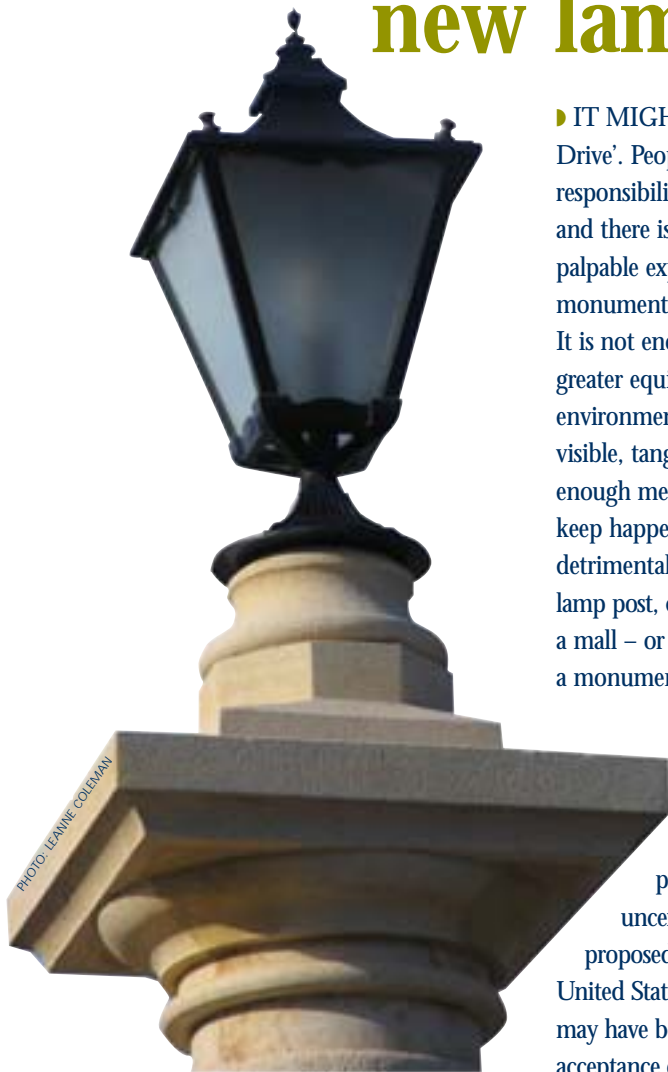




# The Free Trade Agreement and new lamp posts



▶ IT MIGHT BE CALLED 'Memorial Drive'. People in public office feel a sense of responsibility to those who elected them and there is a human imperative to give it palpable expression. They need to leave monuments to their term of governance. It is not enough to manage moves towards greater equity, or to protect the environment, unless these things have visible, tangible form. It is certainly not enough merely to ensure that good things keep happening and that nothing detrimental occurs. Better to erect a new lamp post, convert the main street into a mall – or bequeath to the nation a monumental free trade agreement.

The main reason Parliament was recalled in August was because of the opportunity for the Government to make political capital out of the uncertainty of the Opposition on the proposed Free Trade Agreement with the United States. "No sugar, no Agreement" may have been too narrow a mantra, but acceptance of the FTA for a mixture of short-term political reasons and mis-conceived bilateral ones is likely to end up being an even worse mistake.

Estimates of the impact of the FTA on Australia's national income vary from a negative amount to plus \$4 billion a year. Estimating such future effects is notoriously difficult and, as with other

costings of 'structural change', it's unlikely that the estimates included intangibles like the cost to those who will lose jobs or the adverse effect on the trade balances of other nations.

In the face of econometric uncertainty, serious opposition to the FTA had to be based on principles. There were at least three available: energy spent on multilateral trade promotion is better for developing nations – in fact bilateral trade agreements between developed ones reduce the amount of trade and thus development opportunities for others; not falling in with US interests and culture may be seen as protecting cultural diversity, not as anti-Americanism; and the FTA endorses and follows from an overall relationship about which many Australians are suspicious, afraid or scathing.

