Raft of awards for WA Country Health Service staff.
See story – pages 4–6

Our values:  Community | Compassion | Quality | Integrity | Justice
From the Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to the final edition of *The Country Link* for 2010.

It has been an exciting few months for all of us working to improve health across regional Western Australia.

I am particularly proud of the outstanding efforts of our WA Country Health Service Pilbara team who ensured the opening of the $138 million Hedland Health Campus went with barely a hitch and no disruption to patient care.

Indeed, the only hiccup seemed to be the deluge of calls to the switchboard in the first couple of days, the vast majority of which were from the community wishing staff well for the move.

In addition to this outstanding achievement, we’ve continued to make significant inroads into ensuring a fairer share for country health with the installation of brand new CT scanners in Esperance and Carnarvon and another soon to be installed in Narrogin, which will greatly reduce the need for patients to travel great distances for important tests. The opening of the new palliative care unit at Kalgoorlie Health Campus will provide great benefits to Goldfields families requiring palliative services.

I am also proud of the excellent performance by WA Country Health Service teams in the WA Health Awards. We won four categories from a total of five finalist nominations. Congratulations to everyone involved in all nominated initiatives.

Finally I would like to thank every one of our 8,000 staff in the regions and in Area Office for their commitment throughout 2010. We simply could not do the job asked of us without a dedicated team of people who care about making a difference to the health of their communities.

Wishing you and your families a happy and safe holiday season.

*Wayne Salvage*

*Acting Chief Executive Officer*

*WA Country Health Service*

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Pilbara community welcomes new Hedland Health Campus

Pilbara residents and the surrounding community now have access to a brand new health campus which brings together most of the region’s major medical facilities into one state-of-the-art health care hub.

The new $138 million Hedland Health Campus opened its doors for business in November, replacing the old Port Hedland Hospital which had served the community for over 35 years.

Around 700 people took the opportunity to tour the new campus as part of a Community Open Day held in early November with the new maternity and x-ray departments proving to be of particular interest.

The campus was officially handed over to WA Country Health Service Pilbara in October by the Doric Construction Group, who spent 18 months working on the new facility.

Built on Colebatch Way next to the Karlarra House residential aged-care facility, the new campus brings together the majority of health related services that were previously spread over sites in both South and Port Hedland.

WA Country Health Service Pilbara Regional Director, Tina Chinery thanked everyone involved in achieving a smooth transition to the new campus.

“As you will no doubt appreciate, moving an entire hospital is no mean feat and I would like to thank all the Pilbara staff and those involved in helping the move to go so well,” Ms Chinery said.

“It was a fantastic effort by all involved and, along with the local community, we are now enjoying the benefits of a brand new hospital, which is providing Pilbara residents with access to more specialists in one convenient location.”

Closing the gap at Newman Hospital

Aboriginal community members in the Pilbara will have increased access to specialised help and resources with the appointment of an Aboriginal Liaison Officer to Newman Hospital.

Lex Collard started work at the hospital in November and is committed to providing support for Aboriginal patients in their journey through the hospital system.

His appointment enhances the services already available for Aboriginal people in the area as work continues to reduce inequities in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Mr Collard has lived in the Pilbara for the last five years and has a strong desire to help close the gap and improve the health of Aboriginal people in the region. He has been involved in a number of local community health groups and committees and brings a wealth of local knowledge and experience to the role.

“It is vital that Aboriginal people have the same access to healthcare as anyone else,” Mr Collard explained.

“As the Aboriginal Liaison Officer for Newman Hospital it is my job to break down any barriers that may exist for Aboriginal patients in obtaining their hospital treatment and ensuring that they receive the best care possible.”

The appointment of an Aboriginal Liaison Officer to Newman Hospital has been funded under the $38.2million Pilbara Health Initiative five-year partnership between the State Government’s Royalties for Regions program and the WA Chamber of Minerals and Energy’s Pilbara Industry’s Community Council Health Initiative members (BHP Billiton Iron Ore, Chevron Australia Pty Ltd, North West Shelf Joint Venture, Rio Tinto and Woodside Energy).

