

Nau mai. Haere mai. Ki te pānui o RHĀNZ mō tēnei wiki (Te Reo for welcome to the RHĀNZ Newsletter for this week).

In this issue: National Rural Health Commissioner for Australia, Dr Annette Beautrais, Norm Hewitt and Dr Robyn Toomath all speaking at the NRHC Conference 2017 plus a selection of relevant media and research articles...

Who are RHĀNZ?

The Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand represents a united voice from across multiple rural sector organisations. Our aim is to provide solutions and influence policy affecting the health and wellbeing of rural communities.

[Visit our website](#)

NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE 2017
 Healthy Rural Communities
 Mauri Ora, Whānau Ora, Wai Ora
 March 30 - April 2
 TSB Bank Arena-Shed 6, Wellington

We thank our partners.



National Rural Health Conference 2017

A great line up of speakers is planned for the National Rural Health Conference in Wellington, 30 March to 2 April 2017. The conference proper is Friday 31 March and Saturday 1 April, with the RHĀNZ stream running throughout the Friday.

For those of you who haven't managed to attend one of our rural suicide prevention workshops, Dr Annette Beautrais has kindly agreed to hold a special workshop in Wellington on Thursday 30 March, 1:00-5:00pm.

Dr Annette Beautrais Suicide Risk Assessment, and Suicide Prevention- safeTALK workshop



This workshop will focus on suicide risk assessment and suicide prevention strategies for rural communities. In this workshop, participants will be presented information about the incidence and risks of suicide in rural New Zealand. They will develop skills to help them:

- Recognize a person who might be having thoughts of suicide.
- Engage people with thoughts of suicide in direct and open talk about suicide.
- Listen to the person's feelings about suicide and show that they are taken seriously.
- Move quickly to connect them with appropriate help.
- Demonstrate that they can participate in a didactic role play between a suicide-alert helper and person with thoughts of suicide using the TALK steps.
- Self- evaluate their own ability to be willing, ready, and able to be a suicide alert helper.

There is no charge to attend this excellent workshop but you will need to complete the [registration process](#) as numbers are capped so don't delay.

There are also some great speakers lined up for Saturday 1 April including Norm Hewitt who will be talking on bullying and family violence in New Zealand and Dr Robyn Toomath who will be talking on fat science and why diets don't work.

Norm Hewitt

Keynote address: Bullying and family violence in New Zealand



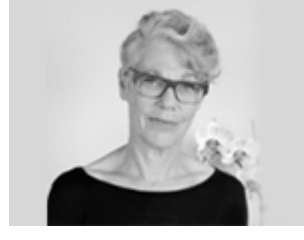
Norm Hewitt is a former New Zealand Maori Rugby team captain, All Black, and motivational speaker on sport, the community and personal fulfilment. Not to mention the winner of the inaugural 'Dancing With the Stars'.

Norm Hewitt is a remarkable man. Softly spoken he embodies all things rugged and male but has earned an entirely different reputation since winning Dancing With the Stars with partner Carol-Ann Hickmore in 2005.

Now Norm is a mentor to youth and an ambassador for many charitable organisations. But it wasn't always that way. Norm is a former New Zealand Maori Rugby team captain and All Black. In a long career from 1988 to 2001, he was a frequently a controversial and outspoken figure.

Robyn Toomath

Keynote address: Fat science: Why diets and exercise don't work and what does



While genes certainly play a part, Toomath argues, more people are fat than ever before because most of us consume significantly more calories than we did 30 years ago. But why?

The answer, she asserts, is the commodification of food created by junk food advertising coupled with urbanization, globalization, and trade agreements. And while government, advertisers, gyms, and the weight loss industry keep pushing solutions that science shows do not work, from extreme exercise regimens and fad dieting to expensive surgeries, pills, and misguided education campaigns, Toomath outlines what just might make a difference in terms of helping people truly control their weight.

Drawing on the latest research and her twenty years of working with overweight patients, Dr. Toomath argues that even strongly determined people who are offered appealing incentives typically cannot lose weight permanently. Instead of demotivating people by treating weight as an issue of personal or even moral responsibility, Dr. Toomath makes it clear that nothing will change until we make it easy, not all but impossible, for people to eat healthily.

Raising important questions about obesity, Toomath sidesteps the standard sound bites and puts an end to the myth of personal responsibility for body size by focusing on the environment all around us.

Interested? Then please click on the following link for further [programme information and registration details](#).

Media Watch

Freedom campers a rural challenge

Media reports over the holiday period had again highlighted the challenge to rural New Zealand from the influx of freedom campers according to Federated Farmers. In many localities the facilities at popular sites had been overwhelmed, in some cases farmers being left to sort out the mess left by campers who had stayed on or crossed their land.

For example, local government spokeswoman Katie Milne said a Golden Bay farmer had been asked by his local council to consider serving trespass notices on freedom campers and others living there in vehicles longer-term, while according to media the same council had instructed its own enforcement officer not to patrol the area because of safety concerns.

"Let's be clear about the problem: tourism is at record levels, and freedom camping in particular is on the rise, with 44,000 international visitors taking the option last summer," Ms Milne said. (Northland Age)

[Read more.](#)

Rural community still stressed after Kaikōura earthquake

It is more important than ever to check on neighbours and friends, says Doug Avery, a leader for mental health and resilience in farming.

