

BETTER HEALTH stories

HEALTHY
NORTH COAST

phn
NORTH COAST
An Australian Government Initiative

Summer 2026



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

View online
hnc.org.au/better-health-stories



Coordination

Strengthening GP access for residents living in aged care homes

Residents of aged care homes across the North Coast experience difficulties accessing local GPs.

In our region:

only 50% of practices provide residential aged care support
many GPs caring for residents in aged care are planning to retire within the next 2-5 years

a needs analysis in 2024 identified areas where access to GPs in aged care is a challenge: Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Kyogle, Clarence Valley, and Ballina LGAs.

In response to these challenges, Healthy North Coast has implemented a General Practice in Aged Care Incentive (GPACI) program.

The program combines direct outreach to general practices, tailored education, data-driven insights and hands-on support for GPs, practice teams and residential aged care homes.



“Your honesty about the challenges of GP access opened doors. Together, we’ve tackled GP misconceptions about aged care, made the GP incentive simpler to navigate. Overall, we supported GPs responsible for more than 3,000 residents to stay in aged care. There’s more to do, but thanks to you, we’re on the right path toward every resident having consistent, high-quality primary care.”

Jane Moye – Coordinator Healthy Living and Ageing, GP for Aged Care Residents Project



In 12 months, the program:

handled **60** requests from residential aged care homes for assistance with GP access/continuation

matched **2,693** residents with a GP

supported **30%** of aged care residents on the North Coast to access, or continue to receive primary care.

supported **39** general practices with coaching, business information, care models, registration and payments assistance

The initiative has strengthened relationships across general practice, aged care and hospital teams, and led to the formation of ‘GP in Aged Care’ communities to share knowledge, improve collaboration and build long-term workforce capacity. It has reduced avoidable hospitalisations and laid the foundation for more sustainable aged care services across the region.

[Learn more about our work in healthy ageing](#)





Commissioning

Health hubs making a difference for people experiencing homelessness

Across the North Coast, homeless hubs are playing an increasingly important role in bringing GP and nursing services to people who might otherwise go without it.

The 2025 NSW Statewide Street Count highlights the urgent need for targeted health support in our region, with the Byron Shire recording the highest number of people who are sleeping rough in New South Wales (291) outside of the City of Sydney. Tweed Valley (155) and Coffs Harbour (99) were the next highest.

Between September and December 2025, nearly 300 consultations have been delivered through three Healthy North Coast commissioned health hubs.

Health Hubs have been made possible via funding from the Australian Government's Primary Care Access program.

There were:

107 GP/Nurse consultations at Fred's Place in Tweed Heads

97 GP consultations at Pete's Place in Coffs Harbour

83 GP consultations at Fletcher Street Cottage in Byron Bay

The services continue to enhance consistent, accessible care for vulnerable community members with complex health and social needs, who may have previously had limited contact with health services.

One service provider said:



“In the beginning, one of the biggest challenges was gaining the trust of our clients. Many were hesitant at first, uncertain about the care and support we could offer. However, as we showed up week after week, our consistent presence helped break down barriers. Gradually, more patients began to come forward, and we started seeing an increase in clients returning for follow ups, wound checks and test results.

“This growing trust became the foundation of the care we provided.”

One service user said:

“The GP service at Fletcher Street Cottage has greatly supported me over the past two years. I have been experiencing long-term homelessness, while also navigating an array of health issues... When I first came to Fletcher Street Cottage, I felt extremely unwell and was not in control of my health. Now, through regular consults with the GP, my health has stabilised and I can access the medication I need. I also find the deep level of care at Fletcher Street Cottage and from the doctors here, have greatly improved my mental health. I no longer feel so isolated and alone.”





Capacity Building

Celebrating the North Coast primary health workforce

On 25 November 2025, Healthy North Coast held our first Primary Health Care Excellence Awards since 2017 - a gathering of 175 primary health care professionals and sector partners in Coffs Harbour.

The Awards received a total of 57 nominations across 9 categories, showcasing the breadth of commitment and talent among North Coast GPs, nurses, pharmacists, allied health, mental health and general practice teams.

The Awards reflect the exceptional care being delivered by GPs, nurses, pharmacists, mental health and allied health professionals every day.

They celebrate real people doing great work - improving access, quality and equity in health care for communities across the North Coast. By celebrating their achievements, the event helps to inspire and retain the talented health workforce that is essential to our region's future.

There were:

57 Excellence Award nominations

9 award winners

175 attendees

4 Recognition of Service Awards

[Read more about the Award winners, and watch their acceptance speeches](#)

The Award winners are:

Dr Grace Gillon, GP registrar, Bullinah AMS - Emerging Leader

Tracey Harris, Lismore GP Super Clinic / Lismore Urgent Care Clinic - Excellence in Practice Management

Trent Renshaw, Coffs Coast Sports Physiotherapy - Excellence in Allied Health Achievement

James Yoo, Plunkett's Terry White Chemmart Port Macquarie - Innovation in Pharmacy

Amanda Moss, Woodburn Health - Excellence in Nursing Achievement

Dr Monica Taylor, Bullinah AMS - Dr Michael Davis Award for General Practice Leadership

Human Nature Adventure Therapy, Ballina - Excellence in Mental Health Delivery

Nicole Dein, Bullinah AMS - Excellence in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health

Macleans Medical - Excellence in Innovation