

CASE STUDY



- Event:** 13th National Rural Health Conference
- Date:** 24 - 27 May 2015
- Attendance:** 1,184 delegates (1,179 national, 5 international)
- Organiser:** Leanne Coleman, Conference Manager, National Rural Health Alliance

Background

The National Rural Health Conference is the largest biennial event for people who want to improve the health and wellbeing of those who live in rural, regional and remote Australia. It is an opportunity for present and future leaders of the rural and remote health sector, including its community members, health consumers and carers, to exchange information, showcase successes, promote the sector's agenda and make useful connections.

The conference is organised by the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA), whose mission is 'Good health for people in rural and remote Australia'. The NRHA has 37 members.

The 13th National Rural Health Conference was held from 24-27 May 2015 at the Darwin Convention Centre. Its theme was *People, Places, Possibilities....*

Conference Objective

The 13th National Rural Health Conference's main objective is to generate a set of delegate-agreed recommendations for action to improve policies and programs for rural and remote health. The recommendations play a key part in setting the rural and remote health sector's agenda for subsequent years

Conference Format

At the 13th Conference, delegates were able to propose recommendations for action through the 'Sharing Shed' an online forum in which they could also make comments on existing proposals and vote for their favourites.

A Conference Recommendations Group had access to all the recommendations proposed as well as comments on them and the number of votes for each - plus the Conference's twitter feed and the keynote addresses. From these various sources a set of Interim Priority Recommendations was prepared, reflecting the information received in the 'Sharing Shed' by Day 4.

These were presented to a Conference plenary session and votes cast at its conclusion. This work resulted in the Final Priority Recommendations and the 13th Conference Communique.

Through this process, 340 recommendations, including ten priority recommendations, emerged, which will lead to action and policy change at various levels of government, including advocacy for them by individuals and organisations that support them.

Additional Conference Activities

Many delegates also attended one of the 13 pre-conference events on offer. Some were able to participate in a bus tour to Nauiyu community to learn more about remote Aboriginal communities, while others attended a workshop on how to become power 'tweeters'.

A number of functions were held during the conference including a welcome reception, exhibitor evening and sit-down gala dinner for 950 people.

Key Conference Outcomes

- Excellent attendance of delegates in Darwin
- Attendance by more than 20 well-respected and high profile keynote speakers from across the health sector
- Addresses by Senator Fiona Nash, Assistant Minister for Health, Prime Minister Tony Abbott via video-link, and Shadow Minister for Health, Stephen Jones on their support for remote health initiatives
- Attendance by 65 exhibitors, the highest number ever attending this conference
- Strong sponsorship support
- Highly successful 'Arts and Health' program including health education and promotion, art therapy, research
- Ability to utilise every corner of the convention centre for arts and health activities
- Successful multicultural program, coordinated by a local advisory committee, who engaged local artists, performers and speakers to entertain and inspire delegates
- Conference provided excellent capacity building for local arts organisations who would normally have the opportunity to perform or exhibit to such a large audience
- Full uptake on excursions and activity program offered such as remote community visits, swing dancing, didgeridoo playing, yarning
- Great vibe at the Gala Dinner with delegates up and dancing before entrée was served
- 340 recommendations and 10 priority recommendations for action

Darwin Convention Centre Experience

The 13th Conference at the Darwin Conference Centre was a huge success, with exhibitor numbers increased and delegate numbers on par with previous conferences.

A number of issues were experienced in the planning stages and during the conference, however through on-going communications with the Event Planners and managers, all were able to be resolved in a timely manner.

Centre staff including security, cleaners, floor supervisors and front of house attendants, were all very helpful.

The chefs were outstanding in their efforts to cater for up to 1,180 delegates in the Exhibition Halls over four days, with no complaints received. At the gala dinner for 950 people without set table placings, 180 special dietary meals were prepared and distributed concurrently with regular meals.

Hosting the conference in Darwin enabled organisers to easily engage with its international neighbours. With short flight times, five international speakers attended from PNG, Timor Leste and Vanuatu were able to attend.

The location of the Centre within the beautiful surrounds of the Darwin Waterfront Precinct, enabled delegates to relax and enjoy the facilities on offer.

Comments from delegates include “Best conference ever” and “Darwin raised the bar”.

Northern Territory Experience

NT Convention Bureau was very helpful in the early planning stages of the event providing information about accommodation, transport operators, entertainers, local suppliers etc.

With guidance from the local organising committee and NTCB, the conference was able to engage a range of local suppliers for the exhibition fit-out, room theming, MC and entertainment, photographer, who were all extremely helpful in meeting our needs.

Many unique elements were incorporated into the program that supported this Top End conferencing experience for delegates. Excursions to remote communities, Indigenous entertainment, speakers and workshops, the Meerepan art displayed around the stage, and tropical theming for the gala dinner all contributed to a special and memorable experience.

Quote

“Darwin offered a terrific destination and convention centre for our 13th Conference.”
Leanne Coleman, Conference Organiser, National Rural Health Alliance

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Images from the conference



