

VitalSigns®

Taking the pulse of our community

Boolarra 2020 Report

Welcome to Boolarra's first **Vital Signs**, a snapshot of how our community is faring in key quality of life areas: Health & Wellbeing, Education & Learning, Economy, Environment and Belonging.

Using credible data combined with people's lived experiences, the goal of this report is to build a better understanding of challenges and opportunities in Boolarra and its surrounding communities. This understanding is vital to making our community a better place for everyone, now and forever.

We acknowledge the Gunaikurnai and we pay our respects to Elders past and present, whose knowledge and wisdom have ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices, shaping and caring for this precious land and ensuring its abundance. We aim to work respectfully with all people and to encourage a lighter footprint on the land, to ensure that it remains environmentally, economically, and aesthetically sustainable.

If Boolarra was a village of 100 people:

26 Aged 0-24

18 Aged 25-44

35 Aged 45-64

18 Aged 65-79

3 Aged 80+

19 Born overseas

2 Indigenous

81 Born in Australia

3 Speak a language other than English at home

23 Work full-time

18 Work part-time

25 Volunteer

13 Unpaid Carer for a person with a disability

5 Work from home

46 Earn less than \$650 per week

2 Earn more than \$3000 per week

51 Women

49 Men

11 Live alone

3 One parent family

What you love about where you live



"I love the fresh produce exchange & the friendliness & helpfulness of the people."

"We were given a 'Welcome to Boolarra' bag when we were new to town...and immediately felt connected and knowledgeable about the area".

"Peace. Wildlife. Small community. Trees. Local events. Heritage building. History."

"Beautiful Community Groups. Rolling hills & lots of bush walks, lovely shops. I love Boolarra."

"The friendly people. The trees and rivers. The way people work together. The Boolarra folk festival."

"That there are so many community groups, there is always something to do."

"I love the community, knowing everyone around town. I also love the nature around my town, I love playing at my local netball club and working at my local pub."

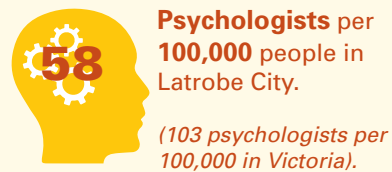
HEALTH & WELLBEING

Without good physical and mental health, we cannot thrive as individuals or as a community. Our health is shaped by many factors including our lifestyle and access to services.

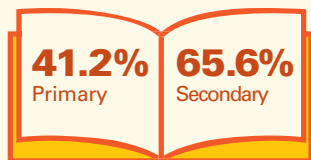
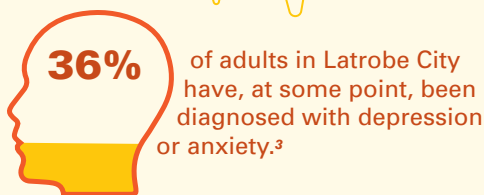
The data shows that mental health, alcohol consumption and family violence are vital issues for our community. Our health behaviours are contributing to our rates of obesity.

Access

There are more GPs per head of the population in Latrobe City in comparison to Victoria, but access to psychologists is more of a challenge for many of our residents.¹



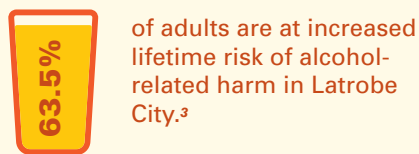
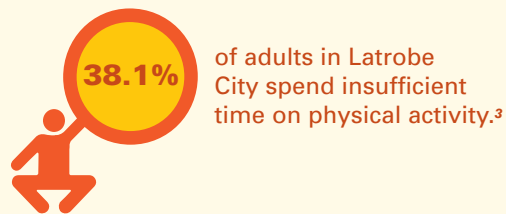
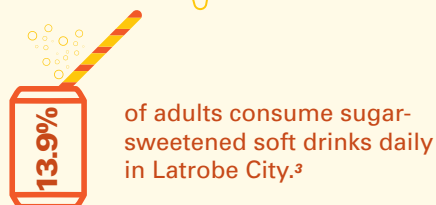
Mental Health



of school teachers, principals and support staff surveyed by the AEU Mental Health Survey in 2019, said they had students with mental health issues in the classes they teach.⁴

If you, or anyone you know needs support: Beyond Blue **1300 224 636**. Lifeline **13 11 14**.

