



“Strengthening the things that enable people to live well”

2019-2020

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

“Strengthening the things that enable people to live well”

Gateway Health is a registered community health organisation providing a broad range of services aimed at improving the health outcomes that matter to clients and communities, in the most sustainable way possible.

In 2019-2020, the organisation employed 380 staff members and provided more than 60 different services and programs across the greater Ovens Murray region.

As a regional community health service, Gateway Health aspires to be a leader, advocate and enabler of change – working together with individuals, agencies and communities to build relationships, capacity and services to prevent ill-health and strengthen the protective factors that enable people to live well.

A commitment to achieving Gateway Health’s vision of People Living Well, means that we work with our staff, healthcare partners, consumer representatives, clients and their carers to ensure our services are efficient, effective, and safe. We seek to continually learn, adapt and strive to improve quality and safety in every aspect of what we do.

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INTRODUCTION

In previous years, annual 'quality reports' to the community have been designed to comply with Quality Account guidelines set by the Department of Health and Human Services. In recognition of the impact of Covid-19, the requirement to submit an Annual Quality Account has been waived this year.

This presents an opportunity to do things differently! Even though we've not been required to, we felt it was particularly important in this year of all years, to provide feedback to the community about the amazing things that have been achieved by our staff in partnership with their clients, colleagues from other organisations, community members and our volunteers.

The devastating impact of bushfire followed closely by the Covid-19 pandemic have certainly made 2019-2020 a year of learning and adapting, importantly to ensure that our staff remain safe and supported, so that they in turn can provide services that are safe, accessible and relevant to the needs of the communities we serve.

The second half of 2019-2020 has seen major transformation for all of us in the way we live, and for Gateway Health in the way we operate. The majority of our staff have been working from home, and most of our services provided through telehealth rather than face-to-face appointments or group activities. While this year may have been challenging for each of us in different ways, our staff have discovered, tested and refined new ways of working to ensure the needs of our clients are met. We have learnt a great deal about what is possible and what we are capable of as individuals and as an organisation.

The 2019-2020 Report to the Community highlights these learnings and tells the story of adaptation and resilience of our staff, our clients and communities in this remarkable time. The report is an important way of recognising the work that we do and providing feedback to the community about the results we achieve in delivering safe, accessible and effective services.

This report showcases the breadth of services we provide, and highlights the way we work together to achieve better health impacts and outcomes than we could on our own. Importantly, the report is also intended to reassure the community that we are open for business and that we are there for them no matter what.

Thank you to each and every one of our staff members, Board directors and volunteers – you are amazing!



Leigh Rhode
Chief Executive Officer



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Service plan 2019-2029

Gateway Health's 10-year Service Plan 2019-2029 was finalised and adopted in May 2019. The service plan examined the expected health and population trends for the wider Ovens Murray region over the next 10 years and outlined priorities for Gateway Health in responding to changing community health needs over that time.

Four key priorities for service development were identified.



PRIORITY 1

Build capacity, capability and systems to manage an increased demand for services, arising from population growth.



PRIORITY 2

Lead the development of the 'Ovens Murray Model' of integrated service planning and delivery.



PRIORITY 3

Work in partnership with others to improve population health.



PRIORITY 4

Be a leader and advocate for community health.

The plan recognises that investment in our staff and the facilities they operate from is critical to achieving these service plan priorities. Therefore, the major focus in 2019-2020 has been to:

- Further develop our People Working Well strategy to foster a learning culture and support our staff in providing great care and performing at their best. A new model and staffing profile for human resource functions was developed and recruitment to the new People Working Well team commenced.
- Undertake a facilities master planning process to guide investment in the facilities and infrastructure that will support our staff to perform at their best. A facilities master planner was appointed in 2019 and significant work completed in developing facilities options for our Wangaratta campus. The impact of the pandemic put a hold on this work for the remainder of 2020. Planning recommenced in 2021, with some changes to facilities design expected to be influenced by greater use of telehealth, and potential for re-activation of physical distancing requirements in the future.



An overview and summary of the Gateway Health 2019-2029 Service Plan can be found at:

gatewayhealth.org.au/images/aboutus/gateway-health-service-plan-2019-2029.pdf

Seeking community involvement in planning

During 2019-2020, Gateway Health sought to reach out to the community in ways that went beyond just getting feedback on our services. The organisation also sought guidance from members of the community in setting our course for the future.

- Gateway Health embarked on a major strategy development process to set clear development goals, and map out the ways in which it should go about pursuing those goals.
- Supported by consultancy firm Spark Strategy, group discussions were held with more than 60 different service users and participants in Gateway Health activity groups. These included those involved in alcohol and other drug programs, elderly people, youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community. Participants in a men's cooking class contributed too. These discussions gave valuable insights into how participants in Gateway Health services and activities view the organisation, what they want from their health service, and how they expect to interact with support workers and others. This has helped inform the three-year Strategic Plan which Gateway Health was in the process of finalising as 2019-2020 drew to a close.
- Beyond individual service users, recognition was also given to the importance of gaining insights from other organisations involved in the health sector, including partner health services and local government. With this in mind, the strategy development process that went ahead through 2019-2020 included interviews with key figures at the City of Wodonga, the Rural City of Wangaratta, Northeast Health Wangaratta, Beechworth Health, Benalla Health, Mansfield Health, Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service, Women's Health Goulburn North East, Murray PHN (Primary Health Network), The Centre – Your Community College (Wangaratta) and the Federal Member for Indi, Dr Helen Haines MP. These served to provide valuable institutional and regional perspectives that have also further informed Gateway Health on how others view us and what they expect from us, and will be reflected in the final Strategic Plan.



