



Media Release

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Workforce support and telehealth: hope for the future?

Paul Lucas, Queensland's Deputy Premier and Health Minister, acknowledged the leadership of rural areas in health workforce development. He said that rural areas are showcasing effective new ways of delivering health services and working with broad scopes of practice.

The Deputy Premier said that the Queensland Government's rate of increased funding over a number of years for rural health could not be sustained. "We therefore need to continue to develop better ways of providing services," he said.

The Deputy Premier welcomed last week's Federal Budget announcements on maternity services and on giving access to the MBS and PBS for nurse practitioners and selected midwives.

He emphasised the fact that without good health people struggle to succeed in the areas of education, housing and employment. Improvements in these key social areas will in turn result in improved health.

"Australian people have the second longest life expectancy on earth – but an Aboriginal male lives 18.5 years less than anyone else. This is a disgrace," he said. He welcomed the progress made in our universities towards training a larger Indigenous health workforce.

He also spoke about the exciting prospects for rural and remote areas from telehealth and called on the Federal Government to put health first in its rollout of high speed broadband.

Another keynote speaker was Rosemary Bryant, Chief Nurse and Midwifery Officer, who reported on the Budget commitments to maternity services, especially for rural areas. She said a national maternity services plan will be in place by November 2010.

"While maternal and infant mortality rates have improved, the benefits have not been shared equally across Australia," Ms Bryant said. One of the results of the plan will be greater choice for rural women in maternity services and birthing centres.

The Conference will continue until Wednesday 20 May.

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