



Latrobe Health
Advocate

Quarterly
Update
October to
December 2018



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The Latrobe Health Advocate respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal people as the Original Custodians of the land we walk on today – the land of the Braiakaulung people of the Gunaikurnai nation and pass on respect to their Elders past and present.





Jane Anderson, Latrobe Health Advocate

I am pleased to present this update from the Office of the Latrobe Health Advocate and thank the communities who have taken the time to speak with me over the last three months.

It has been a privilege to meet you and hear your stories. We've met in a number of ways:

- at our temporary office in Commercial Road, Morwell (look out for news about our new street level premises coming soon.),
- at various community events; Sister Cities Festival in Moe, the Morwell Rose Garden Festival, the Latrobe Valley Food for All Expo and the opening of the Youth Space in Mid Valley, to name just a few,
- at your community location,
- and of course, on the buses.

In this update I am reporting on presentations I've made to organisations across Latrobe where I've shared your voice and highlighted the issues that you have raised with me. I am also reporting on the breadth of issues you've talked to me about and how we are progressing with the priorities that I set in my Statement of Intent.

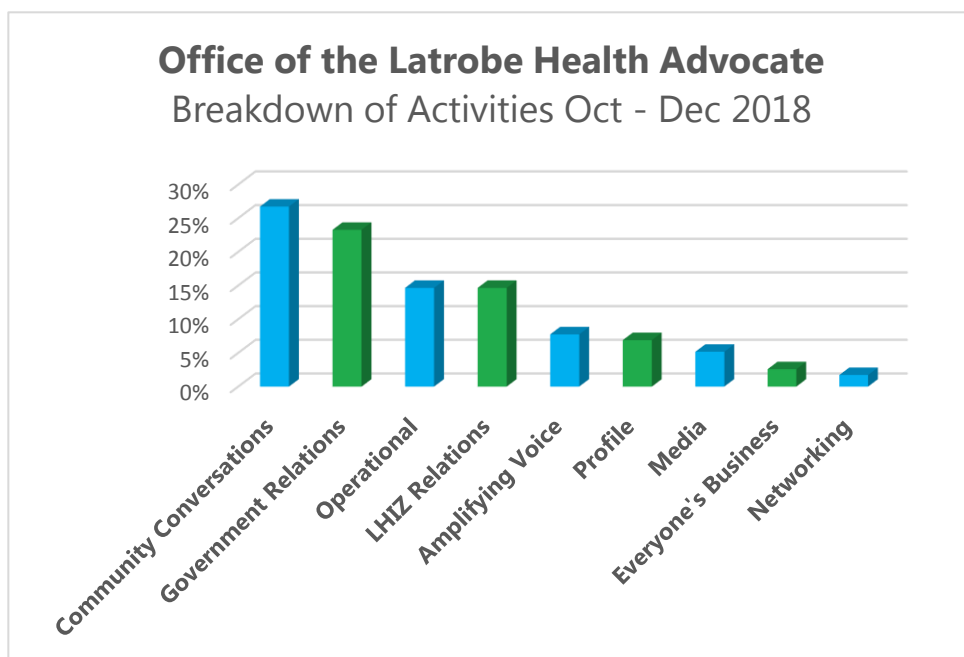
I'm looking forward to having many more conversations in the coming months and encourage you to contact me on 1800 319 255 or via email at info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au any time. Please also visit and like our Facebook page where you can keep up to date with the events I'm attending and information on health and wellbeing issues that may be of interest to you. You can also follow me on Twitter and our Website is now up and available.



Activities October to December 2018

Since its establishment in June 2018 the Office of the Latrobe Health Advocate has focused on raising awareness and building relationships with Latrobe communities, local health and social services and Government. Where appropriate, it has also facilitated connections between communities, local service providers and Government.

Between October and December, the Office of the Latrobe Health Advocate interacted with more than 200 people from Latrobe communities and held discussions with close to 100 representatives from local health services and Government.

