

KDT Update May Trip 2026

We have just returned from our final Kimberley Dental Team (KDT) trip after 18 remarkable years of volunteer outreach across the Kimberley. The four-week journey was both uplifting and deeply emotional. While there was great satisfaction in delivering much-needed dental care, there was also a profound sense of sadness as we said goodbye to the communities, schools, health staff and many friends we have come to know and cherish over nearly two decades.

What began in 2009 as a commitment to improve access to dental care in remote communities evolved into something far greater. Over the years, KDT volunteers have been welcomed into communities across the Kimberley, sharing not only their professional skills but also building relationships founded on trust, respect and genuine friendship. We have watched children grow into young adults, seen communities embrace preventive oral health programs, and worked alongside local staff who have become valued colleagues and friends.

This final trip provided an opportunity to reflect on the extraordinary generosity of the hundreds of volunteers, supporters and sponsors who have made KDT possible. Every dentist, dental assistant, student, driver, organiser, donor and supporter has played a part in creating a program that has improved oral health outcomes for thousands of people living in remote Western Australia.

May 2026 Teams:

Week 1. Our first team for 2026 came in on Saturday full of enthusiasm to be in the Kimberley and to start this adventure. A team briefing was followed by a visit to the shops to stock up and then a sunset picnic on Cable Beach followed by pizzas at Spinifex Brewing. After a smooth and quick pack, we set off on our journey on Sunday morning to Fitzroy with our three KDT vehicles and accommodation vans. On Monday the team travelled to Bayulu School to provide screenings and treatment where possible and needed. Tuesday morning we packed up camp and went to Muludja community school where we set up on the basketball court. Once we finished treatment at the school the convoy set off for 3 hrs to the east to Halls Creek arriving in the early evening. Wednesday to Friday were spent at the Halls Creek District High School where we screened all children and then set up clinic in the kindy classroom. Thursday night we enjoyed a sausage sizzle and the wonderful Kimberley sky at Caroline Pool. After a morning spent treating children at the school on Friday the Week 1 team set off after lunch for an overnight in Fitzroy Crossing.

Dr Daniel Cocker, Dr Moses Lee, DA Lara Kessarios, Ashleigh Owen, Geoff Owen, final year dental students Isaac Lee and Aiden Lau, Jan and John.



Week 2. The outgoing team arrived in Broome in time to meet the incoming team and for their flight home. The week 2 team enjoyed an overnight in Broome before the long 7 hour drive across to Halls Creek on Sunday. On Monday the team spent a busy day at the Halls Creek hospital clinic. On Tuesday a small team travelled the 167km to the very remote community of Ringer Soak (Kundat Djaru) where we screened children and provided treatment for those in need before driving back to Halls Creek. The whole team worked at the hospital clinic on Wednesday and travelled the 110km to Yiyili Community on Thursday. Many adults and children were treated and it was delightful to be back in this community which was the first community we visited back in 2009. Thursday night was spent enjoying snacks and a sausage sizzle at Caroline Pool. After a morning spent working at the hospital clinic the team enjoyed a picnic in the park before travelling to Fitzroy for an overnight stop.

Dr John Hearne, Dr Anthony Radziejewski, DA Karen Bowman, Ros Marshall, David Owen, final year dental students Monisha Arora and James Huang, Jan and John.



Week 3. The outgoing team left Fitzroy early on Saturday in order to meet the incoming flight and hand over the vehicles to our week 3 team who spent a leisurely evening in Broome and rose early on Sunday to drive across to Halls Creek. On Monday morning a small team set off early to Frog Hollow, Purnululu school and the rest of the team worked Monday morning at the hospital clinic and then set off after lunch to Warmun community where we worked Tuesday and Wednesday at the Ngalangangpum school where we screened the children and treated those in need along with many community members. On Wednesday afternoon the team drove back to Halls Creek and worked at the Halls Creek Hospital clinic for the rest of the week. On Thursday a small team also worked at Red Hill School screening and treating children, An earlyish finish on Thursday meant that we could enjoy a delicious sundowner at Caroline Pool with a sausage sizzle and marshmallows on the fire. Before heading off to Fitzroy on Friday lunchtime, Robyn Long and the team surprised John and I with a 'celebrating KDT' cake.



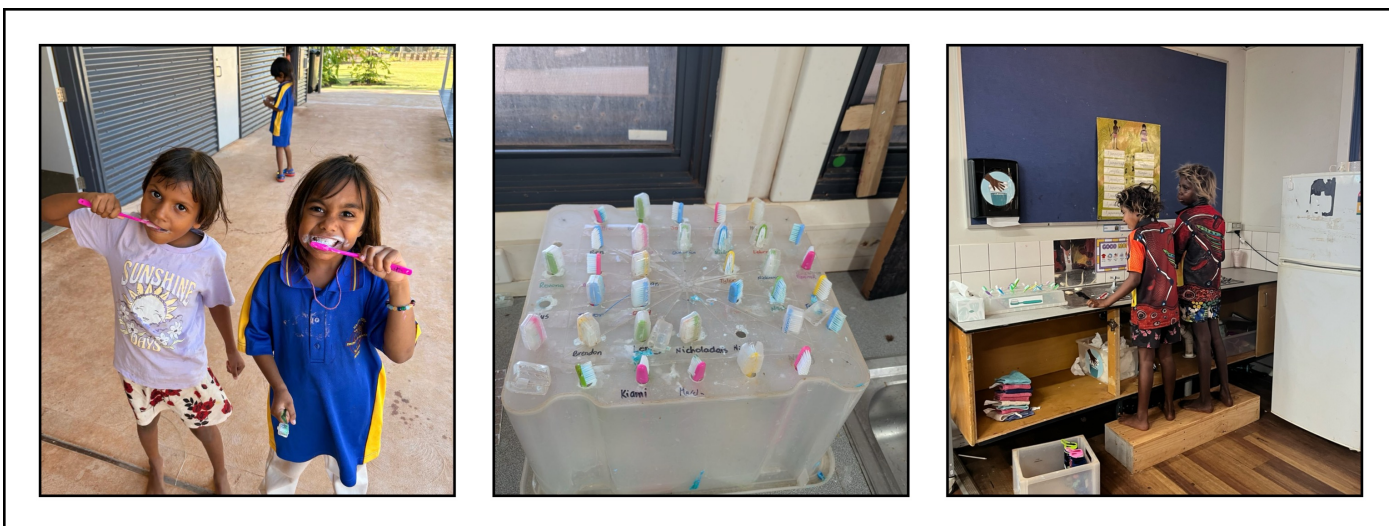
Dr Jilen Patel, Dr Ashlee Bence, Dr David Hora, DA Emily van Rooyen, Tracy Sandercock, Geoff Owen, final year dental students Su Jyn Hia and Yang Li, Jan and John.

