



**Health  
Consumers  
Tasmania**

Building a Consumers Health Voice in Tasmania

## Media release - 15 April 2020

### **Concern for patients who have stopped contacting their GPs**

Health Consumers Tasmania has expressed concern that some patients and carers are not accessing GPs services for general health issues due to worries about COVID-19.

“A lot of people have told us they won’t contact a GP at the moment if they are unwell. But we are encouraging them to pick up the phone and make the call,” said Bruce Levett, CEO of Health Consumers Tasmania.

A Health Consumers Tasmania survey conducted state-wide last week received 323 responses. Its report is available at [www.healthconsumerstas.org.au](http://www.healthconsumerstas.org.au).

30% of respondents indicated they would not try and access a GP in the next two weeks if they needed to because: they were concerned about contracting COVID-19; their GP was too busy to see them; or they believed their ailments were not be serious enough to be addressed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A number of people suffering chronic illness or disability were also afraid of or having difficulty accessing medications.

“A lot of people responding to our survey did have chronic health conditions, but they don’t seem to be aware of the new and innovative steps GPs and pharmacies are taking to care for their patients”.

“GPs have been changing their physical set-up so it is safe for patients and themselves. They can update prescriptions over the phone, and then get the prescription to a pharmacy. Some pharmacies can even home-deliver to vulnerable members of the community”.

“Some GPs have previously voiced concern that their practices are quiet, and they can see more patients, especially if they have chronic health conditions that patients need to keep on top of before winter sets in and COVID-19 cases increase”.

“We don’t want people with a chronic illness to be giving up accessing health care right now, or anyone for that matter. We are really encouraging them to pick up the phone and call their GP or pharmacy and see what can be done for them”.

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