

Murrumbidgee Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Alliance

Annual Report 2022-23





Introduction from Independent Chair

Welcome to the first annual report of the Murrumbidgee Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Alliance!

Although the Alliance has been active since 2015, this is the first year we have put together an Annual Report to let people know who we are and what we are doing.

If other organisations or community groups are interested in linking into the work of the Alliance, please contact the Independent Chair via the secretariat (email below).

We hope you find this report informative and enjoyable and if you would like further information or have questions, please don't hesitate to contact us through the secretariat, Clarissa Managan: mlhd-mhda-eatodirectormhda@health.nsw.gov.au

Regards Robyn Manzie
Independent Chair



History and purpose of the Alliance

The Murrumbidgee Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Alliance was formed in 2015 following planning work and consultations which identified the potential value of having an overarching group or governance process for mental health and drug and alcohol providers in the Murrumbidgee region.

The initial Memorandum of Understanding was signed in June 2015 by eleven organisations who committed to being part of a forum through which key stakeholders from the health, community and social sectors can develop a strategic approach to meeting the mental health and drug and alcohol needs and expectations of consumers for access to, and delivery of, services to the Murrumbidgee population.

The Alliance is a formal arrangement between partners in services for people with mental illness, mental health challenges including suicidality and/or drug and alcohol issues, that reflects a commitment to work together to improve mental health and drug and alcohol outcomes for the Murrumbidgee population.

The Alliance members will:

- Focus on consumer outcomes not organisational outcomes and place the consumer as the central focus;
- Recognise the value that the wider community and social sectors contribute to addressing the needs of mental health and drug and alcohol consumers; and
- Communicate and work together with each other in a collaborative, open and transparent manner that recognises the values, skills and expertise that members bring to the Alliance.

Since 2015, the Alliance has remained committed to these principles and has developed a multiagency, consumer focused, approach that is truly unique across Australia.



Consumer Representative Views:

Vital to the work of the Alliance and its members is the participation of Consumer and Carer Representatives, people with lived experience of mental health and drug and alcohol issues. They use their experiences and perspectives to inform the priorities and strategies of the Alliance. These representatives are full voting members of the Alliance. Two of the Consumer Representatives have provided comments on their experience in the Alliance below, followed by a Carer Representative experience.

Rhonda McInnes:

I have been a part of the Alliance since it was formed in 2015. Over the years I have contributed to working parties and in meetings. The Alliance means a lot to me personally as it's a way to contribute to the community. I have a voice within the Alliance and look forward to every meeting.

Tania Le Petit:

What being part of the Alliance means to you?

Feeling a part of something beneficial to the community. Feeling like I get to help shed light on barriers to support and make things better. Feeling like what happened to me was not in vain.

What is your experience of being part of the Alliance?

Getting to put my lived experience to constructive use. Feeling included and respected.

What are your hopes for the Alliance?

That we become more person centred and find a way to get involved in the community. That the community gets to know who we are and what we do. That we can learn from each other and identify and address service gaps.

An example of how your input has influenced the Alliance?

I'd like to think I bring a humanistic lens to the table. A reminder that we are here to make things better for other human beings.



Carer Representative Views:

Cassie Morris:

What being part of the Alliance means to you?

Being apart of the Alliance, has been empowering. A carers voice and experience is often lost within the lived experience story. It is great to be able to give a voice to the carers experience and have people with decision making powers listen and consider a carer within their processes. At times you feel so disempowered and a power imbalance, but being able to be involved with passionate like minded people willing to listen and want to evoke change is so uplifting.

What is your experience of being part of the Alliance?

At first this experience was daunting, being in a room with individuals with such high levels of experience. However, I was accepted and my confidence in sharing my experiences has grown due to this compassionate group. I enjoy being apart of this Alliance, it is inspiring to see that there are so many leaders within our mental health sector, wanting to make changes and listening to the lived experience voice.

What are your hopes for the Alliance?

I hope the Alliance continues it's momentum to evoke change. I would hope to see more carers be a part of this group to be able to share their thoughts and experiences.

An example of how your input has influenced the Alliance?

At one of the planning days, for goal setting for the next year, we all had to write down areas we thought the Alliance could assist/work on. I suggested addressing stigma for lived experience, this is now a working group within the Alliance looking at various ways we can address stigma within mental health drug and alcohol.

Anything else you would like to say?

As carer you can feel so disillusioned by the systems, you can feel unheard and overwhelmed in the caring responsibility. However, being able to take these experiences to the Alliance, it instils hope that change can occur.



Watch this Space

In keeping with the Alliance's commitment to working in partnership with consumers and carers, the Alliance has committed to developing a Lived Experience Network to work alongside the Alliance service providers.

The purpose of the Network is to ensure collaborative development of a regional network of peers, providing a voice for people with a lived and living experience as either consumers or carers in mental health, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol sectors within the Murrumbidgee region.

The aims of the Network are to:

- *Enhance Consumer and Carer Engagement:* Create opportunities for active participation, representation, and consultation within the Alliance. Ensure the voices of consumers and carers are heard and valued in decision-making processes. Integrate the perspectives and experiences of people impacted by suicide, ensuring their voices are heard in shaping mental health, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol initiatives. Grow the capacity of consumer and carer representation across the Murrumbidgee region.
- *Facilitate Information Sharing:* Establish a centralised platform that provides resources, information, and updates on education, training, and support services relevant to mental health, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol services in the Murrumbidgee region. Disseminate mental health, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol resources, research, and best practices through the centralised information platform.
- *Foster Collaboration and Networking:* Create a supportive and inclusive environment where consumers, carers, and service providers can connect, share experiences, and collaborate on improving service delivery. Encourage dialogue and cooperation among stakeholders involved in mental health, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol, including consumers, carers, service providers, and community organisations.
- *Promote Peer Support and Leadership:* Develop a robust peer network that offers professional development, supervision, and peer support opportunities. Recognise and value the contributions of peers within the mental health, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol sectors. Develop peer networks offering support and sharing experiences to inspire hope and recovery.
- *Advocate for Change:* Work closely with government entities to influence policy direction, secure funding, and promote initiatives that address the needs and preferences of consumers, carers, and service providers. Influence policy and funding to enhance mental health, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol measures, resources, and awareness across the Murrumbidgee region.

Funding has been secured for a Coordinator for the Network, and throughout 2024 the Alliance will be progressing the development of the Murrumbidgee Lived Experience Network."

Want to know what mental health and drug and alcohol services are available in the Murrumbidgee Region?



Go to <https://mapmyrecovery.org.au/>

MapMyRecovery is a free resource connecting the Murrumbidgee community with services that provide support for mental health and drug and alcohol concerns. MapMyRecovery is for people who are experiencing mental health and/or drug and alcohol concerns as well as their friends, family, carers and service providers.

Alliance Initial Priority: Service Integration

The Alliance identified an initial priority of service integration, so that consumers of the services would experience transitions across the services being as seamless as possible. A number of initiatives have been progressed, including a Common Referral Form across all member organisations, and a Consumer-Held Shared Care Plan, so that the consumer has one care plan that spans all agencies they are working with. Work on these initiatives continues.(Lead agency Murrumbidgee Local Health District).



Alliance Workplan

The Alliance developed an ambitious workplan and there are currently three groups working on aspects of this plan – Priority Populations, Addressing Stigma and Community Information Strategy. These working groups meet regularly and report back to Alliance meetings quarterly. The working groups are actively seeking new members of the Alliance to join them in this work. Consumer and carer representatives are particularly welcome to ensure that the strategies from these groups are informed by lived and living experience.

The ***Priority Populations Working Group*** has reached a decision to focus on two priority groups, acknowledging that while there are many groups that would benefit from a focus, selecting two allows activity to be concentrated and achieve better outcomes. The two priority groups chosen are:

- First Nations People
- People with comorbid mental health and/or intellectual disability.

The ***Addressing Stigma Working Group*** has worked at identifying language guides to reduce use of stigmatising words when working with and/or referring to consumers with mental health, suicide or drug and alcohol issues, and the people who support them. The aim is to support and encourage the use of non-stigmatising language by organisations, media, and community members.

The ***Community Information Working Group*** is developing strategies to improve community knowledge of the mental health, suicide prevention and support and drug and alcohol services available across the region. Strategies to date include updating [MapMyRecovery](#) (an interactive online app containing information on all the MHDA member agencies, what services they deliver and where, and how to make contact with the services), promotion of the full range of services available for particular communities through local print media, collaboration with local events and consideration of an Alliance website. Print media campaigns have targeted Griffith and Deniliquin communities, with further communities in planning.



Alliance Communication Strategy

Currently, the Alliance is working on several communication resources identified in the Communication Strategy. These include:

- An Annual Report to be distributed to a wide range of stakeholders;
- A Facts sheet to be shared with Alliance members staff to inform them of the work of the Alliance and engage them in participation in the strategies; and
- A reporting template to provide regular updates to a range of stakeholders to keep them informed of the work of the Alliance.



Communication Campaigns

Life Doesn't Always Go According to Plan.

Connect, Your Way.

(Lead agency Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network).

These multimedia strategies are designed to encourage people to seek help when they need it and to let them know how to access the services.

Back in 2017 the Alliance identified higher than average incidence of mental ill health in the Murrumbidgee area and engaged Juntos marketing to create the Life Doesn't Always Go According to plan campaign. This award-winning campaign aimed at reducing stigma and encouraging help seeking behaviour with the focus being crisis support options; call Murrumbidgee Accessline, call Lifeline or visit headtohealth.

This year, Juntos worked with Murrumbidgee PHN, the Alliance and community members with lived or living experience of mental health challenges to develop a new campaign Connect, Your Way. What we heard during the consultations for the new campaign was that people wanted to see themselves in the campaign, they wanted to hear from real local people and their stories, and they wanted to know there is a range of ways to get help so people could select what best suits their needs. This concept was brought to life by using real local people, who shared their stories of how they connected to support. To find out more information, [Connect, Your Way — Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network](#).



Suicide Prevention and Response activities

Several Alliance members are actively and collaboratively engaged in suicide prevention and response strategies. The members report to the Alliance quarterly to update Alliance members and seek feedback where appropriate.

The Murrumbidgee Suicide Prevention and Aftercare Collaborative led by Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network meet on a bi-monthly basis and members work together to support suicide prevention and aftercare activities as identified as part of the Priority Action Plan Murrumbidgee Suicide Prevention and Aftercare Priority Action Plan — Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (mphn.org.au).

As part of the plan, a Local Response Group (LRG) was formed to ensure coordinated and timely supports are put in place following a suicide event or critical incident. A communications and response protocol was developed which governs and supports the work of the LRG. The LRG includes representatives from Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN), Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD), Wellways, NSW Police and NSW Ambulance.

Individual organisations including Wellways and Murrumbidgee Local Health District provide extensive suicide prevention and aftercare clinical and non-clinical support services and community support programs.



Service Profiles

At each Alliance meeting, a member agency provides a presentation on the services they provide to Murrumbidgee Communities. At the June 2023 meeting, the Department of Communities and Justice presented on their Family and Child Protection programs, whilst Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation (Rivmed) presented on the range of services provided by their organisation to the First Nations community of Wagga Wagga and surrounding areas.

Department of Communities and Justice:

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) now have an Allocation Hub for services for children and young people.

Child Protection Reports that come into DCJ via the Helpline are progressed to the Allocation Hub for response. The Hub gathers information from schools, other services etc, and will then work with other services where appropriate, to provide support and information and to ensure that all pathways and supports are covered for the young person; and can refer directly to services with the consent of the client.

Rivmed:

Rivmed provides culturally safe holistic health and wellbeing services. The services provided are comprehensive to address the risk areas contributing to poor health outcomes. Services are provided from 0 years of age through the lifespan and include primary healthcare, medical, dental, family services, prevention and early intervention drug and alcohol programs/education, domestic violence, social and emotional wellbeing, elder abuse and Stolen Generation cultural healing. Rivmed also works extensively with children in care in partnership with DCJ.

Directions:

Directions' local Pathways Murrumbidgee program offers community based treatment, counselling, case management and harm minimisation services for people impacted by alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) from Wagga and Griffith with outreach to Leeton, Narrandera, Tumut, Young and Cootamundra. Pathways Murrumbidgee has grown this year, with expanded services now available in Griffith and Leeton. We know that having access to support when and where it's needed is vital and are pleased to have more growth in services on the way again for people impacted by ATOD in the new year, across the Murrumbidgee region.

For more information contact Directions at: <https://directionshealth.com/pathways-murrumbidgee/> or phone: 02 6971 7330.



