



NSW Multicultural Health Week 27 July – 2 August 2009

Monday July 27 is the first day of NSW Multicultural Health Week 2009. To celebrate, the official launch will be held at the Welcome Wall at the Australian Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour. Special guest and speaker Stepan Kerkyasharin AM, Chairperson and Chief Executive Office of CRC will officially launch the week with fellow guest speakers Karen Peters, Associate Director Primary and Community Health Policy NSW Health and Astrid Perry, Director of Multicultural Health South Eastern Sydney Illawarra Area Health Service. The main objectives of Multicultural Health Week include:

- To raise awareness of the health of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups
- To raise the profile of Multicultural Health services and state-wide services amongst NSW health services
- To raise awareness of the need for health workers to work with all Australians regardless of language, culture and religion.
- To set a health agenda among CALD media
- To raise awareness of multicultural resources and services to relevant CALD communities (via CALD media)

If you would like to order your free NSW Multicultural Health Week 2009 poster, NSW Multicultural Health Services booklet and a Languages of the World booklet, please call 02 9816 0226 (Free for NSW residents only, all other States & Territories will have to pay for postage and handling).

For more information about Multicultural Health Week and to contact your Area Health Service please visit: <http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/mhcs/subpages/MHW.html> OR call NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service on 02 9816 0226

Why a Greek woman living in Philippines is promoting Ulster as a tourist haven

A major new drive to sell Northern Ireland to the world as a must-see tourist destination has been launched?in the PHILIPPINES by a GREEK woman! Esther Vraka Papaioannou fell in love with Northern Ireland after moving here with her husband and two young children four years ago.



Esther Vraka Papaioannou

And after leaving last year to settle in the Philippines she started a new website, My Secret Northern Ireland, to stave off her feelings of homesickness for her adopted province.

The website is only a few months old but it has already proved a massive draw for people from around the world

Esther says: "The response has been 100 per cent positive. Half of the hits have come from the UK and Ireland, 40 per cent from North America and 10 per cent from the rest of the world.

"They are from people who just want to know about where to go, what to see and what to do. And I try to give them all that, based on my experiences and my passions about Northern Ireland.

"I really do believe that tourism-wise, Northern Ireland is a hidden secret. Most people outside it know

very little about it. I have found that many people don't even know where it is situated. Yet a visit can be so rewarding and I think more could and should be done to share the secret with the world.

"I find that Northern Ireland is the poor relation of both the Republic of Ireland and Britain. And I would like to change the perceptions. Northern Ireland deserves its place on the tourist map."

Esther says that initially she had her doubts about coming to live here but after visiting Newcastle in County Down she was quickly won over by the pace and the lifestyle here – not to mention the people.

"My husband had been offered a job but we had a young family and we

were aware of the reputation of the Troubles," she recalls. "However, after some deliberations we decided to go for it. Coming from the hectic south of England where we had spent six years, one of the first impressions was the peaceful countryside and lack of traffic.

"And the friendliness of the people won us over too."

Esther is from Ioannina in the west of Greece, but she has no thoughts of returning there for the moment.

"I am enjoying life in the Philippines but we have no idea where we might be in a few years' time. My husband, who is also from Greece, would like to go back there one day but I would rather return to Northern Ireland."

As for her website, Esther has compiled a remarkably detailed travelogue around Northern Ireland, including directions to every conceivable tourist attraction as well as songs, recipes and historical information.

Even though she is thousands of miles away, Esther updates her site on a regular basis with her memories of her favourite places and stories.

"I also get a lot of feedback from visitors to the site," she says. "And that is precisely what I want – to make it all as interactive as possible.

"I want more and more people to send me their stories and photographs because that is what ultimately will help make Northern Ireland a place which tourists will regard as unmissable."

Esther's site is at www.my-secret-northern-ireland.com.

Hospital errors cause 4550 deaths a year

HOSPITAL errors claim the lives of 4550 Australians a year, equivalent to the death toll from 13 jumbo jets crashing and killing all on board, says a report to the Government which urges sweeping reforms of the health system.

And savings of \$1 billion a year could be made if problems including hospital-borne infections, medication mix-ups, drug side effects and patient falls were only halved.

Such "adverse events" are estimated to have affected about 16 per cent of people admitted.

The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, released the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission report which warns that the present system is "unlikely to be sustainable without reform".

The commission identifies hospital safety issues, the availability of hospital beds, waiting times and inefficiencies as crucial areas for improvement.

After 18 months' consultation and research, the 10-member commission chaired by a health insurance executive, Christine Bennett, has filed 123 recommendations which are expected to include a limited federal takeover of some state functions, including outpatient services and community health centres.

Before the 2007 election Mr Rudd threatened to seek a mandate for a federal takeover of public hospi-

tals unless the states became serious about reforms. But he is not expected to give the Government's response to the recommendations until he has gauged the reaction of health leaders and the community.

According to excerpts of the report seen by the Herald, it says healthcare services are under strain and without action will not cope with the rising tide of chronic disease and frailty.

Three in 10 Australians who suffer a chronic condition complain of poor co-ordination of their care, conflicting advice and duplication of tests.

As more Australians suffered chronic diseases, they would rely on a wider range of services beyond a hospital and doctor, such as nurses, dietitians, physio-

therapists and community healthcare.

"Almost 10 per cent of hospital stays are potentially preventable if timely and adequate non-hospital healthcare had been provided to patients with chronic conditions," the report says.

At present patients sometimes ricocheted "between multiple specialists and hospitals, not getting access to community support services and having endless diagnostic tests as each health professional works on a particular 'body part', rather than treating the whole person", it says.

Only two-thirds of those who went to hospital emergency departments were seen within clinically appropriate times.

Waste and inefficiency meant Australians missed out on healthcare that could extend overall life expectancy by nearly two years.

The commission says hospitals' productivity was up to 25 per cent lower than the optimum. Duplications, high costs, errors and ineffective treatments adversely affected people's access to healthcare because of the waste of finite resources. Australia had not only a complex division of funding and performance responsibilities, it also faced continually rising costs, fuelled by growing demands of an ageing population and increasingly expensive technology.

