

access to services has a negative effect on health status (NFF, 1998). A shortage of allied health services was regularly raised as an issue of concern in the Bush Talks (1999) consultations and submissions.

In Wauchope NSW there is a two and a half year wait for a dental check-up, although the dentist can fit in emergencies. In Port Macquarie NSW there is no dental service in town for health care card holders and the one resident dentist was reportedly only available for emergencies (HEROC, 1999 p.7).

EDUCATION, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

Research shows a lower proportion of adults in rural, regional and remote areas have completed Year 12 and rurally based seventeen-year olds are less likely to be in school and school leavers living outside cities are less likely to go to university (Gregory, 2005).

Fewer rural children are entering tertiary education: 25% in 1989; 16% in 1997. Tertiary education is almost exclusively available only in the capital cities (HEROC, 1999 p.12).

There are many factors contributing to this including 'family, previous educational experience, inadequate access to secondary schools, the high turnover in teachers, lack of subject choices, poor skills in the use of technology, poor facilities, poor future employment prospects, and disincentives created by government assistance schemes' (NFF, 1997 p.31).

School of the air and distance education is common among families living in remote areas. This form of education was seen as a poor substitute for more interactive secondary schooling. However, it was generally agreed to be adequate for primary students, although it can be an 'unremunerated burden on the supervising parent(s)' (HREOC 1999 p.10).

Students with special needs were much less likely to be catered for in rural and remote areas as there were not enough special schools in rural areas which resulted in very little choice even if one is available. There was also recognition that rural areas provided very little language support for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (HREOC, 1999 p.12).

Around 60% of employed women aged 15–64 years in rural areas had no post-school qualification, compared to 52.5% of employed women in major urban areas. Over 17% of employed women had a university degree, in comparison to fewer than 10% of employed men. The overall trend of lower education levels in rural areas is likely to be at least partially indicative of the greater access to post-school education in large metropolitan centres (ABS, 2001).

Women in major urban areas are more likely to have higher educational qualifications, have the highest labour force participation rate, are least likely to be self-employed, and are less likely to be working part-time.

According to the ABS 2001 census, women residing in rural and regional Australia may face additional employment challenges to those faced by women in urban areas. Job prospects for rural women may not be as frequent or varied as a result of smaller and less diverse local economies.

The proportion of self-employed women in rural areas (25.3%) in 2001 was more than double the proportion in major urban centres (10.2%). Much of this can be attributed to women running and operating the family farm either as individuals or in partnership. In rural areas, 42.9% of self-employed women were engaged in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector. A further 12.7% were engaged in the retail sector. In small towns, 9.9% of self-employed women were engaged in accommodation, cafes and restaurants (ABS, 2006).

SERVICES

Research shows that with reduced access to social services, people living in communities of between 5000 and 10 000 face considerable disadvantage, while those living in communities of below 5000 face extreme disadvantages. Micro-economic reform, inappropriate urban service and funding models, and inadequate staffing and resources continues to have a huge impact on rural communities.

As governments seek to use their resources more efficiently they cut costs by closing services such as schools and hospitals which are deemed unviable as they do not have enough students or clients to justify their existence in monetary terms. This becomes a vicious cycle as rural populations are declining, which results in the closure of services, which in turn make it difficult to attract new population (Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, Valuing Rural Communities, 1998 p 15).

Crisis accommodation is also limited in rural Australia and virtually non-existent in remote areas (HEROC, 1999 p.18).

With the decline of rail services, many people in rural communities have to rely on private buses or cars. This creates additional limitations and restrictions impacting on exploring job opportunities and accessing a wide variety of services (HEROC, 1999).

Lack of transport limits the access young people have to health services, to education and to employment, all of which have an adverse effect on their health. For people under the age of 18, the lack of public transport means that they are reliant on others for transport. (HREOC, 1999 p.17).

DISCRIMINATION

Bush Talks (1999) also reported high levels of either discrimination or levels of disadvantage experienced among young people, gay and lesbian people, people with disabilities, Aboriginal people, and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Their access to specific services and support were particularly impaired the further away from urban centres they lived (HEROC, 1999 p.26). ■

Female factories & forgotten Australians

By Bonney Djuric

Bonney Djuric and Christina Green were keynote speakers at the 2007 NSW Women's Gathering held at Hay. Both women are former inmates of the Parramatta Girls Home and Christina is also a former inmate of the Hay Girls Institution.

Together these women spoke of their experiences in the welfare system and shared their hopes for the establishment of 'A Woman's Place – A National Women's Heritage Centre' on the institutional site of the former Female Factory and Parramatta Girls' Home.

