

COVID-19: Rural & Remote Consumers

Welcome to the fourth Rural and Remote Health Special Interest Group e-newsletter!

We publish quarterly newsletters covering important topics impacting people living in rural and remote areas. This issue focuses on *COVID-19*.

The previous issue can be accessed [here](#).

Consumer Position Statement: Ethical Issues Arising from the COVID-19 Pandemic

CHF and consumer representatives from around the country recently participated in a workshop with the NHMRC Australian Ethics Committee and others to discuss these matters, ensuring that consumer concerns and issues were highlighted.

To inform our position on ongoing discussions on this topic, CHF consulted with members and networks. We received detailed responses from a broad spectrum of organisations including members from the Rural and Remote Health SIG.

You can view the CHF position statement [here](#).

Opportunities and challenges for Telehealth Services in the NT

Kevin, a member of the Rural and Remote Health Special Interest Groups writes.

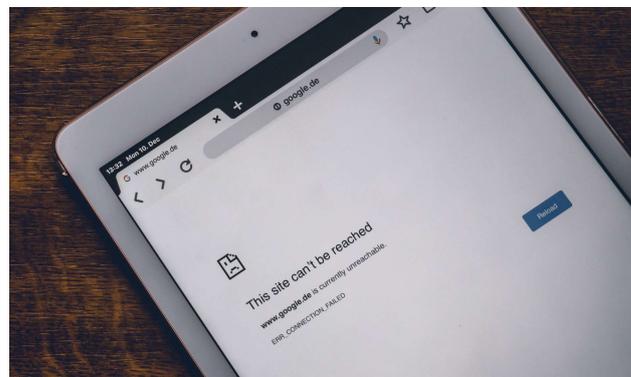
The introduction of temporary Medicare item number for telehealth services during the COVID-19 pandemic is a positive development in rural and remote regions of Australia such as in the NT.

Due to the vast distances for rural and remote residents to access health service centres in the

Top End (Darwin, Katherine) and Central Australia (Alice Springs) telehealth services offer a pathway to access medical services from remote locations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic travel to and from remote communities in the NT have been severely restricted resulting in healthcare providers needing to resort to telehealth services in order to maintain health services over this period.

However, in order to ensure a high level of telehealth service accessibility across rural and remote regions of the NT one fundamental issue needs to be addressed: internet accessibility.



Data from [ID The Population Experts](#) suggests that in 2016 internet accessibility across the NT was as follows:

Internet connection:

Australia: 78.8%
 Northern Territory: 69.7%
 Greater Darwin Region: 76.2%
 Regional NT: 58.7%

No internet connection:

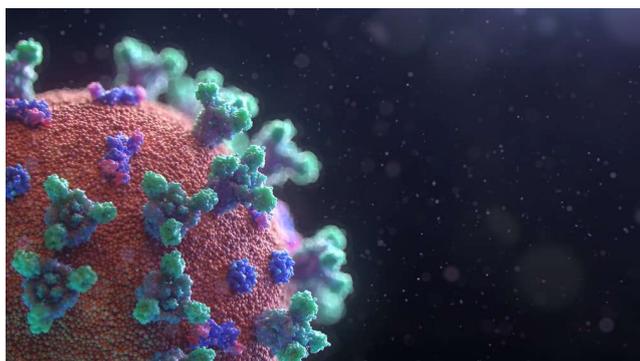
Australia: 13.6%
 Northern Territory: 15.6%
 Greater Darwin Region: 10.7%
 Regional NT: 23.8%

The NT has a population of 250,000 of which the majority live in the Greater Darwin Region (150,000) and other regional centres (40,000 in the Alice Springs region and 20,000 in the Katherine region).

The internet accessibility rates in the Greater Darwin region is comparable with the rest of Australia, however, in regional NT just over 1 in 2 has an internet connection making it very challenging to provide telehealth services outside of Darwin.