First, consider multilateral versus bilateral trade deals. The multilateral trade system is governed by a set of rules to which trading nations are expected to adhere. Their general intent is to promote 'comparative advantage' as the determinant of commodity production and trade flows. Production subsidies and payments that distort trade are discouraged or prohibited under multilateral trade rules.

## in this issue:

- ▶ NZ Rural Workforce Database
- ▶ Creating GP Heaven in the Outback
- ▶ Income Inequality
- ▶ Energy White Paper
- ▶ Future Broadacre Agricultural landscapes















# Networking North Queensland Project



▶ AFTER FIVE VERY SUCCESSFUL years, the Networking North Queensland (NNQ) project is drawing to a close. Supported by the Commonwealth Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, the NNQ project has delivered tangible outcomes for rural and remote health

professionals. Key stakeholders (Blue Care, Queensland Health, Queensland Ambulance Service, Far North Queensland Rural Division of General Practice and North & West Queensland Primary Health Care) were set up with computers and networking capabilities to enable rural and remote agencies throughout North Queensland to link into organisational computer networks and the internet. Twenty-one communities also received videoconferencing facilities which have since become part of Queensland Health's Telehealth Services.

In March 2002 the NNQ project was further funded to develop and trial eLearning as an alternative and sustainable training delivery mode to rural and remote health professionals. Several interactive, self-paced programs have been developed and hosted (see [www.health.qld.gov.au/cdp/](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/cdp/)). One of these includes the **Cultural Orientation Online (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities)** – 'COOL' Program.

Aimed primarily at staff relocating to rural or remote Indigenous communities, the COOL Program has been designed to complement the Queensland Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Program. It helps build relationships with local community members and gain an understanding of the local health and cultural needs.

Teaming up with a local community member and 'mud-mapping' the community's history and culture, staff will develop a workbook of local information. The workbook includes cultural protocol information, key health and other contacts, and key terms and definitions.

Program development has incorporated consultation with a Reference Group that comprised a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff across Queensland.

For more information contact Lee Gasser on (07) 4796 1390 or email [lee\\_gasser@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:lee_gasser@health.qld.gov.au) ❖

## Incontinence

Too often an incontinence problem is dismissed as being just a part of ageing or pregnancy and childbirth. But incontinence is never 'normal' and can be improved and frequently cured.

Due to isolation some rural and remote Australians find it difficult to know where to turn for help. Continence advisors, skilled in clinical knowledge and also aware of the sensitive social and emotional issues involved, can be directly accessed from home.

The Continence Foundation of Australia is encouraging people to talk to an expert.

**Website: [www.continence.org.au](http://www.continence.org.au)**

**Contact the National Continence Helpline. Free call 1800 33 00 66.**

















include health definitions, health promotion and prevention, capacity building, and research and evaluation. Further information available at [www.nfwrhs.sa.gov.au](http://www.nfwrhs.sa.gov.au) or phone Melanie Lawler on 08 8648 5892.

### Small Towns with a future

A recent NSW Farmers' Association survey of 60 small towns across NSW (population less than 5000) indicates many are doing well. Results show that health, aged care and child care have improved in the last five years. Identified areas of improvements include getting rid of excessive red tape, providing more local apprenticeships, improving basic services and fixing juvenile education issues. For details, contact the NSW Farmers' Association on 1300 794 000.

### OTDs

There was a flurry of publicity recently about overseas trained doctors – how well trained they are, what the cultural difficulties might be, and so on. A number of organisations have come out in support of OTDs and there is broad agreement that they deserve to be treated better-than-equally in order to ensure that they can meet the challenge of working in rural and remote Australia. There is also a view that, in reality, people in rural and remote Australia would prefer to be doctored by good Aussie-trained Aussie doctors. That's murky country! It will be safer to focus on the contribution Australia can make to global health and security by producing more than enough doctors for our own needs so some can work in poorer nations.



