

*Editorial***REPORT FROM AUSTRALIA**

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Editorial Board Member

I have just returned from the 5<sup>th</sup> International Rural and Remote Area Nurses Conference, which was organised through the ICN Rural and Remote Nurses Network. Held in Albury, Australia, from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> March, approximately 90 nurses attended from Japan, Thailand, Canada, USA, New Zealand, and Australia. There were four keynote speakers—three from Australia and Dr. Judith Kulig from Canada. The concurrent sessions saw 51 papers presented. In addition, two symposia were presented, both by delegates from the USA and both focusing on disaster management. Without the work of the Australian Rural Nurses and Midwives (ARNM) Association, the conference would not have been the success it was. We were also grateful for the work of the Conference Organising Committee in Australia and the Abstract Committee located in the USA.

The major theme arising from the conference was one of celebration of the work of rural nurses. From the student to the nurse practitioner, it was apparent that much was being done to ensure that rural nurses are prepared adequately for practice and, once in practice, will have the access they need to remain competent.

Following this conference, I attended (also in Albury) the 9<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference. There were approximately 1200 delegates, and of these about 250 were students (nurses, medicine, allied health). The conference theme was ‘Standing up for rural health: learning from the past, action for the future.’ At this conference, delegates were asked to generate recommendations. These recommendations will be taken to the Council of the National Rural Health Alliance, where decisions will then be made by the member bodies. If accepted, the recommendations will form the basis of the Alliance’s work for the next biennium.

There was a large focus on climate change and the drought. Images of rural people using their resilience to overcome adversity were abundant. Many health professionals’ papers focused on innovative programs that aimed to increase both the range and reach of available health services to all sectors of the rural community.

Despite this year being an election year (we are to elect an Australian Federal government in 2007), representatives of both parties (Liberal and Labour) outlined how they saw the health of rural Australians. Of interest was the policy of the Australian Labour Party to increase funds spent on health promotion and prevention. If this occurred, there would be a major policy and expenditure shift.

From a personal perspective, it was wonderful to catch up with old colleagues (and like me, most were older) and make new networks.