Annual Report

2024/25

Bridging gaps in service provision through shared projects and outcomes for strategic integration of service delivery.

MURRUMBIDGEE
Mental Health
Drug & Alcohol
ALLIANCE

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and pay respects to the traditional owners of the lands on which the Alliance operates; the Wiradjuri, Nari Nari, Wemba Wemba, Perepa Perepa, Yorta Yorta, Ngunnawal, Ngarigo, Bangerang and Yitha Yitha Nations. We recognise our communities are made up of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples descended from additional mobs and clans who also call the Murrumbidgee region home.

We pay respect to elders past, present and future and recognise these lands have always been places of traditional healing and medicine, and this plays a role in shaping future health services.

Acknowledgement of Lived Experience

We acknowledge the profound contributions of individuals with lived and living experiences of mental health challenges, substance use, and suicide, as well as those who care for and support them. Each person's journey is unique and adds invaluable insight into how we can collectively improve and reform mental health and suicide prevention systems. We also remember those we have lost too soon, and recognise the lasting impact their absence leaves on their families, carers, and communities. Their stories, strength, and resilience guide us to confront stigma and ensure our efforts are informed by compassion, respect, and lived experience.

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Our Members

Amaranth Foundation

LikeMind

Calvary
Riverina Drug and Alcohol Centre

marathon health
Better healthcare, closer to home

NSW Government
Communities and Justice

MISSION AUSTRALIA
together we stand

Directions
Pathways to Recovery

NSW Government
Murrumbidgee Local Health District

flourish AUSTRALIA
Where mental wellbeing thrives

phn MURRUMBIDGEE
An Australian Government Initiative

firstHealth LIMITED

Grand Pacific Health

OneDOOR Mental Health

Riverina Medical & Dental Aboriginal Corporation
ICN 745

GROW mental wellbeing programs

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

headspace Griffith

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW
good works

headspace Wagga Wagga

SUNFLOWER HOUSE
hope and mental health

intereach

WWRH

KARRALIKA
programs to help you choose a better life

wellways

Chair's Report

It's been another busy and very productive year for the Alliance, culminating in our 10th Anniversary Celebration in June and launch of our website and our Lived Experience, Peer and Carer Network.

An article on the Network and a photo of Rhonda McInnes cutting the Anniversary cake can be found on the following pages.

For more information on the Murrumbidgee Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Alliance check out our website at mmhdaa.org.au

10 years old!

Our first step 10 years ago was to determine what our priorities would be and we undertook a process of setting priorities.

Those priorities have continued to guide the work of the Alliance:

- Service integration across agencies
- Development of new service models
- Capacity to respond to community concerns.

All work and priorities of the Alliance are focused on enabling and enhancing the recovery journey of people in the Murrumbidgee population living with mental health and/or drug and alcohol issues.

The number one priority was, and remains, service integration, so that people using services will experience it as a continuum of service delivery rather than stop/start and risk of falling through the gaps.

The Year in Review

In the 2024/25 year we have achieved the following:

New members

- Welcomed new member organisations: Salvation Army and Mission Australia.
- Welcomed a new Lived Experience member Karen Snaidero.

Completed our Vision Statement

"Bridging gaps in service provision through shared projects and outcomes for strategic integration of service delivery."

Endorsed the Alliance Consolidated Alliance Workplan 2025-27

The current workplan contains the following initiatives:

- Service based strategies to improve information exchange and the transfer of consumers' care through their recovery across the member organisations
- Joint initiatives and projects
- Opportunities for joint funding applications
- Shared education and learning that promotes better understanding and skills sharing between services staff
- A communication and marketing strategy promoting services
- A process for annual review

Relaunched the Alliance Common Referral and Consent Form

Revised and relaunched the Alliance Common Referral and Consent Form, one form that can be used to refer people to any of the Alliance member services.

This was initially implemented some years ago and has recently been reviewed and revamped; it is available electronically with ability to email the form to more than one service provider if required. We're about to evaluate this revised form with a view to extending it to other referring agencies, particularly general practice. It means that to refer to any Alliance organisations, only one referral form is needed. No more searching through a pile of forms for the right one.

Developed the Alliance website

The Alliance website is a public facing site with information about the Alliance, our principles, priorities and projects, plus our annual reports and Alliance Consolidated Workplan 2025/27.

