

# BETTER HEALTH *stories*

**HEALTHY**  
NORTH COAST

**phn**  
NORTH COAST  
An Australian Government Initiative

Autumn 2025



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



## Coordination

### Improved care for Aboriginal peoples facing chronic and complex health challenges

The Integrated Team Care (ITC) program plays an important role in supporting Aboriginal peoples who live with chronic illnesses. Delivered by Aboriginal Medical Services (AMSs) across the NSW North Coast, the program provides care coordination and practical supports such as medical equipment (e.g. continuous positive airway pressure machines (CPAP)) and costs associated with travel to specialists.

The program also contributes to improving the identification of Aboriginal people in health services, strengthening cultural capability in mainstream care, supporting the uptake of health assessments, and fostering stronger relationships between patients and providers.

The AMSs in the North Coast region delivering these important supports are Bulgarr Ngaru, Werin, Rekindling the Spirit, Galambila, Durri, and Bullinah.

In the most recent reporting period (July to December 2024):

**4,954** Aboriginal people were supported through **40,975** occasions of service

**1,631** people were supported with transport assistance to attend appointments

**1,804** medical and allied health appointments were supported

A patient's CPAP machine broke down just before the Christmas holiday period, causing significant distress. Thanks to having an up-to-date GP care plan and an ITC referral already in place, their ITC care coordinator was able to arrange same-day repairs. The patient had a working machine before the clinic closed for the break, giving him peace of mind and preventing a potential health crisis.

Another patient in the region had been unable to access specialist care due to travel barriers and a lack of local services. Through the ITC program, the patient's care coordinator arranged telehealth consultations, allied health support, and transport. The patient's condition has since stabilised, and they've expressed appreciation for the coordinated and culturally safe care.

The daughter of a local Elder shared her thanks when ITC provided accommodation and fuel vouchers so they could travel to Sydney for the Elder's cardiac surgery. Without this support, attending the appointment would not have been possible.

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



## Commissioning

### Lismore Medicare Mental Health Centre delivers safe, quality mental health care

Lismore Medicare Mental Health Centre is a safe, welcoming and non-judgmental place where people can access free mental health information, services and supports.

Operated by Open Minds and located in Lismore Health Precinct at Southern Cross University, the Centre has been an invaluable resource for a community adversely affected by disasters in recent years, including the Northern Rivers floods in 2022.

The Centre is for anyone in need, and can:

- ▶ provide immediate support to help reduce distress
- ▶ provide mental health assessment, treatment and support
- ▶ connect people with ongoing support

In the most recent reporting period (January to March 2025) the service delivered:

A positive customer experience rating of **9** out of **10**



**1,126** client appointments



*“A safe place to talk about my feelings. It’s not like other counselling places with bright lights and being stuck in a chair for an hour. We walked around and looked at nature.”*

*“The staff worked with me, taking into consideration where I was at and what I could cope with at the time. I never felt judged if I was not up to dealing with things. Building my self-confidence to take control myself, I was encouraged to set the goals and direct how processes worked. So they helped me to help myself.”*

*“The help and assistance (from staff member) helped me a lot and never made me feel stupid for being so unsure about my emotions. She helped me understand them. I feel a lot better now than when I first arrived.”*



The other Medicare Mental Health Centre in our region is based in Coffs Harbour, with another one having been recently announced for Tweed in the near future. [Learn more about Medicare Mental Health Centres on the North Coast.](#)



# Capacity Building

## North Coast professionals collaborate for better health outcomes

On Saturday 31 May 2025, around 100 health professionals from across the North Coast region gathered on Gumbaynggirr Country at Pacific Bay Resort, Coffs Harbour, for the Chronic and Complex Care Forum 2025 – a full-day event focused on strengthening primary health care professionals' capacity to manage chronic and complex health conditions.

One quarter (26%) of North Coast residents are aged 65 years or older, compared with 18% in NSW. The number of people aged 85 years or older will almost double in the next 20 years. For this reason, chronic and complex conditions are an important and pressing issue for the region's health workforce, with 59% of people aged 65 years and older having one or more long-term health conditions.

The Forum brought together general practitioners, nurses, allied health professionals and pharmacists to explore innovative, evidence-based approaches to delivering integrated care that focuses on the person being at the centre of that care.

The Forum's agenda featured a diverse and practical mix of profession-specific sessions and case-based discussions, addressing some of the most pressing challenges in chronic and complex care, including:

- ▶ Aboriginal health
- ▶ Gender-affirming care
- ▶ Care at the end of life
- ▶ Strategies for preventing clinician burnout
- ▶ Care for addiction
- ▶ Care for obesity



**9 out of 10**  
attendees reported  
learning something  
that would change  
their clinical  
practice



**9 out of 10**  
attendees felt that  
the content was  
contemporary,  
evidence-based and  
relevant

**100%** of  
attendees who  
responded to the  
survey said they  
would recommend  
the event to  
a colleague



*"Fantastic education across a diverse range of clinical areas and a friendly/social environment." - Practice Nurse*

*"I've learned a lot, made some fantastic connections, and am feeling inspired." - Allied Health*

*"Excellent group of speakers, educators and organisers." - GP*



[See more upcoming health events from Healthy North Coast](#)

