



**Healthy Outback Communities FAQs**  
**Western Queensland Health and Wellbeing Workforce**

Thank you for supporting the Healthy Outback Communities (HOC) program. As a valued member of Western Queensland's health and wellbeing workforce, you have a vital role to play in implementing this new, community-led initiative to improve health access and equity for individuals and families living and working in our channel country communities.

These FAQs have been prepared as a handy guide to help you learn more about the program and how you can contribute to its success. We look forward to sharing more over the coming weeks and connecting with you in person at one of our upcoming events, training sessions or webinars.

Thank you for your support as we work together towards our shared vision of *Healthier Western Queensland Communities*.

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## 1. What is Healthy Outback Communities?

Healthy Outback Communities (HOC) is a new program of health and wellbeing designed for people living in remote Western Queensland channel country.

HOC is community driven to support residents to proactively access health and wellbeing services, shifting the focus from illness to wellness.

The program advocates for a shift in mindset, focusing more on staying well rather than just treating illness. By facilitating access to health and wellbeing services sooner, the aim is for people to need fewer hospital visits, prevent long-term health issues and foster healthy lifestyles.

With a key focus on universal wellbeing, HOC adds social prescribing and virtual health services to existing nurse-led health centres, visiting doctors and other health services currently provided.

The HOC team connects residents to locally-tailored wellbeing services to support physical, social and emotional wellbeing.

## 2. Who delivers Healthy Outback Communities?

HOC is co-designed and delivered by local communities. The program was established by the Western Queensland Primary Health Network and is delivered in partnership with:

- Barcoo Shire Council
- Boulia Shire Council
- Central West Hospital and Health Service
- CheckUP
- Health Workforce Queensland
- Health Consumers Queensland
- Queensland Reform Office
- Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland Section)
- Western Queensland Primary Health Network

### 3. Why is a new approach needed?

Very remote Western Queensland channel country communities face stark health disparities. This region spans almost 220,000 sq km, equivalent to the size of Victoria, and 13% of the state's total land area. The 1,100 residents of these communities do not have a locally-based doctor or pharmacy. The communities rely heavily on the local nurse, visiting health services and the Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland Section).

While residents have access to necessary services, they still endure some of the state's poorest health outcomes, which are also notably more severe. Illness in remote settings not only impacts individuals and their families, but also places considerable strain on the healthcare system, often prolonging recovery periods for optimal health.

### 4. What makes Healthy Outback Communities different?

HOC does things differently and really stands out from other programs in its approach and execution. Here are some of its unique features:

- Place-based
- Person-centred
- Community-driven
- Prevention-focused
- Localised response
- Health and community services working together
- Building local workforce capability
- Access to a virtual health and wellbeing hub

### 5. When and where does the HOC commence?

HOC launches in the Barcoo Shire in April 2024 before expanding to other Western Queensland channel country Shires over the next 12 to 18 months.

### 6. How can health and wellbeing providers get involved?

Every health and community service provider, professional and clinician who lives or works in Western Queensland channel country is invited to get involved in Healthy Outback Communities!

Your support and involvement sit at the very heart of this program's success. HOC is all about health and community services working more closely together and finding new ways to support our wellbeing workforce.

We also know that every community in our patch is unique, with its own needs, priorities and challenges. As HOC is rolled out across each Shire, there will be many opportunities for you to share local insights into service barriers and enablers, and priorities at a community level.

- Come along to our upcoming 'Mates of the Alliance' workshops and webinars
- Learn more about how and when HOC will be delivered in your community
- Get to know the HOC team

- Provide services and support to help individuals achieve their *Personal Wellbeing Plan* goals
- Stay connected via our monthly multi-disciplinary team meetings
- Contribute to the development of *Community Wellbeing Plans* for your region

## 7. HOC in Action: what does HOC look like in practice?

In practice, HOC is all about tangible progress towards health and wellbeing for everyone in Western Queensland's channel country communities.

Here's what that looks like in action for our first year of implementation:

- **More health and wellbeing support:** We're working to expand the range of health and wellbeing services available, ensuring that everyone has access to the care they need.
- **Better engagement, access and navigation:** Through a dedicated HOC workforce and our Virtual Health and Wellbeing Hub, we're making it easier for individuals to engage with services, access resources and navigate their wellbeing journey with confidence.

