

# Rural health news

## Issue 15

June 2007

### A Message from the Director

Welcome to this mid year edition of Rural health news for 2007. A number of events have taken place since the last edition.

The twelfth Rural and Regional Health Forum, Good Governance was held in Lancefield on 17 April with over 100 delegates/board members attending.

Positive news in terms of the 2007-2008 Victorian budget with continued investment by the Government to improve and expand rural health services.

These include:

\$52 million for capital works including the redevelopment of hospitals, aged care and community services in Warrnambool, Geelong and Stawell;

\$6.3 million for 8 new rural GP obstetrics training positions, new rural and obstetrics and gynaecology posts to introduce midwifery models of care at more rural hospitals;

\$22 million to continue the elective surgery blitz and to ensure less waiting periods for patients;

\$32 million for the expansion of the rural health workforce;

\$7.1 million further support for bush nursing hospitals and SRHS to upgrade their facilities and funding to expand services such as ambulances, cancer screening, maternity services and dental health;

\$1.5 million for establishment process of new rural dental school in Bendigo;

The 2007-2008 State Budget also delivered capital investment in community health, aged care and ambulance services in regional Victoria.

Meanwhile, the overall financial activity performance of the rural sector remains positive and I thank all board members, management and staff for their continuing commitment to providing excellent services in their communities.

Geoff Lavender  
Director  
Rural and Regional Health Services

### Budget Information

The fact sheets and media releases are available from knowledge Net  
<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/budget/>.

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### RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES BRANCH (RRHSB) NEWS

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#### 12th Ministerial Rural and Regional Health Forum-Good Governance

The 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial and Regional Health Forum was held in Lancefield on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April on Good Governance. Over 100 board members participated in the forum along with presentations from the Departmental Secretary, the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Bruce Hartnett, State Services Authority, Clem Furphy, Chair, Goulburn Valley Health and an address from the Minister for Health. The day provided a great deal of thought provoking discussion and networking and the feedback was very positive.

#### Future Forums

The 13<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Rural and Regional Health Forum will be held on Friday 17 August in the Barwon region with the theme of Rural Directions.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Rural and Regional Forum will be held on Friday November 16 in the Hume Region with the theme of Aged Care.

#### Rural Health Workforce Planning Guidelines

In 2006, the Rural and Regional Health Services Branch commissioned the development of practical workforce planning guidelines for rural hospitals. The Rural Health Workforce Planning Guidelines, developed in collaboration with the rural health sector, seek to address issues resulting from an ageing population and workforce changes, which have the potential to impact upon health services and their workforce. The guidelines assist organisations to understand the challenges and develop strategies by providing practical assistance and tools.

In addition, the Rural and Regional Health Services Branch and Nurse Policy Branch are collaborating in the roll out of interactive

workforce planning workshops, scheduled for later this year, that will provide health services with the resources and support required to further develop workforce plans.

The guidelines have been distributed to every rural health service and will shortly be posted on the rural health website.

### **Rural Procedural Services Planning Framework**

The Rural and Regional Services Branch has released a second planning framework for health services in rural Victoria. This planning framework has been developed to support public health services make informed decisions about the level of procedural service suitable for their agency, based on service capability.

The procedural framework refers to both surgery and endoscopic procedures. It is a guide to ongoing strategic development and outlines the required systems and standards for provision of a safe and high quality service. It complements the Rural birthing services planning framework, released in 2005.

The framework can be downloaded from the DHS website at: [www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth)

### **Establishment of a Benchmarking Project for rural health services**

Rural and Regional Health Services Branch is working with The Nous Group on a rural health service benchmarking project to achieve: a common set of governance indicators for boards, CEOs and DHS to benchmark against; and, a centralised system to collate, validate and report benchmark data. The project involves all 11 Group C agencies, 2 Group B agencies and 2 Small Rural Health Services. The project timeline envisages endorsement in September 2007 of a proposed benchmarking model that will allow further benchmarking development.

