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Funding helps better coordination of visiting services for Aboriginal health

A pilot program to assist Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services better coordinate and integrate visiting health services has kicked off across WA.

The pilot is funded through the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care's Medical Outreach Indigenous Chronic Disease Program (MOICDP).

MOICDP, which is administered in Western Australia by Rural Health West, provides around 1,300 outreach visits to communities across WA and provides just over 15,000 occasions of service to Aboriginal people each year.

Rural Health West Deputy Chief Executive Officer Kelli Porter said MOICDP boosts the range and accessibility of health services available for Aboriginal people managing chronic conditions. The pilot program aims to support ACCHS to enhance service delivery and coordination of services delivered under the MOICDP.

"The pilot program has been developed in response to feedback from host facilities and our regional working groups," Kelli said.

"Many ACCHS receive visits from a broad range of providers through various funding sources, however few currently have the human or financial resources to look for opportunities for improvement.

"Self-determination over health services is a critical factor in improving the overall health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"This funding available in this pilot is very flexible, with ACCHS able to use it to directly employ a coordinator, or invest in developing resources; its aimed at helping the ACCHS address whichever idea for improvement or problem they most want to target."

Five ACCHS are currently involved in the pilot, spanning the breadth of WA from the Kimberley to the South West.

"Many of the recipients have welcomed the additional funding as a chance to really 'get under the hood' and look at the range of visiting services hosted by each of their sites.

"It's an opportunity to tackle service duplication, improve patient attendance, streamline clinical processes, or boost opportunities for staff at the coalface of satellite sites to provide feedback on what works best."

Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Medical Director Dr Lorraine Anderson was excited to be a trial site for the funding.

“We struggle to manage the administration side of visiting services and providers across KAMS and Kimberley Renal Service, so having this funding for additional staff has been great.

“Our administration is now streamlined, accurate and leaves space for us to consider and apply for new programs.”

Kelli said Lorraine’s comments align with feedback from other recipients.

“Empowering and supporting clients has been a focus for several trial sites.

“The funding has also enabled some of the ACCHS to tick off a few extra items from their ‘wish lists’, for example Mooditj Koort Aboriginal Corporation is developing resources to increase referrals from mainstream GP and health professionals for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“They’ve also purchased blankets, beanies and other supplies for some of their more vulnerable clients, such as dialysis patients and elderly people.

“Despite the diversity across each of the recipients, the common thread across all of the pilots is reducing the life expectancy and wellness gap between our First Nations people and others.”

The pilot program runs until 30 June 2023, with an evaluation to be undertaken with a view to advocating for recurrent funding.

Pilot participants include: Kimberley Renal Service, Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services, Moorditj Koort Aboriginal Corporation, South West Aboriginal Medical Service and Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service.

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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.