Check us out at mmhdaa.org.au

The website also links to MapMyRecovery and to the Lived Experience, Peer and Carer Network on-line participation platform, the Peer Support Program and the Peer Work Placement Program.

This project is hosted by Grand Pacific Health.

MapMyRecovery

Continued the development of MapMyRecovery. MapMyRecovery is a free on-line resource connecting the Murrumbidgee community with services that provide support for mental health and/or drug and alcohol concerns in their community. 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. It enables people to search for services available to their community and how and where to access them.

This project is hosted by the Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network and largely funded by them.

Go to mapmyrecovery.org.au

Community Information Strategy

We often hear comments from communities that they have no mental health and/or drug and alcohol services in their communities. Keeping our communities informed about what is available is an ongoing body of work. Our Community Information Strategy is designed to regularly engage with communities and keep them informed.

The purpose of this working group is to promote the services of the Alliance members, while also fostering opportunities for meaningful community engagement.

Activities often involve collaborative participation in local events and expos across the Murrumbidgee region—for example, a joint presence at the Tumut Family Fun Day—to raise awareness and connect with the community.

Aims of this project

- Take part in local events
- Connect with the community
- Share information about Murrumbidgee services

Stigma Reduction

The Stigma Reduction working group focuses on strategies for addressing stigma towards people who experience mental health, suicidality and/or drug and alcohol use. The group has reviewed and shared resources about the use of non-stigmatising language by health professionals.

The group has been exploring the concept of "Living Books", volunteers with lived experience who are willing to tell their stories in their communities to increase understanding of the lived experience of mental health concerns and/or substance use.

They are also working on developing an educational tool or inservice to challenge the use of stigmatising language and develop alternative language.

Aims of this project

- Research initiatives that help reduce stigma
- Assist people to tell their story
- Support health professionals to reduce stigma

Services for Priority Populations

This working group is focusing on ensuring Priority Populations are represented and have access to mental health and drug and alcohol services across the Murrumbidgee region.

This includes developing strategies to increase access to and effectiveness of services for First Nations people and people who experience co-occuring substance use issues and have a disability.

The group has recently conducted a survey of service providers to identify effective strategies and gaps.

Aims of this project

- Ensure equitable access for priority populations
- Work with service providers
- Increase culturally appropriate services

Chair's Report (cont.)

Suicide prevention and aftercare

The region-wide approach to suicide prevention, aftercare and post-vetion is led by Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network.

Several Alliance members are actively and collaboratively engaged in suicide prevention and response strategies, with relevant members reporting to the Alliance quarterly to update on activities and seek feedback where appropriate.

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

Aims of the coordinated and region-wide approach are:

- Coordinate timely supports following a suicide
- Develop suicide prevention strategies
- Respond and support the community

Peer Workforce Survey

As part of the activities of the Lived Experience, Peer and Carer Network, the project conducted a Peer Workforce survey. These survey fundings will inform strategies to further strengthen the Peer Workforce across the Murrumbidgee region.

NSW Government Drug Summit Hearing

Several Alliance members and the Chair attended and contributed to the NSW Government Drug Summit Hearing in Griffith in November 2024.

The NSW Government has now formally responded to the 2024 Drug Summit recommendations, building on its commitment to reform the state's whole-of-government approach to alcohol and other drug use, which will place harm reduction and wellbeing at the forefront of policy. The NSW Government has supported or supports in principle over 50 recommendations from the Drug Summit.

A key outcome from the Alliance perspective is that NSW Health is now introducing 5-year grant agreements for NGO service providers to increase job security and funding certainty across the sector. This is a key issue for the non-government sector, their service partners, and most importantly, the people who access their services.

The NSW Government is working with relevant government and non-government stakeholders to release the state-wide Alcohol and Other Drug Strategy within the next 6 months.

The Strategy will align with the National Drug Strategy and include a monitoring and evaluation framework to guide implementation.

NSW Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Alliance prepared a submission to the NSW Mental Health Commission's Consultation Strategy which will inform the NSW Government's future Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

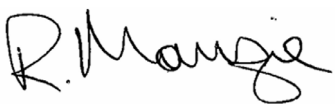
The Alliance submitted a strong response outlining our views on what is working, what is not working, what needs to change, what could improve mental health and wellbeing across our communities and what roles should NSW Government departments and agencies play in that. One of our suggestions related to changing funding models, including increasing the length of grant agreements, to foster stability and better planning. It's pleasing to see that the earlier mentioned Drug Summit response has committed to that.

