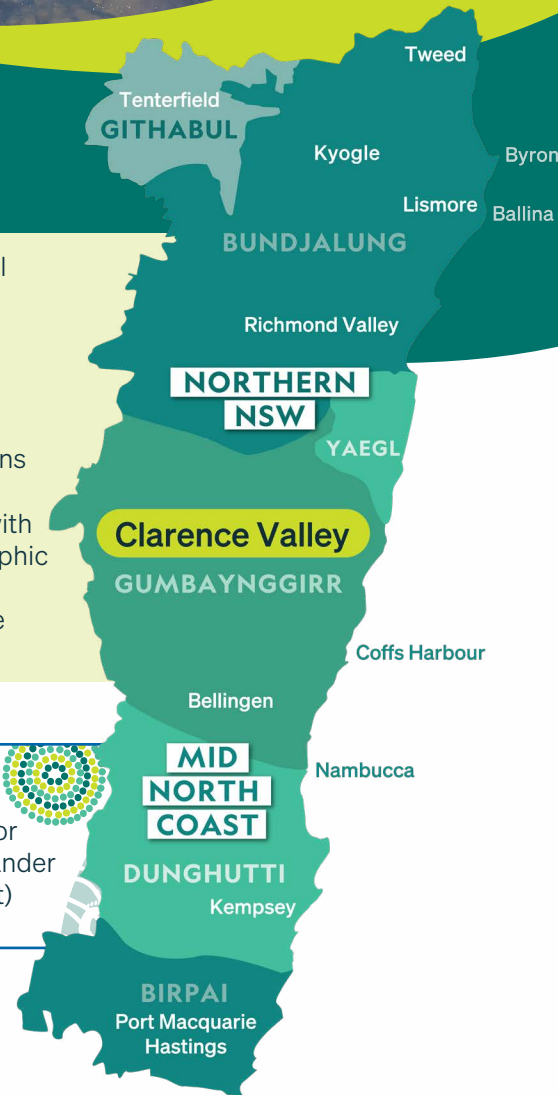


HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2025-2028

Clarence Valley LGA

The Clarence Valley **Local Government Area (LGA)**, located on the Traditional Lands of the Bundjalung, Gumbaingirr, and Yaegl Nations, spans 10,441 km², making it the largest LGA on the North Coast. Clarence Valley LGA is part of the Northern NSW Local Health District and is part of the Clarence Valley SA3 however has some overlap with Coffs Harbour SA3. It encompasses a mix of coastal, hinterland, and mountain regions, along with rural towns and communities. Grafton serves as the main regional centre, followed by the towns of Yamba and Maclean. Agriculture and the fishing industry are key sectors in the area's economy. The Clarence Valley LGA maintains strong connections with neighbouring LGAs, including Coffs Harbour and Ballina. The area's demographic structure, geographic location and size presents specific health challenges, particularly in the areas of service access, healthy ageing and chronic disease prevention and management.



Demographics

Population:

54,212 people, 10% of the North Coast population. Projected to increase by 2% by 2031 (compared to 5% increase North Coast)

Population density:

5 residents per km² (17 per km² North Coast)



8% identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (6% North Coast)



Median age **49** (47 North Coast, 39 NSW)



27% aged 65 years or over, projected to increase by 22% by 2031 (increase 18% North Coast and 29% NSW)



Children and young people's health



Nearly **1 in 5** children assessed as vulnerable in one or more areas of early childhood development.



1 in 2 found it difficult to access a local GP for a child in their care.

Clarence Valley LGA has the second highest presence of post-natal depression in the North Coast. Double the North Coast average.

Opportunity: Work in partnership to improve education, support, community and peer-based services for children and families.

Child immunisation rates

Full immunisation rates for children are above the NSW and Australian rates.

95% of 1-year-old children (94% in NSW and Australia).

93% of 2-year-old children (92% NSW and Australia).

97% of 5-year-old children (94% NSW and Australia).

Older people

62% of people aged 65 years and over have at least one long-term health condition.

Highest in the North Coast.

