



# Latrobe Health Advocate

Annual Report 2022-2023







# Foreword from the Advocate

The 2022-23 year has been a year of transition and adaptation. The changing context of our lives requires a health and wellbeing system that is responsive and flexible.

I am delighted to introduce our *Annual Report 2022-23*, a document that provides an overview of activities within the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone (LHIZ), the work of many stakeholders, and the achievements, challenges and progress made by the office of the Latrobe Health Advocate to champion health and wellbeing in our community.

During this time our commitment to providing a trusted and independent voice for the Latrobe Valley community, with the aim of ensuring the health and wellbeing system is influenced by the experience of communities, remains strong.

Throughout this report, you will find stories that reflect collaborative efforts to improve the lives of individuals and families in the Latrobe Valley. Some of the highlights include:

- Contributing to the development of the Latrobe Valley Authority (LVA) led *Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan* to ensure community voice is sought and incorporated and health and wellbeing is a priority.
- Supporting community members to be involved in the Department of Health Summit and influencing the Department of Health's Mental Health Division to engage directly with the Latrobe community.
- Facilitating visits by the Chief Executive Officers of VicHealth (Dr Sandro Demaio) and the Victorian Council of Social Service (Emma King) to Latrobe to understand community priorities and align advocacy efforts.
- Engaging with Federation University's Physiotherapy School to enhance the skills of students to connect with their patients and communities and support the development of a virtual care clinic.
- Supporting collaboration and changes in service systems to enhance access to services and improve the experience of palliative care.
- Influencing engagement approaches used by government entities and industry in the development of the Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone.
- Supporting a cross-government and cross-sector approach to the application of the social determinants of health in Latrobe.

I am extremely grateful to my small team and many partners who have remained steadfast in their commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of people in Latrobe.

As we look to the future, we will continue to work alongside the Department of Health, the Latrobe Health Assembly and LHIZ partners and community stakeholders to develop a strategic plan and outcome measures for the LHIZ.

We will:

- Track progress on addressing the social determinants of health.
- Advocate for community-endorsed recommendations to improve access to services, palliative care and human connections.
- Promote respectful community engagement in planning processes.
- Progress issues raised by the community regarding transport.
- Review engagement approaches to support effective and inclusive self-advocacy in Latrobe.

The commitment to build on engagement through our inclusive communities work remains, with a focus on addressing the inequities that exist for some communities, including people living with disabilities and/or chronic conditions, people experiencing financial stress, people experiencing family violence, LGBTIQ+, culturally and linguistically diverse people, younger people, people aged over 60 and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Thank you for your continued trust and support as we embark on this work together. We are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and are confident that with your partnership, we can continue to make a meaningful difference to the health and wellbeing of people in Latrobe.



**Jane Anderson**  
Latrobe Health Advocate



# Engagement statistics 2022-23

A summary of the Latrobe Health Advocate's engagement activities during 2022-23 is provided below.

Total number of events

# 438

Total number of people engaged

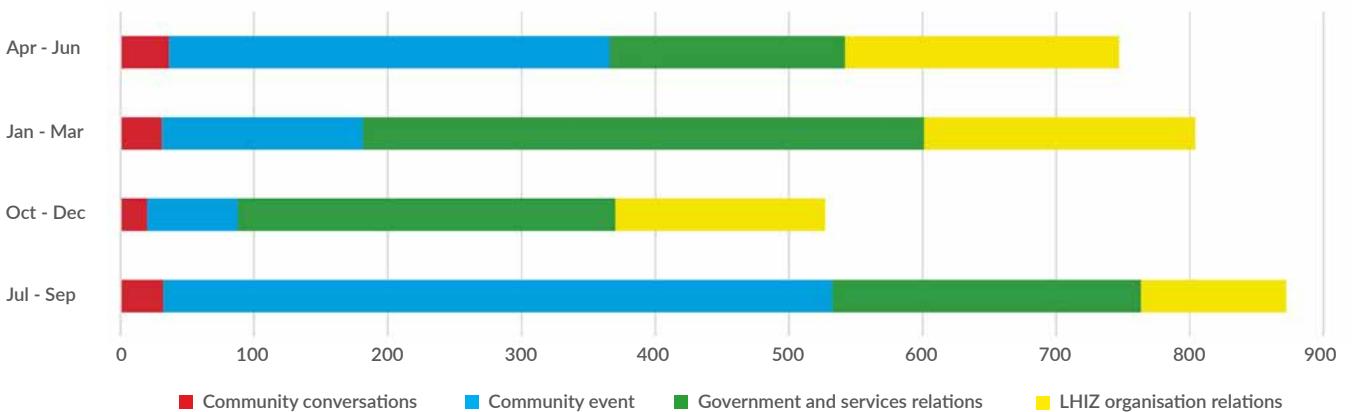
# 2,950

Including community conversations, community events, government and services relations, Latrobe Health Innovation Zone organisation relations, media and formal submissions.



