

Reviewing and improving after-hours care across the western region

Community members across the Western NSW Primary Health Network (WNSW PHN) region are set to receive improved access to after-hours primary health care services in their local area, as part of the *Western NSW After Hours Services Project* recently commissioned by WNSW PHN, set to run over the coming year.

The contract to deliver the services has been awarded to Rural and Remote Medical Services Ltd (RaRMS) - a not-for-profit organisation providing primary healthcare services in rural and remote NSW communities since 2001.

Throughout the project, RaRMS will work closely with several key stakeholder organisations in a collaborative approach, including Marathon Health and the Royal Flying Doctors Service (RFDS), the Western NSW Local Health District, the Far West NSW Local Health District, other after-hours service providers, and importantly, communities right across the WNSW PHN region.

During the *After Hours Services Project*, a place-based review of existing after-hours services will be undertaken to determine what more can be done to improve the access and quality of after-hours services available for all community members, into the future.

With after-hours services comprising of a mix of face to face services from co-located clinics in the base hospitals in Dubbo, Orange, Bathurst and Broken Hill; increased utilisation of technology to promote more remote GP services to smaller rural/remote communities; and importantly, ensuring models of care are implemented to better support residents in residential aged care facilities.

RaRMS CEO, Shane Hatton says RaRMS is excited to have been awarded this opportunity to work with so many great organisations and communities.

“We’ll be looking to support local clinicians wherever possible, including GPs and nursing staff, ensuring the work we do, does not detract from the services or workforce already available.

“We won’t be trying to reinvent the wheel, and we recognise that many providers across the region have considerable expertise that we hope to learn from and build on, as the project unfolds.

WNSW PHN CEO, Andrew Harvey says they are looking forward to seeing the results of the project’s collaborative approach.

“We were really impressed with the collaborative approach proposed by RaRMS and its partner organisations, including Marathon Health and the RFDS, to work with the PHN, the

two Local Health Districts, and importantly the communities, to improve after-hours care services across the region.”

Today’s announcement comes about from funding the WNSW PHN received from the Commonwealth Department of Health for the review and improvement to after-hours services.

The Federal Member for Parkes the Hon Mark Coulton says the *Western NSW After Hours Services Project* will provide an integral component in rural and regional health, which is important for citizens of western NSW, enabling them to access valuable medical services when they need them.

The project will run until June 30, 2019, at which time it is anticipated a new entity will be established by RaRMS, involving all key stakeholder organisations, to deliver ongoing after-hours services across the WNSW PHN region.

ENDS/.

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BACKGROUND:

About Rural and Remote Medical Services Ltd (RaRMS)

RaRMS is an independent, ISO9001:2015 certified organisation, established in 2001 to implement the “Easy Entry, Gracious Exit” model of general practice in small, rural and remote communities. Since 2001, RaRMS has grown to an organisation that manages 14 medical centres, providing care to approximately 30,000 patients every year, including 6225 Indigenous patients. In addition to managing medical centres, RaRMS also provides visiting medical services (GP/VMO) to a number of rural hospitals, under contract to Local Health Districts. RaRMS employs 125 practice support staff, approximately 35 permanent GPs per year, and coordinates approximately 250 locum GP/VMO placements to ensure rural and remote communities have access to primary and secondary health care services.

About Western NSW Primary Health Network

Western Health Alliance Ltd, trading as the Western NSW Primary Health Network (WNSW PHN) is one of 31 Primary Health Networks across Australia, established by the Australian Government to support and strengthen general practice, Aboriginal health services, allied health professionals and other health professionals working in primary health care.

Our region is aligned with both the Far West and Western NSW Local Health Districts and covers much of rural and remote NSW, with a population that has diverse health needs. While our focus is primary health care, we work in partnership with other community and secondary care providers, hospitals and the broader community to help build a more integrated health system, especially for people living with chronic health conditions and their families and carers.

We acknowledge that we work on the traditional lands of many Aboriginal clans, tribes and nations. We commit to working in collaboration with our region’s Aboriginal communities and peoples to improve their health, emotional and social wellbeing in the spirit of partnership.