

LATROBE HEALTH ADVOCATE QUARTERLY UPDATE

JULY- SEPTEMBER 2022



Latrobe Health
Advocate



@LHAdvocate

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 of July- September 2022. During this time I have continued to hear from people in Latrobe with access to services being the top aspiration identified by Latrobe communities, often coupled with a goal of health equity. Collaboration and partnerships were also among the top aspirations with people talking about the value of working together with each other and the benefits that can come from services working well with each other and in partnership with the community.

I heard about the struggles of some community members, and I have heard from local youth workers who have identified the need to attract more professionals to the region to assist in meeting the increase in service system demand since the COVID-19 lockdowns. They have said there is a need for more Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, Paediatricians and GPs.

I have heard that there is an over-reliance on virtual connection and that it is important to offer young people face-to-face services, particularly as relationships and trust are being established. Young people are not always able to discuss their family environment, which can be confronting.

I have heard that autism assessments are behind because people are unable to access services. People have shared their view that the system needs to have the capacity to provide early intervention, offering younger children constant connection with therapists or psychologists.

Some of the suggestions shared with me include: increased funding for people under 65 who are not NDIS, use of Home Care Packages funds to access private dental services, more mental health supports and somewhere for people to go, bolstering the capacity of staff to allow time and space for relationships and more holistic care, accurate diagnoses and treatment, space for privacy and respect, and increased leadership to enable good health outcomes.

Collaboration and Partnership were also among the top aspirations identified by Latrobe communities this quarter. I continue to hear the message that communities are happy to engage, and that local people know what they need. People have said that service providers need to hold trust in the community.

During this quarter, I have also seen several systems changes that can provide opportunities for better services, better mental models, integration of community voice and better relationships.

The Victorian Skills Authority has sought community priorities from the Advocate office to inform an annual work plan about systems reform and to provide oversight to skills and qualification systems, developing insights and analysis to education providers and community organisations.

Health and well-being are one of the priorities identified by the Latrobe Valley Authority in its development of a Transition Plan. Engagement is focused on going to people where they are and hearing voices that are not ordinarily heard.

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

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

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

www.lhadvocate.vic.gov.au

Jane

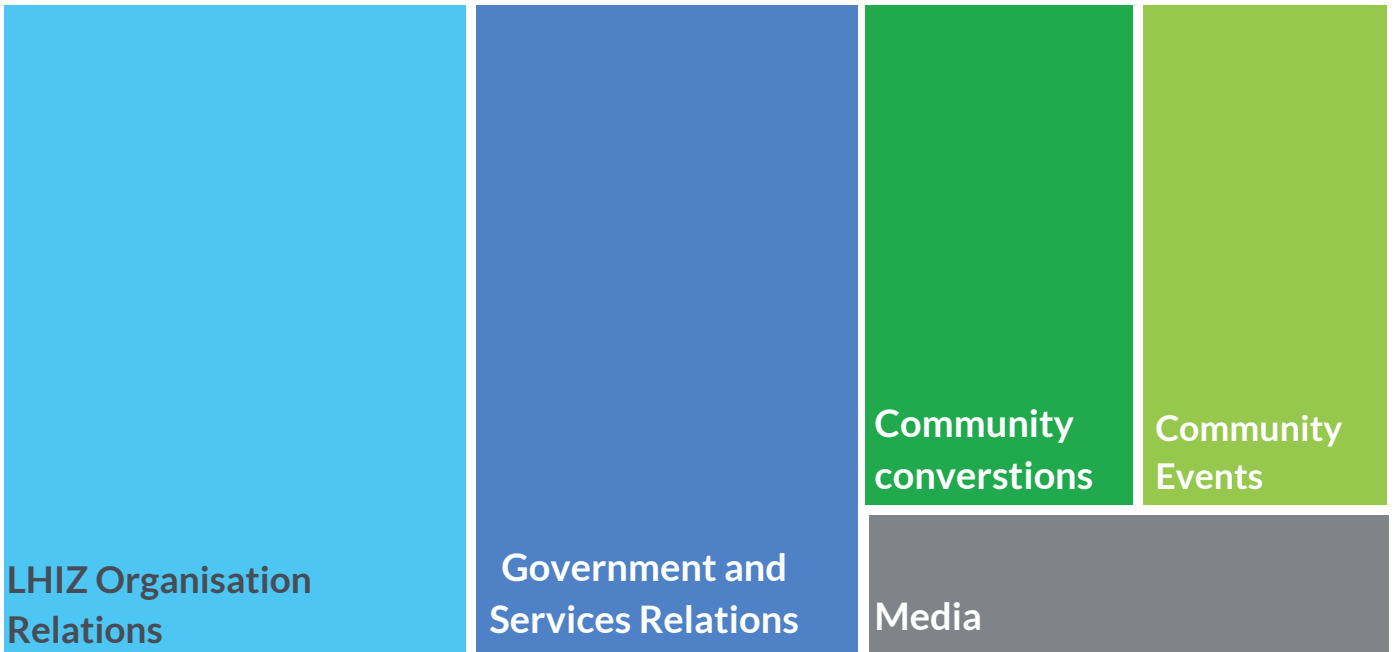
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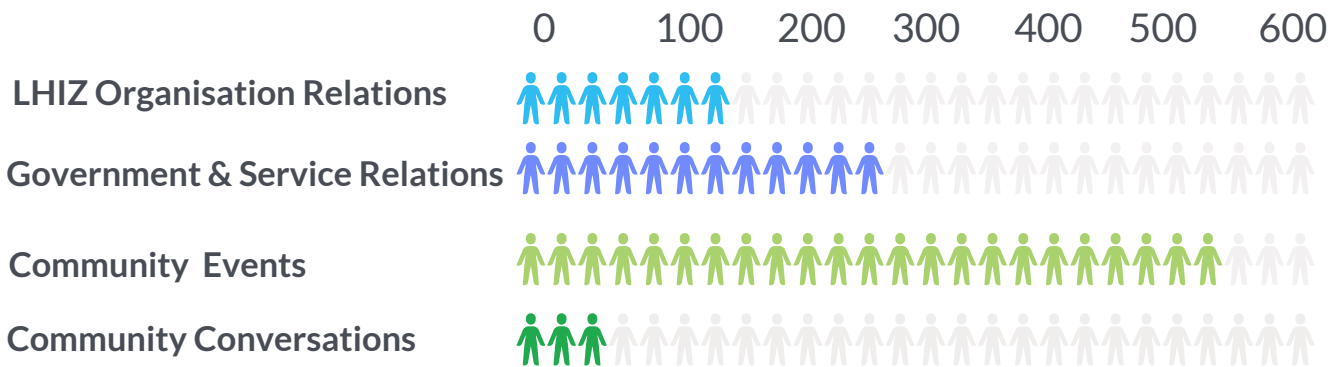
QUARTERLY BREAKDOWN