Most people aren't aware that possibly more than 500,000 Australians experienced care in an orphanage, some or other form of out-of-home care during the last century.

In March 2007 a group of women returned to Hay to revisit one of the institutions where they were incarcerated as young people. The Hay Girls' Institution was an annex of the Parramatta Girls Home located in the North Parramatta

Government Heritage Site. It dates back to two months after the arrival of the first fleet in 1788.

Parramatta was the site of the first successful Government farm where the first harvest of wine was produced, the first crops of maize were grown and wool from the early merino sheep was woven together by the convict women of the Female Factory and exported as Australia's first manufactured goods. It was also the site of the first women's refuge and penitentiary, the Parramatta Female Factory; the first purpose built orphanage for Roman Catholic Children and the Parramatta Girls' Industrial and Training Home.

In exploring her own history as a former inmate of the Parramatta Girls Home, Bonney uncovered a hidden history of Parramatta that is seldom told. It is a history which she believes should be re-interpreted in light of contemporary experiences of forgotten Australians, in particular the symbolic daughters of the

Parramatta Girls' Home. These women and children were largely victims of circumstance in a system whose harshness was an inheritance of the site's convict origins.

In 2006 Bonney and Christina founded the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct Association in an effort to promote and conserve this earliest major site of female convict settlement and to seek its memorialisation as Australia's first National Women's Heritage Centre.

Christine and Bonney are spearheading a campaign to generate interest and support for this ambitious project. Anyone interested in being involved in this project can obtain more information from www.pffp.org.au or email info@parragirls.org.au or call Bonney on 0437 221 149. ■



Christina Green and Bonney Djuric

Overcoming obstacles

This article was written from an interview with Nicole Kullen conducted by Phil Bevan, NSW Department of Primary Industries

I'm excited to see what the future will bring to my horses and myself. They're one of the main things that help keep me going.

Equestrian Nicole Kullen has not been deterred by the many obstacles she has faced as she pursues her passion for horses. The most recent challenge has been equine influenza (EI).

Nicole, from Rock Forest near Bathurst, has been on horseback since she was 18 months old and has participated in a wide variety of equestrian sports, including endurance riding, trail riding, showing and cross-country jumping.

In August 1996 she contracted Meningococcal Meningitis Septicaemia and lost both her lower legs. She has limited arm movement and strength, with no function in both hands and wrists. She has several other health complications as a result of the disease.

'Since getting ill, I've slowly managed to be around my horses again, but it's been a strenuous task because of my disabilities and health problems. Training and competing can be mentally, physically and financially draining,' she said.

Nicole hopes to qualify for the 2008 Paralympic Games which will be held in September, straight after the Olympics in Beijing.

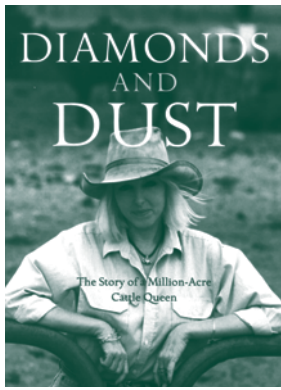
At the start of the EI outbreak Nicole, along with her mother Margaret and dressage horse Nikshar Nomination, were stranded at the Sydney International Equestrian Centre at Horsley Park. After two weeks in lockdown they were given a permit to move her horse back to their trainer's property in the Hunter Valley.

'It's been a difficult period - preparing for the selection trials amidst an equine influenza outbreak. Due to EI, the selectors, judges and the national coach are going around Australia to see each rider and horse combination in a competition scenario at their chosen location within their zone. This was done as all the riders were unable to compete at the one venue,' she said.

Country Web readers can read more about Nicole's story on her website at: www.nicolekullen.com

More information about Equine Influenza is available on the NSW DPI website at: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/equine-influenza ■

book reviews



Diamonds and dust

By Sheryl McCorry

Sheryl McCorry grew up in the outback carrying crocodiles to school for show and tell. When she was 18 her family moved to Broome, and it was the first time she'd ever used a telephone or seen a television.

A year later, only hours after being railroaded into marriage by a fast-talking Yank, Sheryl locked eyes with Bob McCorry, a drover and buffalo shooter. When her marriage ended after only a few months, they began a love affair that would last a lifetime and take them to the Kimberley's harshest frontiers.

Sheryl became the only woman in a team of stockmen. She soon learned how to run rogue bulls and to outsmart the neighbours in the toughest game of all – mustering cattle. The playing field was a million acres of unfenced, unmarked boundaries.

