

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: Giving life to old dogs, NTA review, rural road safety improvements plus a selection of other 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



Retired Working Dogs 2018 Calendar is now available to order!! retiredworkingdogs.org.nz/news/calendar/

We thank our strategic partner and supporters.

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LEAD STORIES

NATIONAL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE SCHEME – SURVEY – IMPORTANT PLEASE COMPLETE

At long last, the Ministry of Health is reviewing the policy underpinning the National Travel Assistance Scheme. Marie Daly, our Programme Manager, will be representing us on the expert leadership group overseeing this work. This is a really important scheme for rural people and their families and we have been advocating for some time now for it to be reviewed to make sure it actually works for rural people.

As preparatory work for the review the Ministry has set up a survey on its website to gather information on people's experience of the scheme, and how it can be improved.

Anyone can complete the survey. There is one for people who have used the NTA or have been a support person - and one for professionals and organisations who work with the NTA.

We urge you to complete the survey and/or pass it on to anyone you know it would be valuable to hear from. The Ministry is particularly keen to hear from patients and their families.

Here is the link to the surveys and further detail about when they close.

Media Watch

Rumble strips, safety barriers coming for 30 targeted dangerous rural roads

Thirty dangerous rural roads around the country will get rumble strips, safety barriers and more safety signs as the Government steps in to contain a road toll that is the highest since 2010. (NZ Herald)

[Read more](#)

Significant tech changes for mobile bus service next year

The national surgical bus, possibly the only one of its type in the world, is looking for a significant change next year to keep up with demands and with high technology.

Mobile Health chief executive Mark Eager says they are assessing cutting-edge new technologies with portable and modular healthcare facilities to help district health boards cope when they are under pressure and to assist in smaller towns and rural areas. (Scoop)

[Read more](#)

Patient gifts free wi-fi to hospitals after chewing through \$3000 of data while sick

Getting online while in one regional hospital will now be free thanks to the founder of an internet service provider who knows what it's like to be a patient. PrimoWireless managing director Matthew Harrison has connected Taranaki Base and Hāwera Hospitals to wifi inspired by his own personal experience of chewing through data during recovery from illness. (Stuff)

[Read more](#)

Better Mental Health Services for Māori

The annual report for 2017 by the Office of the Director of Mental Health Services highlights real concerns regarding the increasing rates of restrictive practice (seclusion, restraint and the Mental Health Act) being used upon Māori by mental health services.

Some mental health professionals may view restrictive practice as the safest and most efficient intervention for an emotionally distressed person. But people under its influence describe it as restrictive and disempowering and that the treatment they receive is more closely aligned with the clinicians' needs than their own. (Scoop)

[Read more](#)

Rural disaster group formed

The impact of storms, floods and other natural disasters on Gisborne's rural community will now be better managed with the establishment of a rural co-ordination group.

Working alongside Tairāwhiti Civil Defence and Emergency Management (CDEM), the Gisborne and Wairoa Rural Co-ordination Group brings together key organisations usually involved when farming and rural communities get hit by significant adverse climatic events or natural disasters. (Gisborne Herald)

[Read more](#)

Lepto no longer men-only disease

With more women working in farming, more are contracting the disease leptospirosis, says the president of Rural Women NZ, Fiona Gower.

She told Dairy News, at a recent international conference on leptospirosis in Palmerston North, that the changing nature of the workforce on farms and in the rural sector generally means this disease is no longer a probably only for men.

Women are getting to work on farms in their own right or in a partnership, "feeding calves, milking cows, doing work with the stock - much more hands on these days". (Dairy News)

[Read more](#)

Calling on Councils to implement safer rural speed limits

National groups representing pedestrians, horse-riders, cyclists, and users of mobility devices are calling on Councils across the country to implement safer rural speed limits.

Transport planner Bevan Woodward says "New Zealand's rural roads are often highly dangerous and intimidating for people wanting to get about on foot, horse or bicycle. It need not be this way. We've looked overseas at what comparable countries have done to improve their rural road safety and it's clear that safer traffic speeds are a key part of the solution. (Scoop)

[Read more](#)

Regional health and education suffering amid small town professional shortages

Allegations that it's "nearly impossible" for some regional people to access essential health services has prompted calls for a rethink of government spending. The think tank Regional Australia Institute (RAI) has today released a score card assessing services in towns with fewer than 5,000 people.

