

Southern Inland Health Initiative

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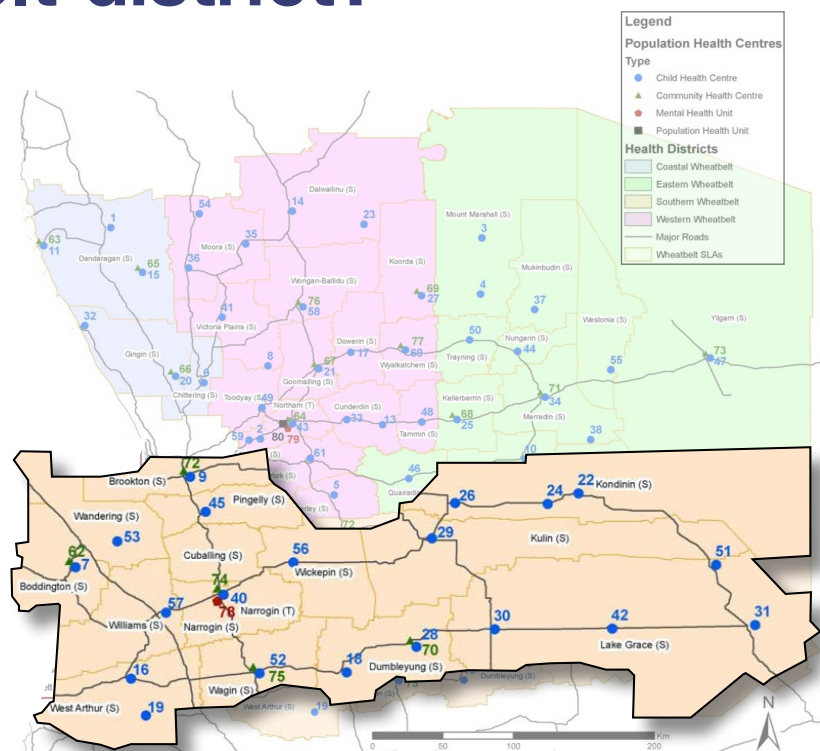
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What is SIHI providing in the southern Wheatbelt district?

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 southern 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 southern 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 health service emergency departments (EDs) at Narrogin, Boddington, Pingelly, Kondinin, Lake Grace, Dumbleyung and Wagin now have access to highly trained emergency specialists in Perth via videoconference, 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

GPs who meet the eligibility criteria can receive financial incentives to encourage them to work in the SIHI region and take part in ED rosters at local WACHS facilities, including in the southern Wheatbelt. These incentives are in addition to the support packages provided by local government.

At the Narrogin Health Service, SIHI funds GPs to be available on the floor in the ED during the day and on call after hours. SIHI also provides incentives to a number of GPs to provide anaesthetic, obstetric and surgical services at the health service and funds a full-time salaried doctor who is employed at the health service.



New district medical model to encourage GPs to stay in country towns

SIHI is supporting collaboration between GPs and 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 southern Wheatbelt region.



Strengthened medical workforce

SIHI is providing medical workforce support to enable continuous service reform and to deliver effective and efficient regional emergency support to WACHS facilities, including in the southern Wheatbelt region.



ED Nurse Practitioner

SIHI funds an ED nurse practitioner position at the Narrogin Health Service. ED nurse practitioners are advanced-practice nurses who specialise in emergency care and service model development.



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 in various southern Wheatbelt towns.

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 southern Wheatbelt region, the following can now be accessed thanks to SIHI:



Community Midwifery Service

A community midwife, based in Narrogin, provides shared antenatal care with local GPs, where possible, including visiting and outreach services to expectant women throughout the southern Wheatbelt. 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.



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 southern Wheatbelt. 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.



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.



Social work services

SIHI funds a social work service in the Southern Wheatbelt to support vulnerable clients, including intervention at the primary care level and at hospital crisis level. This service is supporting people to avoid hospital admission.

Providing health care closer to home (cont.)



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 11 southern Wheatbelt hospitals and health services with participating specialists in Perth.



Tele-mental Health

Southern 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 centre at Narrogin.



Diabetes Telehealth

A partnership between the WA Country Health Service and Diabetes WA to enhance diabetes education services for people in regional WA, including the southern Wheatbelt district, using videoconferencing.