Community

Alcohol and drug program participants
Culturally and linguistically diverse
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
Disabled **LGBTIQ+** Aged
Gateway Health activity groups
Partner health services
Local government
Youth

GATEWAY HEALTH BY YOUR SIDE

The call to Gateway Health to be ready to set up a bushfire response team came on New Year's Day 2020. By then our early response team had already been activated and was on-site at relief centres that had been established across the region, providing initial health and wellbeing support.

Early on in the response to the impact of bushfires that hit North East Victoria, Gateway Health's CEO made a commitment to the people and communities affected by those devastating fires, that "Gateway Health will be here for you, not just in the short term, but always by your side and there for you when you need us."

The call to stand up a Bushfire Case Response Service came at short notice with an expectation that 12 staff members to provide the service could be secured within a two-week period. Jarryd Williams was appointed as Manager of the Bushfire Case Support Service. His reflections on the experiences and achievements of his amazing team are captured in the Case Study that follows.

Case study: Supporting bushfire recovery after the 'Black Summer'

A major focus of the second half of 2019-2020 was giving support to people across the north-east of Victoria and beyond who were deeply impacted by a devastating summer of bushfires.

While bushfires are common in Australia during summer periods, the intensity and extent of the fires over that particular summer were extraordinary.

In turn, the impact of the fires on many people across the region – and especially in alpine areas - placed exceptional demands upon Gateway Health and its people. Our Rural Health team, for instance, was faced with being unable to reach many home-bound clients for periods of time while fires were raging in particular areas, with these locations varying from day to day and week to week as the fires progressed and often changed course. Many more welfare checks were conducted by phone, many visit schedules were adjusted heavily, and ultimately many more visits came to be made once conditions allowed for home visits to resume.

Demand for services across the organisation intensified over many months, with initial needs often focused more on immediate medical problems, but over time embracing broader activities such as family counselling, drug and alcohol support and other kinds of assistance.

In this way, different teams right across the organisation came to feel the impact of the bushfires as they sought to respond to the multi-faceted needs of different households impacted.



"It became apparent that one of the most urgent needs many people had was simply to feel supported at a time when they were in shock, faced with difficult decisions about what to do next and how to do it, and pondering how to navigate the sometimes intimidating processes involved in dealing with a variety of different government departments and agencies offering different services."

At a State-wide level, the Victorian government established a new agency, Bushfire Recovery Victoria, to better coordinate all bushfire recovery activities. A number of organisations were contracted to deliver support services in specific parts of the state, and Gateway Health had the honour of being appointed to meet these needs across north-east Victoria.

An interim bushfire recovery team was formed at Gateway Health in January 2020, with a Program Manager commencing in February.



A team of 11 new staff was hired: all qualified counsellors, social workers and/or community services workers with years of experience in their speciality fields. Nine of the 11 had previous disaster recovery experience.

Team members were able to be identified by new Gateway Health uniforms that helped address the problem of 'scammers' in fire-affected areas claiming to represent support agencies of various kinds.

The Bushfire Recovery team took a 'client-centred' and 'strengths-based' approach, meaning that the support priorities were in each case directed by the individual or family being supported - and with an emphasis on focusing on what they could do for themselves, with appropriate support.

Case workers were required to move at a pace set by each client as they progressed with their recovery journey, remaining flexible and supportive and working collaboratively rather than to a strict set of protocols.

This work became further complicated as the Covid-19 pandemic began to set in, and home visits needed to be restricted. The team supported households to remain connected and able to communicate, where necessary purchasing boosters, mobile phones, and satellite dishes for clients to stay connected with the rest of the world in the event of lockdowns.

By April 2020 the team was itself operating in lockdown conditions, with most team members working from home and relying heavily on technology to give the support needed by clients.

Through careful attention to mutual support across the team, counselling where needed and other support tools, team members were able to meet with the challenges of mutual separation, both from clients and each other over a period of several months.

The team worked particularly closely with Towong Shire and in particular its Local Area Recovery Officers, who in many cases could make direct physical contact with a client when travel was not permitted for Gateway Health staff.

A centralised Alpine Recovery Hub was established, and the Gateway Health bushfire recovery team worked closely with Bushfire Recovery Victoria staff employed at this new hub to manage connections throughout the Alpine and Indigo Shires.

The team tracked spending and activities each week in a way that enabled the creation of a 'trend map': a document that could help serve future disaster recovery officers by showing exactly what happened through the course of the recovery. The map also influenced reporting and advocacy back to government.

The ongoing presence of Gateway Health in the Towong and Alpine communities began to scale back toward the end of 2019-2020, but the team continued offering connection, tangible support and hope to a great many people who might otherwise have felt abandoned at one of the worst times in their life.



YES WE CAN! ADAPTING TO A PANDEMIC

None of us could have predicted the health, social and economic impacts that Covid-19 and the restrictions necessary to prevent its spread have had on all of us, in both our professional and personal lives.

The main priority for Gateway Health throughout the pandemic has been to support our staff and keep them safe and well so that we can continue to safely deliver those services that must be maintained to keep our clients as well as possible.

