

2022—2023

Annual Report



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HEALTHY
NORTH COAST

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NORTH COAST
An Australian Government Initiative



Acknowledgement of Country

Healthy North Coast acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands across our region, which includes the Githabul, Bundjalung, Yaegl, Gumbaynggirr, Dunghutti and Birpai nations. We pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise these lands were never ceded and acknowledge the continuation of culture and connection to land, sky and sea. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples and honour the rich diversity of the world's oldest living culture.

Contents

04	Our Vision and Mission
05	Message from the Chair
06	Message from the CEO
07	Year in Review
10	Our Region
14	Our Organisation
21	Building a Stronger Future: From Recovery to Readiness
34	Primary Care Access
43	Mental Health and Wellbeing
52	Professional Development and Quality Improvement
61	Healthy Living and Ageing
64	Our Continued Commitment to Reconciliation
67	Financial Reports



Our Vision

Healthy people in North Coast communities

Our mission

To build a person-centred health system in which each member of the North Coast community, especially those with the greatest need, receives care that is integrated, high quality and easy to access. Our commitment to closing the gap and reducing health inequity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, is paramount to each of our objectives and outcomes.



Message from the Chair

Dr Adrian Gilliland | Chair

As I reflect on the accomplishments and challenges of the past year, I must start by expressing my gratitude for the leadership of our former CEO, Julie, who steered our organisation with passion, vision and unceasing commitment over the last four years. Equally, I extend a warm welcome to Monika, our current CEO, who has seamlessly embraced and excelled in the responsibilities of the role with her unerring ability to listen, build partnerships and thoughtfully navigate challenges.

The extensive recruitment process for our new CEO was a critical undertaking for the board this year, involving a comprehensive review of a diverse pool of highly qualified candidates. Monika's exceptional qualities in communication and leadership and her strategic vision for advancing the organisation set her apart.

This year was marked by the prolonged recovery from the devastating Northern NSW floods. In the face of adversity, our collective efforts saw the establishment of crucial initiatives addressing the need for prompt and accessible services in the wake of these traumatic events and a focus on building resilience among our communities.

Looking forward, our newly established Strategic Plan 2023–2030 considers the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, floods and fires that have shaped our recent experiences.

Informed by the seven megatrends outlined by the CSIRO, three key themes have emerged as focal points for our strategic planning:

The escalating health imperative – as our local population ages rapidly

Adapting to climate change – the effects of which we have seen firsthand

Diving into the digital realm – where healthcare has significant opportunity for improvement

In response to these challenges, our Strategic Plan 2023–2030 is organised into six key areas:

Excellence

Health equity

Impact

Sustainability

Stewardship

Our people

It aligns with the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report, released December 2022, reinforcing our commitment to advancing primary healthcare, building our local clinicians' expertise and embracing digital health.

I will conclude by expressing my gratitude to those who have contributed to our Board who are leaving us – Caroline Hong and Rebecca Bell for their years of dedicated service to Healthy North Coast and Dr John Moran, who recently passed away, for his many years of service to primary healthcare in our community. While we bid farewell to some, we warmly welcome Luke Lindsay, who brings extensive mental health expertise to the Board.

“

I extend my deep appreciation to the entire Healthy North Coast community – our hard-working team, healthcare and community partners and the people we serve. Together, we are charting a course toward a healthier, more resilient future.



Message from the CEO

Monika Wheeler | Chief Executive Officer

Looking back on the last year, I believe everyone involved with Healthy North Coast, Board members, member organisations, employees, contractors, advisers and partners should be proud of the improvements and achievements the organisation has delivered. Our maturity is developing, and this is evident through the growing sophistication of the work detailed in this report. 2023 has been the first year since the Mid North Coast bush fires in August 2019 that Healthy North Coast and our region have not been managing a natural disaster or public health emergency.

The world looks different now, and we have adapted successfully. But what did this mean for the future? The last year was a period of deep reflection for the organisation. We reviewed, restructured and prepared - leading to the successful development of a new 2030 strategic plan and supporting cascading operational, business and work plans.

A key priority as incoming CEO in September 2022 was to ensure our internal structure could support the delivery of the strategic plan and that we had an organisational culture of success. Learning from our experience from the disasters, I wanted to make sure we could deliver on our planned priorities, while being flexible enough to respond to emerging issues (and new disasters) if and when required.

Following feedback and consultation with staff, directorates were reduced, portfolios changed and internal governance strengthened. A team of highly skilled Associate Directors were employed to complement our hard-working Executive Leadership Team and embed a succession plan into the structure.

We created stronger links between our Board and operational management by enhancing our operational governance structures and building stronger relationships through joint planning days and other meetings.

We also looked closely at our culture. As a not-for-profit, people are attracted to working for us due to our values-based proposition. But the labour market is tight and it's difficult for charities to compete with industry.

Through the implementation of a culture action plan, our 2023 culture survey showed marked improvements in staff engagement, internal communication and trust in the Executive. We moved to a hybrid model of working and will continue to look at evidence-informed improvements to improve our ways of working. Our staff have provided feedback that flexibility is one of the main reasons they love working in the organisation.

The activities outlined in this report detail the breadth and complexity of the work we do. Our ambition for future years is to develop stronger reporting that is more outcomes focussed. This will enable us to be more evidence-driven - learning from our mistakes and reinvesting towards positive change.

There's an incredible collaborative team behind the banner of Healthy North Coast, and while there's still work to do, our 2022-2023 achievements mean we're more aptly able to be the coordinator, commissioner and capability-builder our community needs us to be.



Healthy North Coast is learning from yesterday to build hope and better outcomes for the future.

Year in Review



\$83 million

in funding for local programs and services



\$2 million

in federal funding for COVID-19 initiatives



\$16 million

in federal and state funding for flood recovery initiatives



700

face-to-face and virtual general practice support visits



75

health workforce learning and development initiatives held



117,436

visitors to Healthy North Coast website



358,541

web page views

In 2022-2023, Healthy North Coast made significant strides toward our vision of creating a patient-centred healthcare system that offers accessible, high-quality care to all. Our dedicated efforts to enhance the health outcomes of North Coast residents have continued with an equity lens, by prioritising support in areas and for populations in greatest need.

Reopening of the Healthy North Coast Ballina office. Board Chair Dr Adrian Gililand and Jo Winwood from our Community Advisory Council.



Healthy North Coast Ballina office reopens

In January 2023, Healthy North Coast reopened our Ballina office as part of a new fit-out project to improve our workplace environments.

To mark the occasion, we held an opening event to showcase new meeting rooms and collaboration areas, encouraging our regional partners, stakeholders and community groups to frequent the new facilities as we work together to improve our North Coast communities' health.

Situated on lands of the Nyangbul people of the Bundjalung Nation, guests were honoured to be welcomed to Country by local Nyangbal man, Kris Cook. Healthy North Coast Board members and staff were joined by our local partners, including representatives from local and state governments, advisory council members, Northern NSW Local Health District, primary care and service delivery organisations.

Year in Review (continued)

Through our partnerships, commissioned services network, and regional initiatives, our program areas continue to support accessible, high-quality primary health care to help us achieve our vision of healthy people in North Coast communities. Key service and program highlights include:

Building a Stronger Future: From Recovery to Readiness



6,611

young people participated in the Resilience Survey as part of the Resilient Kids Program



12

local organisations awarded grant funding through the Community Wellbeing and Resilience program to support \$3.03 million in grant activities



5,000

community members accessed 4,500 hours of counselling support through the Safe Haven Community and Wellbeing Hubs



28

grants awarded to primary care providers in the Lismore LGA under the Flood Workforce Infrastructure Grants program



360

clients received 3,200 occasions of service through the Head to Health Hub Lismore hub



110+

Northern Rivers organisations and 1,600+ clinical and frontline staff supported through the Workforce Support and Wellbeing program



144

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessed the Strong Community program between January and June 2023



3,286

routed calls received via the Head to Health North Coast initial assessment and referral service

Primary Care Access program



17,525

occasions of service provided through the GP Telehealth service



3,618

sessions delivered by the North Coast Health Connect service between December and June 2023



120+

practices submitted applications and received payments within 6 weeks of the Strengthening Medicare General Practice grants program launch



4,772

occasions of service delivered through the Mid North Coast Outreach Clinic, including neurology, dermatology, psychiatry and endocrinology

Year in Review (continued)

Mental Health and Wellbeing



5,231

clients accessed services through the Primary Mental Health program with 32,268 service contacts delivered, a year-on-year increase of 31%



13,137

occasions of drug and alcohol treatment services delivered to 2,111 service users



12,862

individual occasions of service delivered through the Psychosocial Support program



6,700

service contacts delivered to over 2,500 people through the Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing program



3,300

young people received more than 16,000 occasions of service through headspace



May 2022

saw the launch of the Cultural Connections program to strengthen the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people

Professional Development and Quality Improvement

2,113 Clinical Society subscribers – an increase of 650

75 Continuing Professional Development events with 1,903 attendees

Back to Health Conference attended by 100 health practitioners

8,357 users of the HealthPathways tool – a 4.5% increase

Introduction of the Healthy North Coast Northern NSW Health Literacy Framework to guide improvements in health literacy over the next three years

Healthy Living and Ageing

Launch of the Healthy Ageing Strategy in 2024

Piloting digital health equipment in residential aged care homes (RACHs)

Living with Dementia booklet produced
Needs analysis conducted of palliative and end-of-life care needs in the region

Continued commitment to Reconciliation

Nine-member Reconciliation Working Group established to actively monitor implementation of Reconciliation Action Plan actions

Local Dughutti Elder Uncle David Kelly welcomed as Reconciliation Action Plan Lead

On-Country Cultural Safety Training for healthcare professionals delivered on Yaegl and Birpai lands in partnership with Ochre and Salt and Corporate Culcha

Our Region

We take pride in living and working in this vibrant and diverse region of New South Wales, and are privileged to contribute to the health and wellbeing of our community.

The North Coast spans an area of approximately 33,000 square kilometres, extending from the Queensland border in the north to the Camden Haven region beyond Port Macquarie in the south. Along its eastern boundary is the coast, and to the west is the New England Tableland escarpment.

Our region comprises 12 local government areas (LGAs), four federal and seven state electoral divisions, six Aboriginal nations and 13 local Aboriginal land councils (LALCs).

It aligns with two local health districts - the Northern NSW Local Health District and the Mid North Coast Local Health District.



32,767
square
kilometres

541,520
people

6
Aboriginal
nations

12
local government
areas

2
local health
districts



With more than 541,000 residents, the North Coast region is rapidly growing, though many of our communities face considerable challenges due to social disadvantage, ageing, geographic isolation and cultural background.

More than a quarter of our residents are over 65 years, while nearly 32,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people call this region home.



17%
population aged
under 15 years



26%
population aged
65 years and over



20%
born overseas
(NSW 34.6%)



6%
identify as Aboriginal and/
or Torres Strait Islander
(NSW 3.4%)



7%
need assistance with self-care, mobility
and communication (NSW 5.4%)

We work with and deliver programs through our incredible network of dedicated primary health care professionals, who live and work in the region, serving and supporting their community.

178 general practices

798 general practitioners

6 Aboriginal medical
services

470 nurses in general practice

2,977 primary care nurses
and midwives

3,635 allied health professionals



Primary Health Coordination

Our team of primary health coordinators maintained a strong collaborative relationship with primary care providers and stakeholders in the North Coast region.

This collaboration has fostered our partnerships with:

- general practices
- Aboriginal medical services
- pharmacy, nursing and allied health services and providers
- Mid North Coast and Northern NSW Local Health Districts
- social service providers
- interagency networks
- peak professional organisations
- universities

Throughout the year, our team assisted 175 general practices, conducting over 650 in-person visits across the region.

We introduced regular events for practice managers and organised over 25 well-attended meetings. These events provided a chance to meet other practice managers, exchange knowledge, discuss emerging issues and future challenges, collaborate on solutions and grow their professional networks.

The level of support for community nursing, allied health and pharmacy services has been on the rise. We plan to expand these efforts further in the new financial year, particularly through the Strengthening Medicare reform activities, which will foster collaboration with multidisciplinary teams.



Primary Health Care Workforce Trends and Forecast Report

Healthy North Coast released an update to our [*Primary Health Care Workforce – Trends and Forecast Report \(2022\)*](#).

Included is new workforce data, a new analysis of age profiles, years to retirement and gender composition of the general practitioner workforce. The updated report provides insights and analysis that the sector can use to inform its workforce plan.

Key findings were:

- 1 in 3 GPs are female
- 1 in 3 health professionals on the North Coast are aged over 55 years
- 1 in 3 GPs in Richmond Valley intend to work fewer than 5 years
- the number of midwives decreased by 13% from 2013–2021
- medical specialists are expected to increase 36% from 2020–2023
- Bellingen, Nambucca, Kyogle and Richmond Valley LGAs recorded the lowest per capita rates of selected allied health professionals from across the region
- the number of Aboriginal health workers doubled from 2013–2020
- 1 in 2 nurses intend to work 10 or more years

Our Organisation

Healthy North Coast is privileged to have a team who not only actively supports our organisational vision and objectives but also fosters a positive influence on our internal culture by embracing and embodying our core values.

Our values



Community first and always



Aim to be good humans



Count us all in



Our strategic goals 2022-2023

Deliver better health outcomes through leadership and collaboration

Commission for health equity using evidence and innovation

Strengthen the primary care health system

Grow high-performing teams focused on quality

Our organisational culture

Our organisational culture is rooted in the breathtaking natural beauty, desirable lifestyle and lively community spirit of our region.

