

MEDIA RELEASE

New pathway for GPs to monitor low-risk COVID-19 positive patients

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Gippsland general practices can monitor low-risk COVID-19 positive patients in their home, thanks to a partnership between Gippsland Primary Health Network (Gippsland PHN) and the Gippsland Region Public Health Unit (GRPHU).

The new model of care is designed to relieve pressure on the acute care health system to manage positive cases in response to a predicted surge in the number of patients diagnosed with COVID-19 between now and January 2022.

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, said Gippsland PHN had worked closely with the GRPHU and other state health services since the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020.

“The development of this new ‘COVID-19 Positive Pathway for GPs’ is a great outcome from this ongoing collaboration and importantly, a great outcome for the community,” Ms Proposch said.

“General practices are already monitoring their patients who approach them directly. This new pathway provides an embedded process for positive patients once they have been assessed by the GRPHU team.”

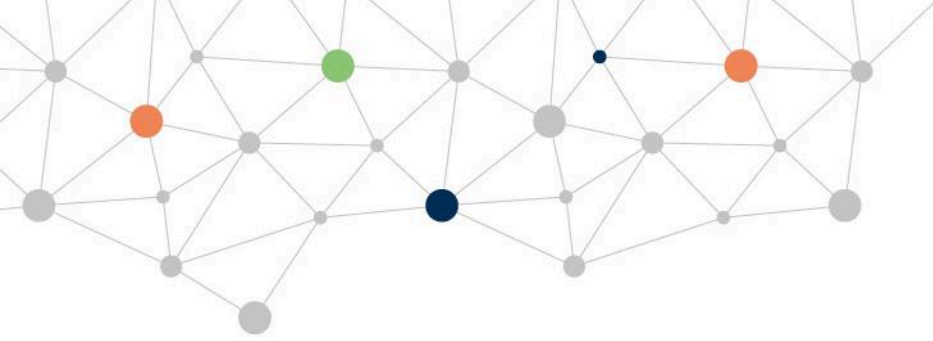
Low-risk patients will be referred to their local doctor who will monitor them remotely through their usual process such as telehealth or can use the digital Platform called Lifeguard.

Gippsland PHN is providing start-up funding up to \$10,000 to 34 Gippsland general practices to enable them to utilise Lifeguard.

Ms Proposch said some regional health organisations and general practices were already using the digital platform which had transformed care for patients with chronic illness.

“Lifeguard enables health professionals to easily monitor the health status of multiple patients at once, including the ability to detect patient deterioration early,” Ms Proposch said. “People in the program enter data into the remote monitoring app daily. Care coordinators monitor all patients via the app system and if a participant reports outside their threshold, it triggers an alert on the system.”

GP Lead at Inglis Medical Centre in Sale, Dr Yousuf Ahmad, welcomed plans for the new pathway which he said would streamline the referral system and provide comfort for positive people.



“We already use Lifeguard to remotely monitor our patients who are COVID positive,” Dr Ahmad said. “They download the app on their phone and input their vital information three times a day. These are then monitored by the Lifeguard care coordinator.

“If there are any changes, these are detected immediately and the patient is escalated to see a GP.”

GRPHU Operations Manager, Annelies Titulaer, said GPs helping to monitor these COVID-19 positive patients would ease the burden on the acute care system.

“With the current outbreak of the Delta variant of COVID-19, positive cases in Victoria and Gippsland have steadily and significantly increased,” Ms Titulaer said. “As the virus is highly contagious, the number of cases in Gippsland is expected to rise and place pressure on the acute system to manage positive cases.

“This initiative will bring comfort to those people who we know may have been anxious that our hospitals would be under pressure from COVID-19 positive patients. It will also bring comfort from the low-risk patients who require monitoring but don’t need to be in hospital.”

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