

## Media Release

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### Statewide data shows Queensland GPs busier than ever during COVID-19 pandemic

Primary care providers play key role in protecting community health as patient attendances increase year on year

**General practices across Queensland have provided an increased number of services during the COVID-19 pandemic to assist in protecting the health of the community, according to recent statewide data released.**

During the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, General Practice and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) across Queensland have collectively seen an increase in patient attendances or activity when comparing March 2019 to March 2022, including:

- an 11.5% increase in chronic disease management
- a 10.6% increase in mental health care
- a 4.8% increase in health assessments.

This increase in services has taken place while GPs, ACCHOs and GP Respiratory Clinics administered more than 5.3 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines in Queensland from February 2021 to March 2022.

GPs, ACCHOs, and GP Respiratory Clinics continue to deliver COVID-19 vaccinations on a day-to-day basis, while also stepping up to deliver influenza vaccinations this winter.

Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN Chief Executive Officer Pattie Hudson, said GPs and practice staff, along with Indigenous health workers, have all played a critical role during the COVID-19 pandemic response.

“These latest figures acknowledge the leadership role taken, and volume of activity delivered, by general practices and ACCHOs during the pandemic,” Pattie said.

“GPs, and practice staff such as managers, nurses, and receptionists, as well as Indigenous health workers, have been nothing short of inspirational.

“The way they have responded to the demands of the pandemic, doing their job in a really professional way, while also managing an increase in ‘business as usual’ services, has provided a pillar of strength for our communities.”

Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN GP Liaison Officer, Dr Jon Harper said that general practice had adapted during the pandemic to ensure continuity of service for its patients.

“We’ve had to be agile and responsive to changes, managing increasing demand by opening after hours and on weekends and, when necessary, utilising telehealth where clinically appropriate,” Dr Harper said.

“We’ve been busier than ever, with attendance numbers increasing year on year, and anecdotally no substantive increases in workforce over this time.

“The way that general practice has stepped up during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates just how important our role is in protecting the health of our communities.

“The vaccination rollout is an example of this, which has been a massive undertaking where GPs have been essential to its success.”

During the pandemic, GPs in Queensland have:

- provided ongoing support to the community for chronic disease while seeing a substantial increase in clients for mental health support
- utilised telehealth as a key platform to maintain delivery of services to the community
- played a substantial role in direct system response through successfully establishing community GP Respiratory Clinics and played an active role in the COVID-19 vaccination rollout.

Dr Jon Harper said a key success is how GPs have worked with Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN, Queensland Health, other key organisations, and the community in supporting the vaccine rollout.

“The collaboration between general practice and Queensland Health in particular has enabled an exceptional preventative health outcome for Queenslanders,” Dr Harper said.

“Vaccinations took a whole-of-system response to meet community need, particularly during peak vaccination periods.

“GPs play a vital role in saving lives and protecting the health of our communities, and I would like to thank them for everything they’ve done during the pandemic.”

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Combined data sources:

- Medicare Item Reports  
([http://medicarestatistics.humanservices.gov.au/statistics/mbs\\_item.jsp](http://medicarestatistics.humanservices.gov.au/statistics/mbs_item.jsp))
- Vaccines Administered: C-Vax Statistics and Progress Dashboard, Queensland Health, accessed May 2022
- Rhino Aspen data collection – State-wide presentations for COVID-19 tests
- National Health Workforce Dataset:
- AHPRA Source: <https://www.medicalboard.gov.au/News/Statistics.aspx>

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**For more information contact: Jess Barr, Manager Media and Communications, Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN on [jbarr@ourphn.org.au](mailto:jbarr@ourphn.org.au)**