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For further information about the UDRH or material contained in this Bulletin, please contact Caryl McQuestin, Media and Marketing Coordinator on 03 6324 4064 or email Caryl.McQuestin@utas.edu.au

From the Directors' Desk:

Directors' Duet An Overture and a Swansong



Associate Professor Ian Blue
& Professor Judi Walker

To mark the changes to academic rural health in Tasmania this 'From the Director's Desk' is a combined statement, delivered as Judi Walker settles into her expanded portfolio role as Professor of Rural Health (and Chief Executive of the North West Rural Clinical School) and Ian Blue takes up his new position as Director of the Tasmanian University Department of Rural Health (UDRH). The priorities of the Faculty of Health Science for the advancement of rural health in Tasmania are set out in the University's media release that follows this joint message.

We have been colleagues for over six years, and know the benefits of strong collaboration in the interests of better health training and services in regional areas such as rural Tasmania and Spencer Gulf in South Australia. We are keen to oversee the move to the next stage in the short histories of both the UDRH and the North West Rural Clinical School (NWRCS).

Judi is in the process of a gradual handover of UDRH activities so that she is freed up to focus on Faculty business and the development of the NWRCS. We will be collaborating on the UDRH's next Business Plan and Budget, both of which should be completed by the end of the year. We are confident that the transition will be as smooth as possible, and that the NWRCS

and UDRH will continue to work towards a collaborative model for rural health education, support and research with some shared infrastructure in administration, information technology and other areas as appropriate.

Ian has appreciated the warm welcome extended to him by UDRH staff and by those UDRH partners with whom he has met so far. He looks forward to providing guidance, encouragement and support so that his staff can maximise their potential in the cause of rural health, to further developing collaborative links with UDRH's key constituents and to maintaining UDRH's high credibility with key stakeholder and partner organizations.

Above all, he will seek to maintain and continue the excellent work this UDRH has achieved under Judi Walker's leadership, observing that progress is like a ship's wake - it slows when the wind or motor stops driving it. Ian will be working to ensure that the UDRH motors are running well and that sails are trimmed to catch the faintest breeze of opportunity or innovation.

Judi Walker

Professor Judi Walker

Ian Blue

Associate Professor Ian Blue

Media Release: New Rural Health Academic Appointed

The University of Tasmania has appointed a new senior academic in rural health.

Professor Allan Carmichael, Dean of the University's Faculty of Health Science (pictured facing page) welcomed the appointment of Associate Professor Ian Blue who took up the position of Director of the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) on 1 August 2003.

'This new appointment will strengthen the focus of rural health in the Faculty and the University and in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services will lead to innovative developments in health education and health service delivery,' Professor Carmichael said.

Associate Professor Blue is a nationally acknowledged academic in rural health education and has held senior posts in nursing education in the health and university sectors. He has moved from Whyalla in South Australia where, from 1997, he was the foundation academic manager of South Australia's university department of rural health. In 2002 Dr Blue was co-editor of the first textbook on rural health in Australia - *The New Rural Health*.

The University of Tasmania has positioned rural health firmly within the Faculty of Health Sciences by establishing the statewide University Department of Rural Health in 1997 and more recently the North West Rural Clinical School.

'I am pleased to have an opportunity to build on the foundation work by Professor Judi Walker and to focus on the main goal for our existence - the health and well being of Tasmanians living in rural areas,' Dr Blue said.

'The University Department of Rural Health will achieve this by focusing on four key areas - undergraduate health science students, health agencies and services, rural practitioners and Tasmanians living in rural areas are the main groups we will work with to achieve this goal,' he said.

Dr Blue acknowledged the importance of key partners in this endeavour. These include the Faculty's Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Human Life Sciences, the Menzies Centre, the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, which funds UDRH's activities.

'Universities are in the business of knowledge creation and knowledge dissemination. I am pleased to take up this appointment in the area of rural health, where challenges are continually presented in population health and workforce development across Australia,' he said.



Associate Professor Ian Blue (second, right), Phil Edmondson (representing the Division of General Practice Northern Tasmania [GP North]), left; Pip Leedham (Deputy Director, Primary Health, DHHS) and Senator Guy Barnett, representing Senator Kay Patterson, Minister for Health, right.



Dr Vern Powell shows medical students, from left, Edwina Moore, Celia Tildesley and Wun Yee Lau around the house and garden. Photo courtesy of The Mercury

Open Sesame to Doctors in the House at Smithton

For Tony Smart, Policy and Procedures Officer at the Circular Head Council, the bringing to fruition of the Smithton Rural Doctors' Residence project needed a woman's touch. Tony's wife, Doreen turned out to have just what the doctor ordered!

