



MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW TELEHEALTH EXTENSION WELCOME, BUT SHOULD BE WIDER AND PERMANENT

Catholic Health Australia (CHA) has welcomed the Federal Government's latest extension of the telehealth program but the peak body is calling for it to cover a wider range of services and be cemented as permanent.

The list of Medicare services delivered via the telehealth program was due to end this month, but following calls from patients and providers, including CHA and its members, Health Minister Greg Hunt has announced it will now run until December.

CHA Director of Health Policy James Kemp said telehealth had been a huge success, hitting the main health aims of better outcomes, value for money, and clinician and patient satisfaction.

Telehealth has transformed how we deliver healthcare. A year after the pandemic emerged and telehealth has provided more than 54 million services to 13.5 million people, all covered under special COVID-19 Medicare subsidies," Mr Kemp said.

Telehealth has been key to Catholic Health Australia members being able to deliver on their mission to ensure universal access to health, in particular to patients from rural or remote areas, as well as the poor and marginalised.

When implemented correctly, telehealth provides value for money and a high standard of care. This is the future of healthcare in Australia. Its rapid embrace by the sector is testament to the benefits it delivers.

CHA welcomes this extension and strongly urges the government to make it a permanent part of Australia's health landscape."

Mr Kemp said while the extension would ensure Australians could continue to see their GP, renew scripts, and seek mental-health support from their own home, the government should expand telehealth to cover other services.

"At the moment only non-admitted patients can access telehealth services, but CHA would urge the government to use the federal budget to extend telehealth to include patients who receive hospital-level care in their homes," Mr Kemp said.

Out-of-hospital care should include services such as palliative care, mental-health consultations, rehabilitation, and postnatal services."