

# BETTER HEALTH *stories*

**HEALTHY**  
NORTH COAST

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NORTH COAST  
An Australian Government Initiative

Autumn 2026



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

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



## Coordination

### Our Patients Together events connect primary and hospital care

Healthy North Coast partnered with the Northern NSW Local Health District (NNSWLHD) on Wednesday 18 February 2026 to deliver the second instalment of Our Patients Together.

This series brings together hospital leaders and primary health clinicians to help unify local primary and tertiary health systems.

NNSWLHD's Director of Medical Services, Malcom Leek, welcomed 18 general practitioners and 19 other primary care workers to Tweed Valley Hospital. Experts from gynaecology and obstetrics, paediatrics, and outpatients presented detailed information about their services.

Participants expressed gratitude to the Tweed Valley Hospital team for their efforts in connecting with primary health care clinicians. A similar event was held at Lismore Base Hospital on 4 March 2026.

These events are practical examples of how HNC's Memorandum of Understanding with the Northern NSW and Mid North Coast Local Health Districts is bringing primary and acute care clinicians together as one system to improve patient care.



Attendees shared their appreciation with glowing feedback:

"This was brilliant, I can't wait for the next one!"

"We don't ever get this kind of information, so valuable, so worth staying until 8:30pm."

"I heard how great the last one was, so I didn't want to miss this one."

Dr Andrew Hutchinson, Head of Paediatrics at Tweed Valley Hospital, said:

"The event is beneficial for both hospital services and GPs. Thank you for facilitating it."

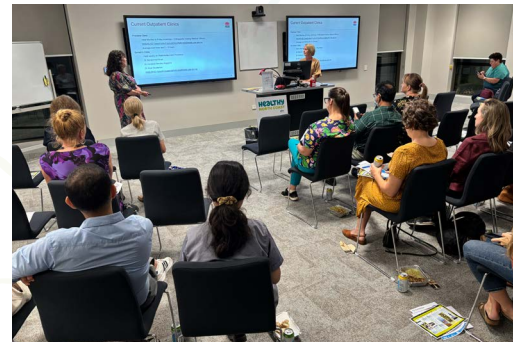


### Key highlights from the event included:

**100% of post-event survey respondents said the event was relevant to their practice (n=20)**

**90% intend to implement new ideas from the education into their current practice (n=18)**

**Enhanced participant knowledge of the key topic areas - including My Health Record, Better and Faster Access, and HealthPathways**





## Commissioning

### Healthy North Coast Aboriginal Health Partnership strengthens social and emotional wellbeing in the region

Healthy North Coast (HNC) and the region's 6 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) continue to work to strengthen Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) for Aboriginal communities.

Over the past 6 months, the Partnership's SEWB programs, funded via Australian Government mental health, drug and alcohol and suicide prevention programs, have had a significant and positive impact, providing culturally grounded, holistic support for individuals and families experiencing grief, trauma, social stress and complex life challenges.

Between July and December 2025, ACCHO-led SEWB teams **supported more than 1,600 community members** through **8,000 appointments**. Among those who completed follow-up assessments, **70% reported improved wellbeing**, demonstrating the effectiveness of culturally informed approaches and the strength of the SEWB service models embedded within ACCHOs.

Findings from HNC's Health Needs Assessment 2025-2028 highlighted SEWB as a priority for Aboriginal communities, noting that access to culturally safe, timely support is essential to improve health and wellbeing outcomes. ACCHO SEWB services continue to address these priorities by offering outreach, home visits, family centred care, culturally informed assessment, and practical support that strengthens engagement and continuity of care.

[Learn more about our work in Aboriginal health](#)



Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) staff emphasised the importance of building trust and reducing barriers to care. One team member shared:

“Social work support involved phone contact, home visits and transport. This helped build connection, trust, and a clear understanding of the barriers stopping the client from accessing care.”

Another reflected on the importance of ongoing support from SEWB teams:

“Many individuals present with multiple, overlapping needs that require sustained, culturally safe engagement rather than short term intervention.”





## Capacity Building

### Building confidence to support end-of-life care at home

Healthy North Coast partnered with Social Futures in February this year to bring together more than 100 aged care and health professionals at Crowley Care in Ballina, with a further 45 joining online. The session focused on strengthening the capability of the home care workforce under the new Support at Home End-of-Life Pathway.

With new aged care reforms now in effect, the day wasn't about theory. The focus was practical: building confidence in early end-of-life conversations, strengthening escalation pathways, and improving coordination between home care providers, general practice and specialist palliative care, so people can remain at home safely for their end-of-life care.

Providers described gaining clearer understanding of referral pathways, the care partner role, and how Australian Government and NSW Health services intersect.

Participants valued having general practice, specialist palliative care, Aboriginal health, home care providers and government partners in the same room – reinforcing shared responsibility for supporting people at home.

Most importantly, the forum strengthened professional relationships – a foundational element for coordinated end-of-life care at home.

By building confidence in communication, escalation and coordination, the Northern Rivers workforce is better positioned to support expected deaths at home, reduce unnecessary crisis transfers, and improve the experience for families when it matters most.

### Key highlights from the session included:

**Over two thirds (n=26/38) of post-event survey respondents said they are now more likely to raise end-of-life planning earlier with clients and families**

**Many reported they will escalate concerns sooner, supporting earlier intervention and reducing crisis-driven care**

**More than half said they will engage differently with clinicians and other providers to strengthen coordination across the system**

**Many were committed to reviewing their organisation's internal readiness and processes - moving beyond individual learning toward organisational change**

**100% (n=38) agreed the forum was relevant to their role.**

[Learn more](#)