Health Behaviours



Family Violence

Latrobe City's rate of family violence incidents is **196%** higher than Victoria's.⁵

The Orange Door (orangedoor.vic.gov.au) is a new free service for adults, children and young people who are experiencing, or who have experienced family violence.

Family and domestic violence support lines: Respect National Hotline **1800 737 732**. Women's Crisis Line **1800 811 811**. The Orange Door **1800 319 354**. Men's Referral Service **1300 766 491**.

Source. ¹ PHN Gippsland Population Health Planning Hub. ² General Practice Health Of The Nation 2018, RACGP. ³ Victorian Population Health Survey 2017. ⁴ Australian Education Union (Vic) Submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. ⁵ Crime Statistics Agency, Family Incident Rate.

Community exercise activates older citizens

A free weekly exercise group in Yinnar that keeps senior citizens active and connected to their community has been a resounding success.

"I saw a need as older people appear to look ok, but we can have many ailments, travel is hard to organise, and specialised exercise can be expensive," says Glenys Webster, the initial driver behind the classes. "Our specialised therapist Kathleen Millett teaches us about our body, how we should be moving, considering all our different needs."

The program has been extended until the end of 2020, with Federation University now also conducting an in-depth evaluation, exploring the idea of how these classes could be rolled out in other rural areas.

"In the first 12 months, 47 classes were held, with an average of 17 participants, which is over 800 places. It proved to me that there was a huge need."



Yinnar Exercise Group

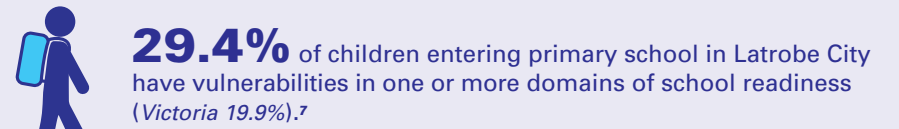
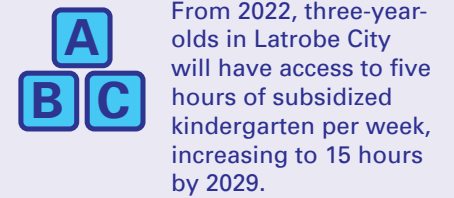
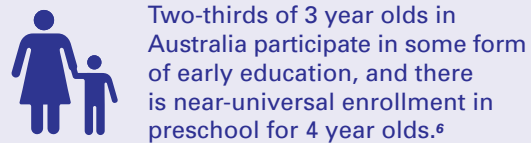
EDUCATION & LEARNING

Access to Education is vital to health and wellbeing and empowers children and adults.

Our district provides us with many educational opportunities including early learning, school and life-long learning. The data shows that not as many of our young people go on to tertiary education, but those who do have a high rate of participation in vocational education and training.

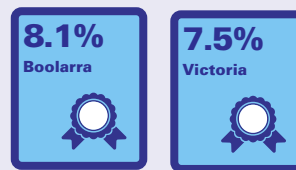
Early Learning

Access to high-quality preschool programs is a proven strategy for lifting outcomes for all children.



Educational Attainment and Pathways

The Census gives a snapshot of educational attainment in our community, which reflects our socio economic make up.⁸

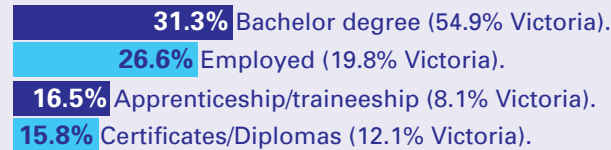


Completed Diploma
Advanced Diploma.⁸



Completed a Bachelor Degree or above.⁸

Latrobe City's school leavers have a higher rate of participation in Apprenticeships and Traineeships⁹



In Australia employment outcomes are strongly linked to education¹⁰

80% with a Bachelor degree or above are employed.

75% with an Advanced Diploma or Diploma are employed.

44% Year 11 or below are employed.

Lifelong Learning



Access to affordable community based lifelong learning is a strength within our community. Opportunities for formal and informal education, training and learning through local organisations including the CFA, CWA, Arts organisations, U3A, and other groups improves skills and builds social cohesion.

