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**EXPANDED TELEHEALTH VITAL TO CONTAINING COVID-19 AND
 PROTECTING DOCTORS AND THEIR PATIENTS**

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that expanded access to telehealth is vital to contain Covid-19 and to protect the health of frontline doctors and their patients.

Dr Bartone said that the AMA is working very closely with Health Minister Greg Hunt to deliver better telehealth access to all Australians as a **matter of urgency in this crisis**.

“The Government is committed to further changes to Medicare to support a comprehensive telehealth model of care, and this includes finalising the detail of further telehealth operations via phone and video by the end of this week,” Dr Bartone said.

“This commitment will see the Government co-design the best practice expansion of telehealth items for all patients, with or without Covid-19, to see any GP or other medical specialist during the Covid-19 health emergency.

“The Government is committed to supporting health professionals to meet the public demand for health care as the spread of Covid-19 continues, especially with telehealth initiatives.

“In a very welcome move, the Government has announced expansion of MBS telehealth from today to all vulnerable general practitioners, and other vulnerable health professionals who are currently authorised to use telehealth item numbers, to use telehealth for all consultations with all their patients.

“This covers healthcare providers who are aged at least 70 years old; or Indigenous and aged at least 50 years old; or pregnant; or a parent of a child under 12 months; or immune-compromised; or have a chronic medical condition that results in increased risk from coronavirus infection.

“Telehealth is a key weapon in the war on Covid-19. Telehealth is essential to reducing the community spread of COVID-19 and protecting doctors, staff, and patients from this virus. It is all about making the community safer.

“It will assure that GPs can more efficiently use their time in helping their patients and their communities. It will reduce demand on valuable PPE.”

Dr Bartone said the AMA is continuing to work closely with the Government in all aspects of responding to COVID-19.

“We are working around the clock to address the concerns of all doctors, all our members, and the general public,” Dr Bartone said.

“It is our priority to ensure that all medical practitioners are properly supported at the front line to give the best possible care to patients in our public hospitals and in the private sector.”

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