



Hunter PRIMARYCARE

FY25 IMPACT REPORT

CONTENTS

Our Organisation	5
Our Impact in Numbers	13
Driving Impact	15
Impact Theme: Better Health & Wellbeing	19
Impact Theme: Equity & Inclusion	27
Impact Theme: Workforce Excellence	31
Voices of our Community	35
Looking Ahead	37



MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR & CEO

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First Nations: Hunter Primary Care acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia. We pay our respects to their elders past and present who we share this great region with.

Diversity: Hunter Primary Care is committed to embracing diversity and eliminating all forms of discrimination in the provision of health services. We welcome all people of diverse ethnicity, lifestyle choice, faith, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Lived Experience: Hunter Primary Care acknowledge and thank the people with lived and living experience of health challenges who share their stories, insights and expertise with us. Their voices play a vital role in shaping our services, improving our understanding and ensuring that the care we deliver is compassionate, relevant and person-centred.

Funding: Hunter Primary Care acknowledges program funding received from the Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network, the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, the Australian Government Department of Social Services, the Hunter New England Local Health District, headspace National, NSW Ministry of Health and the Australian Government Department of Veterans Affairs.



Over the past year, Hunter Primary Care has continued to evolve, lead and deliver meaningful impact for our communities. In a changing health landscape, our mission remains clear: to deliver integrated health and wellness services that help each person be their best.

This year has been marked by both growth and transformation. We’ve expanded access to vital services, from mental health and chronic disease support to aged care and NDIS programs, while deepening our partnerships with government, health providers, community organisations and First Nations communities. These partnerships are central to how we drive impact, not just through the services we provide, but through the way we influence systems, shape policy and advocate for sustainable, equitable healthcare.

Our people have continued to deliver exceptional care with compassion and professionalism. We’ve invested in their wellbeing and leadership, recognising that a strong and supported workforce is the foundation of quality service delivery.

We are proud of the many achievements highlighted throughout this report. From securing long-term funding for GP Access After Hours to hosting a major reconciliation event and advancing our Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan. We launched the Soul Clinic with Soul Hub, expanded nurse practitioner services in aged care and rolled out new chronic condition and respiratory health pilots improving access to care in regional communities. This year also saw the introduction of our first fee-based service model and the implementation of new mental health care models. Together, these milestones reflect growth and our commitment to sustainable, community-driven healthcare.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to listening to our communities, amplifying their voices and driving change that delivers better health and wellbeing outcomes.

Thank you to our valued staff, partners, funders, Board and community for your trust, collaboration and shared commitment to making a difference.



Mr Richard Anicich AM - Chair
BCom, LLB, FAICD



Mr Keith Drinkwater - CEO

OUR LEADERS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Mr Richard Anicich AM - Chair
BCom, LLB, FAICD



Dr Sarah Bayley - Deputy Chair
BMed, BN, FRACGP, GAICD



Dr Fiona Van Leeuwen
BMed, FRACGP, RN, DRANZCOG



Ms Jennifer Hayes
BBus, MBus, CPA, GAICD



Mr Laurence "Ben" Wilkins
BPharm, AACPA, GAICD



Dr Peter Hopkins
MBBS(Hons), MMedSc(EPI),
FRACGP



Mr Scott Puxty
BCom, Dip Law, MBusAdmin,
GAICD



Mr Steven Adams
AdvDip Bus Man, FAICD

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM



Mr Keith Drinkwater
CEO



Mrs. Melissa Ward
General Manager, Primary Care



Ms. Bec Nichols
General Manager, Mental Health



Mrs. Nicole Robertson
General Manager, People & Culture



Ms. Claudine Ford
General Manager, NDIS &
Chronic Disease



Mr Blessing Matore
General Manager, Information
Technology



Mrs. Karen Stathis
General Manager, Finance &
Support Services

ABOUT US

For over 30 years, Hunter Primary Care has been supporting the health and wellbeing of people across the Newcastle and Hunter region. As a not-for-profit organisation, our focus has always been on delivering high-quality, locally responsive care - not just treating illness but improving lives.

We work in partnership with individuals, families, GPs, community organisations and funders to meet the evolving needs of our diverse communities. Our commitment is to provide care that is person-centred, culturally safe and easy to access, particularly for those who may face barriers to support.

Our team of experienced health professionals are dedicated to walking alongside clients at every stage of their healthcare journey, listening to their needs, caring with respect and connecting them with the right support.

We listen. Care. Connect.

VISION

Good health and wellbeing **for all**.

MISSION

To deliver integrated **health and wellness** services that help each person **be their best**.

OUR VALUES



Integrity

We are transparent, honest and accountable for what we do and how we do it.



Recognition

We acknowledge and encourage individuality, diversity and personal development.



Excellence

We encourage and celebrate creativity, continuous improvement and sharing with each other.



Respect

We expect trust, open communication and inclusiveness in our interactions with each other.

