Health professionals come together to achieve together

The 2013 Rural Health West Aboriginal Health Conference was another successful event with over 130 health professionals from around the State converging at the Pan Pacific Perth hotel.

Rural Health West was pleased to welcome rural doctors, a number of nursing and allied health professionals from rural and remote Western Australia and 20 students from a range of health disciplines.

Delegates were regaled with the experiences of Dr Peter Braunberger (pictured below left) from Canada who provided an international perspective on achievements with Telehealth in psychiatric services. Stephen Moo, from the Northern Territory Department of Health, informed the delegates on the successful implementation of E-Health throughout the Territory and the benefits it has provided to both patients and practitioners. Some of these benefits have already flowed through health services supporting Indigenous communities in northern Western Australia.

“A fantastic, informative and enjoyable conference that was extremely relevant to any individual in Western Australia’s health care industry. Not only did it raise my cultural awareness but it also allowed me to revisit specialist clinical areas.”

Delegates participated in a range of workshops and hands-on sessions and relaxed at the social event. They were also able to watch local Indigenous artist Michelle Willura Kickett (pictured top right) as she created a special work of art to commemorate the conference’s theme. Amy Bennett, medical student and President of the Students and Practitioners Interested in Rural Practice Health Education Xcetera (SPINRPHEX) Rural Health Club was the lucky recipient of this piece of art.

“It was good to have a casual social time together, better than a sit down dinner. Great opening and closing with music, putting the heart back into medicine.”

The conference opened and closed in style with the Madjitil Moorna Indigenous Choir providing a moving opening featuring songs in traditional language and Mr Dewayne Everettsmith, an Indigenous health worker and singer/songwriter closing the conference with beautiful songs that represented his life’s path.
From the Chief Executive Officer

Belinda Bailey

Another successful financial year has been completed with Rural Health West celebrating fantastic achievements over the past 12 months. Rural Health Select, the Rural Health West Recruitment arm, led the way placing 43 general practitioners throughout the State. The Locum Placement Service provided the equivalent of 11.0 full-time general practitioners, increasing productivity by 23.5 per cent. Finally, the Rural Health West Outreach in the Outback team was awarded the contracts for the new Rural Health Outreach Fund and Medical Outreach Indigenous Chronic Disease Program. These contracts will contribute over $27 million for outreach services to rural Western Australia over the next three years.

Farewell to Ian Taylor, Chairman

“I have seen Rural Health West grow into a marvellous and well respected organisation and have truly enjoyed my time as Chairman, working with a terrific Board, Chief Executive Officer and staff.”

Rural Health West Chairman of the Board, Mr Ian Taylor, has resigned his position after completing his maximum number of years service in this role. The Board of Directors would like to publicly acknowledge Ian’s outstanding achievements in this position.

Board of Directors

New Chairman – Mr Grant Woodhams

Rural Health West is pleased to welcome Mr Grant Woodhams as the new Chairman of the Board. His term commences at the forthcoming August Board of Directors meeting.

Mr Woodhams is an active and respected community member of the Midwest and former Australian politician who served as a National Party member of the Western Australian Legislative Assembly.

He has lived and worked in regional Western Australia for most of his life and also brings a wealth of knowledge regarding rural issues to the Board.

Positions vacant

Nominations are now open for the following two positions:

- **Elected Organisational Member Director** (medical practitioner)
- **Elected Individual Member Director** (medical practitioner)

To nominate or be nominated you must be an Individual Member or Organisational Member of Rural Health West. Please direct enquiries to the Governance and Compliance Officer on:

T 08 6389 4500  |  E membership@ruralhealthwest.com.au
In May, Rural Health West hosted 30 doctors at the beautiful Karijini National Park for the Rural and Remote Retrieval Conference.

This three-day conference provided delegates with the unique opportunity to practise emergency wilderness medicine in the park’s stunning surrounds.

One delegate said “Thank you so much for this amazing weekend. I loved every second – the scenarios, the opportunity to learn from experienced colleagues, speaking about medicine all the time without the fear of being boring and, of course, the Karijini gorges.”

