

From the RAMUS team

More than 160 medical students have been awarded a RAMUS scholarship in the 2014 application round and there is now just a handful of scholarship offers still to be finalised. We wish a warm welcome to all our new scholars. Many of you have now organised your rural doctor mentor and we welcome and thank all those doctors who are new to the Scheme as well as those who are continuing their RAMUS mentoring role by taking on a new scholar.

Congratulations to mentors Dr Caroline De Costa, Dr Gabriel Shannon and Dr Cameron Henderson who received AM awards in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours. These awards are in recognition of their contributions to rural general practice and to their communities. We are proud that RAMUS is associated with such outstanding rural doctors.

What have RAMUS scholars experienced during their electives and placements? In this issue, *RAMUS Scholars' Elective and Placement experiences*, draws on a number of scholar reports from 2013 and illustrates the enriching nature of rural placements and how scholars can be pleasantly surprised by the experiences they find for themselves.

Thanks to the support of ACRRM and the RDAA, we will be holding a RAMUS networking event at the Rural Medicine Australia Conference in Sydney in late October. This is a great opportunity for RAMUS scholars, mentors and alumni attending the conference to meet one another. RAMUS will also be attending the Isolated Children's Parents' Association Meeting in Launceston in August.

Finally, take a fresh look at the National Rural Health Alliance's website: www.ruralhealth.org.au. The Alliance's website is a major resource for up-to-date and detailed policy information on the health issues having an impact in rural and remote Australia. Among its many activities, the Alliance is the management agency for RAMUS, on behalf of the Australian Government.

Best wishes,
The RAMUS team
Lesley, Janine and Madeleine

RAMUS networking opportunities

Planning is underway for a RAMUS networking event at the Rural Medicine Australia Conference in Sydney in October. All RAMUS scholars, mentors and alumni attending the conference will be warmly welcomed to the event. More details will be sent out later in the year.

In addition, a RAMUS staff member will be attending the Isolated Children's Parents' Association Annual Conference being held in Launceston on 7-8 August and we're looking forward to the opportunity to meet RAMUS scholars attending the conference.



Queen's Birthday Honours

RAMUS mentors Dr Caroline De Costa, Dr Cameron Henderson and Dr Gabriel Shannon received AM awards in the 2014 Queen's Birthday Honours.

Dr De Costa has been honoured for her significant service to medicine, particularly to Indigenous and migrant women's reproductive health. Dr Caroline De Costa is Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and Director of the Clinical School at James Cook University School of Medicine, Cairns. Caroline is currently mentoring a RAMUS scholar in her 2nd year of study and continues to research the history and social implications of the caesarean section, which she has a particular interest in. Caroline has also co-authored three books on this subject.

Dr Henderson's award is for his service to medicine as a general practitioner in the Manilla region, New South Wales. Dr Cameron Henderson has devoted over 40 years to medicine and has worked at the Manilla Medical Centre since 1981. In this time he has mentored three previous RAMUS scholars who have now completed their studies and played a major role in lobbying for the construction of Manilla's Multi-Purpose Service and HealthOne Manilla, enabling the community to access more integrated health care.

Dr Shannon has been recognised for significant service to medicine as a consultant physician and as a clinical innovator. Currently working in Orange, New South Wales, Dr Shannon shares his time and knowledge between Orange hospital and the University of Sydney School of Rural Health. He told The Newcastle Herald that "I find this part of my work, guiding the training of young doctors, to be truly invigorating and they are starting to come back now to return to the bush". Dr Shannon has mentored two recently graduated RAMUS scholars and says that the highlights of his medical career were setting up the University of Sydney School of Rural Health and the opening of the new hospital in Orange.



Dr Caroline De Costa



Dr Gabriel Shannon

Conference Placement Program 2014

Applications are still open for the Conference Placement Program (CPP) for 2nd semester 2014. About 36 grants, valued at up to \$1,500, will be available to current scholars and alumni.

Conferences covering rural medicine, general practice, Indigenous health, rural and remote mental health, emergency medicine and critical care are included on the Eligible Conferences list.

Go to <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/conference-placement> for the full list of eligible conferences and the CPP Guidelines and Application Form. The list will be updated during the semester if and when new conferences are added.