OUR SERVICES



We provide a broad range of interconnected health and wellbeing services designed to meet people’s needs in a coordinated way. With more than 25 services available, individuals can access multiple supports through Hunter Primary Care without having tell their story each time. Our services include:

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH

- ✓ Care Coordination
- ✓ Aboriginal Health Workers
- ✓ Yudhilidin
- ✓ YARN Psychology



ALLIED HEALTH AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS MANAGEMENT

- ✓ Coordinated Respiratory Support
- ✓ Diabetes Education
- ✓ Priority Allied Health Services (PAHS)

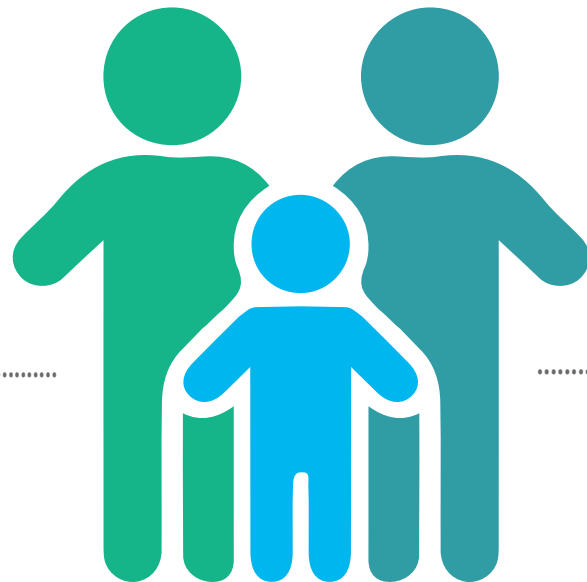


AGED CARE

- ✓ Aged Care Emergency Service
- ✓ Clinical Placement Program
- ✓ Nurse Practitioner
- ✓ Psychology

SUPPORT FOR GP PRACTICES

- ✓ IT Services
- ✓ Call Managed Services



NDIS SERVICES

- ✓ Allied Health
- ✓ Positive Behaviour Support
- ✓ Level 3 Specialist Support Coordination
- ✓ Psychology
- ✓ Group Programs

MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

- ✓ Psychology
- ✓ Drug & Alcohol Counselling
- ✓ Clinical Care Coordination
- ✓ headspace Newcastle
- ✓ Commonwealth Psychosocial Support
- ✓ Psychological Assessments
- ✓ Group Programs
- ✓ Youth Complex Mental Health Services



AFTER-HOURS MEDICAL CARE

- ✓ GP Access

Hunter
PR1MARYCARE

ACE AGED CARE EMERGENCY SERVICE

GP access
AFTER HOURS

headspace
Newcastle

OUR REGION

The Hunter Primary Care region is located on the NSW east coast and services the following areas in NSW:



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Hunter Primary Care’s strategy is built on three key pillars and supported by a strong internal foundation. Together, these priorities guide our work to deliver better care, stronger partnerships and sustainable impact across the region.



CONSUMER-CENTERED CARE & QUALITY

We will deliver culturally safe, easy-to-reach services that close equity gaps and improve outcomes for all people, particularly those who have been historically underserved.



SERVICE INNOVATION & INTEGRATED CARE

We are redesigning how care is delivered, making it more seamless, digital and connected, so people receive the right support at the right time.



PARTNERSHIPS & SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

We will build strong, long-term partnerships and secure sustainable, outcome-based funding to support innovation and growth.



ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH & CAPABILITY

To bring this strategy to life, we are investing in the people, systems and structures that make impact possible. This includes the following integrated themes:

- Theme 1:** Workforce Capability & Wellbeing
- Theme 2:** Digital Enablement & Data Analytics
- Theme 3:** Financial Sustainability & Strategy

These foundational enablers underpin every part of our work - ensuring we can grow, adapt and deliver lasting results.



OUR FUNDING

Hunter Primary Care is deeply grateful for the program funding and ongoing support we receive from our funding partners. Their commitment enables us to deliver vital health services, expand our reach and make a meaningful difference in the lives of the people and communities we serve.

We sincerely thank:



Health
Hunter New England
Local Health District



Australian Government
Department of Social Services



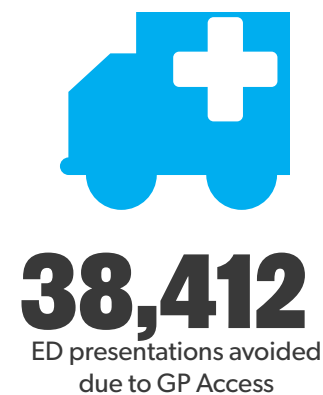
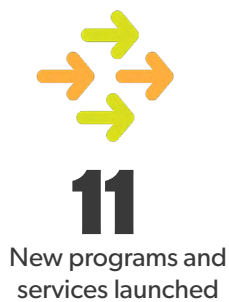
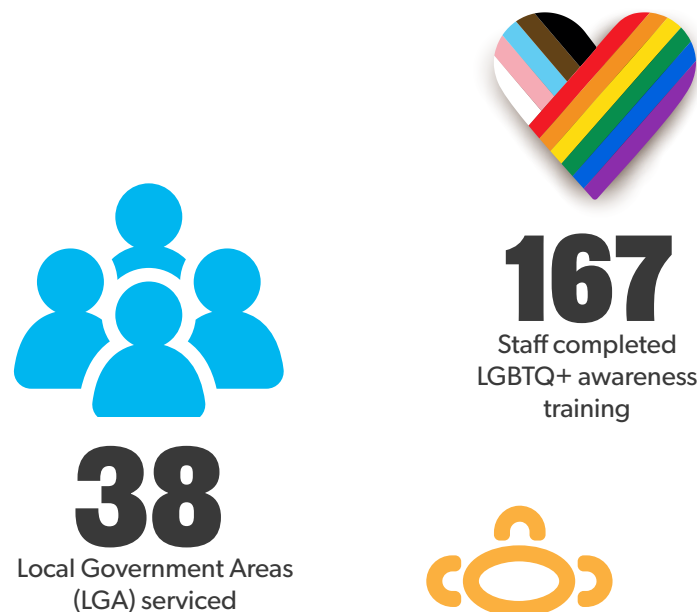
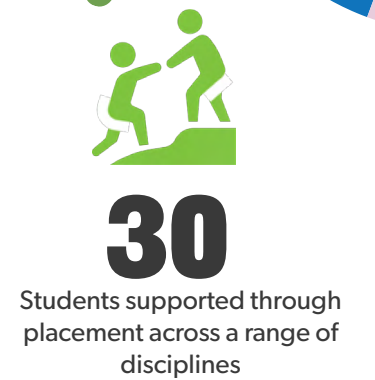
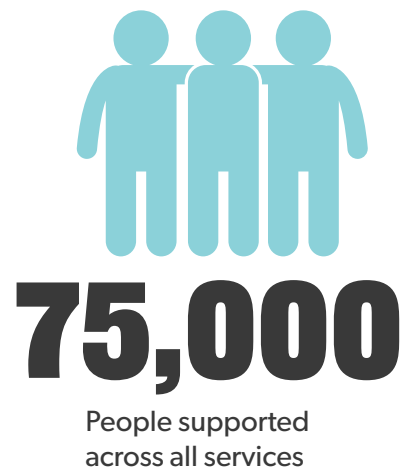
Australian Government
Department of Health,
Disability and Ageing