The majority of our staff transitioned to a work from home setting, and were able to continue to provide services using telehealth and other digital communication with clients.

It was essential that our staff continued to provide face-to-face or home visiting services to prevent serious decline and risk of hospital admission for some of our more vulnerable clients. Strict risk assessment processes and infection control precautions were put in place to ensure the safety of both our staff and clients in these circumstances.

Our infection prevention and control program was expanded by ramping up our building and office cleaning cycles, providing information and education, and increasing the supply of resources such as masks, hand sanitisers and disinfectant wipes.

While some group programs had to be suspended, Gateway Health prioritised service delivery to those at greatest risk of deterioration in their health, with the aim of avoiding the need for hospital admission.

The biggest single obstacle has been the need to maintain appropriate 'physical distancing' to help prevent the spread of Covid-19. To overcome this, the use of telehealth expanded dramatically between March and June 2020 and has continued to grow. For staff and clients alike, the use of telehealth and zoom meetings has become a part of everyday life and the way we communicate.

A range of innovative approaches were put in place so that services could continue to be provided as much as possible while at the same time complying with the restrictions put in place to ensure everyone's safety during the pandemic.



Supporting older people in remote locations

Gateway Health continued to reach out and connect with members of the community facing risks from a range of chronic health conditions, especially amongst older people living in more remote locations.

- During 2019-2020 a focused Rural Health team was established, bringing together expertise in allied health and nursing services, including nursing care, podiatry (foot care), diet and nutrition, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, memory support, exercise and other specialist areas to help ensure that “at-risk” people received fully coordinated and professional care.
- With bushfires from late 2019 onwards, and then the Covid-19 pandemic, a major focus of attention was on how to maintain as much support as possible for people who would normally be supported through home visits, activity groups and other measures that require close human interaction.
- Toward the end of the 2019-2020, substantial progress was being made in creating new “telehealth” options for clients unable to visit or be visited, enabling people to consult with their allied health practitioners by telephone and/or teleconference (Zoom) technology (see more on this later). The initiatives under way in this area are expected to continue delivering ongoing benefits as they develop over time – by way of new choices for our clients as to how they prefer to meet with us, and reductions in travel time and risks for some people in more remote locations – benefits which should carry on long after the Covid-19 pandemic ends.
- Beyond telehealth, other creative initiatives were also being taken to ensure care could continue to reach those in most need. One example of this was an initiative in self-help foot care, with plans for the distribution of more than 270 self-care podiatry kits to Gateway Health clients in need of them across the region. These kits were directed to clients who had experienced cancellations of previously scheduled home visits by members of the podiatry team and were still waiting for re-scheduling of appointments as the Covid-19 pandemic wore on.

Ensuring continuity and reliability

A major part of the role played by Gateway Health in the community is simply to be there - to be reliable and accessible at all times. Never did this seem more important than in 2019-2020.

One of the priorities in dealing with the pandemic impact was to maintain as much continuity and reliability in services as possible, and offer effective pathways to care even in situations where it was quite difficult to maintain a physical ‘hands-on’ presence. We did this by:

- Extending telehealth group counselling sessions via Zoom to include men participating in Gateway Health’s Men’s Behaviour Change program, a program which seeks to work with perpetrators of family violence to help them change their behaviour. The Men’s Behaviour Change program was also able to be extended into Albury, working with a range of stakeholders.
- Continuation of the innovative HIPPY (Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters) program to build literacy and numeracy amongst parents and young children, particularly in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, using telephone and Zoom conferencing, workbooks and role plays provided by post. In the face of Covid-19 and its complications and setbacks, the good work of the program was able to continue.
- Continuing to provide a range of programs for parents of children aged 2-18 years, with a particular focus on helping parents deal with communication and relationship issues involving their children and teenagers. In the face of Covid-19 restrictions, these programs reached parents and carers primarily through Zoom conferencing, conducted during each school term. Participants were offered more flexibility in joining groups, as they were freed from needing to attend specific locations. It was also possible to simplify the registration process, and keep better record of comments and feedback via the chat function available with Zoom conferencing. Going forward, elements of the face-to-face and the teleconference approaches are likely to be blended together, once normal operating conditions can resume.

Sharing information, seeking feedback

During 2019-2020 it was particularly important to communicate with our communities in regard to local information people needed about bushfires, about the Covid-19 pandemic, and about changes to services and activities as a result of these natural disasters. A major focus of communication activity was to filter huge volumes of data and updated information coming into the organisation and make sure that clients, carers and others could receive clear and simple information from us on what they most needed to know at a local and regional level. This was achieved through direct communication between each program and service and their clients and carers.

Direct communication was heavily supported by regular news updates on the Gateway Health website, and Facebook posts, regular local media contributions and responses to media enquiries of many kinds.

Increased emphasis was given to multicultural and multilingual communication, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. News items on the Gateway Health website drew the attention of community leaders to multilingual sources of information on Covid-19. Videos were produced in association with the Albury Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council (AWECC) and made accessible to clients. These videos featured messages in the major languages spoken by recently arrived migrant groups in our community: namely Kinyarwanda, Swahili and Nepali, as well as English. Plans are being developed to extend multilingual communication activity in 2021 and beyond, on a new Gateway Health website linking to social media.

Not all our communication was about Covid-19! Information, education and media contributions were provided on a range of topics.

