

**Date:** 6 July 2020

## **COVID-19 testing clinic to open at University of Newcastle to assist with winter woes**

A four lane, drive-through COVID-19 clinic will open at The University of Newcastle on Tuesday, giving the people of Newcastle and surrounds more opportunity for COVID 19 testing as the winter cold and flu season hits.

Dr Paul Craven, Medical Controller for Hunter New England Health's COVID-19 response said that as the weather gets colder and there are more coughs and colds about, it's important people get tested to rule out COVID-19. But what's also important is that people get tested at the most appropriate place.

"Winter is always a busy time for our hospitals so we're urging locals with milder cold and flu like symptoms, who do not need emergency care, to utilise other available options for testing, not just EDs" Dr Craven said.

"This will mean we have more space at our hospitals for those who need emergency care and we reduce the footfall at our facilities to protect our staff and vulnerable patients," he said.

"The new drive-through clinic at the University will provide a fast and convenient way to access COVID-19 testing, along with the other clinics running across the District, and the free, bulk-billed testing being done in the community through other providers."

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

"If you feel under the weather and need to be tested, we urge you to try to see your GP first, use a private pathology provider or use the drive through service at University of Newcastle." Dr Craven said.

"If you cannot get to see your GP, the online GP service Swiftdocs can see you for a five minute free online consult before providing a direct referral for bulk-billed swab close to where you live, all at the touch of a button.

"If you are really sick, never stay away from hospital, please come and see us in Emergency. We are here for you," he said.

Testing at the University clinic will operate 8am to 4pm, Monday to Sunday from Tuesday 7 July. Those wishing to be tested must contact the drive-through clinic on 4964 7497 to arrange an appointment, prior to attending. Phone lines open 8am Tuesday.