Chief executive Jack Archer said, without improvements, regional people worried for the survival of their towns. "Often people are forced to leave these places and move somewhere else if they've got a really significant health or education need, which really undermines the ability of these towns to be successful."

The RAI's Small Towns Report Card gave small town access to psychologists, pre-school teachers and dentists an F-rating. (ABC News Rural)

[Read more](#)

Reviewers put 'their heads in the sand' ignoring funding in PRIME review

Despite a huge push from advocates for the review of PRIME, the national rural medical and emergency service, to include funding, it did not. Yet, the final review recommends the service's funding be the subject of a new review.

Peculiar? The team at *New Zealand Doctor* thinks so.

Rural nurse specialist and PRIME provider Kirsty Murrell-McMillan has an analogy for the situation.

"They were almost like ostriches putting their heads in the sand, they were wanting to be seen to be doing something," she says. But, it did not go as far as PRIME providers wanted. (NZ Doctor – subscriber only)

[Read more](#)

Giving new life to old dogs



For my last ezine column of 2017, I thought I'd share a story that inspired me this year. It's the story of the Retired Working Dogs Adoption Network, established by veterinary nurse, Natalie Smith, five years ago. So far she has found new homes for, and extended the lives of, over 200 dogs.

Some dogs have even been successfully re-homed in cities, where the owners report they love having an "old dog with a history and roots in rural NZ". The Network's Facebook page helps match owners of dogs looking to be re-homed with individuals who are looking for an older dog. Vet clinics around the country are coming onboard with pro-bono vet checks and dog food. You can read more about this clever initiative [here](#).

The new Retired Working Dogs 2018 Calendar is now available to order @ \$15 + p/p. All funds raised from the sale of the calendars go towards the medical and surgical costs of re-homing the dogs.

We all need a reason to get out of bed in the morning, and for me, it's exactly these types of initiatives that motivate and inspire me.

Wishing you all a wonderful, safe and happy festive season, and may you find time to reconnect with the people, animals and activities that give meaning to your life.

Cheers and best wishes
Michelle

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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

Media Watch

Lessons to be learnt from rural medical education in Northern Ontario

Inspired by a meeting with the dean of Northern Ontario Medical School, Kawhia GP John Burton and his wife Sue accepted an offer to visit the school for three months.

There they have found some useful insight into how to train health professionals for rural communities, insight that can help with decisions to be made in New Zealand. (NZ Doctor – subscriber only)

[Read more.](#)

Resources & Research

Position Paper recommends strategies to save lives and decrease rates of rural suicide

Rural Suicide appears to be getting worse rather than better. In 2016 the number of suicides per 100,000 people in rural and remote Australia was 50 per cent higher than in capital cities.

This has prompted the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (CRRMH) to develop a Position Paper on "Rural Suicide and its Prevention". This paper proposes five key focus areas for action to address the need to save rural lives now and to lower the number of deaths and rates of suicide in the future.

[Read more.](#)

Events Watch

National Rural Health Conference, Pullman Hotel, Auckland, 5-8 April 2018.



The dates are Thursday, April 5 to Sunday, April 8, with the two main conference and exhibition days being Friday, April 6 and Saturday, April 7.

[Click here to register now](#)

6th RRHS Symposium will explore current research in rural and remote health

The 6th Rural and Remote Health Scientific Symposium, Outback Infront, is being held in Canberra on 11-12 April 2018 and [registration is now open](#).

With its sights fixed on the future, the Symposium program will reflect the breadth and depth of current research in the rural and remote health sector today.

5th Annual Future Farms Conference | Conferenz

The 5th NZ Future Farms Conference, Palmerston North, 13-14 March 2018. The conference is aimed at preparing the next generation farmer for the future farm with insights into innovation and information in the agritech and agrifood sectors.

www.conferenz.co.nz