Particularly prominent were contributions by our drug and alcohol counselling experts, youth mental health leaders (via **headspace**, which is operated through Gateway Health in Wodonga and Wangaratta), the Listening to Voices mental health education program, and a range of initiatives designed to raise awareness of important resources on offer to consumers – most notably **Food Access Guides** produced for Albury-Wodonga and for Wangaratta and district during the pandemic period.

Gateway Health also remained open to consumer feedback throughout 2019-2020, responding to questions and comments of many kinds coming to us from the [online feedback feature](#) on the Gateway Health website.

The Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey, an annual state-wide survey of the clients of healthcare providers was not conducted during 2019-2020 due to Covid-19 issues. But Gateway Health continued to build on its response to the previous year's survey: in particular, ensuring clients and carers know how and feel safe to make a complaint or give a compliment, so we can continue to learn and improve; reducing waiting times, improving the ease of making appointments; ensuring all clients have a clear care plan; and ensuring more of our resources are made available in languages and formats that meet the needs of our communities.



Videos can be seen here: youtube.com/channel/UCcA7Bmrq4oG-98SGI5xhD1w/videos.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

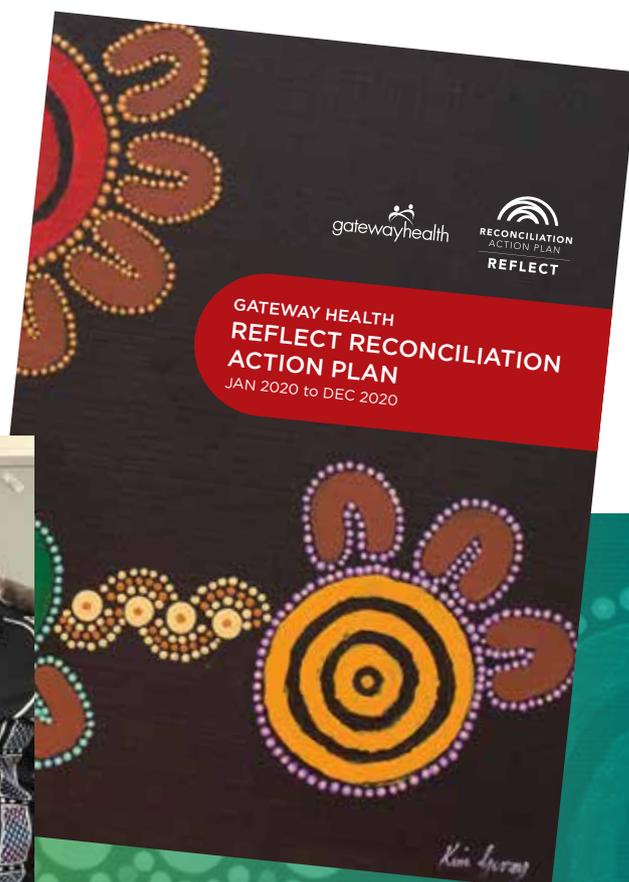
Gateway Health maintains a strong commitment to ensuring that our services are safe, accessible, and responsive to the needs of the diverse communities we serve. A number of activities were undertaken in 2019-2020 that highlight this commitment.

Standing by indigenous communities

- Formation of an Internal Aboriginal Network comprising staff with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds to help advance important ongoing work including mentoring, running of cultural events and shaping of programs and services to better support the needs of indigenous communities. One of the early tasks of the Internal Aboriginal Network was to help facilitate the creation of [Gateway Health's first Reconciliation Action Plan](#), covering the period January-December 2020. This plan, the product of extensive internal and external consultation, was completed and released during 2019-2020.
- Establishment of Burraja Cultural Programs as a business enterprise aimed at creating new opportunities for employment, cultural awareness, positive community interaction and healthy living amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In the face of considerable operational difficulties due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this enterprise got under way during 2019-2020, with the Burraja Indigenous Cultural and Environmental Study Centre – on Gateway Island, at the state border - at its core. The ongoing project is a partnership between Gateway Health and the City of Wodonga, the Victorian Government, Wodonga Aboriginal Network, and Wodonga TAFE (Technical and Further Education). It is expected to deliver ongoing long-term benefits to education, participation, health and wellbeing.

Supporting refugees

- In 2019-2020 the Wodonga Refugee Clinic provided support to a growing number of families and individuals on health issues important to newly arrived members of the community. Major countries of origin include Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia. Some of the more common challenges relate to dietary issues, different experiences and expectations of health care in countries of origin, issues around health literacy and language barriers, and challenges around cultural adjustment both for men and women and sometimes between parents and children. Gateway Health is continuing to build valuable experience and expertise in supporting refugees and other migrant groups to make the most of their opportunities for healthy and productive engagement in community life.





