

26 November 2021

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **You've checked in, but have you checked your mental health? Six Primary Health Networks drive COVID-19 wellbeing campaign in NSW**

As NSW celebrates surpassing 80% double-dose vaccination rates, a core group of Primary Health Networks (PHNs) are collaborating to ensure community members' ongoing physical and mental health remains a priority. Western Sydney PHN, South Western Sydney PHN, Nepean Blue Mountains PHN, South Eastern NSW PHN, Northern Sydney PHN, and Central and Eastern Sydney PHN have collaborated with the community to create a [video campaign](#) in 12 languages encouraging community members to get vaccinated and reach out for mental health support.

As of 8:00pm, 25 October, 85.5% of NSW residents have been fully vaccinated, a figure which will continue to rise. Across NSW, PHNs have been working alongside Local Health Districts (LHDs), general practices, Aboriginal medical services and community pharmacies at the coalface to drive vaccination coverage in the community. At the height of the Delta outbreak, general practices were vaccinating 500,000+ people a week across metro Sydney.

These high vaccination rates mean that NSW residents are physically protected against the risks of COVID-19. However, a rising concern within the primary care sector is protecting the mental health of the community and responding to needs they may have as a result of the pandemic and lockdown.

In a joint statement, PHN CEOs involved in the campaign stated, *"This partnership ensures that we are responding to mental health needs in Greater Sydney and surrounding regions which has been the worst impacted by this Delta outbreak. A healthy population is one equipped with the resources to thrive both physically and mentally. As we move into this post-lockdown phase, we need to ensure our community is not only physically protected against the virus through vaccination, but also mentally supported to overcome the challenges of the past 18 months."*

Along with the challenges of accessing mental health services during the lockdown, evidence suggests that an additional cohort are facing mental health challenges for the first time. In the four weeks to 27 June 2021, Lifeline received 81,033 calls, up by almost 20% from the same period in 2019. These figures do not account for the impact of the most recent NSW lockdown on people's wellbeing.

Communities in Greater Sydney and surrounding regions have proved their resilience during the lockdown and stepped up for vaccinations to protect their community. Now, as normality returns and they can once again visit local businesses, it's time for them to check in with their own mental health and their loved ones.

In response to the growing need for mental health support due to COVID-19 circumstances, NSW PHNs and the Department of Health have established the Head to Health Pop Up initiative. This collaborative project aims to help community members access timely, appropriate care for any mental health concerns. By calling **1800 595 212**, community members can speak with a trained mental health professional who will assess their needs and connect them to the best local support services. This may be a regional provider, online or telehealth resource, or a Head to Health Pop Up clinic.

Recognising that mental health does not discriminate, Head to Health Pop Up is free for anyone in NSW of any age, and no referral is needed. Lockdown, job uncertainty, isolation, homeschooling, and fears around the virus itself, have taken a toll on everyone.

*"Taking the time to acknowledge mental health concerns and reach out for support will be a crucial part of our recovery as a state. We need our community to be physically and mentally resilient as we transition back to 'business as usual'. The pandemic has provided us with innovative opportunities to work with other PHNs and ensure that we are supporting the mental health of not just our individual regions, but of all people across Greater Sydney and surrounds. Collectively, we have helped communities tackle COVID-19. Now, we are here to support them tackle their mental health challenges and improve their wellbeing." – PHN CEOs.*

Western Sydney PHN, South Western Sydney PHN, Nepean Blue Mountains PHN, South Eastern NSW PHN, Northern Sydney PHN, and Central and Eastern Sydney PHN's video COVID-19 vaccine and mental health campaign launches this week. Multi-lingual videos and other mental health resources can be found at: [wentwest.com.au/check-in-on-your-wellbeing](https://wentwest.com.au/check-in-on-your-wellbeing)

More information about Head to Health Pop Up services can be accessed via the Head to Health website: [HeadtoHealth.gov.au/PopUp](https://HeadtoHealth.gov.au/PopUp)

For further information:

Your Name

Your PHN

Contact Number

Email