Our dedicated staff bring passion, commitment, integrity and expertise to their positions, with a substantial presence of healthcare professionals among our team.



88

people employed
as of 30 June 2023



52

full-time
employees



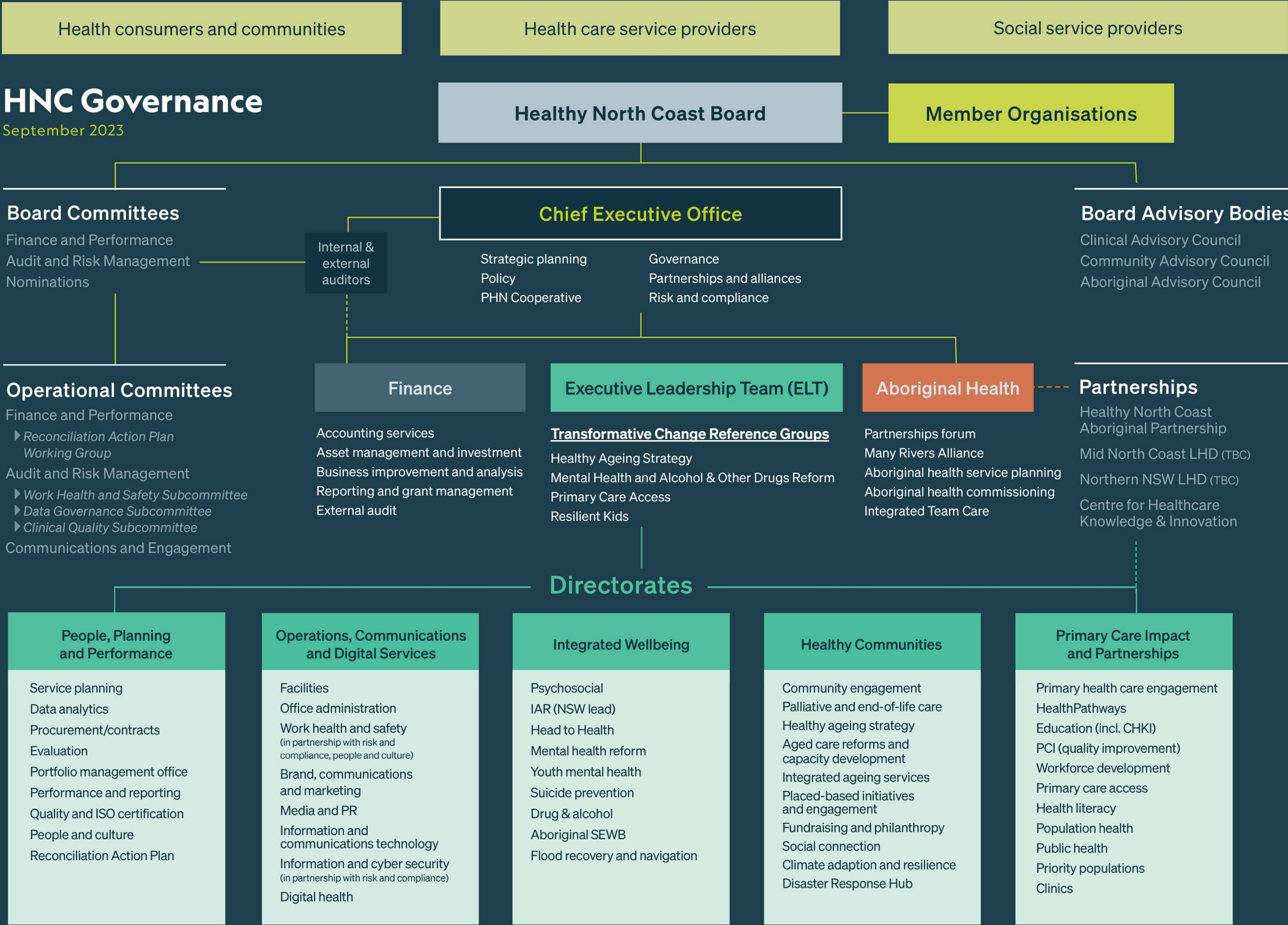
26

part-time
employees



10

casual
employees



Our people

Healthy North Coast Board

Dr Adrian Gilliland
Chair

Kerry Stubbs
Deputy Chair

Dr Jenny Beange

Rebecca Bell
(to 24 Mar 2023)

Anne Bryce

Sam Hardjono

Dr Caroline Hong
(to 6 Dec 2022)

Graeme Innes

Luke Lindsay
(from 31 Jan 2023)

Dr Matthew West

Member organisations

Mid North Coast Division of General Practice

North Coast Allied Health Association

Northern Rivers General Practice Network trading as Nordocs

University Centre for Rural Health

Southern Cross University (from 6 Dec 2022)

Executive Leadership Team

Julie Sturgess
Chief Executive Officer
(to 9 Sep 2022)

Monika Wheeler
Executive Director, Wellness
(to 9 Sep 2022)
Chief Executive Officer
(from 9 Sep 2022)

Tony Hendry
Director, Corporate Services
(to 30 Sep 2022)
Chief Financial Officer
(from 1 Oct 2022)

Luke Elias
Director, Primary Care Impacts and Partnerships

Samara Finlayson
Director, Operations, Communications and Digital Services

Sarah Ford
Director, Healthy Communities

Aimee McNeill
Director, Integrated Wellbeing
(from 19 June 2023)

Loretta Rigby
Aboriginal Health Adviser (Director)
(from 29 Aug 2022)

Sigrid Patterson
Director, People, Planning and Performance
(from 14 Nov 2022)



Our directorates

Healthy North Coast operates with five directorates that are pivotal in accomplishing our strategic goals. These directorates are under the guidance of the Office of the Chief Executive, responsible for steering and supervising the organisation's strategic objectives and ensuring the execution of our operational plans. The portfolios of Finance and Aboriginal Health, led by Director-level positions, also sit within the Office of the Chief Executive.

Integrated Wellbeing

Delivering a shared vision, purpose and action to drive reform in services planning for mental health, drug and alcohol treatment and psychosocial support. We value working with stakeholders and community, leveraging their subject matter expertise, to improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes for our community.

Primary Care Impacts and Partnerships

Delivering comprehensive stakeholder engagement, strategic commissioning, program and project implementation for health system improvement. Key streams of work include general practice quality improvement, chronic disease management, primary care access, workforce education, development and support to improve health outcomes across the region.

Healthy Communities

Connecting communities in the region through place-based and community development programs, disaster management and climate adaptation.

Working alongside the Community Advisory Council and collaborating with all levels of government, industry, non-government and community organisations to improve community outcomes.

Operations, Communications and Digital Services

Providing in-house cross-functional services that deliver well-designed and secure IT systems, regional digital health initiatives, engaging and informative communications and media products, and efficient and safe operational and facility support.

People, Planning and Performance

The People, Planning and Performance Directorate (PPP) comprises several integrated teams. This includes Portfolio and Project Management, Services Planning, Data Analytics, Performance Reporting, Commissioning and Contracts, Procurement, People, Quality and Culture.

These teams work together across Healthy North Coast in developing and monitoring the information and processes needed to support our people, identifying health and service needs, implementing and managing commissioned services, performance reporting and quality improvement.

Delivering the PHN program on the North Coast

Healthy North Coast is one of 31 local, independent primary health networks (PHNs) across Australia, designed to benefit the health of local communities and provide them with better access to improved primary health care services.

PHNs are funded by the Australian Government and use a commissioning approach to procure medical and health care services based on local needs and priorities.

Our key objectives include:

Access and outcomes – improving health outcomes and addressing health inequities

Quality – improving the quality of primary health care

Integration – improving patient experience and outcomes

Value – delivering better value through operational capacity efficiencies and striving for excellence through strong governance



In the media:

Snapshot

Healthy North Coast's media monitoring service reported approximately 600+ media mentions in the past year, reflecting the growing recognition of the organisation's positive impact in the community.

This media interest serves as a testament to our ongoing efforts in promoting primary health and community wellbeing and reaffirms the relevance and importance of Healthy North Coast's work.

Radio was the media type with the most mentions at 39%, followed by social media (24%) and TV (15%).

Media coverage was consistent across the different areas of Healthy North Coast's footprint, with Lismore receiving the most volume (88 mentions), followed by Port Macquarie (72), then Coffs Harbour (66).

Significant stories and projects that drove media coverage this year included:

launches of North Coast Health Connect – Port Macquarie (Dec 2022), Coffs Harbour (Apr 2023) and Northern NSW (May 2023)

COVID-19 rise in numbers and vaccination message (Dec 2022)

primary health business grants for Lismore flood recovery (Feb 2023)

Urgent Care Clinics announcement (May 2023)

Healthy Me, Healthy Community launch (May 2023)

Data reporting was only available from 13 Oct 2022 to 30 Jun 2023 due to media licensing restrictions and equalled 498 mentions. A full-year estimate of 600+ is based on the calculated average number of mentions per day.



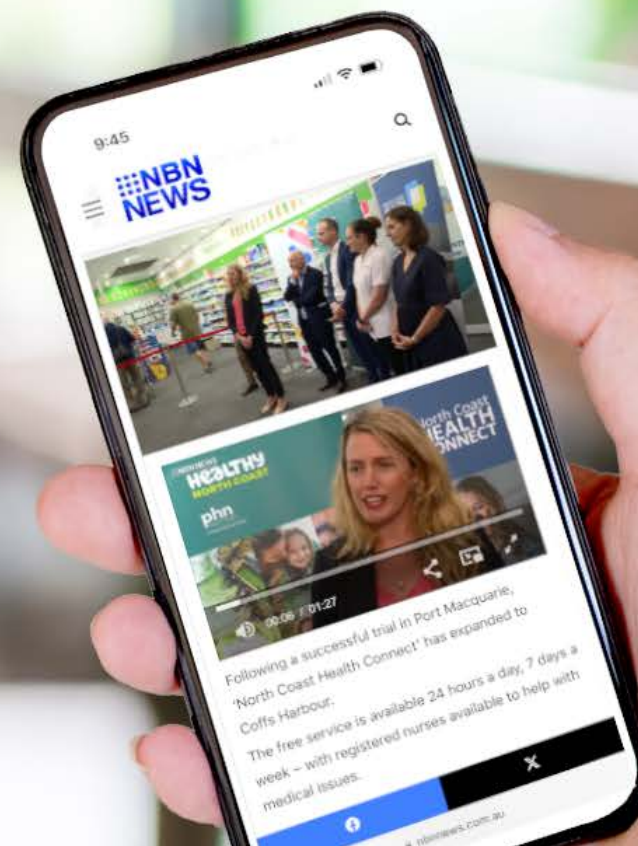
39%
RADIO



24%
SOCIAL MEDIA



15%
TELEVISION





Building a Stronger Future: From Recovery to Readiness

Throughout 2022-23, our region continued to feel the impact of the early 2022 North Coast flood events. The weight of the previous years – a period marked by bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic – was compounded by this unprecedented flooding and devastation. Yet, amid shared adversity, our region demonstrated unwavering strength and an unyielding spirit. We stood tall, determined to rebuild, recover and reinvigorate.

Over the past year, we dedicated ourselves to actively listening and understanding the changing requirements of our local communities. Our goal was to make sure that our efforts in primary health care and community welfare truly made a meaningful impact.

With funding support from both the Australian Government and the NSW Government, Healthy North Coast has made significant contributions to support recovery, partnering with our local health districts, primary care services, commissioned services, the education and community sectors, and our local communities.

We've launched new grant programs, established local mental health hubs and introduced on-the-ground service navigators to make it easier for everyone to access the support they need. We've also redesigned service models to enhance the health and wellbeing of our communities.

We've invested time and effort to learn from recent emergency response experiences. By identifying key lessons and making improvements, we've strengthened our disaster response framework. This increased readiness equips us to face future challenges with confidence.



Here are some of the initiatives we've been working on:

Resilient Kids program

Safe Haven Community and Wellbeing hubs

Head to Health program

Mental Health and Wellbeing Flood Recovery Navigators

Strong Community program

Community Wellbeing and Resilience program

Workforce Infrastructure grants

Workforce Support and Wellbeing grants program

Lismore Primary Health Precinct

Building disaster readiness



Resilient Kids

program development

The Resilient Kids program will design and deliver services that provide mental health and trauma-informed support to young people aged eight to 18 affected by the floods.

Backed by a \$10 million grant from the National Emergency Management Agency, the program aims to:

- help young people impacted by the floods to recover from trauma
- mitigate the long-term mental health consequences of natural disasters
- promote social and emotional wellbeing

The Resilient Kids Program gives special attention given to the unique needs of First Nations children and those living with intellectual disabilities or autism. It is structured around a meticulous, four-stage commissioning process:

- Consultation and data collection
- Solutions design
- Service delivery
- Evaluation



Despite everything that has come at them in the past 12 months and even before that, our young people reported generally feeling supported and connected within their schools, families and communities.

However, the survey also highlights areas in need of future focus. Reports of depressive and anxiety symptoms were slightly higher than the 2021 Resilience Survey national averages for primary students, though similar to the 2021 national average for secondary students.