The Future

As we progress through this next year, we will be focusing a lot of energy on the Lived Experience, Peer and Carer Network to maximise the synergy of working closely with people with lived experience and caring experience and to build our Peer Workforce – a key component of contemporary and future mental health, suicidality and drug and alcohol services.

If you have any questions about Alliance work, about membership, or suggestions for us, please visit our website and let us know.

mmhdaa.org.au



Robyn Manzie

Independent Chair
Murrumbidgee Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Alliance

Rhonda McInnes cutting the 10th Anniversary cake with Tim Owers (Flourish Australia) and Tiffany Thompson Alliance Lived Experience, Peer and Carer Network Coordinator (Grand Pacific Health)

Murrumbidgee Lived Experience, Peer and Carer Network

Our Lived Experience, Peer and Carer Network aims to increase the involvement of carers and people with lived/living experience in the improvement of services in the Murrumbidgee region; creating a more inclusive and effective mental health and drug and alcohol system for our communities.

The Network was launched on the 26th June 2025 and is receiving a positive response from the Murrumbidgee community, with many people from across the region already registering to be part of the Network. Alliance member organisations are drawing on the value of lived/living and carer expertise to guide the improvement and development of their services by connecting with the Network and our broader community via the Alliance website.

Membership of Peer Workers in the Network is growing, with a number of exciting future initiatives planned to connect and support this vital part of our health workforce. We are also looking ahead to welcoming the first enrolments to our Murrumbidgee Peer Work Placement Program in late 2025 and are excited to support the next generation of Peer Workers as they start their careers.

People interested in being part of the Lived Experience, Peer and Carer Network can visit mmhdaa.org.au to find out more.

Lived Experience Members

The Alliance membership includes a number of people with a lived and living experience of mental health and/or drug and alcohol issues as well as of caring for people with mental health and/or drug and alcohol issues. The input of these members is critical to the work of the Alliance as they share their experiences and wisdom to help us deliver more effective services.

Beyond this, the Alliance members are committed to engaging with people with lived experience in everything they do.

Tania Le Petit

I have been a mental health lived experience representative for the Alliance since 2019. There have been many projects during this time and it has always been an aim of the Alliance to identify gaps in services and support where they are able.

This year I have enjoyed being part of the development of the lived experience network which is a first for the Murrumbidgee. The network aims to support the development of a mental health and drug and alcohol peer workforce. It has been fantastic to be part of something where I can provide honest feedback and advocate for others with mental health lived experience and current and future peer workers.

Rhonda McInnes

I've been a lived/living experience representative for a long time. The Alliance gives a voice to some who might not be heard and I enjoy the very important work the Alliance achieves.

Karen Snaidero

Ten years ago I arrived as a fresh-faced peer worker, joining a community mental health team with the MLHD with limited experience and a lot of curiosity. Over the decade I was given opportunities and the privilege to be part of change, to support consumers to have a voice in their own care, and to help shape the services delivered to them.

Recently I took the leap from a public health role and was fortunate to be accepted to represent consumers on the Murrumbidgee Alliance. What an experience and an exciting place to be. The Alliance has given me a new and much wider perspective on mental health care across all sectors and on how the development and delivery of care is approached. I am witnessing collaboration through a different lens and loving every minute. This past year has been a huge learning experience and I look forward to continuing to bring a consumer perspective to the Alliance table for many years to come.

Calvary Riverina Drug and Alcohol Centre

Over the past year, Calvary Drug and Alcohol Centre has continued to experience significant growth across all programs including home detox, inpatient withdrawal and Residential Rehabilitation. All of which have seen a steady rise in client engagement.

A key milestone was the expansion of our Women's Wellness and Recovery Program, marked by the appointment of a new staff member based in Deniliquin. This addition plays a vital role in ensuring consistent Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) service delivery to women in this location.

Program data from both our community and residential services indicates that clients are participating in programs for longer durations and maintaining meaningful connections post-discharge.

We attribute this positive trend to several core factors:

- Comprehensive intake assessments and treatment matching
- A robust medical model of care that supports clients through withdrawal and addresses both physical and mental health needs
- A holistic care planning approach tailored to each client's individual goals and circumstances

Our courtyard is flourishing and our plant to plate project is in full swing with the warmer weather.

