

MEDIA RELEASE

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RFDS trials gender-specific clinics in the Kimberley

The health outcomes of a remote Kimberley community are being better addressed with the roll out of quarterly-run gender-specific GP clinics trialled by the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) of Western Australia.

Yakanarra is a small community with a population of 100 Aboriginal men, women and children, and is located approximately 60 kilometres south-west of Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

“Our initiation of gender-specific clinics in the community is aimed at reducing inequity in health outcomes and improving access to essential healthcare by providing culturally sensitive spaces,” RFDS Western Operations Clinical Lead of GP Services Dr John Fisher said.

Following the success of an All Women’s GP clinic which commenced trial in April, the Flying Doctor has announced it will also host All Men’s GP clinics in Yakanarra from Tuesday, July 16 onwards.

Dr Fisher said the gender-specific GP clinics, run four times a year, will focus primarily on sexual and reproductive health while the existing weekly primary health care clinics will provide immunisations, treatment for chronic conditions and other services.

Broome-based RFDS Primary Health Care nurse Kate Jones said the All Women’s GP clinic had received immense support, with community leaders expressing their keen interest in encouraging more young people to attend the clinic.

Kate said the need to provide a clinic specifically for women was identified at the weekly visit, with many Aboriginal women reluctant to talk about women’s health issues when men were present.

“It is well known that there are specific cultural sensitivities and lore that inhibit men and women talking about specific health issues with people of the opposite sex, and often of a certain age,” she said.

“We keep the clinic casual, offer the women basic refreshments and ensure that children and men are aware not to approach the clinic for the day.

“Already we’ve seen an increase in appointments and we’ve been able to reach more women and address a range of women’s health issues in a single All Women’s GP clinic than in the 12 months before that.”

Kate said local male leaders had expressed there was a need to also tackle the health issues faced by men in the community who were traditionally difficult to engage in healthcare.

“Men, especially in the 17-40 year old age group, only attend the clinic if they are unwell and often miss out on important health screening,” she said.

“The Kimberley Aboriginal Health Planning Forum (KAHPF) of which RFDS is a key member, recommends sexual health screening in all people aged 16-35 years every six months and annually after that while sexually active.

“This is a difficult target to achieve and part of the aim of these clinics is to increase this uptake.

“We are very pleased to be able to expand our outreach in the community and hope to run these gender-specific clinics on a regular basis pending the success of the trials.”

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Photo Caption:

Broome-based RFDS Primary Health Care nurse Kate Jones and Flying Doctor Tanya Ronaldson report the second All Women’s GP clinic for the year held last Friday was a success.

Media Enquiries

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Editor’s Notes

RFDS: Footprint in the Kimberley region

From 1 July 2018 – 31 May 2019, the RFDS has:

- Reached and provided in-flight medical care to 1,622 patients in the Kimberley region alone, averaging 33 patients per week and making it our busiest transport hub in the north of the state.
- Reached nearly 1900 patients in the Kimberley via its GP clinics, Primary Health Care nurse clinics and dental clinics.
- The RFDS conducts remote general practice clinics at Gibb River Station, Mt Barnett, Mount House, Drysdale and Doongan Stations, Mornington Wilderness Camp on the Gibb River Road and in the Aboriginal communities of Djugerari, Koorabye, Kadjina and Yakanarra.

General RFDS Stats and Facts

- Bases: Jandakot, Kalgoorlie, Meekatharra, Port Hedland and Broome
- Fleet: 16 PC-12 turboprop aircraft and two Rio Tinto LifeFlight PC-24 jets
- Services: Emergency aero medical retrievals, telehealth, medical chests, rural and remote GP clinics and dental services
- In the last financial year, the RFDS reached and treated 8,535 patients across Western Australia. That’s on average, 23 men, women and children flown to safety each day.
- In the last financial year, RFDS Western Operations fleet flew a total of 7.56 million kilometres to reach our patients. That’s approx. 200 times around the world.
- Each RFDS aircraft is equipped with world-class aero medical equipment to support in-flight emergencies and serve as Intensive Care Units in the sky.
- All RFDS flight nurses are qualified midwives.