


Darling Downs Health



Local Area Needs Assessment **Priorities Report**

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Purpose

This **Local Area Needs Assessment** (LANA) Priorities Report is designed to help all agencies and services across the Darling Downs Health region understand the health needs of our community.

This will help everyone work together on the most important issues so we can improve the health of our community.

The priorities identified by the LANA aren't priorities specifically for Darling Downs Health. The health system is complex and many organisations like private businesses; local Councils; Non-Government Organisations; other State Government departments; the Commonwealth Government; Primary Health Networks; and community members themselves have a role to play.

Acknowledgment

Darling Downs Health acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our organisation is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. Darling Downs Health is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

We would also like to sincerely thank the members of the Darling Downs community, Darling Downs Health staff and community stakeholders who generously gave their time to share their views, experiences and journeys to help us understand the health and service needs of this region.

About the LANA process

To compile the report, we analysed:

1. Population health and service access data

2. Conversations with community members and staff

3. LANA survey responses

More than 300 community members and 600 staff and other stakeholders completed the survey in July and August 2022.



The Darling Downs Health region **Local Area Needs Assessment (LANA)** identified the most important health and service needs for our region.

It identified priorities in **six key areas:**

1.
Prevention



2.
Locations



3.
Populations



4.
Health conditions



5.
Service gaps



6.
System improvement



Prevention priorities



1. Housing availability

Our survey showed that housing availability is one of the **biggest** issues of concern for our community, and we have **very low vacancy rates** across our region.



Physical and mental health can be impacted when people don't have access to **affordable housing**.¹

The proportion of Burnett residents living in severely crowded dwellings is **141% higher than in Queensland**.²



2. Economic status

Incomes in the Darling Downs Health region are **14% lower than the Queensland average**.³

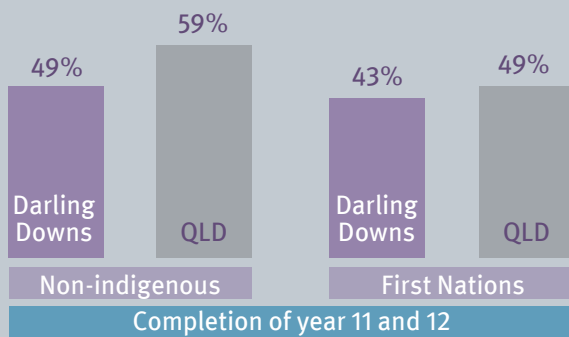


Physical and mental health can be impacted when people are socio-economically **disadvantaged**.⁴

Prevention priorities

3. Educational attainment

Rates of **high school completion** in the Darling Downs Health region are **lower than across Queensland.**⁵



People with **higher levels of education** tend to live longer, healthier lives.⁶

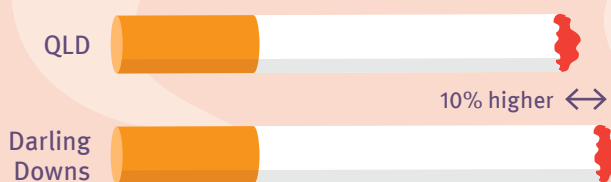
Lower rates of **education levels** implies lower **health literacy** and will impact **communication methods** with our community.

- A
- B
- C



4. Use of tobacco-related products

The proportion of people living in the Darling Downs Health region who currently smoke is about **10% higher than the Queensland average.**⁷



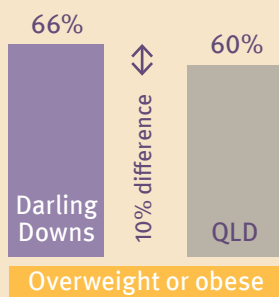
While rates of cigarette smoking are decreasing locally and nationally, **rates of vaping are increasing, particularly among young people**⁸, and vaping is not less harmful than smoking.⁹

Tobacco smoking is the risk factor that has the biggest impact on the health of Darling Downs Health region residents.¹⁰



5. Overweight and obesity

The Darling Downs Health region has **higher rates of overweight and obesity than the Queensland average**, including among pregnant women.⁷