Monika Wheeler, CEO, Healthy North Coast

Resilient Kids timeline

CONSULTATION

Resilience survey

October to November 2022

6,611 young people participated
From 75 schools across the Northern Rivers
The largest group ever to complete the survey after a natural disaster
Results published in the Resilience Survey Summary Report

CONSULTATION

Student and community workshops

December 2022 to March 2023

Through six face-to-face workshops, young people across the region shared:

Their experiences of the flooding event
What impact it had on their lives
The types of mental health and wellbeing supports they want in their schools and communities

SOLUTIONS CO-DESIGN

March to April 2023

Three service design workshops run by mental health and education professionals
Young people, families and community members participated
Particularly focused on the needs of young people with disability and First Nations youth

SERVICE DESIGN

March to June 2023

Recommendations report developed
Model developed that meets the need for young people both within the school gates and also in communities

SERVICE DELIVERY

June 2023

Healthy North Coast has invited service providers to tender to deliver Stream 1 and 2 of the Resilient Kids Program

Safe Haven

Community and Wellbeing hubs

Health North Coast established [Safe Haven hubs](#) in July 2022 in response to the 2022 Northern Rivers flood event. This was achieved as part of the NSW Government's Northern NSW Flood Recovery Program.

[Located in Woodburn, Lismore, Mullumbimby and Murwillumbah](#), Safe Haven hubs are open seven days a week offering free mental health support to individuals and their families, friends and carers.

The model is unique, as staff are trained to deliver a range of interventions, from acute intervention through to counselling, case management and peer support. The four sites also act as base locations for other community-based groups and services, such as:

- flood recovery support workers

- GROW

- financial counsellors

- men's groups

- drug and alcohol support groups

In 2022-2023, almost 5,000 participants accessed the four sites, with nearly 4,500 hours of counselling support provided.



Healthy North Coast CEO Monika Wheeler and Director of Integrated Wellbeing Aimee McNeil were joined by The Buttery staff to welcome Minister for Housing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast, the Hon Rose Jackson MLC, to the Mullumbimby Safe Haven Community Support and Wellbeing Hub.

HEAD TO HEALTH



Head to Health Hubs

Head to Health Hub Lismore

Rapidly established in March 2022 as a pop-up service in response to the 2022 Northern Rivers flood events, [Head to Health Lismore](#) is a safe and welcoming place for people to access mental health information, services and support.

The multidisciplinary care team is accessible during extended hours, including weekends, without needing a GP referral or appointment. The hub provides short-to-medium-term care for moderate to severe mental health needs, and anyone in crisis can receive immediate support and follow-up.

In April 2023, the Australian Government and the NSW Government committed ongoing funding to the hub, and, following an open tender process, Open Minds were awarded the contract. They have been delivering the Head to Health Hub from the Lismore Health Precinct since 1 August 2022.

Since then, Lismore Head to Health has:

- received 213 referrals**
- provided services to 360 clients**
- delivered over 3,200 occasions of service**

Head to Health Hub Coffs Harbour

In 2023–2024, Healthy North Coast will establish a Head to Health Hub in Coffs Harbour thanks to a joint funding commitment by the NSW Government and the Australian Government.

In June 2023, we held a co-design workshop with over 45 participants to adapt the Head to Health service model to local community needs. During the workshop, stakeholders discussed aspects like hours of operation, workforce requirements, service integration and governance.

The workshop participants identified priority groups, including people experiencing homelessness, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, culturally diverse populations and those dealing with

suicidal distress or problematic alcohol and other drug use. The co-design feedback will inform the development of procurement documents.

Head to Health Initial Assessment and Referral Service

As part of the Australian Government's Mental Health and Suicide Prevention 2021-2022 budget package, Healthy North Coast is coordinating the NSW statewide Head to Health Initial Assessment and Referral Service on behalf of eight NSW Primary Health Networks.

The Head to Health Initial Assessment and Referral phone service is delivered by Neami National and offers holistic assessment of needs by a trained professional using the Initial Assessment and Referral (IAR) Decision Support tool.

The service operates alongside Head to Health hubs and the Head to Health digital platform. It provides a suite of entry points to engagement, assessment and treatment for people with a range of mental health needs, including emotional distress, mental ill health or addiction, through a 'no wrong door' approach. Family and carers can also access this service.

Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, the North Coast service received 3,286 routed calls, with majority of calls occurring within business hours.

Healthy North Coast reviews monthly data to monitor the program and for the month of June 2023, 347 referrals were made to the North Coast IAR phone service and 282 assessments were delivered to consumers using the Initial Assessment Referral Decision Support Tool (IAR-DST).

Mental Health and Wellbeing Flood Recovery Navigators

Through the NSW Government's Northern NSW Flood Recovery Program, Healthy North Coast recruited local Mental Health and Wellbeing Flood Recovery Navigators to work across designated local government areas.

The program aims to improve access to mental health and wellbeing services for people impacted by floods and to ensure that supports are relevant to their level of need. The team is also actively striving to enhance community awareness around the support and services that are available. This way, we aim to ensure that the process of accessing care is smooth and well-coordinated, guiding individuals to the appropriate support when they need it.

Since October 2022, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Flood Recovery Navigators have provided onsite place-based brief intervention and support in emergency and temporary accommodation sites to over 440 people. They have made over 140 referrals or connections with other agencies.

Supports have included:

- providing almost 400 hours of direct connection and support to people living at emergency and temporary accommodation sites
- reducing isolation through brief intervention and connection to local activities and groups
- reducing stigma around mental health and help-seeking, including supporting warm referral to services like Head to Health Initial Assessment and Referral
- providing almost 1,900 hours of service development support to building knowledge of services and support options for mental health and wellbeing across the support services sector
- supporting the provision of multi-agency care-planning workshops, which participants found valuable for 'finding about the array of services and pathways' and having the 'chance to meet face-to-face with other services'





Strong Community program

Healthy North Coast, Bulgarr Ngaru Medical Aboriginal Corporation, Rekindling the Spirit and Bullinah Aboriginal Health Service worked collaboratively to implement integrated planning and service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the regional level.

They collectively sought services that would achieve the best possible social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and other related outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Northern NSW.

The Strong Community program commenced service delivery in January 2023, providing free specialist mental health support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 12 years and over in the Northern Rivers.

Mental health and wellbeing supports include in-person counselling, mental health promotion in schools and outreach to communities in Cabbage Tree Island, Wardell, Ballina, Box Ridge, Woodburn, Lismore and neighbouring areas.

In-person support is available at the East Lismore office, and the Strong Community program team provides specialist outreach support to the community. Between January and June 2023, 144 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessed this service.

The Strong Community program staff are using social connectedness and quality of life assessment tools to help track progress against client goals along with measuring psychological wellbeing.

Community Wellbeing and Resilience program

Healthy North Coast recognises that community resilience is key to improving health and wellbeing outcomes in the wake of natural disasters. As a result, we have developed the [Community Wellbeing and Resilience program](#), directly investing in place-based initiatives that support communities to build resilience and social capital.

The program funds initiatives that:

- address the impacts of trauma
- improve social and emotional wellbeing
- build individual and community resilience
- strengthen social and cultural connections
- increase preparedness, response and recovery capabilities

The first stage of the program was supported by \$2 million funding from the Australian Government Department of Health through its Supporting Communities in Bushfire Recovery package 2021–2023.

This phase underwent an independent evaluation by ARTD, which highlighted the significant value of flexible, community-tailored funding. The evaluation demonstrated that such funding allowed organisations to grow, employ volunteers and create new roles within their teams.

Most providers reported an increase in partnerships and connections with other local organisations and agencies, as well as with other CWR providers, because of the program funding. Providers observed heightened community connections resulting from their initiatives, although the evaluation didn't

directly measure improvements in disaster readiness. Nevertheless, their activities seemed to establish the groundwork for community resilience in the face of disasters. Conversely, providers frequently encountered difficulties due to community fatigue brought about by the persistent impact of recurring natural disasters and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2022, the program received \$5 million funding from the NSW Government through its three-year Northern NSW Flood Recovery package. An initial \$3.03 million in grant activities was commissioned in 2022, across 13 local organisations, as part of this package.

Healthy North Coast commissioned an independent evaluation for the expanded Community Wellbeing and Resilience Flood Recovery Program. Outcomes will be reported in 2024-25.

OzGREEN, a (former) local CWR Provider, trained and supported local people in Kyogle and Richmond Valley to deliver its award winning Resilient Communities program.



“ The most significant impact has been the opportunity to build new relationships and form new partnerships. This has enabled us to expand the reach of our programs to new audiences in new communities.

CWR Provider

“ I think some people want [to engage], but they just don't have the capacity, you know, the headspace or the energy. And this is something we're struggling with.

CWR Provider



Workforce Infrastructure grants

Healthy North Coast administered a new \$5 million flood recovery package from the Australian Government and NSW Government.

We offered grant packages for eligible providers within the Lismore local government area (LGA) who have already incurred costs or who have unpaid expenses for:

- building and premise repairs**
- equipment repairs or replacement**
- relocation costs**

On Friday 10 February, Healthy North Coast CEO Monika Wheeler joined the Australian Government's Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Emma McBride MP, and NSW

Government's Minister for Health and Medical Research, Brad Hazzard MP, at the newly renovated and reopened Keen St Clinic to launch this further boost for primary care and mental health services.

CEO Monika Wheeler said, 'Our primary care providers faced severe disruption to their services and damage to premises over the past year, while still working hard to ensure continuity of care for our community members. Healthy North Coast welcomes this funding support for their ongoing rebuild and recovery efforts.'

A total of 28 grants were awarded to primary care providers in the Lismore LGA under the Flood Workforce Infrastructure Grants program.

Grants were awarded to a wide range of primary care providers including general practices, specialist medical services, pharmacists, other allied health providers including physiotherapy, psychology, dental and optometry services.

“ *The funding we received had a direct and immense effect on the viability of our business and our ability to meet the needs of the community.*

We provide a lot of unique services to our community (with a catchment area of several hours in any direction for some of those services), and the funding was used to rebuild our facilities to be more flood-resilient and better positioned to meet the needs of our community both now and in the future.

We are the only pharmacy in South Lismore and many of our customers had (and continue to have) limited transport. A viable pharmacy is essential for them to receive access to essential healthcare services.

Thanks for everything.

Kyle Wood, Owner, Lismore Southside Chempro

Workforce Support and Wellbeing grants program

In May 2022, Healthy North Coast surveyed local primary health practitioners to learn how they were impacted by the floods, what they needed to get back on their feet and their preferences for support in future disasters and emergencies. Fifteen local GPs, allied health professionals, nurses and practice managers then participated in multiple co-design workshops between May and August 2022.

75+ practices completed the survey, representing the views of 1,000+ staff

61% of services reported being impacted by the floods, estimating at least \$12 million in flood damage

83% of responding services were concerned about staff wellbeing, burnout and fatigue

76% of services were concerned about the ability of health professionals to have a rest

With funding from the Australian Government, Healthy North Coast designed an innovative Workforce Support and Wellbeing program to ensure our local primary healthcare services could recover, rebuild and stay open to support our communities during this critical time of need.

We are very proud that every general practice in the Lismore LGA, the most heavily flood-impacted area, has remained open.

“The Healthy North Coast team don’t just make a difference – you are the difference. All Northern Rivers clinics are fortunate in having your support and guidance.”

Clinic Director, Lismore

Program objectives

provide rest and relief for overworked healthcare professionals through workforce surge support resourcing

promote resilience and opportunities for debriefing among teams through wellbeing support initiatives

build individual capacity to respond to patient needs through education and coaching offerings

Impact and evaluation

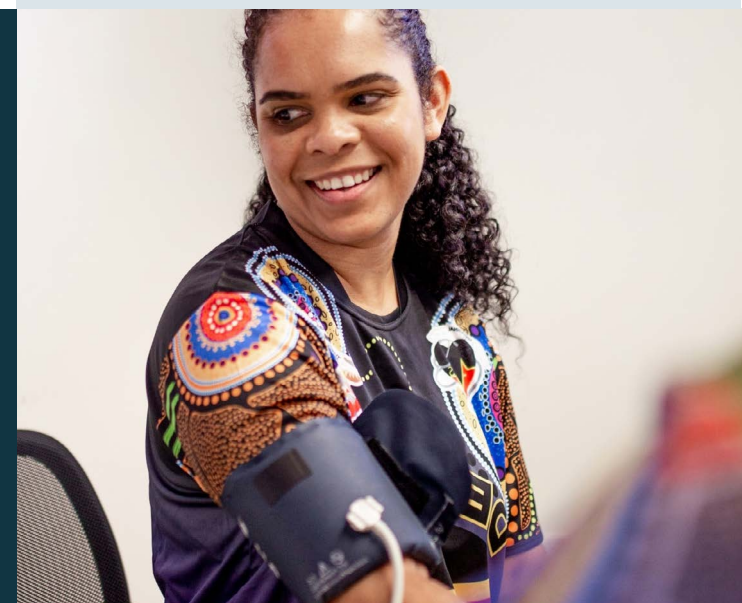
Following co-design, the Workforce Support and Wellbeing program launched in July 2022. The success of the program has been founded on local practices supporting each other through the ‘buddy-up’ locum package - a support model that they designed.

