

## Providing Mental Health Services in the Gunnedah Community

The Barwon Division of General Practice is committed to improving mental health services in our rural communities.

The Division currently employs a full time psychologist, Edwina Cowdery who services the Gunnedah area and also funds Heather Vernon, a private psychologist, who is contracted under the More Allied Health Services Program.

The program was established by the Federal Government to increase the number of allied health professionals in rural and remote areas.

Edwina travels extensively through the region visiting the towns of Gunnedah, Boggabri, Manilla, Barraba and Wee Waa and has had over 339 consultations in the last 6 months. Heather provides services to patients from Gunnedah and surrounding areas in her private rooms in Gunnedah.

One in five Australians will be affected by a mental health issue. The Division has been working to bring mental health into the open by hosting a number of forums and awareness days throughout the region. It is hoped that the events break down some of the barriers to accessing services and remove the stigma associated with seeking help.

The Barwon Division is always on the look out to recruit more mental health professionals to further improve the services available in this region.

If you or someone you know has suitable training and qualifications in this area, we would love to hear from you.

Please forward your resume to Fiona Strang, CEO at [fstrang@barwondgp.org.au](mailto:fstrang@barwondgp.org.au) or phone 02 6752 7196.

*Media contact:*

*Dr Grahame Deane, BDGP Chair/Medical Director, 0428 262 423*