

Thursday, October 23 2008



**For immediate release**

### **The Heart and Teeth of the Victorian Healthcare Association 2008 Annual Awards**

A rural dental health workforce initiative and a programme to reduce heart disease among rural men came up trumps in the 2008 Victorian Healthcare Association Annual Awards.

**Goulburn Valley Health** in Shepparton took out the **Workforce Retention Award** at the VHA's Annual Conference in Melbourne last week for its ***Filling the cavities in the rural dental workforce*** programme.

And **Portland District Health** won the **Population Health Award** for its ***Towards a Healthy Heart*** initiative that aims to reduce the rates of heart disease among rural men aged between 30-60 years.

The VHA Awards are held annually to identify outstanding contributions to public health care in Victoria.

Victorian Healthcare Association chief executive, Mr Trevor Carr, said the winning entries showed rural Victorian health services are leading the way in implementing innovative programmes that overcome obstacles such as workforce shortages and isolation.

Rather than rely on traditional methods of recruiting staff, GV Health offers dental graduates 12 month training placements at its 12 chair public dental clinic that includes a dental laboratory.

The training programme also offers graduates exposure to private dental practice via a link with nearby Cobram Hospital that owns a private dental clinic.

GV Health's strong links with Melbourne University mean that final year dental and oral health students are offered a four week rural placement that has resulted in increased competition for the 12 month dental positions.

GV Health spokesperson, Merrin Pictor, said this has created the unprecedented situation where there are now 20 applicants vying for two dental graduate positions this year.

In Portland, statistics indicated heart disease was a major cause of premature death among men and cardiac-related admissions to the local health service were increasing.

The death of a Portland resident from premature heart attack led employees from one major employer to approach the health service seeking answers to preventing heart disease.

Portland District Health Service responded by funding its ***Towards a Healthy Heart*** programme that from the outset involved the entire local community including: employers, sporting groups and local government.

The programme offered Portland men four risk factor assessments, 12 weeks of group education, 12 weeks of physical activity and individualised health coaching, where necessary.

Portland District Health spokesperson Jacki Carmody said behaviour change was the key to success and results were positive with participants losing an average of three kilograms and reducing their risk factors for heart disease in multiple areas.

The VHA Annual Awards were sponsored by Silverman Dakin, a leading human resources consultancy specialising in executive recruitment and career transitioning.

Thursday, October 23 2008



"As an executive recruitment consultancy specialising in the health and community sector, it gives us the opportunity to highlight the importance of leadership and innovation and the benefits of having the right people within your organisation," Silverman Dakin associate director, Philip Mayers, said.

The VHA is the peak advocacy body representing public healthcare interests in Victoria. Its members include public hospitals, rural and regional health services, community health services and aged care facilities.

For further information and interviews, contact  
Trevor Carr  
CEO  
The Victorian Healthcare Association  
(03) 9094 7777 or (0409) 362 382

