

Media Release

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DIRECTIONS HEALTH EXPANDS OUTREACH SERVICES IN CANBERRA

Canberrans in need have free, quality health care available on their doorstep thanks to an expansion in Directions Health Services' outreach services.

Delivered in collaboration with Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy (CAHMA), the augmented weekly health outreach services are being delivered at Ainslie Village and Oaks Estate, with on-site support from Argyle Housing and Vinnies Blue Door drop-in service.

"Directions Health Services was already providing weekly nursing care at Ainslie Village and fortnightly counselling at Oaks Estate.

"We are pleased to be able to expand these services so we are now delivering weekly nursing care as well as fortnightly GP and counselling services at both locations.

"There has been fantastic uptake of the services by residents at Ainslie Village and Oaks Estate and we thank Capital Health Network, through the ACT PHN Program, for supporting expansion of these services," Directions Health Services CEO, Bronwyn Hendry said.

The outreach services now provide residents with access to nursing, GP and alcohol and other drug counselling services, free of charge.

"A Directions Health Services nurse attends Oaks Estate and Ainslie Village on a weekly basis, providing health assessments, treatment and referrals to other services. Each week the nurse is accompanied by either a GP, or an alcohol and drugs counsellor, enabling residents to access these services fortnightly", Ms Hendry explained.

"Vulnerable members of our community can find it difficult to access health care for a range of reasons, yet often experience the heaviest burden of disease. We have found that providing care in a safe space, close to home, delivered by trusted health care providers can make a real difference."

"Since we began providing services in Ainslie Village and Oaks Estate, our nurses and counsellors have built a reputation for caring. Demand for services has subsequently grown and we are delighted to be able to expand them.

"Health services for the residents of Ainslie Village have increased dramatically due to the expansion of Directions Health Services outreach services at the complex. Many of our residents are in a challenging stage of their lives and essential services such as health care can often be the last option for them, even though they may need it most. The team at Argyle Housing looks forward to working alongside Directions Health Services to ensure our residents receive the best possible support during their time of need." Argyle Housing CEO, Wendy Middleton.

"CAHMA holds BBQ lunches weekly at Oaks Estate and fortnightly at Ainslie Village when nurses and other health professionals are present to help support residents in accessing the services they require. CAHMA Peer AOD Workers provide support, promote trust and build rapport with residents and

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healthcare professionals and educate and inform residents on reducing harms associated with AOD use,” said Chris Gough Manager of CAHMA and The Connection.

The health outreach service at Oaks Estate compliments the range of services provided through the Vinnies Community Inclusion Program, a two-year pilot program assisting people with a psychosocial disability who are not eligible to access an NDIS package.

“We welcome our ongoing partnership with Directions Health and the expanded health services now available,” said Chris Shortis, Director of Special Works at St Vincent De Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn. “The Community Inclusion program we run at Oaks Estate is designed to increase opportunities for social inclusion and link participants into mainstream and community services to help address their specific needs.

“Having a GP, nurse and AOD counsellor available on site prioritises health care and helps people take care of themselves. It encourages them to feel they can reach out when they need help and that someone will treat them sensitively and with the respect they deserve.”

In addition to health services at Oaks Estate and Ainslie Village, Directions Health also provides GP services to the Alcohol and Drug Service clients at The Canberra Hospital and nursing care for clients of the Needle Syringe Program in Civic.

Directions Health’s outreach services are supported by funding from ACT Health and also the Australian Government through the PHN Program.

“It’s wonderful to see residents who typically don’t have an existing relationship with a GP get the health care that they deserve. We’re proud to be supporting Directions Health Services to deliver these outreach services to link vulnerable people to mainstream primary care, particularly as we know that people who are most vulnerable often experience health and social disadvantage,” said Adj Prof Gaylene Coulton, Capital Health Network Chief Executive.

Directions Health’s Althea Wellness Program offers primary and secondary health care for anyone impacted by alcohol, drugs or other addictions, including individuals and family members who do not have a GP.

“We are very lucky to have a team of dedicated doctors, nurses and counsellors who work with Directions Health,” Ms Hendry said. “Without the commitment of these health care professionals to provide services to people where they feel most comfortable accessing them, and the support of our service partners we would not have been able to expand our service to Oaks Estate and Ainslie Village.”

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