

# Country Connections



## President's Report

by Amber Moynihan, President, RMFN Victoria

With the incorporation of RMFN and the launch of the new logo last year, a new look has been given to *Country Connections*. We hope you like this first issue and we welcome any feedback.

A number of activities are currently occurring across the State and the next issue will bring highlights of these events.

## Mentoring Workshop

Bendigo

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2009

Mentoring is a self-sustaining and empowering support strategy that is time effective – an ideal way to help support rural medical families and also build the capacity, and skills, of the RMFN and those who work with, or are interested in helping, rural medical families and rural GPs.

**REGISTER NOW** for this workshop at [www.rmfn-vic.com](http://www.rmfn-vic.com)  
– spaces are still available.



## Teamwork for Better Health Conference 2009

8th - 9th May 2009

The Hilton on the Park, Melbourne, Victoria  
For further information: [www.rwavconference.com.au](http://www.rwavconference.com.au)

*Teamwork ( ) n. Cooperative effort by the members of a group or team to achieve a common goal.*

It gets talked about a lot but exactly what are the ingredients that inspire and sustain successful teamwork in health?

Is teamwork driven by a total commitment of individuals to a common objective?

Is it the passion and "heart" that people bring to the group?

Is teamwork built on the desire of the team to jointly learn together and achieve?

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## NEXT ISSUE

Your contributions will be most welcome until our deadline of 5th June 2009.



## Book Reviews

by Heather Slutzkin

**Joy Dettman's** stories are at home in rural Australia. You read them and hear characters who could be walking down the street of any small country town. *'Diamonds in the mud'* is a collection of her shorter writings where snippets of lives are captured beautifully. Some of the stories contain characters expanded on in her novels. In *'Mallawindy Jacaranda Blue'*, *'Yesterday's Dust'*, and *'Henry's Daughter'* the stories are linked, and she's a great storyteller! The language and characters are down to earth, but the things that happen to them somehow 'larger than life'. They're very much novels where it's the story that draws the reader on to finish the book. If you like lighter fiction that's set in the Australian landscape, you'll love these books.

*'Aphelion'* is written by **Emily Ballou** and published by Picador imprint of Pan Macmillan in 2007. Emily Ballou is an American woman who's been in Australia only since 1991 and previously won quite a deal of acclaim for *'Father Lands'*.

Aphelion is a term used in astronomy referring to the point in the orbit of a planet when it is the furthest from the sun, the darkest point. This story is set in Old Adaminaby, a town drowned as part of the Snowy Mountains Scheme. Hazel is an American curator who comes to organise a museum display of memorabilia from Old Adaminaby. She becomes involved with a family of women, spanning four generations, in the house next door. One of the few male characters in the book is Rhett, who returns to his old family home.

The book is structured in various times throughout the century, which works quite well, and the history and setting of the high country is a very pleasurable part of the book. The plot holds together, but is probably of secondary importance. The characters are well depicted, and the writing quite poetic.

The theme of water and drownings are a haunting presence right through this book. As are the themes of memories and love. And although there's a traditional 'love story', more powerful still is the many different sorts love and loyalties involved in families.

I read many rave reviews about this book, but found myself a little less enthusiastic. Maybe there was a little too much analysis of the relationships, or maybe it seemed that it was trying a little too hard. Maybe I thought putting a love story in there as well was

unnecessary. There are reading group notes on the Picador website, which told me so much more about what I'd been reading! Maybe I should have read them first!

Set in a similar setting and time, **Matthew Condon's** *'Trout Opera'* I found to be a wonderful novel!

Published by Random House in 2007, it is a long book, but beautiful to take time reading.

The main character is Wilfred Lampe, who's spent most of the twentieth century in the small Snowy River town of Dalgety. Wilfred is a simple man who's been a rabbitier and farmhand all his life. When the Olympics are to be held in Sydney, it is thought that he may be a suitable representative of the values of Australia in the opening ceremony. In the course of the novel, he catches up with a niece he never knew he had, Aurora Beck, who is involved in the seamier sides of contemporary life in Sydney and they take an unlikely road trip.

Condon's writing is beautifully reflective, bringing a genuine sense of history evolving – history of a life as well as a country. Descriptively, he portrays the wonderful atmosphere of a world apart one feels so strongly when passing through the Snowy Mountains. And even for one not enamoured of fly fishing, there is sufficient but not too much detail to convey something about what enthralled the enthusiast! The writing in the very different world of Sydney seems also real, and carries the narrative along. Very different characters are written about with empathy, and the reader is faced with only one thoroughly unlikeable character!

