

\$1.6m boost for country Aboriginal people travelling for health treatment

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Aboriginal people travelling from rural and remote areas to Perth for treatment for chronic conditions will benefit from over \$1.6 million funding to better coordinate their care, and improve health and wellbeing.

This came about following a collaborative project led by WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) to better understand the issues impacting Aboriginal people travelling from remote areas, and design solutions to address system-wide problems.

In 2016, Aboriginal people travelled more than 5,000 times from towns and remote communities throughout country WA to be treated in Perth public hospitals.

The funding boost will allow all 14 recommendations of the *Integrated Team Care Country to City: Improving Patient Transitions Project* to be implemented over the next three years.

This will lead to improvements in the experience and care of Aboriginal people living with chronic conditions who require an integrated and seamless approach to address their complex care needs.

Minister for Indigenous Health, Ken Wyatt AM, said improving the patient journey from country to city will make a real difference to the health outcomes for WA Aboriginal people living in remote areas.

“Travelling away from home for health treatment can be a real culture shock for some Aboriginal people, especially if this is their first visit to Perth, or English is not their first language.

“Providing people who are alone and off-Country with coordinated health and social support can reduce stress levels and allow people to concentrate on managing their chronic conditions,” Mr Wyatt said.

WAPHA general manager Linda Richardson said the report outlines practical solutions that will now be implemented across WA to improve processes, promote consistency and increase integration between organisations.

“The initiatives outlined in the report will not replace other programs or services such as the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS), rather having relevant stakeholders working together will make it easier for people to navigate the current system,” Ms Richardson said.

“Supporting people to prepare for travel and navigate multiple service providers can really help them to better manage their chronic conditions and return home as soon as possible.

“Utilisation of existing services is also important, such as redirecting eligible patients to telehealth to avoid the emotional and financial costs of travel altogether,” Ms Richardson said.

The project involved extensive consultation with key stakeholders including Aboriginal health consumers, Aboriginal healthcare providers, WA Country Health Service, Aboriginal Health Council of WA, Health Consumers Council and Area Health Services.

WAPHA funds Integrated Team Care, a care coordination service that works with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and general practices to provide more than 1000 Aboriginal people with integrated and complex care for chronic conditions.

This service has been made possible through funding provided by the Australian Government under the PHN Program.

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About WA Primary Health Alliance: WA Primary Health Alliance oversees the strategic commissioning functions of the Perth North, Perth South and Country WA Primary Health Networks (PHNs). The WA PHNs are three of 31 PHNs established by the Australian Government nationally to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for the community. We work across the WA healthcare system with doctors, allied health professionals, Area Health Services and service providers to improve the coordination of care for people who are at risk of poor health outcomes. For more information, visit www.wapha.org.au