

## **Kimberley Dental Team E- Flyer 2. August 2009**

Dear Team Member,

So much has happened in the past six weeks since our first E-Flyer, one can only scratch the surface.

Firstly we did meet and have a very beneficial evening with Dr Judith Kearins, retired head UWA Psychology and her husband, Dr John Watson. Her opinion and knowledge is well respected and the advice and experience she readily past on to the Team, was of great value.

Dental Health Services, dental van with Dental Therapist Natalie and Dental Nurse Kim, returned to Halls Creek District High School from Monday the 20<sup>th</sup> July, the beginning of Term 3. As these kids had not been seen by a dentist for over twelve months, they were able to start with the 133 screened by us in May. They will be at the School until the end of this term which is excellent. Dr Bendre Otto, the Area Dental Officer attended the hospital and van, the week before we arrived and continued the screening of the school kids.

Unfortunately with considerable political tension between parents and the school, student attendance at school this term has been down significantly. On the surface this is undesirable, but in fact many quite rightly, saw it as a very healthy situation as parents are becoming far more vocal and involved in their Children's education and this must be seen as very positive.

We have registered Kimberley Dental Team as a business name and are now progressing with application for endorsement by the Australian Tax Office for Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status so we will be in a position to apply for both funding and research grants in the near future. Professor Marc Tennant has commenced the process of facilitating final year students to be able to assist from next year onwards.

We have finalized our Mission Statement but this will very likely evolve as the task at hand comes more into focus (attached with this E-Flyer)

Dental Health Services has extended financial assistance to the Team by "employing" Dr Brian Koch and his super dental nurse, Kristal, on a casual basis for the week. This will effectively defray all of their travelling and accommodation costs. I was not employed as "they stated, they could not afford specialist rates". I guess if I have been there Honorary Consultant Orthodontist for disability services / special needs, for the past 23 years, I can do a few more lean yards without pay. I remember a muslim taxi driver, ran out of my fathers dental surgery straight after a successful extraction. The receptionist yelled after him, "when will we be paid" and he replied, "in the after life". This may be the case.

Early last week, Professor Ian Constable of the Lions Eye Institute made contact seeking assistance with regards expansion of the Kimberley Dental Team to assist in the Community of Warnun. Professor Harvey Coates, ENT also visits Warnun. They described the lack of dental services and I advised Ian that I had intended to screen Warnun in May but was "asked" not to do so by DHS. A joint visit and shared fund raising may well benefit all. Jan and I will meet with Ian later next month.

I hope you enjoy the action of this most recent trip. If any recipients are unable to remember the contents and the material of the first E-Flyer, please request and I will follow-up on our return from Europe in three weeks

Please consider if a week in May or August will fit into your program for 2010. We hope to be in a position soon to supplement this week of volunteering with a week of free accommodation in Broome.

Best wishes and thank you for your interest and support.

## ***John and Jan Owen***

### **Kimberley Dental Team The Week of 8<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> August 2009**

Our little Team of seven departed Perth at 7am Saturday morning, we picked up the hire cars at the Broome Airport and travelled to Fitzroy where we stayed overnight at the Fitzroy Lodge.

We drove into Halls Creek on Sunday afternoon and as planned, immediately visited the hospital to ensure the clinics were well stocked and every thing functional. Our reception was lukewarm to say the least. Even though DHS knew we were returning to Halls Creek the second week of August way back in late May, and they had offered and subsequently did "employ" our volunteer dentists and dental nurse, they did not ( possibly they did not have to), extend the courtesy to advise the director of nursing at the hospital that we were coming. I took the slap on site from her first thing Monday morning, but did get an apology, lunch and a thank you for the Teams great effort at the end of a week.

Although both Brian, Jan and I had been in contact with her over the preceding weeks, we and the other five team members finally met with the dental therapist Natalie and her nurse Kim who are based in the dental van at school. They were excited to have our support for the week and it was such a pleasure to know that the kids of Halls Creek were going to benefit from their skills and caring natures

On my first encounter with DHS, in September - October 2008 expressing the desire to assist the Halls Creek Community dentally in conjunction with the much anticipated visit by the Madjtil Moorna Reconciliation Choir in May 2009, I was advised that the school dental van had been decommissioned because of expired / unlicensed x-ray equipment. We offered to purchase the van but were advised they are not sold. They said they weren't even certain where it was, so we offered to "find it" and recommission it by donating new x-ray equipment.

Resurrected and staffed, the recommissioned van returned to the HCDHS, for third term after an 18 month absence. The other dental van located recently behind the Fitzroy Valley Hospital had to be broken into by hospital staff because no one knew who had the key.

#### **Jan's view of the week**

On the Monday John, Brian and Kristal returned to the hospital and Jo, Trace, Ashleigh and Jan announced ourselves at the school, signed up and went to the pre primary to do some refresher tooth talk and play. It was such a joy to be with the little ones again. Lunch (each day) was as in May, sandwiches at 'our hotel poolside spot'. I spent the afternoon at the hospital clinic and believe me the word was out and the queue was long, we saw a few kids from the school and many adults. To finish the day Sciona Brown of the inspirational "Better Life Project", organized a sunset wine and snacks at China Wall. Superb.