Mr Avery is a sheep and beef farmer in the Marlborough region, between Ward and Seddon, an area badly damaged by the 14 November's Kaikōura earthquake. He said while most farms were back on track, it was evident people were still having a tough time.

"The thing that worries me about a time like this is the people you don't see ... you forget about.

"As a community we need to be really vigilant and watching out for people who are showing signs of retiring from their normal [lives] or people who are angry or bitter.

"Anger and blame, and all those sort of things are major signs of people really building up suppression." (Radio NZ)

[Read more](#)

TUANZ welcomes the future extension of fibre availability

TUANZ welcomes today's long awaited announcement around the extension of the Ultra-Fast Broadband programme beyond the current 75% of population coverage. "We welcomed the initial announcement of a proposed extension during the 2014 election campaign and while the fulfilment of that promise has taken some time, are happy to see that the targets by 2024" said Craig Young, CEO of TUANZ.

Today's announcement is welcome because it continues to reduce the copper gap that exists for the people who were originally left out of the UFB project by extending the programme to another 151 towns.

"We are also pleased to see the inclusion of several areas on the fringe of the current cities that were also left out of the original plans" Mr Young said. (TUANZ)

[Read more](#)

Better cellphone coverage may have helped save man's life on Otago Central Rail Trail.

Phone companies are being lobbied to wipe out mobile phone black spots after a man died on a popular Otago cycle trail.

A Canterbury man in his 50s died on December 27 following a medical event while cycling on the Otago Central Rail Trail in the Omakau area. Many spots on the rail trail are known to have black spots and poor coverage.

[Read more](#)

A National Rural Health Commissioner - an election promise of the Turnbull Government.



Last year, Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, made an election promise to appoint a Rural Health Commissioner for Australia. The role of the Commissioner is "to work with rural, regional and remote communities, the health sector, universities, specialist training colleges and across all levels of Government to improve rural health policies."

Legislation has now been developed and is expected to be considered following the resumption of Parliament on 7 February 2017.

Last week the National Rural Health Alliance Australia (NRHA) released a paper exploring the qualities they want to see in the new [Rural Health Commissioner](#). It's an interesting read.

They write:

- The new Commissioner must have a significant background in rural health.
- They will need to have the respect of the education, research and health practitioner communities, as well as the ability to forge partnerships with consumers and communities so that they can receive feedback on community priorities – not simply the feedback from service providers and professional bodies.
- They need to be able to demonstrate that they have a considerable understanding of health workforce policy from the perspective of educators and professional organisations, but also of the impact of the health workforce on the delivery of healthcare at the community level.
- And they need to have demonstrated innovation in the way they approach the development and analysis of rural health and workforce policy. They will need to have constructive working relationships across the health sector to maximise their impact.

NRHA acknowledges that it will be a challenge to find all these qualities in the one person but they are confident it's not impossible. There is no doubt that New Zealand would benefit greatly from a similar position and discussions along these lines will be a central plank of Council members' engagement with politicians on 16 March 2017.

Speaking of extraordinary rural individuals, last week NZ Doctor awarded Dr Chris Henry (Kaikoura GP and Council member) the To Infinity and Beyond Award for 2016. This award is given out annually to a GP whose efforts embody the spirit of space ranger Buzz Lightyear and who goes that little bit further in some aspect of their practice.

Our warmest congratulations Chris, this is a most deserved award. While I know you're a bit embarrassed about the suggestion you're the new "pin-up boy" for rural general practice, I think the sector should exploit this to the max. You're just the recruitment (and retention) tonic we need!

NZDoctor has kindly removed the subscriber requirement for this article so that RHĀNZ members can access the article in full. Thanks NZDoctor you're a great support and source of primary care news [www.nzdoctor.co.nz](#).

Cheers and best wishes,
Michelle

Member Column

Would you like to contribute an article for our newsletter? Tell a story about yourself or one of your members or something you're passionate about. Email your item to Michelle ce@rhaanz.org.nz

Subscribe

Anyone interested in rural health is welcome to subscribe to this newsletter. Keep up to date with us by [subscribing now](#).

Media Watch

Dairy leaders honoured

A key contributor to the dairy industry for 20 years, Justine Kidd, was awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit in the New Year Honours for services to dairy and equestrian last month. (Dairy News)

[Read more](#)

Opotiki GP wins prestigious fellowship

Dr Emily Gill is a General Practitioner in Opotiki and Te Kaha. But next year she's moving her family to the United States for 12 months, so she can study how technology is changing healthcare in rural communities. "Healthcare policy, at the end of the day, is most effective if it's pragmatic; if it's actually going to affect clinical care. So my role, I see, is to offer my perspective as a clinician, when the discussions around health care policy are being had." Dr Gill had to submit a proposal to research how the Internet and digital technology could improve medical access for people living in rural circumstances.

[Read more](#)

Research & Resources Watch

The little book of rural health numbers, National Rural Health Alliance Australia

We've profiled this excellent little publication before but we think it worth doing again. It's the brain child of the National Rural Health Alliance in Australia and is their attempt at combining all known facts on rural and remote health in the one place. It's still a work in progress and they've released it for people to use and provide feedback so they can continue to improve it. Great stuff. We should aspire to replicate this resource in NZ as - in the words of the NRHA - "without data, you are just another person with an opinion."

[Read more](#)

Events Watch

National Rural Health Conference, Wellington, 30 March to 2 April 2017.

[Read more](#)

A World of Rural Health, International Conference, Cairns, Australia, 26 April – 2 May 2017.

[Read more](#)