

## MEDIA RELEASE

# People with a disability face barriers in health system

17 April 2024

People with a disability in Gippsland find that getting support is hard and requires navigating a complex system.

A new Priority Issues Paper from Gippsland Primary Health Network on 'Disability' has found that people living with disability are the most frequent users of health services but 70 per cent experience significant barriers accessing required services.

Social isolation is especially problematic for people living with a disability who also experience housing and employment concerns while mental health is the most common co-occurring health issue and often not well serviced.

The Disability paper is one of three released by Gippsland PHN this week; the others are LGBTIQ+ Health and Wellbeing, and Chronic Illness.

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, said the papers were compiled from local data and intelligence from Gippsland PHN teams and advisory group members for strategic health planning in priority and emerging areas.

"Our priority issues papers capture information from a range of sources including feedback from consumers," Ms Proposch said. "They are an integral part of health planning and help us make informed decision about what is needed by our community."

The LGBTIQ+ Health and Wellbeing issues paper found LGBTIQ+ people are 2.1 times as likely to have a disability or long-term health condition when compared to the general population and were 1.7 times more likely to be diagnosed with anxiety or depression by a doctor.

The Gippsland Rainbow Brick Road report shows that 67% of LGBTIQ+ people have concerns about their mental health.

The third paper revealed that chronic disease is becoming more common and causes most of the burden of ill health in Australia. In 2022-23, the top five chronic conditions in Gippsland leading to potentially avoidable hospital admissions were related to:

- Diabetes complications (1508)
- Iron deficiency anaemia (1450)
- Congestive heart failure (1049)
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (1178)
- Angina (548)

Several risk factors for chronic disease are common in Gippsland – alcohol consumption, smoking, obesity, physical inactivity and diet lacking vegetables.

Community members told Gippsland PHN of things that “would improve their health”. These included improved access to a regular GP in their local area; affordable care including allied health, pain management and specialists, all communicating well with their GP; good quality emergency care locally; and access to specialists between appointments.

Gippsland PHN has commissioned a range of early intervention activities and models of care, designed to promote healthy ageing and reduce pressure on local health services. Feedback from participants includes:

- “I have back issues and I like how our instructor keeps us moving. I want a healthy body and a healthy heart.”
- “I have lung trouble and bad legs. The classes have been especially great for my lungs. My mental and physical health have improved as well as my confidence.”

Ms Proposch said Gippsland PHN valued feedback from all stakeholders, especially the community.

You can read the issues papers at <https://gphn.org.au/resources/> or you can provide feedback to Gippsland PHN at <https://gphn.org.au/what-we-do/health-planning-research-and-evaluation/tell-gippsland-phn/>

**Note:**

***If you or someone you know needs help, contact***

***Lifeline 13 11 14***

***Beyondblue Support Service 1300 224 365***

***Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467***

***MensLine 1300 789 987***

***Kids Helpline 1800 551 800***

***Qlife 1800 184 527***

***Yarning SafeNStrong 1800 959 563***

***Head to Health 1800 595 212***

***You can also speak to your local doctor.***

**ENDS**

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