### **Victorian Health Boards Governance Program**

An education program to enhance the capability of Board directors and members

The three year Victorian Health Boards Governance Program (2007-2010) has been designed to help board directors and members become a more accomplished in their role. DHS has contracted The Nous Group to develop and deliver the program. The program aims to:

- Clarify the roles and accountabilities of Board members

- Strengthen the capacity of boards to operate as high performing teams

- Improve how boards work with management teams

Program formats

The program consists of several levels of workshops and a series of other learning options. These include:

- Foundation workshop run over two days on a Friday and Saturday

- Advanced workshop run over two days on either a Friday and Saturday two weeks apart

- Extension modules run over three hours in the evening

- Team building workshop run over a single day for complete Boards

- Access to web based reference material

Workshops are commencing from 1 June 2007.

Further information: including workshop dates and locations for 2007 contact Ms Megan Small, The Nous Group

[megan.small@nousgroup.com.au](mailto:megan.small@nousgroup.com.au) 03 8602 6221

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## **OTHER NEWS**

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### **CEO Industrial Relations Forum**

A CEO Industrial Relations Forum is scheduled for 25 June 2007 at Hotel Grand Chancellor Melbourne (1-5pm). Facilitators from DHS and VHIA will provide an overview of current IR issues. CEOs interested in attending should register by emailing [Susan.Leyland@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:Susan.Leyland@dhs.vic.gov.au)

### **Free DVD "The Hard Yard – Stories of Farming Life"**

A free DVD that tells the stories of farming families managing the pressures of drought is now available from the Department of Primary Industries. The Hard Yard is a credible source of options, alternative strategies and avenues of support, direct from those with hands-on experience.

More information

The DVD is available from the DPI Drought Information Line on 136 186 or, for those with broadband, can be downloaded from the Department of Primary Industries.

### **Planning framework for public rural mental health services**

In October 2006 the Department released the Planning framework for public rural mental health services: A framework to guide the enhancement of public rural mental health services over the next five years. The framework seeks to build on the inherent strengths and capacities of the current rural mental health service system and provide the environment to enable improved access, and continued service innovation, integration and cross sector collaboration. The framework is available at: [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/publications/pubs](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/publications/pubs)

## **Consultative processes under the Victorian Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy: Stage Two 2006-2010.**

The VWHWS aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Victorian women, with particular attention to the links between gender, diversity and disadvantage. Stage Two outlines three priority action areas: mental health and wellbeing; sexual and reproductive health; and, social connectedness. Roundtable and health service practice forums are being conducted regularly to inform, review and focus the work of the strategy. Key partners in this work will be government, the women's health sector, mainstream service providers, researchers and women as consumers. Information and publications on Victorian Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy can be downloaded from the Department of Human Services web site at: [www.health.vic.gov.au/vwhp](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/vwhp)

## **Women and Drought Community Engagement Officers**

As part of the Victorian Government's strategy to support women's needs in rural and regional areas, part-time Community Engagement Officers, Women and Drought have been employed in five rural regions, based in Local Teams of the Department for Victorian Communities. These officers will facilitate opportunities for rural women from across their respective regions to meet together, share information about local activities and approaches and develop supportive networks to deal with drought and climate change. There will also be a focus on connecting rural women to other parts of government, particularly agencies involved in delivering initiatives that make up the Government's drought and climate change responses. For further information please contact:

Mary Constantine  
Rural Women's Network  
Department for Victorian Communities  
Ph 9208 3650 (direct)

## **2007 Awards for Innovation and Excellence in Primary Health Care**

Congratulations to the Eastern Victorian Bush Nursing Network who won the "Workforce Development" Category. Their presentation "An Integrated Collaborative Approach to Performance Appraisal in the Remote Rural Sector" focused on a peer appraisal format for Remote Area Nurse Managers located in five Bush Nursing Centres (BNC) in east Gippsland: Dargo, Swifts Creek, Buchan, Gelantipy and Cann River.

Beth Allen from the Gelantipy BNC said "from a Remote Area Nurse perspective, the appraisal system provided the opportunity to see how other centres work and compare policy and procedures as part of continuous quality improvement".

