

Rural health news

Issue 10
December 2005

A Message from the Director

Much has happened since the last issue of *Rural health news*. The Hon Bronwyn Pike MP, Minister for Health, launched *Rural directions for a better state of health* in Echuca in November. Rural directions recognises that country Victorians have a range of different health care needs, many of which are specific to rural living. Traditional methods of care are changing, and as technology advances and new ways of treatment become available, it is important to make sure country Victorians can make the most of new treatment options. To ensure that rural health services change for the better, the State Government is concentrating its efforts on three main areas:

- improving people's health and wellbeing
- creating the best health system possible
- strengthening and sustaining the health system into the future.

Rural directions for a better state of health is available online, along with other highlights of how health services are advancing in country Victoria. To find out more about what's happening in health in your region, or to download the *Rural directions* document, visit www.health.vic.gov.au and click on the *Rural directions* banner on the home page.

A newly revised edition of the *Community engagement and consultation: a guide for rural and regional communities* has also been launched.

Within the Rural & Regional Health Services Branch we farewelled Dr Peter Trye and welcomed Dr Susan Sdrinis as our new Senior Medical Adviser. Susan has significant experience in medical management and, along with our Senior Nursing Adviser, Elise Sullivan, will contribute to our growing understanding of rural health workforce issues, clinical governance and the context in which health practitioners practice.

Looking ahead, the Rural Health Conference in April will be another big event and planning for it is well on the way. As well, we will continue to engage with health services directly by participating in and facilitating forums and groups such as the Ministerial Forums, the various rural CEO groups, the SRHS DoNs Group, and the DMS Group. Maintaining this direct connection with the sector is fundamental to our work in developing good policy and program responses to the issues faced by rural health services.

I look forward to seeing you at the Rural Health Conference in Ballarat next April.

In the meantime, may I send best wishes to you all for a happy Christmas and a prosperous and successful New Year.

Geoff Lavender
Director
Rural and Regional Health Services Branch

UPCOMING EVENTS

Rural Health Conference, 19-21 April 2006

Following the success of first DHS Rural Health Conference in Beechworth in May, a second conference will be held in Ballarat - **19-21 April 2006**. The conference will take place at the University of Ballarat with accommodation at Ballarat Lodge. A coach shuttle service will be offered between conference hotels and the university each morning and afternoon for delegates without car transportation. Please note that the closing date for abstract submissions has been extended to 30 January 2006.

Further information is available on our website: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth/>.

PLEASE PUT THESE DATES IN YOUR DIARY!

RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES BRANCH (RRHSB) NEWS

Regional OH&S Officer

Rural health services in the Grampians region are soon to receive a boost in managing their occupational health and safety responsibilities through the appointment of a Regional OH&S officer. This is a pilot project, initiated by the Rural and Regional Health Services Branch, and is aimed at developing a shared-service approach to the provision of OH&S services in the rural health sector, particularly small rural health services.

Recruitment is currently underway to employ a qualified OH&S practitioner to lead the implementation of this project; it is anticipated that

an appointment will be made very soon so that the successful applicant can commence work early in the New Year. The Regional OH&S Officer will be responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring system-based initiatives which will support health services in the management of their OH&S responsibilities and lead to quality outcomes. While the OH&S Officer will undertake some work with individual agencies such as assisting with safety audits, risk assessments and development of Action Plans, the role will also focus on sector-wide responses to emerging trends and issues in OH&S performance, facilitating a sharing of information, education and training.

For further information about this project, contact Pam Sheers by telephone on 03 9616 1525 or email pam.sheers@dhs.vic.gov.au

Rural Directions: a framework for health service delivery in rural Victoria - 8th Ministerial Rural and Regional Health Forum

The Minister for Health, Bronwyn Pike, launched Rural directions for a better state of health, on Friday 11 November. 180 people including representatives from local government, health service, board members, CEOs and staff, and representatives from industry associations attended the launch, held in Echuca.



