

LATROBE HEALTH ADVOCATE QUARTERLY UPDATE

July - September 2021



Latrobe Health
Advocate



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01 — Message From the Advocate**
- 02 — Quarterly Activity Breakdown**
- 03 — Community Aspirations**
- 04 — Community Aspirations cont.**
- 05 — Community Aspirations cont.**
- 05 — Priority Campaigns**
- 05 — Impacts of COVID-19**
- 06 — Systems Change**



Latrobe Health Advocate
2 Tarwin Street, Morwell
Phone: 1800 319 355
Email: info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au

A MESSAGE FROM

Latrobe Health Advocate

Jane Anderson



I am pleased to present this update from the Office of the Latrobe Health Advocate for the period July to September 2021.

COVID-19 continued to impact communities across Victoria this quarter. Latrobe experienced another lockdown after a rise in local cases and public health data showed that vaccination rates in the region were behind other local government areas in Gippsland.

Despite the ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19, there was a lot of activity around my office this quarter. In July my office coordinated a workshop and afternoon tea on behalf of the Human Connections Project partners where agencies and communities came together to discuss the value of social connections in Latrobe. The insights gathered were used to inform the partnership's inaugural report, Human Connections in Latrobe.

I have had many conversations this quarter and some of them are highlighted in this update. Latrobe communities have spoken about their health and wellbeing aspirations including mental health, access to services, social inclusion, healthy lifestyles and community engagement. I continued to hear about the desire for improved palliative care services in Latrobe, and some people spoke about the need for a dedicated hospice or standalone facility in the region.

During this quarter I have seen several systems changes that can provide opportunities for better health and wellbeing across Latrobe and some of them are detailed in this update.

As always, I look forward to hearing from more of you in coming months and encourage you to contact me on 1800 319 255 or via email at info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au at any time.

Remember you can follow my work on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

You can find copies of all the reports we publish along with this quarterly update on our website.

Jane ””