Sheryl went on to become the first woman in the Kimberley to run two million-acre cattle stations, but her life was not without its share of tragedy. Her story is an epic saga of life in one of the toughest and most beautiful terrains in Australia – a story of hardship, drought, joy and triumph.

Pan Macmillan Australia

ISBN 978-1-4050-3775-4

RRP: \$32.95



Re-inventing the bush

By Marg Carroll

Review by Margaret Francis,
Booral

Take yourself on an emotional journey around rural Australia—a journey that every family member will identify with. Be inspired and come away with renewed hope as you immerse yourself in the lives of nineteen young Australians.

I've been a part of this amazing process. One of the stories is about my son Heath. Our emotional input was exhausting and I can only imagine the strength and tenacity Marg needed to create this book which includes her daughter Rebecca's story. Rebecca's story is her family's story and it tells of strength and resilience which overcame a personal life threatening battle to survive and flourish.

These young people are our future. Their unique talents and endeavours have already provided lasting benefits to our communities. Marg is ensuring that rural youth will continue to shine by setting up a Foundation with proceeds from the sale of the book.

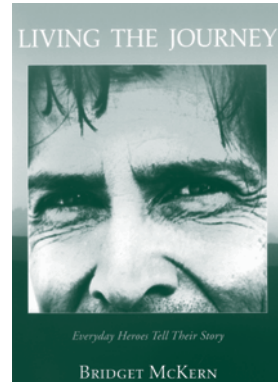
This book needs to be read. It gives a personal insight into the hardships and plight of rural Australians. It will give younger readers hope knowing

that they are not alone and can succeed against the odds. Older people will take heart knowing that there are amazing young Australians who, with encouragement and support, can make good things happen.

Allen & Unwin

ISBN 978-0-7333-2141-2

RRP: \$32.95



Living the journey

By Bridget McKern

A collection of fourteen real life stories of men and women who have faced their individual challenges with courage and determination.

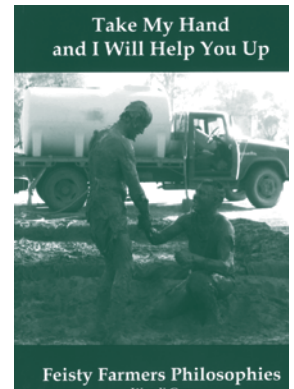
The stories illustrate the extraordinary courage and resilience of human beings.

The book tells of people coping daily with struggles as diverse as single parenthood, loss of faith, autism, post-natal depression, separation from birth mother and more.

A & A Book Publishing

ISBN 978-0-977569-66-3

RRP: \$29.95



Take My Hand and I Will Help You Up – Feisty Farmers Philosophies

By Wendi Guy

Understanding the challenges faced by rural Australians in light of the intense years of drought, Wendi's concern for her fellow farmers has prompted her to research, study and share her thoughts on coping with stress, anxiety and depression.

Believing we are all born with the necessary qualities to be resilient Wendi looks at how we can cope with adversity and reminds us of the qualities within us all.

This is an empowering, inspirational book which provides the reader with thought provoking strategies interspersed with beautiful poetry (*one of Wendi's poems is on p.35*).

Wendi Guy

Phone: 0429 404 391

RRP: \$22.00

We have several copies of each of these books to give away. To be in the running, write and tell us in 25 words or less which book you would like and why.

Entries must be received by 30 May 2008.

Send your entry to:

The Country Web, Locked Bag 21, Orange NSW 2800.

See page 2 for competition terms and conditions.

FREE
BOOK
GIVE-AWAYS

Widening the circle in Condobolin

By Anna Caskey, Project Coordinator

The Lachlan Shire Council is managing a grant from the National Crime Prevention Authority, aimed at reducing domestic violence, increasing referrals to support agencies and increasing attendance at preschool, playgroup and primary school.

The project, targeted at young parents, is called 'Widening the Circle'. The project includes a variety of workshops, concerts and events planned over three years. In 2007, a total of 57 workshops were conducted in Condobolin and Lake Cargelligo and many more are planned for 2008.

The workshops for adults include classes on cooking (*No Fuss Fun Food*), swimming, literacy, recording family history, metal sculpture, legal rights and cultural resilience. Other activities include kindy gym, a Silly Billies concert and a fathers' weekend away with their sons.

The metal sculpture classes have become very popular.

The classes are held at the Condobolin High School. Participants have created a diverse range of sculpture out of the scrap metal they have found at car wreckers, on their farms, in their yards and at the local rubbish tip. Under the guidance and instruction of Len Wallace from the Grenfell Men's Shed, the students have learnt how to weld and make their sculptures structurally sound (there were a couple that fell over at the beginning!). They've also been taught about the safety aspects of using stick and mig welders, hence the very attractive blue overalls which provide protection from flash burn which is similar to sunburn.