Invited guests at the Opening Ceremony, held at Smithton in early July, heard how Tony and Doreen have combined their considerable interior decoration and project management skills in transforming a brand new three bedroomed house into an attractive and welcoming home. The appreciation of the bodies that collaborated on the project - the Circular Head Council, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing,

Rural Workforce Support (Tasmanian General Practice Divisions) and the University Department of Rural Health, was expressed in a special presentation to Doreen.

Once inside, the results of this collaboration were evident. The house has been designed and furnished with multi-tenant usage in mind. The kitchen and dining room are located between two separate sitting rooms and sleeping areas with ensuites, providing residents with privacy and enabling differing activities, such as study and entertaining, to happen at the same time.

It is anticipated that the home will help attract health professionals to the Circular Head community. It will be available for locums, visiting GP registrars and medical students who are training at the Smithton Medical Centre. Smithton doctor of 15 years, Dr Vern Powell, put it like this to the media contingent.

'Imagine single people moving into an area - they need somewhere warm and comfortable that they can call home. We want them to get a good impression and if they feel good about where they are living then we are well on the way,' said Dr Powell.

Circular Head Mayor, Ross Hine, and Professor of Rural Health, Judi Walker, both emphasised the importance of cooperation between stakeholders to facilitate and support the project.

'Council entered into a partnership with the Australian Rural and Remote Workforce Agencies Group to provide and maintain the house to help attract registrars and locum doctors,' explained Cr Hine.

Councillor Hine also paid tribute to the persistence of Vern Powell in helping Council arrive at its decision to enter into the partnership.

In emphasising the importance of providing infrastructure to allow medical students to work in local communities, Professor Walker reinforced the need for a collaborative approach. 'We at the university can't do it on our own - we need to work with all the shareholders,' she said.

Opening the facility on behalf of the Commonwealth, Senator Richard Colbeck reflected on the long term objectives of the project.

'One long term recruitment strategy is to undertake the training of medical students in rural areas, with a view to encouraging their later return to work in that rural area as a fully trained medical practitioner. Making available this type of accommodation at a nominal cost makes it so much easier to attract medical personnel to rural areas for a defined duration,' he added.

Senator Colbeck said that the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing had provided \$168,000 to fund the new accommodation under the Accommodation Projects for Medical Students and Registrars in Remote Areas Program. The Smithton site is the third such facility, with similar residences already established at Ulverstone and St Helens.

For further information please contact Stuart Auckland, UDRH Senior Project Officer, on 03 6324 4035 or email Stuart.Auckland@utas.edu.au

Rural Health Teaching Sites Milestone:

Campbell Town makes ten!

The UDRH has developed a network of Rural Health Teaching Sites (RHTS) around Tasmania, with ten facilities located at Dover, Flinders Island, King Island, Queenstown, Rosebery, Scottsdale, Smithton, Oatlands, St Marys and Campbell Town.

The most recently established facilities are those at Oatlands and Campbell Town. Both were opened in May 2003. The culmination of these projects represents successful collaborations between the UDRH and the Southern and Northern Midlands Councils respectively.

Professor of Rural Health, Judi Walker, sees the RHTS network as fulfilling a number of important objectives.

'It enhances the existing health science course offerings, serving as an innovative way of giving medical, nursing, pharmacy and allied health students a genuine taste of practice in a rural setting, as well as providing them with a refurbished, well established and conveniently located residence for their rural placement.'

In addition to use by health science students, the sites are utilised by health professionals such as dentists and dental therapists, nurses, ambulance officers, GP locums and academic staff from the University of Tasmania. Their successful establishment has been greatly assisted by the 'local knowledge' and enthusiasm of steering committees of people in the local area.

Both opening ceremonies were attended by representatives of Commonwealth, State and municipal government, departments of health, local community groups and senior academics from the University of Tasmania. Southern Midlands Council Mayor, Colin Howlett, echoed the views of his opposite number at the Northern Midlands Council, Kim Polley.

'My council is delighted that the UDRH has decided to establish a much needed training facility in this location. The facility will enhance our existing excellent health services and encourage professional staff to provide an even higher standard of health care. Because new people will be living and working in the town, it will also provide a welcome boost to the economy of the district,' said Cr Howlett.



