

BETTER HEALTH

stories

HEALTHY NORTH COAST

phn
NORTH COAST
An Australian Government Initiative

May 2024



Healthy North Coast is an independent, not-for-profit organisation proudly delivering the Australian Government's PHN Program in North Coast NSW.

IN THE NEWS

Healthy ageing a key priority for the North Coast

The North Coast region of NSW faces unique challenges and opportunities due to its ageing population. Currently, 13,800 or 25% of people between 65 and 84 live in the North Coast. This compares to 18% nationally. Additionally, 30% of the North Coast population is expected to be over 65 by 2030, and the number of people over 85 will almost double in the next twenty years.

Developed in consultation with the community, aged care industry stakeholders, and our population agencies, the demand for the healthcare system grows, impacting people living with chronic conditions. They are living longer but not necessarily healthier. We want to shift the focus to improving health so that people might live the best life they can irrespective of their age."

"Healthy ageing is a journey that begins at birth. As we live longer, we need to ensure all our living years have choice, dignity and control. To address these ageing challenges, Healthy North Coast has developed a Healthy Ageing Strategy with the vision to help people live well, age well, and have ongoing opportunities to contribute and stay connected to their community and Country.

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"Healthy ageing is a



Health survey launched

By Andrea FERRARI
Northern NSW and the Mid North Coast Local Health Districts are launching a new health survey to support our ageing population. The survey aims to understand the health and wellbeing of people aged 65 and over, and how we can better support them. The survey will be conducted in two waves, with the first wave focusing on physical health and the second wave focusing on mental health and wellbeing. The survey is a key part of our Healthy Ageing Strategy, which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of our ageing population. The survey will be conducted in two waves, with the first wave focusing on physical health and the second wave focusing on mental health and wellbeing. The survey is a key part of our Healthy Ageing Strategy, which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of our ageing population.



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

Looking after our health care providers after a disaster

Southcoast pharmacist, who has been a health care provider for over 20 years, shared his experience of supporting health care providers after a disaster. He highlighted the importance of mental health support for health care providers, who often experience high levels of stress and burnout. He also discussed the role of community support in helping health care providers cope with the aftermath of a disaster. The article emphasizes the need for ongoing support and resources for health care providers, particularly in the wake of a disaster. It also highlights the importance of self-care and seeking help when needed. The article is a call to action for the community to support health care providers and for the government to provide adequate resources and support.

Treatment room to improve health outcomes in Ulong

By Andrea FERRARI
The Ulong Local Health District has opened a new treatment room to improve health outcomes for its residents. The room is equipped with the latest medical equipment and staffed by experienced health care professionals. The room is designed to provide a comfortable and safe environment for patients, and to ensure that they receive the best possible care. The room is a key part of the Ulong Local Health District's commitment to providing high-quality healthcare services to its community. The room is also a testament to the district's investment in its infrastructure and its commitment to improving health outcomes for its residents. The room is a key part of the Ulong Local Health District's commitment to providing high-quality healthcare services to its community.



hnc.org.au/media

AT A GLANCE

18%

increase in patients accessing Mid North Coast Specialist Outreach Clinic services

2,599

visitors to the new Head to Health website since launching in late January

3,300+

North Coast residents had their say in the 2024 Better Health Community Survey

1,145

young people impacted by Northern Rivers floods supported by the Resilient Kids mental health program

2,500

healthcare workers have benefitted from our Workforce Support and Wellbeing program

76%

of young people accessing psychosocial support showed an improvement in RAS-DS assessment score

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



Coordination

Community has their say for Better Health on the North Coast

In March and April, as part of our triennial local Health Needs Assessment, we conducted a 'Better Health' community survey to gather valuable insights to help shape the future of primary health care across our region.

Previous years' community feedback has resulted in initiatives like *GP telehealth*, *North Coast Health Connect* and the Port Macquarie social support service *Healthy Me*, *Healthy Community* being established to address specific local health needs.

Community engagement with the 2024 survey was strong, with **more than 3,300 North Coast residents participating** to have a voice in their future health. Community forums will be held to explore the survey findings ahead of the upcoming Health Needs Assessment report to the Department of Health and Aged Care later this year.



hnc.org.au/media/better-health-survey

Head to Health inbound referrals increase

In January 2024, we launched the new North Coast Head to Health website to enhance community awareness and introduce a secure online referral system for the Head to Health mental health intake, assessment and referral (IAR) service.

