



The Hon Michael McCormack MP

Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development
Leader of The Nationals
Federal Member for Riverina

The Hon Mark Coulton MP

Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government
Federal Member for Parkes

MEDIA RELEASE

15 April 2020

FIRST REGIONAL COVID-19 RESPIRATORY CLINIC OPENS IN WAGGA WAGGA

The first rural GP-led COVID-19 respiratory clinic in New South Wales officially opened today at Wagga Wagga's Glenrock Country Practice.

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Federal Member for Riverina Michael McCormack said the new respiratory clinic, assembled at Dr Ayman Shenouda's practice, was part of the Australian Government's \$2.4 billion health package to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.

"Wagga Wagga is a health hub for the Riverina and the Murrumbidgee Valley with more than 250,000 people relying on the regional city's health services and medical professionals," Mr McCormack said.

"Dr Shenouda has been at the forefront of making sure regional Australians live healthy lives and get through this challenging time. I commend the work he has done to help get this clinic up and running. I know the local community will be extremely grateful.

"The Federal Government has committed to establishing up to 100 GP-led respiratory clinics across Australia to assess patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 symptoms.

"The local clinics will help to reduce pressure on hospital emergency departments and other general practices.

"Rural and regional residents deserve health care services which are just as good as those provided in our major cities and the national rollout of these new clinics is part of addressing that.

"These respiratory clinics will be best placed to support people with a fever, cough, sore throat and other respiratory symptoms and will help to avoid the risk of infection in our local communities."

Federal Minister for Regional Health Mark Coulton said the Federal Government was focused on ensuring rural and regional communities are prepared to respond to this pandemic.

"We are putting in place a range of measures including additional practice incentives and the expansion of telehealth to enable the rural medical workforce to continue to care for rural people," Mr Coulton said.

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“Other rural respiratory clinics are also operating in Emerald in Queensland and Mildura in Victoria with more to open over the coming weeks and months.

“The Government is working with local GPs and Aspen Medical, which has significant health emergency management experience in Australia and overseas, to rollout the clinics.”

Vice President of the Royal Australian College of General Practice and Wagga Wagga GP Dr Ayman Shenouda said it was an honour to open the first rural GP-led COVID-19 respiratory clinic in New South Wales.

"GPs are doing an incredible job on the frontline of COVID-19 combating this virus and the respiratory clinic in Wagga Wagga will make a real difference," Dr Shenouda said.

"The clinic will help to screen patients with flu-like symptoms and is located in a separate position to the practice to keep staff and patients safe. It will allow all patients to access their own GP in a safe environment.

"Screening patients for COVID-19 will help to reduce community transmission of coronavirus."

The Government is investing \$206.7 million to establish up to 100 respiratory clinics across Australia, including in rural and regional areas. Additionally, more than 160 fever clinics, jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments are also in operation across Australia.

ENDS

BACKGROUND:

- People with mild to moderate respiratory symptoms will need to make an appointment either online via booking links available at [health.gov.au](https://www.health.gov.au) or over the phone if the clinic has made a local phone booking arrangement available. (People with severe symptoms should call 000 and/or attend the nearest hospital emergency department.)
- It is important people attend the clinic only at the time of their booking so social distancing can be maintained and they may be asked to wait in their car until the clinic is ready to receive them.
- People will be assessed by a GP or a nurse under the supervision of a GP and have a specimen taken for pathology testing if that is indicated.
- Regardless of whether a test is undertaken, the person will receive clinical advice on how to manage their symptoms and an initial follow-up phone call or text message with test results and to check on how they are going.
- After people have visited the clinic, they will remain eligible to continue to consult their regular GP using the MBS telehealth items.

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