Under this funding, an Aboriginal Liaison Officer is also due to commence at Hedland Health Campus Emergency Department in December.
Country Health achievers

Working together: the winning formula in country health

WA Country Health Service has won four awards at the prestigious WA Health Awards.

The three category winners and the special HR award winner all highlight the importance of collaboration and partnerships in improving health in country WA.

The Goldfields Population Health Unit’s Norseman Voluntary Liquor Agreement won the Communities category; the Carnarvon Hospital’s True Culture, True Care Mothers and Babies program won the Partnerships category and the WA Country Health Service’s Community Participation in Health Service Development won the Director General’s Award.

In addition, human resources consultant Richard Prunster won the Peter Baldwin Memorial Award for excellence in human resources practice.

The WA Health Awards, presented annually, recognise the outstanding contributions being made by WA Health workers to improve the health of Western Australians.

The winners were among five category finalists for WA Country Health Service. The Midwest Population Health Unit’s innovative Community Wellbeing Calendar was also a finalist in the Resources category.

Our winners and finalists

Winner, Communities category

The Norseman Voluntary Liquor Agreement was established when the local WA Country Health Service staff worked with police, the hotel licensee and the Norseman Aboriginal community to voluntarily restrict the sale of some packaged liquor products and to provide support and advice within the community.

In its first year the initiative has resulted in a 60 per cent drop in the number of alcohol related hospital admissions, and more participation in family, community and sporting activities. The award was accepted by Susan Gatti, Regional Alcohol and Other Drugs Coordinator.

Winner, Partnerships category

The True Culture, True Care Mothers and Babies program focuses on improving the health of Aboriginal mums and children from pregnancy through until the first day of school. Run out of Carnarvon Hospital, the program emphasises collaboration with other agencies including the Carnarvon Aboriginal Medical Service, the St John of God Strong Women Strong Families program and the Department of Education.

As a result, antenatal visits are up, breastfeeding has increased and birth weights are improving across the region. The award was accepted by Jeremy Higgins, Director of Nursing at Carnarvon Hospital.

Winner, Director General’s category

Community Participation in Health Service Development

WA Country Health Service is leading the way in promoting the participation of communities in improving health services. A vital element of community participation in country WA is the contribution of local residents who are strongly involved in their communities on a day to day basis.

Examples include the establishment of 24 District Health Advisory Councils, the Patient First Ambassador program and the Patients for Patient Safety Program. The award was accepted by Melissa Vernon, Director of Primary Care and Community Engagement.
Winner, Peter Baldwin Memorial Award

Richard Prunster

Like the long-serving HR manager it honours, the Peter Baldwin Memorial Award finalists must demonstrate empathy, excellent interpersonal skills and make meaningful contributions to the working lives of staff.

Richard Prunster joined the WA Country Health Service in 2002, and gained valuable experience working in the Goldfields, Midwest and Wheatbelt regions prior to his current position in Area Office as the HR consultant. He was nominated by his peers for his ability to interact with people, his quiet but confident communication skills and his genuinely caring approach.

Finalist, Resources category

Midwest Community Wellbeing Calendar. This web-based calendar, developed by the WA Country Health Service Midwest Population Health Unit in consultation with the local community and other key stakeholders, is increasing community knowledge about the services available to help improve their health and wellbeing. The calendar is also used by a number of Midwest agencies to promote their services and let local residents know when they will be visiting individual towns.

Congratulations in order, says CEO

Acting Chief Executive Officer Wayne Salvage congratulated the winners and finalists for their team approach to improving the health of Western Australians.

“Time and again our biggest successes are the result of real collaboration and the development of trust within communities,” Mr Salvage said.

“Improving regional health and closing the gap are challenging problems, yet our winners and finalists are demonstrating that it’s possible to make a real difference to people’s lives.”

The WA Health Awards were presented at a special event in December by Director General of Health Kim Snowball and Minister for Health Dr Kim Hames.

Deadly exciting day for Tim

It’s not often you get the chance to rub shoulders with celebrities like Ian Thorpe and Christine Anu, so it was a big day for WA Country Health Service Pilbara’s Tim Turner when he donned a tuxedo to attend the Deadly Awards at the Sydney Opera House.

