8 April 2013

12th Conference opening anticipates bright future for rural health

The 12th National Rural Health Conference got off to a powerful and poignant start last evening, led by the wonderful Tutti Community Choir. Uncle Lewis O’Brien and the Kuma Karro dancers welcomed delegates to Kaurma country, with Lewis explaining the symbolism of the gathering of gum leaves as a sign of the power of community togetherness – well reflected by the conference itself.

Tutti were given a standing ovation for their performance, their red uniforms complementing perfectly the huge patchwork of colour behind them, and their singing charming the conference delegates gathered from all around rural and remote Australia.

Andrew Laming, Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health Services and Indigenous Health, gave an extensive presentation, ranging from his personal involvement with the origins of the rural and remote health ‘family’ in 1991 right up to the present. Andrew recognised the Strong Commitment of conference delegates to rural health and wellbeing, and foreshadowed that this would be ensured by a focus on best practice institutional arrangements such as are being set in place in some other developed nations, and capturing the benefits of technology for health.

Delegates heard a speech on behalf of SA Minister for Health and Ageing, Jack Snelling, from Jenny Richter, Deputy Chief Executive of SA Health, who described a Bright Future in which there would be a greater emphasis on successfully avoiding and managing chronic conditions. A message from the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, was read by Leigh Radford, Conference MC, and delegates were welcomed to the city by Councillor David Plumridge on behalf of the Lord Mayor.

With the twitter stream running fast and hot (you can follow at #ruralhealthconf), the opening session ended with a strong analogue message presented by Council of the NRHA which mirrors its overall purpose:

Good health in rural and remote areas

This goal will continue to motivate the NRHA as it enters its 22nd year.

More information on the Conference can be found at www.ruralhealth.org.au