

## Halls Creek and Communities May 2012

Having recently returned from our May 2012 trip to the East Kimberley we have some great stories to tell. John and I invite you and your colleagues and family to join us for a get-together on the **8<sup>th</sup> July** to celebrate the KDT journey and the many ways that our volunteers, sponsors and supporters contribute to our success.

The early part of 2012 was spent supervising the build of the Kimberly Aboriginal Medical Services Council's, new dental truck which was finally finished just in time to arrive in Broome at the start of our May trip. We flew into Broome, met our incoming team and then flew off to Kalumburu with Dr Daniel Cocker to provide 1 ½ days of dental care, all day Sunday and Monday morning. Meanwhile, Drs Moses Lee and Jilen Patel drove the new truck (ink on these MR licences hardly dry), across to Fitzroy Crossing. They travelled with Trish Pepper and the Healthy Schools Team. On the way the team called into Looma School to screen and provide OH education.

Daniel, John and I left Kalumburu for Fitzroy calling in to screen the children at Wananami School on the Gibb River Road. The truck caused a sensation in Fitzroy as it did everywhere we went. The team screened all the children at the Fitzroy School as well as visiting Noonkanbah, Millijiddee and Yakanarra community schools. Later that week we moved on to Yiyili where we stayed overnight and worked out of the truck at the school. We also took the opportunity to fissure seal the teeth of many of the community children.

By Saturday we had settled into Halls Creek with Daniel and Jilen, Moses having returned via Kununurra. On Sunday we welcomed the new team of Kristal Nettle and students Lyn Chai and Siamak Khabaz-Saberi, who had flown into Kununurra and driven the 400 kms south. It was challenging to manage the hospital dental clinic and the truck, which we parked in the main street opposite the IGA – dubbed the IGA Clinic. Wednesday and Thursday the whole team drove to Warmun where we set up using the KDT dental donger, KAMSC truck and an overflow clinic set up in the Yellow House. We 'camped' overnight and Gija Total Health hosted the team and facilitated our trip. It was heart warming to be in Warmun and working with our Gija friends and families again - they are so resilient having bounced back from their losses and dislocation after the 2011 floods.

The following week we welcomed a new team including Dr Dennis Gregory, Dr Kathryn Rodrigues, Jane Sim and Joanne Cox the KAMSC Oral Health Coordinator. Our community focus for this week was an overnight trip to Ringers Soak, 2.5 hours to the East. The Yuri Yungi Medical Services clinic nurses, Bec and Mandy looked after us very well with accommodation and a BBQ complete with toasted marshmallows. Spending 2 days in the community allowed for extra work to be undertaken. During this week the truck made a visit to Koongie Park, just out of Halls Creek, where the KDT team was very well received by the community.

Team members for the final week were Dr John Hearne, Dr Andrew Heap, Helen Heap, Suzanne Taylor and Joanne. As well as working in the hospital clinic and the IGA clinic, half of the team took the dental truck down the Tanami Desert Road to Billiluna and the other half went by helicopter to Balgo Hills for the day returning to Billiluna to stay overnight. The parish allowed us to use one of their houses and we shared a great community experience even if we are so 'soft' that we had to take the Nespresso machine!

Additional activities included: visiting the newly opened Burke Park Workers Hostel to screen and talk to residents about oral health, visiting and providing treatment at the Halls Creek Frail Aged, screening children and providing DHE at the Department for Child Protection hostel, taking the truck onto the school oval so that children could have a look

through, sit on the dental chair and generally familiarise themselves and setting up the truck and oral health table at the Halls Creek Music Festival.

Most notably was the shift in focus from chiefly treating pain, swelling and extractions to the provision of many restorations and several partial dentures to replace missing front teeth. The obvious improvement in oral health and dental awareness within the community is heartening.

All in all we had a great four weeks, made really good friendships and produced some incredibly successful clinical outcomes with treatment provided to 526 people. We also screened 395 children at 11 schools.