For conferences being held from October to November, the due date for applications is **11 August 2014**. The eligible conferences in this period are:

- Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association Conference 2014
- GP14: Royal Australian College of General Practice Annual Conference
- Rural Medicine Australia 2014: Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine and Rural Doctors' Association of Australia Annual Conference



To apply, please complete the Application Form available at <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/conference-placement> and send it by email to ramus@ruralhealth.org.au by the due date listed on the Eligible Conferences list.

Applications will be assessed and applicants notified about the outcome within one week of the due date for that conference.

If you are awarded a CPP grant, the funds will be paid directly to you in two instalments: the first half before the conference, once you have registered and sent a copy of your registration confirmation to RAMUS; and the second half after the conference once you submit your conference report and statutory declaration. You will be responsible for making your own registration, travel and accommodation arrangements for the conference; RAMUS does not make any of these arrangements for you.

Please note the due date for applications for any conference you are interested in. The due dates are strictly observed and late applications are unlikely to be considered. This is to make sure that applications can be assessed and successful applicants notified well before the conference, to give them plenty of time to organise their conference registration, travel and accommodation.



RAMUS is on Facebook

Stay up to date with RAMUS news, ask RAMUS a question or communicate with other RAMUS scholars, mentors and alumni. To join the RAMUS Facebook group, go to: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/348490061904468/>

Note: this is a closed Facebook group, exclusively for RAMUS scholars, mentors and alumni.

RAMUS Scholar Elective and Placement Experiences

From right around Australia RAMUS scholars tell their experiences and interesting encounters during their rural placements.

Johanna Warren was fortunate to spend her 5th year in Port Lincoln. In her report she has said “I have been predominantly based in Port Lincoln, a tuna fishing town in remote South Australia, with a 7-week rotation also to the smaller coastal town of Ceduna. I have received terrific teaching throughout the year from a broad range of general practitioners, specialists and academic staff.”



Johanna Warren, Port Lincoln, SA



Johanna Warren's close encounter

Julian de Jong commented that “spending one week at a rural general practise, where I was exposed to the day to day life of a rural general practitioner, seeing how a doctor handles their practice day to day has been wonderful and is something I will look forward to again in the coming final two years of medical school.”

Sarah Oldfield expresses her love of the Northern Territory and her desire to return after such an enjoyable placement. “My multiple rural placements gave me plenty of opportunities to experience and enjoy rural practice this year. I would encourage anybody interested in remote practice or Indigenous health to look into opportunities to do placements in the Northern Territory as it is completely different to anything I had previously experienced in Adelaide and rural South Australia. My placements this year have encouraged me to continue to work in rural and remote Australia, but also to return to the Northern Territory and join the healthcare staff who are helping to Close the Gap.”

Broadening her knowledge and understanding of rural health, Angela Hehir talks about her placement in Castlemaine. “Ultimately I truly believe the semester spent in Castlemaine enriched my understanding of what it means to be a doctor and a rural GP, and highlighted some of the complexities, pitfalls and rewards associated.”

While braving the snakes in Derby, Paul Gilbert tells us what he learnt. “I had a 2 month rural internship posting in Derby. It taught me vital skills for functioning as an efficient intern, as well as some not so essential abilities, such as removing snakes from ambulance beds.”



Paul Gilbert after removing a snake from an ambulance bed

Indemnity and insurance – scholars' responsibilities

As a RAMUS scholar, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate indemnity insurance cover if you are undertaking supervised clinical activity as part of your RAMUS-related rural activities; such as during visits to or placements with your RAMUS mentor.

You may be asked by medical practices or health services to provide evidence of your indemnity insurance cover.

Don't assume that your RAMUS rural activities are automatically covered by the university's indemnity and insurance arrangements for medical students. You should check whether the planned activities are included in your university indemnity insurance cover. Those that do not form part of your formal university course and curriculum requirements may not be covered.

You can consider joining a medical defence organisation (MDO) that provides medical indemnity insurance. Several MDOs offer special packages for medical students for free or at low cost.

For more details, please see the statement on **Indemnity and insurance** at <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/scholars>

Former scholars are available to be RAMUS mentors

More than 80 former RAMUS scholars have indicated they are available to be RAMUS mentors from 2014.