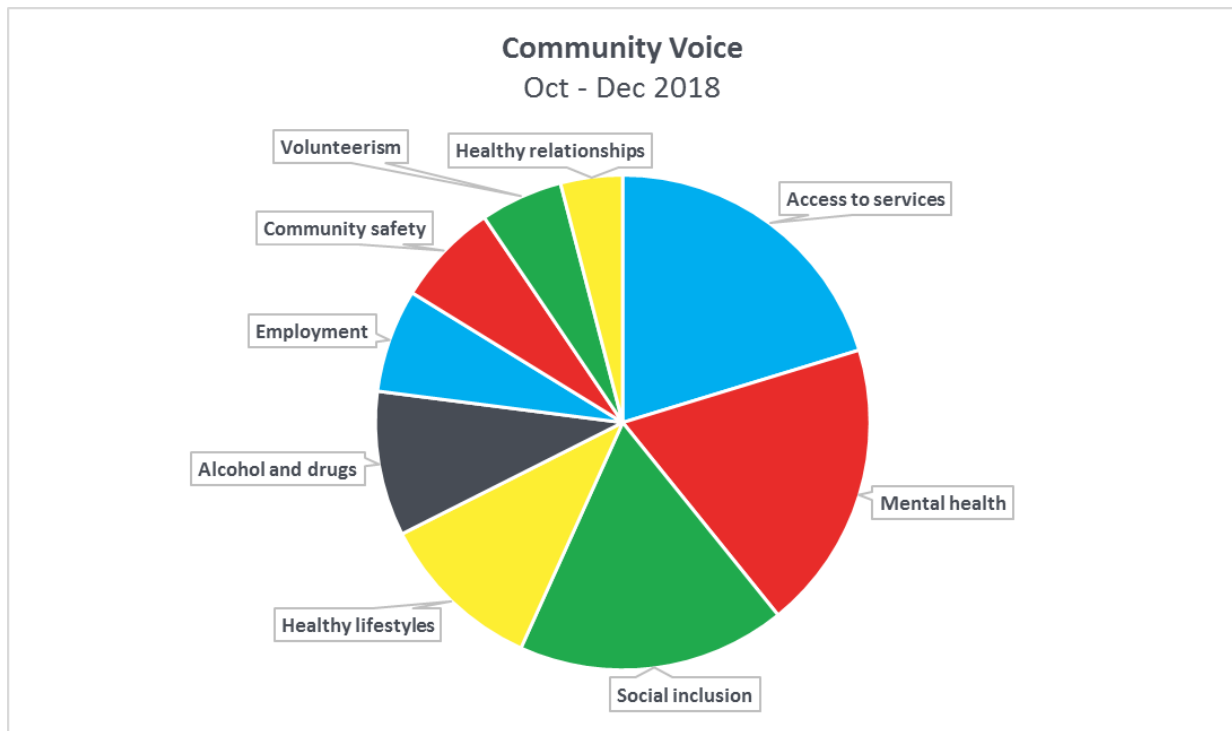


Local organisations and Government representatives have demonstrated an interest in the views and experiences of Latrobe communities. The Latrobe Health Advocate has amplified the voice of communities in several ways including keynote presentations, submissions to Government, media interviews and participation in workshops and meetings.

In response to community conversations the Latrobe Health Advocate has undertaken research and shared information and resources with communities on:

- Latrobe City Council strategies and policies,
- Local government area cancer prevalence and support services,
- Latrobe Community Health Services Gambling support services and Gambler's help,
- National Standards for Volunteering,
- Mental Health Royal Commission Terms of Reference Have Your Say
- Promoting Latrobe Valley Authority and Latrobe Health Assembly funding opportunities

Community Voice



Access to Services

People talked about the availability, affordability and location of medication, doctors, health services and specialists. They shared concerns about having to wait too long and having to retell their story too often. People have specifically mentioned that they are looking for improved access to doctors, prostate cancer support nurses, paediatricians, haematology nurses, geriatric services, child psychologists and clinical psychiatrists.

Mental Health

People talked about the importance of having mental health support services that are approachable, professional and sympathetic. There was a common concern for the mental health and wellbeing of younger people and a recognition of the importance of the home and school environment.

Conversations about mental health were often associated with social inclusion, housing, NDIS or employment. People expressed their desire to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness through awareness campaigns and community events.