Professor of Rural Health, Judi Walker (left), with Mark Dunn, representing the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (second from left); Karen Schnitzerling, representing the Council of Remote Area Nurses of Australia Inc; Susan Powell, Manager, Rural Health Unit, DHHS (centre); Shelagh Lowe, representing Allied Health (second from right) and Professor Allan Carmichael, Faculty of Health Science, at the Campbell Town opening. Photo courtesy of The Examiner.

...and St Marys scores a century!

The St Marys RHTS, established in 1999, notched up a century in June 2003 when the 100th health science student undertook a clinical placement at the St Marys Community Hospital.

Besides accommodating undergraduate health science students from the University of Tasmania, the St Marys RHTS now provides a home for graduate clinical psychology interns training in the Break O'Day Municipality. The scheme was started in late May at a welcome function held at the St Marys Community Health Centre.

Professor of Rural Health, Judi Walker, is enthusiastic about this innovation.

'This is a first for the University's School of Psychology and the UDRH. These graduate students are supervised to provide a neuropsychological service in the area, at the same time as they are training in a more practical environment.'

Shelagh Lowe (pictured above), a physiotherapist from Fingal who provides services at St Marys, said, 'The Rural Health Teaching Site program certainly fits in with the decentralized nature of Tasmania's population distribution. It has been of huge benefit to rural communities'.

Shelagh is especially pleased that the accommodation is available for interstate allied health students, as well as students from the University of Tasmania, because it encourages them to consider working in rural Tasmania at the completion of their studies.

'Before an RHTS was established at St Marys, there were no students undergoing placements in that area. That the University has a presence in the town is a matter of great pride to its residents,' she added.

When asked how she felt about her time at St Marys, one student replied, 'I enjoyed my rural placement a whole lot more than I expected to... I consider this one of the more enjoyable parts of the course. I was not sure if I would work in a rural environment but now I will seriously consider it.'

...but Scottsdale tops the table!

Karla Peek, RHTS Coordinator, reports that the Scottsdale RHTS reached the most impressive total of all when its 150th health science student since 2000 commenced a clinical placement at the North Eastern Soldiers Memorial Hospital.

Besides providing rural placement opportunities for undergraduates, the Scottsdale RHTS has attracted interstate physiotherapy graduates. Asked how she felt about her time at Scottsdale, one replied, 'Not only did I gain valuable knowledge and practice some of my skills, but I was also able to learn about a rural community and the role of the physiotherapist in it.'

For further information about the Rural Health Teaching Site program, please contact Coordinator Karla Peek on 03 6324 4012 or email K.Peek@utas.edu.au

Ladies and Gentlemen

- *be upstanding!*

An innovative project *Stand Up Right - Stay Upright!* was launched in Launceston in late July at the Launceston Tram Shed, Inveresk. It seeks to establish best practice in falls and falls injury prevention for older people living in the community.

The two year project is a collaboration between the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH), the Division of General Practice Northern Tasmania Inc (GP North) and the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services. It is one of five demonstration projects across Australia funded under the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing National Falls Prevention for Older People Initiative.

Professor of Rural Health, Judi Walker, outlined the significance of the launch in these terms.

'It represented an ideal opportunity for those with an interest in the welfare of older people to gain an overview of national falls prevention initiatives and of progress to date in the Southern based component of the Tasmanian project. This work was seen in the context of what is planned for the North with the General Practice workforce, and state wide with other key stakeholders,' said Professor Walker.

Principal Project Officer at the UDRH, Maree Fish, has managed the project from its outset.

'We have worked with fallers aged over 65 who, after entering the emergency department at the Royal Hobart Hospital, are asked if they would be interested in taking part in the falls prevention strategy. If so, after discharge they are followed up by a project officer, a registered nurse from the emergency department, who keeps track of how they fare after their hospital visit,' explained Ms Fish.

Ultimately the project is about improving communication between service providers, hospital departments of emergency medicine and General Practitioners (GPs). The Northern phase will see the involvement of selected practices in which doctors will identify patients who are at risk of falling and implement support and preventative measures before these patients have a serious fall. It will be a collaborative exercise seeking to ensure that relevant information is passed to the patient and his/her GP.

'For example, GPs might be encouraged to access a range of services - physiotherapy, podiatry, occupational therapy, Home Medication Review (HMR) and so on,' said Ms Fish.

