

MEDIA RELEASE

29 July 2026

Free ear health forum to build on growing success in Kimberley

In August, a free two-day ear health education forum will be held in Broome to provide a deeper understanding of ear and hearing health for all health professionals.

Over the two days, the sessions will cover basic ear and hearing anatomy and screening, upskilling facilitated by Ear, Nose and Throat physicians, plenary sessions showcasing case studies from the Kimberley region, concluding with a social networking sundowner. It will also feature a mob-only session where Aboriginal health professionals will come together to yarn on ear health, genuine co-design and community-led research.

Healthy hearing is essential for communication with family and communities and connection to culture. Middle ear infection is a common and preventable childhood disease and is the main cause of ear and hearing problems in First Nations children (AIHW, 2025). With ear disease disproportionately impacting First Nations communities, the Kimberley Ear Health Coordinating Panel, a subcommittee of the Kimberley Aboriginal Health Planning Forum has been working to support strong ear and hearing health outcomes in the Kimberley region for more than 10 years.

Delivered by Kimberley Health Professionals Network on behalf of the Kimberley Ear Health Coordinating Panel and Rural Health West, the Kimberley Ear Health Education Forum will feature two experts in the field, Professor Kelvin Kong and Dr Jafri Kuthubutheen.

Dr Kuthubutheen is the WA Country Health Service ENT Clinical Lead for the Kimberley Region, while Professor Kelvin Kong, a proud Worimi man from Port Stephens, NSW, is the first Indigenous Australian ENT surgeon.

Kelvin's career reflects a commitment to healing and learning across many areas—including clinical research, medical education, general medicine and surgery, paediatrics, health policy, and Indigenous education. Kelvin has regularly provided specialist ENT outreach consultations and surgery across remote Kimberley communities in partnership with the WA Country Health Service.

Rural Health West Deputy CEO and General Manager Workforce Kelli Porter said

“There has been consistent and collaborative work delivered over the years to improve ear health in the Kimberley,” she said.

“We want to keep this momentum going, helping professionals on the ground every day, who are face-to-face with those impacted.”

Kelli said the collaboration between Rural Health West and partners was promising for the future of rural healthcare.

“The Kimberley Ear Health Coordinating Panel is helping to boost promotion of ear health in the region, and we are privileged to work alongside them,” she said.

“The delivery of this forum shows how successful our Health Professionals Networks have been on the ground to unite health professionals and communities. We continue to work across the organisation between HPNs and regional outreach services to provide these kinds of events.

“We are privileged to have ear health champions Dr Kong and Dr Kuthubutheen leading this forum. Their wisdom and knowledge will help guide ear health in the Kimberley into the future.”

Event Details:

Thursday, August 20:

Session 1 (Mob Only): 8.30am - 12.30pm

Session 2 (All health professionals with an interest in ear health): 1.30pm–3.30pm

Venue: KAMS (Population Health training room), 27 Napier Terrace, Djugun

Friday, August 21:

Session 1: 8.30am–4.30pm

Venue: Liyan-Ngan Nyirrwa Centre Nyamba Buru Yawuru, 55 Reid Road, Cable Beach

Networking Sundowner: 4.30pm–6.00pm

ENDS

Media contact:

Lynn Loganathan, Rural Health West, 0434 396 500

Media Notes:

***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, Disability and Ageing.*

Rural Health West's Outreach Team assists in the delivery of health services across rural and remote Western Australia. The team administers outreach services on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing and is the jurisdictional fundholder of four of their service delivery programs in WA.

First Nations Health Outreach Services aims to support the provision of primary health care multidisciplinary teams to prevent, detect and manage chronic diseases and ear disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who live in rural, regional and remote communities.