

# DHAC Newsletter

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## Highlights in this Issue

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*The future depends on  
 what we do in the  
 present.*



~ MAHATMA  
 GANDHI

## Letter from the Editor

Dear DHACs

We would like to thank all who participated in the combined DHAC/CAC Conference on Friday 23 July. It was lovely to see everyone and we hope the conference has provided you with further information and direction for your Councils. We will endeavour to obtain speakers' notes for distribution and consideration of the Councils.

There have been some changes in the Council in the past few weeks:

- Maxine Drake, Senior Advocate has now moved onto the role of Senior Advocate at Headwest. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours.
- William Trott will be joining the Council on Monday 2 August as our new Aboriginal Consumer Participation Officer, a role recently vacated by Brian Charlie in June.

On a personal note, I would like to advise all that I will be going away on Maternity leave for 6 months, starting Monday 23 August. We will arrange for a relief staff in my position during this time so please do not hesitate to contact the Council should you require further information or assistance at [info@hconc.org.au](mailto:info@hconc.org.au) or on 9221 3422.

If your DHAC would like to contribute information and articles for the next issue of this e-Newsletter, please send them through to us via email: [info@hconc.org.au](mailto:info@hconc.org.au) or by post: Reply Paid, GPO Box C134 Perth WA 6839

We hope your DHAC finds information in this issue useful, and we look forward to working with your DHAC in the near future.

Sincerely,  
**Cheryl Rugdee** | Consumer Participation Programme Coordinator

Please circulate this bi-monthly newsletter to those who might be interested.

For an online copy: [www.hconc.org.au/ourservices/DHAC.html](http://www.hconc.org.au/ourservices/DHAC.html)



**HCC Events for 2010!**

Health Issues Group  
Thursday 5 August

Consumer Representative  
Network Meeting  
Friday 6 August

CAC Chairs Roundtable  
Friday 13 August

Consumer Representative  
Skills Training  
Friday 20 August

Health Issues Group  
Thursday 2 September

Contact Health  
Consumers' Council on  
9221 3422 or email  
[info@hconc.org.au](mailto:info@hconc.org.au) to  
register or for more details  
about any of these events!

Want to stay updated?  
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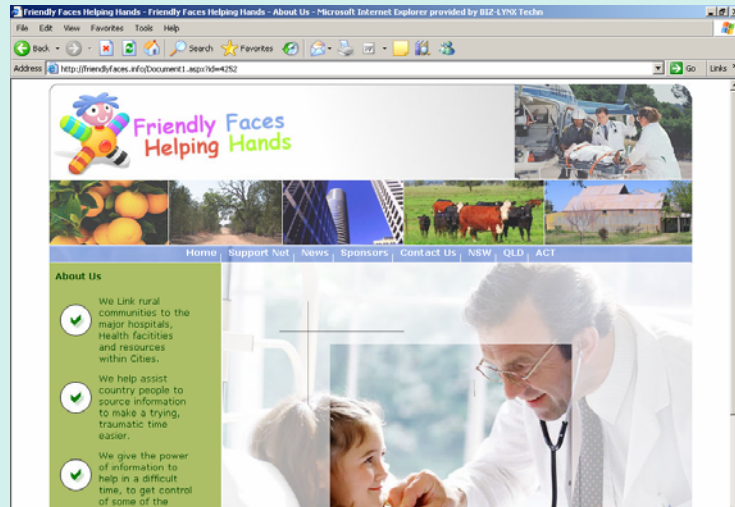
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## Linking rural communities to major city hospitals and health facilities



For people living in rural and remote areas, accessing metropolitan health services can often be associated with a number of challenges. Maules Creek couple, Kelly and David Foran, are familiar with these difficulties after being travelling to metropolitan hospitals several times between 2002 and 2004 for family emergencies. In 2002, Kelly was admitted to Sydney's Royal Prince Alfred Hospital after being diagnosed with a brain tumour, two weeks before she gave birth to her first child Jake. Later complications meant more unscheduled hospital visits the following year. In 2004, the family was immediately rushed to Brisbane when Jake was diagnosed with an eye tumour. The family's experiences led Kelly to consider the idea of an innovative new service that could ease the burden on rural families of visiting a city hospital.

Her idea has materialized in the form of the website "Friendly Faces, Helping Hands", a site designed to provide support to other rural families when travelling to the city. Kelly hopes "(the) website will help to minimise the overwhelming feelings of isolation and give people the power of information in difficult times." The website provides information on accommodation, parking, cheap eats, child care and other facilities that are located around specific metropolitan hospitals, as well as, links to support networks, social workers and counsellors.

Kelly's long term plan is to extend the service to include phone advocacy, so those without computer or internet access will also be able to use the service. She said building the website had been an enormous feat, financially and time-wise, but well worth the effort.

**For more information please see [www.friendlyfaces.info](http://www.friendlyfaces.info)**

*NB:* Please note that the website currently only covers NSW, QLD and ACT.