Speakers at the launch were Professor of Rural Health, Dr Judi Walker, Senator Guy Barnett, representing the Federal Minister for Health, Mr Phil Edmondson, Chief Executive

Officer, GP North and Ms Pip Leedham, Deputy Director, Primary Health, Department of Health and Human Services, representing Ms Mary Bent, Deputy Secretary, Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services. The launch was attended by representatives of the project partners, the Faculty of Health Science at the University of Tasmania, local government, health professional groups and organizations servicing the needs of older people living in the community.

The next phase of the project will be a 'road show' of targeted workshops, to be offered to community-based groups, interested individuals, health professionals and policy makers in Burnie, Launceston and Hobart and facilitated by injury prevention expert Jerry Moller.

For further information please contact Maree Fish, on 03 6324 4000 or email Maree.Fish@utas.edu.au.



The scene of the launch of the Stand Upright - Stay Upright! Project in Launceston

Maree Fish, Principal Project Officer

Managing Grief IN A POSITIVE WAY

"Good Grief" Workshops were presented in Glenorchy and Devonport during August as part of the *Whose Health is it Anyway?* Project.

Sister Colleen Jackson, a psychologist and educator, facilitated the workshops on the management and understanding of grief, covering these topics:

- *why people experience grief*
- *the different phases of grief*
- *the different reactions to grief*
- *helping others with grief.*

Glenorchy based Project Officer with the *Whose Health is it Anyway?* Project, Samantha Tiernan, explained: 'The workshops are suitable for any age and background. We encourage both men and women to attend.'

The need for such workshops is evidenced by the high level of attendance. There were 91 people at the workshop in Glenorchy, whilst around 50 attended in Devonport - a mixture of community workers, health professionals and people dealing with personal grief.

'Many people in the Glenorchy area, for instance, have grief issues due to the loss of health or loss of a loved one,' said Ms Tiernan. 'As much as anything we see the workshops as increasing community understanding of grief, and helping participants to be good grief companions to others.'

Speaking after the Devonport workshop, which was coordinated by Nicki Fletcher, Sister Jackson said that grieving people are often hurt and confused if others tiptoed around them and tried to avoid the subject. 'Most people who are grieving do want to talk about the person who's died. If those around them suddenly pretend they're not there, that's really difficult,' she added.

Colleen Jackson is based in Devonport, where she provides grief counselling through the Sisters of Charity Outreach Service.

The *Whose Health is it Anyway?* Project is one of ten demonstration projects that have been funded across Australia under the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing Sharing Health Care Initiative. The projects are evaluating differing approaches to self management of chronic disease. The Tasmanian demonstration

project grew out of a partnership between Arthritis Tasmania, Glenview Homes Glenorchy, the Department of Health and Human Services and the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH).

For further information on the *'Whose Health is it Anyway?'* Project, please contact Samantha Tiernan on 6277 8804 or email Samantha.Tiernan@utas.edu.au or Nicki Fletcher on 6421 7795 or email Nicki.Fletcher@utas.edu.au

Samantha Tiernan at the Glenorchy workshop



Attending the Grief Workshop in Devonport are (from left) John Yeats, of Port Sorell, project coordinator Nicki Fletcher, Dawn Parker, of Sheffield and psychologist Sister Colleen Jackson. Photo courtesy of Stuart Wilson, The Advocate

Staff Profile:

Bridging the Gap for Indigenous Students



Sharon Dennis, left, works with student Simone Elphinstone as part of the Bridging Program for Indigenous Students.

Sharon Dennis sparkles with enthusiasm when she speaks about her task as Indigenous Higher Education and Health Science Officer at the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH), Tasmania.

'My role is to set up and help to deliver a bridging program for prospective Aboriginal university students. The program is designed to provide people with certain skills, together with an understanding of the University's requirements of its students,' she explained.

Sharon's commitment to the 'mission' of encouraging Indigenous Australians to study to become health professionals was shaped by her experiences before joining the UDRH.

'I started my Nursing career as an Enrolled Nurse. The University offered the Bachelor of Nursing for Enrolled Nurses in my region so I decided to take the opportunity and to upgrade. I had a little boy in my first year and purchased a General Store in my second year of study. I also worked with ATSIC on a very controversial issue relating to Aboriginal people and identification in Tasmania. It is the combination of all these experiences that influenced me to apply for this position,' said Sharon.

The confidence that Sharon had developed in herself and in her own identification as an Aboriginal brought her to an awareness that she wanted to be a positive influence for Indigenous education in the wider community. She recalls situations that gave her a special empathy with other Indigenous people who are confronted with barriers to education and personal growth.