The current metal sculpture course started in February and will culminate in an exhibition of the works at the Western Plains Regional Development building. It is hoped that students will enter their work in the Waste to Art Competition (see the box below).

All activities are free of charge and there is a wide range of people from the community attending the program, from teenagers and young mothers through to aunts, fathers and grandparents.

For more information contact the Project Coordinator Anna Caskey.

Phone: 02 6895 4281

Email:

Anna.Caskey@lachlan.nsw.gov.au



Metal sculpture class participant with her creation

THE SIMS METAL 'WASTE TO ART' EXHIBITION AND COMPETITION 2008

WASTE TO ART is a community art exhibition and competition to showcase creative works made from reused and recyclable waste materials. It is open to residents in the NetWaste region in Condobolin. The Competition includes Primary School, Community and Open classes in the following categories:

- 2 Dimensional – Poster/painting/collage/drawing
- 3 Dimensional – Sculpture/installation/video/soundscape
- Craftworks – furniture/functional objects made from recycled materials

The most inspirational works will be transported to the Regional Competition hosted by Parkes Shire Council in May 2008. Entry forms are available from Lachlan Shire Council, Western Plains Regional Development and the Condobolin Library.

For more information, contact the Project Coordinator Anna Caskey. Phone: 02 6895 4281

Email: Anna.Caskey@lachlan.nsw.gov.au

GRANTS & FUNDING

SEEDS OF RENEWAL

provides funding to small, rural not-for-profit organisations to aid the growth of their community. This program aims to be simple, with a straightforward application and approval process. Grants of up to \$10 000 are available for communities with a population of up to 15 000 people for projects that have a charitable purpose.

Priority will be given to applications from Exceptional Circumstances declared regions.

Applications close 14 May.

More information

Website: www.frrr.org.au/programsDetail.asp??ProgramID=8

Freecall: 1800 170 020

Email: info@frrr.org.au

SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE DONATION PROGRAM

DonorTec offers discount software and hardware deals to Australian charities and not-for-profit organisations. Key donors to the program are Microsoft and Cisco Systems.

More information about the program and eligibility criteria are available at: www.donortec.com.au

Women's Shed:

Urangeline Peace Hall Woodworkers

By Elizabeth Madden, Yanco

Since the 1990s drought, a woodworking group has met each week to make new furniture or return worn out, broken or discarded pieces of furniture to their former glory.

The Urangeline Peace Hall Woodworkers began when the Wagga Wagga TAFE approached rural women in the Urangeline area about running a book keeping course.

Warmly welcoming the offer of training, the women decided a woodwork or furniture restoration course would be ideal and appreciated the twelve months of childcare that came with the program.

The women also found that their teacher, Patricia, understood them and her informal approach to learning really worked.

The training has evolved since its 'droughty' beginnings in 1992.

For the first five years TAFE staff attended the weekly woodwork day. Around ten women continue to meet every Monday for a day of woodwork, although now without TAFE involvement. Usually there are a few stragglers who report having to 'draft a few sheep' or 'chase cows' before making a dash to the Urangeline Hall.

There is much sharing of skills, advice and workload and new tools have been purchased by the group through fund raising activities.

Some group members have learned skills outside the woodwork group, such as upholstering, and have returned to the group to pass on their knowledge.

THE PROJECTS

Over the years the group has resurrected tables, dressers, chairs, meat safes, radiograms and ice chests, as well as building blanket boxes from recycled pine.



Woodworkers Carmel Carroll, Ruth Farrall, Judith Hamson, Marlene McLellan, Myra Jenkins, Margaret Madden, Lisa Rylston and Jenny Turner

Most members work on furniture for their family and friends. Long time member Carmel Carroll said, 'I haven't done a thing for myself but it's so therapeutic and great to see pieces improving as we clean and scrub and sand and polish'.

Judy Hamson explains that very few of the restored items are ever sold as there is too much blood, sweat and tears involved in the process!

The men of the district are able to see the works in progress when attending fire brigade meetings in the Hall. One was overheard commenting, 'I didn't think that pile of sticks could turn into that!'

A BIT OF ADVENTURE

Being part of the woodwork group has its challenges. Bird netting and a shovel are strategically placed near the outside loo during summer to combat over friendly snakes.

One member reports, 'These women lead me astray and you wouldn't believe what we've encountered (bees, possums, rats) as we rescue discarded but often historic items from rubbish tips or reclaim timber from run-down sheds or abandoned farm houses.'

