Robyn Lambley
Minister for Health

**Early success for Telehealth project across the regions**

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The Minister for Health Robyn Lambley says a Telehealth pilot project run through the Tennant Creek hospital is allowing more remote Territorians to access specialist services.

“The Department of Health began the Telehealth pilot project in Tennant Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs in June this year,” Mrs Lambley said.

“The project is connecting patients in remote areas with specialist doctors via videolink meaning they don’t need to travel to hospital for their outpatient consultations.

"The patient sits in a room at their local health centre with a clinician and perhaps with their family, and speaks to the specialist doctor via video link. The specialist doctor can assess the patient and the patient can see and speak with the doctor as they would in a normal consultation.

“After three months of operation, the Telehealth pilot project has already seen increasing numbers of patients attending Telehealth clinics across the regions.

“During a tour of the Tennant Creek Hospital, I could see that Telehealth is already having a great success rate in encouraging remote Territorians to access health services.

“Not only has Telehealth allowed more remote Barkly residents to have consultations with specialists, it’s also encouraging them to attend regular health check-ups at their clinics and take a more proactive approach to their wellbeing.

“I’m also receiving positive feedback that patients are appreciative that they don’t need to leave their families and communities to travel to hospital.

“A recent orthopaedic outpatient clinic held at the Tennant Creek Hospital had nine patients attend via Telehealth, whereas previously the clinic may have only seen two or three patients.”

“In Katherine, there has been a similar report for early success in encouraging people to access more services.

“There were seven patients seen under the Telehealth pilot project at the Katherine Hospital in June. Since then this has increased to 18 patients in July, and then to 27 patients in August which is great news.”
Mrs Lambley said the Telehealth project was a recommendation from the 2013 review of the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme.

“I am pleased to see that even at this early stage, it is already reducing the amount of time patients spend travelling for medical services and increasing the number of specialist services and appointments available to them,” Mrs Lambley said.

“Some of the specialties available through Telehealth in the Barkly and Katherine regions include orthopaedics, surgical, general medicine and rheumatology.

“Telehealth project staff are hoping to increase the number of specialties available through Telehealth clinics in the coming months as they work with clinicians and patients to drive this innovative program.”

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