

MEDIA RELEASE

Stepping towards more responsive mental health services

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Echuca Regional Health has successfully implemented 'stepped care', a mental health model that delivers services responsive to a person's changing needs.

Introduced as part of the Commonwealth Government's reform, stepped care aims to provide the best possible care for people experiencing mental illness. It gives people the opportunity to step their care up, or step it down, depending on their health needs.

Echuca Regional Health (ERH) has been delivering stepped care for 12 months, through funding provided by Murray PHN. The ERH Social Services department has integrated the model into a variety of programs including family services, counselling, acute services and the emergency department.

Fiona Clark, ERH Manager of Social Services, said that the introduction of stepped care has provided ERH the opportunity to increase and tailor services that they provide to the community.

"Clients receive care based on a detailed assessment and can be easily referred to other programs and services in the community. We have established strong links with GPs and services such as housing support and community mental health, providing further wraparound support for patients."

Since July 2017, the service has received an average of 40 new referrals a month.

"To address the increase in referrals, we've developed a demand management strategy, including employing an intake worker and keeping an active waiting list," Ms Clark said. "Patients who can't be seen straight away receive a plan with online strategies and resources to assist them in maintaining their mental health and wellbeing while waiting."

Murray PHN CEO Matt Jones said that stepped care ensures people are kept at the centre of their care, with support services adapting to their needs.

"With almost half of all Australians estimated to experience a mental health condition in their lifetime, it's important that services are flexible and deliver more than a one-size-fits-all approach," Mr Jones said.

"Stepped care provides evidence-based interventions across multiple levels of need. As a person's needs change, the types of services and supports should also change with them, so that they receive the right care, in the right place and at the right time."

To find out more about ERH's stepped care program call 03 5485 5800. For more information on stepped care, visit murrayphn.org.au/steppedcare



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