higher proportion of families receiving a weekly income of less than \$300 in non-metropolitan (16.3%) compared to metropolitan areas (12.3%). The national average was 13.9%. ❖







PHOTO: ARTHUR MOSTEAD

# Health calendar

## JULY 2004

### ACRRM Scientific Forum on Rural and Remote Medicine

*'Recognising Rural and Remote Medicine'*  
8–11 July 2004  
Alice Springs  
[www.acrrm.org.au](http://www.acrrm.org.au)

### ACHSE National Congress –

*The Leading Edge*  
20–22 July 2004  
Darwin  
[www.achse.org.au/frameset.html](http://www.achse.org.au/frameset.html)

## AUGUST 2004

### 2004 Federal Conference

*Isolated Children's Parents' Association*  
5–6 August 2004  
Perth  
[www.icpa.com.au/Conference.asp](http://www.icpa.com.au/Conference.asp)

### General Practice Education and Training Ltd (GPET) Annual Convention

11–14 August 2004  
Brisbane  
[www.gpet.com.au](http://www.gpet.com.au)

### The National SARRAH Conference

26–28 August 2004  
*'Walking together side by side'*  
Alice Springs  
[www.sarrah.org.au](http://www.sarrah.org.au)

## SEPTEMBER 2004

### CATSIN Annual Conference

1–3 September 2004  
Coffs Harbour  
[www.indiginet.com.au/catsin](http://www.indiginet.com.au/catsin)

### 8th Biennial International Paediatric and Child Health Nurses Conference

*'Bringing it together for kids and families'*  
1–3 September 2004  
Adelaide  
[www.sapmea.asn.au/conventions/paed2004/index.html](http://www.sapmea.asn.au/conventions/paed2004/index.html)

### Catholic Health Aust Conference 2004

*'Just Care'*  
6–8 September 2004  
Adelaide  
[www.cha.org.au](http://www.cha.org.au)

## SEGRA 2004

*'Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia'*  
6–8 September  
Alice Springs  
[www.segra.com.au](http://www.segra.com.au)

### 8th National Undergraduate Rural Health Conference

28 September – 2 October 2004  
Tanunda, SA  
[www.nrhn.org.au](http://www.nrhn.org.au)

### RACGP 47th Annual Scientific Convention and AGM

30 September – 3 October 2004  
Melbourne  
[www.racgp.org.au/folder.asp](http://www.racgp.org.au/folder.asp)

### Divisions of General Practice Network Forum 2004

*'Taking Action'*  
23–26 September 2004  
Adelaide Convention Centre  
[www.adgp.com.au/site/index.cfm](http://www.adgp.com.au/site/index.cfm)

### Council of Remote Area Nurses of Australia 22nd Annual Conference

*'Remote Isolated Community Experience'*  
24–27 September 2004  
Fremantle WA  
[www.crana.org.au](http://www.crana.org.au)

### Aged and Community Services Australia – 17th National Conference

*'Mummy, what's going to happen to Grandma?'*  
3–6 October 2004  
Hobart  
[www.agedcare.org.au](http://www.agedcare.org.au)

## MARCH 2005

### 8th National Rural Health Conference March 2005

*'Central to Health: sustaining well-being in remote and rural Australia.'*  
Alice Springs  
[www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au) ❖