@LHAdvocate



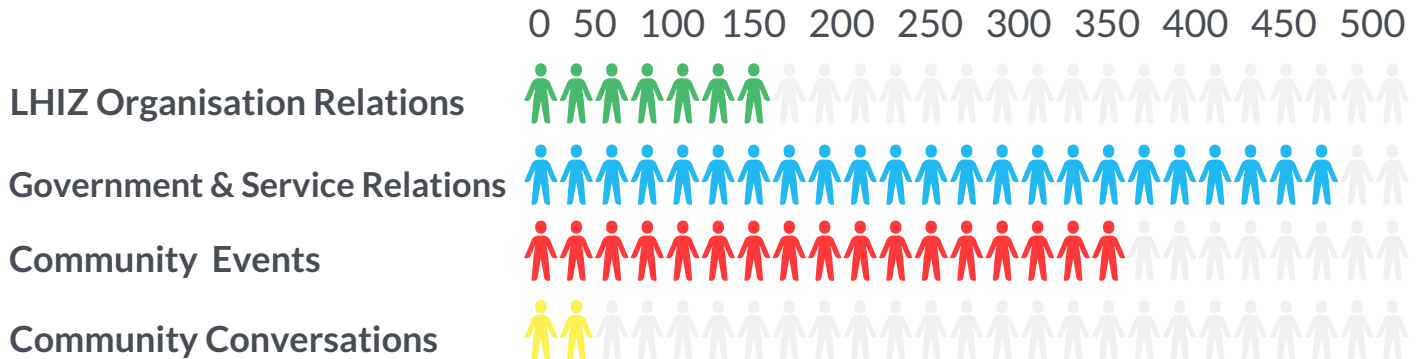
QUARTERLY BREAKDOWN



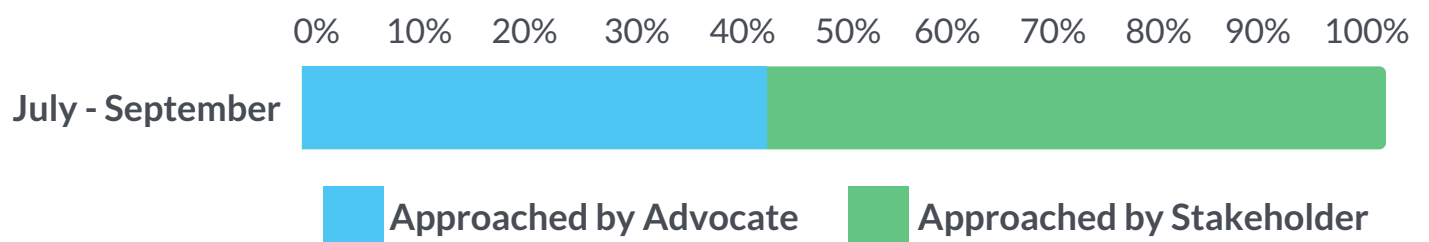
OFFICE ACTIVITIES



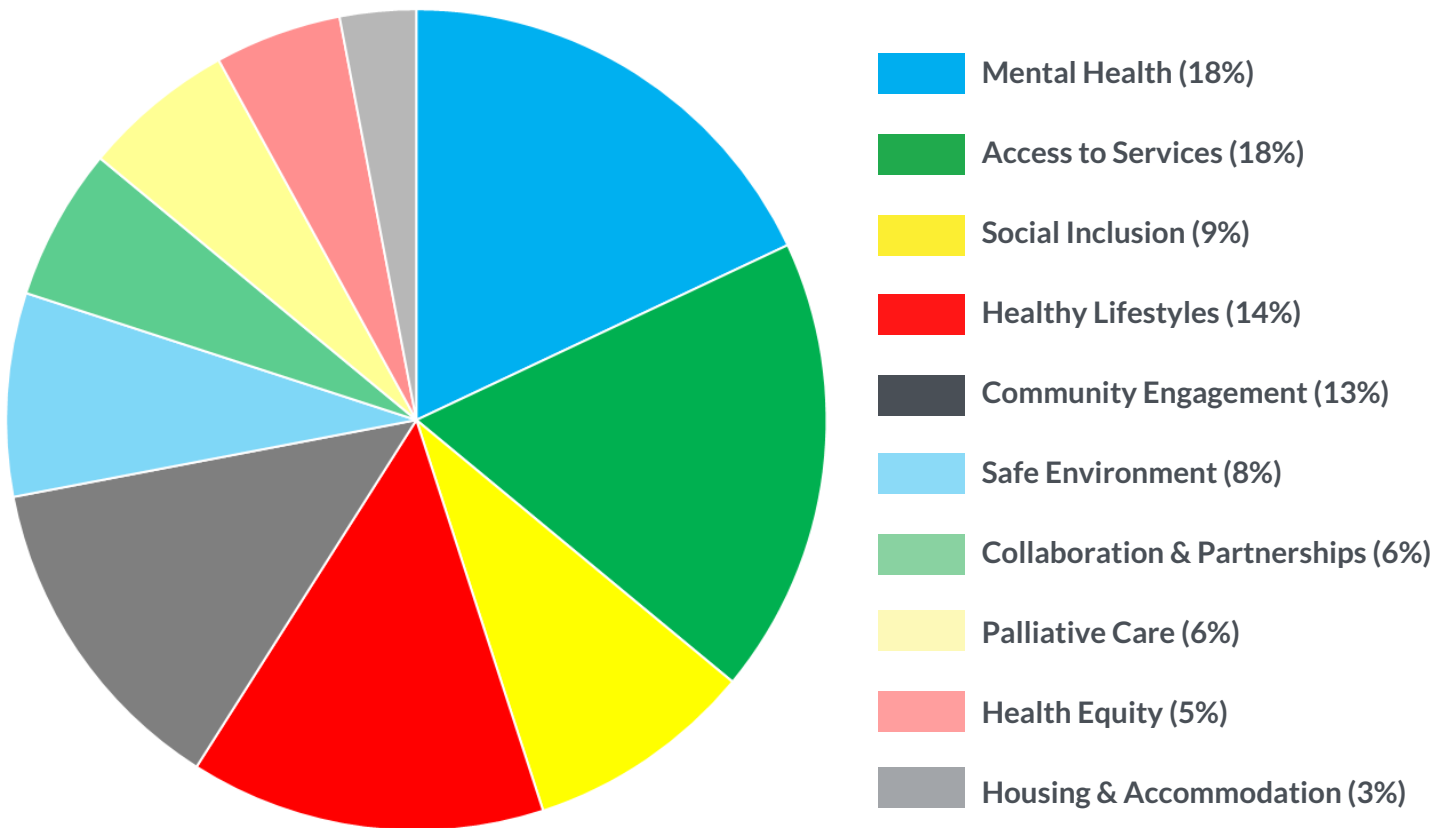
NUMBER OF PEOPLE



ENGAGEMENT REACH



COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS



1 Mental Health



18%

Frontline community workers and service providers want to be able to confidently support others to navigate and access mental health services. They are confronted by the complexities some people are experiencing and feel compelled to help.

People spoke about the mental health impacts of increased rental costs, homelessness, couch surfing, self-harm or harm from others, and the ongoing impacts of natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Advocate heard it is not easy for some people to access the support that they need and those working within the system are experiencing challenges of their own. Young people and local Aboriginal communities are amongst those who are being impacted by gaps and challenges within the system.

People are falling through the cracks

The greatest challenge is people being battered from fires, floods, COVID, suicide and deaths. They are all trying to get back to normal

2 Access to Services



18%

People want to be able to make appointments to see a doctor. They have expressed concerns about long wait times and the impacts of seeing rotating doctors.

