

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

In this issue: A week of rural festivities, an update from strategic supporter Wireless Nation 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](#)



We thank our partners.



WIRELESS NATION UPDATE

There were a lot of positive conversations at the Rural Connectivity Symposium this week. I believe we can all see a collective movement towards a better-connected Aotearoa. Thank you to TUANZ, RHĀNZ & NZ Young Farmers for orchestrating another great event..



Wireless Nation have been busy behind the scenes working towards connecting rural New Zealand. With a successful Otorohanga public Wi-Fi network under our belt, Tokoroa was next on the list.

South Waikato District Council and Tokoroa were also needing a way to get CCTV traffic back to the recording server in one of the buildings in the town. Wireless Nation consulted and designed a reliable wireless backhaul network to carry both the CCTV and public Wi-Fi traffic without compromising on security and performance. The network is currently installed and will be open for public use in the coming weeks.

Recently, we've provided services to GeoNet, run by GNS. Our satellite connections enable them to undertake their critical work in extremely remote places. GNS requires services that are robust and reliable and can stand up to harsh conditions and extreme weather situations.

With the ability to be setup in under one hour, Satellite would have been extremely beneficial during the Kaikoura earthquake where there were reports the medical centre was packed with people as it was the only place with Wi-Fi.

It can also be used as a backup connection to the primary connection. As with our latest work with 4 Square, an iconic NZ brand. Satellite as a backup has been deployed at two of their sites as they are looking to roll out to further stores. It's being used for EFTPOS, monitoring of plant equipment, stock databases and general internet access.

We would also like to extend our thanks to RHĀNZ who do a fantastic job at promoting better rural healthcare and community. We're delighted to extend our support for yet another year. This aligns well with our goals to promote connectivity and remove isolation in the rural sector, including our zero-rate agreement with Farmstrong, a well-being toolkit for farmers.

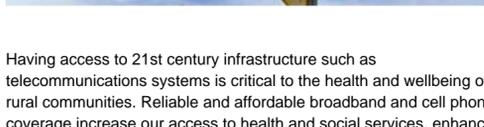
As always, no matter where you are, we've got you covered.



If you would like further information, please contact our Corporate Sales Manager Jason Sommerville at jason.sommerville@wnation.net.nz or +64 21 919 300.

Bill Smale, Managing Director, Wireless Nation

RURAL CONNECTIVITY SYMPOSIUM 2017



Having access to 21st century infrastructure such as telecommunications systems is critical to the health and wellbeing of rural communities. Reliable and affordable broadband and cell phone coverage increase our access to health and social services, enhance our lifestyles and enable profitable rural businesses. RHĀNZ was once again delighted to partner with TUANZ and NZ Young Farmers to host the third Rural Connectivity Symposium which was held in Wellington, 23 May 2017. The programme covered: various political viewpoints on rural connectivity; presentations from the three bidders in the mix for the RB12 funding; lessons learned from a major rural event – the Kaikoura earthquake; and how connectivity is helping improve rural health outcomes and agribusiness outcomes.

Over 140 people attended the Symposium comprising telecommunications providers, rural health providers, agribusiness professional and members of the rural community. Our event was opened by the Hon. Simon Bridges, Minister of Communications, who confirmed that rural NZ is at the heart of what the Government is trying to do in communications. He acknowledged that having high speed reliable broadband and mobile cell phone coverage ensures that rural NZ can get on with the "business of NZ". He restated the Government's broadband target by 2025 99 percent of New Zealanders will be able to download at 50 Megabits per second. The remaining one percent will get downloads of at least 10 Megabits per second. [Click here](#) to read the Minister's press release.

We like that the Government has an aspirational goal of 50 Mbps download speeds for the country but we say that this **target needs to be achieved by 2020 for rural NZ not 2025**. We are also calling on the Government to ensure that all rural medical facilities are connected to fibre-like speeds by 2019 and that we have multiple carrier mobile coverage on all State Highways by 2019.

