University Departments of Rural Health improving the lives of rural Australians

CANBERRA, 12 June 2013 – Speech pathologists in Broken Hill schools, healthy eating classes in Tamworth and mental health support in Whyalla are just some of the success stories delivered by Australia’s peak multidisciplinary rural health education body.

The Australian Rural Health Education Network (ARHEN) is proud to announce a raft of successful projects undertaken by its members to improve the health of Australians living in rural and remote areas.

ARHEN is the peak body for 11 University Departments of Rural Health (UDRH) in rural and remote regions across Australia.

The body will meet with federal MPs in Canberra next week to lobby for a pre-election commitment to establish more training programs for nursing, allied health and dental students in rural and remote areas.

ARHEN will also remind MPs of its programs making a difference to the lives of people in rural and remote areas.

For years there was limited access to speech pathology in Broken Hill, in far west NSW, until collaboration between academics, clinicians and school principals established a learning program in local primary schools.

“The results have been overwhelmingly positive for children and their families, as well as teachers and the university students who trained in Broken Hill,” ARHEN chair Professor David Lyle said.

Another program run through the University of Newcastle’s Department of Rural Health placed students in Tamworth, in NSW’s New England region, where they completed a needs assessment in consultation with local health services.

The students completed four projects on a variety of topics including “Healthy tums, Healthy gums” and were involved in healthy cooking classes at after school learning centres.

In Whyalla, on South Australia’s Eyre Peninsula, some first year nursing students from the University of South Australia are hoping to pursue a mental health specialty after completing a placement under the supervision of academics and mental health nurses.

Health professionals such as physiotherapists and dieticians can now access an online training package thanks to another program established by a UDRH, used throughout Country Health SA. This package is designed to help allied health professionals learn how to delegate appropriately and supervise allied health assistants.
In an effort to increase the workforce in rural and remote areas, health services have begun to use allied health assistants to provide basic therapies under the supervision of the relevant allied health professional.

For more information on ARHEN's success stories or to arrange an interview please contact ARHEN National Director Janine Ramsay on 0419 460 820 or email Janine.Ramsay@arhen.org.au

About ARHEN
Established in 2001, the Australian Rural Health Education Network (ARHEN) is the peak body for 11 University Departments of Rural Health (UDRH) located in universities in each state and the Northern Territory.

ARHEN's aim is to lead the rural health agenda in education and research to improve health in rural and remote areas.

www.arhen.org.au