

Residential Aged Care Virtual Visiting Program

Keeping Connected



Project Workers

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Western District Health Service (WDHS) has completed an innovative pilot program that reconnects families and friends with their loved ones living in an Aged Care Facility.

The pilot program involved residents of Penshurst District Health Service and Grange Residential Care Service utilising videoconferencing technology to facilitate visits between family and friends remotely.



Project Objectives

- To provide a video communications link that connects Aged Care Residents with their families and friends.
- To improve residents quality of life with increased contact with family and friends and increased socialisation with the outside world.

Barriers to face to face visits

- People needing residential services may have to relocate to another town leaving family and partners behind
- Time and transport costs make it difficult for families to visit regularly
- Lack of public transport or poor timing of services make visiting difficult
- Family members may have moved away from the area due to greater mobility of workforce



Stage 1

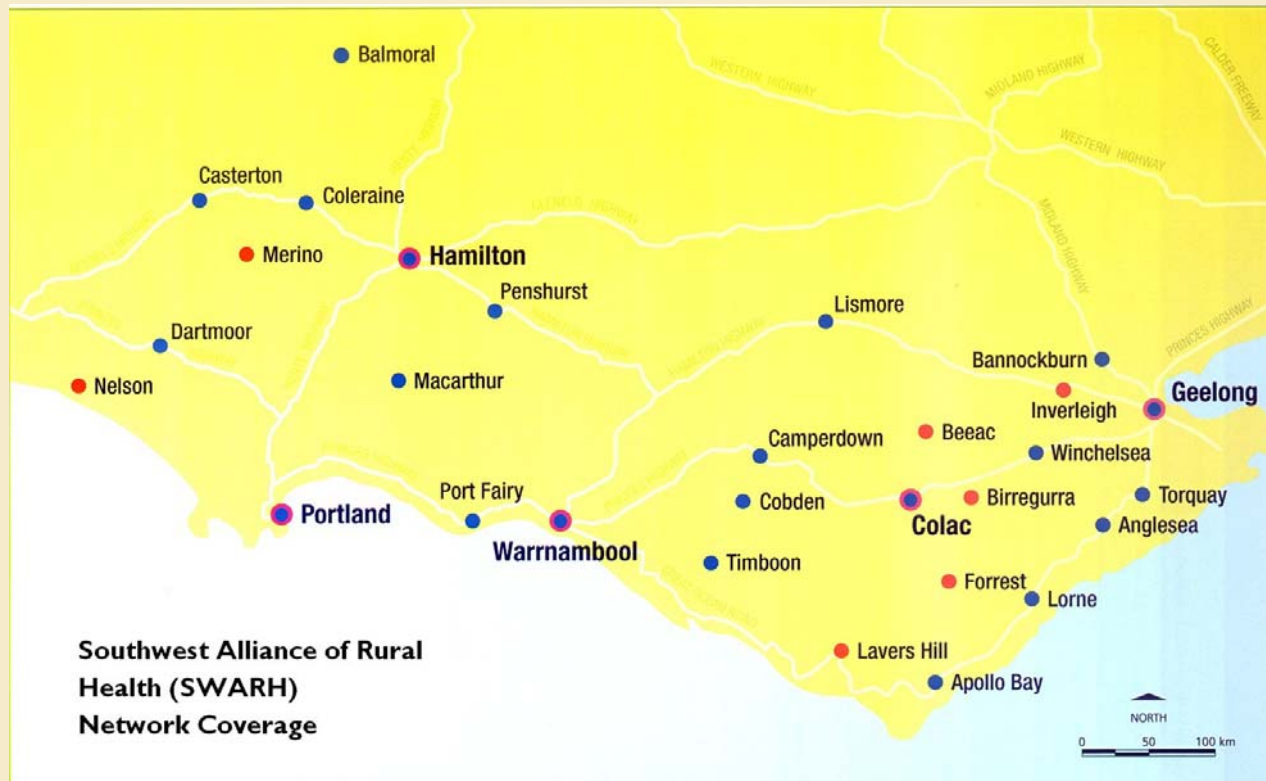
To conduct Virtual Visits within
the SWARH network



Across a secure network



South West Alliance of Rural Health





"It was exciting for my children to see their great grandmother on TV and without the travel. It made her day to see how they are growing up."

Children attending a virtual visit talk to their relative as if they are in the room with them. Having this form of visual communication enables children of any age to participate more so than they would during a telephone call.

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"I found virtual visiting to be a very convenient way to have contact with loved ones and actually see how they are going."



Virtual Visit between Kolor Lodge (Penshurst) and Hamilton Base Hospital



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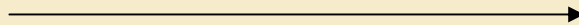


Stage 2

To conduct Virtual Visits outside the private
SWARH network

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Across the internet



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Identifying and Supporting Visitors

- Staff identify potential residents and families for Virtual Visiting.
- Residents own room or a private area where an internet connection is available is used for visits.
- Families are provided with software, webcam and a manual once their internet connection is deemed to be suitable.
- Virtual Visit bookings can be made online



Families with broadband internet now have the ability to ‘virtually visit’ their loved ones from the comfort of their own home. Families wishing to participate are loaned the necessary equipment and provided technical support to enable visits.

Volunteers

8 volunteers have been trained to facilitate the visits and provide basic technical support as required by participants who may be a little apprehensive when using the technology.

This has provided WDHS with a new group of volunteers.



"I responded to the advertisement for volunteers for this project because I thought it would be challenging, rather than just driving for somebody. Also I could really empathise with families being apart and wanted to make a positive contribution"

Volunteer Support

- Volunteers attended a half day training session
- All volunteers receive an instruction manual to help them set up the virtual visits
- Volunteers work in pairs to provide support to each other
- Refresher training is planned for the future and at regular intervals to keep volunteers up to date with any changes

New Applications

Once Virtual Visiting was underway new applications using video conferencing technology were discovered:

- Virtual Quiz
- Visit with a Prominent Person

The Virtual Quiz is now a permanent activity for aged care residents at WDHS. The quiz is managed by each facilities Diversional Therapist in liaison with the Virtual Visiting Team.



Virtual Quiz





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Outcome

The pilot program; which ran from January 2007 to June 2007, proved to be so successful that Western District Health Service decided to continue the Virtual Visiting as part of its services to Aged Care Residents and their families.



The Future

We are awaiting confirmation of Commonwealth funding for a Project Worker to facilitate roll out of the Virtual Visiting program across the rest of the South West and Barwon regions over the next two years.

Western District Health Service will continue to look for funding to support purchase of the equipment required by Aged Care facilities and families to enable Virtual Visiting.





Questions?

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