

Healthy Towns Evans Head Consultation Summary

July 2018



Program Overview

Healthy Towns aims to improve health and wellbeing in selected North Coast communities using a partnership approach. The goals are to:

1. Build community engagement and sense of connection
2. Strengthen integration and coordination of health and community services
3. Identify and address service gaps

Healthy Towns works with communities, service providers and health professionals to identify local needs and design health and wellbeing initiatives.

Community Consultations

Dates	Engagement Method	Total
November 2017 – May 2018	Face to face consultations	27 consultations
April 2018	Community Surveys	200 surveys completed
29 May, 2018	Community Action Planning Workshops	35 participants

Community consultations were undertaken in Evans Head between November 2017 and May 2018. Two hundred community surveys were completed by Evans Head residents. Twenty-seven face to face consultations were held with service providers, community members, local associations and health practitioners.

Community Action Planning Workshops were held on 29 May 2018 with 35 participants attending across two sessions. The workshops presented the outcomes of community consultations including the top ten health and wellbeing concerns identified in surveys. The group voted on the issue areas to further discuss. Small groups worked together to explore the issues and brainstorm potential solutions.

This document is a summary of the issues and strategies discussed at the workshops, arranged thematically to reflect discussion groups.

Next Steps

The outcomes of community consultations will inform the development of an Evans Head community action plan. Working groups will be formed to collaboratively co-design and implement selected local initiatives in the second half of 2018.

Discussion Summary

1. Ageing Issues

Older people underpin the volunteer workforce in Evans Head. A growing population of active seniors is a community strength and presents an opportunity for further engagement in volunteering and community activities. The need for local residential aged care is the most frequently expressed need for older persons. Transport for health and social appointments as well as better access to information about service availability and activities are key concerns. Residents are concerned about the lack of after-hours medical care and the impact on the ambulance service. Many older people also acknowledge a lack of computer skills yet critical information is increasingly only available electronically e.g. My Aged Care.

ISSUES	INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIES	W/ SHOP	CONSULT	WHO COULD BE INVOLVED?
Lack of residential aged care and supported accommodation facilities	Local residential aged care facility *	•	•	Richmond Valley Council
Growing need for in-home care and support services	Strengthen/reinstate Green and Jade Teams*	•		Churches
	Intergenerational labour/support exchange*			Aged Care Nurse – Local Health District
	Aged Care Training (Cert III/IV) for locals	•		
	Ageing Support worker/coordinator	•		Green and Jade teams
Healthy Ageing Support	Self-care education/support/peer support * e.g. diabetes	•		Men’s Shed
	Health Speaker programs	•		
	Stepping On Program		•	RSL
Access to information about programs and activities	Hard copy activity event information. MRNC and Senior Citizens Club to disseminate information.*	•	•	Mid Richmond Neighbourhood Centre
	Computer skills/smart phone classes for older people	•		Uniting Crowley Community members

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2. Transport

Lack of transport is linked by the community to poor mental health and social isolation. There are very limited transport services outside the school bus and limited knowledge of the services that are available. This restricts access to services and appointments, shopping choice and recreation and leisure opportunities. There is some health transport provided through the Neighbourhood Centre but this must be booked in advance and is not suitable for high risk patients or after hours. The Ambulance is used often for health transport as there are no other options. Late hospital discharge was also a frequently cited transport difficulty.

ISSUES	INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIES	W/ SHOP	CON SULT	WHO COULD BE INVOLVED?
Limited knowledge of available transport services	Service information in public spaces (including GP clinic)*	•	•	Social Futures Transport Project Officer
Limited general transport options available	Extension of RED ticket	•		Mid Richmond Neighbourhood Centre
	Improve/expand MRNC transport service *	•	•	
	Improve and promote Active Transport opportunities	•	•	
Limited health transport available	Carpooling*	•		Community Transport
	St Johns Basic Life Care training to enable volunteers to do non urgent/critical health transportation*	•	•	Richmond Valley Council
	Expand other Health Transport availability*	•	•	NSW Ambulance
	Extended Care Paramedics training to reduce health transport need		•	
	Public access to defibrillators*	•	•	4 x community members

3. Mental Health

A number of groups and services provide considerable support to people across the community, for example, Men’s Shed, youth workers and churches. However, Evans Head needs better access to skilled mental health workers and community education to increase community support and reduce stigma. Services are needed locally and must be affordable. There is considerable concern for people being undiagnosed and unsupported and the potential for an increase in suicides.