People talked about the connection between employment and good mental health and some of the challenges facing skilled migrants who are looking for work.

Social Inclusion

People spoke of the importance of family, friends, neighbours and communities being able to come together. Their aspirations for more community events and activities designed for specific age groups and communities.

People want to see more supports for people with a disability, young parents and new arrivals. There were suggestions about creating community gardens and questions about the accessibility of local sporting clubs.

Healthy Lifestyles

People talked about the benefits of exercise and eating well. They spoke of their involvement with local activities and shared their aspirations for more programs and offerings. A range of opportunities and barriers were identified including the need to teach cooking skills and for exercise programs to be affordable for everyone.

The workplace was identified as a place where people could be more active, but it was noted that occupational health and safety rules are often perceived as a barrier to offering organised programs. People noted the influence of doctors and want to see them focus more on prevention and social prescription.

Alcohol and drugs

People talked about the impact alcohol and drugs can have on individuals and community and the negative implications of drug addictions. People are interested in the recently announced drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility and want to have their say about what this will mean for Latrobe communities and what is important for them.

Palliative Care

People shared their experiences and concerns about existing end of life palliative care services. They have described limitations on beds, nurses, volunteers, service collaboration and hours of operation.

They talked about the importance of a having a peaceful nurturing environment where patients can have their privacy. People have expressed a desire for a hospice in Latrobe describing this as something that could be non-clinical with gardens, space, professional support and respite for patients and their families.

Employment

People discussed the need for more job opportunities and the importance of gaining qualifications and work-related licences. Often discussions about employment were associated with mental health and wellbeing.

People expressed concerns about the lack of opportunities and the disconnect between skills, training and jobs. People identified that there are barriers for skilled migrants who are looking for work.

Community Safety

People shared their concerns for the safety of younger and older people. Their desire for a greater police presence and for safer community spaces. Community safety was often associated with concerns about alcohol and drugs.

Volunteering

People have talked about the value of volunteering and the benefits for individuals and communities. They identified some challenges for volunteers including out of pocket expenses and the difficulty that some people experience when they want to join a new group. People have said that local organisations need to manage and support their volunteers effectively.

Healthy relationships

People shared their aspirations for people to be kind to each other. There was a focus on younger people and a desire to see more respect within the community.

Out and About



In November the Advocate attended the Latrobe City Rose Garden Festival. Showcasing the strength and diversity of communities, there was colour, beauty and abundance.

The day's special guest, Costa, commented on the festival being priceless and reflecting a thriving community, inclusive and regenerating. He talked about gardening being horticultural therapy for loneliness and depression.

Some of the most recent conversations with the Advocate have centred around isolation and loneliness and the impact that has on overall health and wellbeing.

This event gave people the opportunity to meet new people (including the Advocate), have fun, learn new things and experience the delight of the gardens.

The Advocate was pleased to be part of the successful Food for Thought Community Expo at Traralgon.

Food for All, Latrobe Valley offered great food, good humour and a range of activities to help communities learn how to improve their health and support local producers.

The need for community gardens and the preparation of healthy foods are subjects that many people have raised with the Advocate.

This was a tremendous event that has been followed up with more workshops and which promises to have some exciting projects happening this year.



The Advocate was honoured to attend the launch of the Youth Space at Mid Valley Shopping Centre in Morwell where 14 young people were appointed to the Youth Governance Committee.

Several agencies are involved in the establishment of Youth Space, led by YMCA and including Berry Street, Baw Baw Latrobe LLEN, Scouts Victoria, Quantum Support Services, Latrobe Youth Voices, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency the Gathering Place, AGL Loy Yang, Centre for Multicultural Youth and GippSport.

Many of the conversations with the Advocate to date have been focussed on young people's health and wellbeing and concerns around mental health.



On the Buses



In December 2018 the Latrobe Health Advocate sought to give people an opportunity to have their say and increase her profile in the community so she travelled on local buses and spent time at bus terminals engaging with community members.

This unique approach to community engagement proved to be invaluable enabling the Latrobe Health Advocate to hear from 70 people in four days.

Community members shared their stories, raised concerns and talked about their health and wellbeing aspirations for themselves and Latrobe.

