

Spring 2024

## A note from CEO Monika Wheeler

Welcome to the Spring edition of Better Health Stories, as we continue to share and celebrate the wonderful things that are happening in primary health care in our region.

It was an honour this quarter to have our Community Wellbeing and Resilience program recognised at the Resilient Australia Mental Health and Wellbeing Award for NSW! The Community Wellbeing and Resilience program funds community-led, place-based initiatives that support better health and wellbeing through disaster recovery and building our community's ability to face future challenges.

We know our region will experience more frequent and severe disasters in the future. Without action, these events will continue to impact our population's health and wellbeing. Building community resilience is key to improving health and wellbeing outcomes after natural disasters and in a changing climate.

As a NSW winner, we progressed to the National Resilient Australia Awards in Canberra, managed by the Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience, where it was a privilege to stand alongside other NSW award winners, including other community organisations on the North Coast.

Whilst we did not win the national award, I am proud of the work our team has accomplished in supporting our communities through difficult times, and strengthening resilience for what will come in the future.



Pictured L-R: Kate Van Saane (Healthy North Coast), Jihad Dib (NSW Minister for Emergency Services), Monika Wheeler (CEO Healthy North Coast), Dr Jean Renouf (Founder and CEO, Plan C), Joanna Quilty (NSW Reconstruction Authority). Image courtesy of NSW Reconstruction Authority.

Flood impacted communities are the focus of the CWR flood program, particularly supporting vulnerable populations. Activities vary and include social and community connection, cultural connection, trauma-based education and social and emotional wellbeing.

This quarter, our Community Wellbeing and Resilience programs have delivered a range of services and support, including:



Community members supported through counselling, care coordination / referrals to services, social and emotional wellbeing



Community organisations and services strengthened through training and capability uplift activity for 297 frontline staff, volunteers and community members



Targeted and technical training and tools provided to support flood recovery needs



Health and wellbeing of community members supported through healing programs, group sessions and yoga / movement sessions.



*“The impact of the floods in 2022 has significant impacts on the mental and physical health of LGBTQ+ people across the Northern Rivers. The funding provided to ACON Northern Rivers from Healthy North Coast’s Community Wellbeing and Resilience Program has supported over 350 people to access workshops and counselling, improving their mental health and allowing them to feel like valued members of our community again.”*

Brad Bower, ACON Health

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands across our region, and pay our respect to Elders past, present and on their journey.

[hnc.org.au/community-wellbeing-resilience-program](https://hnc.org.au/community-wellbeing-resilience-program)

View online  
[hnc.org.au/better-health-stories](https://hnc.org.au/better-health-stories)



# Capacity Building

## Voluntary Assisted Dying one year on

Healthy North Coast is proud to have been part of the voluntary assisted dying education journey for our health workforce. In cooperation with Local Health Districts from the Mid North Coast and Northern NSW, we provided a series of popular and well-received webinars that enable practitioners to enact this new legislation with rigour and empathy.

In our most recent webinar, called Voluntary Assisted Dying one year on, we were joined by Suzie Kuper, the retiring voluntary assisted dying Clinical Nurse Consultant for Northern NSW. We looked again at requirements under the legislation, the continuing integration between palliative care and voluntary assisted dying, and heard powerful stories on how voluntary assisted dying has positively impacted people.

*"I'm grateful for all the presenters and for Healthy North Coast for organising this webinar. Thank you for broadening my limited knowledge on VAD."*

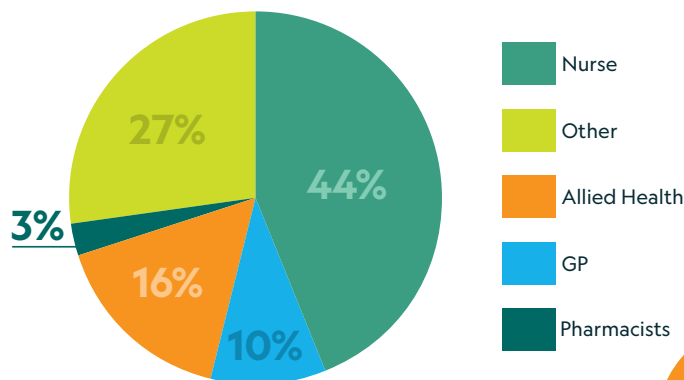
*"The information was updated and revised with real life scenarios."*

