

Keynote Speaker at the first annual Kachana Landscape Management Workshop, 4-6 Sept 2002: Kester A. Baines, B.H.Sc., N.D., Dip.Hom.

Kester is a Fellow of the Australian Natural Therapists Association. He is member of the Homoeopathic Education & Research Association, the Orthomolecular Medical Association of Australia and the Natural Health Society of Australia. He and his wife Suzanne manage the Raphael Centre of Natural Healing in Geelong, Victoria. Kester offers us the benefit of 22 years of experience in his field. He has particular interest in clinical nutrition, functional medicine, and herbal and homoeopathic therapies, and is currently working on a plan to make natural therapies more accessible in outback Australia. Other interests include agroforestry, organic farming and gardening, natural history, and restoring habitat to a small property in the Otway foothills.

Kester visited the Kimberley in October 1999 when he addressed the Rotary Club of Kununurra.

Talk 3: “Medicine, health and healing” – Kester A. Baines B.H.Sc, N.D., Dip.Hom.

In the past sixty-odd years medicine has gone through some stellar leaps – dazzling discoveries and advances which have made a huge difference to life expectancy and quality of life for literally billions of people. Coming to mind are such defining events as the discovery of the usefulness of penicillin in 1941. Soon after that came cortisone and streptomycin, the intraocular lens for reversing cataract blindness, and the development of the clinical trial in 1950 (which led to the connection between smoking and lung cancer). Then came the discovery of chlorpromazine and the revolution it created in the treatment of mental illness, and the development of intensive care as a result of the Copenhagen polio epidemic in 1952. The first open-heart surgery was carried out in 1955, followed by hip replacements and kidney transplants, then the curing of childhood leukaemias in 1971. The first “test tube baby”, Louise Joy Brown, was born in 1978, and in 1984 the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori* was discovered, right here in Western Australia by a young doctor, Barry Marshall, to be the cause of peptic ulcers.

It may surprise you that many of these seeming triumphs of modern scientific inquiry were in fact incredibly lucky and serendipitous events. For example, the discovery of penicillin, probably the greatest medical discovery of all time, could so easily not have happened. In 1928 microbiologist Alexander Fleming in London made his famous observation that a *Penicillium* mould growing as a contaminant on a *Staphylococcus* culture had inhibited the growth of the bacteria. Curiously, other scientists weren't able to replicate this effect. It was found, decades later, that Fleming's observation could not have occurred without the collusion of a string of extraordinary coincidences: 1. The strain of *Penicillium* was quite rare, but happened to be one which produced large amounts of penicillin. Its source was presumed to be the laboratory of another scientist who was working with that strain on a lower floor of the same building. It just wafted in. 2. The *Penicillium* mould happens to thrive at a much lower temperature, about 20 degrees, compared to the *Staph*, which does best at about 35 degrees. 3. Fleming forgot to put the petri dish in the incubator when he went away for a few days' holiday, but left it

on the bench instead. 4. The weather conditions in London during the time he was away were perfect for the growth of the *Penicillium*.

Fleming was much luckier than he realized, but even though he understood his observation could have some clinical significance, he was strangely uninspired to follow it up, apparently thinking that the agents would be too toxic to use in humans. It fell to the Australian Howard Florey, some ten years later, to re-explore the miraculous properties of penicillin. Together with Ernest Chain, a brilliant young chemist who was a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, whom Florey appointed to his team, he turned their university lab into an improvised factory and ultimately in 1941 successful treatment of life-threatening bacterial infections in humans began. The principles they established soon led to the development of several more important antibiotics.

Similarly, serendipitous events allowed the discovery of cortisone's life-saving and symptom-suppressing effects in inflammatory and auto-immune diseases.

In the case of chlorpromazine and its profound effect on the hell of severe mental illness, this treatment was developed after a chance observation that a related antihistamine drug given to allergy sufferers produced a "euphoric quietude".

Spectacular successes such as these in the management of severe illnesses for which treatment had previously been so unsatisfactory led to a degree of triumphant confidence within the medical profession, an elevation of doctors to almost god-like status among the public, and the rapid expansion of the drug and medical technology industries. A belief in the capacity of science to eventually solve all problems ignored the serendipitous aspects of many of the great discoveries which should have prompted a deep and thankful humility rather than hubris.

