

*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 Health Outcomes Branch, Queensland Health. Contact Delia West, Policy Officer on telephone 323 90968.*

The Rural Health Advisory Council last met in Longreach on 11 and 12 November 2004.

#### **MEDICAL SUB COMMITTEE**

The Medical Sub Committee convened in Brisbane before the flight to Longreach.

Members noted that following the evaluation of the Cultural Awareness Training, Queensland Health is taking a number of measures to address the issues raised including:

- a revised Statement of Intent for Reconciliation
- development of the Cultural On-line Orientation Program (COOL)
- development of the One Talk community engagement and participation tool kit
- development of a Queensland Health Implementation Plan for the AHMAC Cultural Respect Framework
- revision of the Cultural Awareness Program.

The Committee discussed the extent to which training and performance measures about cultural awareness and respect are integrated in health service and university accreditation programs and in the curricula of universities specialist colleges. It was noted that a number of colleges are currently revising their curricula to include these measures.

#### **ORIENTATION SUPPORT AND MENTORING GROUP**

This group has met twice and considers that there are four elements of work relating to this issue: preparation and orientation, supervision, support and mentoring.

The group has progressed the first element of orientation and preparation with agreement on the three aspects.

1. A manual or overview which could be sent to a junior doctor or overseas trained doctor when they are contemplating working in a rural area before they leave their country of origin.
2. The second aspect is a rural preparatory workshop which would specifically target practical skills such as trauma management, airways management etc. The rural preparatory workshops run by Health Workforce Queensland would be an ideal template for this, but any other rural preparatory workshop which covers similar topics would be appropriate.

3. The third aspect is that of local orientation and a program has been identified that would be suitable as a template for the development of manuals for use throughout Queensland Health, rural general practices and Royal Flying Doctor Service bases.

All of these aspects need to be provided within the framework of a professional network.

#### **PRESENTATIONS**

After arriving in Longreach, Council received presentations from the Outreach Mental Health Team, Royal Flying Doctor Service; and the Longreach Division of General Practice. These were informative and supported the Queensland Health direction on partnerships.

#### **RHAC**

The issue of a perceived decline in the standardisation and organisation of rural emergency departments was raised with Council and Dr John Scott, Senior Executive Director, Health Services Directorate advised that he will take the issue forward.

Council were informed on the progress of the Review of Maternity Services. Ms Madonna Cuthbert, Executive Director, Health Outcomes Branch advised that the review will specifically address issues for Indigenous women and that the final report is due to the Minister in March 2005.

Ms Cuthbert provided an update on the Statewide Chronic Disease Implementation Initiative noting that the consultations were in progress and the strategy document was in development.

Mr Pat O'Brien, Principal Policy Adviser, Statewide Health Services Planning advised Council that the integrated service planning project is looking at future planning around health services in small rural and remote communities up to around 6,000 people. Currently six RHAC members have been identified to work with the project team.

Council requested the Secretariat to provide advice on public liability cover for hospital auxiliary members.

## PUBLIC FORUM

A public forum was held as part of the meeting format on Friday. The forum was well attended with discussions being of a strategic nature and informing the Review of Maternity Services and the statewide rural service planning project.

Concern was expressed about the inaccessibility to the Patient Transit Subsidy Scheme for women having to travel to Longreach for birthing. Dr John Scott, Senior Executive Director, Health Services Directorate advised that there are processes and initiatives in place to provide practitioners throughout Western Queensland. However, recruitment and retention was a major issue that created flow-on problems in relation to quality and safety in the provision of services. He stressed that there is no policy to reduce funding or withdraw services from Central West Health Service District.

Council asked attendees to consider the value and importance of cross agency and cross government integration approaches in health planning.

## NEW COURSES AT JCU

Council were advised that James Cook University would be commencing physiotherapy and occupational therapy degrees from 2005.

## NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

The chairs of the Rural Health Advisory Council and MSC will represent Council at the National Rural Health Conference to be held in Alice Springs in March 2005.

## NEXT MEETING

The Rural Health Advisory Council will meet on 24 and 25 February in Brisbane.

## RHAC MEMBERSHIP

| Members  | Details of nominating bodies  |
|--|---|
| Ms Marie Pietsch, Chair                          | Agforce   |
| Dr Denise Powell<br>Chair, Medical Sub 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   |
| Ms Chris Bodger                                  | Directors of Nursing Association Queensland (Inc)   |
| Dr David Farlow                                  | Rural Doctors' Association (Qld)  |
| Vacant   | Australian Medical Association (Qld)  |
| 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  |
| Vacant   | Full Time Medical Specialists Association of Queensland Inc                               |
| Vacant   | 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                                 | Project Manager E Commerce & Logistics, 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, Health Outcomes Branch, Queensland Health (observer)                  |