Facilitated by experienced emergency physicians, delegates were faced with scenarios that included head injuries, snake bites and heat exhaustion.

The delegates were also provided with the opportunity to explore the beautiful park by participating in a guided adventure tour of the gorges.

If you are interested in developing your emergency medicine skills and would like to experience a wilderness conference, please visit the website for details of the upcoming Remote Coastal Emergency Medicine Conference or register your interest for next year’s Rural and Remote Retrieval Conference by emailing the events team events@ruralhealthwest.com.au.
Rural Health West established a recruitment service in 2009. Rural Health Select, the recruitment arm of Rural Health West, has since managed over 3,350 enquiries and case managed more than 100 rural general practitioners.

“The case management approach is one of the advantages of the service we provide,” said Tina Donovan, Recruitment Services Manager.

“This approach includes managing the candidate through finding a suitable position; application with the Australian Medical Council; recognition by The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners; gaining medical registration; assistance with visa applications; a comprehensive orientation; and support on arrival,” she said.

In the past three years, the service has placed over 100 general practitioners in rural and remote communities throughout Western Australia, with 43 being placed in 2012-2013.

“The average length of time to actually place a doctor into the community is eight months, this is if it is a straightforward situation,” said Ms Donovan.

“We have recently assisted a doctor where the process took 11 months and involved liaison between the candidate, the local shire, WA Country Health Service, Medicare Australia and the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing,” she said.

Eighteen months ago, this service expanded to include recruitment of nursing and allied health professionals.

“We have placed 51 nursing and allied health professionals in rural primary health care vacancies around the State in the last financial year, this is a great outcome for a new service,” she said.

The recruitment service is provided free of any agency fees to both the candidate and the practice and includes candidates sourced internationally and domestically.
Dr Keira Baker is a junior doctor who is currently completing her basic general practitioner term in Busselton following her PGY 3 year at Bunbury Hospital.

Born and raised in the Wheatbelt town of Corrigin, Dr Baker always felt a strong pull to return to country Western Australia.

“Although I really enjoyed my high school and university education in the city and had some awesome experiences working at Royal Perth Hospital during my intern year, I love being away from the hustle and bustle of the city and enjoy the lifestyle that country towns can provide,” she said.

Dr Baker started her rural practice pathway early, with her local general practitioner being a mentor while she was a student.

“Dr Hans Grobbelaar was the sole general practitioner in my home town of Corrigin for many years and I used to visit him throughout the year to sit in on his general practice sessions,” she said.

Dr Baker then had a full year’s experience in a country town, completing her fifth year of medical school as a rural clinical school student. It was her placement in Kalgoorlie for a rural general practice term that cemented her intention to become a rural general practitioner.

“I had an amazing rural general practice term where I was given my own consulting room and I could see my own patients and perform minor procedures – under supervision of course! By the end, I was excising skin lesions, putting implanons in, trying out my antenatal ultrasound skills and ducking out between patients to help deliver babies. It was unreal, a true country general practice experience.

“I have found that you get to see a lot more variety in the clinical presentations in the country, where there are fewer specialist teams to take the interesting cases away,” said Dr Baker.

Rural Health West, in conjunction with WA Country Health Service, the Rural Clinical School of Western Australia, Western Australia General Practice Education and Training Ltd, the Australian Medical Association (WA) and the Postgraduate Medical Council of Western Australia form the Rural Practice Pathway Collaborative.

To learn more about the Rural Practice Pathway and the great locations available for your rural experience and career, visit the Choose Country website www.choosecountry.com.au.

The new interactive map located on the website provides a snapshot of the rural placement opportunities available. If you would like to know more about a rural career, contact the Choose Country team choosecountry@ruralhealthwest.com.au or check out the great videos on the website.
Rural Health West’s Outreach in the Outback program has once again completed a successful 12 months of operation.

“From June 2012 to July 2013, 1,611 visits were completed and over 28,000 patients accessed these services of which 14,000 were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) descent,” said Nila Cecconi, Outreach in the Outback Manager.