Despite the hype about designer drugs, genetic manipulation and stem cell research, which all remain at this time as potentials only, there have been no major advances in therapy in the past twenty years. As time has passed, the initial and justified euphoria over the "defining moments" in medicine has been tempered by a more realistic concern over drug side effects, the appearance of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and new diseases such as AIDS and hepatitis C, and the rapid growth in the incidence of diabetes and neurological conditions such as autism and Alzheimer's disease.

The irony is that, in spite of medicine's glowing successes in some areas, there is in the community a great deal of chronic unwellness for which conventional medicine has little to offer. Doctor and medical writer James Le Fanu highlights a four-fold paradox affecting modern medicine:

First, doctors themselves are dispirited, the proportion "regretting" their decision to enter medicine rising from 15% in 1966 to 50% in 1988. And since then, things have become much tougher for doctors, with all the uncertainties of the malpractice insurance issue, greater demands in terms of continuing education requirements, and far more interference from government bureaucracies, regulatory bodies and corporate entities.

Second, despite the prodigious medical advances of the post-war years, the proportion of the public claiming to be “worried” about their health has shown the same pattern, rising from 15% to almost 50% over the same period. These people are the so-called “worried well”.

The third aspect of the paradox is that, despite medicine’s advances, an extraordinary number of people are sufficiently dissatisfied with its style or what it has to offer that they seek out and pay for treatment from alternative practitioners such as naturopaths, homoeopaths, herbalists, osteopaths and acupuncturists.

Finally, there is the paradox of explosion in costs. In Britain, the cost of providing health services doubled in the last ten years, with precious little in the way of increased benefits or improved outcomes to show for it.

Social historian Roy Porter puts it this way: “The irony is that the healthier Western society becomes, the more medicine it craves... Immense pressures are created – by the medical profession, by the media, by the high pressure advertising of pharmaceutical companies – to expand the diagnosis of treatable illnesses. Scares are created, people are bamboozled into lab tests, often of dubious reliability. Thanks to diagnostic creep or leap, ever more disorders are revealed, extensive and expensive treatments are then urged... [This] is endemic to a system in which an expanding medical establishment, faced with a healthier population, is driven to medicalising normal events, converting risks into diseases and treating trivial complaints with fancy procedures... The law of diminishing returns necessarily applies.”

So, I believe that we are now at a crossroads where it is timely to reassess where we go from here with regard to health care.

I’d like to share some thoughts about the state of health care in Australia today, and the direction in which I believe we should move for the sake of the health and well being of our people individually, and also to prevent a financial meltdown in the provision of health services. In other words, how can we do it better for the quality of life of you and me, and for the bottom line of the taxpayers' expenditure on health.

I hope you will be open enough to consider these views as part of the reappraisal of health care which we as a society must face up to. We simply are not going to be able to afford to let things go on as they are. The baby-boomer generation is moving rapidly towards retirement over the next 5 - 20 years. “The Cutting Edge” program, SBS-TV, 30/7/02, declared that over the next 25 years the number of pensioners will grow 14 times faster than the workforce. Most of those baby-boomers are hopelessly underfunded for their retirement and many will be expecting taxpayer support by way of pensions and Medicare. The proportion of the population over 60 years old will be rising rapidly. At present there are about five people in the workforce to support each person on a pension. By the year 2023 it is expected that there will be only three workers for each pensioner. Meanwhile, the costs of high-tech medicine escalate. So we will have more people wanting more expensive services, and a shrinking funding base to pay for it all.

Unlike their parents who went through two world wars and the Great Depression, baby-

boomers have had it pretty easy unless their marble was drawn out of the Vietnam barrel. They have high expectations for lifestyle and health care. Where is the money going to come from? Life-or-death decisions are already being made on the basis of funds available, and it isn't going to get better unless we have a radical rethink of how we spend our health dollars.

It's my belief that a dollar spent on prevention is worth ten, maybe fifty, maybe a hundred dollars of treatment and attempted cure after the fact, not to mention a great benefit in terms of the person's health, capacity to enjoy life and to be an actively contributing member of society well into old age.

For most people, their health steadily deteriorates from age 40 or 50 onwards, they're taking more and more medication (and don't think for a minute that your doctor understands all the interactions of those drugs), and their quality of life declines accordingly. Chronic unwellness has taken over. Yet there is no reason, and many active seniors have demonstrated this, why people can't remain healthy and active almost until they drop off the perch. I often think of the American nutritionist Dr. Paul Bragg, who at the age of 17 was sent to a Swiss sanatorium for treatment of his tuberculosis. There he learned how to revitalise and detoxify his body of the large amounts of mercurial drugs he had been given. He went on to devote his life to promoting natural health principles, and he died in his early nineties. He drowned after being hit on the head by his surfboard!

