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Specialised eye and ear surgeries for Kimberley communities

40 Indigenous people from across the Kimberley will have crucial eye surgery and 30 Indigenous people will have ear surgery over the next four months as part of a national program to reduce surgical waiting times for people living in rural and remote areas. The surgeries commence next week.

The patients will be treated by teams of visiting specialists at the Derby and Kununurra hospitals 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 have been previously referred for ophthalmology or Ear, Nose and Throat services by local optometrists and medical practitioners.

Rural Health West General Manager Outreach, Vivienne Duggin said the surgeries would occur during three visits between March 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 and ENT healthcare to patients from outlying communities such as Looma, Warmun, Balgo, Billiluna and Fitzroy Crossing, while being able to stay close to the 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 first round of surgeries will be delivered in Derby to 30 people on the waiting list for ENT interventions. A team of seven specialists and health professionals will travel to Derby to conduct the surgeries over a four day period, incorporating pre-operative clinics, post-operative clinics and surgical sessions. Follow-up care will be provided by local providers,” she said.

“The ophthalmologic team, which will perform eye surgeries in Derby and then Kununurra, comprises four specialists and health professionals and will treat 20 people at each location,” Vivienne said.

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

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

ENDS

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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.