

Edition 8

Lifeline Connect

As another busy quarter comes to a close, we're reminded that every conversation, every event, every volunteer and every act of kindness helps strengthen the communities we serve.

From celebrating our volunteers and embracing important community events to sharing knowledge, supporting wellbeing and creating opportunities for connection, this edition highlights the many ways we're making an impact together.

Lifeline MID COAST

CEO & Board Corner



Catherine Vaara
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Neville Parsons
BOARD CHAIR

> This season is all about people - celebrating our volunteers, welcoming new faces, and recognising the connections that make our community stronger.

It has been a full and heartening few months at Lifeline Mid Coast, and if there is one thread running through all of it, it is people.

During National Volunteer Week in May, we had the great pleasure of meeting so many of our volunteers - some just down the road in Port Macquarie, and others that took travel to experience and be part of what our volunteers do in Kempsey, Wauchope, Forster and Wingham. Spending time together, hearing your stories and saying thank you in person, was easily one of the highlights of our year.

Our volunteers are the heart of this organisation. Whether they are answering calls on 13 11 14, supporting one of our programs, or lending a hand in an op shop, they give their time with a generosity that never fails to move us. To everyone who gives so much of themselves to this community, thank you.

We were also delighted this quarter to welcome two new members to our leadership team. Sarah Cunningham joins us as our Operations & Compliance Manager, and Tom Schumann as our People & Culture Manager.

Both bring warmth, experience and a genuine commitment to our mission, and we have no doubt you will make them feel every bit as welcome as they have already made us feel about the road ahead.

There is other good news to share, too. At Lifeline Congress in May, Lifeline Australia set out its direction to recognise our Eclipse program as a Lifeline program, a wonderful acknowledgement of work developed right here on the Mid Coast, which we look forward to telling you much more about soon.

We feel incredibly fortunate to be part of the community surrounding Lifeline Mid Coast - our staff, volunteers, our service participants, shoppers, donors and supporters! We thank one and all for making this work possible and look forward to all that the season ahead holds.

With gratitude,
Catherine & Neville.

Welcomes & Farewells

FOND FAREWELLS

Farewell Patti & Sam



Sam Burgio
People, Culture & HR



Patti Parsons
Office Manager

After an incredible 19 years with Lifeline Mid Coast, Patti Parsons is retiring, leaving behind a legacy of dedication, kindness and genuine care. Throughout her years with Lifeline, Patti has made a lasting impact on our team, our volunteers and the many people whose lives she's touched. We're also farewelling Sam Burgio, who is moving on to a new opportunity. During her time with Lifeline, Sam has brought enthusiasm, creativity and compassion to everything she does, making a meaningful contribution to our team and community. To Patti and Sam, thank you both for your commitment, friendship and the difference you've made during your time with Lifeline. While you'll each be greatly missed, we're excited to see where your next chapters take you and wish you both every happiness and success for the future.

NEW TO THE TEAM

Welcome Sarah & Tom



Sarah Cunningham
Operations & Compliance



Tom Schumann
People & Culture

We're delighted to welcome two new members to the Lifeline Mid Coast team. Sarah joins us as our Operations and Compliance Manager, bringing more than 20 years of leadership experience across community services, healthcare and corporate sectors. Passionate about building strong teams and supporting volunteers, Sarah will play a key role in leading our operational excellence. Joining her is Tom Schumann, our new People & Culture Leader. Tom brings experience in human resources, workforce operations and trauma-informed community care, alongside a genuine commitment to employee wellbeing and inclusive workplace cultures. We warmly welcome Sarah and Tom to the Lifeline Mid Coast family and look forward to the leadership and passion they will bring to our community.



First Edition Throwback!

February Hydration Month - Wear Blue

Wellness, Connection & Communication Hub

ONE HUB. ONE TEAM. ONE LIFELINE

What began as a small initiative at Head Office in February has quickly grown into something much bigger. Following months of positive feedback, increased engagement and genuine improvements in staff connection and wellbeing, we're excited to officially launch the Wellness, Connection & Communication Hub across the entire Lifeline Mid Coast organisation this August.