The Advocate travelled between the towns of Churchill, Morwell, Moe and Traralgon and there was a broad range of health and wellbeing issues raised, with the top five topics being;

access to services, social inclusion, alcohol and drugs, mental health and wellbeing, community safety.

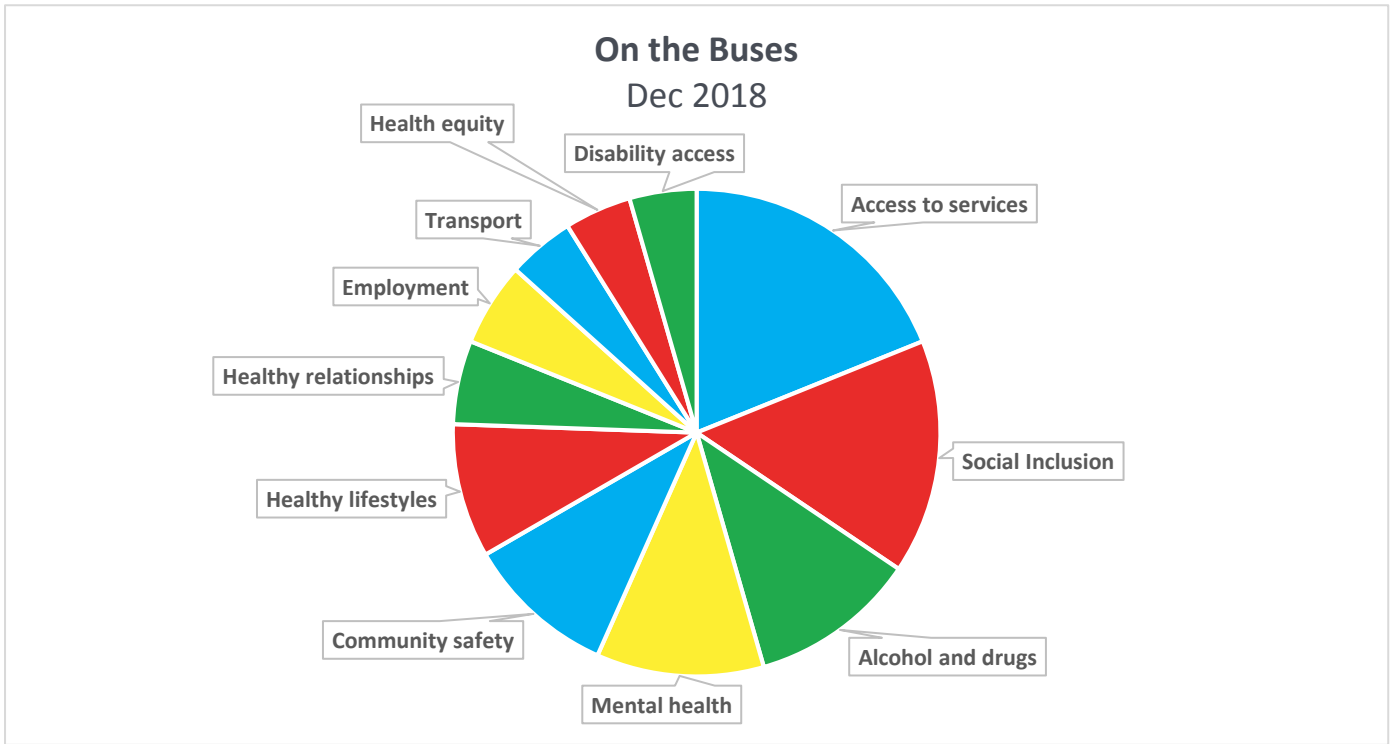
Engaging with Latrobe communities at the bus stops and on the buses enabled the Advocate to hear directly from a diverse mix of local people who may not usually have their voices heard. This approach was intentionally informal and relaxed, reaching out to communities at times and locations convenient to them.

The Office of the Latrobe Health Advocate will now provide feedback to communities about what has been heard and will work together with local health services and government to identify opportunities to address community concerns and bring about change to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for Latrobe.

