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Specialised eye surgeries for Great Southern communities

150 Indigenous people from the Great Southern will have crucial eye surgery over the next four months as part of a national program to reduce waiting times for people living in rural and remote areas.

The patients will be treated by a team of visiting specialists at the Albany Health Campus as part of the Eye and Ear Surgical Support Service, which is run by Rural Health West with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health.

Patients were previously referred for ophthalmology services by local optometrists and medical practitioners.

Rural Health West General Manager Outreach, Vivienne Duggin said the surgeries would occur during five visits between February and May this year.

“Indigenous people living in rural communities can find it financially and logistically challenging to access specialised healthcare,” Vivienne said.

“Many are reluctant to travel to Perth, especially if their treatment means being away from their family for a long period of time. This series of surgeries will provide comprehensive eye healthcare to patients while being able to stay in their local area.

“We anticipate that providing patients with more timely access to treatment will improve health outcomes and have a positive flow-on effect to education and employment outcomes.

“The teams comprise four health professionals, with each three-to-four-day visit incorporating pre-operative clinics, post-operative clinics and five surgical sessions. Follow-up care will be provided by local providers,” she said.

The Eye and Ear Surgical Support Service funding also provides financial support for patients and carers to travel to the hospital for surgery.

Rural Health West is committed to reducing the long waitlists for eye surgery in the Great Southern and other regional areas.

The surgical teams will also be travelling to Derby, Esperance, Geraldton, Karratha, Kununurra, and South Hedland between February and June 2017.

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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.