

**Date:** 19 May 2020

## Call to the people of Cessnock to increase COVID-19 testing

Hunter New England Health is calling on Cessnock locals to increase testing rates during a seven day COVID-19 testing blitz, starting Wednesday 20 May.

A specialised COVID-19 clinic is being set up at Cessnock Hospital to assist with boosting testing numbers in the community.

Public Health Physician Dr David Durrheim said although there have been very few cases in Hunter New England recently with restrictions lifting, the blitz will assist efforts to identify any COVID-19 virus still circulating in the community.

“There were a cluster of COVID-19 cases identified in Cessnock during the virus peak, which makes it even more important to hunt the virus down and ensure there is no ongoing risk to the community.

“We don’t expect to find large numbers of cases – or indeed many at all – but testing is the only way we will know for sure.

Anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms such as fever, sore throat, cough or shortness of breath, is urged to get tested.

Even those with mild symptoms such as fatigue, new muscle aches or pains, a change in taste or smell or a new runny nose are encouraged to arrange testing.

The drive-through clinic will operate 10am to 6pm from Wednesday 20 May until Tuesday 26 May. Bookings are essential, and people should call 49910436 to register before attending. The clinic is available for a limited time but may be extended depending on demand.

Dr Durrheim has also asked that anyone who has symptoms to isolate at home until they have received further advice from their GP or the hospital.

With the large number of people being tested across the District it can take up to 72 hours to receive results, so we urge people patient while they wait.

Clinics at Maitland, Calvary Mater Newcastle, John Hunter, and Belmont hospitals are also available for Newcastle and Hunter locals.