



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WACHS COMMAND CENTRE

What is the WA Country Health Service Command Centre?

The WA Country Health Service (WACHS) Command Centre is a true innovation in country health care, bringing together new and existing services in a 24/7 'virtual' clinical and operational hub. The WACHS Command Centre supports doctors and nurses in country hospitals and nursing posts by providing ready access to specialist clinicians who use technology, videoconferencing and real-time data to assist in delivering quality patient care.

What are the existing services?

- The Emergency Telehealth Service (ETS) supports WA's country doctors and nurses caring for patients by providing 24/7 access to specialist emergency clinicians by videoconference. The ETS is currently available at 82 hospitals and nursing posts across WA. Since the service launched in 2012 the ETS has supported care to more than 116,000 patients.
- The Inpatient Telehealth Service (ITS) provides 24/7 virtual ward rounds to patients admitted to our country hospitals when the local GP is unavailable. The ITS is available at 58 country hospitals. So far, more than 500 patients have benefitted from the support of the ITS via skilled on-the-ground teams.
- The Mental Health Emergency Telehealth Service (MH ETS) provides WA country doctors and nurses with access to specialist mental health nurses and psychiatrists, to assist in caring for people presenting to our sites with acute mental health and drug and alcohol issues. The MH ETS is currently available at 83 hospitals and nursing posts across WA and has supported more than 1400 patients in its first year of operation.
- The Acute Specialist Telehealth Service (ASTS) commenced in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic with 24/7 access to intensive care specialist. We are currently working with other speciality services to provide country clinicians and their patients with access to a range of specialists using new and improved three-way videoconferencing facilities, to support timely acute patient assessment and treatment.
- Between October 2019 and September 2020 more than 1500 WACHS staff attended videoconference education sessions run through the Command Centre, covering 62 different topics such as cardiac themes and snakebite management.

How and when will existing services expand?

- Access to the ETS continues to expand to further hospitals and nursing posts across country WA. In 2020, we trialled ETS connectivity with an Aboriginal Medical Service in Bidyadanga and are using learnings from this trial to shape how we may support other agencies in country WA.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WACHS COMMAND CENTRE

- The ITS is available around the clock at every WACHS hospital with inpatient capabilities and has enabled 87% of patients to be treated at their local hospital without the need to be transferred.
- The Mental Health Emergency Telehealth Service was introduced in July 2019 and has already established itself as a vital 24/7 support service for country doctors and nurses. The service will continue to expand to further hospitals and nursing posts across country WA.

What are the new services and how will they work?

- The Acute Patient Transfer Coordination Service (APTCS) will be a coordination centre that oversees safe, timely and efficient patient transfers to and from regional and metropolitan hospitals for admitted country patients. The team who is implementing the country ambulance strategy works in the Command Centre to align the recommendations to the new service ensuring our partners such as RFDS and SJA and our country clinicians are freed up to care for their patients.
- The Advanced Patient Monitoring System (APMS) is a monitoring centre that uses advanced technologies and real-time information to support doctors and nurses in detecting and responding to unwell patients in country hospitals and nursing posts. Functions will be developed and integrated in partnership with country clinicians in a phased approach in 2021.

When will the new services be introduced?

- Planning for APTCS is well underway with SJA and RFDS with WACHS committing to working together to deliver greater efficiencies and streamlining the process for getting patients to the care they needed, and it is expected to be operational in 2021.
- The APMS scope and functions will be developed and integrated in partnership with country clinicians in a phased approach in 2021.
- We are currently working with speciality groups such as palliative care, obstetrics and paediatrics to expand the ASTS within the next six months.

Why has the WACHS Command Centre been developed?

- Rapidly changing technology has created new opportunities to drastically improve access to specialist level care, particularly in country WA where vast distances, smaller populations and diverse community needs create unique challenges for health care provision.
- WACHS has a strong history of successfully developing innovative technology solutions and investing in world-class telehealth services to enhance access to high quality health care for country communities.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WACHS COMMAND CENTRE