### Election Charter

The National Rural Health Alliance has released its 2004 Election Charter. It contains policies on: The social determinants of health; Reform of the health system; Medicare; Health promotion and illness prevention; Recovery from drought and other natural disasters; Indigenous health; Aged care; Child and adolescent health; Oral and dental health; Mental health; Australia's international responsibility; Strategic health workforce reform; Rural placements for health undergraduates; General practitioners (OTDs, bonding); Allied health; Nursing; Health service managers; Research; Healthy Horizons; and Classification systems for rural and remote areas.

The Charter calls on Political Parties to support a new approach to health financing. It says that rural and remote areas can lead the way in directing greater emphasis towards disease prevention, early intervention and the adoption of a stronger primary health care approach. It also hopes that advances in rural and remote health over the past ten years can be built on to ensure that health dollars are distributed according to health need. In particular, it calls on Political Parties to work on the key challenges that will bring the health status of people in rural and remote areas up to the national standard by 2020.

The full text of the NRHA Election Charter is at [www.ruralhealth.org.au/nrhpublic/PublicDocs/PositionPapers/ElectionCharter2004.pdf](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/nrhpublic/PublicDocs/PositionPapers/ElectionCharter2004.pdf)

### Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet

Developed by Edith Cowen University in Perth, this website contains regularly updated information on Indigenous health, including a bibliography of over 8000 references, the Australian Indigenous health Bulletin, details of courses and upcoming conferences and links to relevant websites. Visit [www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au](http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au)



### Child Safety

Contact Inc. is asking farming families to complete a survey on Child Safety on Farms. Working with Farmsafe and the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety, Contact Inc will use the results of the survey to prepare a report and resource for farm families. A copy of previous reports is at [www.farmsafe.org.au](http://www.farmsafe.org.au)

To participate in the survey, contact the Project Manager, Sue Kingwill.

Phone: (02) 9251 4431  
 Fax: (02) 9251 4432  
 PO Box 42, Millers Point, NSW 2000. ❖





## Conference follow-up

► THE TWO ISSUES OF *PARTYline* leading up to the 8th National Rural Health Conference will report on action taken by the Alliance on some of the eleven priority recommendations endorsed at the 7th National Rural Health Conference held in Hobart in 2003.

Policy work on child and adolescent health was led initially by Mariper Mercader, from the Philippines, as part of a six-week internship project with the Alliance. It subsequently received strong input from Members of the NRHA Council and friends of the Alliance. The resulting Position Paper on Child and Adolescent Health in Rural and Remote Australia and a poster on the Rights of the Rural Child were produced and

formally launched at CouncilFest in October 2003.

The Alliance collaborated with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) to issue a joint media release in April 2004 highlighting the extent of periodontal health, dental disease and untreated decay among Indigenous Australians. It also focused on the higher incidence of cardiovascular disease and diabetes, both of which are related to oral and dental health. The Minister for Health was asked to ensure substantial benefit to Indigenous patients from the dental provisions in MedicarePlus.

Some of the practicalities of the existing rural and remoteness indices (ARIA, RRMA and ASGC) were examined, with the assistance of Andrew Phillips

(AIHW), at NRHA's CouncilFest 2003. The Alliance is currently seeking input into the Department of Health's re-evaluation of these indices, brought about in part by the establishment of a new category, 'Areas of Consideration', in the context of Strengthening Medicare. These classifications are not merely theoretical matters, but are used as tools for funding allocation and incentive programs.

The Alliance has produced a background paper detailing processes for recovery from the post-trauma crises likely to be associated with flood, drought and fire. An Alliance Position Paper on Rural Communities and Disaster Recovery is nearing completion. ❖

## Movement at Our Station

► THESE ARE SOME OF the movements in personnel we know about.