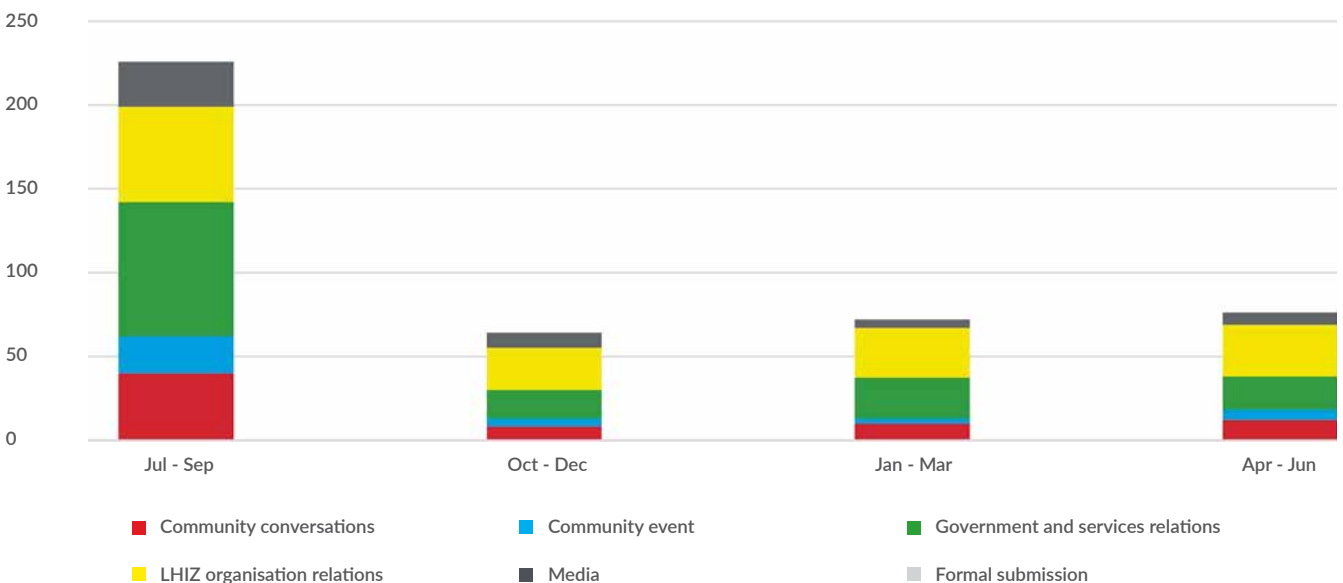
## Number of people engaged (per quarter)

2022-23



## Latrobe Health Advocate's office activity breakdown (per quarter)

2022-23



# Advocacy priorities for 2022-23

## Build on the established role of the Advocate and the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone.

- Measure impact of community engagement and resulting change.
- Advocate to lead ongoing evolution of governance structures in the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone (LHIZ) to facilitate collaboration and accountability.
- Identify priorities of existing and future stakeholders to pursue opportunities for partnerships.
- Establish a coalition to work with the Advocate to strengthen and elevate community voice.

## Elevate the voice of our community and deliver priority campaigns

- Continue to align stakeholder engagement activities with social determinants of health.
- Develop methodology for priority campaigns including advisory groups and expert peer review.
- Continue to build the reputation and effectiveness of the Advocate's role and LHIZ for community leadership and engagement using all available communication channels.

## Advocate and influence health and wellbeing outcomes and system change

- Strengthen connections with various government ministers and key stakeholders to promote collective strategies to address the social determinants of health and achieve systems change.
- Continue bipartisan engagement and build on support for the work of the Advocate.
- Undertake a collaborative project with partners in the LHIZ to design the approach for advocacy and system change.
- Refresh the advocacy strategy and toolkit.
- Advocate for the implementation of endorsed priority recommendations.
- Pilot a process for 'quick win' advocacy opportunities within the LHIZ.



# Priority achievements and activities

Build on the established role of the Advocate and the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone.

## Collaborative leadership within Latrobe and Gippsland

Community engagement is the core business of the Latrobe Health Advocate with the mission of achieving better systems of health and wellbeing for the Latrobe community.

This approach is guided by nine key engagement principles, with the community setting the agenda and the Advocate providing collaborative leadership.

The Advocate has shared community engagement insights with many stakeholders including:

- The Minister for Health
- The Minister for Water, Regional Development and Equality
- The Minister for Environment
- The Latrobe Health Assembly

- The Gippsland Primary Health Network (GPHN)
- The Department of Health (Victorian and federal)
- The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
- The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)
- Latrobe Community Health Service (LCHS)
- Latrobe Regional Health (LRH)
- Maryvale Private Hospital
- Latrobe City Council
- The Centre for Multicultural Youth
- Gippsland Multicultural Services
- The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
- Dental Health Services Victoria
- The Latrobe Valley Authority (LVA)
- Gippsland Women's Health
- Gippsland Neighbourhood House
- The Gippsland Regional Partnership
- The Victorian Council of Social Service
- Public Transport Ombudsman
- Commissioner for Senior Victorians
- Chief Accessibility Advocate.







## Conversations – a snapshot

Conversations throughout 2022-23 focused on priority campaigns highlighted in the Advocate's *Statement of Intent* and included end-of-life palliative care, access to services, social inclusion issues, community safety concerns and digital access.

- The Advocate launched the Social Determinants of Health project in partnership with the LHIZ partners and the LVA to further strengthen work occurring in the Latrobe Valley. A database currently under development will track the breadth of work happening locally across elements in the *National Preventative Health Strategy 2021-2030*. The information will be widely shared.
- The Advocate facilitated a visit to Latrobe City from Victorian Council of Social Service Chief Executive Officer Emma King, to further develop her understanding of the Latrobe community, strengthen advocacy and identify shared priorities. The Advocate and Ms King met representatives from the LVA, Latrobe City Council and the Latrobe Health Assembly to discuss transition, health and wellbeing advocacy, community health priorities and LHIZ initiatives.
- As a member of the Gippsland Regional Partnership, auspiced by Regional Development Victoria (RDV), the Advocate provided insights and advocated on health and wellbeing priorities. The Advocate lobbied for a focus on digital connectivity, housing initiatives that assist in attracting health professionals to the region and a migration attraction plan that enhances social inclusiveness and responds to the needs of a relocating health workforce.
- Collaboration with the Gippsland Region Public Health Unit (GRPHU) is being explored with the aim of aligning efforts, sharing insights and amplifying community impact. The Advocate will contribute to a Gippsland catchment plan, focusing on healthy habits, active lifestyles and reducing harm from tobacco and vaping. Together with the Department of Health, the Advocate coordinated an opportunity to gather input from the LHIZ into the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027*, prioritising community involvement and place-based strategies.
- VicHealth Chief Executive Officer Dr Sandro Demaio discussed health determinants and organisational changes necessary for community responsiveness on a visit arranged by the Advocate. Speaking at a regional innovation breakfast organised by Federation University, the LVA and RDV, and titled *Shifting the Dial on Health*, Dr Demaio explored the impact of COVID-19 on social determinants of health, isolation, food security and youth participation.