140+ requests for workforce and wellbeing support

110+ Northern Rivers organisations supported

1.6k+ clinical and frontline support staff

35 requests for locum workforce support



Lismore Health Precinct

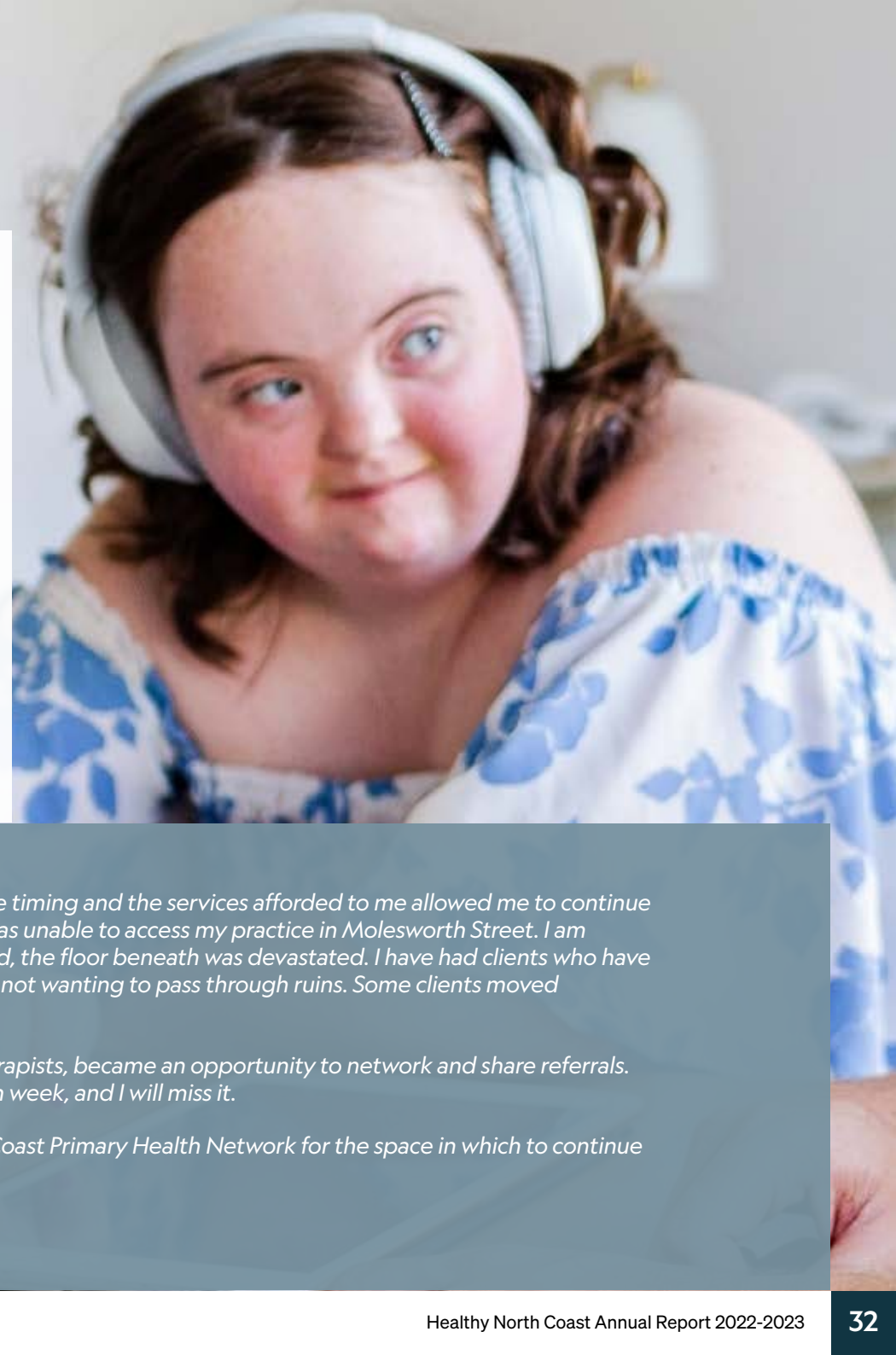
Southern Cross University Lismore Campus

The [Lismore Health Precinct](#) allowed a range of primary healthcare providers displaced or impacted by floods to continue delivering services to support our community when they need it most.

Funded by the Australian Government through the Primary Health Network (PHN) program as part of the Northern NSW flood recovery efforts, the precinct has provided the capacity to house primary health services, including general practice, pharmacy, pathology, mental health and a range of other allied health services.

In 2022-23, over 20 providers called the Lismore Health Precinct home. The Head to Health service, located in the precinct, has had more than 10 rooms in use and continues to experience high demand for services.

The resilience and determination shown by our primary care providers to rapidly relocate are matched only by our local community's determination and strength to recover from this natural disaster.



I would like to reflect on this time at the Lismore Health Precinct. The timing and the services afforded to me allowed me to continue practising face-to-face following the devastating floods in which I was unable to access my practice in Molesworth Street. I am grateful that whilst my practice was high enough that it did not flood, the floor beneath was devastated. I have had clients who have preferred to not come into Lismore or my Practice space downtown not wanting to pass through ruins. Some clients moved to Telehealth and some came to SCU.

Having had a space to continue to practise, together with other therapists, became an opportunity to network and share referrals. It is such a beautiful space and I have looked forward to coming each week, and I will miss it.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank you and the Healthy North Coast Primary Health Network for the space in which to continue my Practice at the Lismore Health Precinct SCU over this past year.

Social Worker, Cirrus Counselling



Building disaster readiness

Disaster Management Framework and Action Plan

Healthy North Coast released its first Disaster Management Framework and Action Plan in December 2022. The Framework provides disaster management guidelines, outlining the role that primary health care can play in supporting the region with developing population health resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Under the Disaster Management Framework, we established a Disaster Response Hub. The Hub provides healthcare professionals and community members with access to a suite of resources on readiness, response and recovery.

The Hub enables communities to connect with medical care and mental health services post-disaster. It also supports primary care physicians to get back on their feet more quickly and provides integrated tools and education to assist with disaster management.

Disaster Management Capacity-Building Workshops

Healthy North Coast, in collaboration with NSW SES, organised eight workshops across the region to assist aged care facilities in preparing for emergencies.

These workshops aim to protect residents and staff during natural disasters, connecting first responders with aged care providers and focusing on planning, coordination and wellbeing.

Over 150 industry representatives and local agencies participated in these workshops, fostering a deeper understanding of emergency preparedness for aged care residents.

Beyond our region

Healthy North Coast used learnings from the 2022 catastrophic floods to support NSW, ACT and QLD Primary Health Networks (PHN) to build disaster management capacity.

Our Disaster Management Framework and Action Plan and presentations at group workshops were well-received. We also provided one on one intensive support to PHN colleagues experiencing natural disasters in their communities.

CEO Senate inquiry

Healthy North Coast CEO Monika Wheeler made a statement to the Lismore hearings of the Senate inquiry into the extent and nature of poverty in Australia, attending with Tony Davies, CEO of Social Futures, and Elly Bird, Executive Director at Resilient Lismore.

Monika spoke about the challenges our region has with access to primary health care and how this worsened considerably for the greater Lismore community after the 2022 floods – particularly for those who are most vulnerable. She cited affordable housing and economic livelihood as two key social determinants of health that remain challenging for people living in the Northern Rivers following the floods.

National Climate and Health Strategy

Healthy North Coast recognises the challenge of a changing climate to the ongoing health and wellbeing of our community.

Taking a proactive approach to shaping public policy, CEO Monika Wheeler presented at a national workshop to inform the National Climate and Health Strategy with a focus on the importance of climate adaptation and highlighting the critical role that primary health care can play in supporting communities after significant climatic events. Healthy North Coast supported this with a written submission to the Commonwealth on the Draft National Climate and Health Strategy.

Primary Care Access

Enhancing primary care for
current and future generations

In 2019-2020, Healthy North Coast embarked on a transformative commissioning project to enhance primary care for our region's current and future generations.

Data analysis provided insights into the complexities of demand and access to services within the Healthy North Coast region. Data showed that:

North Coast young people aged 15 to 24 years have some of the highest rates of low-urgency emergency department visits nationwide

in the general practice setting, 70% of available appointments are going to people aged 45 and older

individuals aged 65 and above account for 43% of GP bookings, leaving younger people with little to no GP access, particularly for unplanned healthcare needs

Particularly concerning were the disparities Aboriginal communities face, with the highest rates of low-urgency presentations among young individuals concentrated in the inland regions of Kempsey, Clarence and Casino.

This project represents an opportunity to instigate systemic change and embrace innovation as we strive to achieve improved health outcomes and promote health equity throughout our region.

Initiatives and improvements from this project include:

North Coast Health Connect

GP Telehealth

Coffs Harbour Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain Clinic

Strengthening Medicare General Practice grants program

Strengthening Medicare and Urgent Care Centre investment

Mid North Coast Specialist Outreach Clinics

Vaccination poster and social media campaign

Bonalbo Booster program

Homelessness Support Service – Byron Bay and Coffs Harbour

Rapid In-Reach pharmacy services





North Coast HEALTH CONNECT

Launched in late 2022, North Coast Health Connect provides 24/7 registered nurse triage via phone or webchat. Delivered by Amplar Health in partnership with the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and local general practices and community pharmacies, the service has the innovative functionality of being able to book quarantined general practice and community pharmacy appointments.

The service offers a distributed model of urgent care where appointments can be secured in any regional town with a participating general practice or community pharmacy. The centralised integrated booking system with local services is the first of its kind in Australia to date.

As of May 1, 2023, North Coast Health Connect Service went live across all local government areas

North Coast Health Connect launch dates.

Region	Launch dates
Port Macquarie (SA3)	8 December 2022
Kempsey (SA3)	27 February 2023
Coffs Harbour, Nambucca and Belingen (SA3)	3 April 2023
Northern NSW	1 May 2023

There are currently 20 general practices and 26 pharmacies participating in the North Coast Health Connect Service. As a result, approximately 200 urgent same-day GP appointments are available each week.

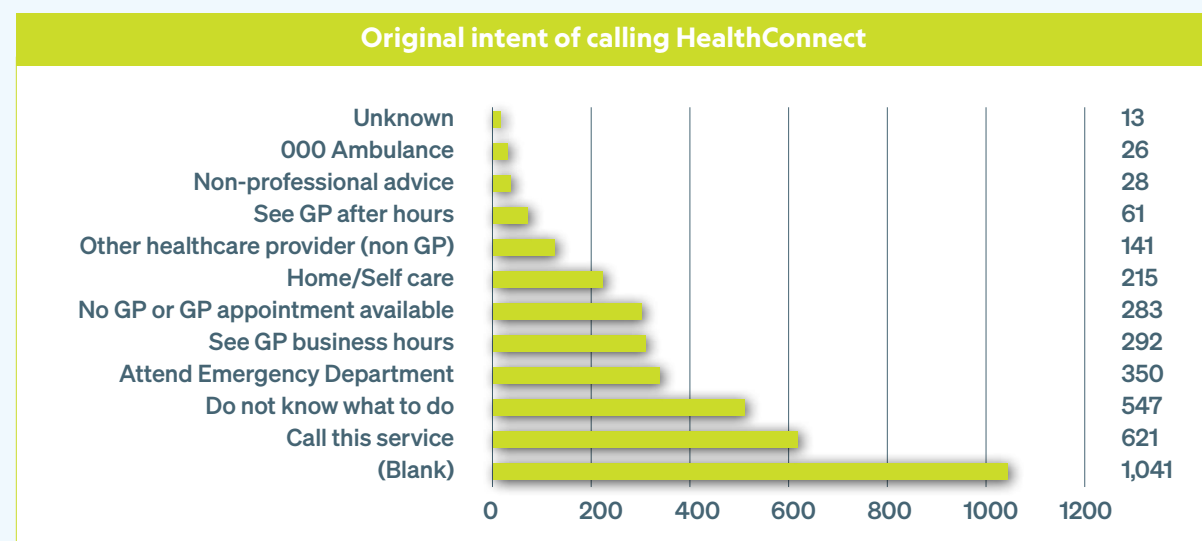
Total sessions for each month:

December 2022	275
January 2023	357
February 2023	225
March 2023	245
April 2023	518
May 2023	881
June 2023	1,117

Top reasons for calling:

Original intent	Dec 2022	Jan 2023	Feb 2023	Mar 2023	Apr 2023	May 2023	Jun 2023	Jul 2023
Call this service	39	71	32	43	94	158	184	621
Did not know what to do	41	62	41	42	101	123	128	547
Attend Emergency Department	26	38	29	26	40	96	95	350
See GP business hours	18	27	19	19	35	79	105	292
No GP or GP appointment available	29	27	9	9	29	77	105	293
Home/Self care	17	24	12	12	23	49	75	215
Other healthcare provider (non GP)	22	11	6	6	24	30	42	141
See GP after hours	2	2	2	2	8	14	31	61
Non-professional advice	1	1	2	2	1	13	9	28
(Blank)	74	88	71	91	150	226	341	1,041
000 Ambulance	2	1	1	1	11	7	2	26
Unknown	4	5	1	1	2	-	-	13
Total calls and webchats	275	357	225	245	518	881	1,117	3,618

All calls and webchats from all SA3s from December 2022 to June 2023.



GP Telehealth

In the ever-evolving healthcare landscape, the Healthy North Coast GP Telehealth service, commissioned in 2021 as part of the then flood response, continued to be a valuable option supporting primary care access.

With the launch of North Coast Health Connect and referral to GP Telehealth available through this new model, direct promotion of the telehealth service was discontinued in November 2022.

Despite this, existing consumer awareness and referral from local medical and pharmacy services resulted in over 17,000 occasions of telehealth service during 2022-23. A third of these virtual GP consults were in the after-hours period.