Week 4. Once again team three departed Halls Creek after lunch on Friday to allow a Fitzroy overnight stop and to meet the incoming team. Having shopped and gathered supplies the week 4 team made the long drive across to Halls Creek on Sunday. Following an overnight stay in Halls Creek we headed 170kms south on the Tanami Road arriving in Billiluna in time to set up for an afternoon session at the Billiluna medical clinic seeing several community members and children who were enjoying a pupil free day. We screened the school children in the morning and worked at the clinic on Tuesday seeing children identified as being in need for treatment. As well as treating children we saw many adults before packing up and driving a further 108 km south to Balgo late that afternoon. On Wednesday and Thursday, a team set up and had a busy session at the Balgo clinic and the other team examined children at Luurnpa school and set up a clinic to treat those in need. On Friday one team returned to the Balgo clinic and the other travelled across to Mulan on the edge of Lake Gregory to screen children at the school and run a busy session at the clinic. Friday afternoon we left Balgo and drove to Billiluna for an overnight stop. On Saturday we packed up and drove to Fitzroy Crossing where we stayed overnight and enjoyed an end of trip and of KDT celebratory dinner at the Lodge. We set off on Saturday morning and after a chiko roll fest at Willare Roadhouse we arrived back in Broome early afternoon in time to clean the vehicles and organise stock before the team flew out in the evening. *Dr Nick Albatis, Dr Greg Celine, Dr Jim Rae,, DA Ruth Warden, DA Ranae Russo, Tracy Sandercock, Geoff Owen, Jan and John.*



Our visits to the Fitzroy Valley schools, Halls Creek and East Kimberley communities were once again warmly received. In total, 701 people were seen. As well as examinations, oral hygiene instruction and dietary advice, the team provided 119 topical fluoride applications, 541 fissure sealants, 190 extractions, 185 restorations, 40 scale and cleans, 13 radiographs, 688 education units and 239 other procedures, including 13 partial dentures. The value of dental services provided during this trip totalled \$229,451.60.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our incredible current and past personal donors and corporate sponsors: Maven Dental Group, Denticare, International College of Dentists, SDI, Colgate, CBA Employees Community Grants, the Office of the Chief Dental Officer, Dental Health Services, the McCusker Charitable Foundation, the Academy of Dentistry International, and the Rotary Clubs of Perth, Perth City East and Heirisson. We are also grateful to the many Rotaract and Rotary members who have faithfully packed toothbrushes into classroom-ready packs each year.



Special thanks go to the Australian Dental Association (WA Branch) for its longstanding support of KDT and, in particular, for funding Remote Area Student Scholarships for final-year University of Western Australia dental students. Through these scholarships and the UWA John Prichard Memorial Prizes, we were able to mentor and support six students this year, helping to inspire the next generation of dental professionals to serve remote and regional communities.

Over the past 18 years, Kimberley Dental Team volunteers have travelled thousands of kilometres to provide care where it was needed most. Together they have relieved pain, restored smiles, delivered preventive education and, most importantly, built enduring relationships with the people and communities of the Kimberley.

Many volunteers speak of the privilege of seeing the difference that continuity of care and oral health education can make over time. They have witnessed children becoming more confident, families becoming more engaged in oral health practices, and communities increasingly embracing preventive care. Just as importantly, volunteers often describe receiving far more than they gave—returning home with a deeper understanding of the Kimberley, its people, and the strength and resilience of the communities they served.

As we bring this chapter to a close, we do so with immense pride in what has been achieved and profound gratitude to everyone who has been part of the journey. While this may be the final Kimberley Dental Team clinical trip, the friendships, memories and impact of the program will endure for many years to come.

To every volunteer, supporter, sponsor, community leader, health worker, teacher, student and patient who has welcomed us over the past 18 years—thank you. It has been an honour and a privilege to serve alongside you.

As we drove out of the Kimberley for the last time as the Kimberley Dental Team, we carried with us far more than equipment and supplies. We carried eighteen years of memories, friendships, shared laughter, campfires, dusty roads, remarkable volunteers and extraordinary communities who welcomed us into their lives.

The dental work is now complete, but the impact of these years—on the people we served and on those privileged enough to serve alongside them—will remain long after the vehicles have been unpacked and the final clinic packed away.

Thank you, Kimberley. It has been an honour.