Our six-month residential program celebrated its most successful year to date, with 22 clients graduating. This has been a collaborative effort and could not have been achieved without the close partnerships with RIVMED, Wagga Base Mental Health Recovery Unit, Pathways, and the MERIT team.

We're excited to announce that our new Model of Care is nearing completion. This framework captures 2.5 years of growth and evolution, and will reflect a service philosophy centred on integrated, person-led recovery, cultural safety, and continuity of care.

In addition to clinical progress, our centre has undergone beautiful landscaping enhancements. These new outdoor spaces offer residents and staff peaceful, reflective environments. A standout feature is our "plant to plate" vegetable garden, which now supports our six-week rotating menu—bringing fresh produce and therapeutic engagement into daily life.

A colourful mural now brightens our reception space, and our newly landscaped front garden offers a warm welcome to everyone who visits.

Directions Health Services (Pathways Murrumbidgee)

Work It Out Program

Work It Out is aimed at supporting young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for whom alcohol and drugs may be impacting their employment and educational opportunities. This year, staff have been actively involved in Circle Sentencing – a process where Elders, community members, the Magistrate, and the client come together to discuss offences and work towards fair, culturally appropriate outcomes. A number of clients have been supported with their legal requirements, with encouraging results. Looking forward, the team are planning to implement YARN SMART Groups for clients as well as completing Guddi Way Screen Training, further strengthening their skills in culturally responsive support.

Pre/Post Program

Pathways' collaborative relationship with Calvary Riverina Drug and Alcohol continued this year, with staff delivering harm reduction education sessions for clients as part of the inpatient recovery program harm reduction week. The Pathways team also provided SMART Recovery groups for connected clients of Pathways, MMHC and headspace (18+). These collaborative relationships ensure ongoing engagement with clients throughout their journey. An AOD GP and Liaison Nurse has joined the Pathways team based in Griffith, addressing a significant service gap in an underserviced area with limited access to withdrawal and detox supports.

Post Custodial Program

Providing holistic support for people aged over 18 and exiting custody who are at risk of harm from alcohol and other drugs, Pathways Post Custodial Support program is engaged via telehealth with Junee, Goulburn, Mannus and Bathurst Correctional Centres. Our positive connections with Probation and Parole as well as other corrective services support the quick engagement of clients immediately upon release. In some cases, our team have seen clients reach out for support while still incarcerated, demonstrating the strong awareness and trust that the community have in the service. Looking forward, the team plan to expand our PCS services to include SMART Inside Out groups facilitated at local correctional centers, expanding our capacity to support structured recovery within correctional settings in regional NSW.

Methamphetamine (ICE) Program

The Methamphetamine (ICE) Program continues to have positive support in the region, with strong referral pathways and wide recognition among other service providers, including Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol and Community Corrections. The ICE program provides dedicated support to people impacted by methamphetamine harms, including family members. In many cases the Pathways team coordinate two separate case managers to work with both the person using substances and their family member, focusing on collaborative goals and outcomes.

To continue to respond to demand for family support, staff have completed training in the 5-Step-Method and Family and Friends SMART Program, which will offer families another pathway to access support.

Directions Health Services (Pathways Murrumbidgee) (cont.)

Priority Populations

Our Priority Populations Program has undergone significant development this year, with the implementation of the Online Day Program (ODP). The ODP supports individuals to explore and change their relationship with substance use through a harm reduction approach, whether their goals involve safer use, moderation or abstinence. Participants engage in interactive online sessions and receive individual case management, covering topics such as relapse prevention, mental health and wellbeing, boundaries, anger management, self-esteem, and preparing for sustainable change. Since it's introduction, the program has been heavily accessed, with two rounds completed and participants graduating each semester. Looking forward to 2026, access will continue to be improved through loanable laptops for clients.

AOD Morning Teas

Pathways Murrumbidgee facilitate bi-monthly morning teas with location specific AOD services in attendance. All AOD services are encouraged to share knowledge and updates on their service. Other services that work alongside or in conjunction with AOD services and their clients are invited to present and provide an update on how their service may positively impact the needs of our clients. We also provide an update back to the Alliance from the morning teas.

Directions Community Advisory Group

Directions' Community Advisory Group (CAG) is comprised of current and past clients and family members. The CAG meets regularly to provide direct feedback about services and community needs to Directions' management and Board. The CAG recently welcomed two new Murrumbidgee members.

