



Latrobe Health
Advocate

Quarterly Update

July to September 2020

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Message from the Latrobe Health Advocate

I am pleased to provide this quarterly update for the period July to September 2020. This last quarter has seen both regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne working collaboratively to stop the spread of COVID-19 and as this update goes to print the hard work of all Victorians has paid off and we are nearing the end of severe restrictions. I want to congratulate communities in Latrobe for their patience and kindness during this time and encourage all of you to continue to be vigilant and maintain the hygiene practices that have seen us reach our goal.

While COVID-19 has been a focus of communities for most of 2020, there has been a lot going on in Latrobe. During this quarter I have engaged with 390 people. 90% of these conversations involved elevating the voice of communities and advocating for systems change in response to community needs and aspirations. The activities and events I attended are highlighted in this update along with an update on two key priority areas for my office, Access to Services and Palliative Care.

I also want to highlight the Inclusive Communities work undertaken by my office which has resulted in the release of a further two reports in the Engagement Inspiration series launched during this quarter. Insights from LGBTIQ communities and people experiencing financial stress were published and distributed across Latrobe.

I am wanting to hear from a range of communities in the coming year and during November will be engaging with young people aged 12-25 years of age. There are a range of ways for young people to connect with me:

- Get in touch with Kylie on 1800 319 255 or email info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au and she'll make a time to catch up. During COVID-19 this can be done in a range of ways that suit you including over the phone or by video call (Facetime). Where COVID-19 safe practices are in place, you may like to meet at a café or a local park for a face-to face chat. The Advocate is happy come to you at a time and place that suits you both.
- Go to our website <https://www.lhadvocate.vic.gov.au/whats-important-to-you/> and leave a message and while there, use the link to go to the Engage Vic survey to add your voice to the Victorian Whole of Government Youth Strategy consultation.
- Message me on Facebook @LHADvocate

I look forward to hearing your experiences in the coming months.

Stay safe

Jane

Highlights of activities and events

In July the Advocate hosted a collaborative workshop with key stakeholders to finalise an action plan focused on improving access to GPs in Latrobe. Released in September, this **action plan** focuses on four themes; improving training and accreditation pathways for doctors, promoting living and working in the Latrobe Valley, building digital and health literacy, and designing a future business model for general practice that takes the pressure off the emergency department.

The release of the plan was an opportunity to highlight actions in the plan being delivered by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and to demonstrate the benefits of the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone bringing communities and services together to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

In August the Advocate released Engagement Inspiration from LGBTIQ people in Latrobe, a report that highlights the health and wellbeing aspirations and engagement preferences of LGBTIQ communities in Latrobe. To release the report the Advocate partnered with VicHealth and hosted a virtual panel with Member for Eastern Victoria Harriet Shing, the Victorian Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality Ro Allen, VicHealth CEO Dr Sandro Demaio, a representative from local workplace Aussie Broadband and a community member. To watch the panel video, click [HERE](#).

In September the Advocate released Engagement Inspiration from people experiencing financial stress in Latrobe, a report that highlights the health and wellbeing aspirations and engagement preferences of people experiencing financial stress. Financial stress can happen to any person at any stage during their life. The Advocate is encouraging governments and services to look at financial stress from a health and social perspective and implement appropriate treatments and interventions to minimise or prevent the devastating impacts of living with little or no income.



In September the Advocate released her [2020-21 Statement of Intent](#) making a commitment to continue working with stakeholders to implement the access to services action plan and the Advocate's end of life palliative care recommendations. In addition, the Advocate will work in collaboration with others to deliver the Healthy Lifestyles in Latrobe and Human Connections in Latrobe priority campaigns. The annual Inclusive Communities project will continue as the Advocate will engage with young people aged 12-25, people experiencing family violence and older people.

The Advocate has written to the Attorney General the Hon. Jill Hennessy, with a letter of support for Latrobe to host a pilot as part of an expansion of the Drug Court in Regional Victoria noting the strong community voice that seeks to find a way to address the impact of alcohol and drugs on Latrobe communities.

The Advocate made a submission to Latrobe City Council in relation to the proposed used lead acid battery recycling plant in Hazelwood North. In this submission the Advocate confirmed her intention to influence development projects, government planning and decision-making processes in terms of how they create a healthy community, impact on climate change and the determinants of health and do not adversely affect community health.

Snapshot of community voice



During this quarter there was greater emphasis on community and stakeholder engagement in relation to the completion of the Advocate's 2019-20 priority projects and campaigns. Much of the community engagement that occurred involved follow up discussions and participation in the development and review of Advocate plans and reports. The main community aspiration for the three months from July to September is to achieve **a more socially connected Latrobe community**.

The Advocate has heard that people in Latrobe want to stay connected with each other and to enjoy an inclusive and safe place where everyone can be themselves. COVID-19 restrictions have changed the ways people in Latrobe connect with each other. Use of online technologies has enabled schools, workplaces, families, volunteers, health services and community groups to stay connected. However there is a limit to digital connectivity, many people are experiencing fatigue, there are some people that have not been able to connect online and there is a realisation that online human interactions are not the same as seeing other people in person.



Find someone in your neighbourhood and have a chat with them

The urgency has gone out of daily living. I can have a lazy day without the guilts

When you talk to mature people over the phone it is not always possible to give instructions, you need personal contact

I can talk to my friends on the phone at length as we've all got time

Observed systems change

The Advocate works towards better systems of health and wellbeing in Latrobe Valley and has adapted the Water of Systems Change ¹ model which identifies 6 conditions of systems change. When considering systems change as a result of elevating community voice, the Advocate looks at these distinct areas:

- Better relationships
- Better services
- Better mental models
- Better supports
- Better policy and
- Better integration of community voice in decision making

Better relationships: The quality of connections and communication happening among services in the system, especially those with differing histories and viewpoints.

