

# Riverina Division of General Practice



BUILDING BLOCKS  
TO BETTER HEALTH:

PRIMARY HEALTH  
NURSES IN SMALL  
COMMUNITIES





# Primary Health Care Nurse - The History...

- Long standing awareness of the lack of health services in small rural and remote communities within the Riverina Division
- Solid evidence of 'second rate' health
- Opportunity to apply for funds for 3 years through the Commonwealth's Regional Health Services Program



## The History cont...

- Communities with populations under 1000 targeted
- Absence of inpatient beds
- 9 communities selected
- Service mapping undertaken
- Widespread consultation with community members, local government, GPs, and other health service providers



# The History cont...

- 3 common issues were identified:
  - A need for increased GP services
  - A need for flexible nursing hours
  - A need for increased availability of general counselling services
  
- A plan was developed and...



## The History cont...

- A deal was done!
- 12 communities would receive services under the Divisions Primary Health Care Nurse Program
- Ungarie, Tallimba, Weethalle, Barmedman, The Rock, Talbingo, Adelong, Tarcutta, Ariah Park, Ardlethan, Ganmain and Stockinbingal



# The Structure...

- Three Primary Health Care Nurses
- Clusters of 4 communities
- 1 day in each community and 1 day for planning, reporting, education, networking...
- Provided with a car, laptop, printer, internet access and mobile phone
- Program Manager based at Division office





# The Role...

- 3 tiered:
  - Provide practice nurse type support to GPs in outreach clinics to help keep their practices viable and rewarding
  - Harness the energy and imagination of community groups to support and promote healthy lifestyles
  - Develop partnerships and collaborate with other health service providers without duplicating existing services

# Hat no. 1 - 'Practice Nurse'...



- **Clinical care:**
- Wound management, immunisation, venipuncture, assist with minor procedures, BSLs, ECG, urinalysis, height, weight, R/O sutures, blood pressure and heart rate monitoring
- **Clinical organisation:**
- Management of recall systems, infection control, referrals, pathology and pharmaceutical coordination



## 'Practice Nurse' cont...

- **Integration**

- Liaise with other health professionals, coordinate patient services on behalf of GP

- **Home Visits:**

- Follow up home visits in collaboration with the patient's GP
- Available to isolated patients or where lack of transport/distance is a problem
- Blood pressure monitoring, assessment, antenatal visits

# 'Practice Nurse' cont...

## ■ Monthly Health Topic

- GP and PHCN identify a topic
- PHCN develops a simple resource kit
- One-on-one education of patients at Outreach Clinic
  - Healthy Hearts
  - Bowel Cancer Awareness and screening
  - Sun Smart Protection
  - Cervical Screening
  - Breast Cancer Awareness and screening
  - Arthritis Awareness
  - Asthma Information

# Hat No.s 2 & 3- Community Development / Partnerships...



Walk Safely to School



Men's Health Night



Diabetes seminar

# Community Development / Partnerships...



Baby Massage



Water exercises



Men's Health in the Workplace

# Community Development / Partnerships...



CDSM



Tai Chi

- Chronic Disease Self Management Course
- Tai Chi for Arthritis
- Women's Health
- Immunisation
- Promote visiting services such as asthma education, women's health clinics, podiatry, dental health nurse
- More Allied Health Services - Diabetes Educator
- Other Health Promotion activities - shop front displays; articles in local newsletters



# Palliative Care Support...

- Specific funding
- Pool of casually employed R/Ns received training
- Complements existing palliative care services
- GP referral
- Patients have the choice to die at home if they wish



# The Enablers...

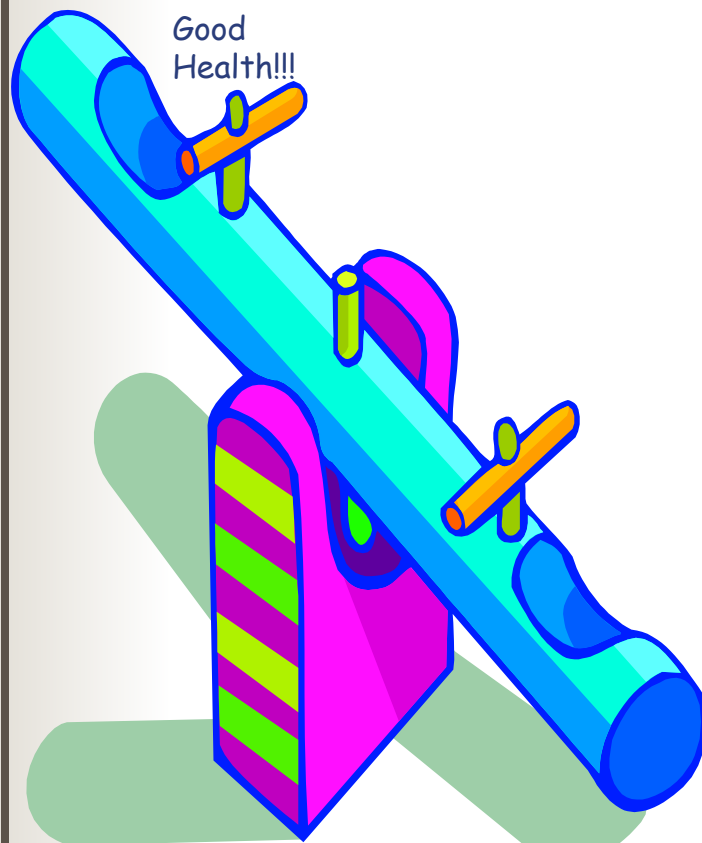
- Great Primary Health Care Nurses!
- Willing to work outside traditional nursing roles
- A broad skill mix and willingness to extend further
- Independent workers
- 'People' skills
- GPs and other health workers embracing the concept
- Community 'personality'

# The Barriers...

- Distance
- Working in Isolation
- Resistance from other health professionals
- Lack of resources - human, material



# The Future...



- Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

~ Calvin Coolidge ~