Grand Pacific Health

This year, GPH Mental Health services in Murrumbidgee have grown significantly, with purpose-built hubs in Wagga and Young offering welcoming, walk-in access to a wide range of supports.

My Step to Wellbeing extends outreach across the region, delivering therapy, peer support, and group programs for children, adults, and aged care residents, ensuring timely, person-centred care for those most in need.

The **Medicare Mental Health Centres** are now trusted community hubs, with Wagga operating seven days a week and both centres providing integrated services, including therapy, group programs, AOD and family support, psychiatry, and art therapy.

GPH's commitment to equity is evident in its culturally responsive work with refugee communities. **Community Engagement Officers** and **Community Navigators**—leaders from within target communities—have built trust, improved access, and shaped services. Initiatives like the **Yazidi Women's Group** and **community Iftars** have strengthened connections and driven increased engagement.

These achievements highlight GPH's leadership in rural mental health, blending innovation, cultural responsiveness, and a strong social justice focus to deliver accessible, inclusive care.

GROW

GROW mental wellbeing programs

GROW is a grassroots lived experience community of people engaging in mutual help for mental wellbeing. The community is backed by a national not-for-profit community managed organisation. Together we provide accredited, **free, peer-to-peer support groups** that use a unique 12 step program for recovery and mental wellbeing. The program is completely user designed and gathered from the lived experience of GROW members since the community formed in 1957.

A key feature of GROW is our integrated governance structure: individuals with lived experience retain full decision-making control over the program content, delivery, and continuous improvement.

GROW operates multiple programs across Australia:

- **Grow Program:** The foundational 12-step peer support program, offered face-to-face, online, and hybrid formats— no referral or diagnosis required.
- **eGrow:** Same structured approach delivered via Zoom allows for anyone with internet access to attend a group.
- **Residential Rehabilitation:** Structured recovery residential services for individuals with concurrent mental health and substance use needs.
- **Growing Resilience:** Free, online 6 week facilitated peer support program to help individuals build mental resilience during high-stress periods.
- **Get Growing:** School-based peer-to-peer programs aligned with the Australian Curriculum.

GROW helps by creating meaningful connection, reduces isolation, leads to personal growth, improved coping, and a sense of purpose.

Positive outcomes reported by our members in the GROW annual Survey (2023 and 2024)

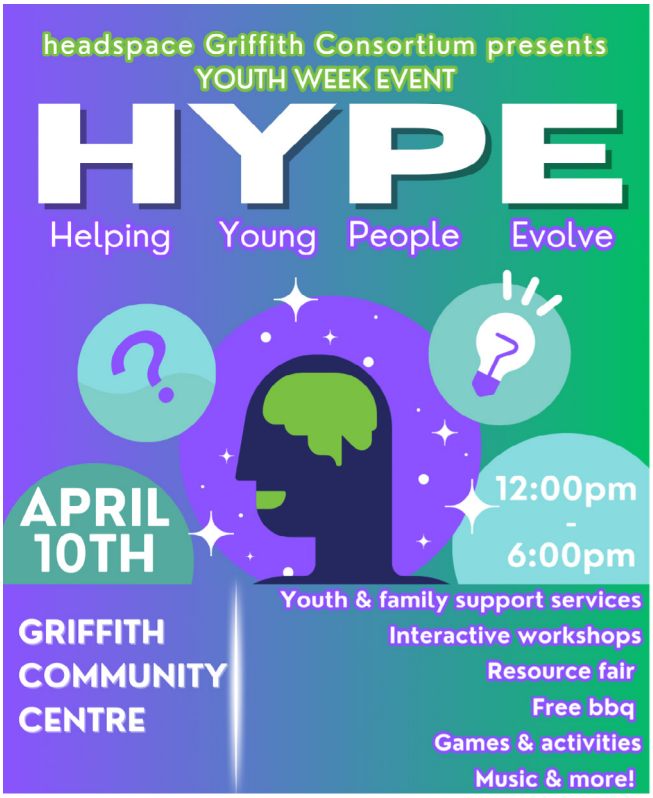
- 83% of participants agreed that the GROW Groups had allowed them personal growth in their life.
- 72% of participants agreed that Grow had improved their network of friendship and support around MH.
- 69% of participants agreed that the GROW Groups had helped them improve a sense of personal value.
- 66% of participants agreed that GROW Groups had helped them develop emotional maturity.
- 64% of participants agreed that agreed that GROW Groups gave them hope of long-term recovery from mental illness.
- 79% of participants reported reduced feelings of suicidal ideation
- 45% of respondents reported that GROW had helped them look after their physical health
- 53% reported GROW helped them to cooperate with professional help

