



# Health priority: Implementing a stepped care approach to mental health and suicide prevention

## What do we mean?

A stepped care approach is a staged system of options that match to an individual's needs, ranging from the least to the most intensive. The multiple levels of a stepped care approach do not operate in silos or as directional steps, but instead offer a spectrum of service options. In essence, a stepped care approach allows an individual to access the right service to meet their needs at the right time, in the right place, to maintain their wellness, or to support their recovery back to wellness, as required.

## Why is this a priority?

In 2014, the National Mental Health Commission undertook a comprehensive review of mental health services. The review found that there was duplication of services and that services were fragmented and difficult to navigate. The review also found that services were not well targeted or tailored to local needs. The report recommended implementing a stepped care approach to mental health and suicide prevention. PHNs were given a key role in leading this reform locally.

## What has the data told us?

Key points from our analysis of the mental health and suicide prevention needs across the population in south eastern NSW include:

### Health status needs

- high rates of mental and behavioural disorders and psychological distress amongst adults, with a greater burden borne by Aboriginal people and people living in the more rural parts of our region

### Health service utilisation

- inequitable distribution of primary mental health services across the region
- high rates of hospitalisation for self-harm, particularly for Aboriginal people and young people
- increasing rates of mental health-related hospitalisation overall

## What have our stakeholders told us?

Feedback from consumers, carers and service providers tells us:

- the consumer and carer voice must be in all aspects of commissioning and service delivery
- the principle of recovery must underpin our stepped care approach and any services commissioned
- fragmentation must be reduced, with coordination and planning essential, particularly when consumers are transitioning between services
- the opportunities for better partnerships, alliances and networks between services and across sector boundaries must be taken up

Consumers, carers and service providers all want a system that keeps people as well and as high-functioning as possible. When things go wrong and adversely impact on a person's quality of life, the system must have treatment options and self-management solutions available for people to access and use to support their recovery, wherever they live in our region.

# Health priority: Implementing a stepped care approach to mental health and suicide prevention

## What is our approach?

Our goals for mental health and suicide prevention are:

- full implementation of the localised stepped care approach
- agreement of a joint, whole-of-region mental health and suicide prevention plan with LHDs

To achieve this, we will work across our four levels of person centred interventions as outlined in our Business model:

