

MEDIA RELEASE

Launching the inaugural Murray Health Report

Thursday 13 May 2021

We hear regularly in the media about the physical and mental health challenges faced by people across Australia. But health outcomes can be very different for people living in regional and rural areas than they are for people living in cities.

Murray PHN is pleased to publish the first edition of its Murray Health Report, which looks at the health issues, challenges and opportunities for people in our region, which runs from the centre of Victoria and along the Murray River.

This edition examines the mental health challenges faced in a 100,000 sq. km region with an ageing rural population, higher avoidable death rates, poorer cancer survival rates and lower life expectancy than metropolitan areas.

COVID-19 and bushfires have worsened mental health problems in the Murray PHN region, where there are higher rates of unemployment, lower socio-economic status and farming communities that experience drought, flood or fire on a regular basis.

The first *Murray Health Report: Mental health in our region* provides mental health statistics and insights and discusses the work that Murray PHN does to help improve mental health outcomes for people in our communities.

In mental health, this includes working with local hospital networks to map the future of mental health care, establishing HeadtoHelp mental health services in five locations to support people impacted by COVID-19 and embedding best practice, patient-centred models of mental health care that start in general practice.

Murray PHN CEO Matt Jones said that in the 2020-21 financial year, Murray PHN had devoted more than \$26m to mental health services, including psychosocial support and alcohol and other drug services.

“In the six years since PHNs were created by the Commonwealth Government, Murray PHN’s total budget for mental health has been more than \$115m,” he said.

“Those funds have commissioned mental health services that have helped thousands of people in the Murray PHN region. In pandemic times, our need for mental health support has never been greater.”

Mr Jones said the Murray Health Report outlined some of the mental health data that Murray PHN uses to determine and assess the level of need in our region.

“It also explains for the community, the work that we are doing to help make our mental health system more targeted, equitable and accessible to the people who need it most. Murray PHN firmly believes your postcode should not determine your health outcome.”



About PHNs (Primary Health Networks)

Murray PHN is a part of the national network of 31 Primary Health Networks across Australia. PHNs work closely with the primary health system to identify opportunities to improve health outcomes in our community, through better coordination and support of health services and by commissioning new services to address the health needs of the Murray PHN population, helps patients to receive the right care in the right place at the right time.

PHNs are not-for-profit organisations funded predominantly by the Australian Government to tackle identified national objectives and local priority areas, that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, aged care, alcohol and drugs, child health, chronic disease, digital health, general practice, health workforce, mental health and population health. These priorities frame the work of Murray PHN, which is also guided by community and clinical input to improve health outcomes.

Contact details

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