New cardiac service celebrated on World Heart Day

29 September 2014

Minister for Health Robyn Lambley says World Heart Day marks seven months since the start of a new angioplasty service that is helping to change the lives of Territorians and their health care.

"Delivering angioplasty services was an election commitment of the Country Liberals Government," Mrs Lambley said.

"The service began in February, and since then 61 patients have received coronary angioplasty operations at Royal Darwin Hospital.

"Low risk Angioplasty services allow patients with a narrowed heart artery to have a small metal scaffold called a stent, prop the artery open through keyhole surgery.

"This has significantly reduced the number of patients needing to travel interstate away from family and friends for this procedure.

"Last week four patients received coronary angioplasty operations. One of those patients is Luk Taodong.

"His surgery took place at Darwin Private Hospital where Royal Darwin Hospital staff could perform the low-risk procedure while Luk was awake."

The service is provided in collaboration with Flinders Medical Centre in Adelaide.

"An increased investment in cardiac services has seen the number of cardiologists in the NT double to six. The NT also has a dedicated paediatric cardiologist," Mrs Lambley said.

"Since February 2014, hospitals in Darwin, Katherine, Gove, Tenant Creek and Alice Springs have also received improved diagnostic capabilities including Holter monitors and stress echo cardiograms.

"A new vascular surgeon has just joined the RDH cardiac team to support and improve heart and vascular health of NT residents.

"The bolstering of these resources is expected significantly reduce the waitlist to see a cardiologist.
"This is an amazing achievement by specialists and nurses in such a short space of time and it deserves to be celebrated on World Heart Day.

"The Territory Government can be proud of the tangible benefits that have been achieved from improved funding of essential services and development of cost effective models of care in partnerships with the private sector.

"On World Heart Day, Baker IDI in Alice Springs is also is calling on the local community to get active and reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease.

"Research by Baker IDI has led to the development and implementation of a community-based strength training program called Lift for Life.

"The Federal Government funded program is designed to help people manage type 2 diabetes as well as promoting preventive exercise for a range of chronic conditions.

Baker IDI’s Head of Physical Activity Professor David Dunstan said that in 2010 Fitness Australia and Baker IDI rolled out the Lift for Life program in disadvantaged communities throughout Australia, with a focus on people who are unemployed.

“To date more than 470 exercise professionals have been trained to deliver Lift for Life to more than 2700 individuals across 170 providers throughout Australia, Professor Dunstan said.

“More than 500 people have participated in the program in Alice Springs - this is a remarkable achievement for this small community.

"Lift for Life has been very popular with local communities and has provided extensive learnings for Fitness Australia, Baker IDI and the Australian Government on implementing lifestyle programs in disadvantaged communities."

Minister Lambley said cardiac disease has been the major contributor to the mortality rate in Australia, and it also accounts for the biggest health gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

"The NT Government is committed to improving heart health services for all Territorians, reducing the need for residents to travel and to produce a substantial reduction in health inequality," Mrs Lambley said.

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