TRACK Talk

MTHCS Mallee Track Health and Community Service

October 2026

MTHCS launches new Regional Health Navigator Service

Mallee Track Health and Community Service (MTHCS) is launching a new Regional Health Navigator Service, providing personalised support to help people living with chronic health conditions better access and navigate the healthcare system. MTHCS was successful in gaining funding through the Murray PHN to establish the new Regional Health Navigator (RHN) service.

The Regional Health Navigator will commence the service with MTHCS from 19 October, supporting people diagnosed with diabetes, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) or chronic heart failure who experience significant barriers to accessing and engaging with health services.

The free, non-clinical service will support eligible people across the Mildura, Swan Hill and Buloke local government areas, with a particular focus on people living in rural and remote communities and those who may find the health system difficult to access or navigate.

MTHCS CEO Dr Frances Peart said the new service recognised that managing a chronic condition could be particularly challenging for people living in rural communities.

“Living with a chronic health condition can mean dealing with multiple appointments, services, referrals and care plans, often while also facing the challenges of distance, transport and cost,” Dr Peart said.

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“The Regional Health Navigator is there to help people make sense of that journey, understand the services available to them and overcome some of the barriers that can prevent them from receiving the care and support they need.

“We are delighted to welcome Lisa Callipari to this important new role and look forward to seeing the difference this service can make for people across our region.”

The Regional Health Navigator will work directly with clients to understand their individual circumstances, identify their health goals, and develop a Navigation Care Plan. The service can help clients identify appropriate health and community services, find referral pathways and, with the client's consent, communicate with healthcare providers to support better coordinated care.

Support can be provided flexibly, including face-to-face, through outreach and via digital or telehealth options, depending on the needs and preferences of the individual.

Importantly, the Regional Health Navigator does not replace a person's GP, specialist or other healthcare professionals and does not provide clinical assessment or treatment. Instead, the role works alongside existing healthcare providers, helping clients understand their options, connect with appropriate services, and become more confident participating in their own care.

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The service is particularly designed to assist people who experience barriers such as geographic isolation, transport difficulties, financial hardship, limited health literacy or English language proficiency, or a lack of family and community supports. Priority may also be given to people who frequently access acute health services or experience avoidable hospitalisations.

Dr Peart said the service complemented MTHCS's commitment to delivering care and support closer to home.

“For people living in the Mallee, accessing healthcare isn't always as simple as making an appointment. Distance and limited local services can add another layer of complexity.

“Having someone who understands our rural communities and can help connect the pieces of the health system is an important addition to the support available across our region.”

Referrals to the Regional Health Navigator Service can be made by HCCCM-commissioned providers, GPs, and community health organisations. Referrals should include the patient's name, date of birth and contact details, the reason for referral, confirmation of diagnosis and the patient's health goals.

For more information about the MTHCS Regional Health Navigator Service, contact from 19 October 2026:

Regional Health Navigator
Email: healthnavigator@mthcs.vic.gov.au
Mobile: 0475 360 249

phn MURRAY
An Australian Government Initiative

Glennis Barnes retires after 42 Years of Service to the Mallee Community

A milepost is being celebrated this week with the retirement of Glennis Barnes, after 42-years’ service at Mallee Track Health and Community Service (MTHCS).

And fitting to an organisation that promotes employment locally and from within, Nurse Barnes calls herself “A Mallee Girl born in this hospital.”

By Mallee, she means Ouyen, and one would hardly recognise the same place then and now. It was Ouyen District Hospital back then, and the town’s commercial scene was vibrant. “There were lots more services based here then … lots more shops, a couple of butchers and a couple of supermarkets and two or three clothing stores.” Not to mention abundant workers and specialist tradies, with “loads more electricity, water, railroad gangs” based at this junction of the Mallee and Calder highways. And that is important, considering that her father wasn’t a farmer, rather an Ouyen-based roads worker. Coincidentally, her husband Peter is also a road supervisor.

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“I always wanted to be a nurse. My aunt was a registered nurse and was probably an influence,” she explained. Meanwhile, her mother worked as a cleaner at the District Hospital, and as a child Glennis volunteered reading to elderly patients there and helped them write letters.

The only time she did not live in Ouyen was during her nurse training in Ballarat, followed by practical experience in Mildura. She moved back to Ouyen in 1984, and married husband Peter in 1986. They have two children, plus a four-year-old granddaughter in Wagga Wagga. “That is where I will be spending much of my time,” she chuckled.

Co-worker and Clinical Educator Chelsea Jeffries said of Glennis’ retirement, “Glennis has been a valued member of our nursing team and a familiar and trusted face in Ouyen for many years. Serving in many roles, she has an incredible wealth of nursing knowledge and her experience over the years has made her a trusted source of wisdom within Mallee Track. She will be very much missed in the learning and development team as well as in the district nursing team. I wish her on the best on her well-deserved retirement and hope it is filled with everything she loves to do including lots of time with her Granddaughter!”

So, this district nurse and nurse educator will be a hard one to replace.

But please don’t restrict her latest title of “nurse educator” to only educating nurses. “I educate everybody,” she says with pride.Her position is a resource for all staff in assisting with required training, plus navigating pathways in both developing and changing career paths. And the proof of success: “We have had some of our kitchen and cleaning staff becoming nurses, and enrolled nurses progressing to become registered nurses.”

“I have enjoyed my time at Mallee Track, as it has been diverse.,” she noted. “I started in wards, then onto training. I was doing sessional tutoring for TAFE; at the time we had a fairly active TAFE with on-site training, a lot of it is online now!”From there Glennis went on to a community health role for almost a decade, but throughout, “district nursing has been a constant.”

Nurse Barnes speaks highly of her times as a district nurse, noting that visits to peoples’ homes gives a special insight to their care. “You get to know people in their own homes, and you are able to pick up subtle changes much quicker,” specifically adding that “you knew them, and you had an advantage in treating them, because you know them.”



Image: Glennis Barnes at her retirement lunch in Ouyen after 42 years of service to the Mallee Community.

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As for her future plans after Mallee Track: “Work on the home, get comfortable, and play it by ear.Relax and enjoy.” Adding that she has “no concrete plans” outside of upcoming surgery. “I will have a pair of pigeon knees in a couple weeks,” she laughed.“Hopefully I won’t set off the airport metal detectors.” And, of course, that grandchild in Wagga.

We thank Glennis for her loyal service to the Mallee Track staff and the greater Mallee Community, and we wish her every joy for her retirement.



Image: Glennis Barnes at work in the clinical training room.