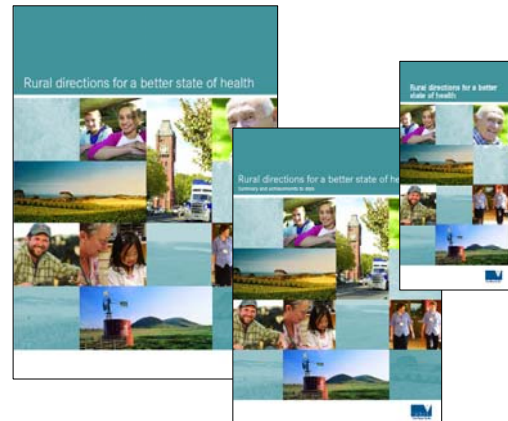
L-R: Patricia Faulkner (DHS Secretary), Geoff Lavender (Director, Rural and Regional Health Services Branch, DHS), Susan Brumby (Director of Community Services Western District Health Service), Cr Peter Williams (Shire of Campaspe), Claire Higgins (Chair Person Barwon Health Services), Nick Bush (CEO Cobram District Hospital), The Hon Bronwyn Pike MP (Minister for Health), Maree Guyatt (Manager Service Development, Rural and Regional Health Services Branch, DHS), Dr Chris Brook (Executive Director, Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services Division, DHS)

Rural directions for a better state of health is the Victorian Government's plan for sustaining a contemporary health system in rural and regional areas, providing high quality and appropriate health services in the best setting, as close as possible to where people live.

Rural directions outlines three key directions that will position the health system to better meet the needs of rural and regional Victorian communities now and into the future. These directions are:

- 1) Promote the health and wellbeing of rural Victorians
- 2) Foster a contemporary health system and models of care for rural Victoria
- 3) Strengthen and sustain rural health services

The full report, brochure and summary and achievements to date can be found at www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth



Welcome reception for 2005 rural health service Board Appointees and launch of new community engagement and consultation guide

The Minister for Health, the Hon Bronwyn Pike, officially welcomed 2005 Board Appointees to regional Public Health Services, rural Public Hospitals and Multipurpose Services boards on Friday 9 December 2005.

Over 90 people including newly appointed board members and CEOs gathered at the event in Melbourne to hear the Minister and other speakers underline the critical importance of good governance and the role of boards in ensuring high quality and sustainable health services in rural and regional Victoria.

Prior to the official afternoon Welcome Reception new board members participated in a workshop overview of a rural health service governance training program the *Rural Health Boards of Management Development Program*.

At the afternoon reception the Minister drew particular attention to the recently launched policy framework *Rural directions for a better state of health* and the pivotal role health services will play in this. She also announced the second rural health conference *Rural Health – Going for Gold* to be held in April 2006.

A newly revised edition of the community engagement and consultation guide *Community engagement and consultation: a guide for rural and regional communities* was also launched, by Geoff Lavender, Acting Executive Director, Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services. The guide can be found at www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth



L-R: Launching the newly revised community engagement and consultation guide for rural and regional communities; Gregg Nicholls (Executive Director, Ambulatory and Community Services, Bendigo Health Care Group), and Geoff Lavender (Director, Rural and Regional Health Services Branch, DHS).

Health Care Governance Mechanisms

The release of the *Victorian Public Hospital Governance Reform Panel Report* in August 2003 has led to the development of three governance mechanisms: The Council of Board Chairs, Health Service Management Innovation Council and CEO-DHS Council.

Council of Board Chairs (CBC)

Established in February 2005 the CBC is a Ministerial Advisory Committee focuses on strategic, joint objectives and approaches to improve the performance of hospital-based services. It also acts to strengthen governance and management and the application of best practice to maximise patient outcomes and system efficiencies. The CBC will approve annual workplan and key projects being undertaken by the Health Service Management Innovation Council (HSMIC).

Membership of the CBC includes the Chairs of all public health services, denominational health services and three board chairs representing rural public hospitals.

Regional public health service board chair members come from Ballarat Health Services, Barwon Health, Bendigo Health Care Group, Goulburn Valley Health and Latrobe Regional Hospital.