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs



OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS



DRIVING IMPACT

At Hunter Primary Care, our impact goes beyond the services we deliver. It extends to how we influence systems, shape policy and champion equitable access to care for our community.

Advocacy & System Influence

Advocacy is a core part of how Hunter Primary Care drives impact, by working closely with government and sector partners to secure sustainable, community-driven solutions.

This year, we were proud to see our advocacy efforts reflected in the Federal Budget announcements in May, which included funding for a new headspace Plus service in Newcastle and the establishment of a new headspace in Port Stephens. We were delighted to welcome Sharon Claydon MP to headspace Newcastle to make the announcement.

We were active in national reform conversations, engaging with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and working with Disability Intermediaries Australia (DIA) to advocate for pricing structures that prioritise quality outcomes for participants.

Hunter Primary Care also secured a new three-year funding cycle for GP Access After Hours, a long-term commitment providing stability for the service. In addition, funding has been provided by the Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network (The PHN) to undertake a GP Access After Hours Service Enhancement Review.

Partnerships & Collective Impact

Partnerships are at the heart of Hunter Primary Care. By collaborating with universities, health services, community organisations and sector networks, we are able to strengthen our programs, create opportunities for innovation and ensure our services are shaped by the collective knowledge of our community.

We continue to engage in a wide range of communities of practice, interagency groups and advisory committees that bring together consumers, carers, staff and service providers to improve service quality.



This year, we are shining a spotlight on three partnerships that reflect the scale and impact of our wider collaboration.

Hunter New England Local Health District (HNELHD):

Our partnership with the HNELHD is focused on strengthening integration between primary and acute care to improve access and outcomes for our community. This includes:

- ✓ Embedding a GP Access triage nurse within the Emergency Department to support appropriate care pathways
- ✓ Working closely with the LHD Drug & Alcohol Clinical Service under a formal Memorandum of Understanding
- ✓ Partnering on the NSW Youth Mental Health Initiative to enhance integration.

University of Newcastle (UoN):

Our partnership with UoN spans clinical placements, joint research projects and grant collaborations. Together we are building the next generation of health professionals through student placements in nursing, allied health, psychology and aged care. We have also collaborated on a HCF Research Foundation Grant and Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) grants for both nurse practitioner models of care and integrated care for people living with memory problems.



DRIVING IMPACT

Regional Health Collective:

As a founding member of the Regional Health Collective, Hunter Primary Care is helping drive innovation through collaboration. The Collective includes CEO representation from primary care providers in NSW including Grand Pacific Health, Marathon Health, Coast & Country Primary Care and HealthWISE. This includes joint work on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in healthcare, joint tenders, lobbying of government and collective advocacy to improve equity and access for our communities.



In addition, we maintain strong partnerships with dozens of other community organisations, advocacy groups and valued referrers to our services. These collaborations are critical to delivering innovative, person-centred care and ensuring our services continue to respond to the evolving needs of our community.

Research

Research continues to be a powerful way Hunter Primary Care contributes to better models of care. This year, we advanced two major research initiatives with strong potential to shape future service delivery.

Through a HCF Research Foundation grant, we are leading a project to translate a successful metropolitan aged care nurse practitioner model into a rural setting. Focused on Tamworth, this research explores workforce sustainability, economic impact and stakeholder acceptability, and is anticipated to reduce hospital admissions, improve access to primary care and gain stronger support for GPs and aged care facilities in regional communities.

We are also a proud partner in the nurse-led dementia care trial led by UoN and funded through the MRFF. To date, 30 individuals have been allocated to Hunter Primary Care to receive the intervention and nine have completed the program. Early feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with participants and carers reporting meaningful improvements in quality of life and connection. These projects not only inform best practice and system design, but also highlight the real-world impact of embedding innovative, person-centred care models where they are needed most.

“Your intervention is having a massive impact... Yesterday was the first time I can remember laughing with my mother in a long time.”



IMPACT THEME: BETTER HEALTH & WELLBEING

Hunter Primary Care delivers a diverse range of programs designed to improve health and wellbeing for people across the Hunter region. Through integrated, multidisciplinary models of care, we are reducing barriers to access, supporting early intervention and improving outcomes for people living with chronic conditions, disability, mental health challenges and complex needs.

