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FRRR Grant to support the BLG!

Improving the health of people in Buloke, Loddon and Gannawarra shires will be the focus of a partnership program thanks to a new funding grant. The \$115,000 grant from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) will activate stages two and three of the Buloke Loddon Gannawarra (BLG) Health Network's Implementation Plan". Northern District Community Health (NDCH), as a partner with the twelve local health organisations in the BLG Health Network, is excited that their application for the Enhancing Country Health Outcomes (ECHO) program was successful. Stage One of the BLG Health Needs Analysis Implementation Plan, which was recently completed, prepared the twelve organisations for the next stages.

There were up to \$3.9 million worth of funding applications in the final round of the ECHO grants with a total available funding of approximately \$370,000 which makes NDCH being one of the 4 projects awarded an incredible achievement. NDCH CEO Mandy Hutchinson said the funding would ensure the organisations would be able to continue the work already started. "We know that when regional and rural health organisations work together in rural areas we get better outcomes," Ms. Hutchinson said. "This project is all about partnership and working together to create healthier communities."

With the health organisations working together in partnership, the project aims to increase workforce capacity and improve referral pathways across four key priority areas of Heart and Respiratory Health, Diabetes, Mental Health and Oral Health. It also plans to educate and empower communities across the neighbouring shires around those same key health concerns.

"One of the great things about the BLG Implementation Plan is that it is an existing and strong partnership," Tracey Wilson, BLG chair and CEO at Inglewood & Districts Health Service said. "It aligns with and enhances work that is already happening in the region and taking it to the next steps for our communities. We are not creating new systems or programs but building on the collaboration and achievements with organisations we already work together with." The plan is also designed to link in with existing municipal health and wellbeing plans and organisational strategic plans.

In 2016 it was identified that there were opportunities to support the health of rural communities through collaborative planning based on a shared understanding of the health needs and priorities of communities. The practice of sharing resources and workload around preventative health is familiar to all in rural areas.

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