Source. ⁶ Preschool-Two Years are Better Than One, Mitchell Report No. 03/2016. ⁷ Public Health Information Development Unit 2015. ⁸ ABS Census 2016. ⁹ On Track 2018 Survey Results, Victoria State Government-Education and Training. ¹⁰ Counting the cost of lost opportunity in Australian education, summary paper, Mitchell Report No. 02/2017.

Imagining futures with rural kids

The Dream Seeds program empowered Mirboo North Primary School students to create a vision and practical pathways towards positive futures and encouraged students to be leaders of their own lives. Six young adults with rural backgrounds mentored the students, showing them they could follow their dreams, overcome barriers to education, providing aspiration and encouraging fun participation.

Kitty Robinson, Dream Seeds team leader said "It's rewarding to see their faces when kids realise that they're finding something out about themselves and exploring new language, such as what values are, and how when they work as a small community they can make changes that impact."

The core themes at the heart of Dream Seeds is aspiration, resilience and connection.

Kitty says that Dream Seeds is currently developing a comprehensive website so that students can access an online portal after they participate in the workshop.



Dream Seeds Program
Mirboo North Primary School

ECONOMY

Economic viability and sustainability is vitally important for building strong rural communities.

While the number of jobs in our region has grown, it has not grown as fast as Victoria's, but our unemployment rate is lower. Many of us run our own businesses, or are self employed.

Boolarra Community Snapshot

Where we work ¹¹



(top five employment sectors)

How we work ¹¹



(hours worked-employed people 15 years and over)

19.3% self employed (owner manager of incorporated or unincorporated enterprise) (13.7% Victoria). ¹¹



\$1,057 Median Weekly Household Income. ¹²



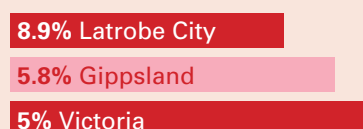
Employment

Annual average jobs growth rate, 2008-2018 ¹³



The number of jobs in Latrobe City have increased.

Unemployment rate (2018) ¹⁴



The youth unemployment rate is 15.4% in Latrobe City (13.87% Victoria). ¹³

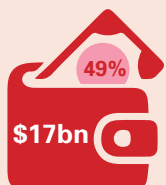
Industry



Of the estimated 105,677 people who work in Gippsland, 14.5% work in the Health Care and Social Assistance sector. It is the region's biggest employer. Jobs in this sector increased by 20.65% between 2011 and 2016. ¹⁴



The manufacturing sector in Gippsland has seen a steep decline in jobs but this sector still contributes 15% of our region's gross revenue (the largest amount of any sector). ¹⁴



Over \$17 billion is spent each year in the Gippsland region, 49% of this is spent with suppliers located outside of the region (a 10% shift could result in 4,200 new jobs and \$1.4bn new money into the economy). ¹⁵

Source. ¹¹ ABS Census 2016. ¹² ABS QuickStats, State Suburb Data, 2016. ¹³ Regional Development Victoria, Regional Snapshot. ¹⁴ Latrobe City Council Economy Profile. ¹⁵ GROW Gippsland Regional Action Plan October 2018.

Boolarra swaps food and knowledge

In 2018 Boolarra Community Development Group member Sue Webster began a food swap, so local people could come together to share excess food.

Sue has found that there have been many benefits other than just the act of sharing the spoils.

"We hold the food swap on the third Sunday of each month, and there have been 10-12 people attending each month, bringing homegrown food, preserves, seeds, home-baked goods, and plants to swap with one another," says Sue.

"As well as sharing our excess goodies, there is a great social aspect to it, with many conversations about how to grow and cook foods taking place. It's a great icebreaker for new residents too, and they like to come along to meet people and find out what people are growing."

Sue says they hope to keep the food swap going every month from now on.



Boolarra Food Swap

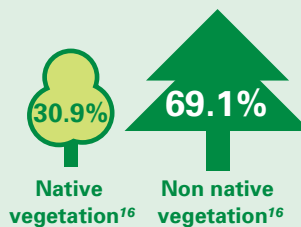
ENVIRONMENT

Our environment is vital to our health, quality of life and survival. How we manage and protect the ecosystems and resources that surround us, determines their sustainability as well as our own.