Overweight and obesity is the risk factor that has the **second-biggest impact** on the health of Darling Downs Health region residents.¹⁰

28% of Darling Downs Health **women giving birth are obese** compared to **21%** in Queensland.¹⁰

6. Childhood development – the first 2000 days

The Darling Downs Health region has **higher rates of developmental delay** among children **than the Queensland average**.¹¹

The environment and experiences of early childhood influence later health and wellbeing.¹²





Priority locations

- 1 Kingaroy North
- 2 Nanango
- 3 Tara
- 4 Stanthorpe
- 5 Kingaroy



These areas are generally more disadvantaged.

They may have **higher unemployment** ¹³, **lower rates of high school completion** ⁵, **lower average incomes** ¹⁴, **higher rates of developmental delay among children** ¹¹, **lack of affordable housing** ¹⁵, and **challenges with access to affordable healthcare** ¹⁶.

Priority populations



First Nations people

- The Darling Downs Health region has a **higher proportion of First Nations residents than the Queensland average.**¹⁷
- First Nations people have a **shorter life expectancy** and **greater rates of illness and disease** than the non-First Nations population.¹⁸

Gender and sexuality diverse people

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) people **experience challenges accessing sensitive healthcare** and **have poorer health outcomes** compared to the broader population.¹⁹



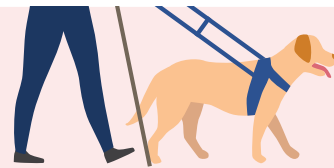
Older people

- **The proportion of older people (65+) in the Darling Downs Health region is 25% greater than the proportion in Queensland.**²⁰
- **Older people (65+)** are **more likely** than younger people **to be hospitalised** and use health services.²¹



People with a disability

- The proportion of people with a severe or profound disability in the Darling Downs Health region is **21% higher than the proportion in Queensland**²²
- People with a disability need more access to health services and **tend to rate their health more poorly** than people without a disability.²³



Refugee community

- Toowoomba is a recognised **Refugee Welcome Zone** and has **high rates of refugee settlement.**²⁴



Priority health conditions


1.

Mental health disorders and substance misuse disorders

- LANA survey respondents identified mental health and substance misuse **twice as often as any other condition** when rating the biggest health issues in the Darling Downs Health region.
- **Mental health and behavioural problems are the most common health conditions** in the Darling Downs Health region.²⁶

2.

Diabetes, arthritis, cardiovascular disease and respiratory conditions

- **The need for these services is projected to increase.**^{27, 28} 
- **When combined, these chronic conditions have the biggest impact on the health of the Darling Downs Health region's population.**¹⁰

3.

Cancer

- **The need for cancer services is projected to increase.**²⁹ 
- **Cancer is the single condition that has the biggest impact on the health of the Darling Downs Health region's population.**¹⁰



4. Oral health

- **Acute dental conditions are the second-leading cause of preventable hospital admissions** in the Darling Downs Health region.³⁰
- Some parts of the Darling Downs Health region **don't have access to fluoridated water**, and fluoride is known to prevent oral disease.³¹