It would appear that some husbands look forward to the woodworking days as much as their wives, often asking why they haven't left for woodwork yet and reminding them that it is Monday!

OTHER BENEFITS

The woodworking group also provides the women with an opportunity to display their culinary prowess with morning tea and lunch being highlights of the day.

These skills, along with their sewing and horticultural expertise, have enabled the group to raise \$7000 over the last six years for cancer research through 'The Biggest Morning Tea' and stalls held at the Hall.

ALL ARE WELCOME

Over the years numerous women from the district have 'dipped in and out' the group to improve their skills or 'do up' an important piece of furniture.

When asked why they take part in the group, the women said they like the people, they enjoy doing up furniture and they have very special friendships.

Anyone is welcome to attend. Kathy Fealy joked that you have to turn up every week to make sure no one talks about you!

WHERE IT HAPPENS

Located in the southern Riverina, the Urangeline Hall is roughly 100 km from the cities of Wagga Wagga (to the north east) and Albury (to the south).

The hall sits quietly in a grassed paddock on the Lockhart (population 1000) to Rand (population 38) Roads. It is across from the Glenara tennis courts and the long abandoned, but clearly recognisable, Australian Rules football field.

Built and lined with local cypress pine by people of the district in 1919, the Urangeline Peace Hall was the first peace hall opened in Australia.

It is an ideal location for the group with an attached kitchen and ample space. ■

Managing separation and divorce

Separation and divorce is a very traumatic experience. People who are separating face many big changes in their life such as:

- moving house
- spending more or less time with their children
- adjusting to a new personal financial situation and
- experiencing different emotions like anger, guilt, loneliness and uncertainty.

As separation entails making changes to so many various aspects of their lives, for many individuals the journey to a new life, home and relationship is very difficult and find themselves at a crossroad, even if both parties are agreeable about the need for the separation and how they should address it.

The following free resources may assist people to deal with their immediate situation and life beyond separation.



Photo: ©iStockphoto.com/Olga Solovei

Different for women and men

Relationships Australia has produced separate booklets for women and men on managing separation and divorce. The booklets have been written to help separating women and men make sense of their feelings, help guide them through some constructive choices and raise their awareness of some services that may help.

■ **Women and Separation: Managing New Horizons** addresses the separation, looking after your self, mothers and children, relating to your former partner, making formal arrangements and the future. It also contains information on research about women and separation, where to go for further assistance and suggested reading.

■ **Men and Separation: Changes in Tough Times** explores similar topics however from a man or father's perspective.

There is also a copy of the booklet *Men and Separation for migrant men* available in English and Arabic.

The booklets are free to download from: www.relationships.com.au/advice/managing-separation or can be ordered by calling 1300 364 277.

Family Relationships Advice Line 1800050321

Monday – Friday 8 am to 8 pm, Saturdays 10 am to 4 pm

A free service to assist people from families affected by relationship and separation issues. Other information is available on the website at: www.familyrelationships.gov.au

Getting started: Information about child support for separated parents

A booklet that explains the rights, responsibilities and options in arranging child support for separated parents.

The booklet is free to download from: www.csa.gov.au under 'Publications' or can be ordered by calling 13 12 72.

What about me?

This series, consisting of five booklets, contains tips and hints, practical ideas, checklists and worksheets for women and men who are adjusting to separation.

The titles are:

- *What about me? Taking care of yourself*
- *Me, my kids and my Ex: Forming a workable relationship for the benefit of your children*
- *Me and my money: Practical money ideas*

■ *Me and my kids: Parenting from a distance*

■ *Me and my changing family: Moving forward*

There is also an interactive CD ROM, *Dealing with separation: Experiences tips and tools*.

Copies of the booklets can be downloaded from www.csa.gov.au under 'Publications' or ordered by calling 13 12 72.

money matters ■ take charge

Money is often a factor in relationship breakdown and can put a lot of pressure on everyone involved.

Regardless of whether money was the cause of the problems, after separation, a person's financial situation changes. Many people have debts from the relationship and must decide who will pay for them. Women's can be especially vulnerable to financial stress at separation.

It is important to take charge of your finances generally, and especially after separation.

USEFUL RESOURCES

■ *Getting Advice: a practical guide to personal financial advice.* This booklet is designed to inform you and increase your confidence with financial advice. It contains tips about deciding whether you need personal advice, finding the right adviser, working effectively with your adviser and getting advice that suits you.

■ *Your money.* This booklet addresses the questions: can you get more from your money, make smarter decisions and avoid expensive mistakes? It is designed to help you use your money more wisely, save for what you really want and manage your loans, insurance, superannuation and retirement savings.