Whether you're in Head Office, one of our retail shops, Crisis Support, Services or volunteering with us, this hub has been created for everyone.

WHY WE'RE DOING IT

This isn't just another newsletter. It's a place to celebrate our people, share ideas, recognise achievements, support wellbeing and strengthen connections across every corner of Lifeline Mid Coast.

Because no matter where we work, we're all part of one team.

Make it yours!

This hub is only as good as the people contributing to it. We're inviting everyone to help shape future editions by sharing:

- Recipes
- Photos
- Jokes
- Shout-outs
- Stories
- Celebrations
- Ideas
- Smiles

Your voice helps keep this space positive, engaging, and authentic.

Together, we'll create a space that celebrates connection, supports wellbeing and keeps every member of the Lifeline Mid Coast family informed, involved and inspired.

Celebrating the heart of Lifeline

AROUND THE MID COAST

National Volunteer Week gave us the opportunity to pause and celebrate the incredible people who keep Lifeline Mid Coast moving every day. Across one memorable week, our Board members, CEO Catherine Vaara and Retail Divisional Manager Max travelled throughout the region, visiting each of our six retail stores and our Crisis Support Centre to personally thank the volunteers who generously give their time. Each morning tea was filled with conversation, laughter and heartfelt appreciation



Wauchope

A wonderful morning with the volunteers who make such a difference here.



Kempsey

Morning tea, laughter and a very well-earned thank you.



Forster

Familiar faces and a whole lot of stories worth hearing.



Port Macquarie

Celebrating the teams who keep the doors open every week.



Wingham

Warm welcomes and a shop full of personality, as always.



Crisis Support

Thank you to the caring voices on the other end of 13 11 14.

To every volunteer across Lifeline Mid Coast - thank you. Your kindness, generosity and commitment continue to change lives every single day.

Giving goods a second life



Lifeline Mid Coast is proud to be partnering with Port Macquarie-Hastings Council as a participating organisation in the new Drive Thru & Drop Off - Reuse and Recycling pilot program.

The initiative makes it easier than ever for community members to donate quality pre-loved household items, clothing and other reusable goods. Rather than ending up in landfill, these donations will find a second life through our Lifeline Mid Coast retail stores.

Every purchase made in our shops directly supports Lifeline Mid Coast's local crisis support, suicide prevention and community wellbeing services. By choosing to donate through this initiative, the community is not only helping reduce waste but also helping fund vital services that make a real difference across the Mid Coast.

HOW IT WORKS

1. Drive through the event.
2. Council staff unload your donations.
3. Reusable items are sorted for participating organisations.
4. Suitable donations are sold through our retail stores.
5. Every purchase helps fund local lifesaving services.



WHY DONATE?

Keeps quality goods out of landfill.

Supports local crisis support services.

Gives affordable shopping options to the community.

Strengthens the circular economy across the Mid Coast.

SAVE THE DATES

Sun 30 August
9:00am - 1:00 pm

Sat 28 November
12:00pm - 4:00pm

Event locations will be announced by Port Macquarie Hastings Council closer to each date

When you donate to Lifeline Mid Coast, you're doing more than clearing out your cupboards - you're supporting a more sustainable community while helping fund local services that save lives.

Retail quarterly round-up



SHOP SPOTLIGHT

Central Rd

A huge congratulations to the team at Central Rd Port Macquarie Shop for their outstanding merchandising efforts and shop reorganisation! Their fresh new layout has made shopping easier for customers, while their eye-catching mattress display has already helped sell six new mattresses.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Lola Swan

Congratulations to Lola from our Kempsey shop on celebrating an incredible 10 years of volunteering! To mark the milestone, Lola generously donated her treasured 1980's Cabbage Patch Kids collection, which the team transformed into a special window display for the community to enjoy.

