

5 July 2024

## Wentworth Healthcare Board Meet with Local Health Providers in Lithgow

In late June, the Board of Wentworth Healthcare, the provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, held events at Lithgow Workies Club to better understand the health services and needs of the Lithgow region.

The Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network is a not-for-profit organisation operating across the Lithgow, Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Penrith local government areas. As one of 31 Primary Health Networks nationally, they receive funding grants from the Federal Government to support local GPs and other primary care providers to deliver high-quality care, to establish and fund non-hospital health services in the community, and to improve the health journey for community members as they move from one health system to another. The organisation is governed by a skills-based board, made up of experts from various fields within the health and corporate sectors.

The purpose of the two-day event in Lithgow, was to allow the Wentworth Healthcare Board to hear firsthand from local services they fund, and other key health stakeholders about the health successes, challenges and opportunities in the region.

On day one, representatives from 11 services in Lithgow funded by Wentworth Healthcare showcased their programs to the Board. This included headspace youth mental health service, Dianella Cottage alcohol and other drug support service, the Care finder service for older people needing help finding aged care services, the Chronic Pain management program that helps people find relief after years of persistent pain, and many others. Their presentations detailed some inspiring stories about the impact of their work and the difference it has made in the lives of individuals in Lithgow.

A client of the Care finder program attended the event and said that her Care finder was like “an angel” who assisted her when she didn’t know where to go or what to do. The Board also heard from a client of the Chronic Pain program, who had suffered for five years with persistent pain that impacted her ability to leave the house, drive or even do simple household chores. She was proud to report that at the end of the program, she was able to drive herself and walk unaided into the venue for her last session of the program. Both clients stated how much these free programs had improved their quality of life.

On day two, the Board met with key health stakeholders to discuss health issues, challenges and opportunities to support better health for the community. Attendees included Lithgow City Council, Lithgow Community Private Hospital, Lithgow Public Hospital, The University of Notre Dame Lithgow Clinical School, Three Tree Lodge Residential Aged Care Home and Westfund Health Insurance.

Issues identified and discussed included healthcare workforce shortages, affordable accommodation for health workers, knowledge of local services available in the region and affordability and access to specialist services outside of the Lithgow region.

Wentworth Healthcare Board Chair, Mr Gary Smith AM, said that the Board found their two days in Lithgow very valuable.



“It was wonderful to recognise the increase in services that we as a PHN have been able to support and establish in Lithgow over the past nine years, helping improve access for the community to more services that are closer to home,” he said.

“But we recognise that more work needs to be done. These events have facilitated valuable conversations and insights that have helped us further our understanding of the issues and priorities for the local community, and will help our decision-making in the future,” said Mr Smith.

“As a Board, we will continue to work with others in the sector to advocate for the health needs of the Lithgow community and for the needs of the health workforce who support them,” he added.

Local Lithgow GP, Dr Madhu Tamilarasan has been a Wentworth Healthcare Board Director since 2020 and brings both her clinical and her local expertise to the Board. Dr Tamilarasan was pleased to see the many successes but also the challenges in Lithgow highlighted at Board level.

“I would like to thank all those organisations who made the time to present and meet with our Board to highlight some of the amazing work being done on the ground but also for sharing openly some of the challenges faced by regional areas like Lithgow,” said Dr Tamilarasan

“We are committed to improving the health outcomes for people in Lithgow and as an organisation we hope to increase our communication about the services we fund in the area for both health professionals and the community,” she said.

## Some free services in Lithgow funded by Wentworth Healthcare:

**headspace Lithgow** – provided by Marathon Health, free support for young people aged 12-25 years across mental health, physical health, work and study and alcohol and other drug needs. Self or family referral, call **02 6941 9024**.

**Lithgow Youth Plus** – provided by Marathon Health, free outreach service for young people aged 12-25 at risk of or living with severe mental illness. Self or family referral, call **02 6941 9024**.

**Psychological Therapy Services** – Access to 8 free sessions for people with mild to moderate mental health concerns. GP referral or referral by calling the Head to Health phonenumber on **1800 595 212**.

**Commonwealth Psychosocial Support** – provided by Flourish Australia, for people over 16 years with severe mental illness who are not supported by the NDIS. GP or self-referral, call **1300 779 270**.

**Head to Health Phonenumber** – free support from trained mental health professionals to find the right mental healthcare across the region. Self-referral, call **1800 595 212**.

**Lithgow Dianella Cottage** – provided by Lives Lived Well, free non-residential day rehabilitation service for people over 18 years living with alcohol and other drug dependency issues. GP or self-referral, call 1300 727 957.

**Care Finder Services** – provided by Anglicare, supports vulnerable older people who do not have support from family or friends, to access aged care and other supports. GP, self or other agency referral, call **1300 111 278**.

**Connector Point** – provided by Nanna’s Touch, a free service to help socially isolated older people connect with local supports and activities in the community. GP, self or other referral, call **0409 765 601**.

**Chronic Pain Program** – provided by Studio Benefit, a free pain management program that helps improve persistent pain through education and exercise. GP referral needed, call **0438 430 082** for more information.



**Dementia Advisory Education** – Provided by Anglicare, dementia education for the community through our Live Well with Dementia events. Check our website for upcoming events:  
[www.nbmphn.com.au/Community-Events](http://www.nbmphn.com.au/Community-Events)

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