ISSUES	INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIES	W/ SHOP	CONSULT	WHO COULD BE INVOLVED?
Insufficient local access to skilled mental health workers	Reinstate/strengthen programs – SMART, GROW group, suicide support group *	•	•	Mid Richmond Neighbourhood Centre
	Expand and promote local mental health service offerings (mental health nurse, psychologist, mental health social worker) *	•	•	Evans Head Medical Centre
	Tele-psychiatry/psychology *	•		Community Health Northern NSW Local Health District
Support required for clinicians to diagnose and support mental health issues	Ambulance NSW Diagnosis Assessment Tool (Newcastle)*	•		
	Mental Health training for other health professionals: GPs, dentists and volunteers	•	•	Richmond Valley Council
Lack of awareness of available services	Community service directory *	•	•	Ambulance NSW
Community education to increase community support and reduce stigma	Sporting Clubs Mental Health Awareness Days	•		2 x community members

4. Social Isolation

Social isolation impacts the whole community – young people, older people, families, young parents and both long term and newly arrived residents. It is made worse by lack of transport/licence, lack of information, poverty, illness and disability and can lead to increased misuse of alcohol and other drugs, gambling and poor mental health. The workshops highlighted the large number of free and low cost activities and groups available but also the difficulty of sharing information with the broader community.

ISSUES	INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIES	W/ SHOP	CONSULT	WHO COULD BE INVOLVED?
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Lack of knowledge about local events, services and activities	Centralised information & activity/event directory *	•	•	Mid Richmond Neighbourhood Centre
	Monthly information events e.g. at Community Garden/Museum *	•		Senior Citizens Club
	Deliver service/event information via Meals on Wheels *	•		Churches
Cost is a barrier to participation in local activities	Support and promotion of free/low cost events/groups	•	•	Richmond Valley Council
Lack of transport and mobility issues are a barrier to participation	Car Pooling (refer to Transport)	•		2 x community members
Technology skills and access are a barrier to participation for older people	Funding/resources for technology training*			
Need to mobilise active retirees as a volunteer group	Volunteers Day*	•		
Young men are a particularly disenfranchised group	Promote Men's Sheds to younger men	•		

5. Young People

The Evans River K-12 School, natural and built sporting opportunities, supportive community, Neighbourhood Centre services and youth groups were identified as community strengths. However, there is little to do other than sport for young people and very limited transport to attend activities or events elsewhere. Mental health issues, drug and alcohol misuse, unemployment and poor access to employment and training services were also highlighted. The two youth workers are unable to meet the diverse and growing needs and spend considerable time transporting young people to services, for example, Headspace in Lismore. There are no local bulk billing mental health services.

ISSUES	INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIES	W/ SHOP	CONSULT	WHO COULD BE INVOLVED?
Mental health issues and drug and alcohol misuse	Local mental health services*	•	•	Mid Richmond Neighbourhood Centre Youth Workers
	Mental Health First Aid Training*	•	•	
	Consult with young people*	•	•	

Limited activities available for young people and limited transport to attend activities out of town	Funding for youth activities/hub/drop in space*	•	•	Evans Head K-12 School Sporting Clubs
High levels of youth unemployment and poor access to employment and training services	Enterprise programs linking young people to National Innovation Foundation for Young Australians	•		Headspace
	Local employment and training e.g. Bowling Club/Surf Club training and employment initiative	•	•	Dirawong Trust
	Local/outreach job service providers			1 x community member

6. Cost of living/housing affordability

The impact of the lack of affordable housing is acknowledged by most in the community and leads to people relocating away from local work and established connections (including school) and in some cases, to homelessness. The cost of rent, rates, insurance, energy, vehicle/transport and food were all identified as placing increasing pressure on households and individuals including creating an increased risk of poor mental health and reduced general resilience. While these issues are beyond the immediate scope of Healthy Towns, the importance of considering social determinants of health was discussed in the workshops.

ISSUES	INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIES	W/ SHOP	CONSULT	WHO COULD BE INVOLVED?
Cost of living and lack of housing affordability are leading to economic stress for residents.	More affordable rental housing*	•	•	Federal & State Government
	Local renewable energy provider*	•		Richmond Valley Council
	Financial Literacy Training in school	•		
	Post Highway Plan (housing and employment)	•		Chamber of Commerce
	No Interest Loan Scheme	•		
	Better/centralised promotion of services/supports*	•	•	Centrelink
	Financially reward Evans Head volunteers		•	Media Facebook Real Estate agencies

* Denotes workshop participants' selected priorities

For further information about Healthy Towns, please contact NCPHN on (02) 6618 5400 or <https://ncphn.org.au/archives/programs/healthy-towns>