

MEDIA RELEASE

Dementia deaths high among Gippsland females

11 July 2022

Dementia is the second highest cause of death among females in Gippsland and the sixth among males with an average of 171 deaths a year.

This was revealed in Gippsland Primary Health Network's priority issues paper on 'Dementia', released this week.

The number of people in Gippsland with dementia is expected to double over the next three decades - an estimated 7,488 people in Gippsland had dementia in 2021 and this is expected to increase to 13,783 by 2058. Out of this total, an estimated 438 people have younger onset dementia (under 65 years). Forty per cent of people living in aged care facilities have a dementia diagnosis.

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, said the priority issues papers were an important resource for both health professionals and the community.

"Gippsland PHN is 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 informed decisions about the best way to achieve our vision of a measurably healthier Gippsland."

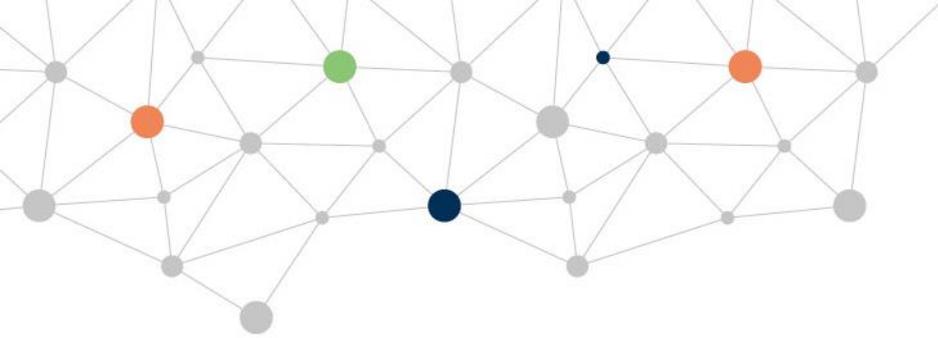
The paper also captured feedback from people living with dementia, their families, carers and health professionals.

People living with dementia said it was important to stay fit, well and connected. At times they experienced feelings of confusion, frustration and embarrassment, and were concerned about the future, losing independence and being a burden.

Carers and family members said support after diagnosis was needed to help the carer and person living with dementia to adapt to the diagnosis. While the carer role is essential, they said it could be very demanding and the system navigation challenging.

Anyone worried about their memory or thinking is encouraged to speak with their general practitioner (GP). A major change to memory or thinking is not normal at any age. For more information about local services, see the Gippsland PHN website (<https://gphn.org.au/what-we-do/health-planning-research-and-evaluation/tell-gippsland-phn/>).

The 'Suicide' priority issues paper highlights the impact of suicide on families, friends and communities.



The paper outlines protective (safety) factors including effective clinical care for mental, physical and substance use disorders; easy access to a variety of clinical interventions and support for help seeking; support through ongoing medical and mental health care relationships; strong connections to family and community support; and skills in problem solving, conflict resolution and non-violent handling of disputes.

Services and supports available are also detailed along with the many resources developed as part of the Place-based suicide prevention trials projects, led by Gippsland PHN in partnership with the Victorian Department of Health in Latrobe and Bass Coast, can be found at <https://gphn.org.au/what-we-do/programs/suicide-prevention-program/>

Resources include free online suicide prevention training for anyone living, working or studying in Gippsland. The training aims to help identify the warning signs of someone at risk, give confidence to speak to them about their thoughts and provides the tools to connect them with professional care.

Access the two priority issues papers at <https://gphn.org.au/resources/>

ENDS

Helplines and online supports include:

Lifeline (24 hours) 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service (24 hours) 1300 659 467

MensLine 1300 78 99 78

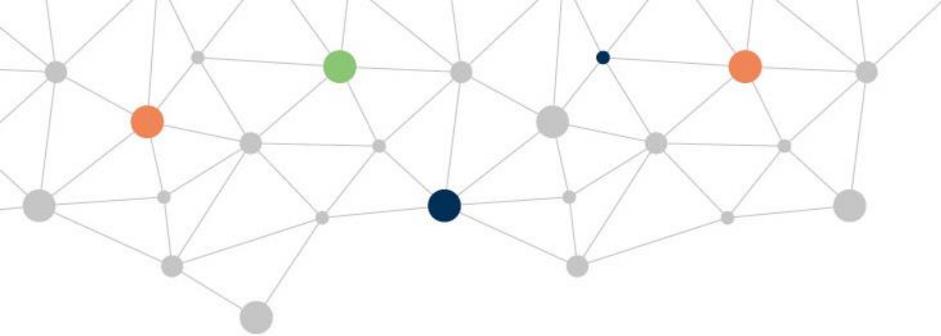
Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

Yarning SafeNStrong – 1800 959 563

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636 – including safety planning

Dementia Help Line 1800 100 500 – a free telephone service for anyone seeking information, advice or support about dementia. Online resources: <https://www.dementia.org.au/>

For more information, contact Lynne Smith on 0437 918 234 or lynne.smith@gphn.org.au



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