



The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

The Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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\$2 BILLION TO EXTEND CRITICAL HEALTH SERVICES ACROSS AUSTRALIA

Millions of Australians will continue to receive medical care and support in their own homes with the Morrison Government investing more than \$2 billion to extend a range of COVID-19 health measures for a further six months, to 31 March 2021.

Medicare-subsidised telehealth and pathology services, GP-led respiratory clinics, home medicines delivery, public and private hospital services will all be extended, as well as further investments in PPE.

These health initiatives play a major role in detecting, preventing and treating COVID-19.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the \$2 billion extension in funding brought the Government's commitment for the COVID-19 health response to more than \$16.5 billion since March 2020.

"We will continue to provide Australians with critical health care and support to protect both lives and livelihoods," the Prime Minister said.

"By providing telehealth and home delivery medicine services we are reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the community while also supporting people in isolation to get the care they need.

"Importantly this also includes mental health services, delivered over the phone, by trained specialists and GPs.

"As we continue to suppress COVID-19 while continuing to open our economy up, Australians can be reassured that we have the world's best medical support in place to protect their health."

Minister for Health Greg Hunt said "Our Governments response to the pandemic brought forward a 10 year plan on telehealth within 10 days."

“As a consequence, over 30 million consultations protected the health and wellbeing of Australians, and protected our health workers and the viability of their practices.”

Patients will continue to have access to Medicare-subsidised telehealth for general practitioner, nursing, midwifery, allied health and allied mental health services, where and when they need them.

Telehealth is also being extended for essential specialist services, such as consultant physician, geriatrician, and neurosurgery services. Bulk billing will continue to be available and regular billing practices will apply to all of these services.

Up to 150 GP-led respiratory clinics across the country, which complement state run fever clinics, will continue their pivotal role in testing. Patients will continue to have access to bulk-billed COVID-19 tests under Medicare, with aged care residents and staff getting priority access to rapid testing.

Medicare-subsidised pathology and testing at the point of care will continue in 86 rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. This enables early identification of cases and rapid response if COVID-19 is detected in these highly vulnerable communities.

Eligible people will continue to get free home delivery of essential medicines by their local pharmacist. The Home Medicines Service has already delivered more than one million medicines to patients’ homes at no additional cost to patients.

Our support for states and territories continues, with the historic National Partnership Agreement ensuring the public health system is prepared and the public and private hospital systems are fully resourced and able to respond rapidly to any outbreak.

As an example, this agreement has enabled the transfer of more than 480 aged care residents to private hospitals and deployed clinical and nursing staff to assist in aged care during Victoria’s second wave.

The National Coronavirus Helpline will continue to operate around the clock providing important advice.

The expert Australian Health Protection Principal Committee recognises that future outbreaks will occur. The ongoing health response must be maintained to protect the health of Australians.

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Media Contacts:

Prime Minister’s Press Office, (02) 6277 7744

Minister Hunt’s office: James Perrin, 0447 534 427

The Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Sydney