'The main barriers I have encountered in my study and professional practice have been silence and exclusion. Whenever my identity as an Aboriginal was raised there would be a silence marked by an uncomfortable atmosphere, only broken when the other person would initiate a quick change of topic. Often it took a long time for that person to speak to me again and most of the time they would not even realise they were doing it.'

Sharon's professional experience is as multifaceted as her background as a student, mother and shopkeeper. She started her training as an Enrolled Nurse at seventeen after moving

away from home. Her work at the North West Regional Hospital involved clinical stints at such remote areas in Tasmania as Rosebery and Queenstown. Sharon also volunteered for the local Ambulance Service, worked as an Enrolled Nurse in theatre and then on the wards as a Registered Nurse. Her experience was further broadened by a secondment as nursing representative for a health union, where she experienced two Tasmania wide strikes in one year.

However, it is the times of shared joy and sadness that Sharon prefers to remember most vividly from her career as a clinician.

'I had so many intensely rewarding times. I have worked with some great people and I have looked after some great people. I have cried with laughter and sadness and shared some of the most intimate moments with people I often do not see again. I have experienced birth and death and seen many people go through life changing experiences.'

Sharon emphasises the importance of bolstering confidence in Aboriginal people looking to undertake a higher education health science course.

'The major objectives of the bridging program are to build up the confidence of Aboriginal people wishing to study at University, to demonstrate that they really do have the ability to go further in education and to remove the fear of failure factor. The program provides an opportunity for prospective students to learn how to study, to show how they will cope and what preparation is needed to go on to further studies,' she explained.

Sharon's appointment is a shared role, based at the North West Centre of the University of Tasmania in Burnie, between Riawunna, the Centre for Aboriginal Education and UDRH, Tasmania. Both were wholehearted in their support for the establishment of this position. Initially Sharon faced challenges.

'There were many issues in developing the role. The first was with me finding my feet in a new environment. Then I had to identify what the requirements were in making this course work and become appealing to Indigenous people. There was a lot of networking and collaboration in seeking support from other faculties and organizations. Then came the recruitment issues - how to market this course, and how to build up the confidence within the Aboriginal community that this is a goal that is attainable for them,' said Sharon.

She is encouraged by the fact that there are currently seven Indigenous students enrolled in the bridging program. Most of these students are from remote areas. Based on her own experiences she acknowledges that the course must be tailored to suit the learning styles of Aboriginal learners.

'I find I am a visual learner, and have discovered that this is a commonality with other Aboriginal people. It would be great if there was a more visual aspect to University education and if this education could nurture the skills of Aboriginal students with a more flexible delivery of health care training. There are skills and knowledge that Aboriginal people have that are catered for better outside the structured hospital environment. If we continue to teach Aboriginal people only what is expected of them as, say, a mainstream registered nurse then the culture will not be practised and, like many other aspects of Aboriginal culture, will be lost forever. Ultimately, I see this process as providing Aboriginal people with the choice to have health care offered by Aboriginal nurses and other health professionals,' Sharon concluded.

For further information about the program please contact Sharon Dennis on (03) 6430 4506 or email Sharon.Dennis@utas.edu.au

From the Saltbush of South Australia to the Mists of Scottsdale

Driving rain and fog greeted three third year nursing students from the University of South Australia's Whyalla campus as they landed in Launceston to begin a clinical placement at the North Eastern Soldiers Memorial Hospital in Scottsdale. Eva Stengewis, Debra Papoulis and Dana Afford were not deterred at all. They were delighted by the lush greenery and misty hills of North Eastern Tasmania that came as a welcome contrast to the sand and saltbush of the Spencer Gulf in South Australia.

The rain and Tasmanian greenness were not the only surprises that awaited the students as they commenced their four-week rural placement at the North Eastern Soldiers Memorial Hospital (NESMH). Rural nursing practice was also a revelation.

'Before we arrived we thought that rural practice would mean spending a lot of time doing routine tasks. But we have done a huge variety of patient care and have enjoyed the opportunity to share ideas with the staff at Scottsdale,' said Debra Papoulis.

Asked about the highlights of their time at the NESM Hospital, the answers flowed thick and fast.

'One experience, where an injured man had to be carried over sand dunes at Bridport by four wheel drive utility to our waiting ambulance, made my adrenalin flow. It really brought home the value of teamwork and versatility in a rural medical emergency', said Dana Afford, who also expressed her admiration for the role played by registered nurses coordinating the emergency response.