## Latrobe Health Assembly and Latrobe Health Advocate working model

The Advocate engaged with community representatives on the Latrobe Health Assembly board to review its collaborative model. It was acknowledged the Advocate's contributions enhanced the Assembly's work by providing information from a broad cross-section of community members not involved in the Assembly.

At the Latrobe Health Assembly's annual general meeting, the Advocate outlined her commitment to refreshing her engagement model with a view towards self-advocacy. She will work with the Assembly membership as this work evolves.

The Advocate has been invited to join the Latrobe Health Assembly's working group leading the review of membership engagement to better understand the challenges and opportunities Assembly members face in fulfilling their roles. The Assembly is seeking to enhance its approach to be inclusive and culturally safe, representing the diverse communities of the Latrobe Valley.

## Economic transition

The Advocate played a key role in helping to shape the *Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan*, a shared vision for the community in 2035, developed by the LVA. The community-driven plan was officially released on 9 August 2023.

The Advocate emphasised community aspirations and experience in her role as a member of the Implementation Working Group, which was responsible for providing the strategic direction in the plan's development.

She participated in the Ministerial Roundtable hosted by the Minister for Regional Development, the Hon. Harriet Shing MP on 8 September 2022, as well as in community consultations.



## Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan

Our Region.  
Our Future.

The transition plan includes a focus on liveability that aligns with the Advocate’s priorities – an inclusive and safe environment; empowered and thriving communities that are diverse and socially cohesive; accessible and inclusive services for health and wellbeing; and integrated transport and reliable digital connectivity to enable the community to access the full benefits of digital innovation and inclusion.

The plan also highlights activity in the region that supports transition in Gippsland, including the following activities led by the Advocate:

- Human Connections in Latrobe - a local approach for local communities;

- Improving access to services in Latrobe; and
- The application of the social determinants of health.

The working group is currently creating an outcomes framework with the Advocate playing a key role in this phase by suggesting links to the Hazelwood Health Study wellbeing barometer and GPHN data. She also advocated for the inclusion of outcome measures specifically aimed at vulnerable communities.

The final outcomes framework will be accompanied by a monitoring and evaluation plan.



## Festival of Big Ideas

The Advocate participated in a panel discussion and presented at the inaugural Festival of Big Ideas in the Latrobe Valley which attracted more than 1,200 participants over three days.

The Festival was facilitated by the LVA to encourage people to think deeply about what is happening locally and what they want a future to look like. The panel discussion delved into the intersection of technology, social justice and clean energy.

The Advocate explained the role and purpose of the LHIZ in amplifying the voices of marginalised communities and addressing power imbalances by fostering communication between the community and decision-makers.

Dr Niraj Lal, a physicist and Gates Scholar, delivered a keynote address highlighting issues relating to income and wealth inequality.



## Health is everyone's business

### EPA soil testing relative to a battery recycling plant

The Advocate has been involved in addressing community concerns regarding the possible legacy of lead contamination from a variety of potential industrial sources such as leaded gasoline emissions, industry and coal-fired power stations as well as the Used Lead Acid Battery (ULAB) facility proposed for Hazelwood.

The proposed ULAB facility raised community concerns that it may add contaminants to the soil around the site that may exceed the *National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure (NEPM) Health Investigation Levels*.

The Advocate has supported meaningful engagement with people impacted by proposed industrial developments with health protection a priority.

Since early 2021, the Advocate has held regular discussions on the issue with:

- Latrobe City Council
- The Victorian Department of Health
- The Victorian Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
- DFFH

The Latrobe City Council sought and obtained government support to address community air and soil quality concerns. EPA Science (part of EPA Victoria) undertook testing to understand current concentrations of trace elements in surface soil, with a focus on lead (Pb) in the Latrobe Valley.

Soil testing occurred at 90 sites across Hazelwood, Churchill and Morwell in July 2022, with a report released in March 2023. The report concluded the assessment of surface soil in public open space surrounding the proposed ULAB facility and neighbouring residential areas showed no significant impact from previous activities. Based on samples analysed, there were no recommended actions.

These results were shared with those involved in the ULAB consultations and the broader community.

The EPA has also set up a Latrobe Valley Air Monitoring co-design project with the aim of improving air quality information in the region. A single, broad air monitoring network has also been created for the Latrobe Valley. The network involves more than 30 community members who worked with EPA air scientists and local experts on the network's design process. Latrobe City Council and the Department of Health support the project.

The focus of the community scientists program may change and adapt with input from the air monitoring co-design panel as pollution sources, population and priorities change.

### Asbestos Taskforce makes recommendations to the Minister

The Advocate has chaired the Latrobe Valley Asbestos Taskforce (LVAT) since it was established by the Victorian Government in 2019 to undertake a review into how asbestos is managed in the Latrobe Valley.

The Taskforce has four key focus areas to:

- Develop a clear understanding of community expectations about asbestos management and disposal in the Latrobe Valley;
- Design a plan for the management of asbestos for all Latrobe Valley sites and locations;
- Enquire into and report to government on current asbestos waste handling processes and safety practices within the public and private sector; and
- To raise awareness of asbestos-related risks to change behaviour (with a priority focus on apprentices and home renovators).

## Snapshot highlight



The EPA's *Latrobe Valley Soil Trace Element Analysis Report* is available online. Simply search for it in your favourite search engine.



The taskforce brought together government agencies, local councils, unions and community groups.

In September 2022, it produced a report, *Minimising risks of asbestos exposure and associated harm in Victoria*, with 21 recommendations.

The taskforce is waiting for a response to the report from the Minister for Environment.

The Advocate met with the Victorian Asbestos Eradication Agency (VAEA) and the Victorian Asbestos Forum (VAF). She encouraged the VAF to use the learnings and approach of the taskforce to enhance its engagement strategies. Broader engagement beyond government channels were recommended to acquire a deeper understanding of various concerns, devise solutions and foster trust. The Advocate's experience is that this approach helps alleviate community concerns and builds public trust in government.

