

## Respiratory clinic opens in Foster

The new Foster respiratory assessment clinic is open on Monday, 4 May.

The clinic will be operated by the Foster Medical Clinic, 97 Station Road in Foster, quite separate from the general clinic.

It will be staffed from Monday to Friday by a team of doctors and nurses, who will be supported by receptionists and cleaners.

Gippsland Primary Health Network (PHN) has been working closely with general practices across the region to establish the clinics at the six sites, with Warragul opening on Monday 27 April and the remaining clinics opening progressively in the coming weeks.

The Australian Department of Health (DoH) has funded 100 private practice respiratory clinics across Australia to provide dedicated services to people with mild to moderate COVID-19 symptoms, in addition to services available within public hospitals and general practices.

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, said the intent of the assessment clinics was to provide assessment and care of patients presenting with mild to moderate respiratory symptoms with referral to another health facility or home isolation if required.

She said the clinics would reduce pressure on public hospitals and primary health providers, while also reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19 across the whole community.

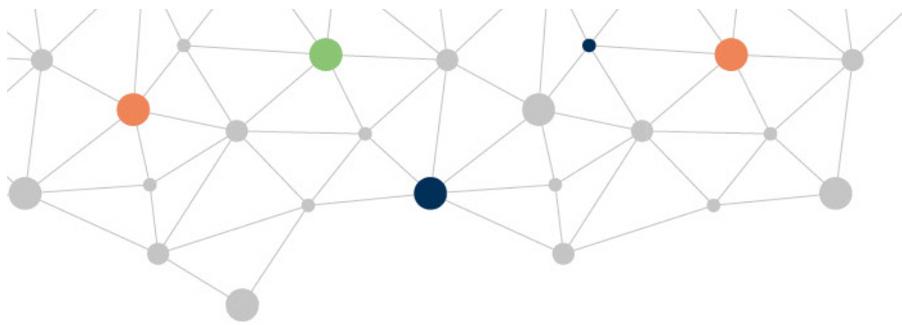
“Respiratory clinics will reduce the risk of further transmission of COVID-19, help to optimise the use of available stocks of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and help reduce the pressure on hospital emergency departments,” Ms Proposch said.

“The clinics will be established in dedicated premises which meet clear criteria, with arrangements to safely manage infection control. They will complement efforts of state and territory clinics at public hospitals.

“They will be staffed by existing general practice doctors and nurses and will be funded to assess, test and diagnose respiratory cases, including COVID-19, influenza and pneumonia.”

Ms Proposch said as well as working closely with the six regional clinics and other regional health services, Gippsland PHN had worked closely with the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) to identify practices capable of managing the appropriate infection control arrangements, and willing to operate the clinics in a mix of urban, regional and rural settings.

Dr Phil Worboys from the Foster Medical Clinic said all staff were excited and ready to be able to provide a safe and reliable service to the community through the establishment of the new respiratory clinic.



“The process for this started when we were predicting a very different scenario to what we are currently going through with COVID-19 and yet we do know that we are in for challenges ahead,” Dr Worboys said.

“Having a respiratory clinic at the Medical Centre will ensure we are able to test and manage patients locally, effectively and efficiently.”

Aspen Medical, an Australian-owned global company appointed by the Department of Health, has delivered training in infection control and prevention to all staff and the clinic has undergone a comprehensive infection control audit.

Those seeking to be tested must register for an appointment on a special website (<https://www.hotdoc.com.au/>) or get more information at <https://fostermedical.com.au/> or phone 5682 2088 (Foster clinic only) to make an appointment.

Once the person has been tested, they will need to self-isolate at home until they receive their results – expected to take up to two days. Depending on the outcome, they will either be referred for more treatment, usually through their normal GP, or be cleared of COVID-19.