Rural Health West has been administering this program (which has delivered funds through the Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program – MSOAP) since 2002, initially with WA Country Health Service and solely since 2006.

Over the last 11 years, the program has expanded to include a range of specialists. Urban specialist services and Indigenous chronic disease services were included in 2010 and ophthalmology and maternity services incorporated in 2011.

“The expansion of services clearly recognises the need of rural communities to be able to access a range of specialist services to ensure their ongoing health needs can be met,” said Ms Cecconi.

The Rural Health West Outreach in the Outback team was successful in its tender to administer the new Rural Health Outreach Fund (RHOF) and Medical Outreach Indigenous Chronic Disease Program (MOICDP).

RHOF’s priority services are maternal/paediatric health, eye health, mental health and support for chronic disease management while MOICDP will focus service delivery on chronic conditions of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, chronic renal disease and cancer.

“We are excited to be able to continue our work with service providers to ensure rural communities can access specialist services closer to home.

“We appreciate the transition may be difficult but are hoping to work closely with all service providers to ensure services are not interrupted and that patients can continue to access the services that have been available to them under the MSOAP initiative,” said Ms Cecconi.

Applications for funding from these new funds closed on 26 July 2013 and successful service providers will be notified in the coming months.

If you have any questions regarding the new programs or would like to be involved in the provision of service, please contact the Outreach in the Outback team on 08 6389 4500 or email outreachintheoutback@ruralhealthwest.com.au. Information relating to the new programs is also available on the website www.outreachintheoutback.com.au.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Outreach in the Outback</th>
<th># of patients</th>
<th># of ATSI patients</th>
<th># of visits completed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Services</td>
<td>17,155</td>
<td>3,512</td>
<td>697</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous Chronic Disease Measure</td>
<td>7,393</td>
<td>6,875</td>
<td>489</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maternity Services</td>
<td>757</td>
<td>695</td>
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<td>Ophthalmology Services</td>
<td>1,866</td>
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<td>Urban Specialist Outreach Assistance Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kimberley Paediatric Outreach Program</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>573</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>28,949</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,095</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,611.5</strong></td>
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Children get cooking

Rural Health West facilitates a family program at each of the Perth conferences to entertain the younger family members and provide fun and interactive activities for partners. Rural Health West also provides an in-house babysitting service for children zero to four years of age.

Recently, at the Aboriginal Health Conference, the children were provided the opportunity to cook their own lunch. They got their hands (and faces) dirty cooking chicken parmigiana; spinach, ham and cheese pinwheels; and shortbread biscuits.

In the afternoon, it was off to the movies to watch Monsters University.

The spouses/partners spent the day at a photography workshop which was facilitated by an experienced photographer. They increased the knowledge of their camera and how to take the best picture and should now have the skills to enter their photographs in the Rural Health West Annual Photography competition!

Medical spouse training bursary

Each year, Rural Health West provides funding to medical practitioners’ spouses for professional development and training with the aim of enhancing employment opportunities and assisting in the retention of medical practitioners to rural areas.

In 2013-2014, bursaries to the value of up to $1,500 will be available. Applications will open on Thursday 1 August 2013 and close Friday 13 September 2013. Please note that each year, we receive an overwhelming number of applications and priority is placed on applications from spouses residing in RA 4 or 5 and only spouses who have not previously received a bursary are eligible.

To download the guidelines and an application please visit www.ruralhealthwest.com.au/bursaries

A new information resource is now available for general practitioners and their families who may require personal or professional support services.

For further information please visit www.ruralhealthwest.com.au/familysupport.
The Rural Health West Doctors’ Service Awards recognise the contribution of doctors and specialists currently working in the rural and remote communities of Western Australia.


Rural Health West invites rural general practices to nominate their practice manager for the Rural Health West Rural Practice Manager Award 2014. This Award is in recognition of the integral role that practice managers play in ensuring rural general practices are able to provide a sustainable service.


For further information on these Awards, please contact the Rural Health West Communications and Marketing Coordinator on **08 6389 4536** or email [marketing@ruralhealthwest.com.au](mailto:marketing@ruralhealthwest.com.au)