



Tell Gippsland PHN

JANUARY - MARCH 2025

INTRODUCTION

Gippsland PHN regularly gathers feedback and insights from community members, advisory groups, and health professionals. This summary reflects the feedback we received from January to March 2025. It highlights key factors affecting health and wellbeing in Gippsland, and opportunities for improvement.

Challenges for Gippsland



Many people cannot afford to access healthcare

- More people struggle to afford essentials like food and have no money left for healthcare
- Gap fees for specialist appointments are increasing
- Out of pocket costs for longer appointments for chronic conditions are increasing
- Transport challenges add to the cost
- The cost of diagnostic services are prohibitive, including for diagnosing ADHD

"The lack of bulk billing GP services results in higher presentations at hospital ED."

- Professional



More people are struggling with housing and homelessness

- There are fewer affordable rental properties
- Homelessness is more visible with people 'sleeping rough' in parks and other public spaces
- Access to primary care and social supports and services is challenging
- Libraries are important for wi-fi and social interactions
- Prolonged financial stress caused by high housing costs and insecurity from eviction or homelessness impacts mental health

"'No wrong door' is not happening"

- Community member



Mental health services and supports can be very difficult to access

- Mental health was the top health concern identified by 90% of respondents in a 2025 Gippsland health workforce survey
- A need for affordable access to care for those with a complex trauma history
- People are 'falling through the cracks' due to eligibility restrictions and service providers working in silos (including elder abuse, LGBTQIA+)
- Young people are struggling to access mental health supports, especially for severe and complex presentations
- There has been a significant increase in children and young people self-harming

"Serious lack of referral options in mental health for both psychologists and psychiatrists with no affordable access for essential care for those with complex trauma history."

- GP



Difficult to meet the care needs of a rapidly growing ageing population

- The high rates of chronic conditions are a significant and growing health concern
- An already stretched health workforce faces an ever-increasing demand for services
- A lack of referral options and supports for dementia diagnoses, services and supports
- Long wait times for assessments and services to support people to live at home
- No local geriatricians in parts of Gippsland

"The increasing as well as ageing population ... will become more of a drain on GP services and the flow on effect for hospital services."

- Professional



Health workforce and system challenges

- There are workforce shortages for GPs and other specialists, allied health and nursing with the greatest impact in East Gippsland
- Practitioner wellbeing concerns due to high workload, including GP supervisors under increasing pressure in rural and regional areas
- Patient care impacted when care is not coordinated between GP, hospitals and other providers
- Accommodation shortages is a barrier to the recruitment and retention of health workforce
- Multicultural health practitioners can lead to difficulties to connect with patients and rural communities

"[The] GP didn't have information about [a recent] hospital stay..."

- Community member



Struggles related to social change and the political climate

- Impact of world politics on marginalised groups
- Violence and crime more visible in communities, leading to fear and worry
- Concerns about being treated in a culturally safe manner
- LGBTQIA+ patients are nervous about accessing services
- An increase in more acute mental health needs can be related to social pressures, including among children and youth

"Their [Neighbourhood Houses] commitment and non-judgemental approach to community has really been noticed."

- Community member

WHAT'S WORKING WELL

- Community organisations offering **free showers and toiletries** to people who are homeless
- **Improved processes** for managing patient care **between hospitals and primary care**
- Greater use of **My Health Record** which is helpful when accessing multiple healthcare professionals
- **Flying Doctor Wellbeing** provides bulk billed counselling and psychiatrist reviews via telehealth
- **Urgent Care Clinics** provide a good alternative to emergency departments

Increased use of nurse practitioners for prescription repeats, aged patient checkups...

- Professional

Gippsland PHN recommendations

- Strengthen **links between primary care and social services** and supports including mental health, alcohol and other drugs and the justice system
- Continued **support for practices** to incorporate MyMedicare reform opportunities that suit their community and business model
- Consider **mental health checks at schools** to tackle mental health issues early
- Promote and integrate the new **National Early Intervention Mental Health Service (NEIS)**
- Provide **training and support for primary care services** in provision of care for people experiencing homelessness
- Establish a **youth mental health clinic in Baw Baw** to service a rapidly growing population
- **Multidisciplinary care teams** to manage chronic conditions through person-centred and holistic care
- Greater involvement by **nursing and allied health workforce** within integrated multidisciplinary models enables **flexible workforce arrangements**
- A **collaborative GP supervision model** where multiple supervisors support the registrars in an area
- Accommodation support to enable new health sector employees and their families to settle in and build **connections in the community**
- Local training pathways for health professionals that offer **end-to-end training** and paid placements
- Support for programs that **reduce reoffending**
- Co-production with people with **lived experience** to address intersecting vulnerabilities

Resources and services

- New **Gippsland Pathways** for health professionals in Gippsland
- **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health resources** to ask the question and access health checks
- **1800 RESPECT 1800 737 732 or 0458 737 732 (text available 24/7)** support for people impacted by domestic, family or sexual violence
- **Medicare Mental Health 1800 595 212** a free confidential service to connect you with help and support
- **Health Access 1800 272 767** after-hours telehealth service
- **Victorian Virtual Emergency Department** (public service for non-life-threatening emergencies)
- **Gippsland PHN events and training program**
- **Digital health training for healthcare providers** (including telehealth and Provider Connect)
- **Community Led Integrated Health Care**
- **Aged care programs** (including mental health in aged care and early intervention programs)



Crisis services

- **Lifeline**
13 11 14 and 0477 13 11 14 (text available 24/7)
- **Suicide Call Back Service**
1300 659 467
- **Beyond Blue**
1300 224 636
- **MensLine Australia**
1300 789 978
- **Kids Helpline**
1800 551 800
- **ReachOut**
Online service for Under25s and their parents
- **13YARN**
13 92 76 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Crisis Support

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If you have questions or would like to request the detailed document that informed this infographic, please contact tellgippslandphn@gphn.org.au or (03) 5175 5444.