



HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2025-2028

Port Macquarie Hastings LGA

The Port Macquarie-Hastings Local Government Area (LGA), located on the mid-north coast of New South Wales, lies on the traditional lands of the Birpai Nation. Covering 3,686 square kilometres, it stretches west from the Hastings and Camden Haven River mouths to the Great Dividing Range. The LGA is part of the Mid North Coast Local Health District and the Port Macquarie SA3, and borders Kempsey to the north, Walcha to the west, and Mid-Coast to the south. A rapidly growing region, Port Macquarie-Hastings faces unique healthcare challenges and opportunities in meeting the needs of its expanding population.



Demographics

Population:

86,368 people, 16% of the North Coast population. Projected to increase by 6% by 2031 (compared to 5% increase North Coast)

Population density:

24 residents per km² (17 per km² North Coast)



5% identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (6% North Coast)



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



29% aged 65 years or over, projected to increase by 16% by 2031 (increase 18% North Coast and 29% NSW)



Children and young people's health

1 in 4 children assessed as vulnerable in one or more areas of early childhood development.

Child immunisation rates

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

96% of 1-year-old children (94% in NSW and Australia).

91% of 2-year-old children (92% NSW and Australia).

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

Older people

61% of people aged 65 years and over have at least one long-term health condition.

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

Higher than NSW and Australia, with the ageing population, this number is expected to grow.

70% of survey* respondents reported the ageing population is one of the most serious health concerns in the community.

56% of survey* respondents found accessing services for older people difficult.

Challenges included a lack 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.



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. The Werin Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre is located in Port Macquarie, providing comprehensive primary health care services to the local Aboriginal community.

25% of people had an Aboriginal health check in Port Macquarie 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
- Health screening services
- Yarning circles
- Community health education events
- Men's health

Social determinants

83 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 **5 per 1,000** people (NSW 4 per 1,000 people).

Increased 30% from 2021.

There is limited availability of affordable housing in the Port Macquarie-Hastings LGA. Of **164** rental properties, **0** were affordable for singles or couples on Jobseeker or Youth Allowance, or for those on the Age Pension. **12** were affordable for a couple with two children on minimum wage and Family Tax Benefits, and **1** was affordable for specific single-parent and couple scenarios with minimum wage and family benefits.

Adequate access to affordable housing is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.

Median total weekly personal income is **\$647** (\$652 North Coast, NSW \$813).

Second highest average personal income in the region.

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 **985**, (Australia 1,000).

Indicates a 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).

3 in 1,000

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

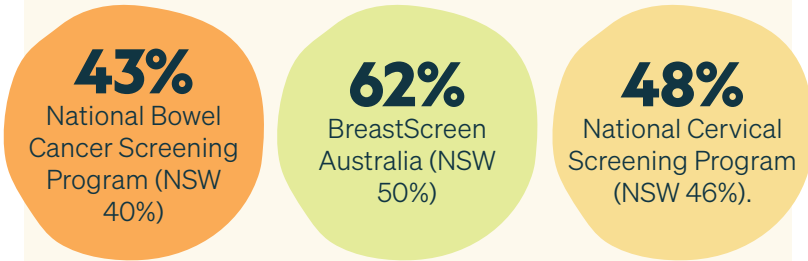
*Throughout this document 'survey' refers to the 2024 Better Health Community survey undertaken as part of the Health Needs Assessment 2025-28 consultation process

Preventative health and chronic disease

More than 1 in every 5 have 2 or more chronic conditions.

The most common chronic conditions are anxiety and osteoarthritis.

Cancer screening participation:



The most diagnosed cancers:

1. Urogenital cancer
2. Skin cancer
3. Breast cancer.

The cancer with the highest death rate is respiratory cancer (30 per 100,000).

Risks:

Current smoking		Alcohol consumption ²	
Port Macquarie Hastings	NSW	Port Macquarie Hastings	NSW
14%	12%	27%	18%
Physical activity ¹		Inadequate fruit intake	
Port Macquarie Hastings	NSW	Port Macquarie Hastings	NSW
79%	77%	57%	55%
Obese		Overweight (not obese)	
Port Macquarie Hastings	NSW	Port Macquarie Hastings	NSW
33%	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 preventative health programs, and provide education opportunities in partnership with LHDs and community organisations to improve early intervention and prevention for chronic disease

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.



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



7 in 10 found it difficult to access a psychologist, counsellor or social worker.



Nearly **2 in 10** people in the Mid North Coast LHD area experience high or very high levels of psychological distress.

The top challenges to access mental health services:

- cost
- difficulty organising appointments
- lack of services.

In Port Macquarie SA3, rate of suicide deaths (17 per 100,000 people) (11 per 100,000 population NSW).

8 in 1,000 people accessed primary mental health care commissioned services. More than half of the services were delivered face-to-face.

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 Port Macquarie Hastings LGA

The Port Macquarie Base Hospital has a 24-hour Emergency Department and specialist services such as intensive care, cardiology, oncology, renal dialysis, and more.

Wauchope District Memorial Hospital offers rehabilitation, palliative care, and an urgent care centre.

Local Community Health centres, including Port Macquarie, Camden Haven HealthOne, and Wauchope, provide a range of primary and allied health services.

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



Access to primary and community health services

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

After-hours GP use in Port Macquarie SA3, which includes Port Macquarie-Hastings LGA is **8%** (Australia 17%).

52% of survey respondents found it difficult to see a GP when they needed.

Opportunity: Improve access to primary care services for lower urgency care needs.

Barriers to accessing primary care include:

- Long wait time for an appointment
- Difficulty getting an appointment
- Cost
- Lack of general practitioners in the area.

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.



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.

For more information about the services available in Healthcare in Port Macquarie Hastings LGA, please scan the QR code:

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