Pathways Team learning harm minimisation methods in a recent safer injecting and overdose prevention training.

Marathon Health:

Marathon Health is a not-for-profit registered charity with a vision of enabling country communities to thrive through improved health and wellbeing. Marathon health is passionate about equal access to quality health services for people wherever they choose to live. Service hubs are in Albury, Bathurst, Dubbo, Orange, Queanbeyan, and Wagga Wagga; and we provide services that are person-centred, culturally safe, and inclusive.

In the Murrumbidgee we have been piloting a Psychosocial Physical Health and Wellbeing pilot to improve health outcomes for people living in the Murrumbidgee region. We trained many staff through a codesigned, custom made 'Connecting physical health with mental health package', with many trained as facilitators to embed the package into host organisations and provide ongoing capacity building.

We deliver a range of programs such as Integrated Care Coordination, Integrated Team care, Health Care Navigation, WARATAH and WARATAH for Kids . These programs support people living with complex healthcare needs to effectively navigate the health system, and access support, information, and linkages to other services. This financial year we began delivery of the care finder program. This program is a crucial service designed to support vulnerable older people who wouldn't be able to arrange services without intensive support and don't have a family member, friend, or person they trust, to help. For more information contact us here <https://www.marathonhealth.com.au/> or phone: 1300 402 585.

Grand Pacific Health:

Grand Pacific Health (GPH) is a for-purpose organisation providing high-quality, locally tailored health services. We have operated for 30 years, and we continue to evolve. GPH deliver services to improve the health, social and emotional well-being of communities across NSW and the ACT from over 25 sites with a team of 340 staff.

Services include Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, Aboriginal Health, Allied and Preventative Health, Primary Health, and GP Clinics. We also manage 8 headspace centres focusing on supporting Youth Mental Health.

We ensure that our people are skilled in delivering culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those who are Culturally and Linguistically diverse, men, people living in rural areas, people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and those people experiencing or at risk of disadvantage.

This year, we introduced Mental Health Direct, a telehealth and in-person mental health support program. We've also strengthened our mental health support by delivering two new Head to Health centres in Shellharbour and Moruya.

Two other newly funded programs, CareFinder in Murrumbidgee (partnering with Marathon) and Healthy Ageing at Home in South Western Sydney, have commenced this year. Through Moruya Head to Health, one of our new centres, we have developed partnerships with local community service partners, Katungul, Directions Health, and Family Place.

We're also pleased to have maintained quality accreditation (QIP), among Australia's first programs to be accredited against these standards. We know that we cannot work alone. We're committed to strengthening how we engage with consumers, carers, families and people to improve local community outcomes. Find out more at www.gph.org.au or reach out via email at info@gph.org.au



Alliance Member Organisations

- Amaranth Foundation
- Calvary Health Care Riverina
- Centacare/headspace Griffith
- Dept of Communities and Justice
- Directions Health
- Flourish
- Grand Pacific Health
- Intereach
- Karralika
- Marathon Health
- Murrumbidgee Local Health District
- Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network
- Relationships Australia/headspace Wagga Wagga
- Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation (Rivmed)
- Riverina Murray Regional Alliance
- Stride
- St Vincent de Paul Society (NSW)
- Sunflower House
- STARTTS
- Wellways



Riverina Drug and
Alcohol Centre



Directions
Health Services



Where mental wellbeing thrives



Communities and Justice



NSW Service for the Treatment
and Rehabilitation of Torture
and Trauma Survivors





L to R: Clarissa Mangan, Paul Templeton, Anna McKenry, Tania Le Petit, Adam Phillips, Robyn Manzie, Cassie Morris, Janaeai Lai, Stephanie Stephens, Elizabeth Martin.

Thank you for reading the Murrumbidgee Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Alliance Annual Report, we hope you found it enjoyable and useful.

Feedback to Alliance

If you would like to provide feedback to the Alliance, you can do so by printing the postcard below and emailing it to Clarissa Mangan, mlhd-mhda-eatodirectormhda@health.nsw.gov.au



Feedback Postcard

Did you find the Annual Report interesting and informative?

What else would you have liked to see in the Annual Report?

Have you accessed MapMyRecovery and if so, do you have any comments or suggestions?

Would you like to know more about the Alliance and what would you like to know?