As a natural therapist with twenty-two years in practice behind me, I want to say at the outset that I don't like the term "alternative medicine", simply because I believe we should be using what works best in the long as well as the short term, whether it's regarded as conventional or unconventional. The terms "complementary medicine", "functional medicine" or "natural medicine" are better than "alternative". I will use the term "orthodox medicine" to describe the style of medicine currently taught in medical faculties of universities and practised by the majority of doctors.

If at times during this talk I sound critical of orthodox medicine, it is from a desire to see improved outcomes, not because I want to engage in an exercise of doctor-bashing. Indeed, I, like many others, owe my life to the skills of orthodox doctors and the techniques of modern medicine. However, it is sobering to reflect that many have not been so fortunate. It is estimated, within the medical profession itself, that some 18,000 Australians die each year as a result of their medical treatment (that's one in every thousand people) and one in six hospital admissions is for treatment of conditions caused by medical procedures or drug therapies. The term *iatrogenics* has been coined for the branch of medicine which studies doctor-caused illness. Can you imagine the outcry if even one person died at the hands of a naturopath?

I'd like to discuss the positive aspects of what can be achieved in terms of health outcomes and cost effectiveness by the use of functional medicine and natural therapies generally. But before we do that, I think we need to look briefly again at what is wrong with medicine today. First, we need to acknowledge that medicine is Big Business, and what is in the interests of corporations, shareholders and doctors is not necessarily in the interests of the patient. George Bernard Shaw may have been in a cynical mood when he wrote: "The test to which all methods of treatment are finally brought is whether they are

lucrative to doctors or not." But there's a grain of truth in his comment. The medical profession generally is strangely uninterested in solutions which are "low tech" and low cost. Medical equipment, technology and drug companies spend huge sums of money promoting their products to doctors and hospitals. They offer incentives to use or prescribe which can be described kindly as unethical, and unkindly as corrupt. Next time you go to the doctor, look around the room, notice all the drug company free gifts which can subliminally influence a doctor's prescription. What you will not see are the lavish dinners with the honoraria paid on the way out, the paid-for trips to exotic locations for so-called educational seminars, the seemingly unbiased papers written by respected senior consultants who are in fact on the payroll of one or other drug company, and the fact that even prestigious medical journals rely on advertising revenue. As for the less highbrow medical press, such as the magazines commonly circulated to GPs, drug advertisements appear on up to three in every four pages. Powerful and potentially dangerous drugs are portrayed in warm, human, life-affirming terms with minimal attention to potential side-effects and with scant regard for the truth of the drug's actual value to the patient. Pharmaceutical company money dominates what doctors learn about drugs, and the same is true of medical technology companies and their promotion of new equipment and procedures.

Medicine is becoming increasingly entrepreneurial, with all the attendant over-promotion, and it frequently degenerates into production line medicine. Throughput is everything. Caring doctors who actually take enough time to listen to and talk to their patients, looking for causes, and perhaps even suggesting some dietary and lifestyle changes, are being hauled up before medical boards or the Health Insurance Commission to explain why they have a higher than average proportion of extended consultations. Never mind the fact that they may be seeing only twenty patients a day rather than a hundred - they are accused of over-servicing. You can write prescriptions for a hundred patients a day but you cannot practise good medicine for a hundred patients a day. With the number of consultations with natural therapists increasing rapidly over the past few years, you could say that the people are voting with their feet, in spite of the financial disincentives. The reasons are simple: natural therapists listen to their patients, they try to educate them to take more responsibility for their own health, they use safe therapies and they get results.

People are willing to pay out substantial amounts of hard-earned cash to access the services of natural therapists when they could go down the road to the doctor and have it virtually all paid for by the taxpayer. Most of our new clients come from referrals rather than advertising. If it were a level playing field cost-wise you would see a massive explosion in the use of natural therapies. People are tired of five-minute doctors' consultations, drug side-effects, and suppression of symptoms without looking at reasons for ill-health. They perceive a lack of respect evidenced by a reluctance by many doctors to listen, to inform, to answer questions, to educate and to involve the client in their treatment regime. They are uncomfortable about the aura of greed which surrounds entrepreneurial medicine.

