

## *Pain at the pump*

As I write this article, radio news bulletins are announcing the price of petrol has tipped \$1.70 a litre. At the petrol station next door, the price sits at an unprecedented \$1.72. To make matters worse, some are forecasting that the price of petrol will climb to \$2.30 by early next year. This seems scary when it seems like just yesterday that we were paying under 70 cents a litre!

For years the media and politicians have reinforced to us that the major pressure on household spending and "working families" has been home mortgage interest rates. Yet these days there can be little doubt that while the focus on interest rates remains, the number one issue for most households, many businesses and the community as a whole is the cost of petrol.

As governments, regulators, bankers and investors across Australia and worldwide watch this all develop from different perspectives, in local communities people are feeling the impact of these extraordinary price hikes like never before. It seems almost unbelievable that so recently - just in January of this year - there were predictions that the litre price of unleaded petrol would hit \$1.50 and, as a community, we were horrified at the prospect. In reality we should now almost regard such a price as a 'happy memory' and perhaps we might be forgiven if we look back on such times as the 'good old days'.

The impact of rising petrol prices is felt at all levels of industry and the community. And as painful as it is for the average motorist to fill up these days, this represents only the very visible result of petrol prices hitting all time highs. More hidden, but nonetheless deeply impacting on the weekly budget, are the price

increases that are being passed on by businesses and industries that themselves are being directly and dramatically affected.

Food, household goods and services, travel, transport - any business, supplier or contractor that has a reliance on petrol to fulfil a significant aspect of their business is feeling the pain and is, inevitably and perhaps quite defensibly, passing on those increases to the end-user. It is hard to quantify what the collective impact is on the average consumer, but combined with the cost of petrol at the bowser itself, as well as the very real and never forgotten impact of increasing interest rates, there is no doubt that many in our community are feeling what was once a firm pinch become a very painful squeeze.

Yes, this is an issue that affects the whole community and I want to share with you the impact of petrol price increases on Royal District Nursing Service. We have 600 cars in our fleet, and their purpose is to enable our nurses to travel to clients' homes in order to provide nursing care.

For us the facts are quite simple: for every 1 cent price increase in petrol, RDNS will spend an extra \$8,700 a year.

To put that into perspective, in mid-2005 we were purchasing petrol for \$1.10 per litre. With prices as they sit today, that means that in the next 12 months we will spend over half a million dollars more to visit RDNS clients in their homes compared to the 2005 financial year.

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### *Pain at the pump cont.*

If prices climb to \$2.30 a litre, as predicted by some commentators, we will spend a further half a million dollars on top of that.

RDNS is a not-for-profit organisation committed to providing the best possible care – and as much of it as possible – to those in our community with a home nursing need. The above increases amount to over \$2 million in

just four years – or a staggering 27,866 hours of care that could have been provided to clients, now simply burned up in petrol costs.

Yes, rising petrol prices are a problem for the entire community. But with those we represent being mainly the frail and the aged, a segment of our community whose voice is often a quiet one, it would be remiss of me not to comment

on how dramatic the impact of rising petrol prices is on this organisation, and importantly in turn, on those we care for and advocate on behalf of.

DAN ROMANIS  
*Chief Executive Officer*

## *Grant helps fulfil a wish*

Michelle's story is proof that one can defy the odds. At the age of 24, Michelle contracted HIV while living in Italy. With her world turned upside-down, doctors gave her a grim prognosis – she would be lucky to live more than four years.

Twenty years later, Michelle has battled depression, contracted and successfully treated Hepatitis C, undergone countless medical tests and visited hospital more times than she can remember. And although she has never been well enough to work full-time, Michelle's strength and determination has seen her successfully contribute to the HIV sector and the wider community.

Michelle credits district nurse Liz Crock, from RDNS Yarra, with helping to give her the strength and support she needs. Liz has provided holistic nursing care to Michelle for over eight years. "Liz provides more than just a nursing service; she gives me a great amount of emotional support. The relationship that Liz and I share is very special.

I can confide in her and she shares with me a wealth of information," explains Michelle.

So when Liz recently learned of Michelle's wish to share a holiday in Queensland with her parents, she knew that Michelle's financial situation would hinder the possibility. "As I can only work on a casual basis, I don't have a lot of money to pay for airfares and for someone to look after my two dogs. But Liz urged me to apply for the Lyndie Spurr Grant a Wish Fund and even offered to write a letter to support my application," Michelle explains.

Established by former RDNS executive general manager Lyndie Spurr, the fund provides financial assistance to RDNS clients or carers to fulfil their most cherished wish – a wish that will make a significant and positive impact on their life. Michelle was elated when she recently received a call from Fundraising Manager, Judith Rees, informing her that she would be receiving a grant to support her trip to Queensland.

"It feels incredible to receive this grant and I am so grateful. I've worked so much over the past year and I recently lost my partner so I'm really worn out. Being able to go on holiday with my family will help keep me from breaking point," says Michelle.

Michelle's parents were equally delighted to hear her news. "My parents are so happy! They are so pleased that RDNS is able to not only provide me with quality nursing care, but can also do this special thing for me," she says excitedly.