[hnc.org.au/news-story/voluntary-assisted-dying-one-year-on](https://hnc.org.au/news-story/voluntary-assisted-dying-one-year-on)

**73%**  
of attendees would make changes to their practice as a result of attending the webinar

**100%**  
of attendees likely to recommend the webinar to a colleague

### Registration Roles



**79**  
registrations

**77%**  
of attendees stated their learning objectives were entirely met



# Commissioning

## Early positive results for Coffs Harbour Medicare Mental Health Centre

Almost half of Australians will experience mental health distress at some point in their lives. The Coffs Harbour Medicare Mental Health Centre is a welcome addition for residents looking for a tailored experience and connection to the right support for them and their circumstances.



**81%**  
of clients felt they were listened to

**58%**  
of information consumers received met their needs

**80%**  
rated their experience as positive

**60%**  
were comfortable using the service

[hnc.org.au/media/medicare-mental-health-centre-officially-opens-in-coffs-harbour](https://hnc.org.au/media/medicare-mental-health-centre-officially-opens-in-coffs-harbour)

## Improving alcohol and other drugs treatment on the North Coast

Our Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program (DATP), funded by the Australian Government and delivered by The Buttery, offers a comprehensive approach to drug and alcohol treatment across our region, combining personalised care, community support, and innovative programs, which has yielded remarkable outcomes over the last quarter.

**89% of patients showed an improvement in the Australian Treatment Outcomes Profile (ATOP)**

**2,415 occasions of service**

**Increase in knowledge and understanding of program participants with 293 people reached through 48 education sessions**

**Targeted support for young people delivered through 6 sessions in collaboration with headspace**

**Tailored support for withdrawal management reached 123 people through 35 sessions**

[hnc.org.au/alcohol-and-other-drugs](https://hnc.org.au/alcohol-and-other-drugs)



# Coordination

## My Health Record usage ramps up on the North Coast

In a success story for the continuity of care for patients on the North Coast, there has been a sharp increase in the rate of regular usage of My Health Record (MHR), giving community members greater access to their health information and health professionals a more detailed picture of their patients with which to make better health decisions at the point of care.

With continual changes over the past two years towards the upload mandate for imaging and diagnostics, plus the continued promotion of MHR and supporting our health professionals through the process, we continue to see an increase in pathology reports, diagnostic imaging, prescription records and dispensing uploads, as well as a greater adoption of eScripts in consumers.

**9%**  
increase of  
MHR-registered  
organisations on  
the North Coast

**105%**  
increase in  
pharmacy cross  
views

**37%**  
of Residential  
Aged Care Homes  
in our region now  
registered for MHR

**58%**  
increase in GP  
cross views

**70%**  
of specialists in  
our region now  
registered for  
MHR

## In-reach education model completes successful six-month pilot

When access to medical specialists is limited, empowering local general practice is essential to meeting the needs of the community.

To this end, Healthy North Coast has just completed a six-month pilot of a 'specialist in-reach' education program with great success.

**Dr Kate Gupta**, an endocrinologist, and **Michelle Bushell**, a diabetes educator, visited practices across the Port Macquarie region to share their diabetes expertise with local GPs, practice nurses and managers to support the care of patients in the area.

After the success of the pilot, we are currently working on the extension of the program, bringing more medical specialists into general practices across the whole region.



**14**  
practice visits  
from specialists

**12**  
practices  
engaged in the  
Port Macquarie-  
Hastings region

*'The in-reach education model brings together GPs and their staff with specialists and the patient to deliver in-practice education that benefits outcomes for health professionals and patients alike.'*

*'Through Healthy North Coast's support, GPs are learning how to manage their more complex diabetics better, patients get consultations with a specialist and their GP together, and the knowledge that is imparted is shared cross the whole practice to deliver diabetic champions in areas of limited services.'*

Dr Andy Williams  
Medical Educator  
Healthy North Coast

[hnc.org.au/news-story/in-reach-education-model-completes-successful-six-month-pilot/](https://hnc.org.au/news-story/in-reach-education-model-completes-successful-six-month-pilot/)