

**Hon Steven Marshall MP**  
Premier

**Hon Stephen Wade MLC**  
Minister for Health and Wellbeing

Monday 23 March 2020

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## **Protecting Vulnerable South Australians From the Impacts of Coronavirus**

A dedicated telehealth service is being made available to cystic fibrosis patients and their families as part of the Marshall Government's strong plan to protect vulnerable South Australians from the impacts of coronavirus.

Premier Steven Marshall said the Government is taking swift and decisive action to protect vulnerable South Australians.

"The health of South Australians is unquestionably our priority during these challenging times, and we must do everything we can to protect those who face a greater risk," Premier Marshall said.

"As part of our strong plan to respond to coronavirus, we are ensuring vulnerable patients continue to have access to important services in a model that reduces their risk to the disease.

"My Government, in partnership with the Hospital Research Foundation, is investing more than \$300,000 dollars to develop a dedicated telehealth service to treat Cystic Fibrosis patients from the comfort of their own home, reducing their need to attend hospital during the pandemic."

The State Liberal Government and The Hospital Research Foundation have each pledged \$156,000 to ensure the Central Adelaide Local Health Network's Cystic Fibrosis Unit can continue to function and patients aren't put at unnecessary risk.

Cystic Fibrosis affects about 350 South Australians and is the most common life limiting genetic condition in the country.

Health Minister Stephen Wade said that while it is far too early for specific evidence about the effects of COVID-19 in people with Cystic Fibrosis, we know other viruses such as the cold and flu can exacerbate the condition, which is why it is so important that we do everything possible to limit the risks.

"I am pleased our health professionals are continuing to pursue innovative ways of caring for our patients and telehealth medicine is an alternative method that doesn't impact on the level of care.

"By allowing vulnerable patients to receive the care they need in their home we are limiting the risk of exposure to the disease."

Central Adelaide Local Health Network Acting Clinical Lead of the Cystic Fibrosis Unit, Dr Judith Morton, said telehealth video consultations will be put in place as a matter of urgency .

“This model of telehealth will allow our Cystic Fibrosis specialists usually based at the Royal Adelaide Hospital to remain at home during appointments,” Dr Morton said.

“Specialists will be able to speak with patients via a webcam on a laptop, while patients will be able to engage directly with their health professional from their home through the use of a laptop or a smart device such as a phone.

“Funding will also be used to purchase essential home spirometers which will allow patients to easily monitor the capacity of their lungs, while infections can be quickly detected and relayed back to the specialists.”

The Hospital Research Foundation CEO, Paul Flynn, said while the service is being introduced in response to COVID-19, it will continue to be used into the future to help more patients receive their care from home.

“This telehealth service is a necessary step which will allow us to provide the best possible care to all South Australian adults living with Cystic Fibrosis,” Mr Flynn said.

“While we are unsure what impact the COVID-19 crisis will have on our fundraising initiatives this year, our position in the community makes it incumbent on us to fight for those most at risk.

“We are proud to be joining the collective fight to flatten the curve of this global pandemic, while helping protect South Australians living with Cystic Fibrosis through this uncertain time.”