

NSW MINISTER FOR HEALTH VISITS WAMS

Friday, 22nd May 2009

The Minister for Health, the Honourable John Della Bosca travelled to Walgett as part of his rural consultation in response to the Garling report.

A meeting was held at the local Health Service with staff from the Hospital, General Practitioners and members of the Healthy Advisory Council.

The Vice-Chairperson, Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer from WAMS were in attendance.

Due to the late arrival of the Minister, the meeting did not end at the Health Service until 5.45 pm. Prior to his arrival to Walgett; the WAMS CEO had made contact with his office to arrange a visit to WAMS premises whilst he was in town.

The Minister and his Secretary accompanied the CEO and DCEO from the Health Service to the WAMS premises. The CEO spoke to the Minister about the difficulty to access specialists to Walgett and also the difficulty for clients to access specialists away from Walgett since the cessation of commercial air services in December 2008. She advised the Minister that WAMS had sent generic letters to everyone from the Governor who visited WAMS last year, to all Ministers. She spoke about both WAMS and the Outback Division attending a meeting with personnel from the Minister for Transport offices at Macquarie Street in regards to presenting the views of rural NSW. The Minister indicated that he was aware of the situation and had been advised of the concerns raised by community members in the region.

On his arrival at WAMS, the Minister was welcomed by the Chairperson, George Fernando. Staff that remained after normal working hours to meet the Minister were:

Phillip Dowse	Senior Aboriginal Health Worker
Rosalyn Fernando	Aboriginal Health Worker – Healthy for Life Program
Ann Megalokonomos	Public Health Worker/BREATHE Worker
Margaret Reeves	Team Leader for the Family Centred Primary Health Care Program
Sharon Silversides	Administration Officer

The Minister was escorted through all WAMS facilities, starting at the Pitt Street entrance. The CEO spoke on the achievements of Phillip Dowse being an AHW/Dispensary Assistant.



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The Minister viewed the photos of WAMS personnel who were recipients at the NSW Health Aboriginal Health Awards, 2008:

Phillip Dowse
Georgiana Butt
Men's Pit Stop

Aboriginal Health Worker
Cashless Condom Vending Machines
A Partnership between GWAHS, Outback Division and WAMS

During his walk through the Dental Clinic the Minister enquired about the difficulty to recruit Dentists. The CEO advised him of the positive relationship with Mr Clive Wright of the Oral Health branch and the relationship that WAMS Dental Consultant, Sandra Meihubers has with him to recruit locum Dentists to WAMS.

The CEO informed the Minister of the programs that his Department funds WAMS – Drug and Alcohol, Midwifery, Family Health, Public Health, Sexual Health and an Aboriginal Health Worker at Collarenebri.

The Minister was introduced to Ann Megalokonomos who was seconded from the Mobile Children's Service to the role of Public Health Worker. Ann Megalokonomos informed the Minister that she had the added role as the BREATHE Worker, and she had given up smoking as part of this position.

At the premises of 33 Wee Waa Street, the Minister viewed the plaque which acknowledged the recent Partnership signing by the former Chief Executive of Greater Western Area Health Service and Bila Muuji Aboriginal Health Services Incorporated. He was impressed with the artwork on the emu eggs and made complimentary remarks to that effect.

At the entrance of 33 Wee Waa Street the Minister viewed the fabric mural donated by the local Public Schools in recognition of WAMS twenty years celebrations. He also observed the local artwork that was used as designs for all of the resources produced for the twentieth anniversary.

The CEO mentioned to the Minister that WAMS had purchased the property of 37- 47 Wee Waa Street from their generated income. He viewed the Midwifery offices and learnt that WAMS have regular visiting consortia of Midwives from Canberra who provide ante natal care, and also offer general family education to both mothers and their partners.

The Minister was escorted to the Healthy for Life Exercise Therapy Room where he viewed WAMS Aboriginal history puzzle. The CEO and DCEO spoke about the occasions that this resource had been used as a lesson plan to GP Registrars, staff of the Walgett Shire and teaching staff at the local Public Schools.

The Chairperson formally thanked the Minister for his visit to WAMS and presented him with a carved emu egg, a WAMS men's tie and woman's scarf in recognition of twenty years of operations, plus a briefing paper on the air services, WAMS resources and pictorials.

In responding the Minister acknowledged the work of Aboriginal Health and Medical Services and paid tribute to their efforts as a workforce. The Minister gave his commitment in offering his support to AH&MS's whilst in this portfolio.

Group photos were taken before the Minister departed, as well as photos taken during his inspection of WAMS.

