

GP home visits help reduce pressure on emergency departments

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A program funded by Gippsland Primary Health Network has supported COVID-19 positive patients to be managed at home by health professionals and helped reduce pressure on hospital emergency departments.

The GP Commissioned Home Visits program has seen doctors from 10 general practices across Gippsland see 210 patients aged from three months to 103 years old in the last six months. Of this total, 121 have been residents in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs).

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, said general practices and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCOs) were funded to assist those people diagnosed with COVID-19.

“They provide home visits to people managing their COVID-19 diagnosis at home who need to be assessed by a GP or a registered nurse,” Ms Proposch said. “The health care professionals also visit aged care residents being managed in a facility who need assessment and management in relation to COVID-19 or other health conditions while the patient is isolating.

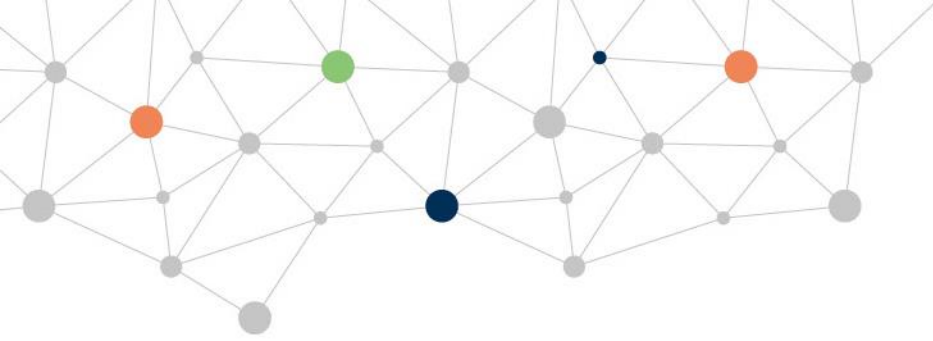
“The program’s focus is on reducing hospitalisations and allowing people to actively engage in their own health management plan, supported by a health care professional via an in-home visit arrangement.”

In some instances, the home visit might be undertaken by a practice nurse or nurse practitioner as well as GPs.

An important aspect of the program has been Gippsland PHN’s use of Capacity Tracker, a cloud-based online tool to support general practices, RACFs, pharmacies and ACCOs during emergencies.

Capacity Tracker provides real-time data to help Gippsland PHN identify issues early and assess service capacity within the region.

“COVID-19 positive cases are one of the items recorded in Capacity Tracker,” Ms Proposch said. “Our staff monitor Capacity Tracker daily and if an aged care facility or GP clinic has



COVID-19 cases, we will reach out about the commissioned home visits program for any patients who may need an assessment.”

This program is also used to report back to Local Area Hospital regarding primary health capacity in Gippsland.

First developed by the North of England Commissioning Support Unit (NECS) and used to manage the flow of patients between NHS hospitals and care homes in the UK, Gippsland PHN has adapted the system for Gippsland.

“The combination of both programs has resulted in great outcomes for our community,” Ms Proposch said.

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 Lynne Smith at Gippsland PHN on 0438 918 234.