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Latest insight papers highlight Gippsland's primary care access and healthy ageing challenges

Gippsland Primary Health Network (Gippsland PHN) has released two new Health Insights papers: *Primary Care Access* and *Healthy Ageing (People Aged 65+)*.

Drawing on regional data and the lived experience of Gippsland residents, the papers provide a comprehensive overview of factors that impact people's ability to access primary care, and the health and wellbeing of people aged 65 and over.

Chief Executive Officer at Gippsland Primary Health Network, Amanda Proposch, shared that the papers highlight the region's evolving health needs and guide future health planning.

"The insights captured in these papers provide valuable, evidence-based data that helps Gippsland PHN, and our partners identify areas that require urgent attention, and support initiatives that will make a meaningful difference in people's lives," Ms Proposch said.

"For example, falls and potentially preventable hospitalisations remain alarmingly high, with Gippsland recording the highest rate of fall-related deaths in the country. This is a major concern - one we are actively working to address through our recent tender application process, seeking one or more providers to deliver falls, strength and balance programs that are tailored specifically for older people."

Key findings include:

- **Primary Care Access:**
 - Bulk billing only general practices in Gippsland are becoming less common, with private billing only practices on the rise, increasing from 4% in 2022 to 16% in January 2025 however
 - 87% of all GP consultations in Gippsland were bulk billed in October 2024, compared to 77% across Australia.
 - Barriers to care include cost, long wait times, transport, and GP availability, particularly in rural areas
 - Health workforce shortages, particularly in psychology and allied health, continue to impact access.
 - Primary care demand is forecast to outpace supply, highlighting the need for new models of care.

- **Healthy Ageing (People Aged 65+):**
 - By 2030, Gippsland is forecast to have the second-highest proportion of people aged 65+ of all PHN regions in Australia.
 - Dementia is the leading cause of disease burden among older people in the region.
 - Falls and potentially preventable hospitalisations remain high, with Gippsland recording the highest rate of fall-related deaths in the country.
 - Community concerns include isolation, navigating services, and accessing timely aged care, palliative care, and dementia support.
 - 60.7% of Gippsland residents aged 65+ receive the aged pension, with higher rates in Latrobe and East Gippsland.

Gippsland PHN is committed to supporting innovative, integrated, and person-centred models of care. Initiatives such as MyMedicare, the Care Finder program, digital health tools, and multidisciplinary care coordination are central to strengthening both access and ageing support.

To read the full Health Insights papers or further research about primary care in Gippsland, visit: <https://gphn.org.au/resources/>