

Grant Guidelines

Country Care Connect Hubs

Mental Health Multidisciplinary Teams Program

Background

The Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability, and Ageing (DoHDA) initiated a competitive grant opportunity in early 2025 inviting Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to apply for funding to establish Mental Health Multidisciplinary Services in their PHN region. This initiative aligned with a key governmental priority: to enhance the mental health and wellbeing of Australians, with a specific focus on suicide prevention.

The core purpose of the funding is to improve access to appropriate, integrated support for people with severe and/or complex mental health needs within primary care setting, ensuring GP-led care remains the central component of the service model.

The Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN (the PHN) successfully secured this grant funding which strategically identifies the Western Downs, Goondiwindi, Somerset, and Lockyer Valley Local Government Areas (LGAs) as priority areas for these Mental Health Multidisciplinary Services.

This prioritisation was based on the identified high level of need in these LGAs, coupled with an opportunity to integrate the new multidisciplinary services with the region's incoming PHN Integrated Mental Health Hubs over the next 1-2 years. This coordinated approach is designed to create an overall uplift to mental health service access in rural towns.

The Opportunity

The PHN invites Expressions of Interest from eligible GP practices – either individual practices or partnerships (one or more practices; see eligibility requirements) – to establish, operate and deliver a CountryCare Connect Hub across the nominated underserved Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the region.

This commissioned initiative aims to strengthen access to primary-based mental health care for people with severe and/or complex mental health needs, particularly in rural communities experiencing high levels of unmet need, workforce shortages, and fragmented service pathways.

Four hubs are to be established across Western Downs, Goondiwindi, Lockyer Valley, and Somerset LGAs. There will be one CountryCare Connect Hub established in each of these regions.

Each commissioned hub will employ 2.0 FTE allied health professionals (a psychologist or mental health worker, plus a social worker), with access to a telehealth psychiatry service, and will deliver culturally safe, trauma-informed, place-based care.

Funding is available for three years (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2028) per LGA. Eligible activities include:

- Workforce and other associated personnel costs
- Practice costs (including rent, etc.)
- Establishment costs
- GP practice operational costs
- Outreach, home visits and telehealth as required
- Facilitate supervision and professional development
- Participation in evaluation and continuous quality improvement
- Implementation required data capture and reporting systems

Funding levels will be confirmed during contract negotiation based on service readiness, local needs, and capacity.

The CountryCare Connect Project aims to:

- Improve access and integration: Deliver place-based, well-integrated support for people with severe and/or complex mental health needs, ensuring strong coordination across PHN programs, HHS', GPs, allied health, and community services.
- Deliver tailored services: Provide individualised care coordination, case management, brief interventions, psychosocial support, and social prescribing.
- Reduce acute care use: Minimise hospital admissions, emergency presentations, and service disengagement through timely, accessible care.
- Provide psychiatric support: Ensure access to Psychiatry services for diagnosis, treatment planning, and medication review.
- Build rural workforce capacity: Strengthen the rural mental health workforce through competitive salaries, professional development, and clinical supervision.
- Support GP practices: Enhance practice efficiency, referral pathways, and access to specialist mental health support, improving patient outcomes and staff satisfaction.

Eligibility Requirements

GP practices must have an established accredited clinic within one of the four mentioned LGAs. Partnership applications from multiple practices are welcomed.

EOIs are open to:

- Accredited General Practices
- Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCHOs) and Aboriginal Medical Services
- General Practices operating across multiple sites
- Partnerships of General Practices (where shared governance and service integration can be demonstrated)
- Applicants must be located within, or able to service, one of the four target LGAs.

Multidisciplinary Team Composition

Each Hub will engage 2.0 FTE allied health professionals (AHPs):

- 1.0 FTE psychologist or mental health worker
- 1.0 FTE social worker

AHPs will deliver clinical and psychosocial support in close collaboration with the GP.

To support the program, a telehealth Psychiatrist will be commissioned by the PHN and will be accessible to the participating Health Professional teams to provide diagnostic, treatment, and medication advice.

Service Delivery

- Care will be delivered primarily face-to-face within GP clinics, with telehealth used as an exception to enhance accessibility.
- Practices must ensure secure, user-friendly telehealth platforms and support digital literacy for both patients and clinicians.
- Care will be strictly targeting individuals with severe and/or complex mental health needs in alignment with the Initial Assessment and Referral Decision Support Tool (defined as those with a mental illness that has a high impact on their day-to-day lives, is severe, persistent, or episodic, and may involve significant social stressors).
- Care plans must be developed collaboratively between the general practitioner/ACCHO and the mental health workers, with regular case conferencing.
- Participating GP practices will be required to provide mandatory data, financial acquittals and qualitative reporting to the PHN regularly, utilising the provided data reporting systems.

Funding Available

Allocated Budget	
Eligible Activities	Funding per LGA Practice for three years
Workforce	
Includes 2 Allied Health Professional FTEs, relocation allowance and professional development	\$1,106,178.60
Practice Costs	
Includes rent, office equipment, telecommunications, data reporting	\$125,908.80
Establishment Costs	
Includes Office IT equipment, Stationery	\$6,200.00
GP Practice Operational Costs	
Includes clinical governance, leadership of project, care coordination, administration support	\$131,424.94
Total per LGA practice over three years	\$1,369,712.34

Submission Requirements

Interested practices must submit an EOI addressing the selection criteria, including:

- Practice profile and service capacity
- Workforce and recruitment strategy
- Infrastructure and telehealth readiness
- Cultural safety and trauma-informed practice approach
- Data and evaluation capability
- Confirmation of mandatory participation requirements

Information Session

The PHN will be providing an information session on this opportunity via Microsoft Teams:

- Thursday, 4 December | 5:30pm - 6:30pm: [Market briefing](#)

A recording of the information session will be available to interested practices unable to attend at this time.

Update: The closing date for expressions of interest has been extended to Monday, 22 December 2025 at 2pm.

Additional Requirements

Please note, those practices who are shortlisted may be approached for a site visit by the selection panel. This will be organised directly with the practice in late January 2026.