■ *Dealing with debt: your rights and responsibilities.* This booklet is specifically designed for people with debts whether they be from loans, credit cards or outstanding bills. It provides information about financial counselling, debt collectors, disputing debts and related legal processes.

The above three booklets are free to download from the Australian Securities and Investments Commission website at: www.fido.gov.au or can be ordered by calling 1300 300 630.

■ *Understanding money: how to make it work for you.* This handbook is designed to help you better understand where your money goes and assist you with budgeting and saving. It also covers debt, investing and seeking financial advice.

This booklet is free to download from the Department of the Treasury website at: www.understandingmoney.gov.au or can be ordered by calling 1800 236 235.

Keys to living together

Keys to Living Together is an informative three part DVD and workbook series that aims to build stronger and healthier relationships. The series looks at developing tools to help cope with changing family situations such as beginning a new family, taking the next step and committing to someone you love and transitions from single families to step families. The series looks at setting expectations and family priorities, budgeting, dealing with conflict, developing an agreed parenting approach and dealing with crisis to ease the transition period.

The titles in the series are:

- *Then We Were Three*
- *Taking the First Step*
- *Instant Families*

The workbooks can be downloaded from: www.facsia.gov.au/keys. To order a free copy of the full kit, phone 1800 050 009 or email keys@facsia.gov.au

Getting through the tough times

There are a number of different things you can do to get through difficult times.

■ **Get into a new routine – put aside enough time to manage new household and child care arrangements.**

■ **Get support – identify friends, family and support groups.**

■ **Stay healthy – eat healthy meals, exercise regularly, get a good night's sleep and avoid drugs and alcohol. This will help both physical fitness and mental health.**

■ **Learn to manage stress – simple things, like keeping a diary of feelings and practising breathing and muscle-relaxation techniques can help.**

■ **Take time out – make an effort to participate in enjoyable activities.**

From *Separated Parents and Tough Times*, a pamphlet produced by the Australian Government Child Support Agency and Beyond Blue. Available at: www.csa.gov.au under 'Publications'.

health ■ influenza vaccine for over 65s

Adapted from 'Influenza vaccine for people aged 65 and over - common questions & answers for the public'
Department of Health and Ageing © Commonwealth of Australia (www.health.gov.au), reproduced by permission

Influenza, also called 'the flu', is caused by the influenza virus. Most healthy adults will recover from influenza within a few days. However some people, especially those aged 65 years and older and people with certain chronic medical conditions, can suffer complications. This can include pneumonia requiring hospitalisation and even death.

WHEN SHOULD I BE VACCINATED?

The best time is in autumn, before the influenza outbreaks in winter.

DO I NEED TO RECEIVE A FLU VACCINE EVERY YEAR?

Yes. The influenza virus changes all the time and the vaccine is changed to match the current circulating virus. The vaccine will provide about 70% protection against infection for about one year.

IS THE VACCINE FREE?

Yes. If you are 65 years or older, the vaccine will be free. You may, however, need to pay for the consultation with your doctor or health care provider.

WHERE CAN I RECEIVE MY VACCINATION?

Your doctor will be able to give you the vaccine or you may be able to visit your local health centre.

IS THE VACCINE SAFE?

Yes. The most frequent side effect of vaccination is soreness at the vaccination site which may last up to two days.

'Flu-like' symptoms such as fever, fatigue and muscle soreness can also occur. These symptoms only mimic the flu. The vaccine cannot cause influenza.

Immediate allergic reactions (such as hives, asthma, breathlessness or collapsing) rarely occur. These reactions are probably the result of an allergy to egg protein, which may be present in the vaccine.

Guillain-Barre Syndrome has rarely been associated with influenza vaccine and represents a substantially lower risk than severe influenza complications.

CAN THE INFLUENZA VACCINE CAUSE THE FLU?

No. The vaccine contains killed virus that cannot cause influenza. 'Flu-like' symptoms may occur as a result of the vaccine but these symptoms are not influenza.

WHO SHOULD NOT BE VACCINATED?

Persons who have an allergy to eggs should not be given influenza vaccine. Influenza vaccine should also not be given to persons who have a fever associated with another illness. Your doctor will be able to advise if you should not receive the vaccine.

CAN I STILL CATCH THE FLU AFTER BEING VACCINATED?

