



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Gippsland PHN snapshot of child health issues

**22 October 2-21**

The latest issues paper on Child Health released by Gippsland Primary Health Network provides an important snapshot to inform future health planning in the region.

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, said the issues papers produced by the organisation's Population Health Planning team were a critical part of the organisation's vision of achieving a measurably healthier Gippsland.

"We are committed to Population Health Planning as an ongoing core function," Ms Proposch said. "We gather data and information from many sources including the local community and health professionals to identify the unique health priorities of our region.

"The purpose is to make the best-informed decisions about the best ways to achieve our vision."

A child's state of health is closely linked to their mother's health, as well as socioeconomic factors including poverty, housing and employment status, family violence, and whether a person is from a vulnerable community such as rural/remote, indigenous, culturally diverse, or children living in Out of Home Care.

The Child Health paper reveals the impact of COVID-19 on children is evident with homes becoming workplaces and education settings, increasing tension and anxiety for some children and families.

Workers in organisations supporting children and young people are concerned there are 'fewer eyes on kids', with some perceiving the risks faced by vulnerable children and young people during lockdown as outweighing COVID-19.

Health issues of importance to Gippsland parents and/or carers include child mental health and suicide, bullying, rising screen time, decreasing physical activity and poor diets, illegal drug use, family violence, child neglect, immunisation and a safe environment.



The top five diagnoses/reasons for doctor visits for Gippsland children aged 0-14 years in 2020-21 were:

- Immunisation (17.9%)
- Otitis media – middle ear infection (11.1%)
- Viral upper respiratory tract infection (9.8%)
- Asthma (9.2%)
- Upper respiratory tract infection (8.8%)

The paper reveals that 6.0% of children aged 0-14 years recorded a mental health diagnosis and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder was the most common mental health diagnosis (43.1%) with anxiety the second most common (20.4%).

Gippsland children are over-represented in some areas including:

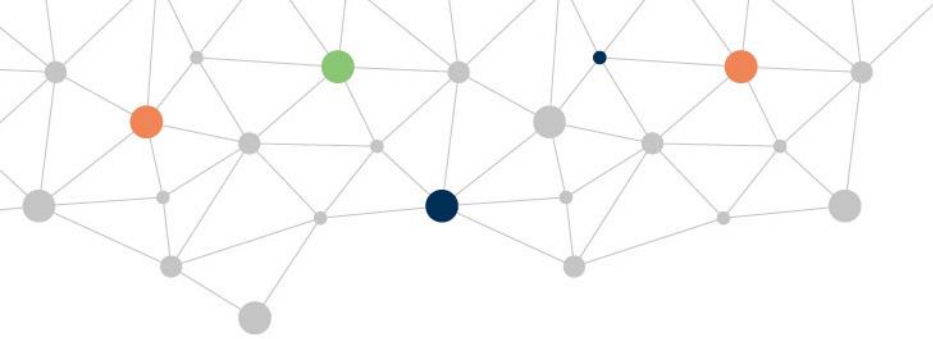
- 17.4% children with speech and language problems at school entry (Victoria 14.2%).
- 19.8 child protection substantiations per 1,000 eligible population (Victoria 11.4 per 1,000)
- 28.8% children in low income, welfare-dependent families (Victoria 19.3%)
- 24.1% developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains at school entry (Victoria 19.9%)
- 14.2% developmentally vulnerable on two or more domain at school entry (Victoria 10.1%)

Barriers to accessing care for children include paediatric and service shortages, complexity of the system as well as cost, access and transport.

To access the Child Health issues paper, go to <https://gphn.org.au/what-we-do/health-planning/population-health/resources-ph/>

## **GIPPSLAND PHN PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT CHILD HEALTH**

- Doctors in Secondary Schools <https://gphn.org.au/what-we-do/programs/doctors-in-secondary-schools-program/>
- Enhancing Mental Health in Secondary Schools <https://vtphna.org.au/our-work/connecting-health-with-other-sectors/enhancing-mental-health-support-in-secondary-schools/>



- The Youth Outreach program and Youth Advocacy Service delivered by YSAS. Visit [ysas.org.au/programs-east/ysas-gippsland-site](https://ysas.org.au/programs-east/ysas-gippsland-site) for more information.
- The Breaking the Cycle youth program is delivered by Latrobe Community Health Service. Visit [www.lchs.com.au/services/gambling-alcohol-drugs/alcohol-and-drugs](http://www.lchs.com.au/services/gambling-alcohol-drugs/alcohol-and-drugs) for more information.
- Headspace - Wonthaggi, Traralgon, Bairnsdale and Sale <https://gphn.org.au/what-we-do/programs/mental-health-care-and-suicide-prevention/>
- Developing minds <https://www.calmkidcentral.com/>
- Gippsland Lakes Complete Health place-based program <https://glch.org.au/social-support-and-counselling/counselling/>
- National Psychosocial Support Measure (NPSM) <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/national-psychosocial-support-programs-for-people-with-severe-mental-illness>
- Integrated Team Care (children and youth with chronic disease who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander) <https://gphn.org.au/what-we-do/programs/indigenous-australian-health-programs/itc-program/>

**ENDS**

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