Tuesday morning was spent at school writing up treatment notes from our May trip for the therapist to use. And gathering some Kindy's to take back for treatment

to the hospital clinic. One little fella was so upset and in such urgent need that Brian has kindly offered to carry out his treatment in Perth under a GA after a preliminary OPG and photos at John's Midland practice. The parents are thrilled. Jan spent a few hours in the afternoon doing homoeopathic consults. 6pm saw the girls at the Community Choir for a singalong. It was good fun and Morwena was thrilled to receive a Songbook and recording of Halls Creek Rodeo. Later we made a big 'tooth fairies' table at dinner with teachers Rory & Bede, Natalie & Kim, Rosetta the school nurse. We won the trivia night with prize money at \$50. It will buy a bit more LA

Wednesday the sing/play/teach team had a lovely session at Little Nuggets early child care, then back to the clinic for all hands on deck. The clinical highlight for John during this second trip was to be able to coordinate and undertake the urgent treatment of 4 young children between the ages of 6-10. They were all in considerable pain and had significant facial swellings, requiring numerous extractions. They had to travel 3 hours from Ringers Soak, a Community close to the Northern Territory Border, on the edge of the Tanami Desert. Trace and Ash were brilliant dental assistants (with lots of guidance from Kristal), and gorgeous with the kids. During the morning Jo spoke about Madjitiil Moorna Choir on Halls Creek Radio and John had a live interview with Miranda Tetlow of ABC Kimberley Radio about the status and development in dental and general health in the Kimberley. Miranda has been a strong supporter from Day 1. and will continue to assist as much as possible

Late in the morning we took impressions for two young women who had lost front teeth. Loss of anterior teeth in young adults greatly influences their self image, speaking skills, confidence and employment opportunities. We have posted today, just a week later, two partial dentures to replace these lost teeth for the young receptionist at the Halls Creek Hospital and an Administration assistant at the Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation, Balgo. These clever pieces of plastic will make a difference to these young ladies and indirectly, their families and Community. "It's not just about Teeth". It actually was pleasant to assist someone who was not actually presenting in pain, Thank you to our son David and his dental technician colleague David Walters, for making these dentures at no fee to us or the patients.

After lunch the dental team returned to the Hospital, Jo Randell networked, Trace and Ash went to visit the Frail Aged and Jan had an afternoon of homoeopathic consults. At 6.00 we went to the DCP hostel with "Craig the Crocodile"; to talk teeth, give out carrots and play. I'll be sending Little Nuggets and the Hostel sets of brushes and etc for the kids.

Thursday first up Brian went to work at the school van with Natalie as some more tough sixes lined up and the rest of us went to Red Hill Catholic School, where we were sweetly welcomed and blessed by the children. We talked teeth and played with Craig while John and Kristal screened teeth on the side. It was then time to finish up the few dental patients at the hospital, say our goodbyes to Natalie & Kim, Gavin Stevens, the School Principal, Aboriginal elder and teacher Doreen Green and the Kids and head on out of town. We visited Yiyili, which is situated approximately half way between Halls Creek and Fitzroy, where we met Rosetta the area nurse who had set up a session for us. More teeth talk, play with Craig and a final screening of about another 40 fantastic kids. We rolled into Fitzroy about 5.00 justly proud of our week and all feeling we had made great grounds with networking and building relationships.

John stated, his proudest moment was early in the week when signing in at the District High School, one of the bright and friendly young teachers we had got to know at our first visit, loudly stated with real surprise, "Your back, nobody comes back". It is still early days, but we said we would and we did.

Friday morning we went to the Fitzroy hospital to look at the beautiful dental clinic, sadly, rarely used. Mid week DHS when talking to Brian Koch, asked if we could help out with Fitzroy. Brian and I need and other job like another hole in the head, but of course the intention was to always assist at Fitzroy Crossing,( preferring now to be called Fitzroy Valley as better represents the area and the many surrounding communities) as it is in critical need. Then over to the new state of the art school. We had talks with key staff about the dental needs of the kids and our Madjiti Moorna work. Back on the road, lunch at Willari Roadhouse and into Broome in time to look at the brand new 3 surgery clinic in the hospital. Completed and handed over in January 09, still yet to see its first patient. LA and other stock already expired. A shocking waste

Despite the 'cool' start, the week was a great success and the people we helped were immensely grateful and gracious.

The Kimberley Dental Team remains committed to put in a minimum of two visits during 2010, equivalent to approximately 4-5 weeks of clinical time, but hopefully increasing to 4-5 trips per year in 2011, equivalent to 10-16 weeks over three to four locations .

Thank you to Jo Randell, Trace Sandercock, and our daughter Ashleigh, who took the week off from her final year studies and internship at the Telethon Institute. We would truly have struggled to achieve so much without your help.

To Brian and Kristal, thank you for your skills, friendship, generosity and wonderful spirit that you brought to the kids, the Community, the dozens of patients helped. Your commitment to assist again in the future demonstrates that you received and were rewarded with the same pleasure we experience in helping people in need in our remote communities.