Media Release

John Elferink
Minister for Health

Telehealth helping connect remote patients to quality healthcare services

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More than 380 remote patients have accessed specialist medical services while also avoiding long distance travel under the Northern Territory Government’s Telehealth pilot project, since it began mid-last year.

Under the pilot project and through the use of Telehealth technology, patients in the trial communities of Katherine, Barkly and Central Australia regions have been able to visit their local health centre or hospital and connect with specialists in Alice Springs, Katherine or Darwin.

Minister for Health John Elferink said Telehealth is particularly useful for routine review appointments which usually only take 10-15 minutes to complete and previously could involve being away from family and work for days at a time.

“Telehealth is also useful for patients with chronic conditions and has saved one gentleman patient in Borroloola from travelling six times over a five month period. Stories such as this are not uncommon,” Mr Elferink said.

“The project is also beneficial to the patient’s family, who are able to be present to discuss health needs and treatment plans. Family members attending can also provide interpretation assistance.”

Since the pilot program was launched, the number of patients who have missed appointments has also decreased. In January this year, Katherine Hospital achieved a 100 per cent attendance rate for Telehealth appointments.

“More patients are now asking to have their appointments via Telehealth as the convenience of the service is realised. Even parent patients can be saved from making childcare arrangements without the need to travel long distances,” Mr Elferink said.

Businesses have also noted the benefits of Telehealth by not having to lose staff for long periods, something especially important to small businesses.

“The Northern Territory Government is committed to continuing to drive innovative health solutions for people in remote communities,” Mr Elferink said.

The pilot project finishes in September this year and an evaluation will be undertaken.

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