



Latrobe Health
Advocate

Quarterly Update

January to March 2021





I am pleased to present this update from the Office of the Latrobe Health Advocate for the period January to March 2021.

My office was a hive of activity this quarter. We recently attended a community and stakeholder forum about the Hazelwood North used lead acid battery (ULAB) recycling facility hosted by Member for Eastern Victoria Harriet Shing. The forum was attended by government representatives, the EPA, local government Councillors and staff, community representatives and the Latrobe Health Assembly. The forum provided an opportunity for people to ask questions and hear more from the government about the decision-making processes that have occurred. Government representatives in attendance were able to hear directly from local communities to gain a greater understanding of their concerns and aspirations.

During this quarter I have seen several systems changes that can provide opportunities for better health and wellbeing across Latrobe. With the construction of a youth residential rehabilitation facility in Traralgon underway, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing intends to embed community experience into services and has sought advice from my office in relation to alcohol and other drugs, access to services and mental health.

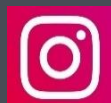
Gippsland PHN Screen For Me project workers have also responded to feedback from the community through my office about gendered language in screening communications. Direct changes have been made from describing 'women' to using a more inclusive term 'Victorians', and changing images to be broader than female appearance only.

I have had many conversations this quarter, and we have highlighted some of them in this report. As always, I look forward to hearing from more of you in coming months and encourage you to contact me on 1800 319 255 or via email at info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au at any time.

Remember you can follow my work on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. You can find copies of all the reports we publish along with this quarterly update on our website.

Jane

@LHAdvocate



Activities Jan – March 2021

In January the Advocate provided advice to the Victorian Government and the Minister for Health, about the proposed used lead and acid battery recycling facility. In her advice she highlighted what she was hearing from communities and urged the government to engage and communicate with Latrobe Valley communities. She also suggested greater assurances from government about preventing environmental contamination and protecting the health of local communities. The Advocate has also asked the EPA to ensure that local communities will continue to be engaged, that human health will be monitored and protected and that the psychological impacts of the development will be recognised and addressed.

In March the Advocate released a public statement in response to the final recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. There is a strong alignment between the recommendations, what the Advocate has been hearing from communities and some of the initiatives already underway in Latrobe. She will continue to work closely with communities to embrace the opportunity for change in Latrobe, and thanks those who shared their experiences with her and helped shape her submission to the Royal Commission.

The Advocate was also pleased to work with Eastern Victoria GP Training to provide local community members with the opportunity to participate in a video production project that will be used to educate current and future GPs about the importance of trusted relationships, supporting the whole person and to promote the benefits of living and working in Latrobe.

After a 12-month hiatus due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Advocate was able to board the bus again in March to talk about the value of social connection. She travelled on the buses for two days and heard directly from community members whose voices are often not heard. Some of the themes that emerged include the importance of having a variety of events and activities available. People said that children, clubs, food, coffee, and local groups can be great enablers for social connection.

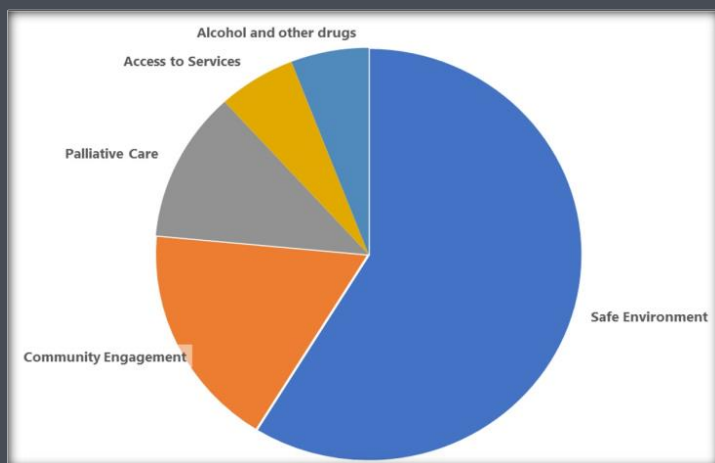
The Advocate also met with local stakeholders including Gippsland Primary Health Network Chair and CEO, and the Latrobe Community Health Service executive team to discuss feedback from communities about access to service in Latrobe. In response to the Access to Services Action Plan, the Department of Health, Primary Health Network and Latrobe Community Health Service are looking at a review of after-hours primary care services in Latrobe.

Human Connections in Latrobe

People have shared their views that community events and activities can help them to connect with others and participate in society. Some people have said that it can be hard to join in where there is a large crowd. The Advocate has heard that opportunities to volunteer or be involved with a group might be the only reason a person leaves their house.

People have said that they are more likely to feel like they belong when they can see that the people around them are accepting of others. A welcoming environment has been described as one where people say hello to each other and do not criticise. People said they need their experiences to be positive and non-judgemental. People have identified a range of places that can enable social connections. These include libraries, skate parks, bus stops, supermarkets, churches, and the shops.

Community Voice Jan – March 2021



Safe Environment

There are people in Latrobe who are becoming increasingly concerned about the development of the used lead acid battery recycling facility in Hazelwood North. People are calling on the government to further acknowledge and respond to community voice, they are expressing concerns about potential health impacts of the development and doubts about the economic benefits. The prospect of the development and the experience of communities in making efforts to be heard by government and industry is resulting in heightened levels of fear and anxiety. This is impacting some people's ability to enjoy good mental wellbeing.



Community Engagement

The Advocate has also heard from people in the community about the development of a wind farm in the region. People are seeking assurances from government and industry that there will be ongoing opportunities to be genuinely engaged. They also want to be assured that any risks, such as the health impacts of infrasound from turbines or the risk of fire, will be prevented and managed appropriately.



Alcohol and Other Drugs

The Advocate has heard from people who are concerned about the impacts of drug and alcohol addictions. Local services have said that there is a need to raise awareness about the supports that are available to the community.



Palliative Care

Communities recognise the good will and care from local palliative care staff and realise the enormous pressure they are under to deliver an appropriate service for patients, families and carers within environments that are designed for a different purpose. The Advocate has heard that hospitals are noisy, busy places and that there is a shortage of palliative care specialist doctors in the area. Communities are looking for a dedicated space where the physical design and atmosphere is family friendly, quiet, serene, and peaceful.



Access to Services

People in Latrobe are looking for greater access to doctors on weekends and after hours as well as local access to health specialists such as urologists, ophthalmologists, and palliative care facilities.

Communities have talked about the benefits of telehealth and recognise that combined with face-to-face appointments and adequate communications from health professionals and services, it can be a great way to access services. Local communities recognise the high demand on the emergency department and want to be able to access health services and professionals in other locations and ways.

We know enough about
lead to be concerned but
not enough to be
informed. All the unknown
is very difficult

There needs to be
more voices heard
and not just the loud
ones

It is important to do
things and have a
sense of satisfaction

People are dying
without being seen

There needs to be more
access to doctors on
weekends, free up the ED

People need face to face
contact and referring to
phone and email is not
good enough



Latrobe Health
Advocate

Latrobe Health Advocate
2 Tarwin Street, Morwell
Phone: 1800 319 255
Email: info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au