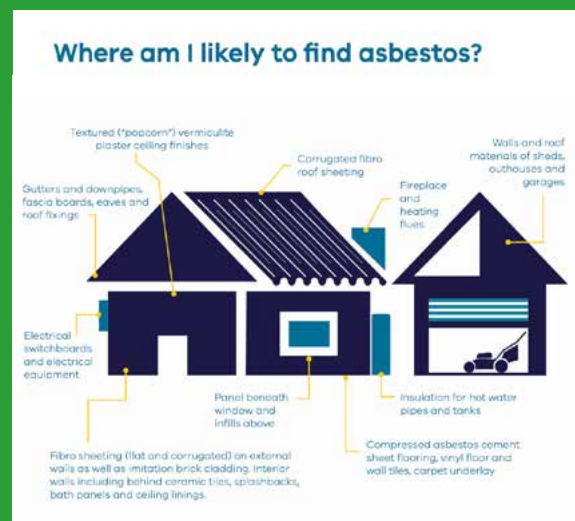
## Snapshot highlight



The LVAT's *Minimising risks of asbestos exposure and associated harm in Victoria* is available online.

Simply search for it in your favourite search engine.

It includes plenty of useful information, including this handy graphic about the most common places you're likely to find asbestos in your home.





## Elevate the voice of our community and deliver priority campaigns

The Advocate has continued to encourage community engagement that enables all community voices to be heard, particularly those not ordinarily heard. The Advocate presented and attended sessions with Federation University students about engaging with the community and hearing about people's goals for improving their health and wellbeing.

The students undertook assignments that required them to consider how to understand and describe a problem, what it means for people in the community and identify potential solutions and how they can be implemented. A broad range of health and wellbeing issues were covered.

The Advocate is considering how the engagement model implemented by the students might inform ways that others in the LHIZ engage.

### Inclusive communities for LGBTIQ+ people

Lack of data, safety fears and barriers in service access were some of the issues raised with the Advocate and by the Gippsland Pride Initiative as part of their engagement with members of the LGBTIQ+ communities.

The Advocate met with members of the Gippsland Pride Initiative to further her understanding of the challenges community members are experiencing in trying to achieve their health and wellbeing goals and to develop joint strategies to address these challenges.

Community representatives reported feeling unacknowledged by LRH. In response LRH expanded its Community Advisory Committee to explicitly recognise LGBTIQ+ advocates, invited the Coordinator of the Gippsland Pride Initiative to attend a management forum and had an impressive flag display on the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT). Gippsland Pride members have reported improvements in relation to the complaint systems and the LRH website was recently updated to explicitly recognise the LGBTIQ+ community and to provide an avenue for feedback. LRH is continuing to explore ideas to increase LGBTIQ+ visibility in communications.

The Advocate provided advice to the GPHN, the GRPHU and the Latrobe Health Assembly on feedback from the LGBTIQ+ community about health and wellbeing barriers and suggestions for engagement. Organisations identified by the community as examples of safe and accessible services include Quantum Support Services and LCHS.

The Advocate attended the Federation University Innovation Breakfast launch of the Gippsland Pride Initiative's *Rainbow Brick Road Report*. There was active discussion about the challenges experienced by the LGBTIQ+ communities and the progress being made.

The value of all local government areas flying the rainbow flag for the first time on the IDAHOBIT was discussed, noting with pride that this practice started in Gippsland.

The Advocate has also engaged in various initiatives related to mental health and inclusivity for the LGBTIQ+ community in the Latrobe Valley. One of the new services implemented as a result of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Mental Health is the Latrobe Mental Health and Wellbeing Local.

This service supports Victorians aged 26 years and over to get mental health and wellbeing treatment, care and support closer to home. It's focused on listening to, and understanding the needs of clients, their family, carers and supporters, and helps to design a care plan that meets the client's goals and preferences. This may involve connecting clients to other health and social services. The support provided is free.

The Latrobe Mental Health and Wellbeing Local is a safe space for all people from all backgrounds and is delivered by NEAMI (formally North Eastern Alliance for the Mentally Ill) in partnership with Uniting Vic Tas and Drummond Street Services.

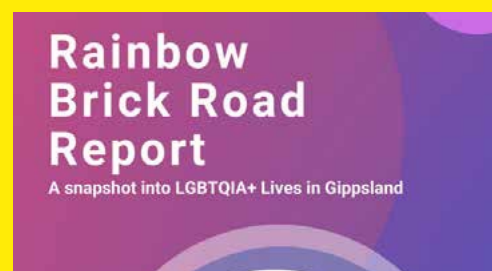
As part of the co-design work for the service, discussions were held between NEAMI and local LGBTIQ+ groups, introduced by the Advocate, to ensure the service created a welcoming environment for LGBTIQ+ individuals. This helped to address concerns about feeling unsafe in some medical settings.

A community consultation with the Advocate raised the issue of no trans-affirming health practitioners in the Latrobe Valley and none recognised by AusPATH (Australian Professional Association for Trans Health). This means patients need to travel to the closest practitioner in Pakenham or the closest GP in Prahran. The Advocate has discussed this feedback with the GPHN who is keen to help address this issue. Meetings have been arranged between the Advocate, GPHN and Transgender Victoria to develop an informed consent pathway for locals to access AusPATH-accredited services.

## Snapshot highlight



The Gippsland Pride Initiative's *Rainbow Brick Road Report* is available online. Simply search for it in your favourite search engine.





### **Inclusive communities for people with disabilities**

The Advocate was approached by the Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA) for assistance in promoting a program called Sexual Lives and Respectful Relationships. This program for adults with cognitive disabilities is peer-led by people with lived experience of disability. The program is run by New Wave Self Advocacy members, who are employed and trained by GCASA.

It is a family-violence prevention program that runs over four free sessions that focus on rights, empowerment and safe and healthy relationships.

The Advocate's help was sought to reach adults in Gippsland with cognitive disabilities to educate people about their rights and safety, how to recognise family violence and where to get help. The Advocate connected GCASA with LRH to increase awareness and provide training.

