



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Lifeguard making a difference in rural communities

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Bush nursing centres and health services in remote communities of East Gippsland are using technology to enhance caring for their patients.

While the services deliver regular face-to-face appointments, they are also monitoring patients in the comfort of their own home via a digital software platform called Lifeguard

The DigitalCare@Home program is a joint venture between Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) Victoria and Gippsland Primary Health Network (Gippsland PHN) to make Lifeguard available to participating health services in Gippsland, including bush nursing centres, to remotely monitor their patients through the Lifeguard application and catch signs of deterioration early, before the patient's situation becomes urgent.

Participants with chronic disease such as respiratory, cardiac conditions and diabetes simply use a mobile app to enter health data on a daily basis. The data is monitored by bush nursing centre staff and if a participant reports a change in their condition, an alert is triggered on the system and the health service is notified.

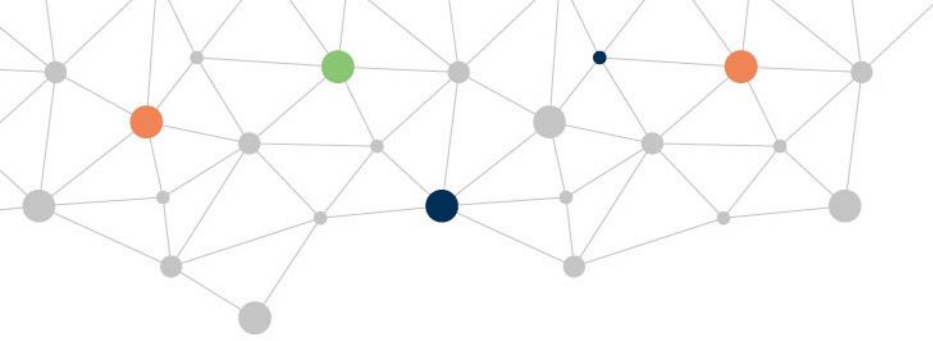
Through this immediate response, the DigitalCare@Home remote patient monitoring program can help to prevent unnecessary hospitalisation.

Manager of the Buchan Bush Nursing Centre, Anne Brewer, said her local community was still struggling from drought, fires, floods and COVID.

The bush nursing centre is at the heart of the community; Anne loves the autonomy her role provides, the variety and making a difference to people. "We look after people from the cradle to the grave," she added.

An important part of her job is preventative medicine as well as curative. Digital tools, such as Lifeguard, mean patients have choices, dependent on mobile phone reception and internet capabilities.

"We are gradually increasing the number of patients who are comfortable with remote patient monitoring using Lifeguard," Anne said. "It has worked well for those patients who are happy to use it. It is great for monitoring things like blood pressure, diabetes and respiratory disease among others."



Susie Edwards from the Gelantipy Bush Nursing Centre has four clients currently using remote patient monitoring with Lifeguard weekly to input their blood pressure details.

Aged between 34 and 72, Susie worked with the clients to develop a care plan and then helped them to download the Lifeguard app to their mobile phones.

“They all feel very reassured that they are being monitored regularly,” she said. “If anything changes, they get an alert and so do I. We then determine what may have caused the change and take any action needed.”

Susie has been working at the Gelantipy Centre for 10 years and said remote monitoring using Lifeguard gave clients another option in terms of their care.

“The only problem in these remote areas is the mobile phone reception and poor internet coverage, otherwise I’m sure we would have many more clients using it.”

ENDS

**Caption: Manager of the Buchan Bush Nursing Centre, Anne Brewer.**

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