

## MEDIA RELEASE

# Drop into a neighbourhood house for digital health support

16 May 2023

Neighbourhood houses are considered by many to be the heart of community connection; a one-stop-shop for people seeking support, education, socialisation and much more.

Now, thanks to Gippsland Primary Health Network, they are using digital technology to help people across Gippsland find information on vaccinations and use applications such as myGov to access to a range of government services online.

Antonia Halloran-Lavelle oversees 21 houses and learning centres in Central and South Gippsland while her colleague Caroline Lister is responsible for 20 centres in East Gippsland.

According to Ms Halloran-Lavelle, the partnership with Gippsland PHN to deliver the 'Vaccine Helpers' program is a "perfect fit" for neighbourhood houses.

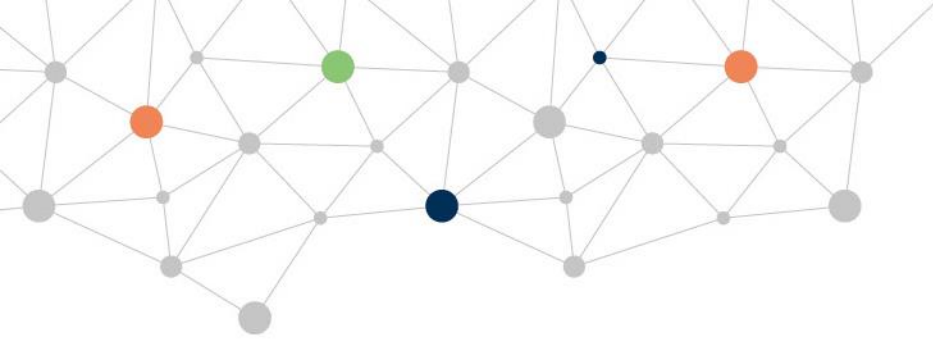
Gippsland PHN launched the program in council libraries and service centres towards the end of 2021 to help people access their electronic vaccination certificates, book COVID-19 vaccinations and access myGov information. It has since been expanded to include use of the My Health Record app.

Ms Halloran-Lavelle said neighbourhood houses had changed significantly from when they were first established.

"They are based on the principles of community development and develop their own programs based on community need," she said. "Importantly, the community identifies what those needs are and what resources are required to build and broaden programs.

"During the pandemic and lockdowns, we were forced to close our physical doors but we kept the virtual doors open, helping people who couldn't access medical needs or food. Since then, needs are changing. We now have houses who are teaching people to grow and cook their own food and others supporting isolated people with transport and digital technology."

Moe Neighbourhood House Manager, Abbe Moriarty, welcomed the support from Gippsland PHN which allowed more time to be spent helping community members. "We were flooded with requests to assist people to download their COVID-19 vaccination certificates," she said. "Now the focus has moved to helping people connect with My Health Record and accessing the *myhealth* app."



Community member, Lawrie Starr, admitted he would have been lost without the neighbourhood house support with technology. “When I retired, I’d never used a computer and couldn’t navigate technology so staff were a big help,” he said. “Now I’m even doing computer classes here.”

Ms Halloran-Lavelle sees the partnership with Gippsland PHN as filling another gap in community support. “It is important that houses are a true reflection of what their communities need.”

Gippsland PHN Acting Chief Executive Officer, Angela Jacob, said the feedback since the ‘Vaccine Helpers’ program started continued to be positive with community members appreciating the assistance.

“It is wonderful to get the feedback from community about this service and the great outcomes demonstrate its value to those people who struggle with technology and access to it,” Mrs Jacob said.

“I encourage anyone who needs support to find the closest vaccination clinic or access government services online to drop into one of the neighbourhood houses where staff will be only too happy to help.”

## **ENDS**

*Caption 1: Moe Neighbourhood House Manager, Abbe Moriarty, assists Moe resident, Lawrie Starr, to access My Health Record.*

*Caption 2: Michael Woolatson plans to download the myhealth app, thanks to support from Moe Neighbourhood House Manager, Abbe Moriarty.*

**For more information, contact Lynne Smith at [lynne.smith@gphn.org.au](mailto:lynne.smith@gphn.org.au) or 0437 918 234.**