

Media release

Wellington Street, Perth Western Australia 6000
Tel: (08) 9224 3943 Fax: (08) 9224 3447
Email: jane.ewers-verge@health.wa.gov.au

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MEDIA RELEASE

New \$6 million clinic opens

A new outpatient clinic and appointment hotline service will help thousands of Western Australians receive their treatment from specialists in public hospitals sooner rather than later.

Health Minister Jim McGinty said the new \$6million outpatient clinic at Royal Perth Hospital would open next week and would treat more than 1,500 people a week in modern and spacious consulting rooms.

Mr McGinty said the new clinic, located in the old Perth Dental Hospital in Goderich Street, would house general outpatients, orthopaedics, podiatry, phlebotomy, diabetic services, a pre-anaesthetic clinic, x-ray services and a pharmacy.

“By centralising most of the hospital’s outpatient services under one roof, we can provide a more efficient service and significantly reduce the time it takes for patients to be seen by a specialist,” he said.

The Minister said the new outpatient clinic had freed-up room at RPH to enable construction to begin on Western Australia’s first dedicated 30-bed trauma ward, as well as a modernised 10-bed burns ward.

In another move to reduce the time it takes to see a specialist, Mr McGinty launched the Outpatient Direct Hotline for all public hospital outpatient clinics.

The 1300 hotline is designed to assist people in confirming and/or cancelling their appointments, thereby reducing the number of ‘no-shows’ at public hospital outpatient clinics.

Mr McGinty said more than 600,000 outpatient appointments were made in WA public hospitals every year but more than 100,000 were either not kept or cancelled by the patient at the last minute, meaning the hospital could not book another patient in.

“This represents a staggering 12.6 per cent of all outpatient appointments - appointments that could be filled by other patients if the hospitals were notified in time,” he said.

“Such a high number of cancellations or ‘no shows’ significantly slows down the system and is a major cause of increased waiting times for outpatient appointments.

“It is also a waste of valuable resources such as clinicians’ time and administration costs.”

The Minister said waiting times for different specialties varied but the average wait for non-urgent orthopaedic and ophthalmic appointments was between 34 and 77 days.

A recent study to discover why patients did not cancel appointments found that most people either forgot or did not know whom to contact to make the cancellation.

“A major reason for this confusion was that every hospital had a separate phone number for outpatient inquiries and separate reminder systems,” Mr McGinty said.

“So by making it easier for people to change or cancel their appointments and change their contact details through the hotline, patients can have their treatment quicker.”

The service began last week and already was averaging more than 250 calls per day and rising.