I read a review that said this novel honours simplicity and peace, and I think that is what I found very appealing. Although simple in needs and desires, Wilfred Lampe is not portrayed as an ignorant yokel. There is such a sense of grace about the novel that one is left with quite a warm glow on finishing! Well worth a read.



## CEO's Report

by Gina Lambe, CEO, RMFN Victoria

### 40° and rising!

Who would have thought that Victoria would endure such an extreme hot spell this summer, accompanied by severe winds and bush fires. It certainly has been a most devastating time for many people, both at a personal and community level.

They were brave souls indeed that joined in the spouse and children's program at the VicFelix GP Registrars Orientation Weekend in Ballarat on 31 January. Whilst the temperature had dropped to the high 30's, it was still a very hot day to be visiting Sovereign Hill – certainly not anticipated during the planning stage. Nonetheless, everybody enjoyed themselves and some found cool relief during the mine tour, down into the depths of an old mine shaft. The same cannot be said for the man demonstrating the making of gold bars. The furnace used to obtain liquid gold heats it to 1200° before being poured into a mould where it quickly drops to 300° when submersed into cold water. The 100 ounce gold bar shown to the audience was given a value of \$130,000 at current



*The Aaron family panning for gold in the creek at Sovereign Hill.*

prices. With a 'threat' to any absconder, a few members of the audience were given an opportunity to hold the gold bar.

By evening on the second day it was cooler and on the eastern side of the State, getGP was entertaining their GP Registrars and families at the Gippsland Heritage Centre. Rides around the grounds were enjoyed by children – young and old, before sitting down to the annual BBQ. This is always an entertaining event which ends with a quiz for all to participate. Often the children fare better with the questions than the adults.

A total of seventeen GP Registrars attended each of these two events, many with their spouse/partner and children. We welcome all those who are now members of RMFN.

Keep a watch for events in your area by logging on to the RMFN website at [www.rmfn-vic.com](http://www.rmfn-vic.com).



*L-R: Liam, Karen Philip, Genevieve and Rachael Aarons; Janitha and Kieren Fernando; Sonali Fernando, Mark Dowling, Reshan and Dinali Fernando and Dimitra Stabelos. Foreground: Anthony, Terry and Peter Stabelos.*

### RMFN Website – Members forum

This is now available specifically for our Members to access information relevant to them. If you are already an RMFN Member, but have not yet registered an email address, you will need to re-register online to access this area. Otherwise you can access the Members forum by using your name and email address.



## Who to Call

### RMFN Committee

#### President

Amber Moynihan 5033 1870

#### Members

Michelle Bensley 5658 1513

Lynn Griffiths 0428 831 637

Deborah Jones 5529 5232

Magdy Shamaly 0412 868 068

#### Chief Executive Officer

Gina Lambe 9349 7806

### Useful Contacts

Beyond Blue 1300 22 46 36

Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800 (freecall)

Lifeline 131 114 (cost of local call)

Mensline Australia 1300 13 11 14

Suicide Prevention Crisis Line (02) 9331 2000

VDHP is a confidential and compassionate service for doctors and medical students with health concerns including stress & anxiety problems, substance use disorders, mental health disorders, any other health problems, including physical health concerns.



Telephone 9495 6011

Aikenhead Building,  
Level 8, 27 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy, VIC 3065.



### Bush Crisis Line 1800 805 391

Confidential 24 hour freecall telephone counselling and debriefing service for remote and rural health practitioners and their families.

## Dates for Your Diary 2009

### RWAV Teamwork for Better Health Conference 2009

8th – 9th May 2009,

The Hilton on the Park, Melbourne.

and **2009 Victorian Rural Doctors' Awards** supported by ACRRM, RDAV, RMFN.

### RDAV Annual Conference

co-hosted with RMFN and

**ACRRM and RDAA 6th Scientific Forum 2009**

29th October – 1st November 2009,

Bell City, Preston.



## Counselling Services

### Telephone Counselling FREECALL 1800 337 068

#### Converge International

24/7 We are there for you

Converge International, a not-for-profit and fully independent organisation, has been operating since 1960. It has the wellbeing of people and their families still at the heart of all we do.

The growing clouds of depression, stress, addiction, conflict, bullying and unethical corporate behaviour are just some of the challenges our team of over 300 experts help manage every day.

### Career Counselling

This service is available to the families of general practitioners working in rural Victoria. Secondary students, tertiary students and mature age people are eligible to have consultations with a careers counsellor by telephone, over the internet or in person.

The service is provided by a career counsellor from Box Hill Institute (BHI) in Melbourne.

Please contact the RMFN Office on (03) 9349 7806 to obtain contact details or further information.