It will take about two weeks to develop immunity after your vaccination. During this time, you should avoid contact with people who may have influenza. However, even if you do catch the flu, the likelihood of developing complications from the infection will be reduced. ■

More information

National infoline: 1800671 811

THE CLOTHESLINE

Billowing sheets
Children swinging
Bird's perch
Pegs go missing

Blue for blue clothes
Red for red
Around she spins
Watch your head

Squeal and moan
Windy day
Heavy loaded
Lines fray

Odd socks
Partner anywhere?
Frosty morning
Frozen underwear

Cobwebs
Spider in zipper
Young Labrador
Clothes shredder

Rain drops
Removal frenzy
No time to fold
Clothesline empty

LINDA RENDELL, BIBBENLUKE

Study on cancer and infertility

Anyone faced with a chronic illness, such as cancer, understands the distress the diagnosis, treatment and side effects can bring. Not only do such illnesses directly affect the individual involved, but they can also affect the partner of the patient and the relationship itself.

Through her own personal experiences and observations gained when her husband was diagnosed with testicular cancer in 2002, researcher Jodie Fleming became aware

of the differences in the ways men and women cope with cancer.

Her research at the University of Newcastle is examining how individuals living with cancer and their partners cope with a cancer diagnosis and possible resultant infertility.

The research project is seeking couples over the age of 18 where one member has received a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime. The researchers are hoping to attract couples

who have had fertility issues, as well as couples who have not. Couples who met after the cancer experience are also sought.

Ms Fleming said the research would help to educate health professionals to deliver tailored support information for the patient as well as their partner.

'What we want from our research is to learn what information and support they need, when they need it, and the way they wish to receive it.'

The couples will be asked to individually complete three brief questionnaires by mail that will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. All information is completely anonymous and stored securely. The study will be recruiting until mid 2008.

If you would like any further information or are interested in participating, contact Jodie Fleming.
Phone: 0412 083 899
Email: Jodie.Fleming@newcastle.edu.au

YWCA NSW & Wellbeing in Rural Communities

By Lisa Page, Health & Wellbeing Manager, YWCA NSW

YWCA NSW is a community service organisation, led by women, providing over 45 different programs and services to women and men of all ages across NSW. With over 128 years of experience to draw from, the YWCA NSW has made a difference to the lives of almost two million people through our services, which include :

- Family Services
- Children's Services
- Youth Services
- Mentoring Services
- Employment and Training
- Health and Wellbeing

YWCA NSW works in partnership with the government and corporate sectors to fund the delivery of its programs and services as well as generating income from the operation of two budget hotels and a conference centre in Sydney. We have six regional offices, with a particular focus in the Shoalhaven and Northern Rivers areas and we deliver programs in a further 25 rural towns.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

The Health & Wellbeing division of YWCA NSW covers a range of health issues with a focus on prevention, healthy lifestyle and wellbeing. Our other projects include the YWCA Encore program, Aboriginal Women's Wellbeing, General Cancer Wellbeing and work on HIV AIDS. Our approach is to explore ways to encourage people to participate and enjoy improving their own health and wellbeing.

WELLBEING PROGRAMS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

With funding from the Australian Government, the YWCA NSW will coordinate the delivery of a range of free wellbeing and healthy lifestyle programs in four regions around Dubbo, Orange, Goulburn and Tamworth. Each region has a Program Coordinator who is responsible for arranging the delivery of programs in their area. Their contact details are provided below.

The specific form and content of these programs will be based on the needs and ideas of the local communities themselves. Possible options could include:

- Exercise courses (e.g. yoga, tai chi) delivered in smaller towns where they are not currently available
- Information sessions on issues of concern for people (e.g. how to improve my bad back, how to help my mates)
- Wellness workshops. Days that bring a range of healthy lifestyle information and speakers together.

We are not limited to these ideas so please contact us if you have other suggestions.

PROJECT CONTACTS

Dubbo: Christine Lord. Phone: 02 68472249
Mobile: 0429481321 Email: chrisl@ywcansw.com.au

Goulburn: Skye Dixon. Phone: 02 48224795
Mobile: 0427535578 Email: skyed@ywcansw.com.au

Orange: Sandra Chrystall. Phone: 02 63930001
Mobile: 0409000733 Email: sandrac@ywcansw.com.au

Tamworth: Genevieve Marchiori. Phone: 02 67852914
Mobile: 0438148044 Email: genevievem@ywcansw.com.au

THE KALEIDOSCOPE

A kaleidoscope of colours are falling from the sky,
Hues of green, pinks and purples, all to meet my eye,
The purple of the Patterson, covers one great hill
The yellow of the rape from another hill does spill,
Full headed greenest wheat continues for some miles
As grey and pink parrots go skimming through the skies,
The yellow crested cocky, the black and white magpie,
Cheeky little blue wrens finish the picture in my eye.
The wide and open country so full of browns and greens
Rolls out like a carpet, the carpet of my dreams,
No fences hold the edges in, the sky is open wide,
My heart is so full of it, I feel I want to cry.
How long no one heard our cries or plans,
But gentle falling rain soon took up the day,
And changed the wide and rolling landscape, grass to lay,
A kaleidoscope of colours are covering the land,
My eyes and heart are full of it,
It is part of the maker's grand plan.