It became even more exciting when the Swim for Life program he created for YMCA Perth won the Deadly Award for most outstanding achievement in employment and training.

Mr Turner, who joined WA Country Health Service Pilbara as manager of the Indigenous Employment Program this year, said The Deadlys are like the Oscars of Indigenous achievement in Australia.

“I designed and implemented Swim for Life over the last two summer seasons before joining WA Country Health Service,” Mr Turner said.

“The Deadly Award provides real street credibility and is instantly recognised as a milestone achievement amongst Indigenous people across Australia.”

Swim for Life is an initiative focused on first-time employment for Aboriginal young people in the Hedland and the Pilbara region who qualify as lifeguards. The YMCA has qualified over 60 Aboriginal young people with a bronze medallion and employed over 30 Aboriginal lifeguards who can go on to complete their senior first aid qualifications.

Mr Turner’s considerable skills in establishing community partnerships, including a collaboration with over 15 community stakeholders, has helped the program win several State and national awards as well as the Deadlys.

Those same skills are now invaluable in his WA Country Health Service position and the implementation of the Pilbara Indigenous Employment Program.

Tim Turner with South Hedland Aquatic Centre duty manager, Thierra Clanton.
Kimberley physiotherapist doubles up at awards night

A senior physiotherapist in the Kimberley has stolen the spotlight taking out two major awards at the Rotary Allied Health Professional of the Year awards 2010.

Kato Matthews scooped the top award of the night as she was named Rotary Allied Health Professional of the Year. She was also chosen as the WA Physio of the Year during the celebrations which were held in Perth.

Established in 2009, the annual event aims to recognise those allied health professionals who demonstrate ‘service above self’ in their work and who act as role models and mentors to make a difference to the working lives of others.

Ms Matthews, who began her working life in Derby eight years ago and now calls Kununurra home, is passionate about supporting rural and remote communities and providing them with quality healthcare.

“My strong belief is that country people should have access to the same standard of health care as anyone in Perth. If I get sick in my community, I expect to be looked after well, and that’s the level of care I strive to give to people in my community,” Ms Matthews said.

“I’m very lucky to have great support from WA Country Health Service, who have encouraged me to pursue my leadership and career goals while working in Kununurra.

“It is also a privilege to be working with such a great local team, in particular Pam Wentzel, senior speech therapist at Kununurra, who nominated me for this award.”

A rural representative on a number of state and national committees for the Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA), Ms Matthews is no stranger to winning awards. In 2008 she received the Award for Contribution to Rural and/or Regional Physiotherapy from the APA Western Australia branch.

Earlier this year she was also chosen to participate in the Australian Rural Leadership Program ARLP for 2010-2011 which allows her to further her leadership learning alongside a select group of rural and regional developing leaders from across Australia.

WA Country Health Service Kimberley Regional Director, Kerry Winsor said Kato had demonstrated her professional commitment through her nearly eight years as a physiotherapist in the Kimberley.

Award categories comprised dietetics and nutrition, social work, occupational therapy, clinical psychology, podiatry, speech pathology and physiotherapy.

The awards were presented at a ceremony held at Mount Lawley Golf Club in November and were sponsored by the Rotary Clubs of Mount Lawley and West Perth, Curtin University and the Department of Health.
Hedland GP wins major national award

Port Hedland GP registrar Dr Sarah McEwan has won a prestigious national award recognising the contribution of young rural doctors.

Dr McEwan, who also works as a District Medical Officer at the new Hedland Health Campus, was named the Rural Registrar of the Year 2010 at the Rural Medicine Australia 2010 dinner, part of the national conference of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine.

The award was given to Dr McEwan for her outstanding dedication to rural communities during her time in the WA Country Health Service and her earlier work in New South Wales regional communities.

Dr McEwan, who was born and raised in Mudgee, NSW and is from the Wiradjuri Aboriginal people, was inspired to become a country GP from an early age.

Her commitment has seen her rack up a list of impressive achievements including membership of the Fellowship of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine and an advanced diploma from the Royal Australian College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

Dr McEwan has a strong interest in indigenous health and since arriving in Port Hedland in June has worked hard at finding ways to provide gender choice to the Indigenous population when dealing with sensitive women’s issues.

