What is SIHI providing in the coastal Wheatbelt district?

The Southern Inland Health Initiative (SIHI) is a half a billion dollar investment by the State Government’s Royalties for Regions that’s transforming health care throughout the southern inland region of WA, including towns in the Wheatbelt, South West, Great Southern, Midwest and Goldfields.

Delivered by the WA Country Health Service, SIHI is the single biggest investment in country health in the State’s history. A recent evaluation report shows country people in the regions covered by SIHI are receiving safer, better and more reliable health care, with significant improvements in emergency care and access to GPs.

To read the SIHI Program Evaluation – Preliminary Key Findings March 2016 report, click here.
Residents in coastal Wheatbelt towns and surrounding communities are now benefitting from the following health initiatives and improvements thanks to this historic health investment:

Providing better access to doctors and emergency care

SIHI is significantly improving emergency medical care by using modern technology and supporting more doctors to live and work in the country. There has been a demonstrated 67 per cent improvement in the GP retention rate at the SIHI four year mark, indicative of the program’s success in supporting and retaining GPs in regional communities (Rural Health West data).

SIHI is also improving the safety and quality of rural health care by improving medical coverage in WA Country Health Service (WACHS) hospitals and health services and better supporting the medical workforce.

In the coastal Wheatbelt region, the following SIHI initiatives are contributing to communities having better access to GPs, improved emergency care and a more robust country health service:

**Emergency Telehealth Service**
Doctors and nurses treating critically ill and injured patients in emergency departments (EDs) at Moora, Jurien Bay and Lancelin now have access to highly trained emergency specialists in Perth via video-conference, thanks to the Emergency Telehealth Service (ETS). Find out more about the ETS here. Watch a video where a former patient describes how the ETS helped to save his life.

**Incentives to attract GPs to country towns and participate in Emergency Department rosters**
Eligible GPs can receive financial incentives to encourage them to work in the SIHI region and take part in ED rosters at local WACHS facilities. In the coastal Wheatbelt, SIHI incentivises a local GP to be on close call availability across the district, including at the Moora Health Service ED. These incentives are in addition to the support packages provided by local government.

**New district medical model to encourage GPs to stay in country towns**
SIHI is supporting collaboration between GPs, enhanced flexible work options, education and training and collegiate support to encourage attraction and retention of doctors providing services in WACHS facilities, including in the coastal Wheatbelt region.

**Strengthened medical workforce**
SIHI supports the medical workforce to enable continuous service reform and delivery of effective and efficient regional emergency support to WACHS facilities, including in the coastal Wheatbelt region.

**Incentives for GPs to provide primary care services and Aboriginal health services**
SIHI offers financial incentives to GPs to deliver primary care services and Aboriginal health services to the community. Currently, there are GPs in Jurien Bay and Moora offering these services under SIHI.
Providing health care closer to home

SIHI has significantly increased the range of local health services that bring care closer to home and help people to avoid hospital.

In partnership with non-government and community organisations, SIHI is building a more sustainable rural health system. In the coastal Wheatbelt region, the following can now be accessed thanks to SIHI:

**Diabetes Educator**
A credentialed diabetes educator is available for appointments two days per week from Jurien Bay, Lancelin, Gingin and Bindoon health services. Pregnant women can now access diabetes services with King Edward Memorial Hospital via telehealth from their own town, with support of the local midwife and a diabetes educator. The Diabetes Telehealth service is also available (if required) in this area via videoconference (see next page).

**Community Midwifery Service**
Two part-time community midwives, based in Moora and Bindoon, provide shared antenatal care with local GPs where possible, including visiting and outreach services to expectant women throughout the coastal district. Women can plan their birth to enhance the safety and well-being of their babies. The service has an average case load of 20–30 women per month including Aboriginal women and clients with complex care needs.

**Newborn Hearing Screening Program**
Parents and newborn babies living in the coastal Wheatbelt region can now access newborn hearing screening provided by community midwives in Moora, improving the rate of early detection of hearing issues in newborns.

**Primary Health Nurse Practitioner**
A nurse practitioner works closely with GPs and provides home visits, care plans and delivers primary care, including for mental health clients throughout the coastal Wheatbelt district. Nurse practitioners conduct clinics in small towns where there are no GPs or limited access to GPs.