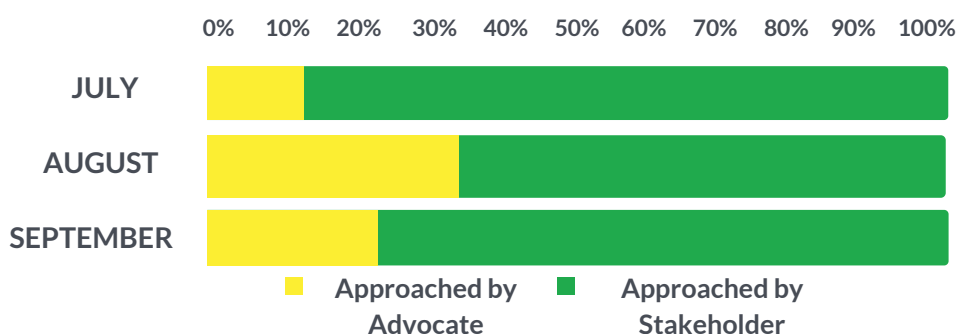
OFFICE ACTIVITIES



NUMBER OF PEOPLE

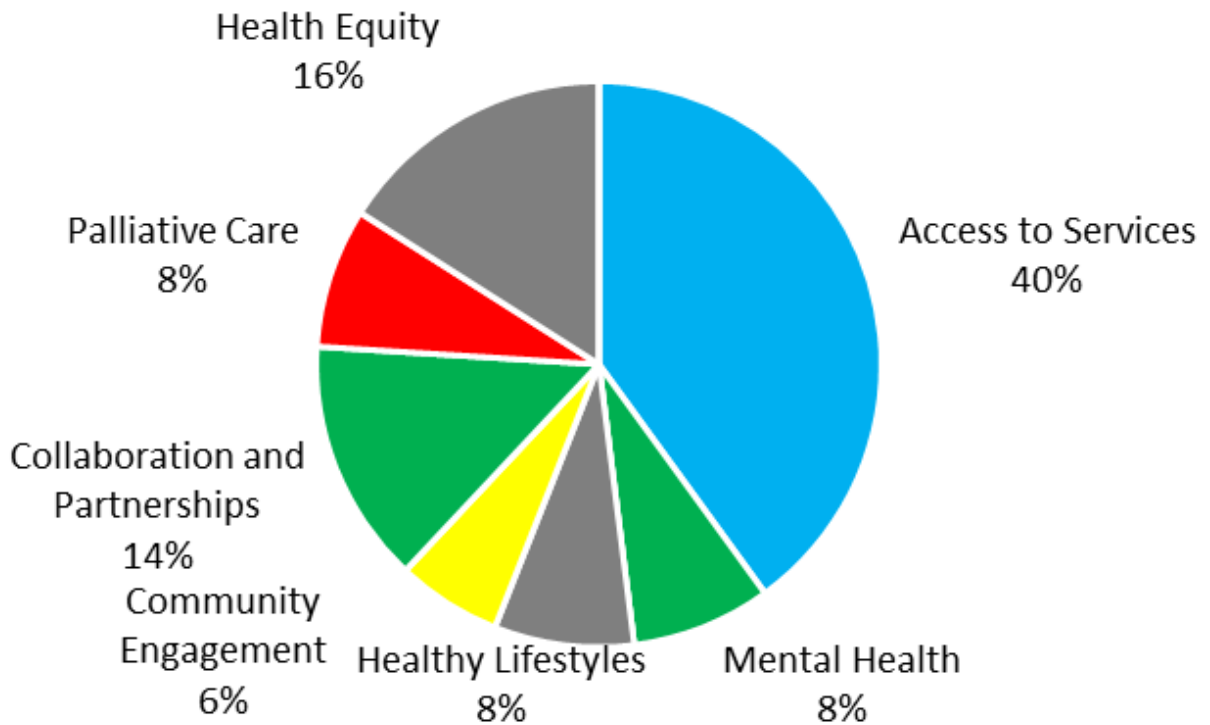


ENGAGEMENT REACH



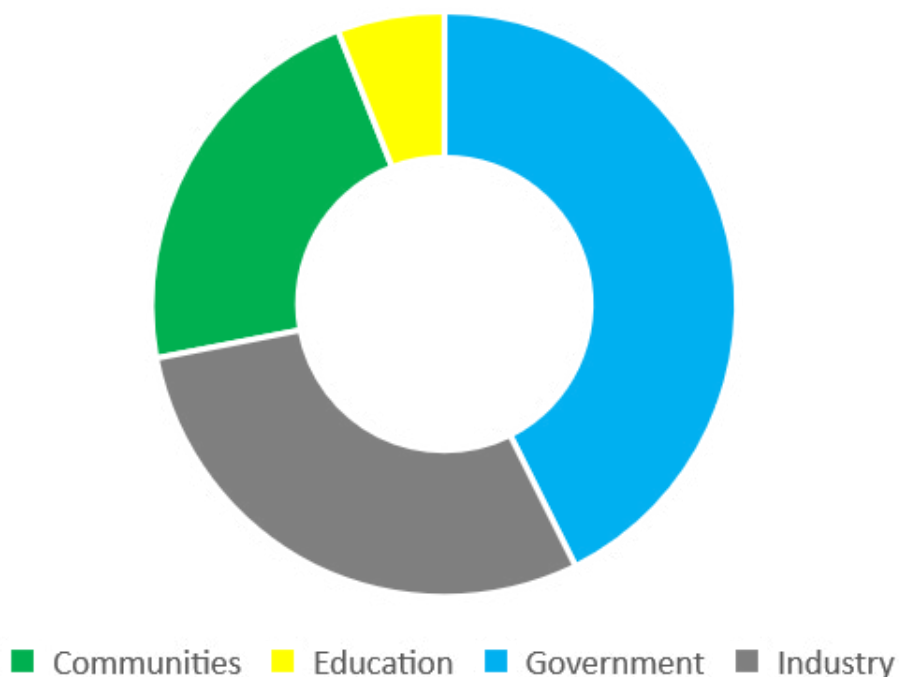
COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

Jul - Sep 2022



ENGAGEMENT REACH STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Jul - Sep 2022



1

Access to Services



Access to Services was the top aspiration identified by Latrobe communities this quarter and was the focus of 40% of community conversations with the Advocate.

Local youth workers have identified the need to attract more professionals to the region to assist in meeting the increase in service system demand since the COVID-19 lockdowns. They have said there is a need for more Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, Paediatricians and GPs.

The Advocate has heard that there is an over-reliance on virtual connection and that it is important to offer young people face-to-face services, particularly as relationships and trust are being established. Young people are not always able to discuss their family environment, which can be confronting.

The Advocate has heard that autism assessments are behind because people are unable to access services. People have shared their view that the system needs to have the capacity to provide early intervention, offering younger children constant connection with therapists or psychologists.