She is also in the process of developing clinics to improve services to women during early pregnancy and following childbirth.

Dr McEwan said she felt humbled to receive such a prestigious award.

“There are plenty of deserving GP registrars across the country and for me to win is simply an honour,” Dr McEwan said.

“Being a GP is rewarding, challenging and life-changing. I love having the ability to have a direct impact on patients’ lives on a daily basis, build trust and provide continuation of care.”

WA Country Health Service Pilbara Regional Director, Tina Chinery said Dr McEwan was a worthy winner.

“Sarah is one of the growing band of young doctors who are finding that working in the regions allows them to make real contributions to the lives of their patients,” Ms Chinery said.

Community rallies for a Day in the Shed at Kulin

A record dry winter has seen many Wheatbelt farmers face an uncertain future as crops failed across the region this year.

Many farms have been left on shaky ground and this can cause stress in families and rural communities.

A free ‘A Day in the Shed … - cultivating resiliency and strength for our communities, families and self” event was recently held to provide locals in Kulin and its surrounding communities with emotional tools and strategies to help them survive these harsh times.

Organised by the Rural Community Support Service (a subsidiary of Great Southern Mental Health), the day featured a host of inspirational guest speakers and included refreshments, activities and entertainment for children.

Rural Community Support Service Coordinator, Jo Drayton said the event was designed to provide assistance to country people facing tough times as a result of the ongoing drought.

“While the financial plight of our farmers is readily discussed we discovered that what had not been successfully addressed was the emotional wellbeing and resiliency of individuals living in these rural communities,” Ms Drayton said.

“Males made up more than half of the 100 people who turned up on the day which is particularly significant as they tend to be the group that are harder to reach.

“We all know farmers tend to be practical people who are good at problem solving, however if you are stressed or down this can lead to depression which, if left untreated, is a risk factor for suicide especially among men.

“Whilst we cannot control economic climates or financial situations, we do have the power to provide these communities with social and emotional support.”

Following positive feedback, the Rural Community Support Service hopes to host further events to help build resilience in rural and remote communities.

For further information about ‘A Day in the Shed…’ contact project coordinator, Jo Drayton on (08) 9881 0790 or jo.drayton@health.wa.gov.au

Speaker Maggie Dent makes a point to participants at the Kulin workshop.
Patients to benefit from new CT scanners

Locals in Esperance, Carnarvon and Narrogin will now be able to get vital health tests without the added stress of long-distance travel thanks to the installation of three state-of-the-art CT scanners.

The brand new 16-slice CT scanners, which provide highly accurate images and can help doctors make diagnoses much earlier in a person’s illness, are already operating in Esperance and Carnarvon hospitals. A third is expected to be up and running at Narrogin Hospital by mid-January.

Each CT scanner can perform a huge number of procedures per year, which will greatly reduce the need for patients to travel to larger country centres or Perth for treatment.

The funding for Esperance’s $1.4 million CT scanner included $246,000 from Royalties for Regions along with more than $440,000 raised over several years by local businesses.

WA Country Health Service Goldfields Regional Director, Geraldine Ennis acknowledged the huge effort involved in raising the cash for the scanner.

“This was a true partnership between the local community, industry and health and I am extremely proud and privileged to have been involved,” Ms Ennis said.

The Esperance CT scanner was formally opened in November by Mental Health Minister Dr Graham Jacobs, representing Health Minister Dr Kim Hames.

The CT scanner installation is the first phase of the $31.8 million Esperance Hospital Redevelopment which will include a new accident and emergency department, birthing unit and ambulatory care.

Carnarvon’s CT scanner complements the existing scanner at Geraldton Hospital to offer more choice for residents across the vast Midwest.

According to WA Country Health Service Wheatbelt Director of Clinical Services Paul Seats, Narrogin Hospital’s CT scanner will lead to an expanded radiology service for the busy regional hospital.

