



MEDIA RELEASE

New after-hours emergency medical service for far East Gippsland

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Mallacoota and surrounding areas will have an after-hours urgent care medical service delivered by emergency medicine specialists from My Emergency Doctor (MED).

Gippsland Primary Health Network (Gippsland PHN) has commissioned MED, Australia's first virtual emergency doctor service led by experienced senior emergency specialists, to deliver the after-hours service until 31 December 2022.

The initiative follows feedback from the local community last year. Gippsland PHN commissioned the Mallacoota Community Consumer Survey, conducted by the Health Issues Centre. One of the key themes identified was a lack of after-hours medical services in Mallacoota.

Gippsland PHN Acting Chief Executive Officer, Angela Jacob, said the new service would address these issues raised by the local community in the survey.

"MED is an on-demand telehealth service that has been operating since 2016 to provide senior specialist emergency doctor led services with health professionals and patients across Australia, especially in rural and remote areas," Ms Jacob said. "More than 100 specialist emergency doctors are on call along with highly trained Patient Support Officers (PSO) who transfer the patient upon the initial call.

"The service is led by specialist doctors - Fellows of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (FACEMs) – where emergency medicine is their specialty."

Calls are funded by the Gippsland PHN program and free to residents of Mallacoota and surroundings during the after-hours period (weekdays 6pm- 8am, all weekend and on public holidays).

Ms Jacob said MED would engage with Mallacoota Medical Centre, the Mallacoota District Health Support Service and local ambulance service to ensure continuity of care. The MED specialist doctors will provide the patient's local doctor with case notes after a consultation, upon patient request.

"MED provides an essential medical service to people living in areas where accessing care in the after-hours space is difficult," Ms Jacob said.

The patient will receive accurate medical advice and assistance, and scripts can be sent to them by the treating on-call doctor. If deemed necessary and the patient requires additional assistance,



MED will facilitate the patient receiving face-to-face treatment at a local urgent care centre or emergency department.

MED already provides an urgent care service to Orbost Regional Health and Omeo District Health.

My Emergency Doctor Founder, Dr Justin Bowra, said their experienced specialists complemented and worked alongside the community general practice and health services.

“We’re proud to assist and support the local GPs and health services in this important function with Gippsland PHN,” Dr Bowra said.

“Our emergency physicians are all Fellows of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (FACEMs). Their skills and training has seen us provide well over 100,000 consultations so far. We have delivered over 80 per cent in-situ patient care rates with our regional and rural health facility partnerships, essentially saving them a trip to the nearest emergency department when there are no other alternatives available to them in the after-hours.”

Ms Jacob said the new service would provide the communities of Mallacoota and surrounding areas with the reassurance of being able to access specialist emergency medicine services after-hours should they need it.

“The MED service is not new to rural and regional areas, working successfully in many other towns in rural Victoria.”

The new service starts immediately. To access it, people can connect through the MED website www.myemergencydr.com/gphn via video call, on any smart device or dial 1800 577 401 to speak to a doctor.

ENDS

For more information, contact Lynne Smith on 0437 918 234 or lynne.smith@gphn.org.au