**Aged Care**
Under SIHI, there is a focus on clinical improvement in residential aged care facilities, including reducing falls and improving care for people with dementia. There is a priority to improve access to community care options to enable people to stay in their homes as long as possible.

**Mental Health**
A shared-care approach between GPs, mental health services and nurse practitioners has enabled the physical health care needs of clients to be comprehensively assessed and managed, in particular in areas where there are limited GPs.
Providing health care closer to home (cont.)

**Health Navigator**
A free telephone and videoconferencing service that supports people living with diabetes, heart disease, heart failure, and long-term lung conditions, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) to manage their chronic conditions and get their health on track.

**Shared electronic records**
Health Navigator clients can now choose to share their health records with all those involved in their care. This means the client’s goals and health history are available so everyone works to the same health goals.

**Outpatient services via telehealth**
Free outpatient service for public patients via videoconference for burns, wounds, pain management, speech pathology, dietetics, gastroenterology, neurology, urology, paediatrics and more can be accessed from Moora, Jurien Bay, Gingin and Bindoon with participating specialists in Perth.

**Tele-mental Health**
Coastal Wheatbelt clients can have appointments with their psychiatrist and/or therapist (psychologist, social worker etc) from their home towns via videoconference, instead of having to make the journey to the regional health center at Northam.

**Diabetes Telehealth**
A partnership between WACHS and Diabetes WA to enhance diabetes education services for people in the Wheatbelt, including the eastern district, using videoconferencing.
Phone 1300 136 588 or visit the Diabetes WA website.

**Antenatal telehealth classes**
Regular antenatal education classes are now available via videoconference, linking expectant parents throughout the coastal Wheatbelt with a range of specialists and experts without having to travel to their delivery hospital. Join the Facebook page: Facebook/BabyBumpsWA

**Lactation telehealth service**
New mothers in the Wheatbelt can go to their local health service and link via videoconference with specialist midwives at King Edward Memorial Hospital who provide specialists breastfeeding advice.
Planning to improve access to services

Planning is currently underway examining ways to improve access to services in the coastal Wheatbelt district including care coordination, telehealth options, post-acute care and management of complex chronic conditions.

Existing services

Services introduced under SIHI are provided in addition to existing WACHS Wheatbelt services including Aboriginal health, child health nursing, school health nursing, immunisation, occupational therapy, speech pathology, physiotherapy, social work, dietetic, and mental health services which are available (primarily outreach/visiting) throughout the coastal Wheatbelt through scheduled visits and telehealth.

Providing upgrades to hospital and health service facilities

SIHI is investing $300 million to upgrade 37 hospital and health service facilities across the Wheatbelt, South West, Midwest and Great Southern. Upgrades will support the delivery of health care services that will better match the needs of their communities and conform to all current compliance and security standards.

In the coastal Wheatbelt region, the Moora and Jurien Bay health services are about to undergo expansion and refurbishment under the SIHI capital works program, with construction expected to commence in late July 2016 and be completed in mid-2017.

SIHI also provided a $600,000 grant to the Shire of Chittering to assist with the development of the new Chittering Health Centre, which was officially opened in November 2015.

Next steps for SIHI

SIHI is transforming the regional health landscape in the southern inland region of WA. The results of the first evaluation of SIHI are very encouraging. The program will continue to be evaluated and a business case is being developed proposing future funding strategies to continue critical programs beyond the end date of 30 June 2017.

You can keep updated on the latest SIHI news by signing up for the SIHI e-newsletter, which will be issued monthly.

If you have any queries about SIHI, please contact us by emailing southerninland@health.wa.gov.au

You can also visit the SIHI website at www.health.wa.gov.au/southerninland
Innovative service helps people navigate the health system

People with chronic health conditions across the Wheatbelt and Great Southern are receiving help to improve their health from the innovative Health Navigator service.

Health Navigator is a free telephone and videoconferencing service offered by the WA Country Health Service and the Silver Chain Group since 2013, to help people with diabetes and long-term lung and heart conditions to ‘navigate’ the often complex health system.

The Health Navigator service is part of the Southern Inland Health Initiative, a half a billion dollar program funded by the State Government’s Royalties for Regions.