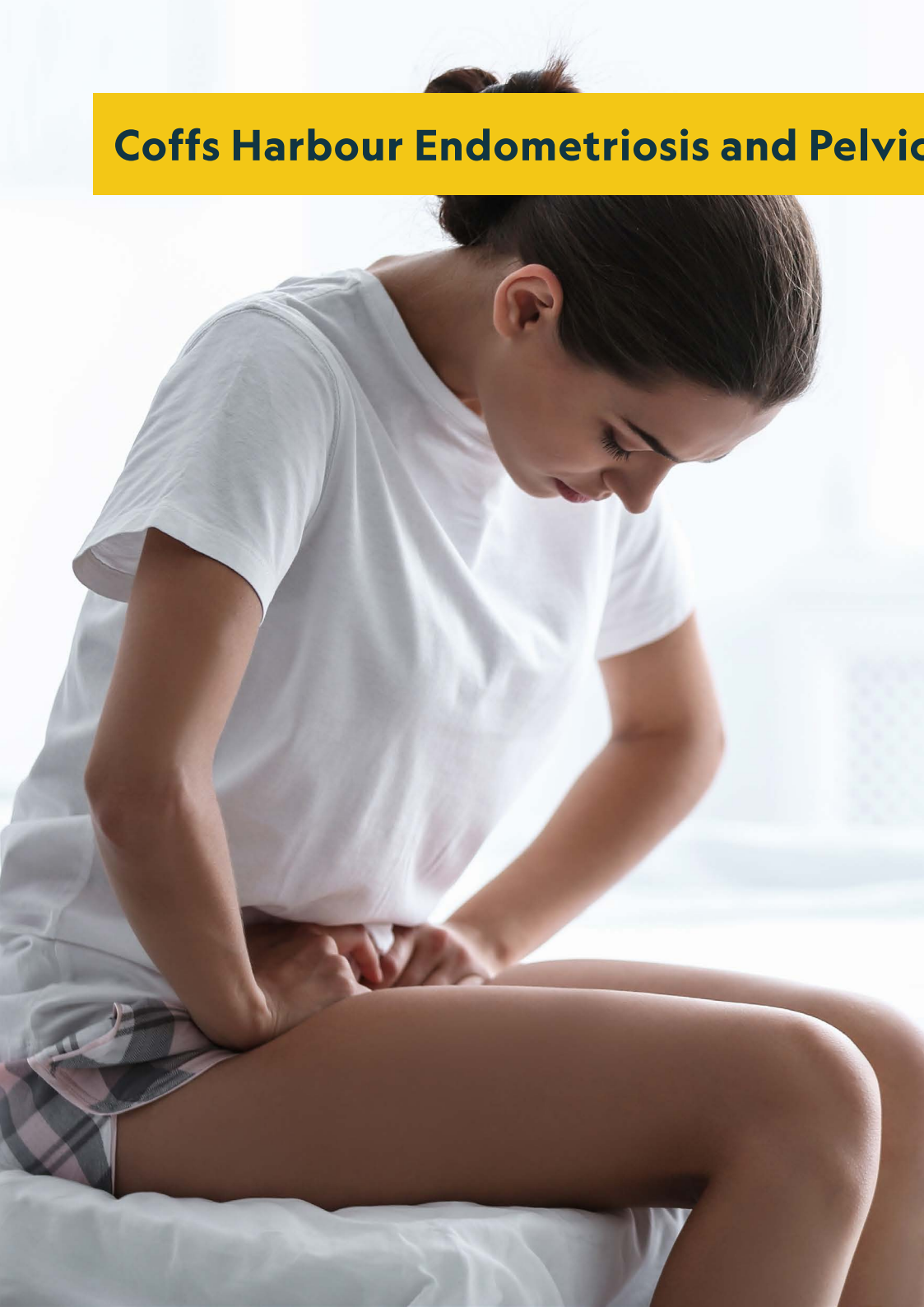
Local government areas with highest volume usage:

Clarence Valley
Coffs Harbour
Lismore
Port Macquarie-Hastings

Demographic data:

17,525 telehealth consults provided
62% female and 38% male
930 (5%) of people accessing the service identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
10,326 prescriptions issued
4,242 medical certificates issued

Month	Occasions of service	Occasions of service in after-hours period
July 2022	1,704	757
August 2022	1,803	651
September 2022	1,627	778
October 2022	1,362	457
November 2022	1,276	371
December 2022	1,584	551
January 2023	1,436	404
February 2023	1,056	289
March 2023	1,326	353
April 2023	1,450	506
May 2023	1,448	386
Jun 2023	1,453	466
Total	17,525	5,969

A photograph of a young woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white t-shirt and plaid shorts. She is sitting on a white bed, leaning forward with her head down and hands clutching her lower back, appearing to be in pain. The background is a bright, out-of-focus window.

Coffs Harbour Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain Clinic

The Coffs Harbour Women's Health Centre received funding from the Department of Health and Aged Care, through Healthy North Coast, to set up and provide services for Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain (EPP) over the next three years.

A team of EPP health professionals will be committed to helping patients improve and manage their symptoms by providing information, resources, education, listening and understanding. The clinic service in Coffs Harbour will be an expansion of a high quality, equitable and accessible service delivered in a safe space by trained professionals.

These services offerings will support women on their journey towards improved health and lifestyle. The multi-disciplinary approach to the care provided will lead to developing treatment and management plans unique to the individual being cared for.

Focus will be on:

- co-design**
- inclusivity of harder-to-reach populations**
- improving access and options for care**

The Coffs Harbour service will include a clinical program coordinator role, activities and service expansions for:

- pre-assessment**
- patient readiness**
- development of learning modules**
- exploring social determinant supports to improve access to care**

The service acknowledges the importance of early diagnosis and treatment of endometriosis to reduce the risk of associated symptoms and complications. People with endometriosis will be encouraged to proactively manage their symptoms, such as through lifestyle changes, medications, or surgery, to improve their quality of life and prevent further complications.

Strengthening Medicare

General Practice grants program

The Australian Government announced the [Strengthening Medicare – General Practice \(GP\) grants program](#) in April 2023. Healthy North Coast rapidly and successfully rolled out the program to all eligible general practices in our region.

Over 120 practices elected for payment in 2022-23 and had their applications assessed, agreements drawn up and payments made within a prompt 6 week period. All remaining applicants who elected for delayed payment were processed and completed in July 2023.

The program will support all general practices to make investments in innovation, training, equipment and minor capital works in one or more of the three investment streams below:

- enhance digital health capability

- upgrade infection prevention and control arrangements

- maintain and/or achieve accreditation against the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Standards for General Practices (5th edition)

In total, the program assessed and awarded 160 grant applications totalling \$4,275,000 to general practices within our region under the first round of general practice grants. This represents 96% of all eligible practices. Further work will continue to support second round applications for additional practices applying for this grant opportunity.

The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation administered and managed the grant program in relation to ACCHOs.

Primary Care Access



Strengthening Medicare

and Urgent Care Clinic investment

The 2023 Federal Budget included a \$5.7 billion commitment over five years to strengthen Medicare and the Australian Government's investment in 58 urgent care clinics across Australia. On a tour of the Lismore GP Super Clinic and Coffs Harbour's CHC Medical Centre, Federal Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health Emma McBride spoke about these clinics' role in helping ease the strain on hospital emergency departments.

Coffs Harbour and Lismore are among 14 NSW locations identified for the establishment of the bulk-billing clinics. Healthy North Coast is currently assessing expressions of interest from practices interested in operating the clinics, with plans for them to be operational by the end of the year.

Mid North Coast

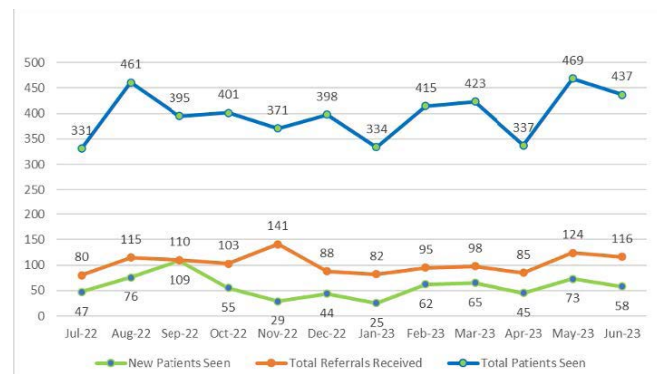
Specialist Outreach Clinic

Established in 2000, the Mid North Coast Specialist Outreach Clinic (MNCSOC) offers face-to-face local specialist medical services, including neurology, dermatology, psychiatry and endocrinology.

The clinic is well-equipped with optimised procedure rooms and in-house facilities for nerve conduction studies, EEG, and UVB light treatment. Specialists fly in from across Australia monthly, supported by a high-performing clinic team facilitated by our clinic coordinator.

The clinic originally resided at Edgar Street, Coffs Harbour, but relocated to 30 Gordon Street in 2022-2023, ensuring a seamless transition, contacting all patients with no missed appointments and receiving only two complaints out of 4,772 service occasions during the entire financial year. The expansion has increased capacity from four to seven consultation rooms.

Demand for specialist services in the Mid North Coast remains high.



Seasonal vaccination

poster and social media campaign

Aiming to boost flu vaccination and COVID-19 booster rates in the region, Healthy North Coast collaborated with local healthcare providers, businesses and community groups to raise awareness about vaccinations in the period leading up to winter.

We developed and distributed posters encouraging flu and COVID-19 vaccinations to local practices and made them available for ordering on our website. The posters highlighted eligible groups for free flu vaccination, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, children, those with specific health conditions, pregnant women, and people aged 65 and over.



Bonalbo Booster program

Healthy North Coast, in collaboration with local health districts (LHDs) and through their PHN program funding, supported a COVID-19 and flu vaccination pop-up clinic in Bonalbo, NSW.

With a population of 300, Bonalbo's residents are predominantly elderly.

The Vulnerable Vaccination program provides easy access to COVID-19 vaccinations for Bonalbo's elderly residents. A total of 26 COVID-19 vaccinations were administered alongside flu vaccines.

Vulnerable Vaccination program funding provides support through the PHN program to mobilise providers and prioritise communities in remote and rural locations to assist towns like Bonalbo in vaccinating their communities.

Homelessness support service -

Byron Bay and Coffs Harbour

Healthy North Coast, through the PHN program, collaborated with Byron local government area (LGA) and Coffs Harbour LGA GP programs to provide access to GP services for communities with high rates of homelessness. The Homelessness Support Services have provided COVID-19 care and vaccinations to people experiencing homelessness and to communities in temporary accommodation over the past 12 months.

Byron LGA has provided community advice and 25 COVID-19 vaccinations. In Coffs Harbour LGA, there have been multiple efforts to coordinate larger volume vaccination days at the neighbourhood centre in Coffs Harbour, where Galambila Aboriginal Health Service (AMS) provides outreach services. This has resulted in over 200 COVID-19 vaccinations administered in the past 12 months. Over one-third of residents accessing this service identify as First Nations people.

“ All my patients today are still living in caravans and have not been to see their GP for COVID-19 or flu vaccinations, as they are unable to afford the visit or pay for vaccines (flu shot). Without these vaccines, when patients come to the hospital for surgery, they may end up with serious health complications and respiratory illness due to not being immunised and may need to be hospitalised for 10 days instead of just attending day surgery. No one wins in this situation.

Consultant surgeon, NNSWLHD



Rapid in-reach

pharmacy services

In the Hastings–Macleay region, Healthy North Coast, through their PHN program, coordinated and deployed a mobile pharmacy to provide COVID-19 booster vaccination services for the bulk of residential aged care homes (RACHs) within the region. At a Residential Aged Care Home in the Kempsey local government area, almost 80 residents were vaccinated by a rapid response mobile pharmacy and nursing vaccination team.

“ During the last 12 months, the option to take up COVID-19 boosters through our pharmacy outreach program was well received. We administered COVID-19 vaccinations at aged care facilities, schools, local businesses and some healthcare settings. We have also administered COVID-19 booster vaccines in our car park for those with poor mobility or disability to make the process easier for the patient.

Judy Plunkett, Owner, Plunketts
TerryWhite Chemmart, Port Macquarie



Mental Health and Wellbeing

Strengthening services

in our communities

In 2022-2023, Healthy North Coast undertook an array of initiatives aimed at enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of communities across the North Coast region. These activities were supported by multiple funding sources and encompassed a wide range of services, from mental health support to substance use treatment and Aboriginal community initiatives.

These activities included:

- Primary Mental Health program
- Increasing access to drug and alcohol treatment services
- Psychosocial Support program
- Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing program
- headspace centres
- Mental Health, Suicide Prevention and Alcohol and Other Drugs Services reform project
- Launch of the Social Prescribing Healthy Me, Healthy Community program
- Cultural Connections program

Primary Mental Health program supports

Through funding from the Australian Government, Healthy North Coast commissioned a range of activities under the Primary Mental Health program to improve access to mental health and wellbeing services in the community.

Activities included:

- delivery of psychological therapies through the Healthy Minds program
- Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing program
- low intensity mental health services
- mental health nurse program
- suicide prevention
- youth-based services

Over the year, 5,231 clients accessed services with over 32,268 service contacts delivered which was an increase of 31% of clients accessing the program compared to the previous year.

A photograph of a person sitting on the ground, holding a large, dark glass bottle of alcohol. The person is wearing dark clothing and jeans. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with grass and a paved area.