## National Compact Initiatives Improving Connection for those in Rural and Remote Areas

### New fibre-optic link in WA

On Friday 21 May 2010, the Australian Government commenced construction work on a fibre-optic communications backbone linking Perth and Geraldton. This work forms part of the Rudd Government's \$250m National Broadband Network (NBN) Regional Blackspots Program. The NBN Program will benefit up to 400,000 people in over 100 regional locations.

For more information about this program: [http://www.dbcde.gov.au/funding\\_and\\_programs/national\\_broadband\\_network/rural\\_national\\_broadband\\_network\\_coordinators](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/funding_and_programs/national_broadband_network/rural_national_broadband_network_coordinators).



### Broadband for Seniors

The Australian Government has committed \$15 million over three years (2008-2011) for the provision of 2000 internet kiosks to organisations that support seniors and want to host a Broadband for Seniors Kiosk and participate in this project. The project aims are to provide seniors with free access to Broadband for Seniors Kiosks, help them gain confidence using computer technology, and to build community participation and social inclusion amongst older Australians

For more information about this program: <http://www.necseniors.net.au/>

### Telstra's Connected Seniors program

Telstra Connected Seniors® is a tailored program created to help older Australians learn more about technology. It offers individual self teach guides, fun interactive workshops, and also offers eligible community groups with the opportunity of funding to run successful training courses around technology.

### Testimony: Volunteer Resource Centre Manjiump (WA)

"Thanks to the funding we received from Telstra Connected Seniors our centre has become a real hub for local seniors. We're in a fairly isolated area, with no public internet access. By offering free internet as part of our internet training sessions, our members not only learned how to email and send pictures to loved ones across the country, but had unlimited access to do so."

For more information about this program: <http://www.telstraseniors.com.au/>

*Technology can offer ways to better connect people with each other and with their community.*

## Advocacy Corner – By Gio Terni, HCC Advocate

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency or AHPRA is now the national body dealing with the registration and accreditation of the following health professions: chiropractic, dental, medical, nursing and midwifery, optometry, osteopathy, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry and psychology. It is also the body that registers complaints from consumers about any of the aforementioned professions. It is hoped that this will bring a more unified, standardised, and informed system of registration and complaint handling, especially where a practitioner is registered in more than one State.

However, Western Australia is the only State not yet participating in this scheme, due to the relevant legislation not coming into force in time. At this stage, the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (WA) Bill 2010* is planned to become operational on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2010. Up until that time, if you would like to make a complaint about one of the above professions, you will need to address your complaint to the relevant Board, for example, the Medical Board. This can quite often be done online. After October 18, complaints must be directed to AHPRA.

**If you would like further information regarding making a complaint, please contact the Health Consumers' Council and ask to speak to one of the advocates.**

### Funding Boost for Indigenous Health

(Source: WACHS *The Country Link* – Issue 4 Winter 2010, p. 7)

“We know Aboriginal West Australians use mainstream services, we know they need better access to culturally secure care – these announcements are a win-win for improving Aboriginal Health Outcomes.” – Debra Salway, CEO, WA GP Network

Health and Indigenous Affairs Minister Kim Hames announced funding boosts which will support more than 80 health programs and services to Aboriginal communities through the State. Support for this investment has come from the Aboriginal Health Partnership Group with representatives from WA Health, Aboriginal Health Council of WA, WA GP Network, the Department of Health and Ageing and the Office of Aboriginal Health.

#### Question for the DHACs:

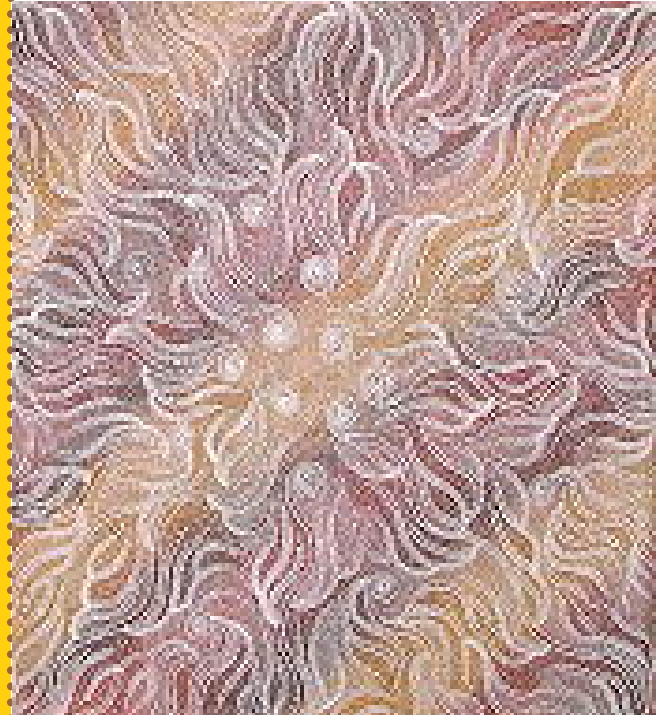
How can the DHACs play a role in ensuring Aboriginal people in WA reach the same levels of life expectancy and have the same access to health services as the rest of the Australian Population?