Several community members raised concerns with the Advocate over NDIA-funded services. Issues included a chronic shortage of reliable, skilled and trained in-home support staff, poor care planning services and the inability of in-home support staff who can use equipment for complex needs clients.

The Advocate has approached the NDIA to ascertain progress in addressing the recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission. This included the recommendations about stronger requirements for facilities, client-specific induction training for carers and increased levels of training requirements to work with people with a disability who have greater needs or vulnerabilities.

The Advocate was also advised of a lack of access to community-based mental health services, especially for people with autism, and sought information from relevant Victorian Government agencies about what specialist support services are available for community members with disabilities who are ineligible for NDIS service plans.

### **Inclusive communities for young people**

At a Baw Baw Latrobe Local Learning and Employment Network (BBLLEN) board meeting, the Advocate shared insights from the *Engagement Inspiration* report, amplifying the voices of young people.

Discussions revealed an acknowledged gap in supporting 14 to 15-year-olds and the significance of engaging with those between graduation and employment to foster confidence. The importance of scholarship services visiting schools to increase awareness and tackle inclusion and fear of rejection was highlighted.

The Advocate attended dinner events organised by the BBLLEN aimed at inspiring young women to achieve their career goals, as well as events to assist young people interested in pursuing careers in the health sector.

The need to stay updated on the main concerns for local youth saw the Advocate actively engaged in the Latrobe Youth Space's Table of 20 meetings. This collaborative approach emphasises the significance of a united community effort in creating an environment where the voices of the youth are heard, valued and integrated into decision-making processes.



The Latrobe Youth Space that opened in May 2021 has developed into a place that provides wrap-around support for young people aged between 12 and 25. In the last two years, it has attracted more than 500 members, demonstrating the demand for this type of service in the region. The Victorian Government's decision in the 2023-24 State Budget to cease funding has generated community concerns, especially in light of the workforce requirements outlined in the *Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan* that encourage local youth to see a positive future in the Latrobe Valley.

The Advocate met with senior staff from DFFH and the Department of Health to discuss the need for the health system to have the capacity to provide early intervention, by offering younger children constant connection with therapists or psychologists.

Discussions acknowledged there can be a lack of coordination and sustained approach to allied and other health services, partly due to the capacity of the system. It was noted that young people are not always prioritised, with opportunities for early intervention therefore missed.

Some specific work in this area has been funded with LRH and Headspace to raise awareness of the supports and systems available to young people.

### **Inclusive communities for people aged over 60**

In her role and as a member of the Gippsland Regional Partnership, the Advocate attended a roundtable hosted by the Commissioner for Senior Victorians on the digital connectedness of older Victorians.

According to the Australian Digital Inclusion Index, older people are among the most digitally excluded in the community.

The roundtable's purpose was to validate the findings collected through research and consultation with older people, and generate solutions that have the potential to make a meaningful improvement to the digital connections of older people. The roundtable outcomes informed the development of a report on digital connectivity, produced by the Commissioner for Senior Victorians and submitted to government, that is yet to be released.

## **Snapshot highlight**



The BBLLEN hosted a health camp in May for local students interested in pursuing a career in the health sector.

There was plenty of interest from local students in the variety of careers on offer. Catch up on some of the highlights from the event by viewing the video on their website.



The Advocate joined the Commissioner and the Latrobe City Council Mayor at a community engagement event in Latrobe, sharing insights and engaging with people aged over 60. She presented community engagement insights from her *Engagement Inspiration* and *COVID-19 Impact and Recovery in Latrobe* reports.

Participants identified challenges and discussed opportunities in relation to social connection and participation, digital connectiveness, health and wellbeing and respecting and valuing older people. The priorities identified for enhancing the lives of people over 60 included better healthcare education, accessible services, digital training and intergenerational connections, while also addressing transport, COVID safety and community facilities.

The overarching goal is to create an inclusive and respectful environment for older members of the community.



## Inclusive communities for multicultural groups

Since 2020, the Advocate has used regular breakfast radio interviews with multicultural representatives on community radio to promote diversity, inclusion and cross-cultural understanding in the community. These interviews not only promote the role of the Advocate but provide access for multicultural groups to have their say.

The Advocate was also fortunate to attend the United Muslim Sisters of Latrobe Valley IFTAR Dinner on their 10th birthday celebration, which was an opportunity for community inclusivity and learning.

The Advocate participates in the Gippsland Multicultural Regional Emergency Management Network, coordinated by Gippsland Multicultural Services. The network's role is to provide a forum for local multicultural voices to be heard and issues addressed with a strong focus on ensuring the welfare of residents from multicultural backgrounds is a priority. It enables information flow between government, local service providers and community leaders representing their residents.

A rugby community day had the dual purpose of amplifying rugby's presence and generating excitement for the anticipated Commonwealth Games rugby competition.

The Advocate partnered with RDV and other stakeholders to organise the event seen as an opportunity to encourage participation among under-represented groups, including people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Engaging with the Fijian community, the Advocate learned that there are approximately 1,000 Fijians in the Latrobe Valley.



Many of these Fijian residents are on Commonwealth Visa work programs in areas such as meat processing and farming.

Sport, particularly rugby, is seen as a means of social connection and promoting wellbeing for the Fijian community.

As a result of the rugby community day, a satellite club has been established in Warragul, offering a more accessible local option for players who previously travelled to the metropolitan area. Plans for a Rugby Masters tournament and an Islander Festival were also discussed.

Despite the later cancellation of the Commonwealth Games, these follow-up events are still proceeding and are eagerly anticipated by many.





## Inclusive communities for people living with chronic disease

Recent significant events have impacted the health and social outcomes of the community, however there remains a determination and desire to improve the health experience for people with chronic disease.

Following extensive consultation by the Advocate and other agencies, Latrobe now has a chronic disease plan. The Latrobe Health Assembly, in partnership with LRH, LCHS and GPHN, developed a five-year plan to improve the experience of Latrobe Valley people living with chronic disease.

