

Media Release

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Culturally responsive low intensity mental health support for South Western Sydney

New services providing locally relevant and culturally responsive mental health support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse communities have launched in South Western Sydney.

South Western Sydney PHN (SWSPHN) is commissioning Gandangara Health Services and ProActive Psychology to deliver tailored, low intensity mental health support which meets the needs of these communities.

The services will support people experiencing mild mental health concerns who are unable to access mainstream services, or whose cultural, language or individual needs those services do not meet. They are designed to complement the national Medicare Mental Health Check In service introduced this year by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

In South Western Sydney, about 42 per cent of people were born overseas, reflecting the region's cultural diversity, and more than 26,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people call the area home.

Gandangara Health Services provides culturally safe, community-based support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 18 and older in Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield and Liverpool.

The Community Yarning, Community Healing program will include yarning circles which combine mental health education, practical coping strategies and peer discussion. Identified First Peoples staff will lead the yarning circles in accessible community settings. Participants will also receive fortnightly phone support during the second stage of the program.

ProActive Psychology is now delivering its Side by Side program for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities aged 16 and older. The six-session, low intensity cognitive behavioural therapy program supports people experiencing mild mental health concerns, including concerns linked to difficult life situations or emerging health issues. ProActive Psychology offers face-to-face support in Bankstown and Fairfield and telehealth across the rest of South Western Sydney.

This service is supported by funding from the Australian Government through the PHN program.

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.

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The localised services are tailored for priority populations with the national Medicare Mental Health Check In service offers guided and self-guided cognitive behavioural therapy programs. The locally commissioned services will support people who cannot access mainstream mental health services or whose cultural, language or individual needs are not met by those services.

SWSPHN Acting Chief Executive Officer Amy Prince said culturally responsive mental health services were vital in a diverse region like South Western Sydney.

“It is important people can access mental health support which respects their culture, language and individual needs,” she said.

“Cultural and language barriers can make it difficult for people to seek help or find a service which is right for them.

“These programs will provide practical, low intensity support to help people manage mild mental health concerns before they become more serious.”

Ms Prince said Gandangara Health Services and ProActive Psychology would tailor their programs to the communities they support.

“Gandangara Health Services will place culture, connection and community at the heart of its support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, while ProActive Psychology will provide culturally responsive care for culturally and linguistically diverse communities,” she said.

“We’re pleased to have both providers on board to deliver locally relevant mental health support across our region.”

Eligible individuals can access the service through self-referral, GP referral or referral from another service.

Access the [Medicare Mental Health Check In](#) service online anytime or call the Medicare Mental Health phone line on 1800 595 212 Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5pm.

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