MEDIA RELEASE

**Don’t Wait Mate: Healthcare organisations’ message to Australians as patients continue to miss vital health checks**

NATIONAL: The Continuity of Care Collaboration (CCC) has today announced a new campaign to encourage Australians not to delay vital healthcare.

The **Don’t Wait Mate** campaign is the result of concerning data that shows a decrease in patient attendance at various health services across Australia. According to research by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) there was a drop of 24% in face to face consultations in June 2020 compared to the same month last year.

During the first wave of COVID-19 pathology testing rates were down 40% on average across Australia and are currently down by 25% in Victoria.

Data from a major private laboratory and representative of national trends revealed that in April diabetes testing rates fell 54% compared to the weekly average in February 2020. Cervical cancer screening rates fell by 67%, tests for prostate cancer reduced by 56%, and other cancer related tests dropped by as much as 60%.

Research results from a consumer survey by the CCC found the most common reasons patients are delaying health checks. Over half of survey respondents (59%), had delayed health checks due to fear of catching COVID-19. 36% were worried that health services would be too busy to see them, and 23% thought they would be breaking the rules to leave their homes to receive healthcare.

The purpose of the **Don’t Wait Mate** campaign is to raise awareness of the importance of continuing regular healthcare and to ensure that Australians feel safe and confident to access care during the pandemic.

Medicines Australia CEO, Ms Elizabeth de Somer said: “Very early on during the COVID-19 pandemic, we identified that regular medical appointments had fallen significantly across the board. This is why we became one of the founding partners of the Continuity of Care Collaboration and support this important public health initiative.

“Delaying essential appointments, screening and pathology for example, could have catastrophic consequences in the long term for patients, which is why I encourage all Australian’s that if you need physical or mental healthcare, then please *don’t wait mate* when it comes to prioritising your medical needs.

**Speaking out in support of the campaign Hon Jason Clare MP said:** *“The work the CCC is doing to encourage Australians not to delay the healthcare they need is vital. Around this time last year, I noticed a mole on my leg was changing colour. I went and got a skin check. The mole was removed, and the pathology test revealed it was a malignant melanoma. I was lucky. We got it early. If I didn’t have that test the cancer could have spread to the rest of my body. I’m asking Australians to please go and get the checks you need done. It’s what I did. It saved my life and it could save your life too, Don’t Wait Mate.”*

**ENDS**

**For more information please contact:**

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**Interviews and Vision**

Pathology laboratory B-roll is available here: <https://vimeo.com/446365523/a1d20fe45e>

Hon Jason Clare MP is available for interview

Elizabeth de Somer, CEO, Medicines Australia – please contact Natalie Wimmer, 0450 728 660

**References**

1. <https://canceraustralia.gov.au/affected-cancer/cancer-types/melanoma/statistics>

**About the Continuity of Care Collaboration**

The Continuity of Care Collaboration is afirst of its kind communication collaboration of over 30 Peak Bodies, Industry and Healthcare Organisations, who have come together to highlight the importance of all people in Australia continuing to access healthcare during the pandemic to ensure optimal long-term health.