In the Murrumbidgee region, GROW supports lived experienced volunteer peer leaders running hybrid/face-to-face groups in Leeton and Deniliquin. In September 2025, as part of the Murrumbidgee PHN Psychosocial Grants program, a Rainbow eGROW group for the LGBTIQA+ community was launched. The group is run by experienced peer leaders from GROW groups in other regions who identify as being from the LGBTIQA+ community who will work alongside members in the Murrumbidgee region to pass on GROW's mutual help model of care. In GROW we affirm the intrinsic, inestimable and radically equal personal value of every human being and believe that friendship is the special key to mental health.

Greenhills Group – GROW

headspace Griffith

headspace Griffith is committed to its partnership within the Murrumbidgee Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Alliance and has delivered two major events (HYPE and The Push-Up Challenge) supporting the community and local health district. This collaboration with affiliated local services strengthens community ties and fosters a shared understanding of local health trends, enabling a more coordinated approach to mental health care.



HYPE

HYPE – Helping Young People Evolve, was a community-focused event held early in 2025 and was aimed at supporting and empowering young people across the Griffith region. This inclusive event was designed to bring school students from across the Riverina together for an engaging day of education, community engagement and connection.

HYPE featured a series of interactive workshops and expert-led talks on key topics impacting local youth and families, including mental health, drug and alcohol awareness, family wellbeing and carers support. The educational components were complemented by a resource fair, where local service providers were able to share vital information and connect directly with community members.

The overarching goal of HYPE was to strengthen community bonds and raise awareness of available support services. The event aimed to inspire positive change and personal growth, particularly among young people. The successful event will be held again at the Griffith Community Centre, March 2026.

Push Up Challenge

Once again, headspace Griffith participated with Australia's largest mental health and fitness event - The Push-Up Challenge. Held over 3 weeks in June, participants were challenged to complete 3,214 push-ups over 23 days. This number represented the lives lost to suicide in Australia in one year (according to the most recent statistics from 2023).

The event raised over $10,000, with funds put towards local mental health programs and community activities.

Feedback

headspace Griffith values feedback from you, in general and through events. If you see us at in the community, pop over and say hello, and let us know what we do well and what we can improve on. Feedback can also be accessed through our website headspace.org.au/headspace-centres/griffith/

LikeMind

Funded by the NSW Ministry of Health and supported by key community partners, LikeMind Wagga Wagga delivers innovative, person-centred mental health support guided by a clear mission and strong values. Dedicated, creative, and always on your side, the team works collaboratively with consumers and carers to build resilience, enhance wellbeing, and create meaningful pathways to recovery.

Holistic, Trauma-Informed Services

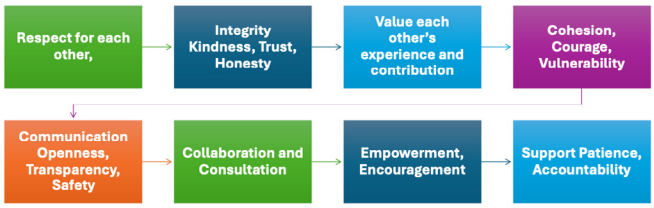
LikeMind provides a wide range of tailored services to meet individual needs, including:

- Brief psychological interventions
- Art therapy
- Alcohol & Other Drug and Gamble Aware counselling
- Case management and care coordination
- Therapeutic group programs such as *Sleeping Well, Self-Esteem & Boundary Setting, Anger Management, Emotional Regulation, and Anxiety & Stress Management*

A Small Team Making a Big Impact

With professionalism, creativity, and a shared sense of purpose, the LikeMind Wagga team delivers bespoke, high-quality care to the local community. They embody the motto: "*What Matters 2U, Matters 2 LikeMind*." Despite increasing demand for services across regional and rural areas, they remain committed to providing accessible and compassionate mental health support.

