

## **MEDIA RELEASE: Access to Services Forum – Promoting the Latrobe Region, Building Health and Digital Literacy.**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

The Latrobe Health Advocate is calling for one of the 50 Medicare Urgent Care Clinics, announced by the new Australian Government in an election promise, to be located in Latrobe.

Her comments came in her address to Latrobe Valley health representatives at an Access to Services forum in Traralgon last Monday, highlighting issues of local doctor shortages and digital health literacy.

Held at the Traralgon office of the Victorian Department of Health, the Access to Services forum is a priority campaign for the Advocate with the themes of promoting the Latrobe Region, building health and digital literacy and increasing the number of doctors.

In her address, Ms Anderson welcomed the recent Labor Party election promise of 50 Medicare Urgent Care Clinics nationally, urging that the Latrobe Valley be a priority location for one of the clinics.

Ms Anderson also noted there was currently a Victorian Government EOI process out for the five GP-led Priority Primary Care Centres across Victoria proposed to open up to 16 hours a day, seven days a week, with selection influenced by need and interest from clinics.

She said Access to Services was the top aspiration identified by Latrobe communities in her recent Quarterly Report, with people saying they delayed seeing a doctor and other health services if their previous experience was unpleasant or if there were language or cultural barriers.

According to Ms Anderson, if systems and processes are difficult or overly complex, if they feel rushed or judged, they are likely to put off going back.

When asked who else they might see if they are unable to see a doctor, 60% of respondents said they would attend an emergency department, up from 32% in 2020. Another 40% of respondents said they would phone Nurse on Call, up from 5% in 2020.

Ms Anderson said work was underway and ongoing to improve training pathways for doctors, build digital literacy, promote the liveability of Latrobe, and enable local system design and innovation to reduce the burden on the emergency department

“Local patients are often required to travel to other regional locations or Melbourne to access the care, medical equipment, or facilities they needed. When this occurred, the transition and

## **MEDIA RELEASE: Access to Services Forum – Promoting the Latrobe Region, Building Health and Digital Literacy.**

communication between metropolitan and regional health services may have been lacking and disrupted the continuity of care.”

As a way of attracting more health professionals, people want the region’s lifestyle, education offerings and more affordable housing in Latrobe, promoted widely. They want systems that encourage doctors to stay in the area and to bring their families with them.

It was suggested the story of the Latrobe Valley should be promoted as well as more work done to embrace different cultures and diversity within the community.

Ms Anderson highlighted the following key themes of importance to the Latrobe Valley health sector: local system design and innovation; reducing the burden on the emergency department and creating a multidisciplinary business model for the future.

Ms Anderson said her office had convened regular stakeholder forums where action plan agencies came together to provide updates on their work underway, discuss strategies to advance systems change and importantly, identify challenges and ways to address them.

“An Urgent Care Clinic in Latrobe is a necessary part of the solution and will be welcomed by communities and health practitioners. Local clinics will have the opportunity to put themselves forward to partner with the government to deliver an Urgent Care Clinic in Latrobe.”

## **MEDIA RELEASE: Access to Services Forum – Promoting the Latrobe Region, Building Health and Digital Literacy.**



Caption: Latrobe Health Advocate Ms Jane Anderson at Access to Services Forum with other stakeholders.

For more information or to arrange an interview with the Advocate please contact Blessing from the Latrobe Health Advocate office on 1800 319 255 or [info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au)

ends