



Review of Low Intensity Mental Health Services in South Eastern NSW

Consultation findings Summary

February 2026



Background

COORDINARE – South Eastern NSW PHN receives funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) to commission low intensity mental health services to support people with, or at risk of, mild mental illness as part of a stepped care approach.

Since June 2020, COORDINARE has commissioned Wellways to deliver NewAccess, a region wide low intensity service licenced and supported by BeyondBlue.

Background



The Australian Government's 2024–25 Budget announced a new National Early Intervention Service (NEIS) to provide support to people at risk of, or experiencing, mild mental ill health or transient distress.

This national approach now known as Medicare Mental Health Check-in commenced on 1 January 2026.

This resulted in a reduction to COORDINARE's Mental Health Flexible Funding from 26/27.

In addition, the Commonwealth directed PHNs to review existing low intensity mental health services to assess whether they should continue, be refocused, or be decommissioned.

Purpose of the Review



The introduction of Medicare Mental Health Check-in and funding reductions has significant implications for the low intensity service landscape in SENSW.

COORDINARE has undertaken a review to determine the most effective commissioning approach that maintains access, avoids duplication, and meets the needs of our region.

The review focused on the current low intensity service, regional needs, and opportunities to implement new models.

Engagement approach



COORDINARE consulted with a range of stakeholders between November 2025 and January 2026, including:

Focus groups with the existing NewAccess provider and Mental Health Hub providers

Survey with consumers of the NewAccess service

Consultations with COORDINARE's Aboriginal Health Council, Clinical Councils, and Community Advisory Council

General community webpage with option for additional comment

Key findings – *What is working well*



Use of structured low-intensity cognitive behavioural therapy (LiCBT)	Targeted, skills-based approach	Broad eligibility criteria and flexible delivery modes	Ability to combine face-to-face and telehealth
The availability of TIS interpreting services	Local, caring, respectful, and non-judgemental staff	Broader services continuing to support consumers as their needs decrease	GP support for lower intensity mental health concerns

Key findings – *Gaps and challenges*



Low awareness of current models, particularly for priority populations	CALD consumers with low English literacy face major barriers accessing phone and online programs that rely on English forms or written materials	Children and older people identified as less well served by digital-only approaches and the existing service system
Transport challenges in rural areas limit face-to-face service access	Poor internet access and low digital literacy can hinder telehealth engagement	Rigidity of existing models

Opportunities



The review identified **clear opportunities** to strengthen the reach, flexibility and equity of low intensity supports across the region to better align with commonwealth guidance and complement existing offerings in the community.

*Stakeholders emphasised the need for **community based, culturally tailored models** that better meet the needs of **priority populations** and will **complement the national Medicare Mental Health Check in service.***

*These suggestions are supported by **evidence and population need.***



Conclusion

With the introduction of *Medicare Mental Health Check-in*, the way PHNs fund low-intensity mental health support is changing.

Instead of funding a broad service for everyone, COORDINARE can now **focus on people who may still miss out on support.**

This includes communities such as people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, older people, and children.

Next steps



COORDINARE will communicate any changes to existing service offerings from May 2025.

You can access more information and updates via our webpage

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