The *Latrobe Chronic Disease Action Plan 2022-2027* provides a roadmap for the Latrobe Valley community, stakeholder organisations, private providers, industry and groups that advocate and offer care and education for people with chronic disease, their carers and families. The plan is a direct result of consultation, community forums and workshops with both service providers, consumers and carers to ensure it meets the specific needs of people in the Latrobe Valley.

The Advocate is also working with Federation University on a new virtual care clinic, proposed by its physiotherapy students and clinicians, to design a model around community needs.

The Advocate highlighted the opportunity to align the clinic to the *Latrobe Chronic Disease Action Plan* and encouraged consideration of digital inclusion. She was actively engaged in the project's advisory group and creation of the model.

The virtual care clinic is now operating as a free telehealth service with students, supervised by physiotherapy clinicians, providing care with a focus on supporting people living with chronic conditions. The Advocate remains involved and is tracking the progress of the initiative.



### Snapshot highlight

The *Latrobe Chronic Disease Action Plan 2022-2027* is available online. Simply search for it in your favourite search engine.

## Latrobe Chronic Disease Action Plan 2022 – 2027

November 2022

## **Inclusive communities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**

The Advocate welcomes positive developments in Latrobe to address the need for a local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCCHO).

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and its Chief Executive Officer Jill Gallagher, are addressing the lack of a local ACCCHO in Morwell, alongside the Aboriginal community, Ramahyuck and District Aboriginal Corporation, LRH and the Victorian Government. Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation (RDAC) has been covering the service gap for many years. The involvement of VACCHO has enabled plans for a local service to progress and the Advocate is involved in ongoing efforts to bring the project to fruition in the region.

The Advocate attended an innovation breakfast focussed on reconciliation, truth and justice, facilitated by Federation University, the LVA and RDV.

In conversations with local Aboriginal advocates on issuing a statement on The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament, it was recommended the Advocate reference the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* and the statement of the Gu-naikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC). The Advocate's statement, supported by GLaWAC, was issued in September 2023 after the referendum date was announced.

## **Inclusive communities for people experiencing family violence**

The need to have social and justice support services working in an integrated way to enable appropriate response and recovery for people experiencing family violence continues to be a theme raised with the Advocate.

The Advocate has engaged with the Gippsland Family Violence Alliance, Gippsland Women's Health (GWH) and the Committee for Gippsland about the challenges faced by people experiencing family violence in achieving their health and wellbeing goals. A meeting between the Advocate and the Chief Executive Officer of GWH discussed the alignment of the GWH Roadshow, the Gippsland Pride Initiative Roadshow and the Advocate's *Engagement Inspiration* report. A collaborative stakeholder engagement forum was seen as an opportunity to increase gender awareness and hear community voices.

In another initiative, GPHN advised it had secured Commonwealth funding under the Family and Sexual Violence Supporting Recovery program to support victims-survivors of family, domestic and sexual violence and child sexual abuse, to navigate the health system. The project will see GPHN partner with GWH and Quantum Support Services to deliver this important initiative for the region. The services will be linked to mental health support.

## **Advocate and influence health and wellbeing outcomes and system change**

### **End-of-life palliative care**

The Advocate's involvement in the palliative care system reflects a comprehensive effort to improve the accessibility and quality of palliative care services in the Latrobe Valley.

In October 2022, the Advocate released the third progress update of significant achievements within Latrobe's palliative care system.

Service system leaders, palliative care specialists and local communities support change in current service delivery models as well as the establishment of a dedicated palliative care facility in the area.

Maryvale Private Hospital (MPH) is engaging with LRH on bed availability and both are working with LCHS who provides community-based palliative care services. MPH and LRH have changed their palliative care wards to make the environments more welcoming.

LRH is also working on increasing its palliative care beds, focusing on training and career paths in palliative care, and considering sub-acute and palliative care in its capital development plan.

Latrobe City Council has a strong interest in the Advocate's recommendations for the sector and unanimously supports a local, dedicated palliative care facility. The Advocate also met with Member for Eastern Victoria, the Hon. Harriet Shing MP, to highlight the need for the facility due to increased demand and an aging population, stating it would improve both health and social outcomes while boosting the regional workforce.

The Advocate facilitates regular meetings with MPH, LRH and LCHS to address palliative care needs and improvements, and joint projects in response to emerging needs.

GPHN's implementation of the Greater Choices for Palliative Care at Home Measure is addressing issues concerning timely access to medicines.

LRH is working to fully implement the PalCare software system in a way that ensures access for staff working across the local services system.

At a forum hosted by the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria, the Advocate shared insights and highlighted the importance of addressing investment and development challenges in the palliative care workforce.

The role of community palliative care nurses was raised in community feedback with the Advocate as well as concerns about the time-limited nature of their services causing anxiety for caregivers.



## Snapshot highlight



ABC Gippsland published a terrific story in May featuring palliative care counsellor Barry Whelan talking about the concept of a 'good death'.

Search for the story on the ABC's website to read more.

# ABC NEWS

## Access to services

Access to services has been the main issue raised in community conversations with the Advocate throughout 2022-23.

In her third progress update, released in September 2022, the Advocate reported on actions underway to address the four key themes of community concerns and challenges with access to health services in Latrobe.

### Action theme 1: improving training and accreditation pathways for doctors in Latrobe.

The Advocate has been working with key stakeholders to improve access to medical supervisors, both face-to-face and virtually, to support GP trainees across Latrobe as well as the successful initiation of the shift towards college-led training for universities.

The Advocate met with staff from LCHS who are developing a new community paramedic service for palliative care. The service aims to integrate with the local palliative care system while providing an acute response after hours and will be a valuable addition to the local service offering.

Discussions were held with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), LCHS, LRH, the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria and Monash Rural Health (Gippsland Regional Training Hub).

The Advocate welcomed the willingness of all key stakeholders to achieve effective service integration and increased understanding of palliative care in the community while encouraging open and respectful conversations about death and dying.

The Advocate is also committed to engaging with local secondary school students to reinforce and promote pathways into medicine. This builds on work facilitated through the Gippsland Regional Training Hub.