The natural environment is one of the reasons we love where we live. Maintaining our region's biodiversity and managing the impact of climate change is a priority for our community.

Biodiversity

Most of our district is located in the Strzelecki Ranges Bioregion. Bioregions help us to better identify and protect an area based on its geographic and natural characteristics rather than its administrative boundaries.



The Strzelecki Ranges Bioregion is one of the most cleared bioregions in Australia.

About 84% of plants, 83% of mammals, and 45% of birds are found only in Australia. ¹⁷

Changes to the landscape, native habitat as a result of human activity have put many of our unique species at risk.

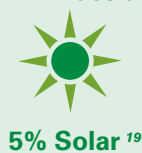


There are an estimated 5,000-15,000 Strzelecki Gum (Eucalyptus Strzeleckii) remaining. Threats include grazing, weed invasion and clearing. ¹⁸

Preserve Our Forests successfully lobbied against logging in coupes near Mirboo North, preventing the destruction of a significant habitat which threatened the Greater Glider and other native species.

Energy, Waste, Water

Energy generation in Australia



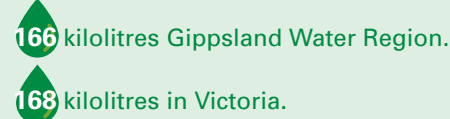
Renewable electricity generation increased by 10% in 2017-18, contributing 17% of all generation. This includes solar, wind and other renewable generation. ¹⁹



In Boolarra around 33.1% of dwellings have Photovoltaic installations (solar). ^{20/21}

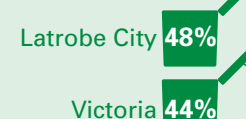
Water

Average annual residential water supplied (2016-2017). ²²



Waste

Recyclables and organics kerbside diversion rate. ²³



Climate Change

Climate change is the most significant environmental challenge facing us. Its impact is predicted to include:

More days over 35 degrees.



Less annual rainfall, but more intense rainfall events.



More days with high and extreme fire danger.



More extreme weather events (floods and droughts).



Decreased water flows in rivers and wetlands.



Increased weed and pest distribution.



Source. ¹⁶ Findings by Bioregion, Victorian Environmental Assessment Council. ¹⁷ Department of the Environment and Energy, Biodiversity Information. ¹⁸ National Recovery Plan for the Strzelecki Gum, Department of the Environment and Energy. ¹⁹ Australian Energy Update 2019, Department of Environment and Energy. ²⁰ Australian PV Institute. ²¹ ABS Census 2016. ²² National Performance Report: Urban Water Utilities, Department of Meteorology. ²³ Victorian Local Government Annual Waste Services Workbook, 2017-18, Sustainability Victoria.

Saving the forest with science

The Mirboo North community successfully lobbied against logging company VicForests' plans to log three native forest coupes. Key to this achievement was the surveying done by Preserve Our Forests Biodiversity Working Group, led by Coordinator, Susan Koci, and thirty volunteers, who undertook the huge task of documenting the forest's biodiversity.

"For now, Mirboo North has been taken off VicForests timber release plans, but we must remain vigilant. From the start, we have been guided by the community.

We now see it is our role to promote better care of the forest, ensuring that we are all part of looking after it and that we become stewards of our forest." says Marg Thomas, from Preserve Our Forests.

The State Government has designated the forests as an Immediate Protection Area (IPA), and Preserve our Forests are looking forward to working with the government to formalise the details over the coming months.



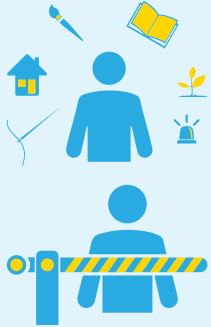
Preserve Our Forests

BELONGING

How we participate in the life of our community and our connections to the people around us help to develop a sense of belonging, which is vital to building healthy, inclusive communities.

Wellbeing is a strength across our region and, while there are barriers to belonging, most feel that people in their neighbourhood are willing to help each other.

Community Voices



People in our community find their connections in a wide variety of places, including volunteering for a local organisation, helping at the school, or as a member of a local arts, historical, sporting, environmental or music group.

While belonging is a strength in our community, barriers to belonging include: Being single or not having any children, being older, being a newcomer to the community, mental health, physical isolation, and lack of public transport.

At our Boolarra community forum, you told us what you would like to see.