Quarter 3 (January to March 2024) highlights



Increased eReferrals: The new online solution facilitated 277 inbound eReferrals to the IAR service, a significant rise from 8 in the previous quarter. Of these, 127 referrals were from local GPs.



Expanded Referral Network: Through the establishment of the new local referral 'spoke' service, 249 new service providers have been added to the outbound referral directory. Total service listing is now 293, greatly enhancing referral pathway options for North Coast residents across all levels of the mental health stepped care model.



Website Engagement: Since its launch in late January to the end of March, the new North Coast Head to Health website has attracted 2,599 unique visitors.

These improvements reflect our commitment to making mental health services more accessible and improving outcomes for North Coast communities.

headtohealthnc.org.au



Commissioning

Psychosocial support for young people

Part of our 2022 Mental Health Reform Project, the **Psychosocial Support Program** delivers non-clinical community-based supports aimed at helping young people in the community to recover from mental illness.

The Program is run by commissioned service partner, Mission Australia. Services include the development of care and support plans to help people manage daily activities, rebuild and maintain connections, build social skills and participate in education and employment.

76% of participants have experienced improvements in their Recovery Assessment Scale – Domains and Stages assessment score

70% of participants reported significant improvement in their k10 outcome scores

CASE STUDY

A client who had an electricity supply termination was supported through the process of phoning and asking for energy rebates to be applied to their account. A new cheaper electricity plan and repayment schedule was negotiated, with this client now having built trust with program staff, creating a foundation for continued engagement and opportunity to address mental health needs.

hnc.org.au/commissioned-service/psychosocial

Supporting Northern Rivers young people impacted by floods

Resilient Kids Program services launched in November 2023 to support the health and wellbeing of Northern Rivers young people aged eight to 18 years impacted by the 2022 floods. Funded by a \$10 million Australian Government grant through the National Emergency Management Agency, the program was co-designed with children, young people, schools, families, and service providers.

The program is delivered by Social Futures, our commissioned service partner, in partnership with The Family Centre and Human Nature Therapy. The program focuses on school-based education and skills building, and the establishment of local hubs supporting community resilience building.

Since launching, 1,145 young people have accessed services, with those receiving support reporting a 97% positive overall outcome. For First Nations and young people with autism or a cognitive disability, this is even higher at a reported 100%.

A 2022 Resilience Survey was completed by 6,611 students from 75 Northern Rivers schools.

CASE STUDY

Thanks to the advocacy of a Resilient Kids counsellor, 'Ray' is now supported through the child and adolescent mental health service program and the counsellor is working with Ray's parent to develop their own skills and capacity for complimentary family and at-home support. Ray plans to continue participating in the social and emotional wellbeing group which they describe as a 'highlight of my week'.

hnc.org.au/resilient-kids



Capacity Building

Supporting our local primary care workforce

The Workforce Support and Wellbeing program, initially launched in October 2022, opened a second round of funding in March 2024. This initiative is part of a \$2.23 million PHN package to assist the flood-affected Northern Rivers primary care workforce.

The funding supports clinical and frontline staff from Northern Rivers primary healthcare organisations, and is delivered through four streams; wellbeing, education, locum support and disaster preparedness.

As a result of the program, 108 organisations have benefited, and more than 2,500 healthcare

workers to-date have been supported in improving wellbeing, resilience and preparedness. In addition, more than 40 organisations have participated in improving their business continuity planning.

Thanks to programs like this, no Lismore general practices have closed following the flooding disaster.

“ Like much of the Lismore community, many of our staff were directly affected by the floods. This program offers relief, rest and assistance to the health workforce in this region, while still enabling our businesses to service the community. It is very welcome and appreciated.” Kyle Wood Owner, Southside Chempro **”**

hnc.org.au/workforce-grants

More patients benefitting from local specialist outreach services

Established in 2000, the Healthy North Coast-operated Mid North Coast Specialist Outreach Clinics provide specialist medical face-to-face services in Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie.

The specialist services provided to our community cover a broad range, including neurology, dermatology, psychiatry and endocrinology.

The clinics are well-equipped with optimised procedure and treatment rooms, and they maintain facilities for nerve conduction studies, EEG and UVB light treatment. Specialists are flown in every month from various locations

across Australia and are supported by a high-performing clinic team of nurses, technicians, and medical administration staff.

Between January to March 2024, visiting specialists provided 1,494 occasions of service, marking an increase of 18.4% compared to the same period in 2023.

“ Working here is a dream and would love to move to the area someday soon. (Specialist)

The staff here are incredible and really go over and above. (Patient) **”**

hnc.org.au/mnc-specialist-clinic