

DATE Tuesday 27 March 2007

## NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH AWARD FOR GSAHS STAFF

A paper showcasing the achievements of Greater Southern Area Health Service (GSAHS) in implementing a support program for families and babies was awarded the inaugural National Institute of Clinical Studies Evidence into Action prize at the recent 9<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference in Albury.

The paper was selected from the top 30 presented at the conference earlier this month (7-10 March) as the one best illustrating how to put research evidence into practice.

Building on several years work by different GSAHS staff members, the presentation highlights the achievements of staff across South East NSW in implementing the *Families First* program through partnerships across hospitals, community and mental health.

*Families First* is a NSW Government prevention and early intervention strategy to help parents give their children a good start in life.

"The program enables the early identification of extra support needs families may have during pregnancy and the first year of a baby's life to allow them to receive help earlier," Coordinator of the Families First program in GSAHS Jo Lawrence said.

Cooma was the pilot site for the program, where Fran Peterie is a member of the local multidisciplinary team that also includes Child and Family Nurses, a counsellor and representatives from Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health.

So far in GSAHS, teams have been established in Cooma, Goulburn, Yass, Young, Moruya, Bega and Queanbeyan.

"We are excited to be implementing the program in the next 12 months to other sites in GSAHS including Wagga Wagga, Albury, Cootamundra, Tumut, Griffith, Deniliquin, Narrandera and Leeton," Ms Lawrence said.

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**Media note: The Executive Director of the National Rural Health Alliance, Gordon Gregory, will present GSAHS with the award on behalf of the National Institute of Clinical Studies tomorrow (Wednesday 28 March) at 3pm at GSAHS Offices, 3rd Floor, Lowe Street, Queanbeyan.**

media release