

Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

**Office of Rural Health
Primary and Ambulatory Care
Division
Department of Health and Ageing**

**'Rural Health Policy – Federal
Perspective'**

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Rural Health Policy Environment

- Reform environment, yet responsive to areas that require immediate attention.
- Audit of Health Workforce in Rural and Regional Australia - released 30 April 2008
- Internal examination of rural health programs by Department of Health and Ageing
- Around 65 existing Commonwealth funded targeted rural health programs
- Gaps and overlaps between programs
- Significant 'red tape' for health professionals and auspicing bodies
- Opportunity to better target programs to address needs

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Office of Rural Health

- Established on 1 July 2008
- Focus for the reform of Commonwealth rural health policy and programs
- First time that rural health service delivery, policy development and workforce distribution are located in the same office
- Headed by senior government official, Ms Jan Bennett, Principal Adviser
- Tasked as a first priority to review Commonwealth funded rural health programs and classification systems

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Review of rural health programs

- Undertaken in 2 stages.
- Stage 1 is examining existing Commonwealth funded programs under the following themes:
 - o Theme 1: Improving access to services, including health promotion and prevention
 - o Theme 2: Investing more effectively in rural health infrastructure
 - o Theme 3: Addressing workforce shortages through better workforce distribution and support
 - o Theme 4: Strengthening workforce education and training
 - o Theme 5: Fostering partnerships between the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments to improve health outcomes in rural and remote areas
- Cross-cutting theme: Review of rural classification systems.
- Stage 1 does not include pharmacy programs, Indigenous health programs and aged care programs (including the Multi Purpose Services Program).


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- Stage 2 of review – a strategic look at rural health programs within the context of national health reform activity:
 - o National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission
 - o National Primary Health Care Strategy
 - o National Preventative Health Strategy
 - o new National Healthcare Agreement
 - o COAG Health Reforms
- Develop stronger links with state and territory governments on planning for rural health

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Review of rural health programs

- The Office of Rural Health has met with 6 key rural health stakeholder organisations during the first stage of the rural health programs review.
- The stakeholders are:
 - o Rural Health Workforce Australia;
 - o The Rural Doctors' Association of Australia;
 - o The National Rural Health Alliance;
 - o Council of Remote Area Nurse of Australia;
 - o Australia Rural Health Education Network; and
 - o Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health.
- These organisations represent a broad range of health professions, service providers and consumers.


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National Rural and Remote Health Infrastructure Program (NRRHIP)

- Infrastructure is a critical enabler for the delivery of rural health services
- NRRHIP announced in May 2008 Federal Budget – amalgamates the former Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund and the Rural Private Access Program
- For funding rounds 1 and 2, the Department received more than 370 applications totalling more than \$100 million
- Minister Roxon announced the first 53 successful projects under round 1 - total of \$13.319 million (GST inc)
- Announcement of outcomes of round 2 expected in April 2009
- Round 3 was advertised on 28 February 2009 and closes 17 April 2009
- 14 projects in round 1 approved for Victoria – total of \$4.364 million (GST inc)


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Multi Purpose Services Program (MPS)

- MPS jointly funded by Australian, state and territory governments
- Good example of successful cooperation between 2 levels of government
- In Victoria, tripartite agreements between Australian and Victorian governments and organisation running the service
- MPS continues to grow and Australian Government is committed to meeting aged care needs in rural and remote Australia
- 30 June 2008 - 117 MPS operating in Australia with 2,817 flexible aged care places
- 7 MPS in Vic providing 333 flexible aged care places
- 2008-09 Vic received funding of \$9.8 million


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Medical Specialist Outreach Program (MSOAP)

- Aims to improve rural and remote community access to medical specialist services by complementing outreach specialist services provided by the states and NT governments
- May 2008 Federal Budget - additional \$12 million over 4 years
- 2008-09 allocation is approximately \$18.9 million
- At the end of 2007-08 financial year, more than 1,800 services were delivered to rural and remote communities. In Vic there were over 282 services with funding of \$3.2 million
- In Vic, MSOAP services include anaesthetics, obstetrics & gynaecology, dermatology, paediatrics, ophthalmology, physician, psychiatry & surgery


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Thank you

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www.health.gov.au/ruralhealth