With challenges comes opportunities: once we arrive in the “new normal” post-COVID-19 period internet accessibility across regional NT needs to be expanded in order to ensure telehealth services can be adopted as a new business model for health service delivery enabling easier access for remote communities and for healthcare professionals to deliver positive health outcomes while reducing costs of travel and accommodation.

COVID-19 Resources and Information



Use **Healthdirect Australia**, the Australian Government Health advice portal for consumers, for [information on Coronavirus information](#), [symptom checker](#) and helpline: 1800 022 222.

Turn to the **Department of Health website** to find the most recent, verified information, posted daily.

Use the **World Health Organisation website** to verify accuracy of health advice.

Be Health Aware - [CHF portal](#) for health resources.

Department of Health

- Factsheet - [Home Medicines Services](#) information for consumers.

- [Infection control training](#) - 30-minute online training module for health care workers in all settings. It covers the fundamentals of infection prevention and control for COVID-19. This training is recommended as a useful resource for everyone.

Australian Commission of Safety and Quality in Healthcare

- [Guide](#) to infection prevention and control and medicines.
- Elective surgery [guidelines](#) and Q&A for consumers.

Guides on Telehealth

NHMRC Partnership Centre for Health System Sustainability provides easy to follow [guides](#) on telehealth for consumers. See the telehealth consumer advice and [video guide](#) factsheets.

NPS MedicineWise

A new [information hub](#) from NPS MedicineWise will help you be medicinewise during COVID-19.

Collaborating 4 Inclusion: COVID-19 Planning Resource for People with Disability available [here](#).

Centre for Rural & Remote Mental Health:

Resources, information and support for looking after your mental health during times of adversity. Find our more [here](#).



COVID SPACE – a place for sharing stories

What’s happening in your home and community to beat COVID-19?

Share your story - tell us on **COVID SPACE**

We want to hear about the smart moves and fresh steps in your community to counter the virus.

These could be new ideas from consumers to stem spread of infection, or innovations by doctors, nurses and clinics to increase access and improve care.

Sharing ideas that are making a difference where you live will help us all to beat the virus, increase access to care and calm our lives.

Email the Communications Team on Communications@chf.org.au or share your story with us on [Facebook](#).

Consultations and Surveys

Call for submissions on impact of COVID-19 on aged care services

As part of its inquiry into aged care quality and safety, the Royal Commission will investigate the impact of COVID-19 on residential and home aged care.

The focus of their inquiry will be upon the lessons that can be learnt for responding to future pandemics or infectious disease outbreaks.

The Royal Commission will continue to accept submissions until the end of June 2020. [Click here](#) for more information.



My Health Record: Rural and Remote Consumer Experience

Amanda Baron, a post-graduate student at James Cook University, would like to hear from you about My Health Record if you:

- a) Live in regional or rural Queensland?
- b) You are seeing your GP, nurse, diabetes educator or other health professional regularly.

Amanda would like to hear about your experiences of My Health Record during your consultations, or when looking at your own records. Amanda would also like to hear from people who may have used it or have experience of it previously.

To participate in the research, they would like to do a short interview. The questions can be asked over the phone or via internet video link

and are expected to take no longer than 40 minutes, at a time convenient to you.

If you are interested and would like to know more, please email amanda.baron@my.jcu.edu.au or call 07 4781 4308.

Australia's Health Panel

Australia's Health Panel is a CHF initiative that allows consumers to comment on health policy and issues and offer feedback on trends and discussions.

Each month, a short survey will be sent to Australia's Health Panel, that can be filled in online.

Our current survey is open and asks your views intended to get the first impressions and opinions of the Australian public on the COVIDSafe.

[Join](#) Australia's Health Panel and have your say on today's issues in health care. Please share details about Australia's Health Panel throughout your networks.

The results of our previous survey, developed by members of the Rural and Remote Health SIG, highlights what consumers had to say about telehealth. You can read the results [here](#).



Events and Campaigns

Will the road to recovery be paved with casualties?

Health Issues Centre are holding the third in a series of Online Consumer Forums on COVID-19.

