

Telstra Health and Tasmania team up for virtual monitoring of quarantined workers

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The seasonal workers from Samoa who delighted Tasmanians with their singing and cheerful spirits during their recent 14-day quarantine in Hobart were supported by a virtual monitoring system rolled out in quick time by Telstra Health, in partnership with parent company Telstra and the Tasmanian Health Service.

Telstra Health's Virtual Health monitoring devices were deployed to digitally monitor and record the guests' health status and to help reduce the opportunity for transmission of COVID-19 to clinical staff, hotel employees and other people in quarantine.

Telstra Health's MyCareManager app was also deployed to store data from the devices in a hosted monitoring platform.

The virtual monitoring project for managing isolation guests was rolled out at very short notice following a request by the federal government to support returning travellers and seasonal workers. While Melbourne hosted returning Tasmanians in quarantine, Hobart took in seasonal workers, many from Pacific islands, for their quarantine period.

Tasmania's Department of Health aimed to manage guests at hotel quarantine sites in Tasmania using a range of Telstra Health's virtual health monitoring devices. Guests were asked to perform daily health checks of temperature, pulse and oxygen saturations (SPO2) using TGA-approved devices.

The Tasmanian Health Service also wanted to provide pre-paired mobile devices to avoid unnecessary technical support requirements for quarantined guests.

The solution rolled out included MyCareManager dashboards that allowed clinicians to review observation trends, variations, alerts, and overall participation by guests with the virtual care devices.

Clinical care teams can then monitor and intervene with people whose data might indicate a trend or change requiring further action, or who have yet to complete their observations.

The solution also involved using secure video conferencing functionality for follow up and mental health support.

According to Telstra Health, the virtual monitoring project was needed at very short notice. Telstra Health's hospital division business development manager Diane Campbell said the entire project was delivered in record time from the initial enquiry to standing up a fully functioning, contracted, solution capable of supporting up to 350 concurrent people.

"The project teams across Tasmanian Health Service, Telstra Health and Telstra worked extremely hard and effectively, to collectively achieve the requirements within the requested time frames," Ms Campbell said.

Telstra Health's Virtual Health platform and Bluetooth devices allow people in quarantine to take an active role in monitoring and reporting their own health data. All guests are monitoring their SPO2 and temperature, but the technology provides the capability to remotely monitor blood pressure, weight and glucose levels if required.

Survey results from 123 of the 150 people who completed the survey showed that 99 per cent either agreed or strongly agreed that the devices were easy to use. All said they were able to communicate freely with health staff using the video functionality on the Bluetooth-enabled mobile device supplied to them, and 98 per cent said it was easy to take their temperature and pulse oximetry vitals.

All of them said they felt comfortable that their privacy and confidentiality were respected and protected during video consultations, and with the health assessment that was undertaken using the video functionality.

Telehealth Tasmania assistant director of nursing Kim Ford, who is also the president of the Australian Telehealth Society said, said the service was consistently achieving a daily health check compliance rate exceeding 90 per cent for cohorts up to 150 guests.

"This means the onsite clinical teams are receiving regular health observations from guests, enabling them to manage alerts and provide care appropriately," Ms Ford said.

Clinicians closely monitored the health of every participating guest by reviewing uploaded data and holding frequent video calls with guests. If the information submitted

to the MyCareManager app shows their health is deteriorating, clinicians are alerted and can then take pre-emptive action by following up through a secure video call on the patient's compatible mobile device.

Photo: ABC Tasmania. Link: YouTube