



Latrobe Health  
**Advocate**

# QUARTERLY UPDATE

## April - June

2019



## Table of Contents

Jane Anderson, .....	3
Latrobe Health Advocate .....	3
Activities April to June 2019 .....	4
Community Voice.....	5
Access to Services.....	5
Palliative care .....	6
Social inclusion .....	6
Health Equity .....	7
Mental Health.....	7
Coordination of services.....	7
Healthy Lifestyles.....	7
Alcohol and other drugs .....	8
Community Voice - year to date 2018 / 2019 .....	8
Amplifying the communities' voice .....	9
Research and Information Sharing .....	9
Indicators of System Change.....	10
Out and About.....	11
Palliative Care and End of Life in Latrobe .....	14



Latrobe Health Advocate  
2 Tarwin Street, Morwell VIC 3840

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

## Jane Anderson, Latrobe Health Advocate



I am pleased to present this update from the Office of the Latrobe Health Advocate for the period April to June 2019. In this report I highlight the conversations I have had with people across Latrobe and the ways I have amplified the voice of communities who have shared with me their experiences, aspirations and concerns for their health and wellbeing and that of their communities.

This report includes insights into what communities are telling me and how these issues are being managed and actioned within my office. I also report on how we are progressing with the priorities of my initial Statement of Intent.

As highlighted in my last quarterly report, I have now made submissions to The Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health and The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. These submissions emphasised the importance of considering where people are in their lives. I've suggested a shift away from what's known as a medicalised model of health to a social model where greater emphasis is placed on prevention; with supports available in community settings and strategies put in place to prevent social isolation and enable people to better participate in their communities.

As always, 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](mailto:info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au) any time.

Please 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 where you can find copies of the reports we publish along with this quarterly update.



## Activities April to June 2019

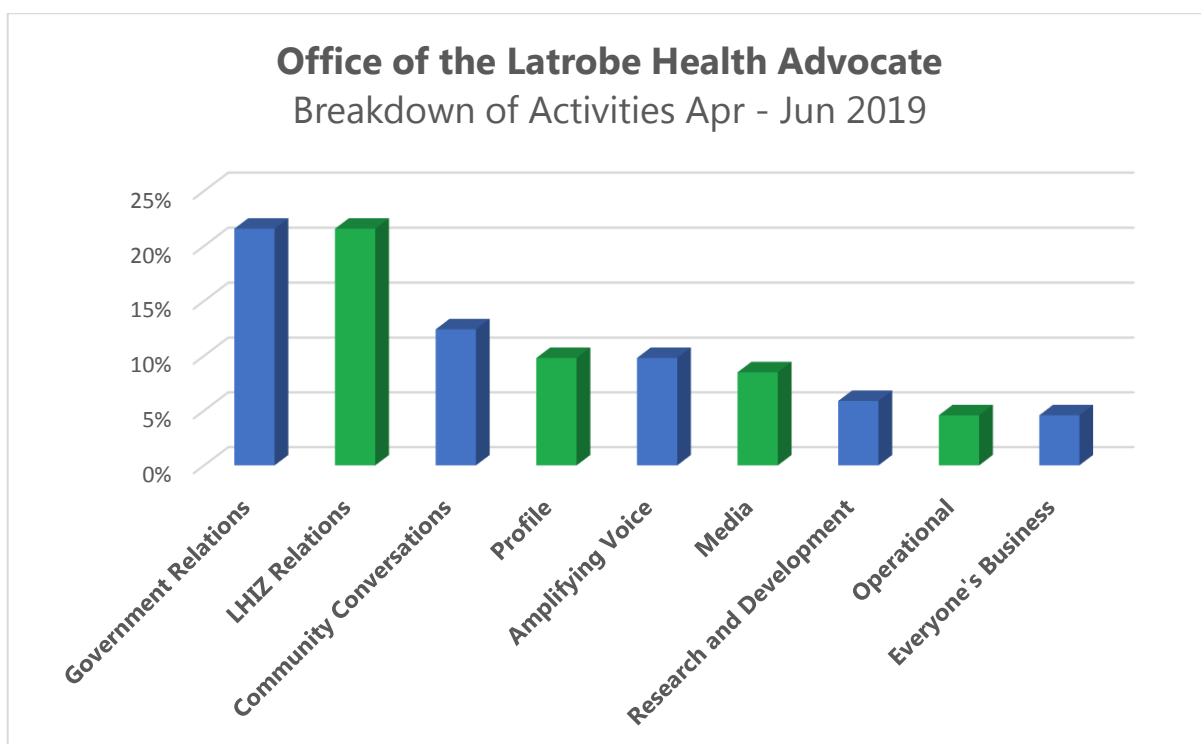
This quarter saw a significant amount of work undertaken on engagement activities and interactions with stakeholders on a range of issues, particularly two of the Advocate's current priority areas, Palliative Care and Mental Health.