“We’ve recruited a new senior radiologist and will be investing in training and development for our local staff, which will result in improved services all round,” Mr Seats said.
New palliative care unit for Kalgoorlie

Palliative care patients and their loved ones in the Goldfields will now have the comfort and dignity of home-style rooms, with the opening of the new palliative care unit at Kalgoorlie Health Campus.

Three new rooms, each overlooking a private courtyard and including an ensuite, kitchenette and sofa bed for overnight visitors and carers, were officially opened in December by Health Minister Dr Kim Hames.

In addition to the private facilities, the purpose-built rooms have access to a shared lounge and a private meeting room, with parking close by for convenience and ease.

WA Country Health Service Goldfields Regional Director Geraldine Ennis said the new palliative care unit would provide patients and their families with the best possible environment and support at a very difficult time.

“The presence of family and loved ones is critical for palliative care patients and the new unit combines the best hospital care in the comfort and privacy of home-like surroundings,” Ms Ennis said.

“It has been specially built so patients can have the privacy they need. Loved ones and carers can come and go as they need to, just like home, with the support of our superb palliative care staff and doctors next door if needed.”

The new palliative care unit is the latest milestone in the $55.8 million redevelopment of Kalgoorlie Health Campus, which will feature a new emergency department, special care unit with an observation ward and new medical imaging (X-ray) department.

$40.5 million boost for Busselton Health Campus

South West residents are set to benefit from an all new Busselton Health Campus thanks to an additional $40.5 million funding boost from Royalties for Regions.

This additional funding increases the budget to $117.9 million which will see the construction of a new community health centre and mental health centre on the existing hospital site.

The new campus is expected to be completed by 2014 and will meet the needs of locals and visitors to the region now and into the foreseeable future.

The additional funds were recently announced by Health Minister Dr Kim Hames who said the expanded Busselton Health Campus would reduce the number of patients who need to be transferred to Bunbury Hospital and provide support to smaller health services in the South West such as Augusta and Margaret River.

“More Busselton people can receive timely and effective care closer to home and at one integrated hospital,” Dr Hames said.

“The new campus will be constructed on the existing Busselton Hospital site in line with the results of the local referendum held by the Shire of Busselton.”

Dr Hames said the State Government provided the extra $40.5 million after considerable discussions with the private sector had not resulted in any private funding for the development.

Construction is expected to start on the new campus in mid 2012.
Karratha’s first community midwife making a difference

It’s hard not to feel optimistic when Karratha community midwife Julie Kipps talks about the difference good care can make to a new mum and baby.

Ms Kipps has been appointed under the new Community Midwifery initiative, part of the $10 million Royalties for Regions funding and one of four projects designed to improve obstetric services at Karratha’s Nickol Bay Hospital.

The Community Midwifery initiative is aimed at high-risk women who traditionally do not access antenatal and postnatal support services.

Ms Kipps is an articulate advocate for the availability of in-home antenatal and postnatal care in the region, particularly for Indigenous women, some of whom were reluctant to trust another new face.

In her first three months, she has made 62 postnatal visits, 11 antenatal visits and travelled to Port Samson, Dampier, Roebourne and Wickham.

“Women who are pregnant or who have just had babies may be feeling unsure or vulnerable. It’s important to establish trust, so I’ve made it a priority to work on establishing good relationships,” Ms Kipps said.

“Locals are now beginning to embrace the service.”

Under the initiative, Ms Kipps works closely with the midwives at Nickol Bay Hospital in Karratha. She visits the maternity ward every day and they in turn refer women to her for follow-up home care.

Local GPs are beginning to refer their patients and King Edward Memorial Hospital is also referring women who have had their babies in Perth and are returning to the region.

In addition, Ms Kipps works closely with child health nurses to ensure new mums and babies have continuous support through that critical first fortnight.

WA Country Health Service Pilbara Regional Director, Tina Chinery said the initiative was also making a vital difference in some higher risk cases.

“While Nickol Bay Hospital is well resourced with antenatal support services, we found that the women who could benefit most were less likely to use them,” Ms Chinery said.

“We designed the Community Midwifery program specifically for those women.”

A ‘faster-track’ to emergency care in Bunbury

A simple but effective change to the way some patients are treated at Bunbury Hospital’s emergency department is having a positive effect on waiting times.

