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Outreach health funding secured for another three years

People living in rural and remote communities will have greater certainty about visiting health services with Rural Health West recently receiving a new three-year contract to plan and deliver outreach services across Western Australia.

Rural Health West funded more than 60,000 medical and health appointments in more than 130 country communities during 2016-17 to bring care closer to home for people living in rural and remote locations.

Rural Health West General Manager, Regional Services Vivienne Duggin said local and visiting health providers would soon be given three-year contracts to deliver services, which means that local communities can rely on outreach health services over the medium term.

“These outreach services are extremely well-received by rural communities, as they remove the financial and time burden of accessing health services if they don’t exist close to home,” Ms Duggin said.

“In the past year, we have potentially saved rural patients collectively travelling more than 118 million kilometres* to access the care they need in Perth. This has significant benefits for rural people, particularly those in poor health,” she said.

In the Pilbara, outreach funding supported Ear Science Institute of Australia (ESIA) to provide much needed audiology and ENT services to the Western Desert Aboriginal Communities of Jigalong, Punmu, and Parnngurr.

More than 700 appointments were conducted in these communities, supported by the Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service, with a further 200 specialist telehealth appointments delivered to complement the face-to-face visiting services.

Further south, outreach funding enabled a visiting ophthalmologist to provide 468 consultations to people living in Katanning, with some receiving eye surgery at the local hospital.

“We’re currently holding workshops across the State to let local health providers know how to apply for outreach funding,” Ms Duggin said.

“Our next step will be to hold regional working groups with key stakeholders to determine the priority health needs of each region and then match those needs against the applications from providers to deliver services,” she said.

The outreach programs are funded through the Australian Government Department of Health and aim to deliver vital health services to people living in rural and remote areas of Australia, who have limited access to certain health services.

- * figure is based on occasions of service x return travel between locations of service delivery and Perth.

ENDS

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Rural Health West aims to improve access to quality healthcare for rural communities through the provision of a highly skilled, motivated and sustainable medical and allied health workforce. We are a not-for-profit organisation primarily funded through the WA Country Health Service and the Australian Government Department of Health.