Eva appreciated the feeling of autonomy that the nurses at the hospital engendered in the students. All three praised the patient-focussed nursing care. 'It was great to be able to do everything for our patients, including their medications, while we were supervised by the registered nurses.' While all of the students found giving their own verbal 'handover' reports daunting, they were enthusiastic about how it contributed to their knowledge about their patients. They praised Julie Millwood, the

Clinical Nurse Manager who acted as their clinical facilitator at Scottsdale.

Julie was delighted with the students' progress. 'We really enjoy having students at this hospital because everybody learns. It makes us constantly re-evaluate our practices in the light of modern practice and what is done elsewhere.'

Her receptive attitude, which is echoed by the other nurses, has clearly made a positive impression on the three South Australian students.

'I feel that I have blossomed professionally in Scottsdale as I have been encouraged to develop my nursing practice here,' said Debra Papoulis. 'The other staff have been eager to share their knowledge and make us feel part of the team,' she added.

The students have been overwhelmed by the generosity of the Scottsdale community. Cakes and social invitations have flowed in. One staff member even provided the three with a car for weekend sightseeing. The accommodation provided through the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) Tasmania, was also welcomed by the students.

The clinical experience was organized by Dr Rosalind Bull (Senior Lecturer, Rural Education Development) through the UDRH at the University of Tasmania in collaboration with Dr Ian Blue (Program Manager-Teaching & Learning) at the Spencer Gulf Rural Health School, Joy Penman (Lecturer) at the University of South Australia, and Maureen Nichols (Director of Nursing) NESM Hospital, Scottsdale.

Eight nursing students from Tasmania will undertake reciprocal placements at Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Booleroo Centre in the Spencer Gulf, South Australia later this year. These placements are supported through collaborative arrangements with the Tasmanian School of Nursing, the UDRH, Tasmania and the Spencer Gulf Rural Health School.

For further information please contact Dr Rosalind Bull, Senior Lecturer, UDRH, on 03 6324 4016 or email her at Rosalind.Bull@utas.edu.au

Recalling the excitement of ambulance duty, Nursing students from left, Eva Stengewis, Dana Afford and Debra Papoulis (right) with NESMH, Clinical Nurse Manager, Julie Millwood (second from right).

Tele-check Suicide Prevention Program for West Coast

The Tele-Check Suicide Prevention Program is a two year program designed to improve the capacity of a community to respond to suicide risk by identifying those in their community who may be at a higher risk of suicide.

It will involve the recruitment and training of *Tele-Check* staff and development of referral and feedback protocols.

Trained staff will be responsible for keeping in contact with clients by telephone to check on their general health condition. In this way there will be a stronger social contact network, a regular check on treatment plans, interagency linking for crisis response and an improvement of the community's capacity to respond beyond the clinical setting.

'We hope that *Tele-Check* will lead to a better understanding of suicide behaviour in rural and remote Tasmania, and that health professionals and others will be better equipped to deal with people at risk,' the Professor of Rural Health, Judi Walker said.

Developmental work for the project, funded through the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, began in April 2003. The UDRH will be responsible for working in partnership with West Coast health service providers to develop material and provide training for *Tele-Check* staff. To ensure sustainability of the service, *Tele-Check* will be embedded into the strategic plans for West Coast rural health services.

UDRH Project Officer, Martin Harris introduced *Tele-Check* to a combined health services provider committee meeting at Zeehan in June. It is envisaged that the program will give rise to collaborative partnerships between health service providers and contributing professionals, and will complement services provided by Lifeline and Red Cross Outreach.

'The point of differentiation is that the proposed *Tele-Check* service is proactive in its approach as the staff contact those individuals referred to them, rather than responding to a consumer initiated call,' Mr Harris said.

For further information, please contact Professor Judi Walker on 03 6431 3155 or Project Officer, Martin Harris on 03 6324 4029 or email Martin.Harris@utas.edu.au





Pharmacy students Penny Hickman, of Deloraine and Jeremy Harris, of Burnie, at Agfest.

Health Science Students are our *Best Ambassadors*

How do you help children make 400 pots of hand cream for Mothers Day? Have a pharmacy stand within the spotty rural health tent at Agfest 2003, Tasmania's biggest agricultural field day event!

Pharmacy students, Duncan McKenzie, Lauren French, Jeremy Harris, Penny Hickman and Leigh Harrison, supported by the Pharmacist Academic at the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH), Helen Howarth, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and Pharmacy Guild of Australia (Tasmanian Branches) and the School of Pharmacy within the Faculty of Health Science, felt smooth and smelled even better after they helped hundreds of children mix, bottle and label pots of hand cream over the three days of Agfest.