3% of the population live with dementia (2% NSW and Australia).

Higher than NSW and Australian rates and is expected to increase as the 65 years and over population increases.

66% of survey* respondents reported the ageing population is one of the most serious health concerns in the community.

50% of survey* respondents found accessing services for older people difficult.

Challenges were lack of awareness of services and difficulty in organising services.

Did you know: Care finders is a free service. It exists to support vulnerable people who have no one else who can support them to learn about, apply for and set up support services.

Scan the QR code to visit the Care finders website.



Opportunity: Increase support and education regarding available services for people as they age and for ageing relatives or people in their care.

Aboriginal health and wellbeing

Healthy North Coast works in partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal peoples, families and communities. Bulgarr Ngaru Medical Aboriginal Corporation provides services to the Bundjalung, Gumbaynggirr and Yaegl people of Clarence Valley, Richmond Valley, Kyogle and Tweed Heads LGAs. Clarence Valley clinics are based in Grafton, South Grafton, and Maclean and include outreach to Baryulgil, Malabugilmah, and Yamba.

18% of people had an Aboriginal health check in Clarence Valley SA3.

Connection to country and culture is key for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples social and emotional wellbeing. Programs that Aboriginal peoples identified to help keep Aboriginal communities healthy and strong:

- Exercise and fitness
- Support with daily living/personal care
- Training programs

Social determinants

85 per 1,000 people need assistance due to age or severe disability (75 per 1,000 North Coast, 58 per 1,000 NSW).

Domestic and family violence rate of **7 per 1,000** people (NSW 4 per 1,000 people).

Increased 82% from 2021 and is higher than North Coast and NSW rates (4 per 1,000).

Opportunity: Assist partnerships including community and social services to increase health and wellbeing supports. Targeted outreach programs and stronger partnerships with domestic violence services could help address the health needs of vulnerable populations in the region.

Median total weekly personal income is **\$578** (\$652 North Coast, NSW \$813).

29% single or lone households (25% NSW) and 3% group homes (4% NSW).

Social isolation can increase health risks.

Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) score **940**, (Australia 1,000).

Indicating greater disadvantage compared to the Australian average (1,000).

Homelessness:

3 in 1,000

people experience homelessness (4 in 1,000 in North Coast and NSW, 9 in 1,000 in Australia).

4 in 1,000

people at risk of homelessness (4 in 1,000 in North Coast and NSW, 7 in 1,000 in Australia).

*Throughout this document 'survey' refers to the 2024 Better Health Community survey undertaken as part of the Health Needs Assessment 2025-28 consultation process

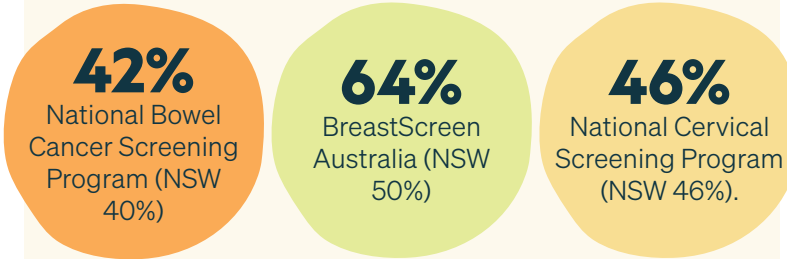
Preventative health and chronic disease

Nearly 1 in 5 people have 2 or more chronic conditions.

The most common chronic conditions are osteoarthritis, anxiety and depression.

Highest presence of Type 1 Diabetes in the North Coast. More than 1 in 2 diagnosed are 65 years or older.

Cancer screening participation:



The most diagnosed cancers:

1. Urogenital cancer
2. Skin cancer
3. Bowel cancer.

The cancer with the highest death rate is respiratory cancer.