These potential mentors are practising in rural, regional or remote locations in NSW, NT, SA, QLD, VIC and WA. They are all keen to support a current RAMUS scholar as they were supported by their rural doctor mentor during their own studies.

Continuing scholars who need to change their mentor in 2014 are welcome to ask the RAMUS team for the contact details of former scholars they could approach about becoming their new mentor.

HECS Reimbursement Scheme

The HECS Reimbursement Scheme writes off a proportion of a medical student's standard Commonwealth Supported (CSP) HECS-HELP debt for every year they train or provide medical services in eligible rural and remote communities.

Under the scheme, doctors can reduce the period for reimbursement of the cost of their medical studies from five years to two years, depending on the Australian Standard Geographical Classification – Remoteness Area (ASGC-RA) location of their training or practice. The Scheme offers the greatest rewards to doctors who are training or providing medical services in the most remote areas.

For more information and the application form, go to: http://www.ruralhealthaustralia.gov.au/internet/rha/publishing.nsf/Content/HECS_Reimbursement_Scheme_Guidelines



Caitlin Coombes participating in the Fiji Village Project, part of an ANU initiative

Factsheets

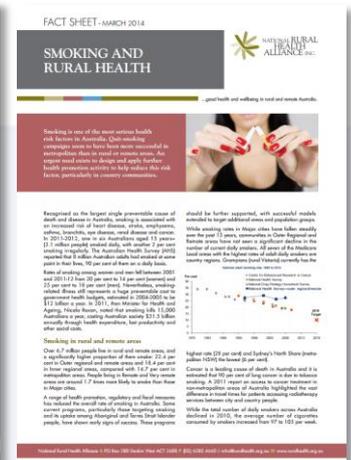
Check out the latest **Fact Sheets** from the NRHA, available at:

<http://ruralhealth.org.au/factsheets/thumbs:>

Recent Fact Sheets include:

- Patient Assisted Travel Schemes
- Alcohol in rural areas
- Smoking and rural health

The Alliance's Fact Sheets are useful sources of concise, current and authoritative information on health issues that are relevant to people living in rural and remote Australia. They do not usually carry references, but information on sources may be requested from the Alliance.

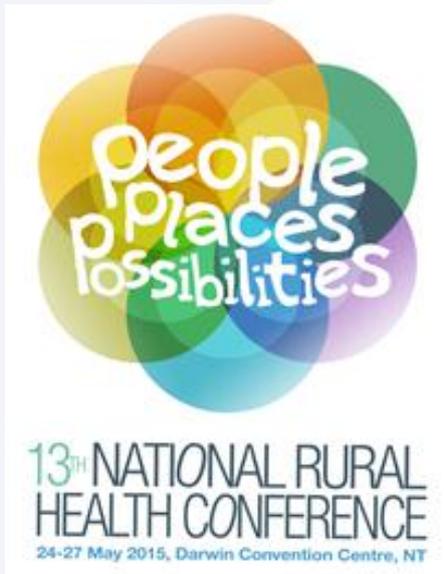
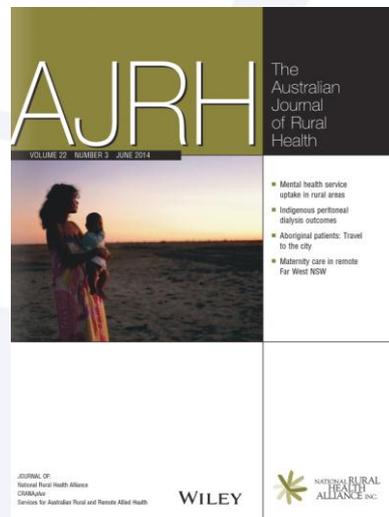


Australian Journal of Rural Health

RAMUS scholars have free online access to the *Australian Journal of Rural Health (AJRH)*.

Access is through the RAMUS website (<http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/ajrh>)

The June 2014 issue of the AJRH looks at a number of women's health issues, including the provision of maternity care in remote Far West NSW and rural NSW women's access to abortion services. Also included is a short report about a project involving student dieticians who are developing a step by step cookbook, for use in group homes in rural NSW.



Save the date!

The **13th National Rural Health Conference**, with the theme *People Places Possibilities*, will be held in Darwin on the 24th to the 27th of May 2015.

For more info head to:

<http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/13nrhc/>