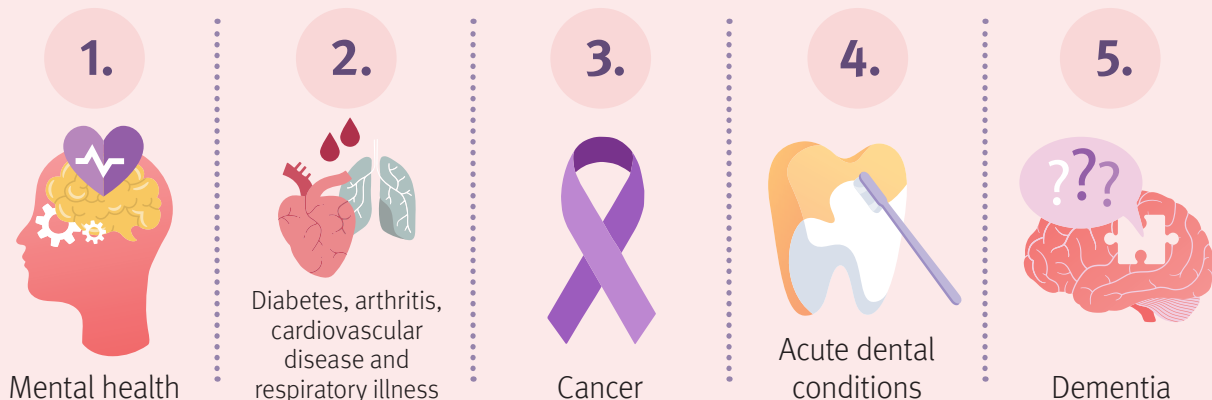
5. Dementia

- The Darling Downs Health region is estimated to have a **20% higher rate of dementia than the Queensland average**.²⁶
- **Dementia rates in the region are expected to grow** as the rate of older people within the Darling Downs Health region's population grows over coming years.³²



Top 5 priority health conditions in the Darling Downs Health region

Snapshot



Service gaps

1. Primary care, including access to tests and scans

- **Primary care** (seeing a GP) is not only **essential to prevent health conditions** and **hospitalisations**, but is **the gateway** to accessing many other services.



- The LANA survey showed that **27%** of community member respondents **needed tests and scans in the past 12 months, but didn't access them.**



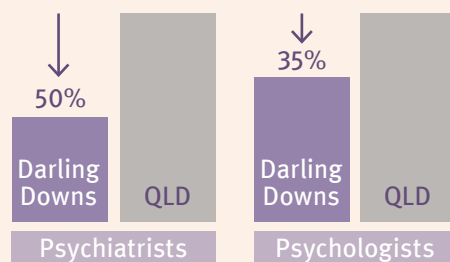
27%
didn't
access
needed
tests
or scans

2. Mental health and drug and alcohol services

- The LANA survey showed that mental health and drug and alcohol services were the **most frequently identified services that community members needed in the past 12 months, but didn't access.**



- The Darling Downs Health region has **50% fewer registered psychiatrists** than the Queensland average and almost **35% fewer psychologists.** Most of these shortages are outside of Toowoomba. ³³





3. Allied health services

eg. physiotherapy, speech therapy, social work, podiatry, occupational therapy

- The LANA survey showed that **28%** of community members needed an allied health service during the previous 12 months **but didn't access one**. This made it the second-most-frequently identified service type.
- The **rural areas** within the Darling Downs Health region have particularly **low rates of access** to allied health services compared to the Queensland average.³⁴

4. Specialist medical services

eg. cardiology, obstetrics and gynaecology, ophthalmology, anaesthetics

- All parts of the Darling Downs region, except Toowoomba, **have lower rates of access to specialist medical services** than the rate across Queensland.³³
- **27%** of community members who completed the LANA survey needed a specialist medical service within the previous 12 months **but didn't access it**.

5. Oral health services

- The LANA survey showed that **19%** of community members needed an oral health service in the previous 12 months **but didn't access one**.³³
- Oral health services can be more difficult for people to access because they aren't publicly available for all adults.³⁵



System improvement priorities

1.

Workforce capability, supply and stability

There is a global and national health workforce shortage, and the shortfall is worse in rural and remote areas. ³⁶

By 2025, Australia is predicted to have a national shortfall of more than 100,000 nurses and 3,000 doctors. ³⁷

These shortages can cause higher than usual rates of turnover and workforce instability.

2.

Physical space

The Darling Downs Health region has hospital facilities which are ageing and some buildings don't have enough appropriate space to see as many patients as possible.

3.

Access to information, IT systems and processes

Consumers are more ready and willing to adopt digital information sharing and virtual healthcare than ever before. ³⁸

The health system will need to put systems and processes in place to make the most of this opportunity. ³⁹

4.

Planning and communicating the next steps of care

Our LANA survey showed that healthcare consumers don't always have clarity on the plan for the next steps of their care. This can make it hard for them to follow the plan and might mean they have unnecessary complications. Health services need to be integrated and coordinated. ⁴⁰

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