Interestingly as part of the round table discussions we asked attendees – on a scale of 1-10, (where 1 is awful and 10 is brilliant) to rate their answers to the following questions:

- How well has your rural connectivity experience over the past 12 months matched the RB11 progress being claimed by Govt?
 - One person scored this a minus 9 with the average score being 4. Theme of the comments were: a sense of frustration between what Govt is claiming and the reality of the experience on the ground and a feeling of "over promising and under delivering."
- How would you describe your response to the RB12 policy directions made by Govt?
 - Average score here was 5.3. General comments were RB12 doesn't address future scale needs, the initiative is not ambitious enough and there was quite strong support for the Wireless ISPs expressed.

A summary report on the day's deliberations will be available in the next fortnight. Thanks to the organisational crew, the wonderful speakers and to everyone who attended this valuable event. Thanks too, to Skellerup who gave away a brand-new pair of quatro gumboots to one lucky punter!



What are the identified priorities for rural health? (And what's missing?) – Report back from the National Rural Health Conference, Cairns, Australia

Here's a useful report in the recent [National Rural Health Conference](#) in Cairns. The report is in three parts:

- A reflection by journalist Melissa Sweet on the strengths and limitations of the rural and remote health sector.
- An overview of key conference themes by David Butt, CEO of the National Rural Health Alliance.
- A Twitter-wrap of some #ruralhealthconf discussions not previously covered by Croakey.

Melissa Sweet makes an interesting comment about the passion with which rural people talk about health. While she says this is reflective of the belief that there is something special about rural communities she queries whether this sense of "exceptionalness" has its drawbacks. Twenty years on from the NRHA's establishment she asks whether it may be better concentrating on the commonalities of the issues affecting everyone's health (e.g. poverty, climate change, food security) rather than trying to distinguish rural health from the wider health sector and broader public debates. Our desire in NZ to view rural health within the overall concept of "One Health" i.e. the interactions of human health, animal health and the health of the environment in which we operate, will help keep our focus as wide as possible.

[Read more.](#)

Media Watch

Pay equity for midwives

Last week the New Zealand College of Midwives achieved a historic win for their members. Their Chief Executive, Karen Guillard, has made a [brief video](#) to explain the significance of the mediated agreement. [Click here](#) to read the College's press release.

The same night Seven Sharp featured a story from Te Anau about the plight of rural midwifery in NZ.

[Read more](#)

Small details save lives in rural emergencies

Emergency crews who arrive first at the scene of a tragedy have found that small details can be the difference between life and death when emergency strikes in a rural area. Rural first responders often needed more information than their urban counterparts, Kaponga fire chief Jason Hurley told about 50 people attending a farm safety day in the town on Thursday. (NZ Farmer)

[Read more](#)

Giant bowel and mock surgeries to jolt rural people about importance of GP visits at new Fieldays Health Hub

Farmers putting off a visit to the doctor will be reminded of the wisdom of regular visits by mock surgeries at a new hub at Fieldays at Waikato's Mystery Creek in June. A Fieldays' Health Hub has been introduced to educate visitors about many health issues affecting rural communities. (NZ Farmer).

[Read more](#)

A week of rural festivities



Last week was one of the busiest we've had so far. We started with the Rural Connectivity Symposium on the Tuesday, held RuralFest NZ on the Thursday and concluded with a meeting with the Health Minister and senior advisers from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry for Primary Industries on the Friday.

We've covered the Rural Connectivity Symposium as a separate story over the page. Suffice it to say it was another excellent event – the third such one we've held.

RuralFest NZ this year took a slightly different format than the first one. First, it was a single-day event rather than a two-day event. Second, rather than determining/refining the top priorities impacting rural health and wellbeing, we focussed on which of our Road Map actions would benefit the most from the collective backing of RHĀNZ in election year.

There were many actions from which to choose and in the end we decided on two actions to help set up long-term accountability for equitable health outcomes for rural people:

- The reinstatement of rural proofing across all government departments; and
- The fast tracking of a new definition of rurality as it pertains to health services in NZ.

