



MEDIA RELEASE

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Specialist Service Expanded

A specialist service for renal patients in Mildura has proved to be in such high demand that a second clinic has recently opened to help meet patient needs.

The new clinic is designed to provide treatment for pre-dialysis patients and will complement services offered by the existing clinic, which services dialysis patients in the region.

A group of four rotating specialists, led by Dr Rosemary Masterson, flies into Mildura from Melbourne once a month to assist local doctors and nursing staff to treat renal patients.

The services provided by Dr Masterson and her team are made possible thanks to the Australian Government funded Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program (MSOAP) which is administered in Victoria by the Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria (RWAV).

"It is a wonderful project to be involved in as there is a huge need for renal medicine in Mildura," Dr Masterson said. "The program provides our patients with specialist services that they may otherwise have difficulty accessing due to the demands of travel.

"The specialist treatment the patients receive locally is definitely better than the help they would receive if they came to Melbourne," she said. "There, the doctor would only see one aspect of their health, in isolation of the other issues that are affecting them, particularly in the case of Indigenous patients.

"The Aboriginal patients who attend the clinic are relatively young in age, but pathologically, they are quite old because of the range of other health issues and social circumstances that contribute to their illness. By coming to Mildura, I have gained a much better understanding of the environment my patients live in and the factors that can and can't be changed."

According to Dr Masterson, Indigenous people make up around 40% of the overall patient load accessing the specialist services provided by the clinic.

"We try to encourage them to eat better food and improve their overall health," she said. "It is quite challenging, but we have made great advances, to the extent that two of our patients are undertaking dialysis at home, which I think is a first in the country."

Dr Masterson is looking to continue to improve the services that are provided by the clinics by providing information sessions to upskill GPs in the local area.

About RWAV

RWAV was established in 1998 to help overcome the shortage of rural doctors and improve access to medical services for rural Victorians. RWAV's recruitment programs and support services are available for all rural doctors, and include: marketing rural Victoria and rural medicine; marketing vacancies in rural practice; international and local recruitment; family support and locum services; professional development (training and grants) to support doctors moving into rural practice as well as to assist rural doctors to maintain their clinical and professional skills.

In addition, RWAV recruits and supports medical specialist outreach services, and undertakes workforce planning and research to inform government policy. RWAV acknowledges the support of the Australian Government Department of Health and Aging, and the Victorian Department of Human Services for their ongoing support and funding.

Further information on RWAV is available on the website at www.rwav.com.au

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