In May, the Advocate hosted a strategic engagement workshop 'Elevating the voices of Latrobe communities' where local health services, governments and communities were brought together to consider how my office can best enable people to express their views and suggestions on matters relating to their health and wellbeing and that of their communities. This was the first official event organised by the Office of the Advocate and there was overwhelming feedback about the value of bringing together such a range of perspectives.

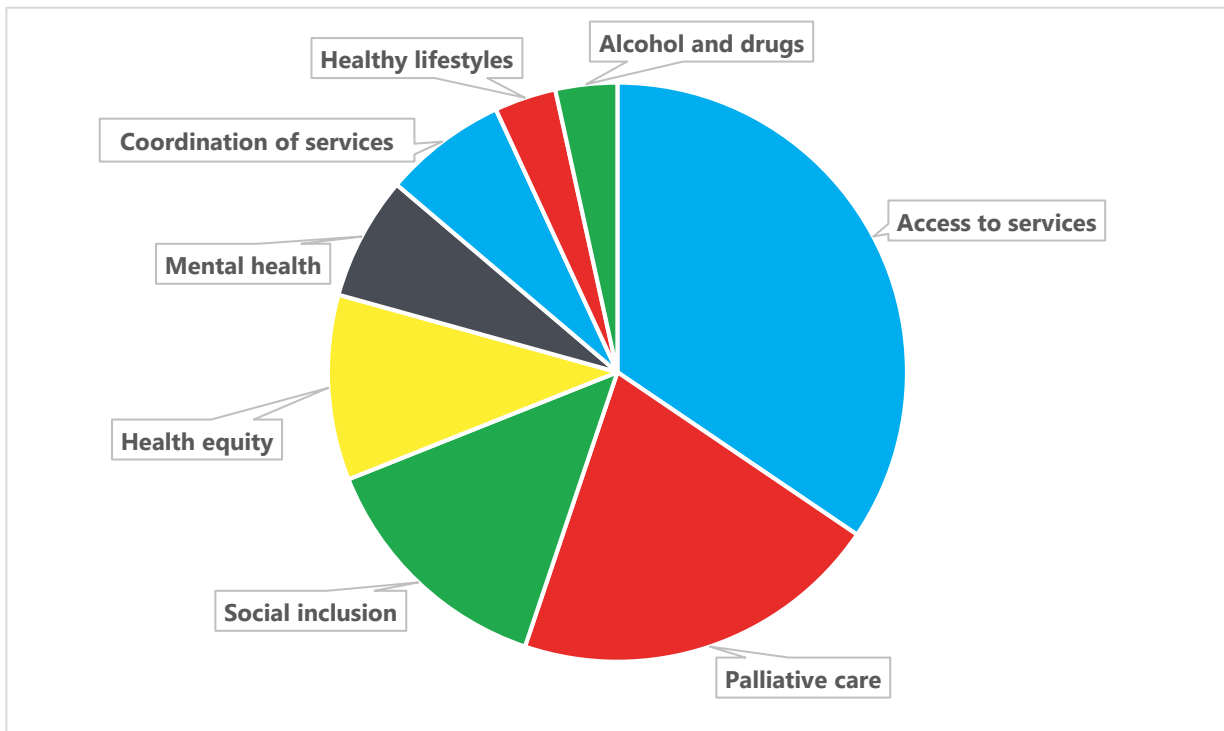
Also, in May, the Advocate organised a roundtable meeting with two Commissioners from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System which was attended by the Latrobe Health Assembly Board and local Aboriginal services.

Between April and June, the Advocate's Office interacted with more than 168 people from Latrobe communities and held discussions with approximately 114 representatives from local health services and Government.

The scope of the Latrobe Valley Asbestos Taskforce, which is chaired by the Advocate, has been broadened to include both commercial and residential asbestos management and removal. Responsibility for the administrative and secretariat duties has shifted from Worksafe Victoria to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.



## Community Voice



### The Top Five

1. Access to Services
2. Palliative care
3. Social inclusion
4. Health equity
5. Mental

### Access to Services

People have shared their experiences of trying to make an appointment with a GP, calling clinics in all the major towns in Latrobe before having to travel to another area to see a doctor. They have shared their frustrations about long wait times and GP clinics refusing to take on new patients and expressed concerns about how this has been communicated to them. One local clinic has talked openly about having to turn away up to 30 people a day. They are concerned about the impact this has, particularly for people who are living with chronic or mental illness.

Communities are looking for consistency in their relationship with GPs and consistency in the treatment they receive. They have also talked about better access to health equipment, specialist paediatric, diabetes and disability health services.

People have suggested that telehealth would be used more if it was better promoted. They have said that for some, telehealth can reduce the anxiety of an appointment. They want to see more GPs agreeing to utilise telehealth services.

People have said that local chemists can be a great first point of call as they are very helpful and good to talk to.

People have shared their aspirations for more education, understanding and empathy from GPs and other health professionals. A local clinic has described how they value nurse practitioners as someone who can act as a mentor, ask questions, support patients and GPs with care plans, ask patients who they want to see and help to prevent patients from having to retell their story.

Local clinics have talked about some of the barriers that relate to the recruitment and retention of GPs and the complexity of the training and qualification pathways in place. They have talked about the decisions made by peak bodies, governments and universities and how this can impact staffing structures and capacity within GP clinics. They have expressed concerns about the ongoing and potentially worsening impact of these external influences.

Local GPs have suggested that when their workforce is stable, they are best placed to have good relationships with their patients and maintain a better understanding of community needs. They have said that when there is instability, it creates additional pressures which can have a negative impact on how services respond to local communities.

The local hospital has been described as having a central role in relation to attracting and retaining a strong GP and health workforce for Latrobe communities. It has been suggested that most medical students only have one regional training experience and that this is an opportunity to make a positive impression on future health professionals to encourage them to return to Latrobe when they are ready to enter the workforce. It has also been described as a valuable opportunity to seek feedback from medical students about their experiences in Latrobe and to use this feedback to continually innovate and enhance the local system.

## Palliative care

Throughout this quarter the office of the Advocate has undertaken significant engagement with communities, nurses, doctors and governments on palliative care services in Latrobe. A project update is provided further in this report.

## Social inclusion

Social inclusion is often discussed when people talk about improving mental wellbeing in Latrobe. People have talked about the positive benefits of community activities where there is a common interest that brings people together alongside an opportunity to connect or socialise.

People have talked about the benefits of U3A, Men's Sheds and Neighbourhood Houses suggesting that they provide good opportunities that encourage people to come out into their communities and help them to connect with others.

People have expressed concerns for older people who might be experiencing social isolation and want to see more strategies in place to address this. They have said that 'aging in place' can be a trap. They want to see more community participation and engagement to help people stay physically and mentally active.

People living with a disability have talked about how important it is for them to be supported to leave the house and participate in society. They have also talked about the factors that have enabled them to know about and have access to services and activities in their community, noting how valuable this is for them.

Communities have shared their aspirations to see more supports for people from different cultural backgrounds that would enable them to participate in more events and activities.



## Health Equity

People have described the challenges they face in accessing some services in Latrobe and how this becomes more difficult when there are additional costs for medications or travel. They have questioned why they are seeing discrepancies in the availability and quality of some services in Latrobe compared to other locations.

Some organisations have expressed a desire to provide more supports to people who are in most need, however they have limited capacity and government support to do this.

## Mental Health

People have described their frustrations in trying to access mental health services and the barriers they experience in trying to develop a mental health plan. They are looking for better coordination between GPs and local mental health specialists and support services.

They have expressed concerns about the lack of mental health specialists and services available in Latrobe, suggesting that there is a shortage of psychologists and counselling services in the area and that those services that are currently present in the area have long waiting lists.

People have talked about the value of mentors and they want to see more listening and understanding in the community about mental health. They have shared their aspirations for more education and efforts to address stigma.

## Coordination of services

People have shared their expectations that health services work well together and that they provide a coordinated approach that is centred on the needs of patients. They have expressed their frustrations about times when services seem to be fragmented.

People have talked about times when there have been changes to the delivery of a service, or changes in staff that have not been communicated to patients or the broader community.

Communities are looking for trusted relationships with health professionals and continuity of care. They have described how this can be interrupted by changes in the system that are poorly planned or communicated and the impact this can have on the healthcare they receive.

## Healthy Lifestyles

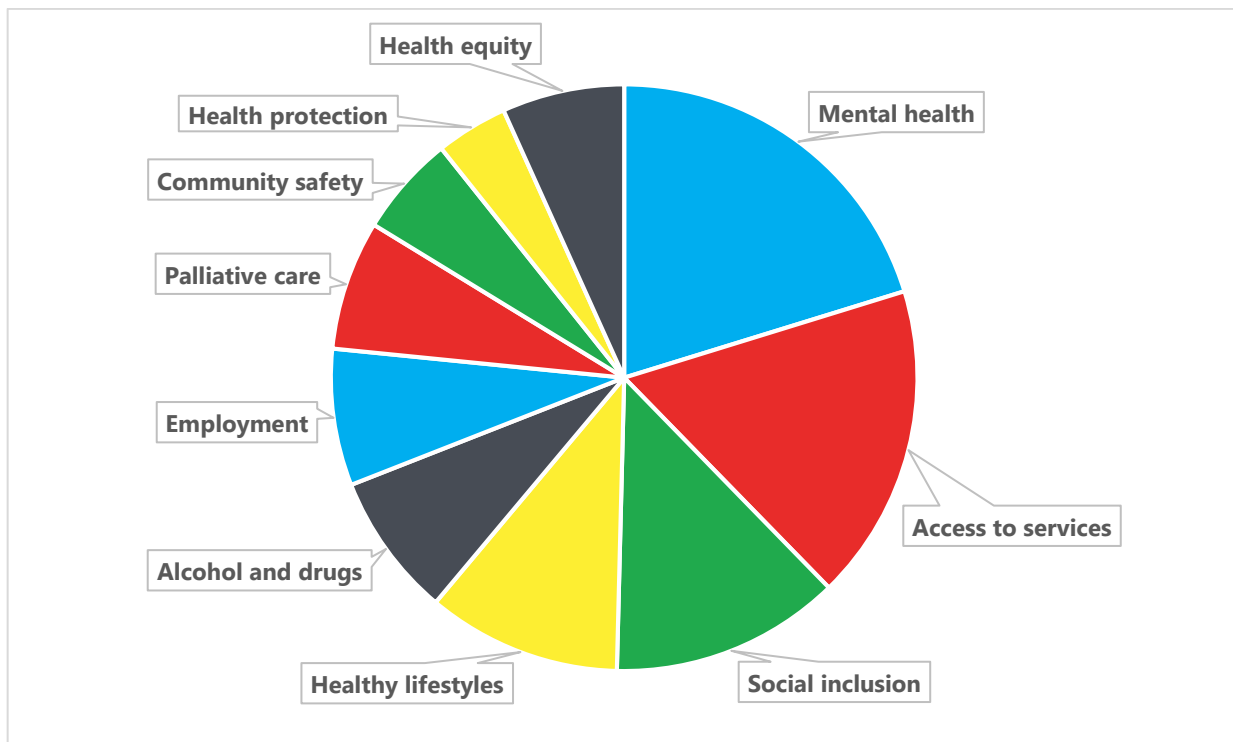
People in Latrobe have identified social norms, particularly in relation to risky levels of alcohol consumption. They have talked about the need to change young people's perceptions of alcohol, suggesting that people think it is the only thing to do and that there is an expectation to drink. They have shared their aspirations for greater awareness and education relating to healthy lifestyle choices and ways to socialise without alcohol.

## Alcohol and other drugs

People in Latrobe are looking for a broader range of supports and services to assist those who are experiencing alcohol and drug addictions. They have expressed concerns about gaps in the system and want to see better coordination and availability of ongoing supports for communities.

They have shared their aspirations for services that are available to help people transition from their addictions and to empower them to be able to participate more in employment and in their community. They have identified the risk of people feeling isolated when they leave an intensive support service. They have suggestions about mentors and professionals who can help people to develop the skills to look enjoy good health and wellbeing.