It's my belief that orthodox medicine fundamentally lacks a philosophy of health and healing. Medicine knows a great deal about disease but very little about health. Rather

than seeing disease as an indication of nutritional lack, toxic overload or functional imbalance which can be rectified by the body's own healing resources if given the right conditions, doctors see illness as an enemy to be assaulted - excised, burnt, poisoned, chemically manipulated and suppressed, even if cure is elusive and the effects of the treatment may be destructive in the long term.

If we had time I could give many examples, in everything from arthritis to migraines, from auto-immune disorders to skin problems, from heart disease to cancer where medicine uses toxic, invasive and powerful measures which may suppress symptoms but which may actually contribute to the patient's chronic downward spiral, a new drug being prescribed for each new problem that arises. Eventually the patient dies, but at least he had the best of medical care.

Happily there are glimmerings of positive change from individuals and groups within the medical profession. A small but growing number of doctors are opting for a more holistic approach to their practices, despite the prejudices against them from within their own profession. Supportive bodies such as the Australasian College of Nutritional and Environmental Medicine, and the Australasian Integrative Medical Association, have arisen within the medical profession as a result of years of effort by dedicated individual doctors. Swinburne University in Melbourne recently established a Graduate School of Integrative Medicine under the direction of Professor Avni Sali, a long-time supporter of nutritional and natural therapies, and now runs a hospital where nutritional and functional medicine is routinely applied and where conventional methods are brought in as necessary. Monash University Medical School's Department of Community Medicine explores the connections between mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health through its Meditation-Based Stress Management Program. Several hundred doctors and natural therapists each year attend the Institute of Functional Medicines's conference on the latest advances in nutritional therapies. The Gawler Foundation runs workshops attended by many doctors, psychiatrists, natural therapists, nurses and other health professionals every year. Its founder, Dr Ian Gawler, is himself living proof of the power of holistic methods, having overcome bone cancer by the use of natural foods, meditation and visualisation. After being told he had two weeks to live, Ian, over twenty years later, is very much alive and well, and devoting his life to helping other people coping with life-threatening disease.

So, when we start to look outside the square, what options are available to us?

First, we need to acknowledge that disease is not the result of crossing over some imaginary line, as if one day you are healthy and the next day you wake up sick, or don't wake up at all! Rather it is usually the result of a long period of abuse in terms of toxic overload and inadequate or inappropriate nutrition on a cellular level. Type II diabetes is a classic example. The consequences of diabetes may be obesity, heart disease, increased incidence of cancer, blindness, kidney failure and limb amputations as a result of peripheral circulatory collapse. Type II diabetes is the end result of years of increasing insulin resistance, in other words, the body not recognising and responding in a normal way to

the insulin produced by the pancreas to regulate blood sugar and facilitate energy production. It is caused in susceptible people by over-consumption of carbohydrates and fats, sedentary lifestyles and deficiency in certain nutrients. It used to be called late-onset diabetes, then adult-onset diabetes; in the past few years even that name has been

dropped because it's now occurring in teenagers and children.

Rather than seeing disease as a line you cross over, I see health and illness as a continuum, a spectrum if you like, with radiant good health and high energy levels at one end of the spectrum, and serious chronic illness and death at the other end. Most of us will find ourselves somewhere between the two extremes of that continuum.

If the dietary and lifestyle choices which promote health are followed from an early age, there is no reason why any person with a passable genetic make-up can't sustain excellent health well into old age. If you didn't choose your parents wisely, you are more behind the 8-ball but there's still a lot you can do to modify the expression of your genes, to improve your situation. Never say "it's in the family so there's nothing I can do about it."

Where health is basically good it can be maintained that way with good nutrition and the other health-promoting activities which I'll get to later.

If you are further along the continuum and experiencing some health problems, then, as well as good nutrition, intervention with natural therapies will be needed. One or more of the following may be required: herbal medicine, homoeopathy, acupuncture, detoxification programs, manipulation, massage, etc. All of these strategies follow the Hippocratic maxim "First, do no harm", and can be powerfully effective. We don't have time to go into detail about these specific therapies, but I'll do my best later on to answer any questions you may have about them.

Orthodox medicine is very good at saving life in acute and emergency situations. For example, 30 years ago, about 30% of people who survived a heart attack died within the first six weeks after the event. Now only 3% to 5% die in that time. If you have bacterial meningitis, strong antibiotics may save you when nothing else will. It is only at this far end of our health and disease continuum that invasive therapies such as toxic drugs and surgery can be justified.

