

Media Release

Monday, 23 September 2024

Guide helps locals plan for their health needs during natural disasters

Wollondilly Shire has been confronted with more than its fair share of natural disasters in the past five years.

The Wollondilly Health Alliance – a partnership of the three levels of government – has developed a practical guide to support our community in planning for their health needs, in particular chronic health conditions, during future emergencies.

Health Resilience: Be Ready for a Disaster was developed in consultation with GPs, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and disaster experts.

It includes information such as:

- How to access your prescription medication if you've had to evacuate quickly
- Steps to manage chronic conditions like diabetes
- Ways to get healthcare when you can't see your regular GP
- Tips to look after your mental health in stressful situations
- Information on the Next of Kin program if you live alone

The Wollondilly Health Alliance is a formal agreement between Wollondilly Shire Council, South Western Sydney Local Health District and South Western Sydney PHN.

It was formed to improve the health and wellbeing of the Wollondilly community by taking a collaborative approach to identifying and advocating for the health services needed to support a growing population; sharing expertise, skills and resources; and better coordinating the local community's preparedness for, and response to natural disasters.

Wollondilly Shire Council Chief Executive Officer, Ben Taylor, said the council was pleased to be working with its partners in the alliance to support the health needs of our community members during emergency events.

"Recent natural disasters in our shire, including bushfires, floods and storms have highlighted the importance of being prepared, and this booklet will provide helpful information to make sure everyone has the best opportunity for a positive outcome."

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

South Western Sydney PHN is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting general practitioners, practice nurses and other primary health providers to deliver the best possible care for their patients. Our aim is to improve access to quality local healthcare for all residents living in the Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly and Wingecarribee LGAs. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, water and skies of South Western Sydney, the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra peoples, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Page 1 of 2

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FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

South Western Sydney Local Health District Director of Population Health, Mandy Williams, said as natural and man-made disasters could occur unexpectedly, having a clear, actionable plan to support your health was critical.

“This booklet was a collaborative project between Wollondilly Health Alliance partners and is a vital tool for helping residents prepare for and navigate the challenges of a disaster, ensuring that their health needs are met even in the most challenging circumstances.”

South Western Sydney PHN Chief Executive Officer, Dr Keith McDonald PhD, said natural disasters could make it harder to manage chronic health conditions, but too often planning for these health needs was overlooked amid all the other preparations which needed to be made.

“This new guide provides easy-to-follow steps which you can take to plan for your health needs, just as you plan evacuation routes and how you’ll communicate, stock emergency food and water supplies, and pack valuables and insurance information,” he said.

An online version of **Health Resilience: Be Ready for a Disaster** can be downloaded from the Wollondilly Shire Council website, [disaster-resilience-booklet.pdf \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.wollondillyshire.nsw.gov.au/files/default/disaster-resilience-booklet.pdf). Residents can pick up a physical copy of the guide at the Wollondilly Library and at council’s Administration Building on Menangle Street, Picton.

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