## Community Voice - year to date 2018 / 2019



### The Top Five

1. Mental health
2. Access to services
3. Social inclusion
4. Healthy Lifestyles
5. Alcohol and drugs



## Amplifying the communities' voice

The Latrobe Health Advocate has shared the voice of communities in a range of forums including;

- Mental Health Royal Commission Roundtable in Traralgon
- Gippsland Palliative and End of Life Care Forum
- Latrobe Health Assembly Board Meeting
- Gippsland Primary Health Network strategic directions workshop
- Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan Consultations, Traralgon and Melbourne
- Gippsland Regional Executive Forum
- CEO Traveller's Aid
- General Manager Stockland Plaza, Traralgon



- LGBTIQ Inclusion Workshop
- Hazelwood Long Term Health Study Advisory Committee Meeting
- Latrobe Mental Health Forum
- Neighbourhood House Victoria, CEO
- Public Transport Victoria, Deputy CEO

## Research and Information Sharing

In response to community conversations the Office of the Latrobe Health Advocate has undertaken research and shared the following information or resources with communities;

- Latrobe City Council strategies and policies including:
  - Wastewater Management
  - Latrobe City Public Open Space Strategy
  - Council Complaints Policy and Procedure
  - Latrobe City Council Tracks, Trails and Paths Strategy
- Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System
- Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health
- Orange Door
- Drink Wise
- Red Frogs
- Lifeline Gippsland
- NDIS
- Neighbourhood Houses Victoria
- VCOSS Emergency Management
- Royal Children's Hospital Gender Service
- Headspace
- YSAS Inner Gippsland
- Telehealth

# Indicators of System Change

The Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System has demonstrated interest in the work of the Advocate and worked with the Office of the Advocate to organise a roundtable engagement in Latrobe. This roundtable was attended by services and community.

Latrobe Valley Buslines has provided feedback about the impact of having more Multimodal Authorised Officers present in Latrobe and the improvements in passenger and driver safety.

The Advocate hosted a strategic engagement workshop that brought together communities and services. There was overwhelming feedback at this workshop about the value of sharing perspectives and a desire to see more of this.





## Out and About



In April, the Advocate had the opportunity to explore what is behind the Orange Door. Manager Vicki Levey showed her around the new facility which has been built and fitted out with family access as a priority. There are children's play areas, bean bags, teenage spaces, computer access, a kitchen area and an emphasis on safety and security.

People have been sharing that they want integrated services, where you can tell your story once and be referred to supports that are meaningful and useful for you. The Orange Door is taking this approach and is working together with Victoria Police to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the community.

Mental health, alcohol and other drugs and homelessness are some of the issues impacting on people seeking support.

Also, in April the Advocate met the Youth Space Governance Group in Morwell. She was impressed with the depth of skill and knowledge in the group and their interest in a range of issues.

One major concern for the group is the use of alcohol as a social pass time and how education programs like those that are available for drugs could make a difference to how young people perceive the use of alcohol in their lives.

Better equipping young people to have conversations with their GP was another issue that the group discussed. Providing a better understanding of their own health and wellbeing so that they can take control of their own health issues and know where to seek support is an important aspect of education for this group.



The Advocate attended the official opening of the Yallourn North Medical Centre.

Many people have spoken about the lack of GP services across Latrobe. People in smaller towns have felt isolated and overlooked at times but this is being turned around by the work of groups like Yallourn North Action Group.

A community driven project, the re-opening of the Yallourn North Medical Centre sees a significant service return to the town thanks to the support of Latrobe Health Services and the Maryvale General Practice Group.

Doctors Artie Inamdar and Charles Luiz will be at the centre on Mondays from 9am to 12pm, Tuesdays from 9:30am to 2:30 pm and Thursdays also from 9:30am to 2:30 pm



In May, as part of the preparations for the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, the Advocate had the pleasure of joining Commissioners Dr. Alex Cockram and Professor Bernadette McSherry, Governance Members of Latrobe Health Assembly and representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to hear what people are saying about their aspirations for an effective mental health system.

Among the questions asked by the commissioners was "what is working now" and "what can be done to improve the mental health of people in our communities?"

People shared their ideas, many of which echoed what the Advocate is hearing from communities across Latrobe on how services can deliver better outcomes for peoples' mental health. The meeting talked about relationships, connectedness, employment, prevention, GPs in schools, social prescribing, collaboration and much more.



In National Reconciliation Week, this year's theme was Grounded in Truth, Walk Together with Courage. Communities were asked to think about how we can contribute to reconciliation because it "must live in the hearts, minds and actions of all Australians as we move forward, creating a nation strengthened by respectful relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples."

As the Advocate attended the Flag Raising ceremony, and participated in the Welcome to Country, she was reminded why we acknowledge the first nation peoples whose land on which we meet; not to tick a box or meet a protocol but to recognise the integral part Indigenous Australians have played in our history and the important role they have to play in an inclusive, connected and healthy future for us all.