Unfortunately, orthodox medicine's ability to treat chronic (or long-standing) disease is not impressive.

Some would say, sadly inadequate. Conditions such as arthritis, heart disease, digestive dysfunction, skin problems, chronic fatigue, asthma, recurrent infections, anxiety, depression and many more are merely palliated, with drugs which increase the toxic load on your system and accelerate the downward spiral towards chronic ill-health and poor quality of life. It is in the area of chronic disease that natural therapies really do have a lot to offer.

We all innately know how to heal ourselves if we are given the right conditions, just as Ian Gawler's body/mind/spirit resolved his cancer. So treatment is aimed at clearing the system of accumulated toxins and enhancing the ongoing capacity to detoxify, also to provide the nutritional raw materials for repair, protection and healthy cellular function, and third, if necessary, to use energetic therapies such as acupuncture or homoeopathy to organise the body's own healing resources to move in the right direction. All healing comes from nature, or God if you prefer. All we can do is provide the environment in which healing can occur.

With regard to toxicity, you may ask where these toxins come from. Some are the product of normal body metabolism. Some come from disordered gastrointestinal

function - the so-called leaky gut syndrome where factors such as drugs, alcohol, food sensitivities, autoimmune disorders, poor diet, and overgrowth of yeasts and other unfriendly bugs can damage the lining of the gut allowing absorption of substances which would normally not and should not be absorbed. Still other toxins come from the general environment - vehicle and factory emissions, chemicals added to or finding their way into the water supply, pesticide and herbicide residues in foods, drugs, alcohol, caffeine, tobacco smoke, trans fatty acids in fried foods and margarine.... the list goes on and on. Just sitting in a room at home or at work, we will be breathing outgassing from the rubber backing on the carpet, vinyl and formaldehyde from the plastic and chipboard in the furniture, solvents from printed materials, probably residual insect sprays, etc.

I believe that the issue of environmental toxins is a time bomb. Hundreds of new chemicals get released onto the market and into our living environment every year. We do not have the advantage of thousands of years of exposure to these chemicals which might have given us a better chance to adapt. As I said earlier, we know that many toxins potentiate each other - in other words, tiny doses of two chemicals which individually would be too small to have a toxic effect, do, when both are present simultaneously, have a toxic effect hundreds of times more potent than the individual chemicals. What then is the effect of the thousands of toxic compounds present in tiny amounts in our systems? I think we are starting to see the effect in people suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome and multiple chemical sensitivity disorders. These are the people who are allergic to the 21st century.

Fortunately there are ways to improve our resistance to this assault, providing a general ecological collapse does not occur. Meanwhile our friends at the biotechnology companies are genetically engineering our food supply so crops can withstand massive increases in herbicide use and they are lobbying the government to allow a 200-fold increase in the allowable levels of glyphosate residues in their soy beans. All this for no benefit to the consumer, just unquantifiable risks for you and me. Their sole motivation is higher profits.

In our attitude to the natural environment as well as to the human body, it strikes me as extraordinary arrogance that we think we can foresee the long-term effects of our crude attempts to manage and manipulate both of these incredibly beautiful, complex and subtle products of the universe's creative imperative.. Future generations will look back at ours and shake their heads in disbelief at a people who were clever enough to develop powerful technologies but were not wise enough to know that they knew so little. Change will only come in the medical system when we all as users of that system demand it. This is already starting to happen. Society cannot afford for it not to happen. There is now a huge and rapidly expanding body of scientific research validating nutritional and herbal medicine. Like the dinosaurs who failed to adapt to changing times, medical professionals who choose to ignore this knowledge and stick to old paradigms will become increasingly irrelevant.

I'd like to end on a positive note, to leave you with some simple strategies to improve your own health and that of your family; if you put these into effect it will do amazing things for your quality of life, and add a few extra years to enjoy the wonderful things

that life has to offer.

TEN SUGGESTIONS FOR A LONG, HAPPY AND HEALTHY LIFE

1. Family relationships, friendships and community involvement

Cultivate them, make time for them, enjoy them.

2. Avoid the harmful

Minimise your exposure to toxins at home and in the workplace. Avoid processed and chemical-laden “foods”, refined sugars and white flour products; minimize use of drugs, caffeine, animal fat, margarine and fried foods. Avoid excessive alcohol intake. Don’t waste time listening to negative thinking, gossip and bigotry.

