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New report highlights opportunities to keep Gippsland residents out of hospital

A new Health Insights paper from Gippsland Primary Health Network (Gippsland PHN) highlights the scale and cost of potentially preventable hospitalisations in Gippsland and opportunities to improve health outcomes and reduce pressure on hospitals by strengthening access to primary care.

Health Insights: Primary care: Keeping people out of hospital shows that in 2023–24, there were 12,895 potentially preventable hospitalisations among Gippsland residents, representing 7.4% of all hospitalisations compared with 6.2% nationally.

Preventable hospitalisations are estimated to cost Gippsland \$127 million each year.

The report reinforces that timely, accessible primary care plays a critical role in preventing illness, managing chronic conditions and helping keep people out of emergency departments and hospital beds.

Key insights:

- Gippsland's potentially preventable hospitalisation rate was 3,343 per 100,000 people, compared with the national rate of 2,617
- Chronic potentially preventable hospitalisations increased by 34% between 2017–18 and 2023–24 (due to increasing rates of chronic disease)
- There were 43,462 lower-urgency emergency department presentations for Gippsland residents in 2024–25, representing 33% of all emergency department presentations
- Lower-urgency emergency department presentations decreased by 13% between 2019–20 and 2024–25, but Gippsland's rate remained higher than the national rate in 2023–24
- Since opening in 2023, Gippsland's two Urgent Care Clinics have averaged approximately 27,000 total presentations per year to May 2026
- Around 60% of Urgent Care Clinic patients reported they would otherwise have gone to an emergency department

The report also identifies barriers to accessing primary care in Gippsland, including cost, long wait times, transport, limited or unaffordable local referral options, poor communication and a lack of information about existing services.

Opportunities to help keep people out of hospital include:

- Expanded after-hours GP services
- Better coordination between primary and acute care
- Integrated, multidisciplinary care models
- Care coordination for people with complex needs
- Increased use of digital and virtual health solutions

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, said the findings highlight the scale of the opportunity to improve access to care and help people stay well in their communities.

‘Nearly 12,900 potentially preventable hospitalisations occurred among Gippsland residents in just one year, at an estimated annual cost of \$127 million. These figures reinforce why timely and accessible primary care is so important for our communities and our broader health system,’ Ms Proposch said.

‘We are seeing the important role of alternatives to emergency departments. Around 60% of patients attending Gippsland’s Urgent Care Clinics reported they would otherwise have gone to an emergency department, demonstrating the value of giving people more options to access the right care in the right place at the right time.’

The paper acknowledges that not all lower-urgency emergency department visits and potentially preventable hospitalisations can be managed in primary care. Understanding local services and community needs can support better decision-making, service planning and care coordination.

Health Insights: Primary care: Keeping people out of hospital uses local and national data, as well as input from Gippsland health professionals and community members, to better understand challenges affecting primary health care in the region and identify opportunities for action.

Access Health Insights: Primary care: Keeping people out of hospital, along with other Gippsland PHN publications, on the [publications section of the Gippsland PHN website](#).

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