Number of conversations in 4 days				
MON 10 DEC	TUE 11 DEC	THU 13 DEC	FRI 14 DEC	TOTAL
20	19	18	13	70

Est. ages of community members						
0 – 17 YEARS	18 – 25 YEARS	26 – 35 YEARS	36 – 45 YEARS	46 – 55 YEARS	56 – 65 YEARS	65+ YEARS
13	3	10	8	10	13	13

Most frequently raised issues (overall)				
ACCESS TO SERVICES	SOCIAL INCLUSION	ALCOHOL AND DRUGS	MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING	COMMUNITY SAFETY
17 MENTIONS	14 MENTIONS	10 MENTIONS	10 MENTIONS	9 MENTIONS



Communities have shared their thoughts with the Advocate

We need more GP's, they change every three months and we have to keep telling our story.

We need to engage young people. I don't see kids out and about any more.

Services need to listen to people who are yelling out for help

There needs to be a change in culture to reduce alcohol and smoking.

There are lots of activities but some people don't leave their house.

Aged care services in the area are pretty good.

Sometimes I'm afraid to walk the streets by myself.

There needs to be a message to young people to encourage them to get help, open up and not take risk taking behaviours

Amplifying the communities' voice



During this quarter the Advocate made a number of presentations to service providers; including board members, executive team members, and staff. The Advocate presented community voices to these organisations and encouraged them, when considering the design and delivery of services, to be aware of people's aspirations and concerns for their health and wellbeing and for that of the communities.

The Advocate made presentations to:

- Latrobe Health Assembly
- Latrobe Regional Hospital AGM
- Gippsland Multicultural Services AGM
- Latrobe Valley Authority
- Latrobe Health Champions
- Gippsland Primary Health Network

Systems Change / Mental Health

A priority identified in the Statement of Intent for 2018 – 2019 is Systems Change and the Advocate resolved to use a project/campaign approach to change conditions that hold a problem in place, initially focussing on:

- Mental Health
- Alcohol and Other Drugs and
- Palliative Care

The Advocate has engaged with communities around all three of these issues this quarter however the most prevalent issue has been that of mental health. The Victorian Government's commitment to a Royal Commission into mental health is to be commended and the Advocate has offered her support to enable the voices of Latrobe communities to be heard.

In conversations with people in Latrobe, mental health and wellbeing is the most common issue raised. Most of the time, concerns about mental health are associated with other factors such as violence, alcohol and drugs or the broader determinants of health such as employment and education. Concerns for the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people have been raised on several occasions.

Through research the Advocate has come to understand that the issues facing communities in Latrobe are complex and all, in some way have an impact on mental health.

The needs of the Latrobe communities are known and documented. The Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiries brought to light the entrenched and systemic challenges facing Latrobe communities and the designation of the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone, establishment of the Latrobe Health Assembly and appointment of a Latrobe Health Advocate have created an opportunity for change to occur.

People have shown that they want their voices heard. They are ready for change and want to participate in the design and delivery of a health system that meets everyone's needs.

Of the themes that were put forward for consideration, the Advocate identified the most important to be:

- Prevention and early intervention
- Social isolation, depression, anxiety and trauma
- Accessibility and navigating the mental health system
- Preventing suicide
- Workforce development and retention

The Advocate has encouraged Government to consider three additional themes when determining the terms of reference, these are:

- A health equity model
- Place and community
- Social determinants of mental health

The Latrobe Health Advocate acknowledges that many of the challenges facing the mental health system and Victorian communities will be universal in nature however consideration of place and community will enable the Royal Commission to explore the context in which people live their lives and to understand the factors affecting mental health within this context.

The Advocate has also urged those developing the terms of reference to consider the following:

- First do no harm.
- The likely increased demand on the existing mental health system
- The very important and visible role of the media

The outcomes of engagement with Latrobe communities will inform the Advocate's interactions with the Royal Commission along with any other briefings or formal recommendations that may be offered to the Victorian Government or local health services.

Share your thoughts with the Advocate

Contact us:

You can call 1800 319 255

You can email: info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au

You can call in to:

Level 1, 154 Commercial Road Morwell

Follow us on



OR go to:
www.lhadvocate.vic.gov.au