The team values are:

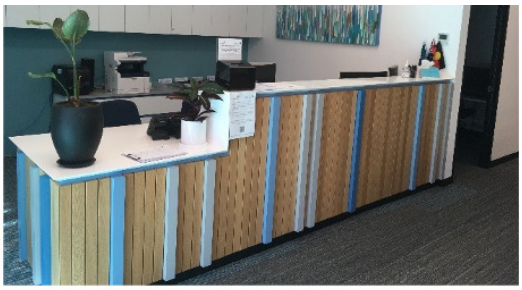


Commitment to Education and the Future Workforce

Since receiving (with LikeMind Orange) the Charles Sturt University Excellence Award (2023) in partnership with Three Rivers Department of Rural Health for their *Community Mental Health Experience Program*, LikeMind Wagga continues to strengthen education and clinical placements. They proudly support the next generation of mental health professionals—offering supervision, learning opportunities, and hands-on experience for nursing, social work, and paramedic students.

Collaboration Across the Sector

As a long-standing member of the Murrumbidgee Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Alliance, LikeMind Wagga Wagga actively works to reduce service silos and remove barriers to care. through collaboration, innovation, and sector-wide projects, they ensure better outcomes for consumers and drive ongoing improvements in community mental health.



From left: Sharon Bennett Administration Officer, Martina Greenaway Service Manager, Adam Warren Social Worker, Private Practitioner, Rachael Higginson Social Worker Mental Health Clinician and Mardi Pillow, Student Social Worker, Charles Sturt University.

Marathon Health

In 2025, Marathon Health proudly marked 10 years of service to our communities. Over the past decade, we have remained committed to improving the health and wellbeing of people across regional and rural NSW.

Country Australians continue to face higher rates of chronic disease than those in metropolitan areas. Our focus remains on preventative health, education, early intervention, and connecting individuals to essential care—ensuring everyone has access to the support they need, no matter where they live.

Where we are placed:

Office locations:

- Wagga Wagga
- Deniliquin
- Lake Cargelligo
- Griffith

Working from home:

- Tumut
- Gundagai
- Boorowa
- Cootamundra
- Leeton
- Narrandera

Over the past decade, Marathon Health has continued to evolve in response to the changing needs of regional and rural communities. Our programs demonstrate the power of collaboration, innovation, and compassion in improving health outcomes and strengthening community resilience.

As we celebrate 10 years of service, we remain dedicated to reducing health inequities, building local capacity, and ensuring that every person—no matter where they live—can access the care and support they need to live well.

Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network

During the past year, MPHN opened two Medicare Mental Health Centres in Wagga Wagga and Young. Medicare Mental Health Centres provide a welcoming place where everyone can access free and confidential mental health information, services, and supports. They offer immediate support for people in distress, including their family and carers. Medicare Mental Health Centres are open extended hours, and no appointment or referral is needed.

We launched the NSW Government funded Urgent Care Service in Wagga, with our model being based within existing general practices, increasing access to supports for urgent care within the existing general practice setting. MPHN introduced initiatives including The Doctor's Table and Allied Health Forum providing essential connection for health professionals to connect, engage in professional development opportunities and explore ways to work collaboratively to support the residents of our region.

The Murrumbidgee First Nations GP Toolkit was launched with our Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Manager, Maxine Honeysett, undertaking a roadshow around the region visiting practices and orienting them to the toolkit and to understand how we can support them to deliver culturally safe, respectful, welcoming and coordinated care for First Nations community.

We also supported people experiencing homelessness to access coordinated healthcare with our Homelessness Health Support Program delivered by Marathon Health and general practices in the region delivering GP led multidisciplinary clinics. We engaged with approximately 130 people across 17 communities through Conversations and Yarns on the Couch, to hear from our communities regarding their experience of accessing healthcare and ensuring that local voices directly shaped the Health Needs Assessment 2025-2028.

MPHN continues to play a leading role in joint regional planning, most notably through the development of the updated Joint Regional Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, and Alcohol and Other Drugs Plan (2025–2030). Building on the foundations of the successful 2021–2024 plan, this new strategy reflects the voices and lived experiences of our communities. Senior Manager Priority Populations and Alliance member Anita McRae shared:

MPHN's Anita McRae (Senior Manager Priority Populations), Robyn Manzie (Alliance Chair) and MPHN's Maja Asmus (Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Manager)

"This plan reflects the voices and experiences of our communities. It's shaped by local insights and built through genuine collaboration—especially with people who have lived and living experience. Our goal is to create meaningful change by improving access and outcomes for people who often face the greatest barriers to care."