Health Navigator works with local GPs to support people to keep their health on track. With the patient’s permission, clinical information can be shared between their GP and any other health provider involved in their care to ensure everyone is working towards the same health outcomes.

Health Navigator project manager in the Wheatbelt, Karen Beardsmore said it was exciting that the service was gaining awareness and momentum throughout the catchment area.

“We know that people in regional areas have higher rates of diabetes and heart disease than people in the metropolitan area, and it can be harder for them to access advice and support services,” Ms Beardsmore said.

“In the Wheatbelt, 7.5 per cent of adults have diabetes of some form, compared to 6.3 per cent of adults Statewide. Complications from diabetes account for 3.8 per cent of all deaths among Wheatbelt residents, which is a staggering figure compared to the State average of 1%.

“The Wheatbelt also has one of the highest rates of heart disease, with 26.5% of adults experiencing some form of heart disease, which is significantly higher than the national average (21.5%) and the Perth metropolitan area (between 10.7%-20.9%).

“Both conditions are preventable and treatable if people have access to the right information, education and ongoing support – which is what the Health Navigator team aims to provide.”

Ms Beardsmore said Health Navigator had been a significant breakthrough for many clients.

“One lady living with diabetes and a long-term lung condition was often admitted to hospital for breathing issues. A Health Navigator coordinator worked with her and her GP to develop an action plan to determine triggers and treatments for her breathing issues without hospitalisation.

“The Health Navigator coordinator made regular contact with her to provide ongoing encouragement and to support her to rediscover some of her previous interests once she was feeling better.”

Find out more about Health Navigator here.
Emergency Telehealth Service a life saver for Lancelin tourist

For Perth resident Michael Murphy, who was holidaying in Lancelin with his family, a beach fishing expedition quickly became a day he would never forget. Just a few hours later he would be airlifted to Perth for emergency medical treatment.

Mr Murphy and his family were headed to the beach when they encountered a bogged vehicle. After providing their assistance he started to experience severe chest pains. His family took him to Silver Chain's Lancelin Health Centre and not long after, Silver Chain's registered nurse linked up with the Emergency Telehealth Service (ETS).

Introduced under the Southern Inland Health Initiative, the ETS enables doctors and nurses in country hospital emergency rooms to access highly trained, emergency medicine specialists based in Perth using video conferencing equipment.

When Mr Murphy (pictured below) presented at the Lancelin Health Centre, he had significant chest pain and was clearly in need of emergency treatment.

Instead of local staff coordinating his transfer via ambulance to the nearest Perth hospital – 100km away – the Silver Chain nurse activated the ETS and was able to initiate emergency treatment under the guidance of an ETS doctor at the Perth headquarters in Wembley.

Dr Robert Graydon, Medical Director ETS, who leads the team of ETS doctors, said when dealing with any patient experiencing chest pain, a timely response is imperative to ensure limited damage to the heart.

“Thanks to the ETS, a doctor could be present at the Lancelin Health Centre within seconds. We were then able to immediately recognise that Mr Murphy’s symptoms suggested an acute myocardial infarction or a heart attack,” Dr Graydon explained.

Whilst the Silver Chain nurse continued the treatment plan on the ground, the ETS doctor arranged for Mr Murphy to be airlifted by helicopter from Lancelin to Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital and fast tracked straight to the cardiac catheter laboratory.

“I was trying to stay calm so I didn’t panic but I really didn’t know what was happening. It was a scary situation. The nurse on the ground was absolutely marvelous as was the ETS doctor based in Perth,” Mr Murphy said.

“After heart surgery in Perth, I’m now on the road to recovery. If it wasn’t for ETS, everything could be very different though. I’m sure I would have made it to hospital but the damage to my heart could have been much greater.”

Watch a video where Michael describes how the ETS helped to save his life at the Lancelin Health Centre.

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Your local District Health Advisory Council (DHAC)

The local District Health Advisory Council (DHAC) works with the WA Country Health Service to improve the delivery of health services in their health district. As consumers, carers and community members, DHACs are able to share their and others experiences with local health service providers to help them make better health service decisions and deliver consumer centred care and services. To find out more, visit www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au and search ‘District Health Advisory Councils’.

Your coastal Wheatbelt DHAC representative is Jan Court who can be contacted on 9655 1389 or email janicecourt@bigpond.com.