

WA's first COVID-19 respiratory clinic opens in Geraldton

21 April 2020

WA's first GP-led regional respiratory clinic, operated by Batavia Health, opens today in Geraldton, allowing people with a mild illness suggestive of coronavirus, such as an upper respiratory tract infection, to be assessed and, if required, tested for COVID-19.

Located in a stand-alone facility, adjacent to the main Batavia Health building, it will ensure patients and staff can maintain safe social distancing measures from others attending for non COVID-19 related health conditions.

Federal Member of Durack, Melissa Price, said the clinic was part of the Australian Government's \$206.7 million investment in establishing up to 100 respiratory clinics nationally.

"This is significant for the Midwest community who will benefit from timely and increased access to assessment for the virus.

"We are focused on ensuring regional communities are prepared to respond to this pandemic which is why we have also expanded telehealth and introduced other measures that enable the regional medical workforce to be well equipped to care for regional communities."

Practice Principal, Dr James Quirke, said Batavia Health was pleased to offer this service to provide the region with a facility that has the single purpose of monitoring, measuring and responding to any possible COVID-19 outbreaks.

"Hopefully, the Midwest Respiratory Clinic will give peace of mind to both medical services personnel and people living in the Midwest community for their continued public safety."

On behalf of the Australian Government, WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) has facilitated the establishment of the clinic, working closely with specialist health emergency management company, Aspen Medical.

WAPHA is also liaising with other general practices to finalise arrangements in the coming weeks for up to nine more clinics in regional and metropolitan locations.

WAPHA CEO, Leanne Durrington, said the Australian Government Department of Health had approved the Midwest Respiratory Clinic, a condition of which was to meet strict infection control criteria, and complete intensive training.

"The clinic is intended for people whose respiratory symptoms are mild to moderate, and who think they may need to be tested for COVID-19.

"Patients who attend can be confident of remaining safe, being thoroughly assessed, and receiving the best possible care and advice."

MEDIA RELEASE



“For all other healthcare needs, people should continue to visit their usual GP who knows them and their medical history well.

“This is particularly important for people with chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease and respiratory disease, or for people needing an annual flu vaccination.”

All GPs can now offer appointments via telehealth or face to face when required and have infection control procedures in place to keep patients safe.

Batavia Health has been working closely with WA Country Health Service to ensure the new clinic is integrated with the region’s COVID-19 response planning.

In addition to the new clinic, in regional areas, where there isn’t a WA Country Health Service COVID clinic, people can go to a public hospital, health service or remote health clinic. People must phone ahead to advise of their symptoms.

With permission, Batavia Health will notify the patient’s usual GP of their attendance at the clinic, and the outcome of testing will also be communicated by the pathology provider.

Appointments for the clinic will be via phone bookings only. No walk-ins will be seen without an appointment.

Anyone with severe breathing difficulties should call triple zero (000) immediately.

BACKGROUND:

- It is important that people attend the clinic only at the time of their booking so that 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.

ENDS

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