

Wagait Community Meeting – Access to Primary Health Care Services

Wagait Shire Council Community Centre, Tuesday 7th February 2017



Present:

- Community Members: Approximately 60 community members in attendance. Letter received from one resident who was unable to attend.
- Christine Connors – General Manager Darwin Region and Strategic Primary Health Care – Top End Health Services
- Miriam Heath - District Manager - Top End Health Services
- Alison McLay – Outreach Manager – Top End Health Services
- Sarena Ruediger – Executive Manager Planning and Performance – NT PHN
- Lisa Sparrow – Workforce Strategy Manager – NT PHN
- Peter Clee – President – Wagait Shire Council
- Deborah Allen – CEO - Wagait Shire Council

Introduction:

Christine Connors acknowledged the long standing relationship between the Department of Health and Wagait Community in delivery of primary health care clinics over the past ten years. Christine noted that there had been limited opportunity in the past where health providers could have a conversation about the changing health needs and demands of the community and expressed her appreciation of this opportunity.

Community members were invited to describe their experiences of health services in the region, some points of clarification were provided, community members made some suggestions with respect to potential ways forward and a commitment was made regarding next steps.

Experiences described by community members included:

Understanding of existing services

- Poor understanding of when and how Wagait community members could access services from the Belyuen clinic, including:
 - Emergencies (including after hours)
 - Sick certificates
 - Sick children
 - Other health needs
- Residents questioned why they were unable to contact clinic staff directly after hours, but rather were required to call the DMO at RDH. Other residents acknowledged the out of hours demand that might be put on clinic staff if they were to be contacted directly, and the role the DMO has in managing this.
- Opportunities presented by forthcoming changes to Aged Care which will enable Wagait community members to access aged care services from their choice of provider.
- Feeling by people that they have no pathway to voice or to be heard about their concerns or issues.
- Questions about why snake antivenin is not available at the Belyuen clinic.

Experience of existing services

- Isolated incidents in which the DMO response to emergency needs was perceived to be inappropriate, resulting in people feeling unsafe.
- Otherwise very satisfactory / effective experiences of care received, including care in emergency situations.
- Older people talked about difficulties in accessing home care services, very grateful of the existing TEHS nurses coming to visit them at home. Is it possible to explore home visits for some community members to make sure all is well?

Accessibility of services

- Cost of transport to access health services in Darwin (\$25 ferry)
- Wagait residents who are in Darwin regularly may have more capacity to access health services in Darwin.
- Some people do not have a car in Darwin. Public transport can make it more difficult to access services, particularly with children or when acutely unwell.
- Elderly residents may have difficulty catching the ferry due to steps at the Jetty and on the Ferry.
- Travelling with individuals with Dementia can be difficult
- Carers are unable to leave the people for whom they care for the length of time required to travel to Darwin for appointments.
- Driving to Darwin is a long trip and can be difficult for the elderly or those who are acutely unwell to manage.
- Residents felt that there were inequities in service availability across comparable communities (Belyuen, Adelaide River, Batchelor, Pine Creek).

Accessibility of particular types of services

- Concerns regarding where residents would access palliative care services.
- Concerns regarding antivenin not being available in the community
- Lack of post natal support and difficulty travelling to Darwin with newborn and young children
- Difficulty attending Darwin to obtain health services, in particular for:
 - immunisations with young children

- sick certificates when unwell
- medications
- Concern about how medications would be accessed if a GP service was available in Wagait.

Demand for services

- A lot of elderly people in the community and people with Diabetes
- When it comes to accessing health services, different times suit different people. 4pm suits most.
- Community members felt that the level of use of the current clinic in Wagait is not an indication of potential use of a GP service due to mixture of limited scope of current service and poor community awareness of what this service can provide.

Suggestions from community members

- A survey be undertaken to assess demand for services
- Consideration be made to attracting a GP to consult in the community on a part time basis
- Avenues of communication with Wagait community members could include: council email, post boxes, shop, ferry and word of mouth.
- Community may be interested in assisting with volunteers, particularly in addressing concerns for safety of staff working alone in the Wagait clinic.
- Community keen to identify how they can attract health services/ health service providers and contribute to the answers.
- Community members form their own support group to help each other - suggested a group form to attend hydrotherapy in Darwin.
- Concern raised about the number of snakes in the area, and the need for first aid training.

Points of clarification made by Top End Health Services

- Top End Health Services are very keen to hear of any incidents where the process of accessing health services is not effective (such as the examples given of accessing emergency support) in order to ensure that such issues do not recur.
- Acutely unwell residents of Wagait may access the clinic at Belyuen.
- It was noted that where there may be perceived inequities in the availability of service in comparable communities, that this was a product of historical funding that has not grown with population growth. There has been a lack of social planning in conjunction with developments approved in the outer Darwin areas.
- The current Nurse Led Clinic at Wagait will not be closed. The short closure prior to Christmas was the result of a misunderstanding regarding compliance with legislation. This has been resolved and the clinic will continue to be provided twice a week.
- Top End Health Services are conducting exploratory discussions with stakeholders to clarify access to Palliative Care Services.
- Antivenin is not recommended for keeping and administration other than in large hospitals due to risks associated with it's administration.

Actions

- Top End Health Services will develop an information brochure for Wagait residents outlining the services they have access to and how they can be accessed.
This will include:
 - Explaining TEHS complaints pathway /system to people.
 - Better communication needed to explain how TEHS services work.

- What can be provided at the Wagait Clinic and how to arrange services such as immunisations.
- What can be accessed at Belyuen Clinic and how.
- Process for accessing emergency care after hours.
- Aged Care Services
- Palliative Care Services
- Opportunities to contribute through Friends of Top End Health Services
- Top End Health Services will review specific incidents regarding after hours emergencies as raised by community members.
- Wagait Council will facilitate a “health collective” including members of Council, NT PHN, Top End Health Services, Aged Care services and community representatives.
- NT PHN to summarise discussion and outcome of this meeting and circulate to community members.
- NTPHN will work with the health collective and TEHS in better understanding population health needs.
- Further explore aged care services and packages.

Further Communication

Any Wagait residents wishing to provide further information with respect to accessing health services can contact NT PHN or Top End Health Services through the Wagait Shire.