Some people have talked about the difficulty they have had in accessing specialists including mental health workers and stoma nurse.

The Advocate has heard about the challenges some people can experience if they do not fit the exact criteria for NDIS or My Aged Care, which can be further complicated if they prefer to be self managed.

Some people have said that they have the ability to navigate a complex system but they are concerned for others who may not have the means to do this. Others have expressed concerns for people who may be experiencing mental illness or homelessness and what it might be like for them to receive the support and services they need.

It takes a long time for me to educate the doctor about how I want to be looked at, and then the grass gets greener and they leave

The whole system of supporting the aged is a farce. Everything is focused for NDIS, not aged care

3 Healthy Lifestyles



14%

People have shared what it means for them to live a healthy lifestyle. They have talked about keeping physically fit, appreciating the good life we have, enjoying the company of others, staying connected with family, living pain free, spending time in the garden or on the golf course and having a good attitude towards life.

People have suggested they may be more able to achieve a healthy lifestyle if they can stay connected to others, learn to embrace change, receive more reliable home help, receive hard copy bills, continue to maintain their fitness through gardening, swimming, walking, going to the gym, social netball or ballroom dancing.

They have said it's important to avoid negativity and make a conscious effort to keep well.

It is important I can have a feeling of safety in the community, that there are facilities for me to keep healthy

My health and wellbeing is pretty good

4 Community Engagement



13%

The Advocate heard that people in Latrobe remain interested in the future economic development of the region.

Some people are actively seeking to engage with industry, Health Innovation Zone stakeholders and government about the used lead acid battery (ULAB) recycling facility in Hazelwood North and the Delburn Wind Farm.

People are continuing to pursue opportunities to share their views and are concerned about the difficulty they experience in accessing decision makers or influencing outcomes.

Some people expressed their distrust in the advice or decision making behind planning and approvals decisions.

There is a focus on jobs and we shouldn't have jobs at the expense of health

5 Social Inclusion



9%

Through her engagement with people over 60 in Latrobe, the Advocate heard about contentment in many of her conversations. People talked about the importance of maintaining a positive outlook and being satisfied with their ability to keep going. Some people described being happy the way they are and their enjoyment in living day by day.

People talked about maintaining their mental wellbeing through companionship and connection to others. The Advocate heard that spending time with others can be a way to take your mind off your own body, but for some it was hard to get used to what was described as a shrinking circle of friends and social activities.

The Advocate heard from some people that the process of being invited to share their opinions and have their voices heard was good for their health and wellbeing.

Staying with your community
and staying connected is
important

PRIORITY CAMPAIGNS



END OF LIFE PALLIATIVE CARE

The Advocate continues to hear from people who want to see the establishment of a hospice or palliative care unit in the region and who have concerns that this does not yet exist.

There are concerns about the busy, rowdy and crowded environment within the hospital setting, for patients receiving end of life care and their families.

The Advocate has heard first-hand experiences from people who have been with loved ones who received hospice based care in other locations. These people have highlighted the benefits that this type of care can bring.



IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Latrobe communities started to experience an increase in the number of active cases in the region, resulting in increasing restrictions and focus from government. Community members spoke about the need for easy to access information and answers to their questions and a consistency of messaging and protocols from the various levels of government and services operating within the region.

People asked questions that related to lockdown rules, easing of restrictions and what this means for their workplaces, schools or other community settings, isolation rules, exposure sites, testing and vaccination. Some people experienced tension as they observed what they describe as lack of compliance with the rules, and others experienced frustration or confusion as they tried to navigate the information and rules for their specific context or situation.

Some of the suggestions people put forward include having service providers promote and disclose their vaccination status, greater clarity and support for staff on the ground to make decisions, and the proactive development of protocols and processes to cater for different situations that might arise.

SYSTEMS CHANGE

The Advocate sees better systems of health and wellbeing driven by six elements:



INTEGRATION OF COMMUNITY VOICE

- AGL Loy Yang is actively seeking community experience to inform their community grants and partnership activities.

BETTER SUPPORTS

- Latrobe Community Health Service, informed by the Gippsland PHN suicide prevention workshop, will make changes to existing gatekeeper training for staff.

BETTER MENTAL MODELS

- Latrobe City Council established a 100 member community panel and invited community members to join conversations about how to make Latrobe a better place to live, work, visit and play. People shared their thoughts on current and future challenges that the region might face in years to come.

BETTER SERVICES

- Gippsland PHN is working to address perceptions that people can only access mental health services if they have a referral.

BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

- VicHealth, VCOSS and George Institute have lead discussions around a Social Wellbeing framework. They have involved participants, including the Advocate, from many sectors and jurisdictions to influence wellbeing approach