Life undoubtedly will continue to throw forth its challenges to Michelle, but for a short time at least, she will be able to find respite and renewal in the northern sun, thanks to the on-going legacy of this important fund.

If you would like to support the Lyndie Spurr Grant a Wish Fund, please contact Judith Rees on (03) 9536 5238.

## *The importance of listening*

While we are proud of our history and reputation at RDNS, we are also acutely aware that a reputation can only be maintained through on-going and consistently good performance. In the last few years particularly, we have seen rapid growth and change within the healthcare sector and accordingly, we too have had to grow and change.

This has meant staying abreast of changes within the industry, but critically, listening to what our clients think about our service. Therefore, we recently engaged a market research group to conduct a client satisfaction survey in order to ascertain their current level of satisfaction with the organisation.

Almost 2,000 clients were involved in the survey, which had a response rate of 47%.

Results have been benchmarked with the national 'Home Health' database, which comprises 84 organisations. The composite result for all clients is an indication of how RDNS compares to other organisations in relation to its overall level of client satisfaction.

This survey was a follow-up to a similar survey conducted in 2003 and pleasingly, the composite result saw the level of client satisfaction increase to 88.6, up from 86.9 in the 2003 survey.

Perhaps most satisfying, apart from this composite result, was the fact that we scored above the industry benchmark in each of the major sections of the questionnaire, which surveyed issues such as the arranging of client care, dealing with our Customer Service Centre staff, interacting with nurses themselves and the handling of personal issues.

Of all the questions asked, it was the friendliness and courtesy of our nurses that scored most highly, along with their technical skills and the respect paid by RDNS staff to clients.

This is a good result and we can be pleased with the level of satisfaction that our clients are experiencing. However, there are always areas in which to improve, no matter how good the performance. The results also indicated that we should continue to address areas such as our clients' sense of readiness to cease treatment; how well changes to client care are handled by staff; how well complaints and concerns are dealt with; and seek to keep clients and their families and/or carers even better informed about their treatment and progress.



## Leading by example

Leading Solutions, Australia's largest privately owned IT solutions provider, has maintained a long-term partnership with RDNS, stretching back to the early 1990s. After 15 years of working closely together on a range of IT projects, we are delighted that Leading Solutions has decided to develop the relationship further by becoming one of our major sponsors.

Troy Morgan, Leading Solutions Sales Manager says, "As a long-standing business partner of RDNS, we are pleased to become a sponsor and to be given the opportunity to support RDNS in the generous work that they do for the community."

Established in 1988, Leading Solutions delivers innovative IT solutions and expertise, supported by the products and services of leading IT vendors, as well as an extensive range of software and engineering capabilities. Throughout the relationship with RDNS,

Leading Solutions has been involved in assisting us with numerous IT projects.

Most significantly, in 2006 Leading Solutions was the chosen partner for the supply, deployment, integration and maintenance of over 1000 Fujitsu T 4215 Tablet PC and Option Packs across all RDNS locations. Our Mobile Computer Refresh Program delivered to our staff a more robust and reliable unit, resulting in significantly improved communications throughout RDNS. This project has been a great example of how the right technology has been able to assist us in achieving our constant goal: delivering the best possible nursing service to our clients.

The dedication of both RDNS and Leading Solutions staff to the success of this project and their exceptional service delivery earned them a joint Information Technology Institute Project Management, Victorian Chapter Award for 2007.

Currently, Leading Solutions is assisting RDNS as a procurement partner for a range of products including HP, EMC, Symantec and Cisco products. This is supported by a Leading Solutions dedicated call centre which is responsible for the logging and tracking of warranty calls for the Fujitsu T 4215 tablets and other Netcare related services.

Over the years, Leading Solutions has extended their support for RDNS beyond the call of a commercial partnership through their involvement in numerous fundraising activities and through generous donations. We are truly delighted to welcome Leading Solutions on board as an official sponsor.

If your organisation is interested in discussing a sponsorship or partnership with RDNS, please call Judith Rees on (03) 9536 5238.

## Annual report scores a gong

We recently received news that our 2007 Annual Report has won the gold award for graphic design in an international awards program.

Over the last few years our annual reports have been designed by the Educational Resource Centre (ERC) at the Royal Children's Hospital. This multi-media facility, which specialises in clinical photography, graphic design, multi-media and web production, primarily serves the needs of the hospital but also undertakes work for external clients.

As a member of the American-based HeSCA (Health and Science Communications Association), ERC recently entered the 2007 RDNS Annual Report into HeSCA's annual awards program, called the Media Festival. This festival is an international forum for health sciences media with the goal of showcasing and recognising individuals and organisations whose

work represents the very best in health sciences media production.

The purpose of the HeSCA Media Festival is to award health communications media demonstrating outstanding design and production values. The HeSCA Media Festival is judged by leading biocommunication professionals with currency in the field. The criteria used in evaluating media are technical quality, production values and techniques, educational design, technological innovation, creativity, and craftsmanship of the media product.

We are delighted that in such a prestigious awards scheme and against so many international entries, graphic designer Jacqui Glenister, who designed the 2007 RDNS Annual Report, has been awarded the gold medal. We heartily congratulate Jacqui on the win.



Annual Report: 2007

