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Department of Health and Ageing

'National Directions in Rural and Remote Health'

Jan Bennett, Principal Adviser, Office of Rural Health
Department of Health and Ageing



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We don't sleep much anymore



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Rural Health Policy Environment

- Active reform environment
- Audit of Health Workforce – released April 2008
- Internal review of rural health programs
- Around 65 existing targeted rural health programs
- Gaps and overlaps between programs
- Significant reporting and accountability burden for health professionals and auspicing bodies
- Opportunity to better target programs to address needs
- Eligibility based on outdated data and classifications systems



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Office of Rural Health

- Established on 1 July 2008
- Focus for the reform of Commonwealth funded rural health policy and programs
- First time that rural health service delivery, policy development and workforce distribution in the same office
- Headed by a Principal Adviser
- Tasked as a first priority to review Commonwealth funded rural health programs and classification systems
- Links to the broader national health reform agenda



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Review of rural health programs

Stage 1 will examine existing programs under the following themes:

- Theme 1: Improving access to services, including health promotion and prevention
- Theme 2: Investing more effectively in rural health infrastructure
- Theme 3: Addressing workforce shortages through better workforce distribution and support
- Theme 4: Strengthening workforce education and training
- Theme 5: Fostering partnerships between the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments



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Review of rural health programs

Second stage of review – a strategic look at rural health programs within the context of national health reform activity:

- National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission
- National Primary Health Care Strategy
- National Preventative Health Strategy
- new Australian Health Care Agreements
- COAG Health Reforms
- Maternity services review

Develop stronger links with state and territory governments on planning for rural and remote health



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Commonwealth, State and Territory Collaboration

Previous work on Healthy Horizons: A Framework for Improving the Health of Rural, Regional and Remote Australians Outlook 2003-2007

- Evaluation completed May 2008
- Evaluation found that the Healthy Horizons Framework had achieved its primary aim, which is to *'provide a framework for action where the national goals are identified and then adapted in accordance with jurisdictional priorities'*.

Deliberations for a future framework to be undertaken between the Commonwealth, States and Territories through the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council.



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Rural Health Stakeholder Involvement

Key stakeholders for the Review are:

- Rural Health Workforce Australia
- The National Rural Health Alliance
- The Rural Doctors Association of Australia
- Council of Remote Area Nurses Australia
- Australian Rural Health Education Network
- Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health



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Investment in workforce reform

- \$148 million announced on 5 November to establish new GP training places
 - 175 additional new doctors to begin GP training.

- \$18.4 million through the Remote Vocational Training Scheme to increase the number of places for medical practitioners in remote and isolated communities from 15 to 22 from 2011.



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Commonwealth Funded Rural Health Initiatives from the 2008 Federal Budget

- \$9 million to expand Medical Specialist Outreach Assistant program;
- \$7.9 million to continue and expand the Specialist Obstetrician Locum Scheme;
 - Provide support to GP proceduralists, including GP obstetricians and GP anaesthetists.
 - Enhance safety and quality in rural practice by facilitating access to personal leave and professional development.
- \$4.5 million to double number of John Flynn scholarships for undergraduate medical students to undertake placements in rural and remote medical practices, and for additional clinical placements for allied health professionals;
- \$2.5 million for clinical placement scholarships for allied health students;
- \$35 million Expansion of Additional Education Places, Scholarships and Clinical Training for mental health nurses and psychologists



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National Rural and Remote Health Infrastructure Program (NRRHIP)

- Amalgamation of the former Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund and the Rural Private Access Program.
- Divisions of General Practice, Indigenous Community Councils, private general practitioners (for medical student / registrar training facilities), allied health professionals and dentists providing privately insurable health services and rural private hospitals may apply.
- Communities up to 20,000 eligible



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Thank you

Visit the Office of Rural Health Website
www.health.gov.au/ruralhealth