### **Action theme 2: enhancing and promoting the livability of Latrobe and strengthening local recruitment systems**

The Advocate has been working Latrobe City Council and the LVA in collaboration with LCHS, Rural Workforce Agency Victoria, Latrobe City's *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan* partners and Monash Rural Health (Gippsland Regional Training Hub) to promote opportunities to attract and retain GPs, health professionals and their families within the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland more broadly.

### **Action theme 3: building health and digital literacy and enabling greater responsiveness to community voice**

The Advocate worked with the then Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions in the development of the Victorian Government's Digital Inclusion Strategy released in October 2022 and has been working with LVA to promote digital literacy and equity.

In collaboration with GPHN, Latrobe City Council, Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation, local health services and local clinics, she is discussing ways services and practitioners can embed the mindset of 'seeing the person before the business' and identifying opportunities to share and apply this learning across other primary care settings.

### **Action theme 4: local system design and innovation, reducing the burden on the emergency department and creating a multidisciplinary business model for the future**

The Advocate worked with the GPHN and LCHS to establish a Priority Primary Care Centre (PPCC) and Urgent Care Clinics in Latrobe. These initiatives, designed to integrate with existing healthcare services in the area, have proven successful and have received positive feedback.

The Chief Executive Officer of LRH reported in June 2023 that the PPCC at Moe had diverted 10-15 patients a day from the LRH Emergency Department. Gippsland PHN data shows the PPCC is attracting 300 presentations per week

Another initiative, building on GPHN's consultation with the community, providers and health services, is a new community-led multidisciplinary model of care for Gippsland. The GPHN has worked with the Advocate to develop the model of care and the model comprises two trial projects – one in the Latrobe Valley and one in East Gippsland.

In Latrobe, a clinic based at LCHS in Churchill, in partnership with Berry Street, will assist disadvantaged families with children. The service will provide care coordination, transport assistance and a multi-disciplinary approach to address family needs.

When a person visits the hub, the first meeting will be with both a Care Coordinator and Social Service Navigator who will provide coordination of health care, social services and even transport needs.

The second project is in the remote area of Deddick Valley in East Gippsland. In this project, Orbost Regional Health and the Deddick Valley Isolated Community Group have joined forces to set up service hubs in local communities.

A Care Coordinator will visit these hubs to support residents with chronic health conditions, monitor and evaluate their symptoms and connect them to specialists for diagnosis. The coordinator will support residents with disabilities in identifying and advocating for their needs, helping with access to services, funding and care plans.

Families experiencing violence, new parents, and young children will also be supported by identifying patients at risk.





The Advocate addressed the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria conference in early 2023 on 'responding to community health needs in regional communities'. The discussion centred around wait times for GPs in Latrobe and the Mallee regions, prompting strategies to address this issue. The Advocate shared insights into the engagement model and the access to services project in Latrobe. A collaboration was explored to enhance GP training and supervision capacity, and also promote life-style opportunities for families considering relocation.

### **Mental health and wellbeing**

Building on the Human Connections project from 2020-21, the Advocate produced the *Human Connections Storybook* in 2022 which is a consolidation of the endeavours of various partners to achieve greater social connections in Latrobe. The Storybook champions the efforts taking place in Latrobe and is designed as an uplifting and celebratory communication piece. It features contributions from all the partners, each sharing stories that illustrate their work towards addressing the recommendations outlined in the *Human Connections in Latrobe* report.

The Advocate has continued to engage with the Department of Health to ensure the Latrobe community benefits from the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Mental Health. In an initial meeting with the State Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisor, the Advocate discussed ongoing efforts to enhance the social and emotional wellbeing of diverse and Aboriginal communities while focusing on suicide prevention in Victoria. She invited the Advisor and her team to visit the LHIZ to explore opportunities for alignment and advancement of initiatives and foster mutual learning and progress. The Advisor and her team spent two days in Latrobe and delivered a presentation to the Latrobe Health Assembly.

The Advocate worked with the Department of Health to develop a forum in Morwell to reflect on the mental health and wellbeing transformation process so far and discuss shared priorities for the next chapter of reform. The forum was designed to contribute to the development of shared priorities for the next 12 months as well as the longer-term strategy for system transformation. The Department heard people's experiences of leading, contributing to and implementing system reforms, and what needs to be collectively considered for the coming year. The Advocate shared activity already occurring in the LHIZ and stressed the importance of new initiatives working alongside current activity.





## Social Determinants of Health

The Social Determinants of Health (SDH) project has successfully engaged a diverse range of stakeholders. Initially, the Department of Health provided a structure for the project based on population health data and public health research. This framework was then complemented by community data collected by the Advocate, which helped narrow the project's focus to three key priorities: mental health, healthy lifestyles and accessible transport.

Subsequent workshops refined the project's scope, leading to an exclusive focus on healthy lifestyles. The *National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030* was adopted as a valuable framework for identifying the determinants that play a significant role in either promoting or negatively impacting healthy lifestyles.

The project's next stage involves group mapping of ongoing efforts. This collaborative approach will help build a shared knowledge base among stakeholders, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the action occurring on the social determinants of health in relation to healthy lifestyles and identification of gaps and areas for collaboration.

## Health and wellbeing impacts of planning and development

The psychological impacts of industrial developments in the Latrobe Valley was the topic of a roundtable event, hosted by the Advocate with the Chief Environmental Scientist. The discussion highlighted:

- the complexities of planning and development processes for both organisations and communities;
- the grief and loss that communities can experience regardless of whether they support or oppose a proposal;
- the lack of wellbeing support afforded to communities as part of the planning process; and
- the need to proactively engage and build trusted relationships between governments, industry and community.

The Advocate shared the initial outcomes from this event with the Ministers for Health, Planning and Energy, Environment and Climate Action. She is now in discussions with government, the EPA and Latrobe City Council about the prioritisation of actions and future work resulting from the event.





Following communication with the Minister for Planning, the Advocate met with the DEECA to discuss the impact of planning processes on health and wellbeing. The department welcomed the Advocate's advice on the most appropriate means to incorporate the current learnings from development proposals into the establishment of the Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone.

