



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Grants used to strengthen Gippsland general practice

General practices throughout Gippsland have used Gippsland Primary Health Network Strengthening Medicare grants of up to \$50,000 to make positive changes to their clinics.

The initiatives include installing new digital technology, building a new infection control room, environmental initiatives and improving cyber security.

To date, 71 general practices have received their grants with more expected to be approved over the coming weeks.

The Australian Government committed \$220 million in funding to general practices and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to make improvements to support quality primary care as part of its Strengthening Medicare commitment.

Gippsland Primary Health Network Acting Chief Executive, Angela Jacob, said general practice was the cornerstone of the primary healthcare system as well as the most accessed care for consumers.

“We are so pleased to get positive feedback from our general practices about how they used their grants for initiatives that make a difference to patients and their staff,” Mrs Jacob said. “We know the demand for GP services keeps growing, especially as our population ages and we are pleased to be working in partnership with the government to offer these grants for practices to expand patient access and provide better, safe, quality care.”

#### **Clocktower Medical Centre, Sale**

Clocktower Medical Centre in Sale has used its Strengthening Medicare grant to build an isolation room, ensuring patients with potentially contagious medical conditions are kept separate from other people while they receive medical care.

Practice Manager, Caroline Driscoll, said the centre had plans to create an isolation room however the grant made it possible to bring the project forward.

“The room is completely separate from the rest of the medical practice,” Caroline explained. “It has its own entrance and there are no air vents connected to the main clinic waiting room” or air conditioning.

If a patient wants to see a doctor because they are extremely unwell, they call the clinic and a special appointment is made for a GP to see them in the isolation room. They are met at the back



entrance, given a mask and taken directly into the room, without having to enter the main building or waiting area.

Previously, one of the regular consulting rooms was used for to treat patients for medical conditions such as flu or infections which meant it could not be used for around three hours and then needed to be deep cleaned- depending on the patient's condition. However, this still entailed the patient having to come into the building to enter the room.

The new isolation room means the wait between being able to see contagious patients in the new room can be safely reduced to around 20 minutes.

The new isolation room has its own air conditioning unit, air purifier, vinyl flooring and furniture which can be easily cleaned to infection control standards. None of the equipment needs to leave the room. A special cupboard for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is located directly outside the door, where clinicians can don PPE before entering the room and then doff safely as they leave and discard of all PPE in the safest manner using infectious waste.

"We have now resumed spirometry testing which requires the patient to exhale," Caroline said. "This is the most common type of pulmonary function or breathing test, but we ceased doing them during COVID. We now meet the Asthma Foundation new standards for performing spirometry testing. We have also resumed breathalyser testing."

Caroline managed the project and said it came in on budget and on time. "We are very grateful the grant opportunity came along when it did," she added.

### **Bairnsdale Medical Group**

Bairnsdale Medical Group has put the Strengthening Medicare grant to good use. Practice Manager, Piero Baglioni, said air filter systems were purchased for two rooms, including the isolation room.

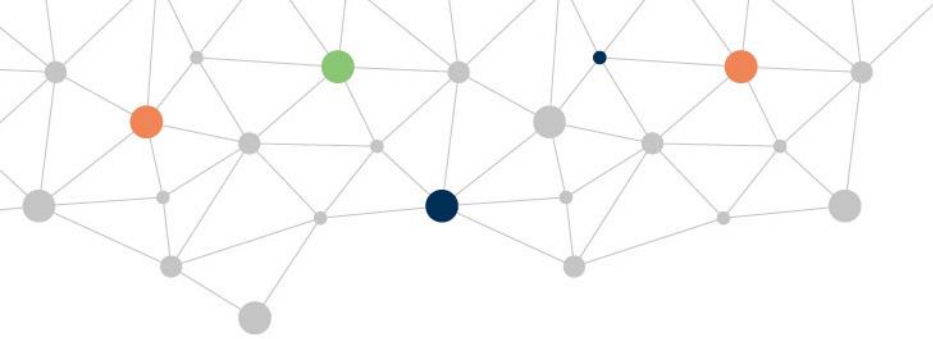
"We upgraded our computer system and installed fibre optic technology. As part of increasing cyber security, we installed multi-factor authentication and increased our storage capacity in the Cloud."

### **United Medical Centre, Moe**

United Medical Centre in Moe used its Strengthening Medicare grant to replace its outdated technology.

Practice Manager, Alan Chen, said the computer equipment in the clinic was up to 15 years old and needed a significant upgrade.

"We are gradually phasing out the old computers and replacing them with new ones," Alan said. "We are also updating our main server and installing new anti-virus software and upgrade the backup system to ensure all our information is secure."



### **Victoria Street medical Clinic, Warragul**

Victoria Street Medical Clinic undertook a range of initiatives with its grant. Practice Manager, Steve Gymer, said the clinic purchased new medical and nursing equipment for the consulting rooms.

Other initiatives will see the installation of a new washer disinfectant to meet and exceed new standards for sterilisation and infection prevention control.

“Additionally, we are putting some funds towards the cost of our three-year accreditation which means we are meeting all guidelines for quality and safety of health care.”

### **Capstone Medical Centre, Bairnsdale**

Capstone Medical Centre in Bairnsdale used its Strengthening Medicare grant to purchase new teleconferencing technology for its general practitioners.

Practice Manager, Gie Perdigon, said previously, the GPs would conduct telehealth appointments over the telephone.

“Now we have purchased updated equipment with cameras and a new sound system,” Gie said. “It means that our patients who can’t come in to the clinic because of their age or circumstances can still have a face-to-face appointment with their doctor.”

**ENDS**

***Caption 1: Clocktower Medical Centre Practice Manager, Caroline Driscoll, is pictured in the Sale clinic’s new isolation room, ensuring patients with potentially contagious medical conditions are kept separate from other people while they receive medical care. The new room was built with the clinic’s Strengthening Medicare grant.***

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