Soul Hub

Funded by the PHN and a partnership between Hunter Primary Care and Soul Hub Newcastle, Soul Clinic is a co-designed model of care that removes barriers to healthcare. Guests can access multiple supports in one place, without needing to navigate complex systems or retell their story multiple times. This integrated model creates the space for trauma-informed, relationship-based care, giving people the trust, time and continuity they need to engage more fully in their health journeys.

The clinic is pioneering the innovative use of AI in its care model. AI has the potential to reduce health inequities by supporting clinicians during consultations and driving system-wide improvements. For people experiencing homelessness, who often face stigma, financial barriers, chronic illness and fragmented care, this innovation is helping create new pathways to better health outcomes.



Launched in March 2025, Soul Clinic has already delivered more than 500 GP appointments to people experiencing homelessness in Newcastle. Guests most often present with:

- ✓ Mental health concerns
- ✓ Alcohol and substance use
- ✓ Skin infections, assault and injury
- ✓ Respiratory and gastrointestinal issues
- ✓ Dental problems
- ✓ Chronic pain.

With on-site pathology, the clinic has also identified an increasing number of diabetes and endocrine disorders, enabling earlier treatment and better outcomes.

David’s Story: A Pathway to Recovery

Following his release from incarceration, David* arrived at Soul Hub struggling with severe depression, anxiety and chronic pain. Initially hesitant to engage, he gradually built trust with the GP team through consistent, respectful care. With the right medication and ongoing support, his mental health began to stabilise.

Through a GP Management Plan, David was connected to physiotherapy and exercise physiology at the co-located Kaden Centre. Soul Hub staff even accompanied him to his first session to ease the transition. Over time, he began to re-engage with community, reconnect with services and regain a sense of hope.

David’s journey shows the power of integrated, person-centred care - bringing medical, psychosocial and community supports together in one trusted place.

**David’s real name has been omitted from this story.*

Responding to Demand: Launching Psychological Assessments

In October 2024, Hunter Primary Care took an important step by launching our first fee-paying service in response to the growing demand for timely and accurate psychological assessments. For years, our organisation has been known for providing free, high-quality mental health support, and this remains at the heart of what we do. But as demand continued to rise, we recognised the need to broaden our model of care to ensure more people could access the help they need, when they need it. Since launching, we have already provided over 70 assessments for children, young people and adults. These include ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, cognitive and learning assessments, all delivered by our experienced team of clinicians.

Client feedback has highlighted the value of clear guidance, timely appointments and compassionate care. One parent shared:

“We’d been waiting for months elsewhere. Hunter Primary Care got us in quickly, explained everything clearly and gave us a plan we could follow.”



Improving Respiratory Care in Muswellbrook

In 2025, Hunter Primary Care launched the Coordinated Respiratory Support (CRS) pilot program to improve outcomes for residents of the Muswellbrook LGA living with chronic lung conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and bronchiectasis. Fully funded by the PHN, this twelve-month pilot brings together a multidisciplinary team of local accredited healthcare professionals to provide coordinated, person-centred care. Participants benefit from personalised health assessments, allied health consultations, fortnightly check-ins, collaborative case meetings with their GP and online Shared Health Appointments, that build understanding of respiratory health and lifestyle medicine.

Karin’s story: Breathing Easier and Living Safer

Karin lives with COPD and was referred to the CRS program to improve her mobility and manage her condition. Daily activities, including navigating stairs and bathing, had become increasingly difficult.

Brandon, a respiratory nurse, coordinated support with an occupational therapist to assess her home, prescribe assistive equipment and referred her to physiotherapy for pulmonary rehabilitation. He also helped develop a COPD Action Plan and provided medication education.

“I know how to use a spacer and inhalers, I have my COPD Action Plan and know when to seek help. The OT is arranging a swivel car seat, an electric chair, and a better wheelchair through My Aged Care.”

Expanding Access with Telepsychiatry

In 2025, headspace Newcastle introduced telepsychiatry, bringing specialist psychiatric care via video consultations to young people, particularly those in regional or remote areas who would otherwise face serious barriers to accessing mental health support. This allows clients to connect with psychiatrists without needing to travel for specialist appointments. The service includes diagnostic and treatment planning and secondary consultations, where local staff, GPs or allied health clinicians can access video sessions with psychiatrists for case review, clinical supervision, or treatment advice. This helps build local workforce capacity while ensuring clients receive high-quality, timely psychiatric care.

Kara’s Story: Reconnecting with Strengths

After experiencing significant life changes that impacted her confidence and daily routines, Kara* was referred by her psychologist to one of our mental health peer workers. The goal was to provide additional short-term support to help her stay connected with her recovery journey. Through regular check-ins, Kara rediscovered the coping strategies she had developed in therapy, rebuilt her confidence and re-engaged with her psychology sessions.

**Kara’s name has been omitted from this story*

“Having someone check in and remind me of the skills and strategies I already knew made such a difference. It helped me see that I wasn’t going backwards — I just needed a hand to get back on track.”

Strengthening Mental Health Support

Hunter Primary Care’s Mental Health Services continued to grow and adapt to meet the complex needs of our community. Through innovation, collaboration and a commitment to person-centred, trauma-informed care, we introduced new programs and expanded existing supports to improve access, engagement and outcomes.

Group Programs Expansion

This year, our group therapy program was significantly strengthened. The Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) pilot evolved into a full 18-week program, with an additional group added to meet high demand. More than 35 people have now completed the full program - a remarkable achievement for a complex and often acute population. Our Connected Recovery program was also adapted to better suit a primary care setting. Looking ahead, we will broaden our stepped care approach by introducing a Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) informed lifestyle group, a group for women in the natal period, and a fee-for-service DBT program.