$296,310
SHOPS COMBINED QUARTERLY FUNDS RAISED

WINGHAM
TOP-PERFORMING SHOP COMPARED TO 2025

$10,974
SHOPS COMBINED AVERAGE DAILY SALES







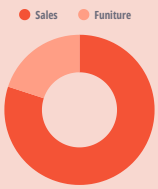


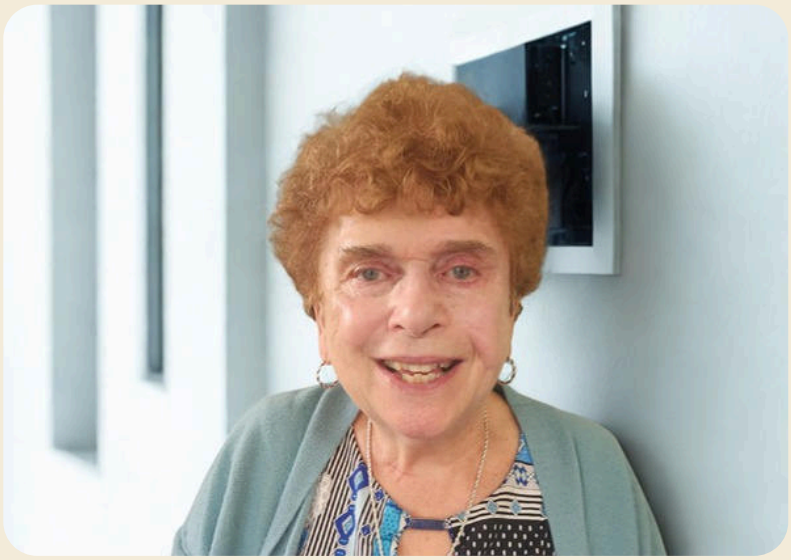


LOLA'S CABBAGE PATCH COLLECTION

TOP PERFORMANCE STAT

One in every five dollars spent at Central Rd was on furniture.





For the caller

Celebrating 18 years of service with crisis support volunteer Jacky Avery.

For 18 years, Jacky Avery has been a calm and compassionate voice for people reaching out to Lifeline during some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

Originally joining Lifeline with a simple but powerful goal - to support people in crisis - Jacky says the opportunity to offer empathy through listening continues to be what keeps her coming back.

While the need for crisis support has continued to grow, so too has the deep sense of fulfilment that comes from knowing a conversation can make a genuine difference.

Over nearly two decades of service, Jacky has witnessed significant change - from advances in training and education, to new technology and evolving ways of supporting callers. Yet despite everything that has changed, one thing has remained constant. It is this unwavering commitment, shared by every Crisis Support volunteer, that continues to make Lifeline a trusted source of hope and support for our community.

Thank you, Jacky, for your extraordinary dedication, compassion and 18 years of service. Your commitment embodies the very heart of Lifeline.

RECOGNITION

VOLUNTEER
Jacky Avery

ROLE
Crisis Support Volunteer

YEARS OF SERVICE
18

"At the heart of everything, we remain here for one reason... for the caller."

JACKY AVERY

Save Lives.
Become a Crisis Support Volunteer

Lifeline
MID COAST



Know someone who would make a wonderful Crisis Supporter? Share this page!

Register Now

THE MYTH

"I don't have the time."

THE TRUTH

Choose a time that suits you.

Volunteer shifts are flexible - from just **one 4-hour shift a week** . You pick the slots that fit around your life.

THE MYTH

"I'd need to be a qualified counsellor."

THE TRUTH

You don't. We train you from scratch.

Every Crisis Supporter completes nationally recognised training. If you can listen with care, we'll teach you the rest.

SERVICES TEAM

Growing leaders

Three people, three kinds of growth - a new chapter, well-earned recognition and leadership in action.



CHASING A DREAM

Ebanie Martin

SERVICES COORDINATOR

This year has been one of incredible achievements for Ebanie, balancing her role as Services Coordinator while continuing her academic journey towards a Master's in Psychology. Alongside her studies, Ebanie has also celebrated the publication of her work - a milestone that reflects her dedication to learning, professional growth and improving the lives of others.