3. Consume the healthy

Eat smaller but more frequent meals. Consume mainly vegetables, fruits, legumes, fresh nuts and seeds, and fish. Use only whole-grain breads, cereals, pasta and rice, and don’t have large serves of these carbohydrate-dense foods. Have pasture-raised lean meat and free-range poultry if you wish, three or four times a week. Eat organically grown produce wherever possible. If your access to fresh fruit and vegetables is limited, make sure you are taking a supplement of fruit and vegetable concentrates rich in phytonutrients. Is there scope for a vege garden? If you are under stress, working in a toxic environment or have health problems, seek professional naturopathic advice for a suitable supplement and treatment program.

4. Drink clean water

Don’t drink town water without treating it to remove chemicals. Buy a decent purifying system, such as pressed carbon block or reverse osmosis. Drink more water than your thirst tells you to.

5. Detoxify

If you already have health problems, seek professional naturopathic advice for a program to enhance liver and digestive function and to flush out accumulated toxins.

6. Be physically active

If you are not doing regular manual work, build up to doing at least half an hour of moderate walking, swimming, jogging, cycling, or whatever you enjoy, four or five times a week, at a level which makes you puff and sweat a little. If you’re over 40 or have a history of health problems, get a thorough

cardiovascular check-up before starting an exercise program. Gardening is great exercise, and you get to admire or eat the results of your efforts!

7. Don't smoke

Enjoy clean air, taste food again, add years to your life, have breath that doesn't smell like a stale ashtray, and feel virtuous that you are not contributing to the deaths of the hundreds of non-smoking Australians who die each year from the effects of other people's smoke.

8. Drink red wine, in moderation

If you enjoy it and don't react to it, one or two glasses (no more) of good quality red wine on a regular basis will significantly reduce your risk of heart disease. If you can't take it or don't like it, take grape seed extract capsules. Of course, if you have ever had trouble controlling your alcohol intake, stay away from all alcoholic drinks.

9. Reduce and manage stress

We can't always control what happens to us but we can choose how we react. Will this situation really be important in six months' or five years' time? Cultivate an optimistic but realistic attitude. Learn to meditate, do tai-chi or yoga, watch the sunset, just take some quiet time every day. Take up some enjoyable hobby or leisure activity. Get adequate sleep. Become the person your dog thinks you already are!

10. Find a higher purpose

Whether we have a spiritual perspective on life or not, finding a purpose to accomplish something worthwhile and pursuing it with passion and determination will bring great satisfaction and sense of meaning and value. If we always keep a goal out in front of us, it keeps us sharp and there is evidence that it extends life as well.

So, share these ideas with others!

In summary, I hope I have shown that we need a new paradigm of health care where the primary focus is on health and its maintenance rather than disease and its treatment. Currently, eighty percent of all the money that is spent on a person's health is spent in the last five years of their life. If you have a heart attack which you survive, it will cost the taxpayer about \$50,000. A stroke, about \$65,000. A heart transplant, about a quarter of a

million dollars. Not to mention the pain and suffering and family economic loss involved. If we can get back to natural foods grown in healthy soils and we use inexpensive and effective nutritional, botanical and lifestyle strategies to reduce the extent of chronic illness and the need for this type of high-tech intervention, isn't that a better outcome?

And, don't forget:

The human body, with proper care, will last a lifetime!

Just in closing, I'd like to mention a project I am working on to make natural therapies more accessible to people in remote areas. The Royal Flying Doctor Service does a fantastic job in providing emergency and other medical services in the bush and what I am proposing would be complementary to their role. Our emphasis would be on health and nutrition education, preventative health care and the provision of naturopathic options for the treatment of illness. With the distances being so vast, clearly such a service could not be financially viable of itself so external fundraising will be needed. Maybe we could also tap into the infrastructure of the RFDS with their "clinic runs" to reduce costs in some areas. These are possibilities which we need to investigate.

We have some discussion time left – it would be good to get some feedback about the issues I've raised and what people in the bush feel about natural therapies, whether they perceive a need for better access to services of that type. Any comments or questions?

Postscript: If you would like to contribute to getting this project happening, donations can be sent to me at Raphael Centre, 115 Roslyn Rd (PO Box 137), Belmont, Vic. 3216 (Australia). All contributions will be acknowledged, with deep gratitude. Unfortunately we don't yet have charity status for tax-deductibility of donations, though hopefully this will happen in due course. The provisional name of our service is Australian Outback Natural Health Service.