Risks:

Current smoking		Alcohol consumption ²	
Clarence Valley	NSW	Clarence Valley	NSW
16%	12%	28%	18%
Physical activity ¹		Inadequate fruit intake	
Clarence Valley	NSW	Clarence Valley	NSW
81%	77%	59%	55%
Obese		Overweight (not obese)	
Clarence Valley	NSW	Clarence Valley	NSW
40%	31%	34%	34%

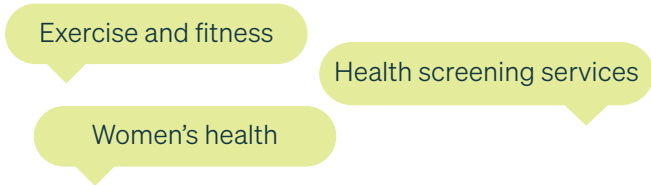
¹ aged 15 years and over, who did not meet 2014 physical activity guidelines

² estimated number of persons aged 15 years and over who consumed 5 or more standard alcoholic drinks on any day in the last 12 months at least monthly

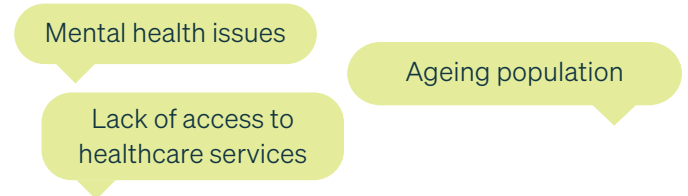
Opportunity: Strengthen and enhance preventative health programs, strategies, and care teams through partnerships, helping reduce the prevalence and impact of chronic conditions.

When you were asked...

What kind of programs would you like more of, to keep you and your community healthy and strong?



Which do you see as the most serious health concerns in your community?



Mental health

What you have shared about your experiences with mental health:



1 in 10 people needed to access a mental health service but couldn't.



4 in 10 people reported mental health as one of the most serious health concerns in the community.



2 in 3 found it difficult to access a psychologist, counsellor or social worker.



7 in 10 found it difficult to access a GP and psychiatry services.

Higher than the North Coast average.

The top challenges to access mental health services:

- Lack of services
- Difficult to organise
- Long way from home.

Clarence Valley SA3 rate of suicide deaths 22 per 100,000 population (double the rate of NSW).

Opportunities: In partnership, explore and implement innovative ways to strengthen treatment, prevention and mental health support programs suited to a rural area. This could include increased education, support and access for digital based services and community and peer support services.

Did you know: Medicare Mental Health Centres can help you access the local mental health services and supports that are right for you. No referral needed, access by phoning 1800 595 212.

Healthcare in Clarence Valley LGA

Grafton Base Hospital and Maclean District Hospital service the Clarence Valley region they are both rural community hospitals open all hours and providing emergency care and a range of medical, nursing and surgical services.

Community health centres Grafton Ambulatory Care, Community and Allied Health, Iluka Community Health, Maclean Community Health, and Yamba Community Health, provide a range of primary and allied health services.

The distribution of GPs is unequal in the North Coast region, with the rate of GP FTE in Clarence Valley LGA among the lowest in the North Coast region.



Access to primary and community health services

75% of ED presentations are for lower urgency care (52 % North Coast, 48% NSW).

After-hours GP attendances rate in Clarence Valley SA3 is **3%** (Australia 17%).

Access to after-hours GP services remains a challenge and may contribute to higher ED admissions.

Barriers to accessing primary care include:

- Long wait times for appointments
- Difficulty getting an appointment
- Lack of practitioners/services

- Long distance from home
- Cost
- Difficult to organise appointments.

Opportunity: Continue to work in partnership to support recruitment and retention of the healthcare workforce.

Healthy North Coast commissioned services

HNC commissions a range of community-based services to address local health needs.

These include:

- Aboriginal health
- Alcohol & Other Drugs
- Mental health
- Youth specific
- Integrated Team Care.

Did you know: If you need medical advice and care, call Healthdirect for free, 24/7 on 1800 022 222 and speak to a registered nurse. They can also connect you or your children with virtual health care services, so you can receive care from wherever you are.

Scan the QR code to go to the Healthdirect website.



For more information about the services available in Clarence Valley LGA, please scan the QR code:

If you have any questions please email Betterhealth@hnc.org.au