This year's theme for Neighbourhood house week was "Bringing people together – from neighbourhood to your nation"

Social inclusion is one of the top three issues that people in communities have talked to the Advocate about, alongside mental health and access to services.

In bringing people together, Neighbourhood Houses help combat loneliness and provide human connection, something that is vital to health and wellbeing.







Early in June the Advocate attended the Innaugural Gippsland Pride Initiative Roller Derby Cup.

It was a great event celebrating inclusivity and equality across sports and communities and exciting to watch.

Congratulations to all those involved in getting this event and The Gala off the ground. Congratulations also to Gippsport for signing the pledge.



Late in June the Advocate caught up with a group of people who use wheelchairs and regularly meet in Traralgon. It was an opportunity for her to hear about their aspirations for their health and wellbeing.

The issues of access to services was again raised with her and the need for business to consider the environment they create so that more people can feel included and have an opportunity to access services and employment opportunities equally.

Accessibility is an ongoing issue and what would make these Latrobe locals happy would be that people's needs were considered up-front when businesses are getting started and not as an afterthought.



Also, in June the Advocate had the opportunity to meet with the enthusiastic and highly committed team of practitioners and staff at Trafalgar Medical Clinic.

The Clinic has been successful in encouraging their staff to stay in their local community where they can enjoy a rural lifestyle and undertake a range of work, all out of a local GP practice.

The GPs and Nurse Practitioner spoke about how they enjoyed the variety and flexibility in their work and that they feel they are making a difference in their community.



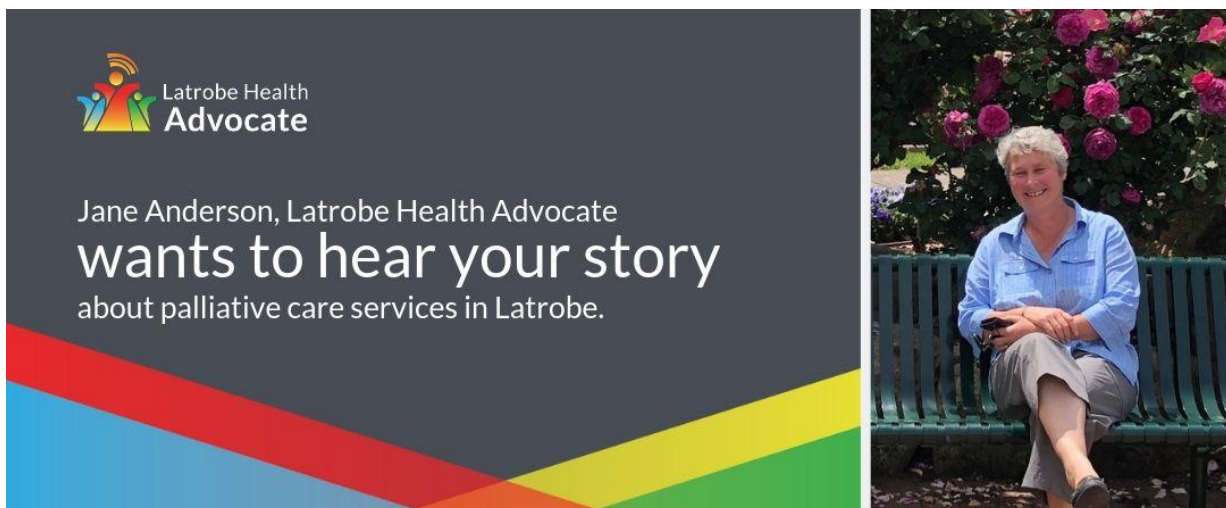
## Palliative Care and End of Life in Latrobe

End of life palliative care was identified as a priority area for systems change in the Advocate's 2018/19 Statement of Intent. Latrobe communities have shared their palliative care experiences and have identified a gap in the service system between home and hospital. They have described limitations on beds, nurses, volunteers, service collaboration and hours of operation.

People have shared their aspirations for a palliative care experience that feels caring and nurturing, with consistency of nurses and supports for families. They have talked about the importance of having a peaceful nurturing environment where patients can have their privacy.

Throughout this quarter the office of the Advocate has been engaging with palliative care nurses, social workers and volunteers from Latrobe Regional Hospital and Latrobe Community Health Service to hear their views and suggestions and explore feedback from communities more deeply.

