



NATIONAL RURAL  
HEALTH  
ALLIANCE INC.

## Media Notification

Wednesday 7 March 2007

### **Rural Health - It's All Happening in Albury at opening of 9<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference.**

A Governor with a rural and health background, a Health Minister, a Shadow Minister for Health Promotion, an expert on climate change and its impact on the health of rural Australians, will all speak at the formal opening of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference in Albury this afternoon( 7/3).

Following a Smoking Ceremony and Welcome to Country, Her Excellency Marie Bashir, a distinguished child psychiatrist who grew up in rural NSW, will open the conference, followed by Hon. Tony Abbott, Federal Health Minister and Kate Lundy, Shadow Minister for Health Promotion. The Minister will have spent a busy day in Albury, addressing the National Rural Health Network of more than 220 health students from 19 rural health clubs at universities around Australia, the Indigenous Health Forum, and a forum on Emergency Medicine in rural Australia. These are two of the several pre conference gatherings: others cover Indigenous Health, Breast Cancer in Indigenous Women, Innovations in rural and regional Paramedic roles, rural health service management, and rural pharmacists.

Professor Tony McMichael, Director of the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health will tell the 1000 plus delegates that irreversible climate changes already occurring will cause increases in death, illness and injury from heatwaves, storms, floods and bushfires. It will influence the range and seasonality of various infectious diseases eg outbreaks of the mosquito-borne viral disease, dengue, will tend to extend southwards, down both western and eastern coasts.

Changes in climate will also impair various ecological processes that underpin our health. Crop yields will be affected by changes in soil moisture, pollinating insect activity and temperature sensitive photosynthesis. Changes in local food production and costs will affect food choices, nutrition and health.

Mental health will also be affected in more vulnerable communities where collective resources and resilience are low, and child health will be jeopardised. There are also issues of freshwater and hygiene and, for remote indigenous communities, the additional loss of traditional plant and animal food species.

The issues raised by Professor McMichael will be taken up by other keynote speakers and papers during the congress. But there will also be time for art, music and celebration of rural success and resiliency. **Lots of stories to report.**

**Full program at <http://9thnrhc.ruralhealth.org.au/program/docs/program.htm>  
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