

Mental health under scrutiny

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FEDERAL Senator Penny Wright came to Albany on Tuesday to meet with health groups and discuss mental health services in the region.

The Australian Greens Senator for South Australia kicked off her national tour at Albany and met with the Men's Resource Centre, Great Southern Mental Health Service, Headspace Great Southern, Regional Counselling and Mentoring Services and Mayor Dennis Wellington.

Ms Wright said she would write a comprehensive report on regional and remote services and areas that needed improvement.

"The area of mental health has been neglected in the past, particularly in regional, remote and rural areas," she said.

"People have difficulty in accessing services because 90 per cent of psychologists live in the city."

After hearing about the Men's Resource Centre Pit Stop program, Ms Wright said that was the type of unique project she wanted to share with others around Australia.

"Part of what I can do is when I travel around, I can tell people about good ideas I hear; people in WA have a great thing with this program," she said.

She said she wanted to brainstorm possible solutions to people delivering grassroots services, which included GPs and issues with after hours, farmers and increasing anxiety, particularly in light of climate change and the impact of the fly-in fly-out regime on



Federal Senator Penny Wright met with Men's Resource Centre resource officer Grant Westthorp to discuss regional mental health services.

Picture: Laurie Benson

families. Headspace Great Southern manager Andrew Wenzel said Albany did not have the range of mental health services that were available in Perth.

"In Perth there would be a community organisation like ours, then three or four not-for-profits; here we just have Headspace for

young people," he said. "There is also a big problem with finding suitably qualified people for positions, occupational therapists, psychologists."

Mr Wenzel said another problem was there was not many options for same sex attracted young people, for example, there were no gay

and lesbian venues. He said the impact of fly-in, fly-out on families was starting to show in Albany.

"We are seeing young people whose mums or dads are going away and it's impacting on the family," he said.

Ms Wright will travel to Geraldton and Perth this week.