The event will be held via Zoom to give consumer organisations and consumers the opportunity to engage and provide feedback on the issue of how manage the twin challenges of economic and COVID-19 recovery as restrictions ease.

Join the webinar to discuss how we should balance the twin challenges of economic and COVID-19 infection recovery, with guest experts on behavioural change and health economics.

When: Tuesday, 16 June 2020

Time: 11 am – 12:30pm [AEST]

Register [here](#).



SARRAH 2020 National Rural and Remote Allied Health Conference - Sharing Stories: Shaping Success

Hosted by SARRAH since 1995, this biennial conference is for all involved in regional, rural and remote health. SARRAH invites you to Townsville

- to hear a range of eminent speakers,
- to join us as we share stories to shape the future success for remote, rural and regional allied health, and
- to celebrate 25 years of SARRAH networking, advocacy and events.

When: 13-15 September 2020

Where: The Ville, Townsville

[Click here](#) to find out more.



Better Care, Everywhere: Healthcare variation in practice – New Date

Hosted by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, and led by high profile national and international speakers, this is the one health event you can't afford to miss in 2020. The first national event dedicated to reducing healthcare variation across Australia.

New Date: 4-5 February 2021

Where: International Convention Centre, Sydney

To find our more, or to register [click here](#).



CHF Summit 2020: Shifting Gears – New Date

The CHF Summit: Shifting Gears has been **postponed until 18-19 March 2021** due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Summit will be held at the **International Convention Centre in Sydney**.

Keynote speakers include: ABC TV's **Ellen Fanning**, **Dr Kate Mulligan**, Director, Policy and Communications for the Alliance for Healthier Communities in Toronto, and **Vincent Dumez**, Co-Director and patient and partner at the Centre of Excellence on Partnering with Patients and the Public, University of Montreal.

The Summit will offer both organisations and consumers to come together to explore, discuss and grow the concept and practice of consumer-centred care, and be at the forefront of system change.

Submissions for abstracts are also now open. CHF invite you to propose topics relevant to contemporary issues in health reform from a consumer perspective. See more about [topics for submissions](#).

[Click here](#) to find out more. If you have any enquiries, please contact Sandra Gardam at event@chf.org.au



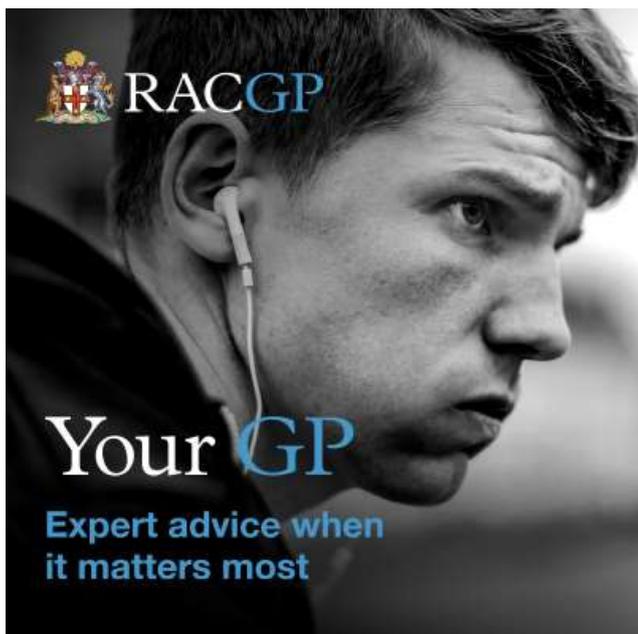
7th Rural and Remote Health Scientific Symposium: Shaping the Future – New Date

About: It will bring together the rural and remote health sector with policy makers and others in the government and the non-government sectors to shape the future of rural and remote health research.

New Date: 24-25 May 2021

Location: Alice Springs Convention Centre, NT

[Click here](#) for more information or to register.



Expert Advice Matters

A campaign launched by RACGP reinforces the importance of continuing to consult a GP for any health matter during this time, and that doing so is safe and easy.

