

# MEDIA RELEASE

December 17, 2019



## Communities share with the Latrobe Health Advocate how they want to be heard.

The Latrobe Health Advocate has released a new report, *Engagement Inspiration* that includes key insights and suggestions for governments and services about how people in Latrobe want to engage.

The Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiries recognised the need to reform and innovate local services through increased community engagement and empowerment. The Advocate has been engaging with Latrobe communities in a variety of ways since she was appointed by the Minister for Health in June 2018. In 2019, the Advocate has heard directly from people living with a disability, people living with chronic conditions and people who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

This report challenges current perceptions about consultation fatigue and offers some innovative ways to hear directly from people who may not usually have their voices heard.

The Advocate is now sharing the report with the Victorian Government and the foundation organisations of the Latrobe Health Assembly, including Latrobe Regional Hospital, Latrobe Community Health Service, Latrobe City Council and Gippsland Primary Health Network, and looks forward to continuing to work with them to listen and respond to the needs of people in Latrobe.

People living with disabilities in Latrobe want governments and services to think ahead and plan engagement activities that are physically and emotionally safe. The Advocate has heard that people are diverse but systems are not. Unfortunately, people can fall through the gaps if they don't fit into the categories and eligibilities of the system.

People living with chronic conditions in Latrobe have suggested keeping engagement simple and keeping it real. They have also talked about the value of social time with people and pets and recognise that this is good for health and wellbeing.

People who are culturally and linguistically diverse in Latrobe have said that face-to-face engagement is important. Engagement activities need to be safe and neutral for the communities and cultures involved. Informal and ongoing community engagement activities give people a sense of belonging which can lead to increased social supports and ultimately, improved health outcomes.

In the coming months the Advocate will be listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, LGBTI people and people experiencing financial stress about how they want to engage and what matters to them.

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## **Quotes attributable to Jane Anderson Latrobe Health Advocate**

"I have seen that people in Latrobe do want to engage. They have something to say and they want to be heard. People in Latrobe care about their health and wellbeing and they care about each other."

"Communities are the experts in what matters to them and know first-hand the impact that health professionals, governments or services can have. The foundation organisations of the Latrobe Health Assembly are well placed to acknowledge and respond to ongoing feedback from local communities."

"People have told me that they don't expect governments or services to have all the answers, but they do expect an authentic and honest approach and want to work together to develop local solutions."

- ENDS -

The full report is attached to this media release for your information. If you have any questions, please contact Kylie Jones at the office of Latrobe Health Advocate on 1800 319 255 or via email at [info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au)