Other University of Tasmania health science students were also busy. Under the supervision of trained professionals, nursing and medical students plastered arms, assisted in measuring blood pressure and monitoring blood sugar, and talked about university life and course choices.

Rurally based health science students were again well in evidence when Rosalie Maynard, UDRH Health Careers Program Coordinator, worked with North West Rural Clinical School (NWRCS) students at Future Moves, a student recruitment and career awareness promotion targeting the North West region.

Future Moves saw the three major providers of tertiary education and training in Tasmania - the University of Tasmania, the Australian Maritime College and TAFE Tasmania - collaborating to stage a week of future study and career information and seminars along the North West coast. Visits were made to Don College, St Brendan-Shaw College, Marist Regional College, Hellyer College and the Leighlands Christian School. Professional development sessions were provided for high school teachers, and community-based events were held in Devonport and Burnie.

Jenny Robinson, Natasha Laidler and Phill Pullinger, three University of Tasmania medical students who are undertaking clinical programs at the NWRCS, assisted Rosalie by talking about their experiences to interested secondary school students. These students are fitting role models for secondary school students, and aptly illustrate the University's adage that 'our students are our best ambassadors'.

In May four nursing students, Danielle Bowden, Wendy Flanagan, Ellen Anderson and Leah Furley, attended the Hellyer College Health Day on behalf of the Senior Lecturer in Nursing at the NWRCS, Barbara Newman. All received certificates of appreciation from organisers.

Health science students also figured prominently at the annual health careers residential camp, held in July at Camp Clayton, Ulverstone. This activity is covered in an article in this newsletter appearing on page 8.



Nursing students, Danielle Bowden, of Smithton (left) and Wendy Flanagan, of Burnie, at the Hellyer College Health Day.

UNIQUE COLLABORATION BEARS FRUIT FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

In May six allied health professionals were presented with the Professional Certificate in Allied Health Research at a formal ceremony at Parliament House, Hobart.

The presentation was attended by the six completing students and their guests, and by representatives of the collaborating institutions - the School of Allied Health Research of the School of Physiotherapy at the University of South Australia and the Faculty of Health Science at the University of Tasmania.

The students were presented with their certificates by Professor Judi Walker, Faculty of Health Science, University of Tasmania, and Associate Professor Karen Grima, Director, Centre for Allied Health Research, School of Physiotherapy, University of South Australia. The event was sponsored by the Hon Sue Smith, MLC.

The Professional Certificate in Allied Health Research is a skills and competency based flexible learning program offered by the School of Physiotherapy at the University of South Australia in collaboration with the Tasmanian UDRH. Allied Health is a term which covers health science professions (other than medicine, nursing and pharmacy), such as physiotherapy, social work, podiatry, psychology, speech pathology and occupational therapy.

Key aspects of the Professional Certificate in Allied Health Research program include:

- * *the use of proven research distance education learning material*
- * *academic support phased over the program*
- * *work based mentor support*
- * *applied learning*
- * *flexible modes of delivery.*

The program is open to any allied health professional with a relevant undergraduate degree or appropriate professional qualifications and experience. It has as a feature the writing and presentation of a 10,000 word thesis. This work is presented to lecturers, health professionals and fellow students at a formal Colloquium, normally held at the Clinical School of the University of Tasmania in Hobart.

For further course related information please contact the Senior Project Officer, Allied Health, Alison Miles, on 6324 4062, or email Alison.Miles@utas.edu.au

Health Careers in Action at Camp Clayton

Year 10 rural and remote students with an interest in health careers gained first-hand information on the range of options and the realities of being a rural health practitioner at the annual residential workshop at Camp Clayton, Ulverstone, on the North West Coast. The workshop attracted students from as far afield as Rosebery, Smithton, St Marys and Geeveston.

The special strength of the workshop lay in the involvement of a wide selection of people with knowledge of different aspects of the health area - health professionals, current University of Tasmania health science students, recent graduates, health science lecturers and student recruitment staff. They provided insights into the university experience as well as advising about course requirements and the transition from school to tertiary study.

Health Careers Program Coordinator with the UDRH, Rosalie Maynard, was enthusiastic about the response to the program.

'The standard of applications was excellent, indicating that a lot of students are interested in exploring future opportunities in the area of health. The event also received tremendous support from local health professionals who were keen to be

involved, seeing this as a practical opportunity to encourage young people to become rural health practitioners.'



