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**Survey shows key health consumers turning to GPs for advice on COVID-19 vaccines.**

Health Consumers Tasmania (HCT) represents and gives a voice to a broad cross-section of Tasmanians who rely on our health system.

Over the past 12 months, HCT has been working closely with its stakeholders and the community to understand the impacts of COVID on Tasmania.

Last month, HCT surveyed a group of key Tasmanian stakeholders including patients, carers, volunteers and health service employees.  The survey asked a number of questions regarding vaccines.

HCT CEO, Bruce Levett, said the results were incredibly important.

“While it’s a small sample, it gives a real insight into what Tasmanians are thinking,” Mr Levett said.

“The key finding is that the majority of those surveyed said they were relying on their local GP for information on COVID vaccines.

“Respondents are also accessing State and Federal Government websites for information.

“Half of those surveyed said they did not need any further information prior to receiving their vaccination, which puts Tasmania on track for a strong vaccination result, with 38,836 doses administered and 5.3 per cent of the Tasmanian population receiving at least their first dose of vaccine.  81 per cent of those surveyed said they believed the vaccines were safe and 84 per cent said they would be vaccinated.

“For those who indicated they did require further information, this was in relation to side effects, vaccine safety, long-term impacts and vaccine testing.  It’s important that the Australian Government continually improves the information provided to the community and how they provide it.  This is now even more acute given the risk of adverse reactions from AstraZeneca and the recommendation that Pfizer be the preferred vaccination for people aged under 50.

“For example, our feedback is that for people aged over 70 and in Category 1b of the roll out, referring them to a website to book on-line is not the most effective way to communicate and they should be receiving a personal letter or email with a number to call.  We need to iron out some of the hiccups that the Federal Government has experienced in recent weeks, so we don’t make the same mistakes when the vaccines are rolled out to the broader community.

“While many of the respondents said they felt lucky to live in Tasmania and recognised the Government’s strong response, many also said they were fearful the community was becoming complacent.”

Mr Levett said this is an important snapshot of Tasmanian attitudes and it was vital the Government continues to engage with the community and roll out information programs.

“Just as we can’t let the community become complacent, the Government needs to stay on the ball, listen to Tasmanian health consumers and continue to make sure every Tasmanian is getting the message regarding COVID and vaccination.”