

## Climate Change Issue

### EDITORIAL

# The future, our rural populations and climate change – a special issue of *Rural and Remote Health*

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In the year 2008 we have entered into an *oil shock* period. Now mid-year, in the last 18 months the price of a barrel of crude oil has almost tripled. There are concerns that high fuel prices are driving the world's economies into recession, although some countries have been cushioned from the full impact.

Debate about the reasons behind the rapid increase in the cost of fuel suggests, among other theories, that it is a result of demand outstripping available supply of oil. This re-focuses community attention on climate change.

Oil price rises are allegedly being driven by increasing demand in India and China. As these two economies

encompass approximately 35% of the global population they are likely to become large carbon emitters, accelerating climate change and global warming. The Olympics in Beijing will be a time for the world to reflect on China's miraculous industrial progress in such a short time. The shadow to such development, however, is the potential for the new economic giant to produce greenhouse gas emissions on a massive scale. Again, climate change is on our minds.

In this special issue of *Rural and Remote Health* we are pleased to present four articles concerning different aspects of climate change and its potential impact on rural areas. From Australia, we have one article advocating a return to



the traditional<sup>1</sup> and two articles discussing the mental health implications of prolonged drought<sup>2,3</sup>. One explores the concept of solastalgia and the link between community wellbeing and climate change<sup>2</sup>; the other considers how optimism in the face of adversity can be protective of mental health<sup>3</sup>. From Africa, we have an article describing how the large-scale expansion of a traditional technology in Ethiopia (rainwater harvesting), aimed at addressing the effects of climate change, has led to the unexpected health consequences of increased malaria transmission<sup>4</sup>.

We hope *Rural and Remote Health* readers enjoy both the Olympics and this small but thought-provoking batch of articles that build on an understanding of the potential impacts of climate change on the health of our rural populations. We hope this stimulates readers to examine the impact of climate change, and that the solutions offered by some of the authors help readers and their rural populations approach climate change productively and optimistically.

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