The Advocate shared insights from the community engagement relating to the other developments in the region and highlighted the desire from local communities for the LHIZ to be more formally recognised in planning schemes.

The Advocate's work with VicGrid informed its *Offshore Wind Transmission Development and Engagement Roadmap*. The four-phase development model developed for offshore wind projects was released in March 2023 and evidences the centrality of community consultation and the awareness of the health and wellbeing impacts of major transition projects.

Phase 1 has been completed with significant positive community engagement and strong engagement from the Traditional Owners of the land and water in scope for the project. The project is now in Phase 2, developing the options assessment methods through community consultation. A *Draft Options Assessment Method* report was released in July 2023 and community consultation has commenced.

Ausnet advised the Gippsland community engagement approach championed by the Advocate's planning processes model has resulted in a greater sense of trust within the community and lower levels of anxiety than those experienced in Western Victoria, where a more top-down consultation approach was used. Workshops on community benefits are planned and a community advisory group is being established. Community concerns regarding the impact of electromagnetic fields will be explicitly addressed as well as mental health impacts.

## **Inclusive and safe access to transport**

Inclusive and safe transport access as a determinant of health in the Latrobe Valley was the subject of a roundtable event organised by the Chief Accessibility Advocate and the Latrobe Health Advocate in October 2022.

The event highlighted various barriers faced by individuals, including those with low literacy, disabilities, parents with prams, youth, seniors and those who are culturally diverse. These included mental health challenges, financial stress, lack of local knowledge and living in regional or remote areas. Ways for people to voice their feedback and complaints was also highlighted as an issue.

The roundtable reached a shared understanding of the known issues and work occurring to improve access to public transport in the Latrobe Valley. Identifying and understanding enablers and barriers assisted in determining next steps, with potential for a whole-of-Latrobe transport strategy.

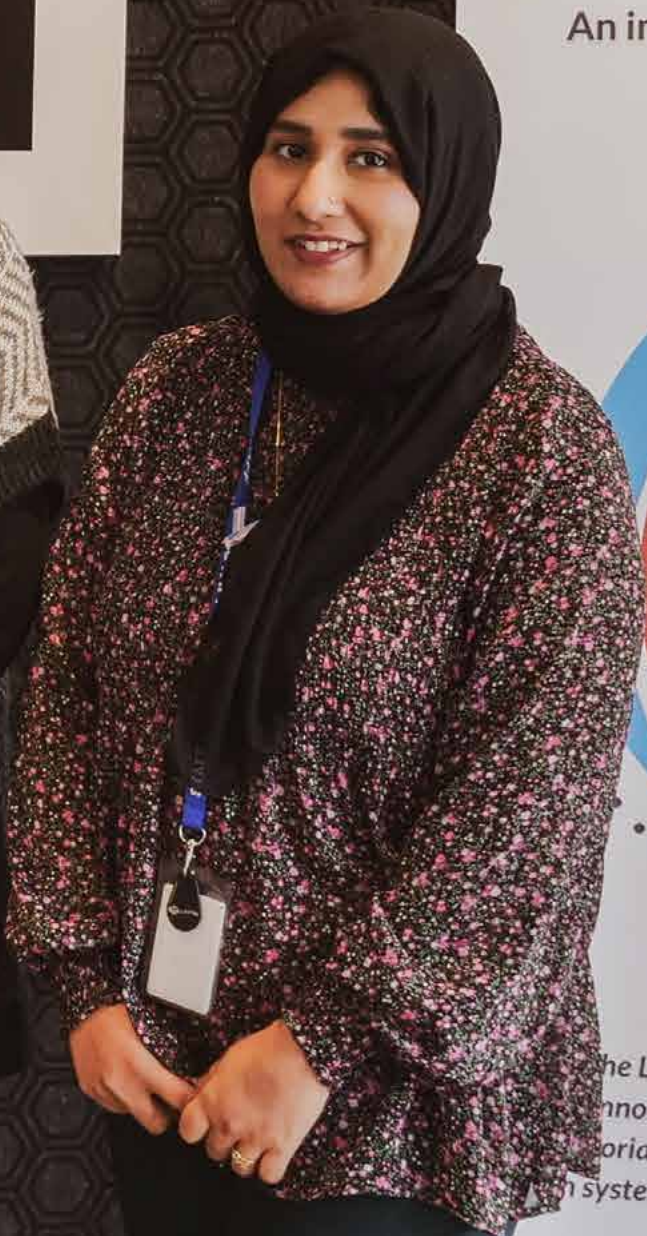
Participants included the Chief Accessibility Advocate, the Public Transport Ombudsman, Department of Transport, V/Line, Transport Victoria, Latrobe City Council, LCHS, DFFH, GPHN, GRPHU, Gippsland Disability Advocacy Inc., West Gippsland Healthcare Group, Latrobe Health Assembly, LVA, Federation University, TAFE Gippsland, Department of Education, Gippsland Multicultural Services, Morwell Neighbourhood House and Traralgon Taxis.

A report outlining the outcome of the roundtable summarises the ideas developed to improve access to transport into four themes and lists the actions suggested. The Advocate is continuing discussions with the Public Transport Ombudsman and other stakeholders. Changes since the roundtable have been tracked and will inform a second round of consultations.









Lat  
Ac

An independent voice for

We want  
systems of  
and wellbe  
Latrobe

Better relationships. Be  
Better services. Better su  
Better integration  
voice in decisio

The Latrobe Health Advocate is p  
Innovation Zone, and provides in  
Victorian Government on behalf of  
health system and policy issues affecting



Latrobe Health  
**Advocate**

PO Box 108  
2 Tarwin Street  
Morwell VIC 3840  
Ph: 1800 319 255  
E: [info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au)  
W: [www.lhadvocate.vic.gov.au](http://www.lhadvocate.vic.gov.au)



The Latrobe Health Advocate respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal people as the Original Custodians of the land we walk on today – the land of the Braiakaulung people of the Gunaikurnai nation and passes on respect to their Elders past and present, future and emerging.