



Issue 2, 2005

The Rural Health Advisory Council (RHAC) provides strategic advice to the Minister for Health on contemporary rural health issues. Its Medical Sub Committee (MSC) advises on rural medical matters referred to it by the RHAC. The full Terms of Reference of the RHAC & MSC are available from the Strategic Policy Branch, Queensland Health. Contact Delia West, Policy Officer on telephone 323 54194.

The Rural Health Advisory Council last met in Brisbane on 26 and 27 May 2005.

NEW MEMBERS

Three new members have been appointed to the Rural Health Advisory Council and Medical Sub Committee. Representatives and their respective organisations are Dr Merrilee Frankish, Rural Doctors Association (Qld); Dr John Douyere, Australian Medical Association

(Qld); and Mr Bob Bricknell, Councillor, Beaudesert Shire Council.

Cr Bricknell was able to attend the meeting 27 May and we look forward to meeting Drs Frankish and Douyere at the next meeting.

MEDICAL SUB COMMITTEE

The MSC discussed the current inquiries into Queensland Health and formed some recommendations in relation to the most critical aspects as they see it. The Committee made a motion to RHAC that the Minister be advised of the implications. (See RHAC report for further details.)

ORIENTATION SUPPORT AND MENTORING GROUP

Gerry Costello advised that the working group had been successful in their request to Dr John Scott, Senior Executive Director, asking him to urge District Managers to establish local orientation manuals for facilities in their districts and provided an example of an orientation document as a template.

Additionally the group is currently considering a submission from Queensland Rural Medical

Family Network, Health Workforce Queensland on broadening the scope of the document "Welcome to Queensland" so that it would be doctors 'going bush'.

All stakeholders who are working to address the critical lack of orientation, support and mentoring for doctors are represented on the working group as evidenced by the participatory model of orientation being developed.

Denis Lennox, Principal Medical Advisor (Rural), who is a member of the working group, advised members that the Queensland Health Review of the Queensland Country Rural Relievers will oversee the ongoing programs for doctors who will undertake country relieving.

RURAL HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

In keeping with motions from the February meeting, the Workforce Group on rural rotations, formalised supervision, professional development opportunities for rural allied health personnel convened on Thursday 26 May 2005 and made the following recommendations:

- the recruitment of a project officer to write up and evaluate the allied health rotation program that had been established between Princess Alexandra Hospital and Charleville Hospital.

- this rotation program be expanded to other disciplines and other sites where applicable.
- the current allied health positions in rural and regional areas are assessed for part-time positions that could be amalgamated into full-time positions.
- flexibility is built into employment conditions so advantage could be taken of opportunistic employment situations.

INQUIRIES INTO QUEENSLAND HEALTH

Council considered the recommendations from the MSC on the impacts of the Morris Inquiry, Forster Review and the Criminal Justice Commission Inquiry into Queensland Health.

Members discussed ways in which they could support their local medical practitioners and sought to promulgate successful strategies through the Local Government Association and Country Women's Association.

The Chairs of the RHAC and MSC met with the Minister on 14 June 2005 and advised him of the impending rural medical workforce crisis that has arisen as a result of the current enquiries.

HEALTH CAREERS IN THE BUSH

Members were provided with an update from Ms Natalie Hindmarsh on Health Careers in the Bush. Evaluation of the program shows that it is effective in promoting tertiary education in health careers to secondary school students from rural areas.

BLUE PRINT FOR THE BUSH & PLANNING FOR HEALTHIER RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Members were advised that the Minister directed that the Planning for Healthier Rural and Remote Communities project proceed in conjunction with the Blue Print for the Bush (BP4B).

BP4B will undertake a whistle stop tour around Queensland during June to identify rural initiatives and issues that should be addressed.

REVIEW OF MATERNITY SERVICES

Members were advised that Dr Cherrell Hirst AO, provided the report to the Minister in March and it has been publicly released. There is a link to the report on RHAC website.

The report suggests three priority areas for change:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander birthing
- Rural and remote birthing; and
- Address the lack of post natal care in communities.

QUEENSLAND IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVE FOR THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC DISEASE

Workshops were conducted across Queensland in April and May with funding support available to facilitate attendance for rural and remote participants.

The key issues identified for rural and remote areas included:

- Workforce recruitment and retention (and capacity to offer incentives to attract and retain staff)
- Flexible service delivery models
- Timely access to services
- Access to fresh fruit and vegetables
- Criticality of partnerships.

NEXT MEETING

The Rural Health Advisory Council will meet on 25 and 26 August in Cloncurry.

**The Mt Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health presents the
Vague & Indecent Remote Health Conference
26 - 28 August 2005
Mercure Verona, Mt Isa**

This conference is aimed at the development and implementation of health innovations, particularly in remote settings. There will be a combination of both interactive workshops and poster and paper presentations from a range of health professionals across Australia.

Phone (07) 4745 4500 for details

RHAC MEMBERSHIP

Ms Marie Pietsch, Chair	Agforce
Dr Denise Powell, Chair, Medical Support Committee	Ministerial Appointment
Ms Lyn Armit	Association for Australian Rural Nurses (Qld)
Ms Karen Bell	Queensland Council of Allied Health Professions
Ms Anne Bent	Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health
Dr Russell Bennett	Ministerial Appointment
Vacant	Directors of Nursing Association Queensland (Inc)
Dr David Farlow	Rural Doctors' Association (Qld)
Dr Merrilee Frankish	Rural Doctors Association (Queensland)
Mr Chris Gill	Council of Remote Area Nurses Australia
Ms Narelle Gotting	Directors of Nursing Association Queensland (Inc)
Mrs Margaret Greenway	Isolated Children's Parents' Association
Dr John Douyere	Australian Medical Association (Qld)
Vacant	Full Time Medical Specialists Association of Queensland Inc
Mr Bob Bricknell	Local Government Association of Queensland
Ass/Prof. Dennis Pashen	Ministerial Appointment
Mrs Lyn Kelman	Queensland Country Women's Association
Ms Moya Sandow	Ministerial Appointment
Ms Mary Martin	Ministerial Indigenous Appointment
Dr Richard Turner	Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
Mrs Jennifer Waters	Ministerial Indigenous Appointment
Dr Gerry Costello	Royal Flying Doctor Service (Qld)
Dr John Scott	Senior Executive Director, Health Services Directorate, Queensland Health
Ms Moina Lettice	Manager, Quality Safety & Clinical Networks, Northern Zone, Queensland Health
Ms Pattie Scott	District Manager, Gympie Health Service District
Ms Sue Little	Manager, Office of Rural Health (observer)
Ms Anne Turner	Senior Executive Director, Strategic Policy & Govt Liaison Directorate, Queensland Health
Ms Madonna Cuthbert	Executive Director, Strategic Policy Branch, Queensland Health (observer)