Expanding Therapeutic Approaches

Through PHN funding, we introduced Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy, a specialised trauma-informed approach, following expert consultation and staff training. This enables clinicians to provide more targeted support for people with complex trauma histories.

Intensive Support Program

We launched the Intensive Support Program, a non-clinical service focused on navigation, resource coordination and capacity building. By addressing social and systemic barriers such as housing, financial hardship and domestic violence, the program strengthens engagement with therapy and improves overall client stability.

Peer Work in Mental Health

The addition of Mental Health Peer Workers has enhanced our holistic support, offering hope and shared understanding through lived experience. Peer Work builds trust, motivation and engagement - complementing clinical care with person-led, recovery-oriented support.

Partnership with Open Arms

Our partnership with Open Arms Veterans & Families Counselling provides confidential mental health services to current and former navy, army and air force personnel, veterans and their families.

Growing our NDIS Impact

In 2025, Hunter Primary Care's NDIS team continued to grow and innovate, expanding the supports available to participants and strengthening our reputation as a trusted, person-centred provider.

A major milestone was the launch of our first NDIS-funded group program, Let's Move Together — a six-week trauma-informed program that combines movement and social connection to build strength, confidence and wellbeing.

The team was also named a finalist for the Most Outstanding Allied Health Organisation in the 2024 Australian Disability Service Awards — national recognition of our commitment to quality care. We launched Bite-Sized Allied Health Insights, a monthly online series connecting participants, coordinators and support workers with our clinicians across occupational therapy, nutrition and dietetics, social work, exercise physiology and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

Another standout achievement was successfully completing our NDIS accreditation audit with no findings. Auditors commended our professionalism, passion and collaborative approach, describing our services as operating "above and beyond" industry standards.

"Group programs provide a unique opportunity for social connection, physical activity, and personal growth. As an exercise physiologist, I've seen firsthand how these programs can improve health and fitness but also boost confidence, foster independence, and create a sense of belonging."

— Georgia, Exercise Physiologist

Leading Change in Aged Care Service Delivery

Hunter Primary Care was proud to expand our Aged Care Nurse Practitioner Service, building on the success of our pilot program funded by the PHN. The pilot achieved a 97% satisfaction score from aged care residents and demonstrated the value of providing timely, specialised primary care within residential aged care homes.

With the support of additional funding from the PHN, we were able to both employ our first transitional nurse practitioner and expand the service into Tamworth, helping to address critical workforce challenges in aged care while extending access to quality primary care for more residents. Today, our service has grown to include five nurse practitioners and a transitional nurse practitioner across 12 aged care homes.

Expanding Aged Care Nursing Clinical Placements

Following the success of the Aged Care Nursing Clinical Placements Program, Hunter Primary Care secured additional funding from the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing to expand the program into the Mid North and North Coast regions of NSW.

This expansion builds on a program that has already delivered outstanding outcomes since its launch in 2023. To date, we have supported 348 nursing students, provided more than 5,600 facilitation hours and 45,000 clinical placement hours and worked with 135 aged care hosts across the Hunter, New England and Central Coast regions. The program has engaged students from four universities and three TAFE campuses, supported by over 100 clinical facilitators. Importantly, 4.7% of students identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, exceeding the national target.

The new funding will allow even more students to access high-quality, hands-on training in aged care, strengthening the pipeline of nurses with the skills, knowledge and confidence to meet the needs of an ageing population.

"The clinical placement program is essential for providing students with valuable hands-on experience in aged care. Hunter Primary Care is a well organised not-for-profit organisation that makes hosting students in our facility a seamless experience. The quality of both the students and their facilitators is exceptional. I would highly recommend Hunter Primary Care to any organisation considering student placements."

Bronwyn Ling
(Facility Manager, Wallsend Manor Aged Care)



Building Confidence and Connection in Singleton

In 2025, Hunter Primary Care launched Multidisciplinary Lifestyle Medicine Community Groups for residents of Singleton and surrounds, living with chronic conditions such as diabetes and mental health concerns. This pilot program, fully funded by the PHN, is designed to help people gain new skills, build confidence and strengthen their connections to community supports.

Participants receive consultations and self-management support from our multidisciplinary team of diabetes educators, dietitians, exercise physiologists, occupational therapists, social workers and registered nurses. By creating a supportive space where people can share experiences and learn together, the groups foster connection and reduce isolation.

The program has also delivered tangible improvements in health and wellbeing. Mediterranean diet adherence among participants doubled and marked gains were recorded across key Lifestyle Medicine Vital Signs domains. Participants reported feeling more confident engaging in daily activities such as shopping, meal preparation, attending community events and walking in their neighbourhood.

Participant satisfaction has been overwhelmingly positive, with comments such as:

“The information I was given has changed my life.”

“These groups are awesome. I feel so encouraged because someone will say exactly what I’m feeling. I am not alone, and it’s been amazing.”

“When I first started I’d lost all my confidence and just felt yuck all the time. Now I’ve just run a couple of errands and I’m not exhausted... I’ve started to regain my confidence.”

Embracing Technology to Enhance Care

In 2025, Hunter Primary Care made significant strides in digital innovation to support more efficient, accessible and person-centred care. Across our services, we’ve invested in modern systems and new technologies that make it easier for people to connect with care and for our teams to deliver it. This included the introduction of AI pilots, exploring how technology can improve client experience and streamline workflows. We also expanded the use of digital tools such as e-forms and online booking systems to simplify access and reduce administrative barriers. These investments in digital infrastructure lay the groundwork for smarter, more connected care - enabling us to spend less time on processes and more time focusing on the people we support.