- Since its introduction in 2012, the ETS has assisted country clinicians to transform emergency care for country patients presenting to WACHS emergency departments, nursing posts and Silver Chain facilities. The new services have been developed on the framework already in place for the ETS.
- The WACHS ETS, ITS and MH ETS have contributed to improving patient outcomes, consistency of service and standards, and governance, in addition to facilitating clinical skill building in the country workforce. These transformational flow-on effects have enabled WACHS to envision the future of country health care – the WACHS Command Centre.
- These elements have come together into an integrated, single point of entry that supports doctors and nurses in country hospitals and nursing posts by providing ready access to specialist clinicians who use technology, videoconferencing and real-time data to assist in delivering quality patient care – the WACHS Command Centre.
- In October 2019, the Minister for Health Roger Cook officially launched the WACHS Command Centre to increase access and improve coordination of acute services available via telehealth across country WA.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us the importance of having situational awareness across the entire organisation and to always operate as a cohesive system. The 24/7 capabilities of the Command Centre and improved real-time data information provide us with a unique opportunity to support many aspects of emergency management, rapidly respond to situations and provide collegiate advice no matter the time of day.

What evidence supports the development of the WACHS Command Centre?

- Strong feedback from WACHS staff and clinical incident outcomes indicate the importance of having high levels of specialist support available to country clinicians whenever they need it.
- Contemporary evidence supports the introduction of advanced technologies to assist country clinicians in the early detection of deteriorating patients and providing this information closer to the bedside can improve patient outcomes.
- Previous reviews into patient transport and ambulance services recommended a patient transfer coordination system be implemented to streamline inter-hospital patient transfers. Currently there is no single organisation in WA with overview or responsibility for patient transfers. Feedback indicates that coordinating transfers is an often complex and time-consuming process, taking the clinician away from the bedside. The new APTCS will assist country clinicians from the time the decision is made that a patient requires care elsewhere to the time the patient arrives at their destination. The service will also facilitate early planning to have care provided closer to home as soon as possible.
- The possibilities of the Command Centre are endless, and we will consider any new service that will support country clinicians caring for patients closer to home.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WACHS COMMAND CENTRE

How does the WACHS Command Centre assist country clinicians and patients?

The WACHS Command Centre houses a digitally enabled, flexible and dedicated specialist clinical workforce available to every WACHS hospital and nursing post in real-time, supporting local clinicians, improving outcomes for patients and keeping care closer to home. The Command Centre offers a single point of entry to access multiple specialist services, supporting streamlined service delivery.

If our country clinicians ever need help, advice, support or want to escalate issues, our friendly and supportive team is there around the clock.

Who works in the WACHS Command Centre?

The WACHS Command Centre has a dedicated team of specialist clinicians who understand country healthcare and its challenges. Our doctors and nurses are selected based on their specialty skills and affiliations with country WA having either worked on lived in country. They are all WACHS employees with some holding other employment at metropolitan health service providers, private consulting room and or the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Like most hospitals, there is a team of emergency physicians, senior medical officers, psychiatrists, and senior and experienced clinical nurses and nurse practitioners. The clinical team are supported by the business support team which include a business manager, health information manager and many others. The WACHS is also collaborating with partners such as the metropolitan health services, St John Ambulance and Royal Flying Doctor Service to leverage technology and clinical expertise that better supports clinicians, creates a more sustainable health service and improves patient safety.

Some of our doctors and nurses who provide clinical telehealth support are based in regional hospitals such as Albany and Geraldton while others work in specially enabled confidential locations such as their home.

How is the WA Country Health Service Command Centre being funded?

The development and coordination of services under the WACHS Command Centre is a WACHS digital innovation priority, resourced through the State Government's Country Health Innovation funding until June 2023. The WACHS is currently developing a future operational funding case to cater for the growth of the Command Centre.

The MH ETS is being funded until 2022 through the Commonwealth Health Innovation Funding. Long term funding solutions will be explored following evaluation of the program and prior to the ending of the funding agreement.

Where is the WACHS Command Centre located?



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WACHS COMMAND CENTRE

The WACHS Command Centre is currently located in an old ward at Royal Perth Hospital, Ward 6A, Wellington Street, Perth. The Command Centre was recently successful in getting funds to develop up its very own purpose-built centre.

Will the WACHS Command Centre have oversight of all WACHS sites, without being contacted?

The WACHS Command Centre is available to rural and remote clinicians when they request support. Local clinicians maintain overall responsibility and accountability for the care delivered to their patients. Information pertaining to activity and patient transfer requirements across all WACHS sites will be available not only to the WACHS Command Centre, but to all WACHS, metropolitan health service providers and our transport providers.

Will the WACHS Command Centre replace clinicians in country hospitals and health services?

No. The WACHS Command Centre is here to support country clinicians in providing care to their patients, assisting with specialist advice, clinical support, logistics and fatigue management, not to replace this invaluable frontline role.