

# MEDIA RELEASE

17/04/20

## WESTERN QUEENSLANDERS “CLOSE THE GATE ON CORONAVIRUS”

**NEW CAMPAIGN: Outback residents doing their bit to confront COVID-19 in the bush.**

[CLICK HERE:](#) Interview grabs and overlay of Western Queenslanders #ClosingTheGateOnCorona

[CLICK HERE:](#) Edited social media video to be released online (17/04/20)

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Western Queenslanders have embraced a new campaign to raise awareness about the importance of self-isolating but also keeping communities together in the battle against COVID-19 in the bush.

The Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN), which commissions health services across almost a million square kilometres of rural and remote Queensland, has launched a campaign entitled “**Close the Gate on Coronavirus**”, and residents are already jumping on board.

“Closing a gate is what many property owners do several times a day to keep livestock from running amok, and it’s what most town-dwellers do to keep the kids or pets from bolting onto the road,” WQPHN CEO Stuart Gordon said.

“It’s also a great metaphor for how the bush is reacting to the intrusion of COVID-19 in our daily lives, through the need to self-isolate and maintain hygiene.”

“By now everyone’s very familiar with the distancing rules, but we wanted to put a Western Queensland spin on the messaging to help give our communities a clear point of reference,” Mr Gordon said.

Local hospitals, general practices and pharmacies have been the focus of activity in the region since the pandemic first emerged as a threat to Western Queensland, with hospital fever clinics and GP Respiratory Clinics being established, and personal protective equipment distributed to clinicians across the region.

The WQPHN has been busy sourcing and distributing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to GPs and Pharmacies across Western Queensland, with close to 20 thousand P2 and surgical masks already distributed, and another 20 thousand due to be delivered to clinicians in the coming days.

But Stuart Gordon says it’s important to ensure this is a community-led response to the virus.

“Rightly, the focus has been on ensuring our clinical providers are ready to meet whatever the virus can throw at them, but it’s also vital we rally support from the entire community to keep at-risk people safe, and to give our clinical teams the best shot at COVID-19,” Mr Gordon said.

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“By *closing the gate on coronavirus* we’re communicating in a very simple, non-aggressive way that for now, we need to keep our boundaries sealed as best we can, and be vigilant about what comes and goes through our gates.”

“It’s also a message about doing the right thing and respecting others, because we all know that leaving a gate open, especially on a grazing property, can cause havoc and unnecessary anxiety.”

“Just like we trust our providers and partners to deliver services to communities across our region, as individuals we trust each other to ‘close the gate’, sending a friendly yet firm message about COVID-19,” he said.

To date (17/04/20), Western Queensland has not recorded a positive COVID-19 test, but there are expectations the virus will inevitably head West, with the region’s Indigenous communities considered a high-risk population.

“At the beginning, out here in communities in the North West, people were a little bit disbelieving thinking it’ll never happen to us, it won’t come out here,” said Gidgee Healing CEO Renee Blackman, head of the region’s Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

“Then it started to become real as the cases crept up the coast and I think that’s what started to jog people into action.”

“So now I think communities are much more aware of the threat the virus poses and I think that the everyday activity of ‘closing the gate’ will resonate with our mob as a message about keeping the virus at bay,” she said.

#### **Western Qld Primary Health Network (WQPHN) quick facts:**

- commissions health services in Western Queensland
- covers almost one million square kilometres of Queensland, 55% of the state’s total land area
- aligns health investment with demonstrated population health needs
- uses health intelligence data to orientate health services efficiently and effectively
- ensures the right primary health care is delivered, at the right time by the right provider
- advised by GPs and other health professionals and consumers
- one of 31 PHNs across Australia established and funded by the Commonwealth Government

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