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Healthcare Help Over the Holidays: After Hours Services Available in the Hawkesbury area

Do You Know Where to Go When Your Doctor is Closed This Holiday Season?

As the festive season approaches, Wentworth Healthcare, provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, is reminding Hawkesbury residents that the emergency department is not the only option for non-life-threatening illnesses or injuries. Each year, preventable accidents and minor health issues spike between Christmas and New Year, and many people are unaware of the alternative care available when their GP is closed.

Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay, said that the Federal Government funds after hours services and Medicare Urgent Care Clinics through Primary Health Networks to help ease the pressure on emergency departments.

"If you need medical help after hours, on weekends, or during the holidays, the **Doctor Closed website** can help you find GPs who offer after hours care, as well as your closest urgent care clinic or service," Ms Reay said.

While there will be an urgent care clinic opening in Windsor early next year, currently in the Hawkesbury area, **NSW Health funds North Richmond Urgent Care Service**. The service provides bulk-billed healthcare for urgent but non-critical conditions when your GP is unavailable. It is open every day of the year, including Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day, from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM.

To access the service, call **healthdirect** on **1800 022 222**, where a registered nurse will assess your condition and refer you to the most appropriate care. This may include an in-person appointment at North Richmond, a telehealth consultation through virtualKIDS or virtualGP, or escalation to NSW Ambulance if required.

For those who can travel, **a walk-in after hours GP clinic is available at Nepean Village Shopping Centre** in Penrith. It operates Monday to Friday from 6:00 PM to midnight, and on weekends and public holidays from 3:00 PM to midnight. The **www.doctorclosed.com.au** website also lists GPs with extended hours and after hours pharmacies, including **Penrith 24-Hour Pharmacy at 438 High Street**, which is open every day of the year.

Ms Reay also reminded the community that mental health support is available throughout the festive season. The **Hawkesbury Medicare Mental Health service, located at 1 Musson Lane**, Richmond, offers walk-in support without an appointment. It is open Monday-Wednesday and Friday from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM, Thursday and Saturday from 1:00 PM to 7:00 PM, and on public holidays, including Christmas, Boxing Day and New Year's Day, from 1:00 PM to 7:00 PM.

"We're proud to fund after hours services to help our community access timely care and avoid unnecessary strain on our region's hospitals during this busy time," Ms Reay said.

"I encourage everyone to visit www.doctorclosed.com.au to find out what other local healthcare options are available," Ms Reay concluded.

In an emergency, always call 000.

For urgent mental health support call Lifeline which is available **24/7** on **13 11 14**