Increasing access to drug and alcohol treatment services

Healthy North Coast commissioned The Buttery, Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre and Namatjira Haven to deliver a range of drug and alcohol treatment programs across the North Coast region. A range of service interventions were offered throughout the year, such as:

- early intervention**
- adult and youth counselling**
- group therapy**
- withdrawal management**
- relapse prevention**
- day rehabilitation services**

The program aims to achieve improved health and social outcomes for individuals, families and communities at risk of, or currently affected by, substance use. The aims of the program are to:

- increase withdrawal safety and management of substance dependence**
- reduce the number of young people experiencing alcohol and other drug related harms**
- reduce barriers to accessing drug and alcohol treatment services, such as counselling for vulnerable populations**
- support outpatient withdrawal management services and recovery supports**

13,137

occasions of service were delivered to 2,111 service users across the Healthy North Coast region.

92%

of service users recorded an improvement in drug and alcohol use through the Australian Treatment Outcomes Profile (ATOP) score.

75%

reported improvement in Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10/5) scores relating to their mental wellbeing.



Psychosocial

Support program

The Commonwealth Psychosocial Support program aims to improve health and social outcomes and facilitate community-based recovery for people living with severe and complex mental ill health through non-clinical supports.

Through the development of individualistic care plans, the program offers a range of services to help people manage daily activities, rebuild and maintain connections, build social skills and participate in education and employment.

Healthy North Coast commissioned The Buttery, Mission Australia, CHESS Connect and Momentum Collective to provide recovery-focused psychosocial support services.

The program is also designed to assist those needing support to test access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). In 2022-2023, the program:

facilitated access testing for the NDIS for 140 participants, with 45 successfully receiving a package

conducted 12,863 individual occasions of service, resulting in an average 69%

improvement in the Recovery Assessment Scale – Domains and Stages (RAS-DS)

Aboriginal

Social and Emotional

Wellbeing program

As per the advice in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031, Healthy North Coast prioritised direct funding of Aboriginal mental health, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol funding to six Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services across the North Coast region.

The North Coast Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing program improves access to strengths-based, culturally appropriate, community-led primary mental health and social and emotional wellbeing services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is locally developed to meet the needs of each community.

Programs included:

mental health, alcohol and other drug and suicide prevention services

delivery of programs or activities that enhance social and emotional wellbeing

connection and navigation of service support

community engagement and capacity building

Throughout the year over 6,700 service contacts were delivered to over 2,500 people across the region.



Healthy North Coast invested \$5.5 million from the Department of Health and Ageing Primary Health Network grant funding in the region's headspace centres in 2022-2023.

The centres are located in Tweed Heads, Lismore, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Kempsey. headspace services provide tailored and holistic services, including integrated mental health, AOD, primary health and vocational support services.

These are often complemented by the facilitation of social opportunities for young people from 12 to 25 years old who are experiencing mild-to-moderate level mental health challenges.

In 2022-2023, the six active headspace centres provided holistic services to more than 3,300 young people and delivered more than 16,000 occasions of service with over 1,800 of the service users receiving their first ever occasion of service at a headspace centre. Averaged across the region's centres, 57.9% of service users had a significant improvement in client outcomes.

headspace's service framework puts young people and their families at the centre of care. It ensures the delivery of accessible, appropriate, and integrated services by a consortium of aligned providers.

Additionally, a regular community of practice with headspace centres in the region allows the exploration of innovative mechanisms for service improvement and service delivery to vulnerable cohorts.

Healthy North Coast headspace centres were successful in the 2022-2023 Australian Government's headspace Demand Management and Enhancement program grants, with an additional \$2.7 million awarded in 2022-2023 across the six headspace centres. Funding will support capital works, service enhancement and wait time reduction strategies.

Key supporters and advocates for youth mental health, joined by the Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, The Hon Emma McBride MP, at the official opening of headspace Kempsey.



Mental Health, Suicide Prevention and AOD

Services reform project

Healthy North Coast is spearheading a reform project for our region to enhance mental health, suicide prevention, and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) services.

We are partnering with local stakeholders to assess and reinvigorate primary mental health services, guided by a participatory approach. The need for change is evident, with 1 in 5 North Coast residents facing mental health challenges annually.

The project adopts participatory design, engaging service users, providers, carers and advocacy organisations.

We aim to create services that are accessible, holistic and responsive to the community's diverse needs, ensuring better health outcomes.

Our project includes research, workshops, solution design, commissioning and evaluation, ultimately promoting a more interconnected and efficient service model.

We are committed to fostering collaboration among services through a hub and spoke model, enabling a more effective and inclusive approach.

We recognise the urgency of improving the wellbeing of North Coast residents and are dedicated to reshaping the mental health service landscape in our region.



The new model will help us to deliver the consistent care experience that our community has asked for. It is a 'no-wrong-door' approach that will help to change the way we provide wraparound mental health and related support services. With service options now coming together as a collective offer, people will know where to turn to even when they need help across a range of needs.

Monika Wheeler, CEO, Healthy North Coast

Mental Health, Suicide Prevention and AOD Services reform

project objectives

Equitable access	Ensure region-wide access to mental health services, breaking down barriers.
Localised initiatives	Develop place-based activities addressing regional mental health, suicide, and substance use needs.
Transparent co-design	Engage local stakeholders, considering social and economic factors.
Data management	Create an intuitive system for monitoring and evidence-based practices.
Safety and quality	Prioritise safety and quality in service delivery.
Enhanced outcomes	Improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes.
AOD service access	Enhance access to substance use services, tailored to recovery stages.
Protective factors	Increase protective factors and consider social determinants.
Leadership and innovation	Lead mental health, suicide prevention and AOD service reform.
Workforce distribution	Address workforce distribution to ensure equitable access.

Launch of the Social Prescribing Healthy Me, Healthy Community program

The Healthy Me, Healthy Community program builds individual and community connections to reduce loneliness and improve wellbeing in Port Macquarie.

Healthy Me, Healthy Community connects people to individual, community and social support services and works alongside community to build connectedness.

Objectives:

- build individual, social and community connections in the target communities
- increase wellbeing and reduce the loneliness of program participants
- build linkages and referral pathways between primary care and social services
- increase the rate of social prescribing by GPs
- contribute to reduced demand for after-hours health services and the reduction of non-urgent emergency department presentations



Healthy North Coast staff at the launch of the Healthy Me, Healthy Community program in Port Macquarie

Healthy Me, Healthy Community program

Case Study - Jeff

Retiring after a long and fruitful career can certainly be a very exciting and welcome stage of life. On the flipside, however, it is often associated with feelings of loneliness, unfulfillment, and a lack of purpose.

No-one understands this more than 70-year-old Jeff. Jeff, an ex-electrical trades TAFE teacher, retired four years ago after enjoying an engaging and gratifying work life. Once the initial retirement 'honeymoon period' passed, the commonly reported sense of disenchantment began to set in. A hard worker who thrives in a busy environment, Jeff also enjoyed the human interaction and social side of working. Therefore, the much slower pace and significant decrease in contact with others made Jeff's new reality a difficult adjustment.

Getting his 'groove back'

Struggling with purposelessness and some personal issues, Jeff sought professional guidance. The Mayo Private Hospital referred him to the Outreach Program who recommended Feros Care's Healthy Me, Healthy Community (HMHC) program.

Designed to get people involved with activities that have a positive impact on health and wellbeing, HMHC was just what the doctor ordered...minus the medication. It instead focusses on 'social prescriptions' like volunteering, social groups, arts, cultural events and exercise to help participants feel connected, relevant and above all, happy.

"I wasn't sure what to expect or if the program would actually help me, but it sounded like an interesting concept so I decided to participate," reflects Jeff. "Thankfully it turned out that the program suits me very well. It's delivering what it promises and is one of those things that you get out of bed for."

Collaborative goal setting

During their first conversation, Jeff and his Wellbeing Coach discussed how the program could improve his social connections and give him more purpose. Based on the

Wellbeing Coach's ability to gain a clear understanding of what matters to him, they collaboratively mapped out some key goals.

"She (the HMHC Wellbeing Coach) reads me very well. She listens, has lots of ideas, and comes back with suggestions which are a good fit."

Jeff identified that he needed something which would connect him to the community and maintain his interest at the same time. During his TAFE days, he had a lot of experience teaching woodwork. With this in mind, his Wellbeing Coach secured a volunteer position for Jeff in the local Community College's workshop.

"I feel right at home there, the people are really nice, and the work is very interesting. I'm designing and building teaching aids for classes, like a macramé corkboard I just completed."

The world is my oyster

In addition to doing something he is passionate about, Jeff is enjoying helping others, as well as gaining the community interaction he was missing.

"Spending time with people energises me and the program has given me a purpose." He went on to explain that the bonus of volunteering is that he can control the 'terms' of his work.

"I'm doing 2 days a week which is enough for the time being. It's great that I can dictate my own times and work the hours that suit me best."

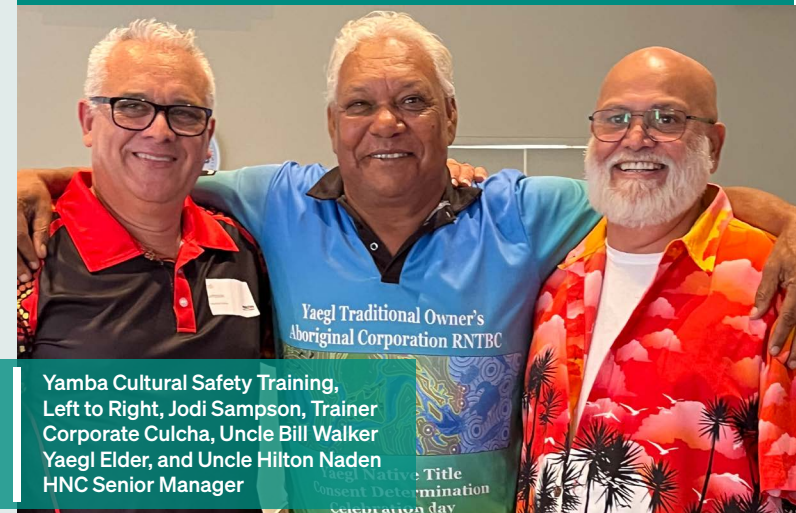
Moving forward, Jeff's Wellbeing Coach is exploring coffee meet-up groups to further expand his social networks. With his volunteering in full swing and the prospect of more community engagement on the horizon, he's keen to see where the program could take him next.

His parting words reflect this sentiment and will hopefully inspire others to sign up for the HMHC program. "It's very early days of course, but I'm feeling very positive – and the world is my oyster."

Cultural Connections program

Healthy North Coast initiated the Cultural Connections program in May 2022 to strengthen the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people through applying the cultural determinants of health into HNC commissioned programs.

The purpose of the program is to increase opportunities for Aboriginal communities across the North Coast to participate in cultural initiatives. All programs are designed and delivered by Aboriginal people for the Aboriginal community.



Cultural Connections program

Hastings Women's support group

Members of the Hastings Women's support group

The primary focus of this group is to empower women, their children and families by building resilience and community connections in a culturally safe environment.

The group supports Aboriginal women in the Hastings Valley with information, assistance, and - where necessary - referrals, in order to keep them and their children safe from domestic violence.

Information is gathered and shared from various partner organisations in the government, non-government and private sectors, so women are informed and understand the support available to them.

Durri Mens/Boys cultural camps

These camps help the participants obtain greater cultural knowledge, cultural identity, self-confidence and self-esteem. Greater confidence in one's own cultural roots and inheritance helps to provide a stronger launching pad to enjoy good health and wellbeing. For the boys, it also helps their entry into adulthood and enables them to take advantage of the many opportunities available to them.

The specific outcomes for the boys participating in the program varies according to the activities offered at each camp, but includes:

Aboriginal community history

Local Aboriginal cultural traditions, stories, dance, totems and practises

Aboriginal language acquisition

Connection to country and awareness of culturally significant sites

Bush knowledge including hunting, gathering and cooking

Understanding requirements for good physical and emotional health

Leadership skills through support and mentoring by the men's camp supervisors



Looking for pips to eat and go fishing

Professional Development and Quality Improvement

Improving patient outcomes through high-performing primary health care

In 2022-2023, Healthy North Coast remained committed to enhancing health care quality and patient outcomes. We prioritised preventive health care, shifting from reactive to proactive care, which not only saved costs but also bolstered community wellbeing. We also fostered professional development and knowledge sharing through events like CPD and the Back to Health Conference. Cultural competency was a vital aspect, promoting understanding of diverse cultures and inclusivity in health care.

Our dedication to quality improvement was unwavering, with programs supporting the delivery of high-quality care, and health literacy was central, empowering individuals with knowledge for informed healthcare decisions. Lastly, our involvement in digital health initiatives kept us at the forefront of healthcare innovation, benefiting both professionals and patients.



Professional development and quality improvement activities over 2022-2023 included:

- Back to Health Conference
- CPD events
- Cultural Safety training
- Better health outcomes through quality improvement support
- HealthPathways' central role in local primary care
- Northern NSW Health Literacy Framework
- Australian Digital Health Agency initiatives

Back to Health Conference 2022

Back to Health 2022 was held from Friday 21 to Sunday 23 October 2022 at Pacific Bay Resort Coffs Harbour. The theme was preventive health, shifting focus from reactive to proactive care.

Healthy North Coast's inaugural annual conference was a great way for more than 100 North Coast health practitioners to come together to focus on improving health outcomes for the community.



Dr Caroline West
Conference Facilitator
Back to Health Conference 2022



The social aspect was by far the most talked about component of the conference. Feedback suggests that participants would return to a future Healthy North Coast conference, regardless of the content, just to socialise with their peers.