Patients with less serious and not very complex conditions are benefiting from this new way of working which sees them ‘fast-tracked’ to staff in a separate area within the emergency department where they can be treated more quickly and efficiently.

The model is being introduced as part of the State Government’s Four Hour Rule program to improve the flow of patients, increase efficiency and reduce waiting times in hospital emergency departments.

WA Country Health Service South West Acting Regional Director, Rory Stemp said previously, people who did not have serious or life threatening conditions were treated in the same area as the more serious cases.

“This new model, developed in consultation with staff and incorporating patient feedback, means that patients with less serious conditions can be seen and treated more quickly by a specially designated group of medical staff,” Mr Stemp said.

The new model is still in its early stages and will be formally evaluated once fully implemented.
Aboriginal mother and baby the stars of new pregnancy education DVD

In what’s believed to be an Australian first, a team of Kimberley health workers is helping Aboriginal women improve their health and wellbeing during pregnancy using 21st century storytelling technology.

A DVD entitled *How to Have a Healthy Pregnancy and a Healthy Baby* follows East Kimberley woman Cissy Gore-Birch Gault through her pregnancy, the birth of her baby at Kununurra Hospital and after-birth care at home.

Produced locally by Vicky Biorac of B Visual Media, *How to Have a Healthy Pregnancy and a Healthy Baby* was the brainchild of WA Country Health Service Kimberley midwife, Hanneke Schoe and Ms Gore-Birch Gault herself.

The DVD shows Ms Gore-Birch Gault meeting doctors and midwives, having important medical tests, learning about pain relief options, childbirth positions and what lifestyle choices are best for good health during pregnancy.

The 1 hr 45min, 2-DVD set is divided into 17 separate ‘chapters’ on important aspects of pregnancy, childbirth and after-care. It includes a tour of the birthing room, diet and exercise, emotional wellbeing, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum disorder, parenting tips, breastfeeding, and the highlight: the birth of Ms Gore-Birch Gault’s beautiful and healthy son, Joshua.

Three local fathers - Jason, Deon and Desmond - also talk about their roles in the birth of their children and share their thoughts on being dads.

The DVD, which is available for purchase, is the result of months of close collaboration between WA Country Health Service’s Kimberley Population Health Unit (KPHU), Boab Health Services (formerly the Kimberley Division of General Practice), St John of God Healthcare and Save the Children Fund.

KPHU maternal and child health coordinator Melissa Williams said the DVD was another outstanding example of how local health organisations can cooperate to get good ideas off the ground.

“When Hanneke and Cissy first came to me with the idea, there was no funding and not much time, as Cissy was already pregnant,” Ms Williams said.

“WA Country Health Service played a key role by bringing the main players together. We secured funding almost immediately, which enabled us to start filming straight away.

“While the DVD focuses on Indigenous women, it is also highly relevant for doctors and midwives who see women of all ethnic backgrounds.

“Our aim is to get all mums seen as early as possible in their pregnancy, or ideally before pregnancy, and we hope this new DVD will help.

“The DVD follows other successful local initiatives aimed at improving new mums’ attendance at antenatal care, including art and belly casting combined with group education.”

*How to Have a Healthy Pregnancy and a Healthy Baby* can be purchased for $66 plus p&p from Vicky Biorac at B Visual Media, vickyb@bvisualmedia.com.au, call 08 9168 3061 or 0418 234 681.

Proceeds from the sale will be used for maternal and child health education programs in the East Kimberley.
Local art showcased at Mindworx exhibition

Albany Regional Hospital recently took the ABC approach to mental health when it hosted the Act-Belong-Commit Mindworx exhibition during Mental Health Week.

The exhibition showcased works by local artists who have all at some stage utilised the services of the WA Country Health Service Great Southern mental health team and highlighted their skills, expertise and contribution to the local community through their art.

Well known local artist and mental health nurse, Michael O’Doherty said the Mindworx program, which has been running for three years, was inspired by mental health workers who noticed the impressive artistic talents amongst their patients.

“Keeping mentally healthy is just as important as keeping physically healthy and there are a number of ways people can work to improve their mental health,” Mr O’Doherty said.

