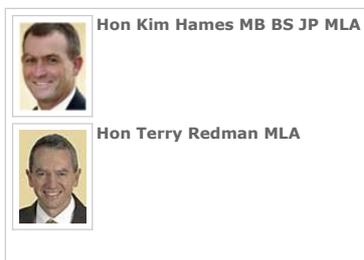




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Brighter smiles for kids in remote communities

Thursday, 20 November 2014

- **Landmark exemption paves the way for oral health improvement**
- **Fluoride varnish service available for first time to children in remote communities**

In a first for Western Australia, a special exemption from the WA Chief Pharmacist means health workers will soon be able to apply fluoride varnish to help prevent tooth decay among children in remote

communities.

Health Minister Kim Hames and Regional Development Minister Terry Redman today announced that the WA Fluoride Varnish Service, part of the \$6 million Royalties for Regions-funded Ear, Eye and Oral Health Initiative, would help children living in some of the State's most remote communities.

Dr Hames said about 50 per cent of Aboriginal children in remote regions of the State suffered preventable dental problems.

"Fluoride strengthens tooth enamel and is a highly effective treatment where tooth enamel is starting to show signs of decay," he said.

"This is the first time a special exemption has been given by the WA Chief Pharmacist allowing health workers other than dental practitioners to use fluoride varnish. That's a significant step in the treatment and prevention of tooth decay among Aboriginal children.

"Australian studies have demonstrated a 25 to 45 per cent decrease in the decay rate with the use of fluoride varnish when applied six-monthly."

Mr Redman said a similar program operating in remote communities in the Northern Territory had been very successful.

"We've seen how this initiative has worked in the Top End so it has clear benefits for people in need of oral health treatment across remote parts of the State," Mr Redman said.

"This Royalties for Regions funding will help develop a more sustainable health care system in remote communities across regional WA."

Training in fluoride varnish application will be offered to Aboriginal health workers, school health and child health nurses, and remote area nurses in early 2015.

Fact File

- **This initiative covers the Kimberley, Pilbara, Mid-West/Gascoyne and Goldfields regions; other regions will be included in the future**
- **Extensive consultation has been undertaken with Aboriginal planning forums and the Aboriginal Medical Services in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Mid-West/Gascoyne and Goldfields**

Health Minister's office - 6552 5300

Regional Development Minister's office - 6552 6700