



Boosting cancer screening rates

10 March 2023

Gippsland Primary Health Network (Gippsland PHN) has partnered with 19 local general practices to boost screening rates for bowel, breast and cervical cancer, and testing for hepatitis B and C.

A report by the University of Melbourne, prepared from the Victoria Department of Health, shows the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed patients' screening and diagnostic appointments, contributing to a 30 per cent reduction in cancer notifications since restrictions were applied in Victoria in 2020.

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, said these decreases had significant public health implications for vulnerable population groups and the general community.

"General practice is central to increasing cancer screening participation rates," Ms Proposch explained. "Research has found the use of GP-endorsed letters, recall and reminder systems, and improved clinical information systems are key drivers to increasing the number of people undertaking cancer screening."

Participating general practices submitted an expression of interest to participate in the Gippsland PHN Maximising Cancer Screening project, that is currently underway until June 2023. During this time, practices will choose one of the focal cancer screening types and will be supported by Gippsland PHN to embed screening activities.

These activities include extracting clinic data to identify patients who are under screened or have never been screened, facilitated learning workshops and opportunities to share, network and connect with other practices involved in the project. An incentive payment of \$12,000 will be given to participating practices that complete the program.

"It is essential that Gippsland general practices build skills and implement activities to proactively contact patients to encourage cancer screening," Ms Proposch said.

"Finding cancer at an early stage increases the chances of successful treatment and improved survival. Remember, it's important to get to know your body and what is normal for you. If you notice anything unusual for you, see your doctor."

ENDS

Gippsland PHN is part of a national network of 31 Primary Health Networks across Australia. Primary Health Networks are predominantly funded by the Australian Government to tackle identified national objectives and priority areas. Visit: gphn.org.au

For more information, contact Tracy VanderZalm at Gippsland PHN on 0447 491 345.