“The Mindworx exhibition provided local artists, some who have had formal training and others who are self taught, with an opportunity to express themselves through their artwork and take a sense of pride and achievement in their finished work.”

Artwork was displayed in a variety of different mediums including digital photography, textiles, painting and poetry.

‘Act-Belong-Commit’ Mindworx was sponsored by ‘Act-Belong-Commit’ and the Great Southern GP Network.

Variety donation boosts Midwest neonate care

For most people, pregnancy is a time of great excitement and expectation as preparations are made to welcome a new addition to the family.

However, for those women with higher risk pregnancies it can be a time of great worry and stress as they are closely monitored to ensure the welfare of both them and their unborn child.

In some rural and remote communities of Western Australia, higher risk pregnancies and those women with sick babies may have to travel to larger regional hospitals or Perth to access specialised equipment.

Thanks to a Variety WA donation of almost $13,000, Geraldton Hospital’s Maternity Unit has taken delivery of new medical equipment which will improve patient care and allow women to remain closer to home and the support of their families and loved ones.

WA Country Health Service Midwest Acting Nurse Director Chris Cream said she was delighted to receive the equipment which would provide greater access to services in the region.

“We are already able to offer care to higher risk pregnancies at the hospital but this new equipment is a welcome boost and will assist staff in continuing to provide safe and effective care,” Ms Cream said.

Geraldton Hospital has received five waterproof audio Dopplers which are used to monitor the baby before delivery, and a ventilator blender humidifier which is used to take care of a sick baby after delivery.
Northcliffe community welcomes nurse practitioner

Diane Langman is helping to enhance community access to healthcare services at Northcliffe as she takes on her new role as nurse practitioner for the area.

A nurse practitioner is a highly qualified registered nurse who collaborates with physicians and other health care professionals to provide a wide range of clinical care to patients.

WA Country Health Service is introducing nurse practitioners across all regions, initially in emergency care and remote area specialisations with plans for additional roles in primary care, aged care and mental health which will enhance community access to health care services.

Diane, who has been a nurse for over 25 years, joined Northcliffe Community Health Centre in September and brings with her a wealth of experience in both emergency and community healthcare, including work overseas.

“As a nurse practitioner I am qualified to assess and manage patients including providing direct referrals to other health care professionals, diagnosing and treating common illnesses, prescribing medications and ordering diagnostic tests,” Ms Langman explained.

“In my role at Northcliffe Community Health Centre I provide a wide range of clinical care including community, primary and acute care that helps to support the majority of health care needs in the community.”

Northcliffe is part of the Warren District which also encompasses Manjimup and Pemberton Health Services in the South West region.

Looking after children’s health for 60 years

When the Lady Mitchell Child Health Centre in South Bunbury welcomed its first mums and babies in 1950, some of the advice given to mothers included advocating the start of potty training as young as nine months.

While some things may have changed, current child health nurse Claire Philipps said it was comforting to know that the foundations of good health for children remained the same.

“We still emphasise the basics: good nutrition, play and toys, safety, and lots of love and attention from parents and carers,” Ms Philipps said.

One of the many child health nurses to have worked at the centre, Ms Philipps made the observations at an afternoon tea to celebrate the centre’s 60 years of service to local mothers and families.

WA Country Health Service South West Population Health Director, Andrea Hickert thanked the City of Bunbury for continuing to support such an important local service.

The Lady Mitchell Child Health Centre was named after Dame Clara Mitchell, wife of WA premier Sir James Mitchell, with services in the early years provided by the Sisters of St Elizabeth.
Simple tools the best at Halls Creek Hospital

When Halls Creek Hospital staff say they’ve been going lean for a year, they’re not talking about the weekend barbecue.

‘Going Lean’ is a contemporary management tool helping this enthusiastic team of a dozen doctors, nurses, orderlies, cleaners and other support staff stay on top of their game and deliver better care for patients.

Lean management was developed from principles used by Henry Ford and other post-war manufacturers. It is used by organisations as diverse as small businesses and health care to help them perform at their best when resources are limited.