Attendees at the Gumbaynggirr Cultural Safety Training at the Cultural Experience at "Niigi Niigi" (Sealy Lookout)

“

The Back to Health Conference was a great event with a variety of good speakers, packed with useful and innovative ideas and had lots of networking and discussion of ideas.

Registered Nurse, Bellingen

Healthy North Coast received 66 responses detailing how clinicians planned to modify their practice following the conference. Common responses included:

- paying greater attention to prevention strategies
- utilising resources and information shared at the conference
- paying greater attention to documentation
- being more aware of and utilising milestones as a way of assessment
- staying more up-to-date with innovative research and evidence-based practice
- increased screening and early referrals
- increased usage of HealthPathways
- considering the cost-effectiveness of treatment

Overall, feedback suggests that the program was well received and that the speaker and topic choices were high quality. Feedback suggests that:

- the program was interactive, fun and varied, and catered for all disciplines
- the program was well-timed, with sessions not being too long
- the conference offered ample networking opportunities



Back to Health Conference Panel at the HealthPathways workshop - prevention and management of diabetes.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) events

75

TOTAL EVENTS

42

FACE-TO-FACE

24

WEBINARS

9

ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT

1

B2H CONFERENCE

2,674

TOTAL REGISTRATIONS

1,903

TOTAL ATTENDEES

Regional clinical societies foster practitioner relationships by providing a platform through which the primary health care workforce can come together to learn new information, network and have fun in a collaborative, knowledge-sharing space. These quarterly education sessions are held across the PHN network in eight locations with topics and speakers contextualised to the regional need.

2022-2023 saw increased interest and growth in clinical societies, with topics as diverse as youth vaping, gaming addiction, immunisation and osteoporosis. Case studies, panels, referral pathways and evaluation are central to each clinical society session, focusing on quality ensured by the education team's medical educators and event coordinators.

Total North Coast Clinical Society subscribers: 2113, (+650)

Tweed Valley: 271 (+96)
Ballina and Byron: 382 (+76)
Lismore, Casino & Kyogle: 188 (+65)
Clarence Valley: 217 (+72)
Coffs Harbour and Bellingen: 380 (+109)
Nambucca and Macksville: 143 (+58)
Kempsey and Macleay: 221 (+76)
Port Macquarie & Hastings: 311 (+98)

Q1
2022

Total events	21
Webinars	7
Face-to-face	7
ALS training	7
Registrations	766
Attendees	480

Q2
2022

Total events	16
Webinars	2
Face-to-face	12
ALS training	1
Registrations	566
Attendees	423
B2H	1

Q3
2023

Total events	21
Webinars	11
Face-to-face	10
ALS training	0
Registrations	858
Attendees	609

Q4
2023

Total events	17
Webinars	4
Face-to-face	12
ALS training	1
Registrations	484
Attendees	391



2023 has been a turbulent year as we emerged from the lockdowns of the previous COVID-19 years. And that was no better seen than in the Healthy North Coast education team and their clinical societies. Face-to-face is such an important role for us, not only in delivering education but also in building relationships.

The face-to-face meeting with GPs in Port Macquarie, co-hosted with Health Pathways and the local health district antenatal team, was my best example of this. A great turnout of local GPs all learning together around improving shared antenatal care for those on the southern part of our footprint showed health professionals' collaboration at its best.

The cohesion of our small team has only gone from strength to strength in the last year with the addition of a new face (Rebecca) and the return of an old one (mine). This has allowed us to push our education model out to an ever-increasing number of participants while keeping it fresh. The inclusion of biannual planning meetings also held face-to-face has had a very positive impact on achieving these.

Dr Andy Williams, GP Educator

Cultural Safety Training

Healthcare professionals across the North Coast embraced this year's newly offered Cultural Safety Training. To mark NAIDOC Week, the initial series of face-to-face half-day workshops and immersive on-Country Cultural Safety Training sessions took place on Yaegl and Birpai lands.

Healthy North Coast delivered training in partnership with Corporate Culcha and Ochre and Salt. It combined online modules with on-Country experiences, fostering a deeper appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities.

Hilton Naden, Healthy North Coast's Senior Manager for First Nations and Population Health, highlighted the workshops' emphasis on historical facts and past treatment of Indigenous peoples.

He stressed that these workshops aimed to address misunderstandings and foster a more inclusive approach to cultural and social determinants of health and wellbeing.

The Cultural Safety Training initiative emerged in response to the 2021 Health Needs Assessment Community Survey, which revealed that 32% of Indigenous respondents delayed health care due to the lack of culturally safe services.

The program was designed to make primary health care practices culturally safe, increasing First Nations peoples' access to health services and contributing to closing the gap.

The initiative attracted strong interest and has had a significant impact, enriching healthcare practices in North Coast communities.

Better health outcomes through quality improvement support

The impact of primary care is felt not only in the wellbeing of individuals but also in the health of the entire region. At Healthy North Coast, we are committed to maintaining strong partnerships with key players in our local healthcare ecosystem, encompassing general practices, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and non-government providers. This collaborative approach to driving regional quality improvement is aimed at maximising our influence on individual health and the wellbeing of the entire North Coast region.

The Quality Improvement Practice Incentive program (QI PIP) is an instrumental component of the Australian healthcare system aimed at elevating the quality of care provided to patients. This program functions as a powerful incentive to drive continuous improvement within healthcare practices, primarily within general practices. PIP QI operates on the fundamental principle that enhancing healthcare outcomes requires an ongoing commitment to quality improvement initiatives.

Our support for quality improvement work is delivered through our Primary Care Impact program and underscored by an extensive library of QI topics and projects.

This repository houses comprehensive information about activities that can be self-selected, as well as our ongoing projects. We also offer the resources and tools for creating tailored QI initiatives. Our QI Tips for Success page provides valuable insights and strategies to enhance the effectiveness, enjoyment and sustainability of quality improvement efforts.

184 general practices and Aboriginal Medical Services

140 PIPQI registered practices

73 practices engaging

66 PIPQI practices engaging

40% practices engaging

47% PIPQI practices engaging



Better health outcomes through quality improvement support

Type of engagement	Topics	Practices	Interactions
Improvement topics being worked on	68	84	211
Request Medicoach Topic	20	36	54
Project participation	9	36	42
Shared a PDSA with Healthy North Coast	5	5	6
Shared a PDSA with everyone	5	3	5
Total	89	103	318

Quality improvement topics being worked on: **211**

Medicoach requests: **40**

Medicoach topics requested: **19**

Total training session hours: **31**

Topics	Interactions
Improve coding and recording of key data sets	18
Increase skill development in care planning	17
Improve recording of proportion of females aged 25-74 with up-to-date cervical screening	9
Develop systems of care in general practice for people diagnosed with dementia and their families	8
Improve and maintain team wellbeing, communication and empathy	8
Improve health literacy	8
Improve recording of alcohol status	8
Increase rate of influenza immunisation for high risk patients	8
Improve recording of risk factors to enable CVD assessment	6
Improve recording of weight classification	6
Increase cervical cancer screening rates in under-screened or never-screened women	6
Improve recording of influenza immunisation for patients with COPD, diabetes and 65+	5
Improve recording of smoking status	5



We have enjoyed the challenge of working with the Healthy North Coast team on this project. We have only received positive feedback from clients who attended the (Go4Fun) sessions. It was a great opportunity to introduce new skills to our reception team. Our whole practice embraced the program and celebrated the successes. We did identify that we do not have very many children who fit the criteria and worked around to find solutions to produce referrals.

Debbie Farrell – Administration, Lismore GP Super Clinic



All GPs have successfully used the ePathology component while doing telehealth appointments. Feedback is that it is easy to use and convenient for patients. When used in conjunction with eScripts, it has reduced foot traffic in the surgery by about 50%. It has also reduced the amount of 'lost' forms and reprinting at reception.

Participating practice on QI Activity Practice: Set up & Increase use of pathology electronic ordering

HealthPathway's

central role in local primary care

An [evaluation report](#) into [Mid and North Coast HealthPathways](#) highlighted its pivotal role as the single source of truth for local primary care. The report also emphasises the value of this online resource in promoting coordination and integration across the healthcare system.

Methods

Conducted by The Science of Knowing, the comprehensive evaluation featured a literature review and mixed-methods analysis of the Mid and North Coast program, particularly in the context of collaborative and integrated care. It included quantitative analysis of Google Analytics data and a health professionals survey, along with a qualitative case study involving four online focus groups and 11 stakeholder interviews.

Trusted and reliable

The evaluation recognises HealthPathways as a reliable source of local clinical information, improving the experience of care provision. Site data analysis reveals consistent growth, with spikes during the COVID-19 pandemic and critical events like floods and bushfires, indicating its usefulness during rapidly changing clinical environments.

Opportunities for improvement

The report identifies several areas for improvement, including:

- boosting site usage

- addressing technological barriers

- refining program processes

- implementing a monitoring and evaluation framework

In collaboration with key partners, the HealthPathways team continues to improve the connections between primary and tertiary care by providing valuable local clinical, referral, and health systems information.

HealthPathways continues to play a central role in local primary care, fostering collaboration and ensuring trustworthy healthcare information for clinicians and patients.



We want to see HealthPathways embedded across the region as a tool that can drive health system improvements by bridging the gap between primary and tertiary care and by providing trusted localised clinical, referral and health systems information.

We're looking forward to working with GPs and GP registrars to ensure the platform meets their needs going forward and to support continued uptake and usage into the future.

Dr Sarah Mollard, HealthPathways Clinical Lead

HealthPathway's Year in Review

HealthPathways is a tool that operates at the point of care, connecting healthcare professionals and improving healthcare decisions. It navigates the local healthcare landscape, providing local referral pathways and work-up requirements, ultimately leading to quicker patient access to care.

In 2022-2023, clinical pathways, both new and reviewed, continued to evolve to meet changing demands. User engagement remains robust, reflecting the site's importance in health care delivery. Access trends reveal the diverse needs of healthcare professionals, from managing COVID-19 to addressing psychological therapy and community support. These insights collectively underscore HealthPathways' dynamic and vital role in health care.

Pathways developed, updated and reviewed

New clinical pathways developed: 16
Reviewed: 93
Partial updates: 89
Updates to COVID-19 suite of pathways: 75

HealthPathways workgroups

Paediatrics
Mental Health
Cancer
Palliative Care
Vaping
Voluntary Assisted Dying

Site statistics

	2021-2022	2022-2023	% change
Users			
Individuals who have accessed the site	7,978	8,357	+4.75
Page views			
	234,403	240,020	+2.39

Top 10

HealthPathways accessed

2022-2023

Clinical:

COVID-19 Medications
COVID-19 Management
COVID-19 Active Case Management
Antenatal Care – Initial Visits
Dementia and Cognitive Impairment
Antenatal Shared Care Schedule – Northern NSW
First Presentation Antenatal Blood and Urine Tests
Osteoporosis
Guide to MBS Items
Abnormal Liver Function Tests

Referral:

Local Specialists and Health Services
Non-acute Obstetric Assessment
Psychological and Mental Health Therapy
Non-acute Child and Young Person's Mental Health Assessment
COVID-19 Referrals
Non-acute ENT Assessment
Non-acute Adult Psychiatry Assessment
Non-acute Orthopaedic Assessment
Non-acute Gynaecology Assessment
Social and Community Support

Northern NSW

Health Literacy Framework

Healthy North Coast has introduced the Northern NSW Health Literacy Framework 2022–2025, which serves as a guide for improving health literacy in Northern NSW over the next three years. Building upon the collaborative efforts undertaken with the Northern NSW local health district since 2016, this framework is driven by a clear vision: to enhance health outcomes, care experiences, and satisfaction for all individuals in Northern NSW. The primary focus of this framework revolves around bolstering communication, streamlining health policies and processes and increasing the accessibility of healthcare.

over 100 resources were reviewed to meet health literacy criteria

127 health professionals were trained, including 29 new ambassadors

a new Health Literacy Framework was published
the Health Literacy website was re-designed

53 services responded to the Health literacy audit

21 services entered the Drop the Jargon competition

Three Health Literacy Ambassador Grants were awarded and supported from 17 applications:

running a medication trial for women with severe nausea and vomiting in pregnancy

partnering with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities

improving discharge information for Ballina Rehabilitation patients and carers

Three Primary Care Impact Quality Improvement topics had health literacy content added, and a new health literacy PCI topic was created. Health literacy was embedded into:

Healthy North Coast mental health contracts

NNSWLHD Multicultural Health Plan

NNSWLHD Health Care Services Plan

Healthy North Coast education topics

Healthy North Coast Preventive Health Conference

Australian Digital Health

Agency initiatives

Healthy North Coast's Digital Services and Practice Engagement teams work in partnership to support the Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA) initiatives across our region. Each year, ADHA works provides additional funding to organisations who are delivering the Australian Government's PHN program to provide local delivery and engagement for their national projects.

The 2022-2023 period included the delivery of an essential NASH Certificate update project involving general practices, Aboriginal medical services and pharmacies, as well as key stakeholder engagement for the Provider Connect Australia (PCA) platform. Our Digital Services team closely collaborated with the Events and Communications teams to deliver informative and engaging webinars.

These webinars addressed key topics, including the My Health App, Cybersecurity in Healthcare, and the Active Script List and Electronic Prescriptions, aligning our organisation with the latest developments in the digital health care landscape. Our unwavering commitment to these initiatives reflects our enduring dedication to innovation, quality, and improving the lives of those we serve.





