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New reports identify Gippsland's palliative care priorities

Gippsland Primary Health Network (Gippsland PHN) has released its Palliative Care Needs Assessment 2025 and Palliative Care Health Insights Paper, providing updated insights into one of the region's pressing health challenges and outlining priority actions to better support people living with life limiting illness.

Gippsland is home to one of the most rapidly growing ageing populations in the nation, accelerating demand for palliative care services, workforce capacity and person-centred care across the region.

The needs assessment and paper identify four key priority areas to guide Gippsland PHN's future work to help the primary care sector transition through this population shift to support 'better dying': strengthening the palliative care workforce, improving coordination between services, building community awareness and providing equitable access to services.

Key insights:

- In 2023, there was a total of 3,139 deaths in Gippsland, with this figure expected to climb to 4,247 by 2030.
- While it is estimated that 70% of Australians would prefer to die at home, only approximately 15% do.
- Gippsland's palliative care workforce is predominantly composed of palliative care nurses, with a total of 33 full-time equivalent (FTE) working in the region in 2024. This is a rate of 10.6 FTE per 100,000 people, which is lower than the national average of 13.1.
- In 2023-24, rates of palliative medicine services in Gippsland were 50% lower compared to national rates.
- Some communities face systemic barriers when accessing palliative care services in the region including people living with mental illness, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, multicultural communities, people with disability and those experiencing homelessness or social isolation.

The assessment and paper were underpinned by an analysis of local and national data as well as extensive engagement with professionals and families and carers with lived experience of palliative care in Gippsland.

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, said Gippsland is projected to have the second highest population of people aged above 65 of all PHN regions across Australia by 2030, and a concerted regional response is required to deliver a connected and equitable system for palliative care that meets local needs.

“In the coming years, Gippsland’s ageing population will continue to experience increasingly complex health needs and strengthening the palliative care response in our region isn’t optional - it’s essential.

“People living outside metropolitan centres deserve the same dignity, comfort and choice at the end of their life and by investing now in skilled staff, culturally safe care, and locally delivered supports, we can ensure families can access the support they need closer to home,” Ms Proposch said.

In response to the needs identified, Gippsland PHN is supporting a range of initiatives over the coming years to strengthen local palliative care capacity and coordination. These include the delivery of Community Grants to support locally-hosted events during National Palliative Care Week in May 2026 to raise awareness of palliative care and advance care planning; expansion of the GP Champion Palliative Care program to support general practices with staff training, health assessments and advance care planning; and collaborative planning with PHNs across Victoria and Tasmania to strengthen system-wide coordination and support for communities.

Learn more about how Gippsland PHN is strengthening palliative care supports for people living with life-limiting illness: gphn.org.au/what-we-do/programs/palliative-care/

For more information about programs and support services in Gippsland, please visit gphn.org.au/what-we-do/programs/palliative-care/

To view a copy of the Needs Assessment and Insights Paper, please visit: gphn.org.au/resources/

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Media contact

Natalie Kuczer

Communications Officer

Gippsland PHN

03 5175 5481

natalie.kuczer@gphn.org.au