IMPACT THEME: EQUITY & INCLUSION

At Hunter Primary Care, equity and inclusion are not separate initiatives – they are embedded in everything we do. From our First Nations health services and Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to LGBTQ+ inclusion, we are committed to creating services and workplaces that reflect and respect the communities we serve. Our focus is on meaningful action, not tokenism, ensuring every program, partnership and initiative contributes to a more equitable health system.

First Nations

Reconciliation is deeply embedded in the fabric of Hunter Primary Care. It is reflected in the way we work, connect and show up as an organisation every day. Guided by our Stretch RAP and the leadership of our RAP Working Group, we hold a clear and public commitment to reconciliation. Cultural respect and inclusion are built into our everyday practice - from cultural awareness training for staff to the implementation of cultural policies, protocols and engagement principles. These foundations ensure that reconciliation is not a project, but business as usual.

In addition to this ongoing work, we are proud to highlight several key initiatives this year that further demonstrate our commitment to truth-telling, respect and partnership.

The Last Daughter Film Screening

To celebrate NAIDOC Week 2024 – Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud & Proud, Hunter Primary Care, in partnership with The Wollotuka Institute and Kiray Putjung Aboriginal Corporation, hosted a community film screening of the acclaimed documentary The Last Daughter.

Hosted by the UoN the screening drew an audience of approximately 140 people, including representatives from local organisations such as Newcastle Greater Mutual Group, Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC), and Councillor Deahanna Richardson from Newcastle City Council. The evening was made special with an introduction, Q&A session and book signing from Aunty Brenda Matthews, proud Wiradjuri woman and subject of the film. Guests enjoyed catering by Peibri Place and explored artwork displays by the Nikinpa Aboriginal Women’s Group and Justiz Community Services.



“Fantastic.”
“Such a great experience to be in the room with everyone and hear Aunty Brenda speak.”

“Inspirational and moving.”

Partnership with Yakuway Indigenous Corporation



In 2025, Hunter Primary Care formalised a partnership with Yakuway Indigenous Corporation through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This partnership reflects a shared commitment to driving positive change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. At its heart is a dedication to working together cooperatively and building upon the unique strengths of both organisations.

Through this collaboration, both organisations are united in ensuring the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are heard, their needs met and their cultures respected. The partnership is underpinned by cultural understanding and meaningful engagement, with the aim of delivering services that uplift and empower communities.

Looking ahead, the partnership will pave the way for joint initiatives that promote wellbeing and sustainable growth, supported by a long-term strategic plan to deliver on shared goals.

“We are walking hand in hand, supporting each other and working towards a shared vision for the community.”

- Malcom Smith, Yakuway Chair

Cultural Celebrations

Hunter Primary Care proudly embraced three nationally significant cultural events - National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and Close the Gap Day, as opportunities to immerse staff in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and to strengthen community relationships.

Our events were designed in collaboration with Elders, artists and First Nations facilitators including Auntie Jill Jessop, Auntie Theresa Dargin, Nikinpa Aboriginal Women’s Art Group and the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation. Activities included powerful Welcome to and Acknowledgements of Country, storytelling and cultural workshops. Catering and bush tucker experiences were provided by Aboriginal-owned businesses such as Peibri Place and Yaama Café Gamilaroi Connection.

Hunter Primary Care also actively participated in community-led NAIDOC events hosted by Aboriginal Land Councils and local organisations, connecting with community members and engaging children in cultural activities.

By embedding cultural learning and First Nations partnerships into these significant events, we ensure these cultural events are not simply ceremonial dates, but living experiences that deepen staff knowledge, strengthen community relationships and reinforce our commitment to reconciliation.

Strengthening LGBTQ+ Inclusion

In 2025, Hunter Primary Care made significant progress in creating safer, more inclusive spaces for clients, staff and community members who identify as LGBTQ+. We continued our membership with ACON’s Pride in Health + Wellbeing Program, delivered LGBTQ+ Awareness Training to staff and achieved a Bronze Award in the Health + Wellbeing Equality Index (HWEI).

Our Rainbow Network continued to play a central role in implementing our Pride in Health + Wellbeing Action Plan, leading initiatives such as a Pride Month staff celebration and participating in the Newcastle Pride Fair.

This year, headspace Newcastle hosted and attended several inclusive events and programs and continued hosting the As You Are Group - a weekly social group for LGBTQ+ young people.

Together, these initiatives highlight Hunter Primary Care’s organisation-wide commitment to building an organisation where diversity is celebrated and inclusion is embedded in everyday practice.

Community Connection

Hunter Primary Care remains deeply connected to the communities we serve by showing up, giving back and sharing knowledge across the Hunter region. In 2025, we proudly supported six community fundraisers and had a presence at more than 40 community events and expos. Our staff also presented at five major conferences, reflecting our growing influence and strong partnerships.



IMPACT THEME: WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE

At Hunter Primary Care, our people are the foundation of our impact. We are proud to foster a workplace culture where staff feel valued, supported, and empowered to grow. This year, staff wellbeing and leadership remained a strong focus, with our annual Peer-to-Peer Recognition program, leadership training and wellbeing initiatives. From Step and Sips and pet photo walls, to stretching and mindfulness sessions, these moments brought our people together to recharge and strengthen relationships.

The following staff profiles highlight just a few of the incredible individuals who bring our organisational values of excellence, integrity, respect and recognition to life across all areas of Hunter Primary Care.

