

MEDIA RELEASE

New paper looks at digital health impact on health outcomes

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A new priority issues paper from Gippsland Primary Health Network explores the role of digital health and its potential to lead to better health outcomes.

The paper, 'Digital health and access to services', says digital health allows people to access the healthcare they need. It gives health providers such as GPs access to timely information and allows greater sharing of health data between providers.

Gippsland PHN Acting Chief Executive Officer, Angela Jacob, said the organisation brings together local data and intelligence from Gippsland PHN teams and advisory group members for strategic health planning in priority and emerging areas.

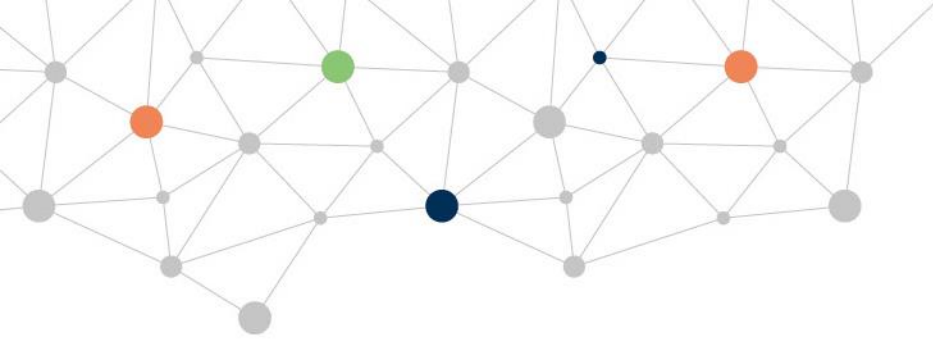
"Our priority issues papers capture information from a range of sources including feedback from consumers," Mrs Jacob said. "They are an integral part of health planning and help us make informed decision about what is needed by our community."

Digital health refers to technologies that can facilitate the delivery of healthcare and collect and share a person's health information. Digital care models are not a replacement for in-person care but rather allow greater choice for patients and health professionals, and greater patient involvement in care choices.

Digital health includes:

- mobile health and applications (such as SMS reminders and wellness apps)
- electronic prescribing (ePrescribing)
- electronic health records (including My Health Record)
- telehealth and telemedicine (e.g., telephone, video, online)
- wearable devices (such as fitness trackers and monitors)

The issues paper also looks at digital inclusion which is about ensuring that everyone can access and use digital technologies effectively.



The data shows Gippsland trailing in some areas such as access to an internet connection and the use of various digital devices. Gippsland has lower digital access, 69.5 (out of a score of 100), compared to the national average of 72.0.

People with low socio-economic status and younger people are also more likely to use mobile devices rather than stationary devices in the home.

A second paper released is titled 'Dual diagnosis of mental health and alcohol and other drug problems'. Dual diagnosis is when someone has a mental health condition and an alcohol or other drug (AOD) use problem at the same time.

Around 50% of people experiencing a mental health condition also have a substance use problem and vice versa while people who live with a dual diagnosis often find it challenging to access support services.

The paper shows there are 3,800 people in Gippsland with a current dual diagnosis of mental health and AOD issues based on general practice data. Some 65% of people with an AOD diagnosis have a mental health diagnosis too with vulnerable population groups likely at higher risk of dual diagnoses.

People with dual diagnosis have higher rates of:

- severe illness course and relapse
- violence, suicidal behaviour and suicide
- infections and physical health problems
- social isolation and family/carer distress
- service use
- anti-social behaviour and incarceration
- Homelessness

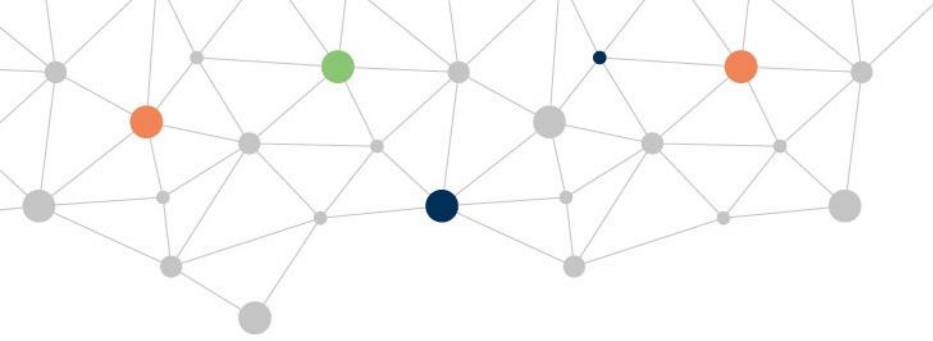
Dual diagnosis service users have told Gippsland PHN in their feedback that they want reliable and local information, and better coordination of services, regardless of timing or location.

People can access the two new issues papers at <https://gphn.org.au/resources/>

Feedback and discussion about the content of the papers is welcome via tellgippslandphn@gphn.org.au

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Please note:



The Gippsland Indigenous Dual Diagnosis Service delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Headspace, Gippsland Family and Carer Support Service and Australian Community Support Organisation. You can also contact your local GP or community health service.

Latrobe Regional Health Area Mental Health Service is the main provider of acute mental health services, including a dual diagnosis service.

*The National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline **1800 250 015** will transfer you to the Alcohol Drug and Information Service in your state. You can also contact:*

- *SANE Helpline **1800 187 263 SANE** (also online)*
- *Arafmi **1300 554 660** 24-hour hotline for carers.*
- *Carers Australia **1800 422 737***

For more information, contact Tracy VanderZalm at tracy.vanderzalm@gphn.org.au or phone 0447 491 345.