**Send us your thoughts!**

The Health Consumers' Council facilitates an Aboriginal Consumer Participation Program, which advocates and supports the voices of Aboriginal health consumers on an individual and community level. To find out more about the program or to speak to an Aboriginal Consumer Participation Project Officer contact Laura Elkin: [laura.elkin@hconc.org.au](mailto:laura.elkin@hconc.org.au) by email or phone 9221 3422

Health Consumers' Council provides an Advocacy Service to both metropolitan and country consumers in Western Australia. This service can assist consumers in accessing health services to meet your needs, as well as assist you in making a complaint.

Ring 9221 3422 or Toll Free (country): 1800 620 780, or email [info@hconc.org.au](mailto:info@hconc.org.au) for further information or to arrange for a consumer advocate for further assistance.



## \*Consumer Input Required\*

As part of the Federal Government's current health reform plan, \$9.3 million over two years has been allocated to develop and implement a new framework for managing the Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS) in the future. The aim of the MBS Quality Framework is to ensure all services covered by the MBS are aligned with contemporary clinical evidence, are cost effective, affordable and result in improved health outcomes for all Australian health care consumers.

CHF will be coordinating workshops about the proposed MBS framework, which will provide an opportunity for consumers to identify key issues regarding the proposed framework and to ensure that any new mechanisms put in place for listing, pricing and review of MBS items will be effective, safe and encourage better health outcomes for consumers.

The Perth workshop will be held on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> August. Actual venues will be announced at a later date.

For more information, the CHF Information Paper can be accessed at: <http://www.chf.org.au/info-601-mbs-qualityframework.chf>.

The Department of Health and Ageing have also released a Discussion Paper on the Quality Framework. It can be accessed at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/MBRT-Discussion>

CHF is seeking workshop participants from health consumers who have experience with the MBS or who have a general interest in the area.

For more information see [www.chf.org.au](http://www.chf.org.au) or contact Sarah Watt, CHF Project Officer at [s.watt@chf.org.au](mailto:s.watt@chf.org.au) or on (02) 6273 5444.

## South West Medical Attraction Taskforce (SMAT)

A recent report by the South-West Medical Attraction Taskforce has reported that some doctors in the SW region have to deal with 1,500 more patients than average. In order to address this problem, SMAT has determined two main strategies, which were outlined by Alison Companti during a speech she gave on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2010:

### 1. To ensure doctors who currently practise in the South-West are supported and encouraged to stay for longer periods of time.

This support includes educational opportunities and networks for doctors' families, appropriate accommodation and professional development.

### 2. To attract additional medical personnel to the South-West.

The main focus for this strategy is in encouraging country students to study medicine and providing them with support, since it has long been acknowledged that medical students from a rural or remote background are more likely to practise in rural and remote areas than metropolitan students. Other objectives associated with this strategy are to improve medical infrastructure in the south-west to improve student placement opportunities and for SMAT to assist doctors when setting up medical practices.

For more information please contact:

Alison Companti, Project Consultant and SMAT Committee member

Ph: 0417 917 464

Email: [alibeans@hotmail.com](mailto:alibeans@hotmail.com)

## Useful Links

See these links for further assistance

**Consumers' Health Forum of Australia**  
<https://www.chf.org.au/>

**Department of Health – Country Hospital Info**  
<http://www.health.wa.gov.au/emergencyactivity/beds/countrymhealth.cfm>

**Friendly Faces, Helping Hands**  
<http://www.friendlyfaces.info>

**Health Consumers of Rural and Remote Australia**  
<http://hccra.ruralhealth.org.au>

**11<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference**  
<http://11nrhc.ruralhealth.org.au/>

**National Compact Initiatives**  
<http://www.nationalcompact.gov.au/>

**WA Country Health Service**  
<http://wacountry.health.wa.gov.au/>

## RURAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA THE HEART OF A HEALTHY NATION

11<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference  
Perth 13–16 March 2011



If you care about the health and wellbeing of the 32 per cent of Australians who live in rural and remote Australia, make sure you're at the heart of the action...

The National Rural Health Conference is the key biennial event for individuals and organisations interested in Australia's rural, regional and remote health and we encourage you to take this opportunity to network, celebrate, listen and have your say about issues that concern you.

If you'd like to submit an abstract or find out more about the conference please visit:  
<http://11nrhc.ruralhealth.org.au/>

## Health Consumers' Council Membership

**Our Vision: To be an independent, authoritative and effective voice of and for health consumers in Western Australia**

The Health Consumers' Council would like to encourage you to become a member. There are many benefits to becoming a member, besides the fact that it is totally free!

As a member of the Health Consumers' Council you will:

- Be kept up to date about health issues
- Be able to have your say on health policy and on the way that health services are delivered
- Receive free *Health Matters* magazines
- Be able to go on our distribution list so you can find out about all the events involving HCC and other consumers!

**You can now become a member online!**

To join us, visit  
<http://www.hconc.org.au/joinus/application.php>

Or you can still call the Health Consumers' Council on (08) 9221 3422 or Free Call 1800 620 780 to join