Rural Public hospital board chair members are from Mansfield and District Hospital, Stawell Regional Health and West Gippsland HealthCare Group.

The CBC meets once every two months and these meetings are attended in part by the Minister for Health and departmental executives including Dr Chris Brook and Mr Geoff Lavender from Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services (RRHACS).

Health Service Management Innovation Council (HSMIC)

The HSMIC is a Ministerial Advisory Council established in February 2005 to undertake key projects and facilitate collaborative action across the

sector in operational management and governance improvement.

Membership of HSMIC includes a number of board chairs, CEOs, clinicians/managers from the health services and departmental representatives including Dr Chris Brook, RRHACS. HSMIC meets once a month.

Rural members include:

Mrs Claire Higgins - Chair, Barwon Health

Mr Ormond Pearson - CEO, West Gippsland Healthcare Group

Ms Debra Cerasa - clinician, Latrobe Regional Hospital

Dr John Ferguson - clinician, Ballarat Health Services

CEO-DHS Council

The CEO-DHS Council is a body that will formulate and provide advice to the CBC on system-wide priority setting, including those priorities that will become the responsibility of the HSMIC to implement, and will receive advice from the HSMIC on the status of delivery on priority projects.

Dr Brendan Murphy, CEO of Austin Health, chairs HSMIC. Membership of the CEO-DHS Council includes the CEOs of all public health services, denominational health services, three CEOs representing rural public hospitals and departmental executives including Dr Chris Brook and Mr Geoff Lavender from RRHACS.

Regional health service CEO members are:

Mr Andrew Rowe - Ballarat Health

Mrs Sue De Gilio - Barwon Health

Ms Kathy Byrne - Bendigo Health

Mr Greg Pullen - Goulburn Valley Health

Mr Felix Pintado - Latrobe Regional Hospital

Rural Public hospital CEO members are:

Mr John Krygger - South West Health Care

Ms Merlyn Pritchard - Mount Alexander Hospital

Mr Nick Bush - Cobram District Hospital

The CEO-DHS Council will meet twice a year with the inaugural meeting scheduled for February 2006.

DHS NEWS

Wilson Lodge Residential Aged Care facility in Sale – Excellence in Sustainability Award

The Wilson Lodge Residential Aged Care facility in Sale is the first low energy sustainable facility of its kind commissioned by the Department of Human Services. It has recently been recognised with the 2005 AIRAH national excellence in sustainability award, which was presented to the consultant engineers AHW Consulting Engineers. The MBA Excellence in Construction award for Best Sustainable Energy Project was also awarded to the Builders, Kirway Construction, for the same project.

Designed by Melbourne-based architects Tectura, the project shows that it is possible to incorporate a range of Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) features in an aged care facility within the normal budget allowance for a standard DHS project of this type. ESD factors include the harnessing of solar energy, the availability and use of geothermal energy, the collection of rainwater, use of water flow control systems, double glazing, reverse brick veneer construction, solar boost hot water systems and the use of natural ventilation and lighting. These features contribute to a building that offers maximum resident comfort and amenity while minimising recurrent operating costs.

The project has demonstrated benefits to the residents in terms of indoor air quality and extensive natural light and anecdotal reports indicate that the overall use of medication for residents has reduced since occupying their new residence in early 2004. Through the implementation of the ESD design elements the energy costs of running this facility are proving to be considerably less than a building with traditional mechanical systems.

OTHER NEWS

Western District Health Service project takes out state award

Western District Health Service Sustainable Farm Families – the human resource in the triple bottom line project has taken out the Statewide Primary and Community Health Network Award for innovation and excellence in Primary Health Care for health promotion.

The award was announced and presented by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health Mr. Daniel Andrews at a presentation dinner held at Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre on 6 October 2005.

Western District Health Service Chief Executive Officer Mr. Jim Fletcher said “taking out the award was an outstanding achievement and a credit to the team of Susan Brumby, Stuart Willder, Ann Curran, Sue Watt and Larry Neeson from Western District Health Service and Professor John Martin formerly of RMIT Hamilton”.