**Implementing Wellbeing Plans:** We're not just talking about plans; we're putting them into action. We are committed to providing opportunities for people to develop personal wellbeing plans and, later, a community wellbeing plan. We will then proceed to develop or implement services needed to fill the gaps identified in the plans.

- **Taking real action:** We're committed to action in the community. With our *You Said, We Heard, We Did Tracker*, we're not just listening; we're acting. By identifying priorities and crafting solutions together, we're turning community feedback into real results that benefit everyone.
- **Building a network of champions:** We believe in the power of community champions to drive positive change. Through our ***Mates of the Alliance*** champion program, everyone has the opportunity to contribute to community wellbeing plans and shape the future of HOC across Western Queensland. We look forward to sharing more about Mates of the Alliance over the coming weeks.

## 8. Who is the HOC Team and what do they do?

We are excited to introduce the dedicated HOC Team and their roles in our region. Working closely together on the ground in the community and via the Virtual Wellbeing Hub, this team is committed to fostering more connected, healthy outback communities.

- **Wellbeing Connector:** Our locally-based, part-time staff play a vital role in coordinating health and wellbeing services and resources at the community level. They keep track of all wellbeing and medical services available in the region using 'My Community Diary'. They also work with the community to develop a *Community Wellbeing Plan* that prioritises local health and wellbeing goals, risks and opportunities.

**Wellbeing Practitioner:** Working closely with community members, our Wellbeing Practitioners help develop *Personal Wellbeing Plans* and facilitate access to suitable health and wellbeing services. Local residents can book an appointment with the HOC Wellbeing



Practitioner via the Virtual Health and Wellbeing Hub to discuss social, emotional and wellbeing matters or medical issues as well. They also coordinate monthly meetings with the multi-disciplinary team in each region and work closely with our Wellbeing Responder and Wellbeing Connectors.

- **Wellbeing Responder:** Our Wellbeing Responder plans and executes health and wellbeing services tailored to the region and ensure alignment with Personal and Community Wellbeing Plans. They keep the HOC Alliance informed about progress, potential risks, future planning and funding requirements.

## 9. What is the Virtual Health and Wellbeing Hub (VHWH)?

The Virtual Health and Wellbeing Hub (VHWH) is a digital gateway to accessible healthcare services for HOC community members. Through phone or video consultations, local residents can conveniently connect with health professionals, from home.

The Hub seamlessly integrates with the patient records used by visiting RFDS face-to-face doctors and nurses. This ensures continuity of care and a comprehensive understanding of the patient's medical history.

Community members can easily book appointments with the RFDS VHWH for both medical and wellbeing concerns. Whether it's a routine check-up or addressing more complex health issues, the VHWH offers a full spectrum of care directly to the patient, eliminating the need for physical travel to healthcare facilities.

In cases of urgent medical conditions, the VHWH seamlessly integrates with the RFDS acute telehealth service, ensuring prompt and effective response to critical health situations.

## 10. What is a Personal Wellbeing Plan?

The Healthy Outback Communities approach aims to tailor personal wellbeing plans based on individual needs, providing support to residents so they can achieve their health goals through accessible services. Regular check-ins and goal reviews will ensure progress towards improved health and wellbeing.

Community level wellbeing plans will also be developed.

## 11. Who can I speak to locally about Healthy Outback Communities?

The Wellbeing Connector is the first person to reach out to for information about HOC. More information about this person and their contact details will be available shortly.

## 12. Who is the Western Queensland Primary Health Network?

Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN) is an independent not-for-profit established in 2015. WQPHN is one of seven PHNs across Queensland (one of 31 funded by the Australian Government) and:

- aims to improve patient care in the region and make primary health care more efficient and effective

- commissions (or funds) health services in Western Queensland
- aligns health investment with demonstrated population health needs
- uses health intelligence data to orientate health services efficiently and effectively
- ensures the right primary health care is delivered, at the right time, by the right provider
- receives advice from GPs and other health professionals and consumers.

### 13. How do I register for the program or find out more?

Go to [wgphn.com.au/hoc](http://wgphn.com.au/hoc) or connect with your local wellbeing connector for more information about HOC in your community.