Respecting identity

- Continuing growth and development of the Gender Service, which supported more than 80 children and young people and their families dealing with gender identity matters during the year – the only service of its kind in Victoria operating outside of Melbourne.
- Continuing work to ensure that Gateway Health is a welcoming place for all people, including members of the LGBTQIA+ community. This included commencement of the first steps needed to receive Rainbow Tick accreditation, a rigorous process requiring the organisation to demonstrate openness and inclusivity at many levels. Gateway Health hopes to achieve this accreditation during 2020-2021.
- Success in maintaining the engagement of young LGBTQIA+ people who made the first-ever Rainbow Ball held in Wodonga on 16 February 2019 such an outstanding success, despite the fact that it was not possible to stage the event again in 2020 as planned due to Covid-19 restrictions.
- Scheduled first for February 2020, then postponed till October 2020 (later to be postponed into 2021), planning for the second Rainbow Ball shaped up well: more than 20 planning meetings were held and more than 300 young people from Shepparton to Corowa to Tallangatta were registered to attend, exceeding all expectations. In the face of ongoing Covid-related setbacks, positive engagement was maintained with virtual meetings, active use of social media, and the ongoing energy of participants in the Way Out Wodonga program and members of the North East Pride Collective (NEPC), a group facilitated by Gateway Health to support engagement by young LGBTQIA+ people. In the absence of the Rainbow Ball, other activities – notably a 'Digital Dance-Off' on TikTok - were held.
- The words of one 16 year-old volunteer organiser sum up the feelings of many people involved in Gateway Health group activities of all kinds during 2019-2020 that came to be postponed, shelved or performed differently:

"Initially I was, of course, upset, but I kept my head high, and whether it was naivety or hope I felt the show would go on at some point. As Covid wore on however I lost a bit of hope and discussion of the Ball made me feel quite down and like all of my efforts had been for nothing. I got through it though and realised that even though I'd lost the Ball, I'd gained so many skills from my time working with the NEPC." (Rainbow Ball volunteer)

EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Gateway Health seeks to empower individuals to live well. We do this by providing access to good medical and allied health care services, and by providing access to knowledge and resources to support positive decision-making and self-reliance over time.

The support we provide is mindful that each person comes from a family of some kind, and lives within a broader community, and seeks to strengthen the foundations that underpin the health and wellbeing of individuals, their families and their communities.

Help to live well and age well

One of the vital services that Gateway Health provides is aged care assessment, undertaken on behalf of the Commonwealth Government. It is important to note the assessment itself is independent of service providers. During 2018 two different streams of assessment were brought together at Gateway Health with consolidation continuing in 2019-2020 to better coordinate and improve the quality of service given to clients.

- Gateway Health's Aged Care and Regional Assessment Service began to provide an integrated service model incorporating the Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS) for the East Hume region, and the Regional Assessment Services (RAS) for Wodonga and Indigo Local Government Areas. Beyond the acronyms, what it means is that at the 'intake' stage our assessment officers now work more closely together, and share and have a better knowledge of different assessment and care types so that they can work alongside clients to ensure they are provided with the correct assessment type for their individual needs. This has enabled clients to participate in an assessment focused on their care and support needs, which determines their eligibility for formal government subsidised care and support services, while making their choices clear.

- The combined ACAS and RAS services both consistently reached the stringent performance standards set by the Commonwealth throughout 2019-2020.
- The service received less referrals in the second half of 2019-2020 during the Covid-19 restriction period. But many assessments during this period were still able to be conducted, primarily by phone. Where assessments needed to be done at home, they were conducted under strict infection control protocols.
- In keeping this important assessment work happening, sometimes under difficult conditions, Gateway Health's aged care assessment team made a vital contribution to ensuring that people with aged care support needs were not kept waiting any longer than necessary to have their needs met.

"Gateway Health's aged care assessment team made a vital contribution to ensuring that people with aged care support needs were not kept waiting any longer than necessary to have their needs met."



Adopting a “strengths based” approach

In 2019-2020 Gateway Health continued to offer and to further develop a broad range of services providing early intervention to help people recover from trauma or to stop the progression of potentially harmful behaviours.

While the range of services was (and is) diverse, all were united by a “strengths-based” approach. This means that our staff practice in a way that recognises the effects that trauma can have on people’s lives - how it can shake their faith in their own strengths and ability to recover, and how those strengths need to be recognised and nurtured back to full capacity.

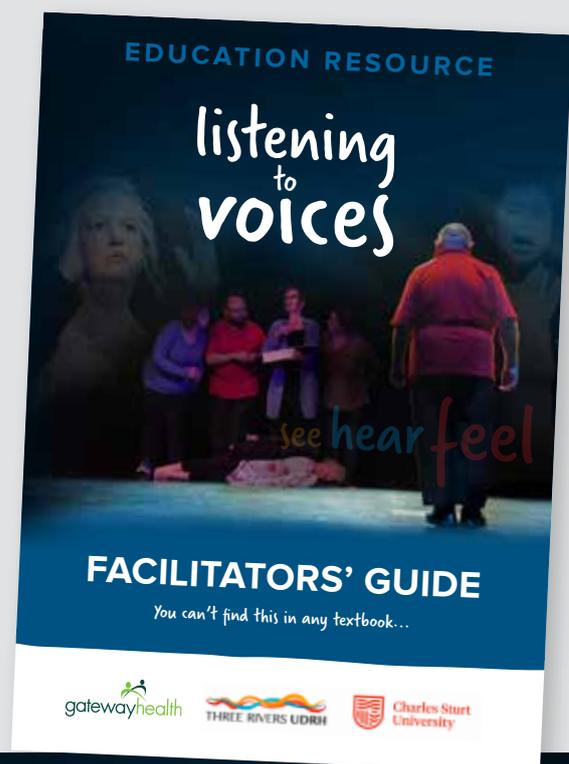
The ‘models of care’ used to support clients (i.e. the ways in which we work) are based on the premise that people have within them the capacity to make the changes they need. Highlights of Gateway Health’s work in this area in 2019-2020 include the following:

- Alcohol and drug treatment programs were improved by the introduction of a new way of providing care: a nurse practitioner model. Under this model, care is provided by a registered nurse who is also educated to provide advanced practice in line with the needs of the organisation and community she or he works in. The new approach has offered easier access and greater flexibility for clients in getting the information and help they need.
- The LAUNCH program, which supports people moving out of the mental health system and back into the broader community, was able to make use of Zoom videoconferencing to help continue its work building life skills and social skills amongst participants. This carried on in the face of restrictions which prevented the running of normal group activities that typically include education and training, as well as paid and voluntary work. Important aspects of work include helping people to manage time commitments, plan for appointments and interact constructively with others. By finding ways to conduct much of this activity online, while far from ideal, a level of ‘strengths based’ support could continue to be offered through a difficult period of restrictions.