Find out more [here](#).

What is the Rural and Remote Health Special Interest Group?

The special interest group is an informal network of consumers who have self-selected to work more intensively on policy issues. We currently have 32 members from around Australia, from Darwin to Port Pirie and Kalgoorlie to Ingham.



Each have extensive experience working within the health system (health promotion, aged care, palliative care, disability, dental, mental health, maternity services, clinical nurse, pharmacist, health services management and paramedic). Some members are consumer representatives, representing consumer views on a number of steering committees and working groups nationwide.

Our members live (or have lived) in rural and remote areas across Australia and offer a wide range of lived experiences, from access challenges, to living with depression, rare chronic conditions, and complications from medical implants.

About Consumers Health Forum of Australia

Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) is the national peak body representing the interests of Australian healthcare consumers and those with an interest in healthcare consumer affairs. CHF works to achieve safe, quality, timely healthcare for all Australians, supported by accessible health information and systems. Find out more [here](#).



Full Website Links in this Newsletter

Rural and Remote Health Newsletter: Preventive Health and Primary Health Care - Issue 2 Autumn 2020:

https://chf.org.au/sites/default/files/rural_and_remote_health_sig_newsletter_issue_3.pdf

Consumer Position Statement: Ethical Issues Arising from the COVID-19 Pandemic:

https://chf.org.au/sites/default/files/consumer_position_statement_-_ethical_issues_arising_from_the_covid-19_pandemic_final_0.pdf

ID The Population Experts:

<https://profile.id.com.au/australia/internet-connection?WebID=160>

COVID-19 Resources and Information:

Health Direct:

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus>

Department of Health:

https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert?utm_source=health.gov.au&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=digital_transformation&utm_content=health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov

World Health Organisation:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

CHF's Be Health Aware Portal:

<https://chf.org.au/be-health-aware#covid-19>

Home Medicines Review:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-national-health-plan-home-medicines-services-information-for-consumers>

COVID-19 Infection Control Training:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training>

Infection prevention and control and medicines:

<https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/covid-19>

Elective surgery guidelines and Q&A for consumers:

<https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/faqs-consumers-elective-surgery>

Guides on Telehealth:

<https://www.healthsystemsustainability.com.au/telehealth-guides-for-consumers/>

Video Guide Factsheet on Telehealth:

https://coh.centre.uq.edu.au/files/2022/COH_UQ_Consumer_Attending%20a%20videoconsultation_v1.pdf

Being MedicineWise during COVID-19:

<https://www.nps.org.au/coronavirus>

Collaborating 4 Inclusion:

<https://collaborating4inclusion.org/covid-19-person-centred-emergency-preparedness/>

Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health:

<https://www.crrmh.com.au/covid-19-coronavirus-information/>

Consultations & Surveys:

Call for submissions on impact of COVID-19 on aged care services:

<https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/submissions/Pages/default.aspx>

Australia's Health Panel: COVIDSafe App:

<https://chf.org.au/australias-health-panel-0>

Australia's Health Panel – Telehealth survey report: <https://chf.org.au/ahptelehealth>

Events and Campaigns:

HIC Webinar: Will the road to recovery be paved with casualties?

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/will-the-road-to-recovery-be-paved-with-casualties-tickets-105047840920>

SARRAH 2020 National Rural and Remote Allied Health Conference:

<http://www.sarahconference.com/>

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care – Better Care Everywhere:

<https://events.catalystevents.com.au/website/8086/>

CHF's Summit 2020: Shifting Gears:

<http://www.chfsummit2020.com.au/ehome/index.php?eventid=518286&>

7th Rural and Remote Health Scientific Symposium:

<https://www.ruralhealth.org.au/7rrhss/home>

RACGP: Expert Advice Matters Campaign:

<https://www.racgp.org.au/running-a-practice/practice-resources/practice-tools/expert-advice-matters>

Consumers Health Forum of Australia:
<https://chf.org.au/>