As Ebanie begins an exciting new chapter pursuing a career in psychology outside of Lifeline, we congratulate her on everything she has achieved. While we will greatly miss her warmth, passion and commitment within the Services team, we couldn't be prouder to see her following the path she has worked so hard to achieve.

Thank you, Ebanie, for everything you've contributed to Lifeline Mid Coast and farewell.



RECOGNITION

Kelly Saidey

SENIOR SERVICES COORDINATOR

Congratulations to Kelly, who has recently been recognised with the Silver Friend of Australian Rotary Health Award following a presentation highlighting the vital work Lifeline Mid Coast delivers throughout our community.

Kelly was also honoured to return to Charles Sturt University as an Alumni Guest Speaker at a graduation ceremony, sharing her professional journey and encouraging graduates as they embark on their own careers.

Kelly's passion, leadership and unwavering commitment to supporting our community continue to inspire those around her.

Our sincere thanks to Rotary for their ongoing support and valued partnership.



LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Kaitlin Atkins

SERVICES COORDINATOR

A special acknowledgement goes to Kaitlin Atkins, who has stepped confidently into a lead role across our group programs during a period of change. Bringing strong program knowledge and genuine care for our participants, Kaitlin has helped ensure our groups continue to run smoothly while taking on additional responsibility for the latest Eclipse cycle. Kaitlin has embraced the opportunity with confidence, compassion and professionalism, making a real difference to both participants and the wider Services team. Thank you, Kaitlin - we're incredibly grateful for everything you've taken on and look forward to seeing you continue to thrive.

SERVICES

ArtWalk through our participants' eyes

ArtWalk 2026 provided an incredible opportunity for participants from Lifeline Mid Coast's group programs to proudly showcase their creativity and talents to the wider community.

Visitors explored a collection of original artworks and handcrafted jewellery, each piece telling a unique story of resilience, growth and self-expression. More than simply displaying creative work, the evening gave participants the opportunity to share their stories, connect with the community and experience the pride of seeing their work appreciated - and even purchased.

For many, it was an empowering reminder that creativity can become confidence, connection and purpose.





SPOTLIGHT ON OUR GROUPS

- Eclipse
- Support After Suicide
- Toward Recovery
- Bloom

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Alongside the artwork, visitors were invited to contribute messages of hope and words of encouragement. Advice from every generation - from five-year-olds through to older community members - created a beautiful display of kindness, reminding us that hope can come from anyone. These conversations helped reduce stigma around mental health and highlighted the importance of creating safe spaces where people feel seen, heard and valued.

EVENTS

Out of the Shadows

HONOURING LIVES. CREATING HOPE.



JOIN US

Annual Memorial Sunrise Gathering

A gentle and meaningful opportunity to come together as a community in connection and remembrance. Beginning with a short guided walk at sunrise, participants will make their way to the Port Macquarie Amphitheatre to be welcomed into a morning ceremony bringing suicide out of the shadows.

REFLECT · HONOUR · REMEMBER

Whether you have lost someone to suicide, have been personally impacted, or simply wish to stand alongside others, everyone is welcome. Because no one should have to walk alone.

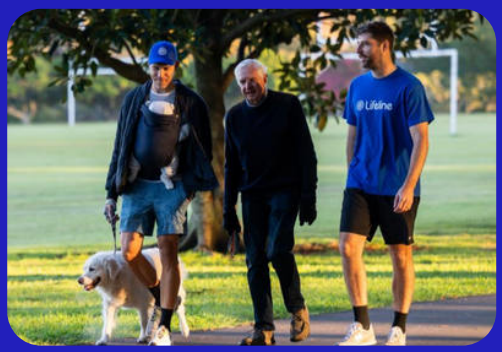


EVENT SNAPSHOT

Port Macquarie • Town Beach

Sunday 13th September

Sunrise guided walk, speakers, music and an honouring station.