- There is a shift in the way the Department of Health and Human Services (the Department), Latrobe Regional Hospital and palliative care agencies are working together. Input from the Advocate is being sought for planning days and to inform discussions between the Department and the hospital. The letter of acknowledgement and direction from the Minister for Health in response to the Advocate's recommendations and progress update has assisted in affecting change.
- Gippsland Primary Health Network (Gippsland PHN) has highlighted the increasing number of interactions with the hospital as a result of COVID-19. Gippsland PHN plays an important role in bringing together Commonwealth and State funded services with a localised or place-based focus on the Gippsland region. This has led to more opportunities for the hospital to engage with GPs.
- The Department and the Latrobe Health Assembly have been proactive in bringing together local services to ensure a more coordinated and localised response to the COVID-19 emergency. This has created opportunities for various local agencies to work together, share ideas, have consistency of public messaging and to inform the Department about the impact of COVID-19 from a local perspective.

Better services: Procedures and guidelines that inform the work of services and networks ensure the delivery of activities that are focussed on improving social and environmental progress within its communities.

- Latrobe City Council has established a community focused COVID Helpline to respond to community questions and help people to navigate the ongoing changes to COVID-19 rules and regulations. The Advocate has met with the team managing this Helpline and has seen first-hand their commitment to taking the time to listen and provide a point of social connection for communities.

- In response to the Advocate's recommendations about end of life care services Latrobe Regional Hospital has completed a refurbishment of its sub-acute ward to provide access to gardens and create a more homely environment. The hospital is also working to further integrate its services with Latrobe Community Health Service and to raise the profile of the palliative care consultancy team internally and with other health services.
- The hospital is working closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to create a dedicated community space including private rooms and an office space. Liaison Officers are being supported to provide cultural awareness training and education.
- Latrobe Community Health Service (LCHS) has shown interest in applying learnings from the COVID-19 experience to inform future service design. The service is taking a proactive approach to minimising the number of 'did not attend' presentations. Some of the strategies being implemented include use of SMS, offering variable (rather than fixed) appointment times, reaching out via phone call ahead of time and seeking to understand the individual needs of patients and families.

Better mental models: Habits of thought – deeply held beliefs and assumptions, taken for granted ways of operating that influence how we think, what we do, and how we talk.

- The introduction of an internationally recognised scoring system that enables an organisation to monitor how its services are being experienced by communities
- A new Gippsland Regional Plan which is traditionally centred on economic development has a strategic theme that focuses on a healthy, happy and inclusive community. The Advocate has provided input to this plan and there is a commitment for inclusiveness to be a priority.
- Interest has been shown in the work undertaken by the Advocate to hear from people experiencing financial stress. There is interest from local services in sharing the Advocate's report with their frontline staff to raise awareness and build greater empathy for communities.

Better policy: Government, institutional and organisational rules, regulations and priorities that guide how things are done.

- Discussions between local agencies and governments about the impact of COVID-19 on local communities are informing the ongoing design and communication of restrictions and approaches to communications and engagement.

If there is another lockdown, things need to be looked at in greater depth, to have better response

Integration of community voice: The formal and informal influence of decision-making power among individuals and organisations.

- Local services have established a way for its executive team to hear from the Advocate on a quarterly basis, understand the views of communities and use this to inform their approach.
- Many have been proactive in their approach to hearing from the Advocate to inform future strategies based on community voice.
- Services are being encouraged to use social media for communications and engagement with community.

¹ This model is adapted from the Water of Systems Change, John Kania, Mark Kramer and Peter Senge 2018

Summary of advocacy priorities

End of Life Palliative care: The Advocate is asking all parties to openly consider the establishment of a dedicated space for end of life palliative care as part of the LRH expansion.



Access to doctors: The Advocate is encouraging joint State and Commonwealth support for the implementation of the Access to Services Action Plan to address shortages of GPs in the region.



COVID-19

During this quarter the office continued to support Latrobe communities, local services and the Victorian Government in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The State of Emergency for Victoria remained in place and after an initial easing of restrictions within regional Victoria a second lockdown was imposed.

There were outbreaks of COVID-19 within an aged care facility in Latrobe and transmission that occurred within the community. The Advocate continued to operate remotely and engage (via online methods) staying in regular contact with the Department of Health and Human Services and local agencies to support the emergency response. During this second lockdown and particularly when there were outbreaks in Latrobe, the Advocate participated in regular discussions focused on understanding the impacts of COVID-19 and engagement with local communities.

As part of her reporting to the Health Minister, the Chief Health Officer and DHHS the Advocate shared concerns raised with her around a number of issues. She then advocated on communities' behalf.

Impact of COVID-19

Further consideration for people who live alone and may not identify as, or be eligible for, mental health services or in-home care services.

Ensuring that outreach COVID-19 testing services are accessible to people who may not have access to transport.

Ongoing support for a regional or place-based approach to the COVID-19 emergency response and recovery efforts.

Localised supports and adequate staffing for people experiencing loneliness, anxiety or financial stress.

Ensuring that community groups and volunteers are also supported (alongside economic activities) as restrictions are eased.

Ongoing support for a regional or place-based approach to the COVID-19 emergency response and recovery efforts.

Everyone is suffering in their own way

We've been pushed to upgrade our computer skills



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