Phone 1300 136 588 or visit the [Diabetes WA website](#). 🖱️



Antenatal telehealth classes

Antenatal education classes are now available via videoconference, linking expectant parents throughout the southern Wheatbelt with a range of specialists and experts.

Join the Facebook page: [Facebook/BabyBumpsWA](#) 🖱️



Lactation telehealth service

New mothers in the Wheatbelt can go to their local hospital or health service and link via videoconference with specialist midwives at King Edward Memorial Hospital who provide specialists breastfeeding advice.



Existing services

Services introduced under SIHI are provided in addition to existing WA Country Health Service Wheatbelt services including Aboriginal health, child health nursing, school health nursing, immunisation, occupational therapy, speech pathology, physiotherapy, dietetics, and mental health services which are available (primarily outreach/visiting) throughout the southern 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.

Building activity currently underway or planned in the southern Wheatbelt region as part of the SIHI capital works program:

- Narrogin Health Service is about to undergo a \$50 million plus upgrade, with construction expected to commence in mid-2016 and be completed in mid-2018

- health services in the southern Wheatbelt towns of Boddington, Kondinin, Dumbleyung and Williams will be upgraded, with construction on the various sites due to commence in the second half of 2016
- a new Pingelly Health Centre will be built, delivering primary health services and 24/7 emergency care
- upgrades to the Lake Grace Health Service are almost completed and the refurbishment of the Wagin Health Service was completed in December 2015.

Visit the [Bigger Picture Health website](#)  for more information on all the SIHI capital projects in the Wheatbelt.



Artist's impression of the Narrogin Health Service

Age appropriate accommodation for Pingelly

Planning is underway to develop new age appropriate accommodation to support older people in Pingelly, funded by SIHI and built, owned and managed by the Pingelly Shire.



New primary health centre to be built in Pingelly

An innovative new primary health centre is being developed in Pingelly, to deliver primary health services such as early childhood checks, immunisation and home and community care to local residents to keep them healthy and living well in the community.

The Pingelly Health Centre will also provide 24/7 emergency care, including via the Emergency Telehealth Service during operating hours. Construction on the new Pingelly Health Centre is due to commence in the second half of 2016.



Artist's impression of the front of the new Pingelly Health Centre.



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 video-conferencing 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.](#) 🖱️

Telehealth provides convenient solution for pregnant teacher

Dumbleyung resident and Kukerin Primary School teacher Amanda Gilfellon discovered the convenience of using the WA Country Health Service's telehealth service when she was pregnant with her first child.

During her pregnancy, Amanda, who has Type 1 diabetes, was under the care of a King Edward Memorial Hospital obstetrician which meant travelling to Perth for appointments. In addition to those appointments she also needed to see an endocrinologist, nurse practitioner and dietitian to manage her diabetes.

During her 20-week visit with her nurse practitioner it was suggested that she have another appointment before her scheduled 28-week visit, to make sure everything was progressing well with her pregnancy.

"That additional appointment fell during school term time and would have meant another day off work and a long trip to Perth," Mrs Gilfellon said.

"It was at that point that my nurse practitioner and diabetes educator, Marina Mickelson, suggested that we conduct the appointment via telehealth from the local Dumbleyung Hospital."

The telehealth service in Western Australia links regionally-based patients and clinical staff via videoconference to specialist health professionals based in the metropolitan area or elsewhere for outpatient appointments.

Ms Mickelson liaised with a registered nurse at Dumbleyung Hospital and with the help of the telehealth service desk, they were able to establish a link quickly and easily.



Amanda Gilfellon, husband Matthew and baby Cecelia.

Mrs Gilfellon said using telehealth was just like having a face-to-face appointment and that she could see and hear everything very clearly and there was no delay when chatting to Marina.

"It was so convenient not having to travel to Perth for that appointment, which would have involved not just travel, but also having to find someone to take my class at school for the day, which is not easy in a small regional community," Mrs Gilfellon said.

"I really think that more people would be keen to try telehealth if they knew it was available."

"I think they would definitely ask to have outpatient appointments via telehealth if they can avoid having to travel and take time away from work and family commitments."

Mrs Gilfellon delivered her daughter Cecelia early at 35 weeks.

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 southern Wheatbelt DHAC Chairperson is Stan Sherry who can be contacted on 9885 1174 or email stan.sherry@bigpond.com