Alison Sharp from the Dargo BNC attended the Awards night in Melbourne and thanked her fellow Nurse Managers, administration staff and Committee of Management members who are all supportive of the project.

## **North Grampians Emergency Care Upskill Program**

The North Grampians Emergency Care Upskill program aims to evaluate the applicability/transferability of an existing training program. The training content and model were originally developed for Victorian Remote Area Nurses. The following five small rural hospitals are involved in the project:

- Rural Northwest Health
- Dunmunkle Health Services
- West Wimmera Health Service
- East Wimmera Health Service
- Edenhope and District Hospital

Twenty-four Division 1 registered nurses from 16 different campuses were selected to complete the 2007 Learning Support Resource Material developed for the 2007 Remote Area Nurses Emergency Guidelines (RANEG), followed by a competency based assessment.

Participants have completed extensive workbook materials by distance education mode and attended a two-day workshop in Horsham at the end of May. Competency based scenario assessments will occur during June 2007.

Participants will provide feedback on the applicability/transferability of the training content and methodology. Hospital management will provide feedback on implementation of the new skills from a health services perspective.

Rural Ambulance Victoria, an approved training provider, has run the training. The training course has been allocated the maximum 25 Continuing Nurse Education points by the Royal College of Nursing Australia. The course content and RANEG are updated annually and demonstrate current best practice in the management of emergency and trauma stabilisation.

The implementation of the Emergency Care Upskill program will improve the competence and confidence of the Division 1 registered nurses employed in small rural hospitals in managing medical emergency and trauma. Improved and timely management of emergency situations by nursing staff will lead to improved health outcomes for patients.

## **Next Steps, Victoria's suicide prevention forward action plan 2006**

A public statement (July 2006) notes that rural communities experience higher suicide rates

than urban areas and provides a comprehensive framework for risk factor reduction and mental health promotion for at risk groups across rural (and metropolitan) Victoria.

Next Steps is available at:  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/publications/publications](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/publications/publications)

### **Climate Change and Human Health Conference 2007**

Park Hyatt, Melbourne  
Tues 16 – Wed 17 October 2007  
<http://www.healthclimate2007.com/>

DHS is convening this conference and seeking abstracts in the listed themes (see below).

Abstract Submission deadline: Friday 8 June 2007

Early Bird Registration deadline: Friday 17 August 2007

Conference themes:

- Human health and social impacts of climate changes
- Reducing morbidity and mortality from the impacts of climate change
- Planning for increased numbers of heat waves
- Mental Health
- Aged Care
- Infant and child wellbeing
- Managing people with existing illnesses or conditions
- Emergency management
- Water
- Communicable diseases
- Drought

### **DHS Drought Working Group-Terms of Reference**

The Working Group will provide a forum for co-ordination, consultation and development of DHS responses to drought in Victorian in order to maximise policy outcomes and benefits for the community. Objectives include the development of a longer term strategic DHS Drought Plan.

SPOTLIGHT ON:

## **Director for DHS Hume Region**

**Angela Connors** has been appointed Department of Human Services' Hume Regional Director, based in the Wangaratta office.



New Department of Human Services' Hume Region Director Angela Connors.

It is a return to the region for Ms Connors, who was born in Mooroopna and spent much of her early life in the area.

She comes from the Department's Gippsland Region where she was Health, Disability and Aged Care Manager.

Ms Connors will be focusing on issues such as, accessibility to community services, workforce, the new legislation for the operations arm of business and drought.

Ms Connors has acted as DHS Regional Operations Performance Director and has been Executive Officer to the Executive Director of Disability Services.

She has had experience in Grampians Region as Manager of Disability Client Services.

Ms Connors' roles before joining the Department included stints as Project Manager at Kangan TAFE and Family and Youth Counsellor and Business Development Officer for the City of Moonee Valley.

'We will continue the tradition of high quality services to clients that has long been a feature of Hume Region,' she said.

Past editions of Rural health news can be found at:

[http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth/news/rural\\_newsletters.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth/news/rural_newsletters.htm)

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

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