- A further contribution to empowerment came with the ongoing development of the Listening to Voices mental health education program, which entered an exciting phase in 2019-2020. Listening to Voices brings together a group of people who have had direct personal experience as clients of the mental health system, and who now offer the benefit of their insights in the form of a powerful theatrical experience that has been made available to many different audiences. In 2019-2020, funds were successfully sought to work with Charles Sturt University to develop this activity into an online learning module, able to be readily purchased for use by outside organisations. The project is seen to offer great potential as a learning resource for a wide range of organisations seeking to develop a better understanding of mental health issues in the workplace and beyond.

youtu.be/AlRkDVnjAlI

listeningtovoices.org.au



Putting dogs in schools!

- In 2019-2020 Gateway Health supported seven schools to have a dog as part of their school community, helping to tackle the problem of disengagement by students struggling with their studies.
- The dogs have been particularly helpful for students who experience difficulty regulating their emotions, have mental health concerns, or have difficulty attending school. Staff report that the dogs provide a different level of engagement and a way to support students to “de-escalate” when they are distressed and when words won’t help them stay calm. The students support the dogs, knowing that they need to be calm to be able to learn, and through this they become aware that the same applies to them. Once again, the approach seeks to empower and motivate those who participate, thereby benefiting the individual, their family, the class group, and the school community at large.
- In 2019-2020, schools that had (or would soon have) dogs as part of their school community, supported by Gateway Health, were Baranduda Primary School, Melrose Primary School, Wahgunyah Primary School, Wodonga Flexible Learning Centre, Wodonga Middle Years College (one dog on each of two campuses), Wodonga Primary School, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, Wodonga South Primary School and Wooragee Primary School.
- Not surprisingly, the dogs have attracted great community interest, including media coverage.
- Gateway Health was supported in this ground-breaking activity by two organisations, Dogs Connect and the Wodonga Dog Education Centre, and the work is continuing into 2020-2021.

“Staff report that the dogs provide a different level of engagement and a way to support students to ‘de-escalate’ when they are distressed and when words won’t help them stay calm.”



Supporting youth mental health

- Youth mental health and wellbeing were supported in numerous ways through headspace, the national youth mental health service, operated by Gateway Health in Wodonga and Wangaratta.
- As usual, headspace at a local level sought to reflect local needs and conditions. For example, in addition to the usual full range of youth counselling and support services provided through headspace, distinctive local activities went ahead as well – such as a fishing competition in Corryong, developed in association with a local fishing club. Videos were created by young people themselves and posted on Facebook. Staff in headspace Wodonga worked closely with Albury Wodonga Health to develop further videos to help young people with the mental health dimensions of Covid-19.
- A large amount of consultation went ahead with young people in Wangaratta and surrounds – supported by young people already associated with headspace in Albury-Wodonga – as part of the planning toward opening a Wangaratta-based centre during 2020-2021.
- Activities including an art therapy program were adapted so that they could continue online during the Covid-19 lockdowns.
- Wodonga-based headspace staff took the opportunity provided by lockdown conditions and work-from-home to further their professional development for the benefit of themselves and clients – more than 90 per cent of local headspace staff were completing additional studies during 2019-2020.



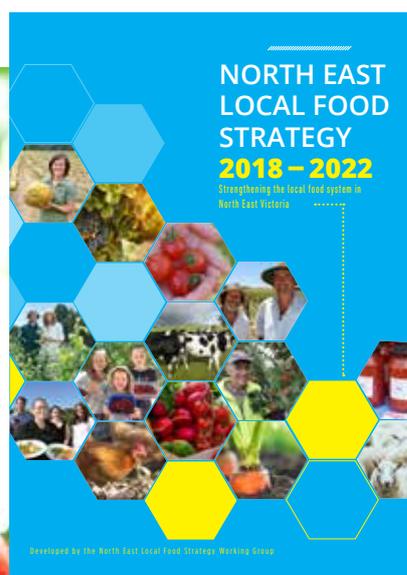
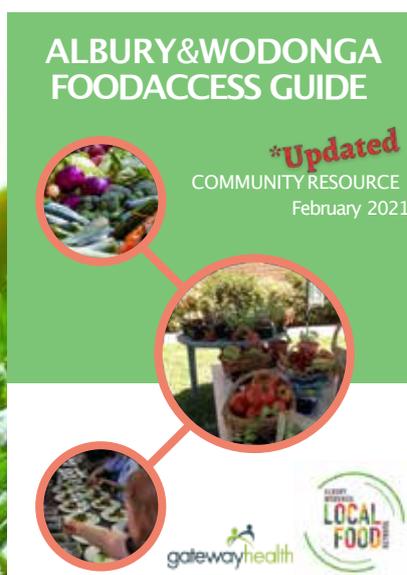
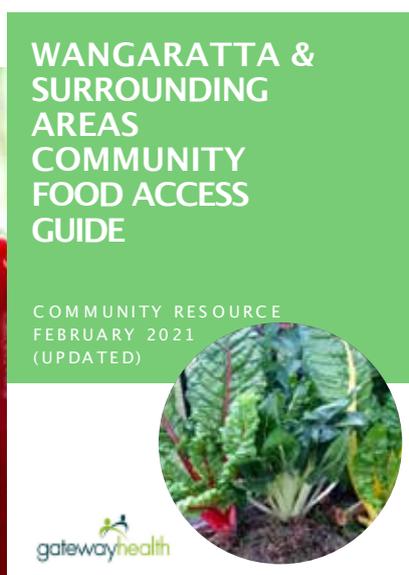
PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Gateway health is committed to working in partnership with individuals, communities and other organisation to improve health and wellbeing for all through health promotion, prevention and population health research initiatives.

