

MEDIA RELEASE



Meekatharra community voices shape local healthcare

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The remote Western Australian town of Meekatharra has its fair share of challenges but having a say in the most appropriate primary care services is no longer one of them, thanks to the strong voice of the Meekatharra Aboriginal Reference Group (MARG).

By working closely with MARG, WA Primary Health Alliance's Midwest team has been able to listen and respond to local needs by funding primary care services and health workers to deliver culturally appropriate, accessible and effective treatment and support.

WAPHA Country Operations Manager, Jodie Green, said, "With guidance from MARG, we are commissioning to local need, with four new services embedded in the community to deal with the priority health issues they identified.

"I am proud of the special relationship my colleagues and I have with MARG and its members and it's great to work with the community in such a genuine way.

"To celebrate their achievements, we were delighted to support the production of a documentary video that we hope will inspire other communities and agencies to work together similarly."

MARG Elder, Adeline Gilla, said, "I am very happy and proud of MARG and what it is doing for Meekatharra. To see the Aboriginal flag flying very high in Meekatharra shows we have come a long way. MARG has some wonderful people and supporters, too. I can see positive changes and how MARG is connecting the dots."

Department of Communities Regional Services Reform Unit, Director Regional Coordination, Jamie Strickland, said MARG is a great example of how government and other relevant stakeholders can sit down and hear from the Aboriginal community about what matters to them.

"Often, it's not about throwing more money at issues; it's about listening to the community and seeing how we can work together to make things better.

"To see how MARG has grown and is making positive change in Meekatharra is inspirational and perhaps an approach that could be used in other locations."

Established five years ago with support from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, WA and the former Department of Aboriginal Affairs, MARG has ongoing support from the Department of Communities. It allows people to come together and air their views on all manner of topics and establish priorities for the community.

Watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X85cj5JqrKQ>

The documentary video was supported by funding from the Australian Government through 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, hospitals 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