Healthy Living and Ageing

Healthy ageing

across the life course

The Healthy Living and Ageing team are extending their traditional aged care networks with new community partners through:

- Dementia Alliance groups
- first responder agencies and disaster preparations
- alliances with networks of older women's groups

The launch of the Healthy Ageing Strategy in 2024 will bring about more collaboration with community-driven initiatives ensuring Healthy Ageing becomes everyone's business.

Initiatives from 2022-2023 include:

- increasing telehealth capacity and capability
- Living With Dementia resources
- Palliative and End-of-Life Care Needs Assessment

Increasing telehealth capacity and capability

As part of the Australian Government's response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, Healthy North Coast is piloting a digital health project designed to improve primary care access in residential aged care homes (RACHs) through increased use of telehealth.

Supporting access to primary care clinicians and specialist services in aged care homes through telehealth will improve health outcomes for residents, avoiding unnecessary Emergency Department presentations and hospital transfers.

From July 2023, participating local RACHs will receive iPads, laptops or the remote diagnostic system, Visionflex. The project includes education and equipment training for RACH staff and support and engagement for local GPs.

Visionflex telehealth and remote diagnostic equipment



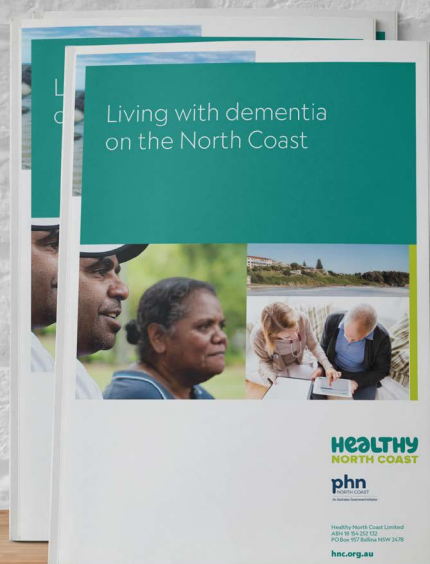
Living with Dementia resources

Healthy North Coast is supporting people in our communities living with dementia, and their support networks, through Healthy North Coast's Living with Dementia booklet.

The booklet takes people living with dementia and their families through the dementia journey, from diagnosis through to planning for a good death.

The demand for local information on services and clear guidance to manage the varying stages of the disease has been overwhelming.

The booklet is available from GP practices, pharmacies, libraries and local aged care service providers.



Palliative and End-of-Life Care consultation

and engagement activities

Between May and December 2022, the Palliative and End-of-life Care team undertook a needs analysis of palliative and end-of-life care needs and service gaps across the region.

Opportunities identified include:

- building community capacity in relation to death literacy and end-of-life planning**
- compassionate communities**
- building service capacity and capability**
- improving integration between service providers**

Consultation activities included:

- an online survey**
- two online ‘What is a good death?’ workshops**
- key stakeholder interviews**
- two healthy ageing and palliative and end-of-life care journey workshops held in Coffs Harbour and Ballina**

Workshop participants included health professionals and community members.

The feedback shared provided insight into opportunities for improvement, barriers, and gaps across the region in relation to access and provision of palliative and end-of-life care.



People can feel isolated when they feel they can't talk about it. Especially after someone close to them has died.

Community member, Coffs Harbour workshop



We need to have some kind of hospice care option in this region. Dad didn't want to die in a hospital, and he didn't want to be cared for in a hospital. We were lucky that we were able to take care of him, but there must be so many people who don't have that option. It takes such a massive toll on the family, there should be other options.

We could have really used some respite for a day or two. It would have been hard to hand over to someone else, but we needed a break, and we couldn't get it. Also, it was just so overwhelming and confusing – who we needed to talk to about what thing. I think that was part of it too – it was so hard to try and find help, it was actually easier for us to do it ourselves.

Community member, Coffs Harbour workshop



Death and dying needs to go back into the hands of the community to support people to stay close to home.

Health professional, Coffs Harbour workshop

Our Continued Commitment to Reconciliation

Fostering unity

and cultural understanding

Healthy North Coast's commitment to reconciliation continued in 2022-2023.

Our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan exemplifies this commitment, with an upcoming 2023-2025 plan to build upon our current initiatives.

We established the Reconciliation Working Group, actively monitoring RAP actions, and during National Reconciliation Week 2023, Uncle David Kelly, our Innovate Reconciliation Plan Lead, enriched our understanding of local Indigenous cultures.

Cultural Safety Training, delivered in partnership with Ochre and Salt and Corporate Culcha, has been a key focus, aiming to enhance cultural awareness among healthcare professionals and promote culturally safe healthcare for Indigenous patients.

Our dedication to reconciliation continues to shape Healthy North Coast's journey.

Initiatives from 2022-2023 include:

- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Introducing Dave Kelly, RAP Reconciliation Action Plan Lead
- National Reconciliation Week
- Cultural Safety training

Reconciliation

Action Plan

Healthy North Coast's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was endorsed by Reconciliation Australia in August 2021, expressing our commitment to working with Aboriginal Elders, leaders and community members across the Githabul, Bundjalung, Yaegl, Gumbaynggirr, Dunghutti and Birpai nations in our footprint.

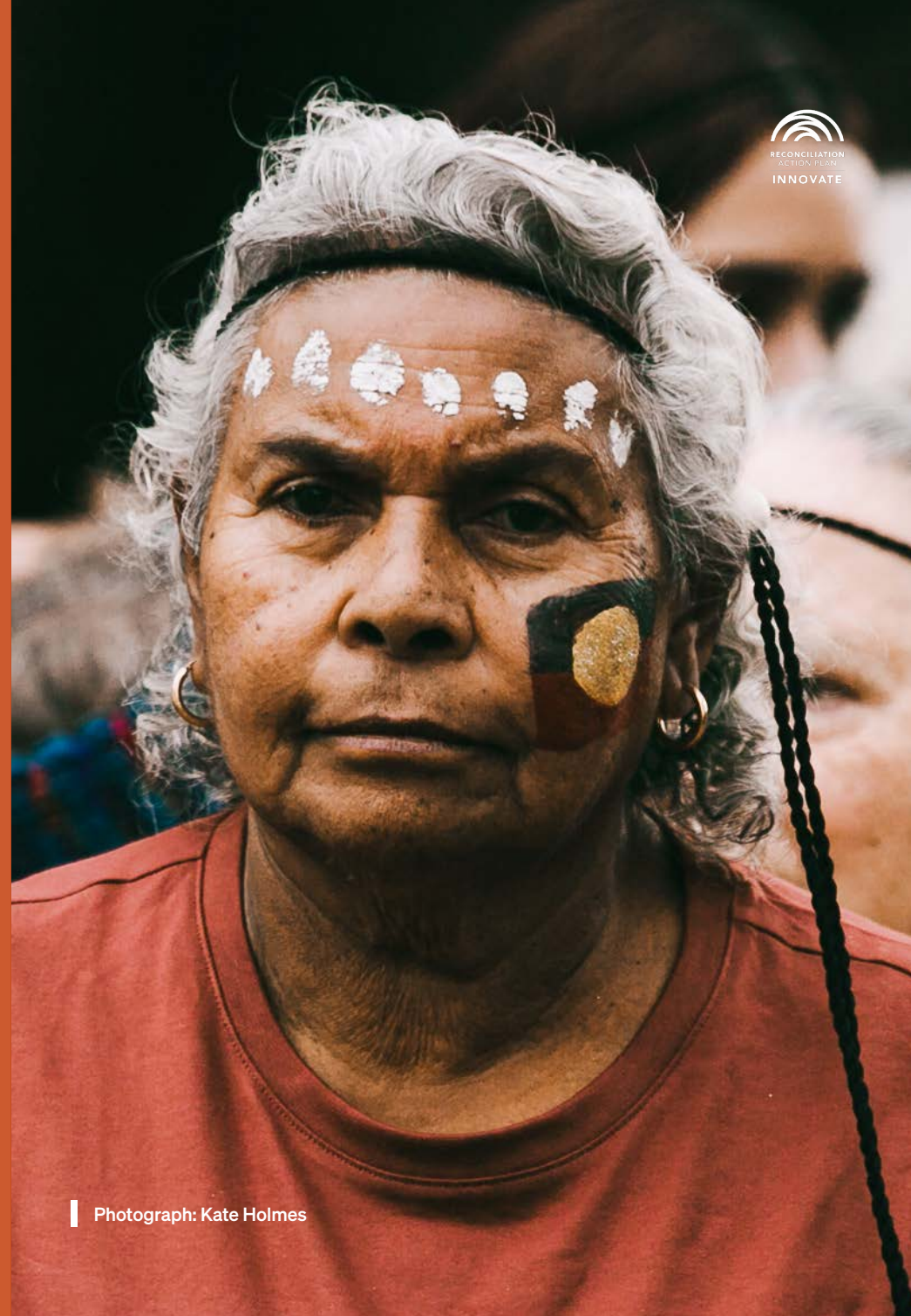
This two-year plan with over eighty deliverables has enabled us to reflect and embrace new ways of working, raising awareness and strengthening cultural safety across the organisation. Healthy North Coast will develop a new 2023–2025 Innovate RAP to further embed the initiatives contained in the current RAP.

One of the key deliverables in the current RAP was the establishment of a Healthy North Coast Reconciliation Working Group comprising elders and Aboriginal people from the local community, academics, and Healthy North Coast staff.

This nine-member group comprises two external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members, two members who also sit on our Aboriginal Advisory Council and five Healthy North Coast staff members.

The Reconciliation Working Group meets quarterly to actively monitor implementation of RAP actions, tracking progress and reporting.

Healthy North Coast welcomed local Dunghutti Elder Uncle David Kelly, who joined the organisation as Reconciliation Action Plan Lead this year.



Photograph: Kate Holmes



National

Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week 2023 was a time for unity, reflection and celebration at Healthy North Coast.

We were honoured to have had Uncle David Kelly, a proud Dunghutti man and our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan Lead, visit us during this time.

His insights and wisdom enriched our understanding of Reconciliation Week, and we thank him for his valuable guidance.

National Reconciliation Week presentation and conversation, facilitated by David Kelly at the Mid North Coast Specialist Outreach Clinic.

Cultural Safety training

Healthy North Coast delivered a program of Cultural Safety training sessions in partnership with Ochre and Salt and Corporate Culcha. Read the full story on page 56.

Financial Reports

For the year

ended 30 June 2023



Statement of Profit and Loss

	NOTE	JUN 2023 (\$)	JUN 2022 (\$)
Revenue			
From Continuing Operations	4	81,587,554	48,035,019
Interest and Distribution Income		1,572,291	351,941
Unrealised gain/(loss) on investments at fair value		224,024	(681,739)
Expenses			
Commissioned Services		(57,578,842)	(27,254,222)
Employee Benefits Expense		(9,104,846)	(8,500,177)
Client Support Services		(7,287,285)	(5,021,353)
IT and Telecommunications		(1,547,700)	(1,227,888)
Depreciation and Amortisation Expense		(1,994,097)	(1,104,563)
Conference Attendance and Hosting		(236,105)	(109,317)
Insurances		(196,544)	(163,417)
Printing, Postage and Stationery		(77,674)	(94,530)
Property Expenses		(255,874)	(285,493)
Consultancy Expenses		(249,607)	(224,301)
Agency/Advisory expense		(1,669,116)	(997,925)
Minor Works		(580,799)	(508,870)
Interest Expense on Lease Liability		(101,265)	(84,260)
Other Expenses		(1,757,792)	(1,558,871)
Year end surplus		746,323	570,034
Income Tax Expense		-	-
Net profit for the Year		746,323	570,034
Other Comprehensive Income		-	-
Total Comprehensive Income for the Year		746,323	570,034

Notes

The full set of Healthy North Coast's certified financial statements, including notes, can be located at hnc.org.au/financial-statements

Statement of Financial Position

Assets			NOTE	JUN 2023 (\$)	JUN 2022 (\$)	
	Current Assets	Cash and Cash Equivalents	6	17,864,196	43,386,474	
		Trade and Other Receivables	7	3,645,174	58,630	
		Other Financial Assets	8	29,529,228	4,585,077	
		Other Assets	11	191,802	9,248	
	Total Current Assets			51,230,400	48,039,429	
	Non-Current Assets	Trade and Other Receivables	7	84,440	75,698	
		Property, Plant and Equipment	9	2,371,615	784,945	
		Intangible Assets	10	126,309	163,144	
		Right-of-use Assets	12(a)	2,662,949	3,091,262	
	Total Non-Current Assets			5,245,313	4,115,046	
	Total Assets			56,475,713	52,154,475	
	Liabilities	Current Liabilities	Trade and Other Payables	13	14,236,729	8,561,522
			Lease Liabilities	12(b)	709,906	825,870
		Contract Liabilities	14	31,322,910	32,986,156	
		Provisions	15	5,000	5,000	
		Employee Benefits	16	698,742	638,798	
Total Current Liabilities			46,973,287	43,017,346		
Non-Current Liabilities		Lease Liabilities	12(b)	2,043,178	2,329,565	
		Employee Benefits	16	100,870	195,509	
Total Non-Current Liabilities			2,144,048	2,525,074		
Total Liabilities			49,117,335	45,542,420		
Equity	Net Assets			7,358,378	6,612,055	
	Retained Earnings			7,358,378	6,612,055	
	Total Equity			7,358,378	6,612,055	



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Healthy North Coast is an independent, not-for-profit organisation proudly delivering the PHN Program in North Coast NSW. We are committed to improving the health of our communities through quality primary health care. The PHN Program is an Australian Government initiative.

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