40%

"If pharmacist is going at 110% and people have to wait, it is a combative environment"

2

Health Equity



16%

Health equity is shown as the second aspiration for communities. In conversations with the Advocate, this was always mentioned alongside the aspiration of access to services

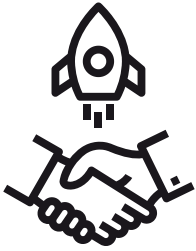
The Advocate has heard that there are discrepancies and systems gaps that LGBTIQ+ people can experience when they access services. Community members are looking for all services to be inclusive in their language and paperwork.

Other barriers that people have identified include; financial cost for health services, lack of bulk billing, lack of or difficulties transitioning between services and lack of communication about changes in services.

"We assume that these kids need these services because there are parts of the puzzles missing."

"We are not health professionals and have to navigate health services and NDIS, we direct traffic."

3 Collaboration & Partnership



14%

Collaboration and Partnership were also among the top aspirations identified by Latrobe communities this quarter. Community members have talked about the value of working together with each other and the benefits that can come from services working well with each other and in partnership with the community.

People have said that attending networks can help you to feel more confident in yourself and the information that you are sharing with others.

The Advocate continues to hear the message that communities and happy to engage, and that local people know what they need. People have said that service providers need to hold trust in the community.

Community members have observed a significant shift in the levels of collaboration since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Local staff who work with young people have expressed frustration about the difficulties that they and young people face in trying to organise a coordinated approach to care. They have said that gaps in information can lead to assumptions and misdiagnoses and that high demand for services and the time-consuming task of trying to navigate the service system on behalf of their clients, can get in the way of relationships.

The Advocate has heard suggestions of centralised access to services and information, and an online directory that helps people to navigate the system. Local staff have suggested that partnerships between health and social services and increased opportunities for professional development and networking would help.

"Collaboration didn't occur five years ago and it is great now."

"Anything that comes with collaboration needs to come from the community."



MENTAL HEALTH (COMMUNITY SAFETY)

Over time, a broad range of issues have been raised with the Advocate that are contributing negatively to mental health and well-being locally.

A local community member has expressed concerns for their neighbour who is experiencing mental health issues. They have observed yelling, screaming, and potential self-harm for several days at a time. At times the neighbour comes out of the house and is abusive to other people. At times the Police visit the house which leads to screaming and then the Police leave. The local acute mental health service has been described as a revolving door.

Suggestions include the provision of long-term support and consistency of care, structural change to mental health laws and systems and increased support such as respite options for community members or neighbours who are impacted by these situations.



ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT

The Advocate has continued to hear overtime, that many people experienced barriers in accessing transport. A local community member has shared their experiences in trying to access public transport and has drawn comparisons with other locations that they have lived in. They have expressed surprise about being informed there is only one wheelchair-accessible taxi operating in Morwell and shared their concerns about having no wheelchair-accessible transport options when trains are replaced by buses. It is essential for this person to have the means to go back and forth to Melbourne to access health services. They have said that it is scary living in a regional town because you are dependent on a small number of drivers, and it can be intimidating. They would like to see the community invest in a transport system that helps people to get around and fits a broad spectrum of people.

SYSTEMS CHANGE

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



BETTER SERVICES

Latrobe Community Health Service has a drop in service at the Traralgon Men's Shed to do health checks in an accessible way.

BETTER MENTAL MODELS

Health and wellbeing is one of the priorities identified by the Latrobe Valley Authority Transition Plan. Engagement is focussed on going to people where they are and hearing voices that are not ordinarily heard.



BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

A local network has been established to engage with multicultural communities to share public health information and support people during events such as extreme heat. This network enables information sharing, and opportunities for communities to have their voice. It is being seen as a reliable source of information and way to connect with communities.

Our Place is an example of a contemporary model of a multi-disciplinary team with a focus on reducing the anxiety of children when accessing services.

Federation University, together with Gippsland PHN and Latrobe Regional Hospital are working together to better plan discharge and referral systems and to prepare for the implementation of Urgent Care clinics in Latrobe.

INTEGRATION OF COMMUNITY VOICES

The Victorian Skills Authority has sought community priorities from the Advocate office to inform an annual workplan about systems reform and to provide oversight to skills and qualification system, developing insights and analysis to education providers and community organisations.

Through her involvement with the Gippsland Regional Partnership, the Advocate has observed Government department presentation of priorities and feedback from partnership members demonstrating willingness and desire to hear and incorporate community voice

At the Gippsland New Energy conference the Advocate observed a collective view about the importance of community engagement from a diversity of stakeholders all levels of government, community, industry, education. There was a collective view about working towards the future, creating opportunities for Gippsland and the importance of community engagement.