

MEDIA RELEASE

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WESTERN QUEENSLANDERS URGED TO PUT THE HANDSHAKE ON HOLD DURING COVID-19 SECOND WAVE DOWN SOUTH

COVID-READY: Region prepared for cases if they arise as more Western Queenslanders seek a coronavirus test.

[CLICK HERE](#): Social media video on the importance of social distancing in the West.

Western Queenslanders are being urged to maintain social distancing and avoid the time-honoured bush convention of shaking hands, as concerns grow over the explosion of cases in southern states.

The Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN) is reporting a rise in outback residents attending respiratory clinics for a coronavirus test, but warns the best weapon against the virus remains heeding health advice about avoiding unnecessary contact.

“It’s a bit like asking a Western Queenslander to reconfigure their DNA by asking us not to shake hands, it’s an instinctive habit that is very hard to change,” concedes WQPHN CEO Stuart Gordon.

“But given what’s happening down south, we have to remain vigilant in the West, so we need to find other ways to say g’day to each other that doesn’t increase our risk of spreading the virus.”

“While we’re all getting used to bumping elbows and feet, we can still look each other in the eye when we meet, and we can still give each other a wave as we pass on the highway.”

“Regardless of whether Queensland remains relatively virus-free compared to the southern states, it’s still vitally important we don’t become complacent, because it’s everyone’s business now to stop the spread,” Mr Gordon said.

The WQPHN has distributed more than 30,000 items of personal protective equipment to GPs, pharmacies and Allied Health agencies in Western Queensland, where five respiratory clinics are currently operating to safely manage patients who present with flu-like symptoms.

In the state’s South West, St George’s respiratory clinic normally averages five patients per week, but in the past seven days numbers have increased to almost 20.

To find a respiratory clinic in your region – [click here](#)

Training and education have also been central to the WQPHN’s activities in coronavirus preparedness, including infection-control training for Aged Care providers.

“We have some very vulnerable populations in our patch, including elderly people and our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, who are all very keenly watching these outbreaks in Victoria and New South Wales,” Stuart Gordon said.

“We are in regular contact with our network of commissioned health service providers and our General Practice partners, providing support and resources when needed.”

Page 1 of 2

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"We can reassure communities in the West that we are well prepared for any influx of COVID-19 because the work hasn't stopped since this virus first emerged as a threat early this year," he said.

For the latest information about COVID-19 relating to the WQPHN's activities – [click here](#).

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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