Building resilience and knowledge for better living

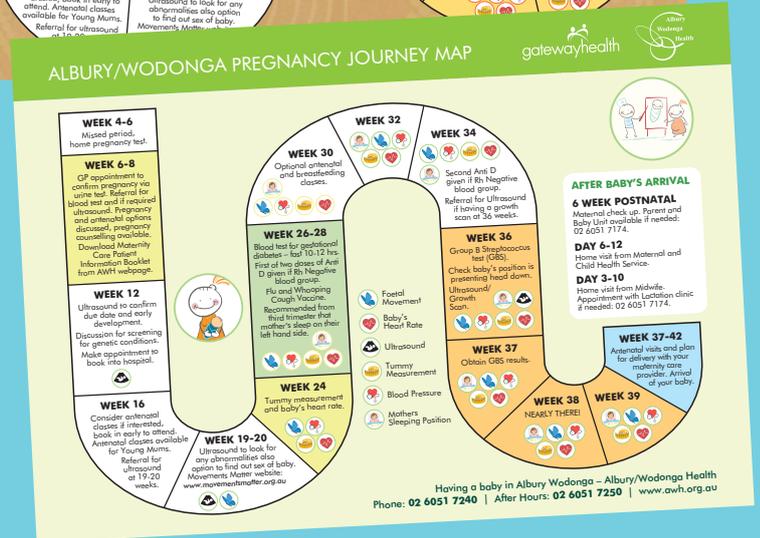
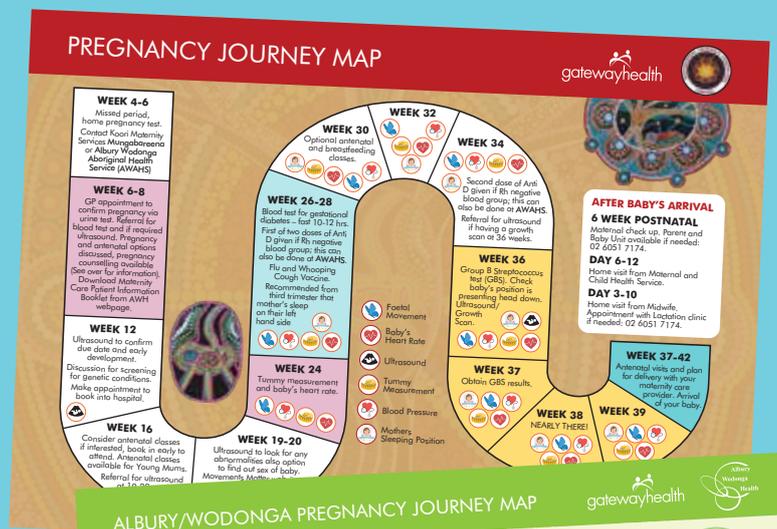
Health promotion activity at Gateway Health is guided by a regional integrated health promotion plan. Gateway Health undertakes health promotion and prevention activities aimed at reducing the risk factors for poorer health and generating environments and actions that enable people to live well. Examples of this during 2019-2020 included:

- Staging of a **Taste of Wodonga** food event, which brought together attendees involved in local food production, restaurants, retailers and others with a shared interest in building a stronger local food system. More than 40 people attended the first event held at La Maison Restaurant in July 2019, and a follow-up event held at Miss Amelie restaurant in November 2019 attracted around 120 participants. Supported by a new 'We Eat Local' mobile phone app, the festival demonstrated a growing interest in finding ways to work together for the common good in this area. This promising work continues into 2020-2021.
- **Food Access Guides** compiled for Albury-Wodonga and for Wangaratta, offering consumers information and support to help get them through the difficult pandemic lockdown periods. The guides provided tips on preparing meals within a tight budget, gaining access to good value fresh food supplies locally, how to grow and prepare food, and how to connect with other people who have similar interests. This was consistent with the strategic aim of Gateway Health to help contribute to 'health literacy' in local communities. The Food Access Guides continue to be updated and made available on the Gateway Health website: gatewayhealth.org.au/news-from-gateway-health/new-guides-to-food-support
- Collaborative work with community-led Acres & Acres Food Cooperative in Corryong, assisting the co-op with grant submissions and aligning projects with the North East Local Food Strategy being developed between Gateway Health and other local stakeholders. By end of 2019-2020, work was under way by Acres & Acres Food Co-op to design a community market garden, a suite of kitchen gardens, and a community food hub where people can learn to grow their own food, and build their own food growing business, using climate-ready techniques.



