



Wudinna District Council

Community Health Services Update - 27 January 2022

Dear Community Members

Following our late December Community Update on our Wudinna District Council web page regarding the gap in a local GP service for our communities, I'm taking the opportunity to let our people know the steps that Council is taking in trying to secure GP Services.

On 13th January we met again with the Eyre & Far North Local Health Network (EFNLHN) CEO Ms Verity Paterson, Executive Director of Medical Services Dr Susan Merrett and Business Manager Medical Services Ms Leeann Harbridge, to progress discussion re Health Services for Central Eyre Peninsula.

EFNLHN advised that they recognise that Wudinna with our Eyre Highway location and distances from major Hospital support is a priority location to have GP on site. They also confirmed that there are no plans to move towards closing the Wudinna Hospital and agree with our Council representatives that the best solution would be for Wudinna and Districts to have a resident GP based at Wudinna. Having experienced Dr Scott's wonderful 14 years at Wudinna we all certainly know what 'the best' feels like.

Council assures our community that it is our intention to work towards securing another resident Doctor. We do have to be realistic and recognise the issue of our rural and remote communities across Australia that are struggling to secure resident GPs. Council is committed to active recruiting for our district through both Australian and Overseas agencies and will also look for any Commonwealth or State government support initiatives to do this.

Council intends to pursue an interim GP Locum service, and ideally have this available from our Wudinna Health Centre building. While EFNLHN can not guarantee a full time locum GP, our aim is to use this model (rather than no local GP access).

EFNLHN also gave an update on what is currently taking place for our Trudinger residents. A one day per fortnight visitation has commenced for residents by a GP employed by Mid Eyre Medical. We have been advised this meets the standard of care required for residents. If a resident becomes unwell between visits, then Nursing Staff seek advice through the 'On Call' Service.

At our meeting EFNLHN advised that the Rural Doctors Workforce Agency had renewed the contract for the Women's Health visiting GP Service and were in the process of negotiating the continued use of the Wudinna Health Centre.

As normal, Wudinna Hospital nursing staff will assess any people who present at the Emergency Department and then seek further medical advice if required. If they require extra care the on-call doctors will assess the best place for this to occur, remain at Wudinna or be transported to a larger hospital such as Port Lincoln or for people who are very unwell, Adelaide.

Regarding the question "Would SA Ambulance provide a Paramedic at Wudinna to support our Volunteers and Hospital Staff during this time" we have been advised by EFNLHN that they have raised this with the South Australian Ambulance Service, but with the current COVID situation their capacity to respond is somewhat diminished.

We have some common questions from community members on the following and have kindly sought EFNLHN advice on:

Q: Who do I phone if I want to enquire if there is a doctor available in Wudinna to make an appointment with from January 1st onwards?

A: You are not able to make an appointment with the GP that provides a service to the Trudinger residents directly, however if you need follow up after a hospital presentation, the nurse unit manager will arrange an appointment for you.

Q: While there is no Doctor at Wudinna and I need an appointment will the next closest Doctor e.g., Streaky Bay, Ceduna, Elliston, Lock, Cummins, Kimba take appointments for people from our district?

A: Elliston, Ceduna and Kimba are EFNLHN owned practices and they have advised that they will accept new patients. These practices can also offer telehealth (telephone) once you have been seen in person, for example to have a prescription renewed. Streaky Bay, Lock and Cummins are privately run practices and therefore it is their decision whether they will accept new patients, you can inquire directly to them about availability and their use of telehealth.

Q: Is there a recommended medical help line/web page that people can run a concern past to assist/decide if they require a Drs appointment?

A: Yes, Help is available in the first instance via "healthdirect": 1800 022 222 or online www.healthdirect.gov.au.

Q: What if I am unable to drive and have no family who can drive me to another town for a doctor's appointment – is there a service that can assist me?

A: If you are in receipt of a Home Care Package (HCP), NDIS package or receive services under the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) you may be able to get assistance with transport to access medical appointments, please contact your provider for assistance. If you are over 65 and not receiving support through HCP or CHSP you can call Country Health Connect to see if you are eligible for these programs, <https://countryhealthconnect.sa.gov.au/> or phone 1800 944 912. Alternatively, Red Cross may be able to assist, they can be contacted on 08 8100 4500.

Country Health Connect Community Health Service (most of us know it as Community Health) which operates from the Wudinna Health Centre have kindly provided an overview of the services which continue from the Centre. For any of these Services if you are unsure just check with Maria on phone 8680 2254. An overview includes; Maria onsite 8:30am – 4:30pm Tuesday-Friday, Carla Home Support Co-ordinator 8:30am – 4:30pm Monday – Thursday, Tania Allied Health Assistant Tuesday 9am - 4:30pm, Wednesday 9am – 4pm, Thursday 9am - 3:30pm. Visiting services include Dentist, Physio, Podiatry, Dietetics, Occupational Therapist, Speech Therapist, Bay Physiotherapy, Independent Hearing and Eyre Eye Centre. If you are attending appointments and the front door is locked, please phone 8680 2254 to be let in.

Wudinna Pharmacy is open again following Mervat's very well earned regular two-week January break. It was great to see Sally back as well. Thank you to the people who were patient during the first Monday morning rush for Prescriptions and thanks Sally for working your way through them.

If you missed getting an appointment for COVID vaccinations, please call Wudinna Pharmacy on 8680 2038 to go on their list for a call back once they commence this service. Flu and Whooping Cough vaccinations will also be available at the Pharmacy.

We really appreciate our local Pharmacy services, many thanks from all of us to Mervat and Sally.

I hope this update while not being able to provide the immediate answers we all want, is useful for people during this time. Please know that as a community we have worked our way through similar situations over the years and that Elected Members and Council Staff are very committed to working to a return of local GP Services and aim to keep community informed with what we know along the way.

Eleanor Scholz
MAYOR