Dylan – Positive Behaviour Support Practitioner

Dylan joined Hunter Primary Care in 2023 and brings a strong background in mental health and psychosocial disability, supported by a Bachelor's Degree in Psychological Science from UNSW. In his role, Dylan focuses on creating personalised behaviour support plans and finds great satisfaction in facilitating positive change for both individuals and families.

He values the opportunity to deepen his understanding of disability, provide tailored person-centred support, and build meaningful connections with people from diverse backgrounds. Dylan also enjoys sharing his knowledge with support workers and care teams to help enhance the lives of the individuals and families he works with.



Kathy – Clinical Lead / Senior Psychologist

Kathy has over 35 years of experience supporting adults with a wide range of issues including depression, anxiety, grief, adjustment difficulties, perinatal mental health, pain, stress, and low self-esteem. Before joining Hunter Primary Care she spent five years working in North Queensland supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Her background also includes many years of working with people with disabilities, people who are unemployed, injured workers and those living with chronic pain.

In her current combined role as clinician and clinical lead within the Primary Mental Health Service, Kathy values the opportunity to support vulnerable people in the community with respectful, high-quality mental healthcare. She also enjoys mentoring and supporting her colleagues, helping to normalise both the positives and the challenges faced in the profession.



Prescila – Transitional Nurse Practitioner

Prescila joined Hunter Primary Care in November 2024 as a transitional nurse practitioner, undertaking her nurse practitioner endorsement while gaining hands-on experience in the role. She values the support and mentorship she has received from experienced nurse practitioners and her team, which has given her the confidence to grow into this advanced position.

What Prescila loves most is making a real difference in the lives of residents and their families each day, while working alongside a team that is both dedicated and compassionate.



Mya - Concierge Administration Officer

Mya joined Hunter Primary Care in 2023 as part of the Reception Team, before moving into the NDIS and Chronic Disease team where she supported participants with complex needs and contributed to the design of pilot programs. These experiences provided a strong foundation in service navigation and person-centred care.

Today, Mya is proud to be part of the Concierge Team, working across NDIS & Chronic Disease and Primary Mental Health Services. She collaborates closely with colleagues and the Finance Team to strengthen processes, including refining NDIS billing and payment reconciliation, ensuring services run smoothly for participants and staff alike.



Clare – Integration Coordinator, Soul Clinic

As Integration Coordinator for Soul Clinic, Clare draws on her background as a registered nurse with trauma and emergency experience to help bridge health and community services.

In her role, Clare coordinates GPs, allied health, social services and specialist providers to reduce barriers and ensure guests receive holistic, person-centred support. She values the privilege of working with such a complex and diverse population, describing the role as one that constantly stretches her practice and encourages continuous learning and reflection. Above all, she feels honoured to be trusted to walk alongside guests on their health journeys.



Lyn - Registered Nurse / Learning and Support Coach

Lyn is a registered nurse working in the Patient Streaming Service (PSS) for GP Access After Hours. In her role, Lyn provides phone triage to clients, including clinical assessment, medical advice and coordination of appointments at GP Access clinics when required. She also refers patients to emergency departments or 000 when necessary to ensure timely and appropriate care. Lyn supports residential aged care facilities across the Hunter New England region through the Aged Care Emergency Service (ACE) triage program, helping to deliver quality care in the community.



As a Learning and Support Coach, Lyn mentors new staff through one-on-one orientation and training in the clinical systems used within the PSS. Alongside her role with Hunter Primary Care, she also works in the Emergency Department at Belmont District Hospital. This dual experience enhances her expertise in triage and acute care while supporting patient flow and reducing pressure on emergency departments.

Growing the Future Workforce

At Hunter Primary Care, we believe that building a stronger health system starts with investing in the next generation of health professionals. Each year, we host a growing number of student placements across a wide range of disciplines, creating opportunities for hands-on learning, skill development and meaningful contribution to real-world care.

Our partnerships with universities and training providers enable students to gain valuable experience in primary care settings, from mental health and allied health to aged care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and chronic disease management. This year, headspace Newcastle successfully retendered and expanded their Early Career Program, which supported 12 students across psychology, social work and occupational therapy.

Inspiring Future Nurses – Princess’ Aged Care Journey

Through our Aged Care Nursing Clinical Placement Program, we are proud to nurture the next generation of nurses. Nursing student, Princess, shared how her placement experience gave her the skills, confidence and inspiration to pursue a career in aged care.

During her placement, Princess learned strategies to support people living with dementia, developed confidence in communication techniques and gained a deeper appreciation for the role of dignity, connection and quality of life in aged care.



“Each day, my facilitators created a safe environment where I could reflect on what I did well and explore areas for improvement. Their guidance was consistent, encouraging and always aimed at helping me grow in confidence as a future nurse”.

From Placement to Employment

Sally’s journey with Hunter Primary Care began as a placement student and has since grown into a meaningful career. After completing her psychology placement, Sally joined the organisation as a Clinical Psychology Registrar, continuing to build on the strong foundations developed during her training.

“I had a great time as a placement student and when I finished studying I was eager to continue my growth at Hunter Primary Care. My experience with my team, my coworkers and supervisors has been great — the support, guidance and learning has been incredible. I value the opportunity to support people in our community on their journey and how Hunter Primary Care has helped me do this.”

Building Skills in Nutrition & Dietetics

Fourth-year nutrition and dietetics students Sophie and Jin embraced their Community Public Health Nutrition Placement with creativity and purpose. Tasked with developing a practical nutrition education initiative, the pair designed and delivered Healthy for You and Your Wallet — a program focused on accessible, budget-friendly ways to eat well.

Through interactive sessions on meal planning, cooking with affordable appliances and making informed food choices, Sophie and Jin equipped clients with tangible skills they could use in their daily lives.