We extend our sincere thanks to all Alliance members who contributed to and promoted the consultation sessions and survey that helped shape this important regional plan for the Murrumbidgee region.

As part of MPHN's active engagement with the Alliance, Anita McRae and Maja Asmus have contributed significantly to several key working groups, including Priority Populations, Community Information Strategies, Map My Recovery and the 10-year anniversary. These collaborative forums play a vital role in advancing the Alliance's shared goals and identifying opportunities to enhance social and emotional wellbeing for individuals and communities across the Murrumbidgee region.

One Door Mental Health

The One Door Mental Health Family and Carer Mental Health Program (FCMHP) in Murrumbidgee offers inclusive and innovative support for carers of people experiencing mental health challenges across the region.

Our team of dedicated Carer Advocates is committed to fostering mental health and wellbeing through innovative initiatives and community engagement. Our services are built on a foundation of empathy, inclusivity, collaboration.

Our team understands that providing support and care for a person experiencing mental health distress may involve some significant challenges. It may impact a carers health, wellbeing, relationships and other meaningful aspects of their life.

We provide a range of services designed to offer emotional and practical support while helping carers navigate the complexities of the mental health system while also nurturing their own sense of recovery.

We offer:

- Face-to-face support groups in Wagga, Griffith, Leeton, Deniliquin, Corowa and Urana
- Emotional and practical support
- Information on coping strategies
- Assistance in navigating the mental health system and NDIS
- Finding additional supports in the community
- Building a peer support network
- Education on how to support someone experiencing mental health challenges
- Advocacy support

Sunflower House

Sunflower House has strengthened its role as a supportive hub for people living with psychosocial challenges, as well as those who are vulnerable or seeking a safe and welcoming environment. As the region's only non-crisis haven, we provide connection, free meals, and a safe space for individuals experiencing isolation, anxiety, or depression.

Our priority is to create a home away from home for people who are not supported by NDIS funding, ensuring they have equal access to community, care, and inclusion. At the same time, we remain committed to welcoming NDIS participants and providing them with the same supportive environment and opportunities to engage. We encourage all support providers to utilise Sunflower House.

We also continue to partner with UNSW and the Three Rivers Department of Rural Health through placement programs, contributing to the development of the future mental health workforce.

Wellways

Wellways delivers a range of Mental Health services across the Murrumbidgee, working from offices in Wagga Wagga, Young, Griffith, Deniliquin, Temora and Albury. These services include:

- Community Living Support Services (CLS)
- Housing and Support Initiative (HASI)
- Well-Connected & Service Navigator
- Supporting Recovery
- Universal Aftercare
- After Suicide Support Program
- StandBy

Wellways suite of programs provide care to people who have mental health and wellbeing concerns, have experienced suicidal crisis, or been bereaved by suicide, to connect with their community to support recovery. They work in a collaborative and participant-led manner to support people to live independently, manage their own physical and emotional health and get involved in their local communities, providing both individual and group supports.

Wellways staff have a strong focus on community engagement and participate in a large number of community events and activities including NAIDOC week activities across the Murrumbidgee; the Leeton, Hay and Wagga Mardi Gras and the Deniliquin Ute Muster. They have close working relationships with Alliance members, MLHD inpatient units, MLHD Recovery Unit, Community Mental Health Teams, Aboriginal Medical Centres, MPHN and other stakeholders.

Over the last 12 months Wellways has seen a significant expansion in the Universal Aftercare program to incorporate priority populations including children and young people, men and older people. This has allowed an increased presence across the district, the running of community workshops in communities affected by suicide and increased support for individuals following a suicidal crisis.

Deniliquin Suicide Prevention Day

NSW Aftercare Forum

National Suicide Prevention Conference

Young Suicide Prevention Day

Goanna Academy Narrandera

Leeton Mardi Gras

Griffith Wear It Purple Day

Homelesssness Week

Murra Yarra Healing Walk

Thank you for reading the Murrumbidgee Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Alliance Annual Report for 2024-25.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Murrumbidgee communities as we go forward

We are particularly keen to increase Lived Experience and Carer Experience participation, so again, go to our website and tell us how we can improve services to our communities.

mmhdaa.org.au