

GPs at frontline of urgent care in WA

10 September 2019

“Not all urgencies are emergencies” is the message of a public awareness campaign launched today to signal the start of an 18-month GP Urgent Care Network Pilot that will see GPs across Perth and in Bunbury taking the lead in providing urgent care.

The campaign will educate the public about their options when they need treatment for an urgent but not life-threatening illness or injury that can be dealt with by a GP, leaving emergency departments for emergencies.

More than 125 general practices are taking part in the Pilot spread across metropolitan Perth, including five in the Bunbury area.

People will be able to book an appointment at a time and place convenient to them and participating practices will be easily identifiable thanks to bold black and orange signage.

The GP Urgent Care Network will operate seven days a week and will cover at a minimum the peak periods from 8am to 8pm.

WA Health data shows the majority of patients who attend public metropolitan emergency departments for injuries and illnesses that could be well managed by a GP – about 190,000 people in 2017/18 – do so during these times.

The model, developed and delivered by WA Primary Health Alliance in partnership with WA Health, uses existing capacity and capability in general practices.

WA Primary Health Alliance Board Chair, Dr Richard Choong, said this innovative new program will encourage people to get the right care in the right place.

“With the number of unfilled appointments in general practices being very similar to the number of emergency department presentations for GP like conditions, this model is both a sustainable and efficient way to deliver urgent care,” Dr Choong said.

“Not only do we need a solution that reduces demand on our emergency departments, we also need to encourage people to change their behaviour and understand that a GP is more than capable of dealing with their urgent care needs.”

Participating practices will be well equipped to deal with a range of injuries and illnesses, ranging from cuts needing stitches to muscle sprains, minor fractures, fever, stomach pain and infections. They will also have access to radiology and pathology, so patients can have all the relevant diagnostic tests organised easily and quickly.

WA Primary Health Alliance acknowledges the support of WA Health, the Royal College of General Practitioners WA Faculty and the Australian Medical Association (WA), as well as the many GPs who are taking part in the Pilot.

MEDIA RELEASE



The GP Urgent Care Network Pilot has been developed from the WA Government's Urgent Care Clinic election commitment and builds on the recommendations in the Sustainable Health Review regarding better connections and relationships between hospitals and general practice and keeping people well in the community.

To book an appointment, visit www.gpurgentcare.com.au or call Health Direct on 1800 022 222.

The public is reminded that in a medical emergency, they should always call 000 or go to their nearest emergency department.

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About WA Primary Health Alliance: WA Primary Health Alliance oversees the strategic commissioning functions of the Perth North, Perth South and Country WA Primary Health Networks (PHNs). The WA PHNs are three of 31 PHNs established by the Australian Government nationally to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for the community. We work across the WA healthcare system with doctors, allied health professionals, hospitals and service providers to improve the coordination of care for people who are at risk of poor health outcomes. For more information, visit www.wapha.org.au