Empowering Growth through Occupational Therapy Placement

For Occupational Therapy student Sarah, her final placement at Hunter Primary Care marked the culmination of years of study and the beginning of her professional journey. Supported by her supervisor Ella, Sarah spent her placement deepening her clinical skills, applying classroom knowledge to real-world practice and building confidence in supporting clients.

The placement was a true partnership in learning. Ella provided guidance, mentorship, and space for Sarah to grow, while Sarah brought fresh perspectives and energy to the team. Together, they demonstrated the value of structured, supportive student placements.



VOICES OF OUR COMMUNITY

The most powerful measure of our impact is found in the stories of the people and communities we support. Through their words, we see how care, connection and collaboration create real change. These stories and testimonials reflect the diversity of experiences across Hunter Primary Care - from improved health and wellbeing to increased confidence, independence and belonging. They remind us that every service delivered is part of a bigger story: strengthening lives and communities.

Chriso's Story: Building Confidence Through the Right Support

Chriso was referred to our Aboriginal Aftercare service following a suicidal crisis brought on by multiple life stressors. With no formal supports in place and limited trust in services, he began his recovery journey through culturally safe, holistic support from the Aboriginal Aftercare and Care Coordination & Supplementary Services Teams. Through trust-building, safety planning and psychoeducation, Chriso reconnected with his GP, began counselling through Hunter Primary Care's Primary Mental Health Service and accessed specialist alcohol and other drug support. This multidisciplinary, strengths-based approach supported his physical health, strengthened coping strategies and rebuilt a sense of purpose. Today, Chriso is engaged in social groups, training, and employment planning. He is more confident asking for help and proud of how far he's come.

Jacob's Story: Finding identity and confidence

At just 14 years old, Jacob* came to headspace Newcastle facing multiple challenges including autism, ADHD, learning difficulties, depression and anxiety, compounded by bullying related to their gender identity. Initially hesitant to engage, Jacob gradually built trust with their mental health clinician, who took a family-inclusive approach and worked closely with their school, GP and paediatrician. With the right supports in place, including medication, tailored therapy and safety planning, Jacob has since stopped experiencing suicidal ideation and are now excited to begin at a new school with confidence and hope. Jacob's father later shared heartfelt thanks, noting how supported and understood the family had felt throughout their journey.

**Jacob's name has been omitted from this story.*

Fynn's Story: Building Confidence and Career Success

Finding that first role after university can be daunting. For Fynn, the search had become disheartening until connecting with the headspace Newcastle Work and Study team. With help from their vocational specialist, Fynn refined their resume, gained interview skills and built confidence. Soon after, they secured a role with strong growth opportunities.

"Reaching out to the headspace Work and Study team was hands down the best decision I made in my job search and I honestly can't thank them enough for all their support along the way"



Peter's Story: Strength Through Advocacy

Peter lives with complete vision loss. When his NDIS request for simple exercise equipment was declined, our exercise physiologist advocated on his behalf, providing research, clinical justification and persistence until approval was granted. Now, with access to the right equipment, Peter can stay active, maintain independence and continue doing the things he loves. This success reflects the difference evidence-based advocacy can make in empowering people to live well on their own terms.

Gwen's Story: Empowering Wellness through Shared Health Appointments

At 84, Gwen is a vibrant member of our Care Coordination & Supplementary Services Shared Health Appointments group. The group includes weekly sessions blending lifestyle education, cultural learning and peer support for people living with chronic conditions.



"I find the advice and support given very important and valuable... The opportunity to meet and talk with others is of tremendous value... our group sessions are of great importance to me."

Peter's Story: From Homelessness to Home and Hope

After two years of homelessness Peter, was referred to Hunter Primary Care's Commonwealth Psychosocial Support program. With help from his skills facilitator, he was supported to lodge a new housing application, access medical documentation and secure priority social housing. Within two months, Peter received keys to his new home — close to family, shops and support. He has since reconnected with his daughter and celebrated Father's Day with family for the first time in years.

"I'd just like to thank you for all your help... I couldn't have gotten where I am today without your support."

Ricky's Story: Navigating Systems and Building Capacity

Ricky lives with autism, epilepsy, anxiety and depression. Though he had an NDIS plan for four years, he had never accessed supports due to system complexity. With guidance from his social worker, Ricky and his mother were supported to access financial, carer and community resources and, for the first time, an NDIS-funded support worker. His mother shared:

"Thank you so much for your help and always being there. No providers have ever given us the help that you have given us... You really are amazing because without you we wouldn't have done the appointments but you were right there behind us Andrew thank you and we really couldn't have done it without you. You are gold."



LOOKING AHEAD

As we look to the year ahead, our focus is on building a stronger, more connected and sustainable primary healthcare system for our communities. Guided by our Strategic Plan 2035, we will continue to strengthen the foundations of our organisation, while driving growth and innovation in how care is delivered.

Our strategic priorities for the year ahead are:



Consumer-Centred Care & Equity: Expand culturally safe and accessible services, strengthen First Nations partnerships and shift more support toward prevention and early intervention.



Service Innovation & Integrated Care: Unify intake and referral pathways. Grow virtual and hybrid care offerings to improve access and continuity of care.



Partnerships & Sustainable Funding: Deepen outcome-based partnerships with funders and community organisations, while diversifying income to ensure long-term sustainability.



Organisational Strength & Capability: Build workforce capability, wellbeing and retention. Strengthen digital enablement and data analytics to support smarter, more connected care. Maintain disciplined financial strategy and diversification to support a resilient future.