According to the Director of Nursing at Halls Creek Hospital, Donna Hindmarsh, a simple daily briefing every morning at 8am has vastly improved communication, knowledge and teamwork.

“Every morning everyone gets together for a daily briefing which focuses only on the key issues for that day and how to deal with them,” Ms Hindmarsh said.

“We discuss patient workload, staff duty allocation, visiting specialists and anything important arising in the last 24 hours.

“As a result, communication and openness has improved, everyone feels comfortable asking questions and we are all better informed.”

Ms Hindmarsh said in an area as remote as Halls Creek, seven hours’ drive from Broome and four hours from Kununurra, teamwork was essential to enable staff to think on their feet and respond to a patient list that could sometimes be challenging.

“We are a full triage and treatment hospital, plus we run the community ambulance service. We also manage many patients with chronic illnesses and aged care,” Ms Hindmarsh said.

“All of us are committed to making a real difference to the health of this community. Initiatives such as a simple daily briefing have reaped big rewards.”

The Halls Creek Hospital team.
Kimberley hotel services team makes first-class improvements

Getting six colleagues together is easy if they work in the same region, right?

Not if it’s the Kimberley, where travelling to the next town can mean a day’s drive out of a busy week.

However, the hotel services managers in Derby, Broome, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Kununurra and Wyndham hospitals are so keen to improve services that they’ve met the challenges of distance to set up a bi-monthly forum.

The hotel services managers are responsible for the ‘behind-the-scenes’ smooth running of a hospital and look after catering, cleaning, orderlies and other essential services.

According to East Kimberley Operations Manager Damian Jolly, the initiative has already brought benefits.

“The managers have agreed on a range of actions including standardising the approach to chemical registers, purchasing from suppliers and cooking to standard menus with documented nutritional values,” Mr Jolly said.

“This will enable us to provide more consistent services across the region, boost patient care by making systems simpler and make our hospitals more attractive workplaces for new staff.

“The forum is also looking at how we attract and retain staff, particularly at the more remote areas of Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek.

“We are passionate about attracting health professionals to the Kimberley who will relish the challenges our region offers, because they can make a real difference in the lives of the community.”
Shaquille a worthy winner

A Carnarvon high school student travelled overseas to make his first documentary with the help of a new scholarship aimed at giving more opportunities to young Aboriginal people in the Gascoyne.

Shaquille Oakley, a Year 11 student at Carnarvon Senior High School, was the inaugural winner of the Gascoyne Aboriginal Youth Leadership scholarship.

The WA Country Health Service initiative was developed by the Midwest's Population Health Unit and jointly funded this year by Carnarvon Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation and supported by Perth-based film company, Filmbites.

Shaquille, a budding film-maker already being mentored by Filmbites, travelled to Cambodia with the help of the scholarship, Filmbites and his mum Kaylene, to make a documentary about young people in a small village.

As part of the award, Shaquille presented his documentary at two local workshops in early December, enabling him to talk to other young people about the rewarding experience of making a documentary overseas.

It's the first time the Gascoyne Aboriginal Youth Leadership scholarship has been awarded, and WA Country Health Service’s Dr Marisa Gilles said she couldn’t be happier with the outcome.

“We wanted to provide local young Aboriginal people with a way to help follow their dreams and aspirations, whatever they may be,” Dr Gilles said.

“Shaquille completed a rigorous application, including telling us what he wanted to achieve and how he would give back to his community.

“There are many talented young people like Shaquille in the Gascoyne and with the help of this scholarship, we want to encourage them to dream big and fulfill their amazing potential.”

The next Gascoyne Aboriginal Youth Leadership Scholarship will open for applications in March-April 2011.

Fond memories of Ron Olson

Sadly this year we lost our colleague Ron Olson who had worked as the Department of Health’s photographer since 1982.

Ron’s professionalism was called upon by a number of areas across WA Health including here at the WA Country Health Service, where he brightened up a number of leaflets, posters and documents with his colourful and expert photographs.

He was a fitness fanatic who was devoted to his family and will be remembered for his friendliness and his willingness to help others.

His legacy will live on in the number of wonderful photos he has taken over the years.

WA Country Health Service Newsletter The Country Link

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