

LATROBE HEALTH ADVOCATE QUARTERLY UPDATE

April - June 2022



Latrobe Health
Advocate



@LHAdvocate

A MESSAGE FROM Latrobe Health Advocate



I am pleased to provide this update for the period April to June 2022. During this time my office has focused on progressing priority campaigns; improving end of life palliative care services in Latrobe, improving access to services in Latrobe and application of the social determinants of health in Latrobe.

Access to Services remains a top aspiration identified by Latrobe communities, alongside palliative care, health equity and healthy lifestyles. Although there are some excellent examples of quality healthcare in the region, people are experiencing inequities in accessing regional compared to metropolitan health services.

I recently welcomed two new team members to my office and to the Latrobe Valley. Sana and Blessing have joined the team and look forward to engaging with local communities and supporting our efforts to improve health and wellbeing in the region.

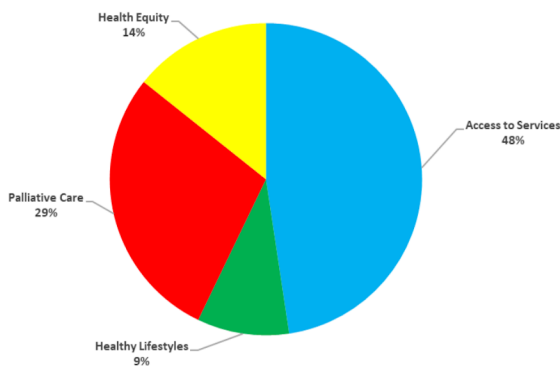
If you want to learn more about our work or wish to express interest in sharing your experiences or partnership with us, please contact my office for further details or go to our website www.lhadvocate.vic.gov.au

Jane

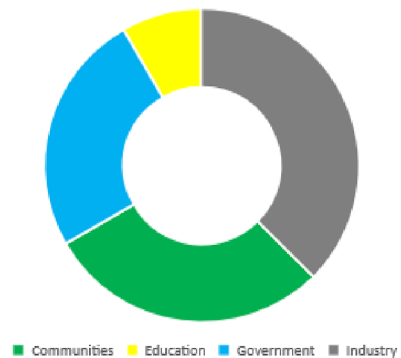
OFFICE ACTIVITIES



COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS



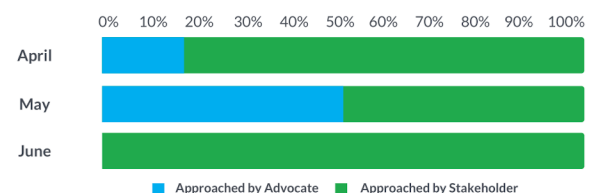
WHO WE ENGAGE WITH



NUMBER OF PEOPLE



ENGAGEMENT REACH



PRIORITY CAMPAIGNS



END OF LIFE PALLIATIVE CARE

The Advocate has heard from people who recognise the need to enhance palliative care services in the region and to establish a dedicated hospice or end of life care facility. People have shared their personal experiences of caring for loved ones currently experiencing end of life care. They have described the impacts of limited staffing, lack of pain management expertise and limited access to medication. Community members have shared their ideas about earlier access to palliative care, more proactive intervention and education.

In May the Advocate and members of her staff spent the day in Melbourne visiting the Caritas Christi Hospice and the new Palliative Care Ward1A at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. The Advocate and her staff were joined by the CEO from Latrobe Regional Hospital and the Palliative Care Project Coordinator from Gippsland PHN.

It was an opportunity to strengthen relationships between regional and metropolitan services and to see first-hand, the difference a dedicated environment for end-of-life can make. The team learned about important design features such as having direct access to the outdoors and natural light, shelves, and corkboards for patients to place their belongings so people feel more at home. There were rooms for families and carers and shared kitchen areas for patients and families to cook their own meals and enjoy quality time together



ACCESS TO SERVICES

People have shared experiences of trying to access general and specialist health and mental health services in the region. The Advocate continues to hear about the difficulties people face in trying to gain access to a GP and the implications this can have for their health condition and their ability to access other health professionals. Although there are some excellent examples of quality healthcare in the region, people are experiencing inequities in accessing regional compared to metropolitan health services.

The Advocate has heard examples where patients are trying to navigate their way across multiple services and gain clarity about the advice they have been given and which medicines they should or should not be taking. Suggestions for improving the experience for patients include more accurate health records and information sharing across services to enable better quality of care.

A group of local secondary school staff have shared their views about access to services for themselves and their students, highlighting the challenges facing students in the aftermath of COVID-19 lockdowns and the current stresses that teachers are experiencing. People have described the impacts of staff shortages and high workloads and highlighted the benefits of being able to access wellbeing days and mental health supports in the workplace. They have emphasised the need for greater mental health supports to be available to students and are holding out for the implementation of mental health system reforms.

Other suggestions for improved access to services include greater use of e-prescriptions across services, after-care and proactive information sharing including provision of contact details for local health professionals, welcome kits for medical students to help them better connect with local communities, and earlier access to mental health supports.



SYSTEMS CHANGE

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



Observations of systems change:

INTEGRATION OF COMMUNITY VOICE

- A local community worker is actively seeking input from the Advocate office and others to inform their plans to activate a community space in Moe.
- VCOSS recently conducted a statewide listening tour to understand the impacts of COVID-19 in different communities. As part of this tour there was a deliberate effort by VCOSS to reach out to locations where community gather and to use the voice of local communities to influence decision making
- Local government officers sought out data from the Advocate office to inform work that they are doing in relation to palliative care.



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