JUNE BIRKETT, CHRYSAL CREEK

POETRY
GIVE-AWAY

POETRY BOOK GIVE-AWAY

Country Web reader Jennifer Duddle has kindly donated copies of her poetry book *Snowflake on my sleeve: a journey of grief and joy*.

To be in the running to win a copy simply write and tell us in 25 words or less what you like about poetry.

Entries close: 30 May 2008.

See page 2 for competition terms and conditions.

Copies may be also purchased for \$16 by emailing jennifer@broadband.net.au

Finding the right board for you

Courtesy of CPA Australia (www.cpaaustralia.com.au)

It's flattering to be asked to become a director, but don't get tempted for the wrong reasons.

Here are 10 questions to ask before joining a board.

1. CAN YOU PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT THE BUSINESS?

Assuming that you are being asked onto a board for your financial/accounting skills, you may not necessarily be familiar with the industry and/or company you are getting involved with, so take some time to find out what they do. Visit their website and search the Internet (including articles in the press) for background information about the company. If the company is listed, visit the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) for the history of its share price and company announcements.

Listening to how the Chair explains the business will not only give you a picture of the sort of environment you are joining, but also gives you an idea of the competency and knowledge of the people you will be working with and depending on.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What does the business do?
- How does it make money?
- What is its sustainable competitive advantage?
- What is the biggest challenge facing the company?
- What is its biggest threat?
- What is the biggest opportunity?
- Could you please describe the culture?

2. WHAT IS THE COMPANY'S CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION?

You need to know up front whether you are facing a potential solvency problem or if there are any accounting secrets. Request a copy of the last two financial reports and review them for their comprehensiveness, any qualification, or unusual or aggressive accounting techniques.

Knowing the accounting standards and policies used should give you a clearer picture of the tone of the accounting practices of the business (e.g. aggressive) when reviewing its financial reports.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What is the current and forecast cash flow, borrowings and interest cover?
- Can I speak with the Chair of the Audit Committee?
- Who is the Auditor, and are there any current disputes with them?
- What accounting standards and policies have been used by the business?

3. WHAT LEGAL AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENTS DOES THE COMPANY OPERATE IN?

Many companies have regular litigation in the normal course of business but you need to know if there are any major or unusual actions pending.

Based on the nature of the business you should consider what the major risks for the organisation are and the extent to which the board is effectively monitoring those risks.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Are there any legal actions or major disputes pending against the company, including action by any regulator?
- How does the board oversee risk management?
- What is the legal form of the business?

4. WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF THE INFORMATION WHICH I WILL BE PROVIDED WITH?

As a director you will be dependent on the quality of both management and the information they provide. Review the materials provided to directors for comprehensiveness, completeness, clarity, timeliness and thorough analysis of any proposals. Look carefully for evidence of any worrying signs of 'hope' (do all the forecasts follow a straight-line up or do they seem overly optimistic?) or 'denial' (budgets or plans not being met and no evidence of corrective action being taken). Request the last 12 months' board minutes and any committee minutes; the last set of board papers; the last two years' annual reports; the board charter and any committee charters; and the company's code of ethics and/or conduct.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What protocols are in place for directors having access to management outside of board meetings?

5. CAN YOU PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT THE BOARD?

You should meet face-to-face with at least the Chair, CEO and two or three other

directors in order to ensure you share common attitudes and approaches to the company, its vision and risk. If possible, conduct a reference check through your own network or do an Internet search on each individual. Make sure the board charter clearly outlines the role of the board and its governance practices.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Who is the Chair?
- Who are the other directors?
- How long have they been on the board?
- Who is the CEO? Can I meet him or her?
- What are the relationships between the directors, and between the directors and the CEO, like?

6. WHY DOES THE BOARD NEED A NEW DIRECTOR AND WHAT ARE THEY LOOKING FOR?

A good board has a well-thought out succession plan and clear expectations of the type of contribution they are seeking in a new director. Make sure their expectations of you (and in particular, the expertise you bring and time you can commit) matches what you believe you can contribute. Ensure any departing director isn't leaving for reasons of substance or relationships.

The letter of appointment should clearly set out details of your responsibilities, term, any committee roles or other roles you will be expected to take on, plus your remuneration.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What contribution am I expected to make?

Continued on page 32