These actions are relatively simple and inexpensive for the Government to implement. In the case of rural proofing, we reminded the Health Minister that Cabinet already approved this policy back in March 2010, so all that needs to be done is for Government officials to remind our policy makers that they need to consider the additional challenges rural people face accessing a whole range of services as a result of isolation and low population density. In the case of a new definition of rural we reminded the Health Minister that a proposed new definition - which has the backing of RHĀNZ members - is currently being considered by the Health Research Council. The Minister undertook to consider these requests and we will next catch up with him at the Health Hub as part of Fieldays at Mystery Creek in Hamilton mid-June.

We will be providing members with a summary report of the day's discussions and decisions within the next week. In the meantime, here are some useful resources:

- [Our press release](#) – Lives of rural NZ at risk, something needs to be done
- [Federated Farmers press release](#) - Rural people shouldn't be second class citizens for health services
- [Hear our chairperson](#), Dr Martin London, speak with Jesse Mulligan, National Radio, about RuralFest and our meeting with the Minister. It's a great summary of the whole of last week.

A huge thank you to the team at Federated Farmers: Kristy McGregor, Nick Hanson and Gavin Forrest for all their advocacy and policy expertise, and for helping us host and feed 45 people for the day.

Finally, our thanks to all our member representatives who took time out of their exceptionally busy diaries to be in Wellington for the day. It is heart-warming to see the trust and relationships being built across our alliance.

Cheers and best wishes,
Michelle

Subscribe

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

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](mailto:ce@rhaanz.org.nz)

New Member

We are delighted to welcome University of Otago as a member of the Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand and in particular, their named representative Dr Fiona Doolan-Noble.

This brings our membership to 47 organisations and we are very much looking forward to working with the team at the University of Otago to help deliver on our promise of making rural NZ healthier. Their expertise in research and their inter-professional approach to the education and training of our rural health professionals will be especially useful to our endeavours.

Media Watch

NZ to get 375 new medics by 2021

Nearly 400 new emergency medical jobs will be created over the next four years to relieve single officer crews, but the ambulance union has accused the government of taking shortcuts.

An extra \$59.2 million will be spent to double crew all road ambulances with 375 new recruits by 2021, Health Minister Jonathan Coleman announced on Sunday. (NZ City News)

[Read more](#)

St John welcomes Government funding boost

St John welcomes today's news that more than \$100 million will be included in this year's budget to provide double crewing of all emergency ambulance responses over the next four years.

The package also introduces a new sustainable funding model to increase St John's baseline funding and to meet growing demand for ambulance services while addressing historic shortfalls. "Ending single crewing is one of the most significant developments in our ambulance service history," says Chief Executive Peter Bradley. "We will be able to recruit 430 frontline jobs over four years and provide rural New Zealand with the same crewing levels as urban areas – a move that will save more lives and make it safer for our crews." (St John)

[Read more](#)

Here's the RHĀNZ release on the additional ambulance funding. We think this is a step in the right direction as emergency ambulance crews are under greater pressure in remote areas of New Zealand to provide more robust emergency response services.

[Read more](#)

Five signs your mental health is under strain

A leading mental health charity has warned people not to ignore the five less familiar symptoms of depression and anxiety.

As Mental Health Awareness Week (May 8-14) gets under way the government and health charities remain committed to increasing awareness of mental health and its symptoms.

[Read more](#)

Waikato med school gets West Coast backing

A region known for its battling spirit is backing Waikato's fight for a medical school. The Waikato bid aims to meet the healthcare needs of people outside the main centres – a focus which resonates with West Coast leaders. Grey District Mayor Tony Kokshoorn said improving healthcare services was the number one priority for many provincial regions.

[Read more](#)

Local Initiatives

Homecare Medical are expanding their 111 Clinical Hub into the Lakes and Tairāwhiti DHB areas.

[Read more](#)

More resources for rural mental health workers - Northland [Read more](#)