WALK YOUR WAY

Throughout September

Walk Anywhere. Walk your way. Individually or as a team. Fundraise for Lifeline Mid Coast.

WALK YOUR WAY

Community Fundraiser

Want to support Out of the Shadows but can't attend the memorial gathering? Join our community by taking part on or around World Suicide Prevention Day (10th Sept). No set times. No set locations. A shared purpose.

Register for our self-paced community fundraiser and walk your way. Choose your favourite track, your local streets, the beach, or walk with family, friends or your four-legged companion. Aim for 9 km to represent the nine Australian lives lost to suicide each day, or simply walk a distance that's right for you. Every step raises vital funds, starts important conversations, and reminds those doing it tough that they are not alone.

REGISTER VIA OUR WEBSITE

WALK YOUR WAY. SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY CREATE HOPE.

One morning to remember. A month to make a difference

The Push Up Challenge 2026

185,559
PUSH-UPS BANKED

$11,179
FUNDS RAISED

112
LEGENDS SUPPORTING

Another Push-Up Challenge has come to a close, and what an incredible effort it was from our community.

This year, 112 dedicated participants banked an incredible 185,559 push-ups, while raising $11,179 for Lifeline Mid Coast - with every dollar staying local to help fund the lifesaving services our community relies on.

Every push-up completed, every dollar donated, and every conversation started helped raise awareness and remind people that mental health matters.

To everyone who participated, donated, encouraged others, or simply started a conversation about mental health - thank you. Together, you've helped create lasting awareness and reminded our community that no one has to face life's challenges alone.





SPECIAL MENTION TO TEAMS WHO TOOK PART

- Local members of Parliament
- St Columba Anglican School
- Port Macquarie SLSC
- Essential Energy
- LLMC Board
- Sharks RLFC

AND MANY MORE...

THE PUSH UP CHALLENGE

Out and about with LLMC

Youth Homelessness Matters Day

Joining local services and community organisations to raise awareness of youth homelessness and connect young people with the support available to them.

Held on the central grassed area between Town Beach, the skate park and the playground, the event created a vibrant community hub where young people could connect with local support services in a relaxed and welcoming environment. Our team enjoyed meaningful conversations, hosted a fun photo booth complete with op shop props, and even got a few young people involved in some push-ups ahead of The Push-Up Challenge.

Events like this play an important role in raising awareness, strengthening community connections, and reminding young people that support is always available when they need it.



Aged Care Expo

Our Community Engagement team was pleased to attend the Aged Care Expo, connecting with older members of our community, their families and carers, while showcasing the wide range of support available through Lifeline Mid Coast.

Visitors were also invited to contribute to our Wall of Wisdom, sharing words of encouragement, life lessons and messages of hope. The display sparked many heartfelt conversations and served as a beautiful reminder of the strength, resilience and wisdom that exists within our community.



Thank a First Responder Day

Our Community Engagement team spent the morning visiting local emergency service stations, delivering boxes of freshly baked cookies as a small token of appreciation for the incredible work our first responders do every day.

Lifeline Mid Coast recognises that first response extends far beyond emergency callouts - from paramedics, police officers and firefighters to nurses, teachers, support workers and many more roles. It was a privilege to thank them for the compassion and resilience they bring to their roles.



COMING UP

Save the date

We've got some huge community events coming up and would love your support on the day. If you're available to help, please contact the office and ask for Mattise or Boni for more details.

28 Aug
Wear it Purple Day

Wear It Purple is a national effort ensure every LGBTQIA+SB young person knows they are seen, supported and never alone.

30 Aug
Drop & Reuse

Drive Thru & Drop Off with Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, 9am–1pm.

13 Sep
Out of the Shadows

Set up and pack down, and volunteer at the registration table.



Got something to share?

The next edition of Lifeline Connect lands in October 2026. Send your photos, stories and shout-outs to the office - we'd love to include them.

SUBMISSIONS DUE
September 2026



July 2026
Lifeline Connect

Next Newsletter October 2026

Submission Due September 2026

Lifeline Mid Coast
We are local.