

## **MEDIA RELEASE: LATROBE HEALTH ADVOCATE**

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"Out now: Latrobe Health Advocate's quarterly update! Priority: Latrobe community's seamless access to services."

This quarter, the Latrobe communities' primary aspiration was identified as Access to Services, making up 41% of the community conversations with the Advocate, Ms Jane Anderson.

The lack of trans-affirming health practitioners was raised with the Advocate as there are no health providers recognised by AusPATH (Australian Professional Association for Trans Health) in Latrobe. The impact is that there are no GPs, psychologists, counsellors, specialised support or health services available in Latrobe and patients need to travel to the closest health practitioner in Pakenham or the closest GP in Pahrnan. The Advocate has discussed this issue with the Gippsland Primary Health Network (GPHN) and they will coordinate with Trans Gender Victoria (TGV), local primary care providers and community health services to discuss options to address this issue.

The Advocate heard from the carers for family members with chronic illnesses and disabilities who raised concerns about the waiting list for podiatry services. This issue is being addressed by the Latrobe Community Health Service (LCHS) who have recruited another podiatrist through a partnership with Latrobe Regional Hospital and the establishment of a high-risk foot clinic.

'Knowledge of available services is a priority for the community and the shift of promotional activities towards online platforms has resulted in a lack of awareness of supports that are ready and able to assist' said Ms Anderson. It has been suggested that there be community focused marketing to address the issue, for example local TV ads, or quick commentary about what's available.

Living in a Safe Environment was considered a top priority of the community this year and community members continue to raise issues about the management of asbestos in Latrobe. One recent example involved the lack of clarity about the responsible authority to address community concerns around a site redevelopment in Morwell. The Advocate is calling on the government to implement the recommendations of the Latrobe Valley Asbestos Taskforce, including establishing a state-wide coordinating centre/body to manage all asbestos-related queries and adopting a whole-of-government approach to asbestos investigations and inspections.

The Advocate has heard about several gaps in the delivery of mental health services. The halving of the number of mental health sessions available through a GP initiated mental health plan was raised as a particular issue for people with autism. The limitation of this mainstream service is causing mental health impacts, but there are no more intensive services available unless the person with autism has a NDIS-funded plan.

During this quarter the Advocate has also seen several systems changes that can provide opportunities for better mental models, better policy, better relationships, better services, better support, and integration of community voice. 'Shared problem solving is becoming much more common in Latrobe' said Ms Anderson. The partnerships of local public and private hospitals to grow palliative care services, the sharing of resources between the local public hospital and the community health service to increase and improve the provision of

podiatry services and the engagement of community members in community led integrated health care models all demonstrate that new ways of operating are being embraced.

Ms Anderson continues to hear from communities who share their goals, barriers, and suggestions and how they want to be engaged by governments and services across Latrobe.

Quotes Attributed by Latrobe Health Advocate, Jane Anderson –

“I remain dedicated to championing the health and wellbeing of the Latrobe Valley communities, and I will continue to advocate for improvements in the system that respond to the experiences of the community.”

The full quarterly update can be found at [LINK](#)

**For more information or to arrange an interview with the Advocate, contact Office Coordinator, Evette at 0408 216 053 or email [info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au)**