In accepting the award Western District Health Service Community Services Director Ms. Sue Brumby said “the major funders Rural Industries Research Development Corporation and Gardiner Dairy Foundation together with 17 other organisations and industries and 321 farmer families involved in the project had ensured the success of the project.”

“The driving force behind the project was a recognition that farmers are ageing, working harder, longer, experience death, injury, suicides and morbidity rates at a higher level than the Australian population whilst increasingly relying on family members to provide the extra labour needed to cope” Sue said.

“Evaluation of the program to date has indicated some significant changes in attitudes and behaviour to

personal health and safety which is demonstrated by improvement in cholesterol levels, body mass index and increased knowledge of their own and family health and taking time out to seek medical assistance from the G.P's and primary health care providers as the need arises” she added.

The Sustainable Farm Families project has been provided to the broadacre and dairy industry so far however interest has been shown by the sugar and cotton industry.

The collaborating partners in the project include RMIT University, Farm Management 500, LandConnect Australia, Victorian Farmers Federation, Australian Women in Agriculture, Department of Primary Industries, WestVic Dairy, Colac Area Health, Victorian Farmers Federation, United Dairy Farmers, Rural Industries Research Development Corporation, Joint Research Venture Farm Health and Safety, Gardiner Dairy Foundation and Department of Human Services. The Department of Human Services has funded a train the trainer project commencing in June 2005.

“Sustainable Farm Families is a working model of intersectoral collaboration and would appear to be repeatable and transferable across sectors and communities, which is really exciting”, Ms Brumby added.

Enquiries: Ms. Susan Brumby
Director of Community Services
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L-R: Receiving the Awards were Parliamentary Secretary to the Health Minister Daniel Andrews, Western District Health Service , CEO Jim Fletcher, WDHS Community Services Director Susan Brumby, Men's Health Educator Stuart Willder, and Primary Health Care Network Chair Gai Wilson.

SPOTLIGHT ON CLAIRE HIGGINS, CHAIR PERSON OF BARWON HEALTH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

I first applied for a position on the Board of Barwon Health after several people that I was working with suggested that I had skills to offer such a position. I must say that I did not expect that application to be successful, however on 1 November 2000, I was appointed to the Board. I have enjoyed the experience so much that I have this year been reappointed for my third term on the Board. At the end of this term I will have completed eight years of service.

So rather than focus on what led me to the role initially, what keeps bringing me back? Our Community Advisory Committee (of which I Chair) received a presentation from a Barwon Health Executive recently, and part of his presentation summarised perfectly the inspiration for why I continue to apply to be part of the Barwon Health organisation.

These were:

- Numbers of persons treated and cared for
- Community support and ownership
- Staff, volunteers and their achievements
- Our facilities and décor
- Gratitude
- Reputation and history

I see the role of Chair Person as a terrific opportunity to work closely with people who are really driven to improve the delivery of health care to the community. I spend a lot of my time working with the Staff, Executive, and Board members, and liaising with the Department of Human Services. The role of Chair Person is really a conduit of information between parties, in particular the Board and the Chief Executive Officer.

During 2002/03, the Barwon Health Board spent a lot of time focusing on its financial governance of the organisation. As part of this process, the Board challenged the executive to deliver productivity and efficiency improvements to ensure that the organisation delivered against a break-even result. And in fact, we continue to challenge ourselves to delivery further improvements which enable Barwon Health to provide services to the community over and above the WEIS target set for Barwon Health.

Now that the Board believes that its financial governance procedures are well developed, it has turned its attention to other areas of governance to deliver better outcomes for the community. Specific areas of focus for 2006 will be clinical governance, risk management and engagement with the community.

From an operational perspective, the key challenges for Barwon Health is how we continue to deliver quality health care to our community, reduce waiting lists, and improve our focus on preventative health care and community education. To achieve this, we will be working very closely with the Department of Human Services, other rural and regional health services, our staff and our executive.

Please send your feedback and suggestions for future editions of *Rural health news* to:

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or by telephone: (03) 9616 2019.

Past editions of rural health news can be found at:
http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth/news/rural_newsletters.htm