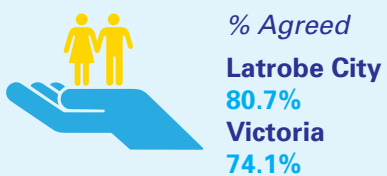
Belonging in Our Region

Subjective Wellbeing ²⁴



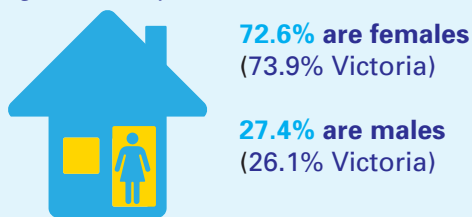
The subjective wellbeing index measures life satisfaction in a number of areas, including feeling part of your community. Responses are combined and converted to a personal wellbeing index where 0 is completely dissatisfied and 100 is completely satisfied.

People around here are willing to help their neighbours ²⁴



Social isolation

Around 1 in 5 older Australians are socially isolated. In Latrobe City 39.5% of people aged over 75 years live alone, of which: ²⁵



²⁴ VicHealth Indicators Survey 2015. ²⁵ LGA Statistical Profile 2015.

Enhancing community connection among seniors

Mirboo North's dedicated volunteer community bus service provides important social connection and accessible transportation for senior citizens in Mirboo North.

The bus is used regularly by the Mirboo North Senior Citizens Club, who organise regular shopping trips to Midvalley Shopping Centre in Morwell.

"The bus service is very unique as it can pick residents up directly from home, providing residents with an opportunity to go to some local shopping and have some lunch together afterwards," said Margaret Peters, regular user of the service.

"You'd be hard pressed to find another service that provides a kerbside service, it helps those who are not quite as able as others to continue to be independent. If we didn't have this service, many residents would have to rely solely on family and friends for transport."

Mirboo North Community Bus

Why did we produce this report?

The Mirboo North & District Community Foundation and the Mirboo North & District Community Bank are proud to present you with the first Vital Signs report for our region. This is the first major collaborative project of both organisations who have a shared vision to foster strength and prosperity for the communities in our District.

We are hoping that this project will lead to a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities before us as a community. This report is merely a starting point from which further discussion will enable us to target our community's resources to those areas.

How to use this report:

This report is to get you thinking and chatting with your friends, family and work colleagues. Discuss questions like:

- What issues do you care about?
- What data surprises you?
- What would you do to make a difference?
- Will this data change the focus of your community organisation?

How can you get involved?



Tell us what you or your community organisation thinks. How should we make the most of our opportunities or tackle our challenges?



Offer your time and expertise to tackle initiatives that improve our community outcomes.

About the Mirboo North & District Community Foundation

Our vision is a healthy, vibrant and resilient community working together to tackle our challenges and celebrate our successes. We work towards this vision through managing our 'Future Fund' of over \$6.2M, investing in the community through grants (more than \$1.3M so far), directing donations to key community projects and building capacity and skills across the district.

We also facilitate a shared understanding of our needs through community planning initiatives, support local people to develop local solutions and encourage the giving of time, money and skills back to the community.

About the Mirboo North & District Community Bank

The Mirboo North & District Community Bank is a community owned company which not only delivers full banking services to its customers, but it also distributes around 80% of its profits back to the communities in our district through a diverse range of community investment programs (the other 20% are distributed to our local shareholders).

Our customers have enabled us to distribute more than \$1M back to our communities in less than 9 years since opening. This Community Bank model is unique and a way for small communities to not only retain banking services for their town but to also make their community more sustainable. Our motto is: "Banking is our Business, Community is our Purpose."

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Our Vital Signs District



Map data ©2020 Google

A word about the data:

While we have endeavoured to use local data wherever possible, much of the data used in this report is only available at a Local Government Authority (LGA) or larger population level. Data relating to Boolarra in this report, generally encompasses the town and surrounding communities.

Vital Signs is a community check-up conducted by community foundations around the world that measures the vitality of our communities and identifies significant trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life. With special thanks to the Toronto Foundation for developing and sharing the Vital Signs concept. Australian Community Philanthropy manages the licensing of Vital Signs within Australia. The Vital Signs® Trademark is used with permission from Community Foundations of Canada.