

FIFO health service on runway to south coast

ELENA MORABITO

A fly-in, fly-out health service will soon help Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe residents who currently travel two hours to attend appointments.

Fly2Health Group director Kennedy Lay said the idea was sparked by combining two of his passions, being both a physiotherapist and pilot, which led him to create the service in March 2021.

Mr Lay said he took great joy in flying to rural communities and providing health services including physiotherapy, speech therapy,

occupational therapy and psychology.

"Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe really stood out because there are no services that go out there, which is really sad," Mr Lay said.

"We know a lot of people commute to Esperance, which is two hours one way.

"So we just want to bridge that gap with equal access, equal access is the most important thing for us."

He said the towns were conveniently located one hour and 20 minutes by plane from Perth, along with being a high demand and high

needs area. Mr Lay said it was a "logistical puzzle" to lease and operate two aircraft out of Jandakot and travel to Esperance and Hopetoun-Ravensthorpe on a fortnightly basis.

He said staff would fly out in the morning and return in the evening, which was an important part of the Fly2Health business model to retain staff and provide a variety of work.

Mr Lay said there was currently a "massive shortage" in allied health staff and increased work hours, lack of variety and time away from their families were

contributing to the shortage. "I think a lot of young grads don't necessarily want to move to those rural areas. I think they have a good heart in terms of they want to do rural and make a difference in the rural communities but not necessarily want to move out there," Mr Lay said.

"So I think our business model works and it's helped with that staff burnout and retention as well."

He said Fly2Health will be servicing Esperance on February 15 and staff will take their first Hopetoun-bound flight on March 4.

Session to connect migrants and jobs

AMBER LILLEY

Migrants living in the Goldfields are invited to an employment information session to help meet the demands of a workforce with high vacancies and low unemployment rates.

Organised by the Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission, the Skilled Migration Employment and Information Session will be held on February 10 from 5pm at the Goldfields Arts Centre.

The commission said the Goldfields-Esperance region had an average unemployment rate of 3.3 per cent, meaning there was strong competition to attract and retain workers.

Chief executive Kris Starceвич said it would provide employers the opportunity to meet new migrants living in Kalgoorlie-Boulder to help fill positions together with the State Government-funded Goldfields Migrant Employment Project.

"We have seen the value in the GMEP as a workforce solution that connects Goldfields employers directly with skilled migrants in the region, Western Australia or Australia, who wish to live and work in the Goldfields region," he said.

"Not only do candidates bring their skills, experience and commitment to the workplace, but they also bring a strong commitment to building a quality lifestyle in the Goldfields."

The commission said more than 140 connections had been made between employees, employers and families since the project started in 2018.

This included 46 clients who relocated to the Goldfields last year, taking on jobs in the mining, aged care, construction and hospitality industries.

At the session, the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder will present information on the Designated Area Migration Agreement, alongside Blessings Masuku of the Goldfields Community Legal Centre.

The commission said representatives from other employment bodies would also present information during the two-hour session.

Volunteers provide haircuts to community

CARWYN MONCK

A group of volunteers in Esperance have banded together to give back to their community by providing free haircuts for those in need.

The program forms part of the Hair Aid Community Cuts initiative which operates in 87 locations across Australia.

The program was brought to Esperance late last year by Jacqui Rogers, and volunteers have since run four Community Cuts sessions operating out of the Esperance SEED Community Hub.

Former salon owner Mrs Rogers said she decided to introduce the program after identifying a need for the service in the Esperance community.

"I feel like there's a big part of our community that (view) haircuts as a luxury — to me it's a necessity to give someone some confidence, whether it's going for a job interview or rocking up on their first day of school or just making them feel good," she said.

"Our focus is for the homeless but at the end the day it's for people in need.

"It's a real passion of mine.

"I used to own a local salon for 18 years and I employed around 50 people in all my years here . . . but nothing has been more rewarding than this."

Volunteers held the first Community Cuts session of the year last Saturday afternoon and helped 16 community members get a haircut. To help establish



Jacqui Rogers gives a haircut at the SEED Community Hub.

the program, volunteers received donations of hair salon chairs and mirrors from West End Hair and Beauty Studio and South Regional TAFE Esperance.

Mrs Rogers said she had seen a rise in the demand for community haircuts during their last session as students returned to school.

"I hope that those kids who received haircuts all rocked up to

their class yesterday feeling confident," she said.

"As soon as you've done their haircut they bounce out of their chair, they're a different person and they feel really good, and that's so valuable."

Volunteers look to run Community Cuts sessions every six weeks and are searching for additional qualified and experienced hairdressers to volunteer.



Dee Bennier gives a haircut.



Blessings Masuku Pic: Carwyn Monck

Norseman 'co-living village' home to more than 30 mine workers

ELENA MORABITO

The 206-room Norseman "co-living village" for mine workers is hosting more than 30 FIFO workers.

Shire of Dundas chief executive Peter Fitchat said mining company Pantoro had received a temporary permit in November to use the

premises before the work was completed.

"... we issued a temporary permit because of the urgency of the need to get people working," Mr Fitchat said.

Mr Fitchat said about 20 per cent of the accommodation was occupied, which equated to 30 to 40 rooms.

Resource Accommodation

Management general manager Chris Jury said the company, which had experience in building and managing FIFO accommodation, would usually open venues "area by area" to meet the demands of the clients.

Mr Jury said even though both the accommodation and kitchen were operational, the company was holding

off on welcoming Norseman residents in light of the COVID-19 crisis.

He said locals had embraced the opportunities created by having FIFO accommodation in town and the company was "working hard" to keep people on board.

"I'm sure there are people that would prefer that the mine wasn't

reopened and the accommodation wasn't in town," Mr Jury said.

"But we're working hard to have local employment and create those opportunities within Norseman and we're working very closely with council on that."

An additional 61 rooms are set to be available mid-year along with a cafe.