On Council of the NRHA, Pauline Wardle has taken over from Rosemary Jeffery as representative for Frontier Services. Pauline is the Assistant Manager for Frontier Services and lives in Alice Springs. Leanne Chandler now represents the Association for Australian Rural Nurses. Her predecessor in the position, David Lindsay, remains involved with some of the Alliance's work. Bev Cook now represents Health Consumers of Rural and Remote Australia, replacing Vianne Brain. Bev hails from Nandaly in north-western Victoria and has been a consumer advocate for many years. David Milligan now represents the Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health Taskforce of the Health Professions Council,

with Robyn Vines having left for work in the Middle East.

Congratulations to Leigh Cupitt who was awarded a NSW Aboriginal Health 2004 Award in the category of 'Outstanding Non Indigenous person who has contributed to health services'. Leigh Cupitt is now in Port Moresby on a mentoring project for the PNG public service.

Dr Ian Blue is now the Professor and Chair of Nursing with a cross discipline appointment in the Community Health Program at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), Canada. Ian was previously the Director of the University Department of Rural Health, Tasmania.

Jan Southgate has left the Australian Rural and Remote Workforce Agency Group to be CEO of Relationships



Irene Mills, Chair of friends, with Michele Foley

Australia. Carol Bennett, previously at the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, is Acting CEO of ARRWAG.

Michele Foley, Manager of *friends of the Alliance* and Editor of *PARTYline*, has just commenced maternity leave, and takes with her the best wishes of her colleagues in the NRHA and others who know her. ❖

## September 2004

### *Divisions of General Practice Network Forum 2004*

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  
24–27 September 2004  
The Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle WA  
[www.crana.org.au](http://www.crana.org.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  
Grand Hyatt Hotel, Melbourne  
[www.racgp.org.au/folder.asp?id=905](http://www.racgp.org.au/folder.asp?id=905)

## October 2004

### *International Day for Older Persons 1 October 2004*

United Nations Information Centre  
[www.un.org.au/international](http://www.un.org.au/international)  
%20Observances.htm

### *Breast Cancer Awareness Month*

1–31 October 2004  
Cancer Council of Australia  
[www.cancer.org.au](http://www.cancer.org.au)  
*Aged and Community Services Australia – 17th National Conference*  
3–6 October 2004  
Hobart  
Policy, Research and Reality  
[www.agedcare.org.au](http://www.agedcare.org.au)

### *World Mental Health Day*

10 October 2004  
[mhaca@octa4.net.au](mailto:mhaca@octa4.net.au)

### *Anti-Poverty Week*

17–22 October 2004

### *National Rural Women's Coalition*

18–19 October 2004  
Melbourne  
Healthy Women – Healthy Communities  
[www.ruralwomen.org.au](http://www.ruralwomen.org.au)

### *Australian Nursing Homes and Extended Care Association*

23rd Annual Congress  
24–27 October 2004  
[anhaca@aomevents.com](mailto:anhaca@aomevents.com)

### *Australian Council of Social Service*

Annual Congress  
28–29 October 2004  
Alice Springs Convention Centre

### *Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA)*

Annual National Conference  
Sydney  
29–31 October  
[www.suicidepreventionaust.org](http://www.suicidepreventionaust.org)

## November 2004

*13th National Conference on Incontinence*  
10–13 November 2004  
[www.continence.org.au](http://www.continence.org.au)

*12th South Pacific Nurses Forum*  
15–19 November 2004  
Avarua, Raratonga, Cook Islands  
[www.spnf.org.au](http://www.spnf.org.au)

### *Australian Association of Rural Nurses NSW State Conference*

19–20 November 2004  
[www.aarn.asn.au/](http://www.aarn.asn.au/)

## March 2005

### *8th National Rural Health Conference 10–13 March 2005*

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

## April 2005

*5th Australian Women's Health Conference*  
20–22 April, 2005  
Carlton Crest Hotel, Melbourne  
[www.womenshealth2005.com.au/](http://www.womenshealth2005.com.au/)

## June 2005

*Dental Hygienists' Association of Australia Inc.*  
National Symposium 2005  
11–12 June 2005  
Uluru, NT  
Indigenous Oral Health  
[www.dhaa.asn.au](http://www.dhaa.asn.au)

