

MEDIA RELEASE

PPCCs helping reduce pressure on emergency departments

14 December 2023

Gippsland's two Priority Primary Care Centres (PPCC) have treated 20,320 patients since opening in January this year, helping reduce pressure on hospital emergency departments.

The Victorian Government, in collaboration with Gippsland Primary Health Network, funded two PPCCs in Gippsland – the Latrobe PPCC in Moe and the Baw Baw PPCC in Warragul – to relieve the pressure on emergency departments at Latrobe Regional Health (LRH) and West Gippsland Healthcare Group (WGHG).

The GP-led clinics provide care for people with conditions that require urgent attention but not an emergency response.

Gippsland PHN Acting Chief Executive Officer, Angela Jacob, said 3454 survey responses from patients indicated the service met their needs, particularly in the after-hours periods.

"They are proving a success in leaving the emergency departments for those who really need them," Mrs Jacob said.

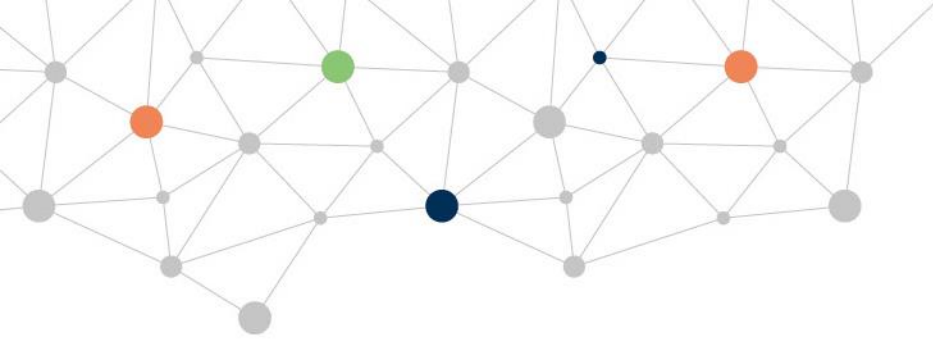
"From the feedback surveys we get, we know the majority of people using the PPCCs are happy with the convenience and ease of access," Mrs Jacob said. "This is a great example of collaboration and cooperation, and patients are the beneficiaries."

Latrobe PPCC, run by Latrobe Community Health Service (LCHS), saw 10,707 patients between January and November with 60.4% of patients who responded to a survey saying they would have otherwise attended an emergency department.

Baw Baw PPCC, run by Central Clinic, has seen 9,613 patients with 51.1% of those surveyed confirming they would have otherwise gone to the emergency department.

Chief Executive Officer at LRH, Don McRae and Chief Executive Officer at WGHG, Dan Weeks, both say the centres have reduced the pressure on their respective waiting lists for non-emergency patients (classed as Category 4 and 5 patients) and freed up time for emergency department staff to care for those patients who need emergency attention.

"It's a concern that people with less urgent illnesses or injuries may have left our Emergency Department without care or perhaps have decided not to seek treatment at all," Mr McRae said. "There is potentially a further risk to a person's health if an illness or injury is left untreated."



“The Priority Primary Care Centre is an option for our category 4 and 5 patients who don’t need an emergency response. It has certainly helped to take the pressure off our waiting room and our ED staff, who can now focus solely on the people who need urgent care or have a life-threatening condition.”

Mr Weeks said the PPCC provided our community with access to the non-emergency medical care they needed.

“West Gippsland Healthcare Group supported the establishment of the local Priority Primary Care Centre in Warragul which was designed to provide alternate treatment options for non-critical patients rather than waiting in the Emergency Department,” he said.

“Even though this is a relatively new program, it is proving successful and the number of emergency department patients was reduced to approximately 23,500 in the last financial year.”

Executive Director Primary Health at LCHS, Andrina Romano, said the Latrobe PPCC had been “really effective” in helping reduce the patient load on the Emergency Department at Latrobe Regional Health.

“More than 60% of people who attend the Latrobe PPCC say they would have previously gone to the hospital emergency department if the PPCC wasn’t available and LRH have seen a drop in category 4 and 5 patients,” Ms Romano said.

“When you need to see a doctor on a public holiday, it can be stressful wondering what’s open. The Latrobe PPCC will be open on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year’s Day.”

General Manager of Central Clinic, John Farthing, said the PPCC had proved its value to the community.

“The community is much more aware of what the service provides and the ease of access and flexibility associated with our centralised location, together with operating hours, have made the PPCC a valuable asset in providing the community with (an additional) vital and essential health service,” he said.

Both PPCCs will be open throughout the Christmas and New Year period. They are open seven days a week including public holidays - Latrobe from 7.30am to 11.30pm and Baw Baw from 8am to 10pm.

For information on the PPCCs, including services, go to the Gippsland PHN [website](#).

Ends

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