Year 5 Medical Student Martin Newman, demonstrates surgical techniques to secondary students, using pigs' trotters

Geeveston High School student, Juliet Allen, took part thanks to the enthusiasm of her science teacher.

'I was already interested in a career in health, but I didn't know anyone I could talk to about it,' Juliet said. 'I came here leaning towards Pharmacy, and I still am, but now I've seen the different areas I can go into.'

The professions represented included medical practice, nursing, physiotherapy, social work, dietetics, radiography, speech pathology, occupational therapy, dentistry, pharmacy and the ambulance service.

Though the workshop had an undeniably serious purpose, participants had plenty of fun. Utilising the excellent recreational facilities of Camp Clayton, there was rock wall climbing, a quiz night, karaoke and a mini Olympics.

A feature of the residential camp was the inclusion of practical activities relating to various health professions. Participants plastered arms, engaged in medical role play and sewed up pigs' trotters. Occupational therapists Alison Gardiner and Alisha Sugden demonstrated wheelchair mobility at their session and Rural Pharmacy lecturer Helen Howarth involved students in mixing creams.

Senior Lecturer in General Practice, Dr David Saner, provided insights into the realities of medical practice in a rural area, and local dentist, Dr David Abbott, spoke about dentistry as a career. In the case of physiotherapy, pharmacy, and medicine, practitioners were accompanied by students. Some professions, such as nursing and



Secondary school students with Rosalie Maynard, Camp Coordinator; (fifth from right, front row) and Jason Fello, Executive Officer, UDRH (front, right).

speech pathology, were represented by teams offering a variety of activities relevant to their work. A panel, involving University of Tasmania student recruitment staff and students from a range of health science courses, offered information related to course selection and talked about the highlights and challenges of university life.

Activity was not limited to Camp Clayton. A day was spent in Burnie, where students toured the North West Regional Hospital and had hands-on experience with a variety of lifelike manikins and simulators. At the nearby North West Centre of the University of Tasmania they were shown how technology has changed teaching and learning.

Professor of Rural Health, Judi Walker, said, 'The health careers workshop is part of a multi-faceted approach to increasing the flow of young people from rural areas into health careers. I was thrilled and enormously encouraged at the vitality and enthusiasm of the carefully selected group who attended the camp. I am confident that, if they do ultimately take up health careers in a rural setting, they will prove valuable assets to the rural health workforce and to the fabric of their communities.'

For more information contact Rosalie Maynard, Health Careers Program Coordinator, UDRH, on 0419 580 819 or email Rosalie.Maynard@utas.edu.au

Staff Milestones & Achievements

UDRH Director, Ian Blue, has affirmed his commitment to professional development for UDRH staff. A significant number of academic and general staff are undertaking courses of study which will ultimately enhance their contribution to the work of the University, and to the health and social capital of the community. In addition, staff are encouraged to serve on external committees that relate to their area of activity at UDRH.

In August Rosalind Bull, Senior Lecturer, Rural Education Development, graduated with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Adelaide. Dr Bull's thesis explored the contribution that nurses make to the work of the operating room.

Maree Fish, Principal Project Officer for the *Stand Up Right - Stay Upright!* Project, completed her Master of Education (Counselling and Development) at the University of Tasmania in December 2002. Maree is well known in sporting circles as goal keeper in Australia's gold medal winning Seoul Olympic hockey team and a member of the Tasmanian Sporting Hall of Fame. She has an ongoing professional interest in the process by which retiring elite athletes adjust to 'life after sport', the subject of her honours thesis some years ago.

Sue Whetton, Lecturer, Online Educational Development, has signed a contract with Oxford University Press to write a health informatics textbook for the Australian and New Zealand market. The book will consist of between ten and twelve chapters, with experts (several from within the UDRH) contributing individual chapters. Sue commented that the contract is very timely, as

interest in health informatics grows fast, and the last Australian health informatics text was published in 1996. The book is expected to be available in time for the 2004 academic year. Sue graduated from the Master of Information Systems program at the University of Tasmania in December 2002.

Shandell Elmer, Junior Research Fellow, Primary Health Care Research Education and Development (PDHRED), was awarded a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in sociology, with First Class Honours. Her thesis was entitled 'Experiences of Community Participation in Health'.

Kim Boyer, Senior Research Fellow, Rural Health Policy and Service Planning, has been appointed to the National Health and Medical Research Council Research Committee, where she chairs its Strategic Research, Health Services Research and Palliative Care Research working groups.