

MEDIA RELEASE

New report: Gippsland people want access to health care when they need it

10 January 2024

Gippsland people want to access health care that meets their needs and stage of recovery, when they need it, according to a new report released by Gippsland Primary Health Network.

The comprehensive report, 'What Gippsland community want for their mental health and wellbeing', is a compilation of insights and priorities collected from various Gippsland PHN projects from 2020 to 2022. The report also includes insights from partner organisations.

Gippsland PHN projects includes codesign of the Primary Mental Health Care and Alcohol and Other Drugs Commissioning strategies, community consultation to inform chronic disease risk factor screening for the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone and placed-based suicide prevention trials.

Partner organisations insights which helped inform the report include the Latrobe Health Assembly's work to codesign a mental health café and a social prescribing model and insights from the Latrobe Health Advocate engagement activities between 2020 and 2022.

Gippsland PHN Acting Chief Executive Officer, Angela Jacob, said the report provided clear and consistent information about what communities want from their care.

"They want a more holistic approach to their health – looking at physical and mental health together and working with multiple chronic conditions at the same time," Mrs Jacob said. "They would like comprehensive health-related support for both the physical and mental implications of their conditions. This includes non-judgemental and supports for smoking reduction."

The report reveals that some community members are deterred from accessing health care by unpleasant experiences some health professionals. This includes experiences of language or cultural barriers; difficulty or overly complex systems and processes; being rushed or judged.

They want health care professionals who listen, establish trust and care about the relationship so they understand the patient's journey in navigating services.

People also want increased mental health awareness from their health professionals and clinicians who understand trauma and its far-reaching health impacts.



Service cost is reported as the biggest barrier for health care access, particularly for people experiencing multiple challenges. This includes cost of general practice, cost of prescription medication and cost of specialists. People want screening and preventative services to be free of charge to increase uptake.

The importance of equipping all healthcare professionals with the ability to support individuals experiencing suicidal or self-harm ideation was raised, along with improved screening and support for suicide risk is a priority.

People believe community members with lived experience should be embedded in the wellbeing support system, with the aim of both providing assistance and fostering collective healing in the community. Lived experience expertise should be integrated into community, into organisations, into policy research, system reform, and all aspects of support and development.

Mrs Jacob thanked everyone in Gippsland who provided feedback across multiple engagement activities.

“There is a consistent theme in the report of people wanting to be heard, they want affordable care and barriers to accessing health and wellbeing services removed,” she said. “This valuable feedback will assist the sector design services that meet the needs of their communities.

“We have already demonstrated this is achievable with some significant projects rolled out this year in response to community needs and Gippsland PHN is looking forward to continuing this important work with our partners.”

Read the report at on the [Gippsland PHN website](#).

Snapshot of feedback:

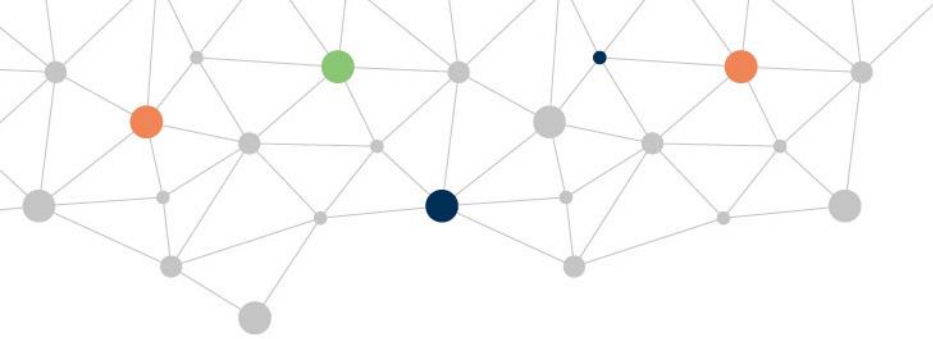
“I want to feel listened to, I often feel depressed after attending doctors, feeling they don’t believe me.”

“Why don’t we have mental health nurses at GP clinics all around the country. They navigate and coordinate services and some nurses are allowed to do secondary consults with psychiatrists, which is great because you get to see the same person. The face-to-face relationship is very important because you need that human touch, that caring and compassion. They can see visual cues when you are not able to tell them. I can be heard and not judged. “

“I am more than a diagnosis and I want more than a prescription - my other needs are also addressed such as substance use, physical health and my experience of trauma.”

“[I have] complex mental health, I can’t afford to go to a doctor.”

“I want someone easy to talk to, who can guide me in the right direction. I need help making my way through the system.”



“When I use a new service or move between services and settings, I would like a seamless handover and a plan in place for what happens next.”

“Following a diagnosis of a chronic disease, I would like to access health related supports for the physical and mental consequences of my chronic disease related conditions.”

“I would like to see all health professionals be able to support people experiencing suicidal or self-harm ideation. There should be adequate primary care counselling services that I can access within one week.”

“I want skilled child mental health clinicians in all parts of Gippsland. I want specially targeted services for children 0-10. I want access to bulk billed child psychiatry...”

“We need wrap around care that includes carers, family, and friends.”

“Hubs are a great idea. Services could be accessed much more easily and would take pressure off trying to navigate what to do and where to go next.”

“I want to be accepted and not be the subject of racism in the health system. I want the choice of an indigenous or non-indigenous clinician, I want clinicians who understand trauma.”

The insights and priorities were collected during various projects during 2020-2022, including:

- Codesign of mental health cafe (Latrobe Health Assembly, 2022)
- Codesign of the Primary Mental Health Care and Alcohol and Other Drugs Commissioning strategies (Gippsland PHN, 2021)
- Gippsland PHN Health Needs Assessment (2021)
- Community consultation to inform chronic disease risk factor screening for Latrobe Health Innovation Zone (Gippsland PHN, 2021)
- Codesign of social prescribing model (Latrobe Health Assembly, 2020)
- Place-based suicide prevention trials (Gippsland PHN, 2020-2022)
- Office of Latrobe Health Advocate (2020-2022)

If you or someone you know needs help, contact:

Lifeline 13 11 14

Beyondblue Support Service 1300 659 467

MensLine 1300 789 987

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800

Qlife 1800 184 527

Yarning SaneNStrong 1800 959 563

Head to Health 1800 595 212

To access mental health support in Gippsland, speak to your local GP.