The Advocate also asked people to share their stories of palliative care in Latrobe through an online survey.



Hearing about people's experiences enables the Advocate and others to better understand the challenges, gaps and opportunities for improvement within the system. People shared their story online, over the phone, via email or by arranging a time to speak with the Advocate in person.

The Advocate encouraged people to share their story in as many or as few words as they like. They could choose to have their story shared with others, or just with the Advocate's office.

The Advocate asked people to think about the following questions;

- What are the positive aspects of palliative care services in Latrobe?
- What could be done to improve palliative care services in Latrobe?
- What are your aspirations for palliative care services in Latrobe?



Local palliative care nurses have shared their experiences and aspirations about local end of life palliative care services noting that there is high demand and a need to improve collaboration between health services. They have identified the central role of GPs in end of life palliative care.

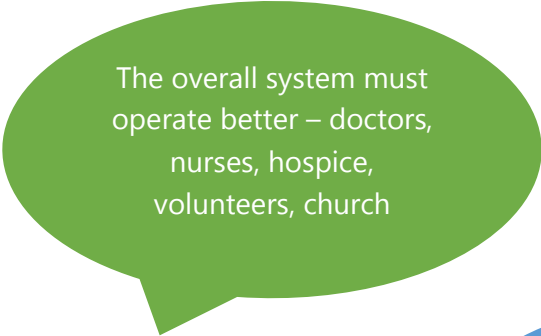
They have expressed a desire for a hospice in Latrobe describing this as something that could be non-clinical with gardens, space, professional support and respite for patients and their families.

Some nurses have suggested that a hospice could resolve a number of existing challenges and would provide Latrobe communities with a totally different type of care that brings together a broader team of specialists that could provide a more holistic and specialised approach.

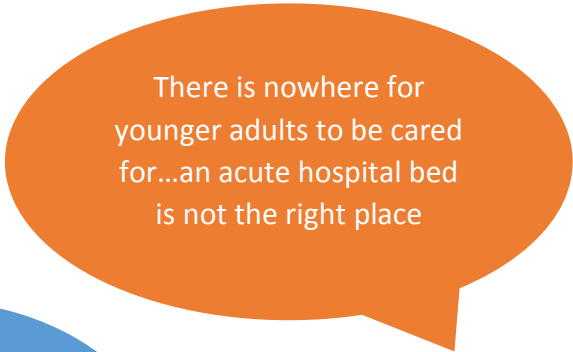
This was also brought up several times in the workshop that the Advocate hosted on July 2<sup>nd</sup> where communities, health professionals and governments came together to share their experiences and suggestions to improve palliative care services in Latrobe.

At that workshop the Advocate heard from people directly impacted by the Palliative Care System in Latrobe. There were stories of gratitude and despair. Stories that reflected what is working well and what is not working in the system, and the changes that could be made to improve the system and offer people in a Latrobe a better palliative care end of life experience.


Following on from the approaches that had already been made to the Advocate, those who had come together were asked to share courageously and listen with generosity and that's exactly what they did. As a result, the Advocate has a great foundation on which to build her recommendations and bring their voices to Government. Her report and recommendations will be available in September.




The overall system must operate better – doctors, nurses, hospice, volunteers, church



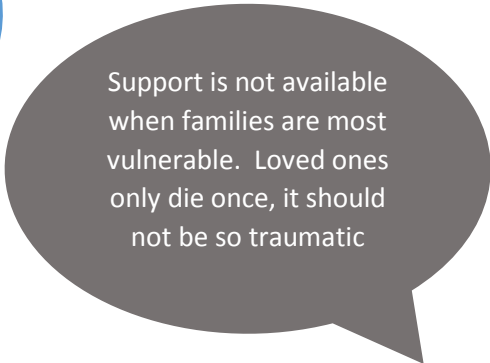
There is nowhere for younger adults to be cared for...an acute hospital bed is not the right place



Palliative care needs immediate fix 7 days/ 24-hour care. Start work on investigating a hospice



It has gone backwards...we used to share care...with limited resources and it was good



Support is not available when families are most vulnerable. Loved ones only die once, it should not be so traumatic



Latrobe Health  
**Advocate**

2 Tarwin Street  
Morwell VIC 3840



email: [info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au)  
[www.lhadvocate.vic.gov.au](http://www.lhadvocate.vic.gov.au)