- Creation of new antenatal and postnatal resources developed in partnership with Northeast Health Wangaratta, in the form of a user-friendly "Pregnancy Journey Map" which provides local service information for women planning on giving birth in Wangaratta and Wodonga and surrounding areas. These services include available midwife and clinic options. Additional information is provided about what to expect when receiving care during pregnancy. The maps were developed in partnership with North East Health Wangaratta, Albury Wodonga Health, Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service and Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation. (A similar resource has also been made available for women breastfeeding.)

gatewayhealth.org.au/services/health-promotion/having-a-baby



- Successful completion of a pilot cooking program conducted at Pangerang Community House in Wangaratta, in partnership with the community house and Anglicare Victoria. The pilot drew on resources including the Men's Cooking Group already established at Gateway Health. Eleven people participated in the free pilot cooking program, with the majority of participants having a health care card and several having dependent children.

Feedback from participants suggested that the pilot project helped improve participants' healthy eating skills and knowledge:

- **50% reported eating vegetables and fruit more often**
- **Up to 50% were cooking at home more often**
- **Up to 75% buying healthy food more often**
- **Most had increased confidence in getting value for money when shopping for food.**

Participants also identified improvement to their skills in teamwork, problem solving, planning and organising and learning new things.

pangerang.org.au/

[youtube.com/watch?v=wrqg5KZrKp0&feature=emb_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrqg5KZrKp0&feature=emb_logo)

Partnership for better rural health

Gateway Health also invests in a range of partnerships that impact on longer term health and wellbeing outcomes.

- Gateway Health worked with Alpine Shire Council and Alpine Health to deliver the Alpine Active Living Mapping Project with the goal of finding out what opportunities exist to support the population to be physically active in the Alpine Shire. The project objectives were to specifically identify:
 - how active the population reported to be
 - existing active living services, activities and opportunities, facilities and parks
 - how connected physical activity opportunities were (e.g. walking/cycling paths etc.).

Developing this understanding helped to inform recommendations for increasing active living and in turn, improving the health and wellbeing of the Alpine Shire population, especially older people and those with limited financial means.

The research was undertaken during 2018-2019, though work continued into 2019-2020, particularly in regard to dissemination of the findings.

gatewayhealth.org.au/images/programs/Health_Promotion/PCP_AMF_Active_Alpine_Poster_Nov_2019.pdf

- Following on from the success of the Alpine Active Living Mapping Project, a similar project was conducted in association with the Rural City of Wangaratta. For this second project, more than 500 surveys were filled out and returned by residents of Wangaratta and surrounds.

Major barriers to physical activity so far identified by the Wangaratta research include:

- Lack of footpaths (especially in smaller townships)
- Lack of time
- Cost
- Weather
- Lack of awareness (knowing what was already on offer in the community)
- People's health and/or mental health conditions
- Transport and accessibility

Results of the study will be published in 2020-21, including recommendations for action to address the barriers and enablers identified.



- Gateway Health is a major partner in Deakin University's RESPOND research initiative. This five year project is taking a community-based approach to improving the health and wellbeing of children across the Ovens Murray Goulburn region, working with each community to drive positive and practical changes from the ground up to promote healthy weight among children. Gateway Health staff have been actively involved in collection of baseline health status data and facilitating community workshops in Local Government Areas participating in phase one of the research.

RESPOND was supported by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET), VicHealth, Goulburn Valley Primary Care Partnership, Central Hume Primary Care Partnership, Upper Hume Primary Care Partnership, Lower Hume Primary Care Partnership, and their member agencies. The project continues to be supported by a \$1.5 million National Health and Medical Research Fund (NHMRC) Project Partnership Grant and a further \$2.6 million in partner contributions. Deakin University's Global Obesity Centre is undertaking the research, which will continue into 2020-2021.

lhpcp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/RESPOND-Project-Summary.pdf

2019-2020 DID YOU KNOW?

More than 700 people participated in activity groups of various kinds, either in person or online.

Home visits were made to around 5,000 clients, many in remote locations, until the time Covid-19 visiting restrictions were imposed in early 2020.

Gateway Health was obliged to maintain professional accreditations with nine different specialised professional bodies and regulators, to demonstrate ongoing compliance with exacting quality standards, with all of these requiring renewal during the financial year. One of these was for accreditation relating to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Practice Standards, a major government compliance task undertaken for the first time by Gateway Health.

Some 260 households received Bushfire Recovery support in the wake of a record summer of bushfires.

More than 1,500 people received age care assessments from the Gateway Health assessment team.

**As many as 9,000
phone calls and videocalls
were made to clients unable
to receive visitors during the
pandemic period.**

**(not including patients of our GP Clinics or
headspace clients)**

**More than 130,000
“occasions of service”
were logged. This means
contacts of all kinds,
whether by phone
in-person appointment,
follow-up email, or
other means.**

**Gateway Health
employed approximately
350 staff and had over 50
volunteers, working across
a wide variety of specialty
areas. These staff were
employed under eight
different industrial awards
and agreements.**

**Gateway Health attended to
the needs of more than 10,000
clients – that’s not including
patients of our GP practices in
Wangaratta and Wodonga.**



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