

Wimmera Primary Care Partnership

Liveability Attributes Summary

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Background

Responding to Domain 5. 'Victoria is Liveable' of the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework, the Wimmera Primary Care Partnership (PCP) has commissioned a liveability assessment to accompany the Wimmera PCP Community Health and Wellbeing Profile 2020 and to support the development of the Wimmera South West Liveability framework.

The Wimmera PCP Liveability Assessment is intended to provide a preliminary scan of the region's key liveability attributes and challenges, using readily available data. It is intended as a starting point for more detailed investigation of liveability characteristics of the region.

Domain 5. Victoria is Liveable

Outcome 5.1: Victorians belong to resilient and liveable communities

- Increase neighbourhood liveability
- Increase adaptation to the impacts of climate change

Outcome 5.2: Victorians have access to sustainable built and natural environments

- Increase environmental sustainability and quality

The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework (2016)

The selection of indicators for this preliminary assessment was informed by:

- liveability assessments undertaken of other regional locations, such as the *Neighbourhood Liveability Assessment of Benalla* (Davern, M., Roberts, R. & Higgs, C. - 2018)); *Liveability with an Age-Friendly Lens in rural Victoria* (Davern, M. & Brasher, K. - 2017) the *Liveability Assessment Tool* (Hunter New England Population Health - February 2012)
- data which were readily available, and
- data considered to have particular significance to the region (e.g. extreme heat and water storage figures).

The assessment adopts a broad approach to considering what factors influence liveability in the region, recognising that many indicators used to assess liveability of cities and urban neighbourhoods are less relevant (or appropriate) for rural communities; and, that a wider range of data may help improve understanding of liveability aspects specific to this region and its population.

'...much of the existing literature and research on liveability has been based within major urban centres which provide very different contexts to rural communities. Not only is the built and natural environment very different and towns of smaller scale, but many rural areas across Australia have a significantly different population structure than urban centres.' - Davern, M. & Brasher, K. (2017). *Liveability with an Age-Friendly Lens in rural Victoria: Linking Liveability Indicators and Age Friendly principles across the Shires of Indigo and Towong*. RMIT University: Melbourne.

Outside of peri-urban localities and large regional centres, the population of many Victorian rural communities is largely characterised by an older population, higher rates of chronic disease, lower household income, and much poorer levels of access to health and other services.

However, self-rated measures of satisfaction with different areas of life, connection with and participation in community, and many qualities of the local community are typically rated much higher for populations living in rural communities (including the Wimmera PCP region - as set out in this report) than for populations living in Greater Melbourne or large regional centres. This raises the question of *who* decides whether a place is liveable and what the most appropriate indicators are to use in a specific location.

Many characteristics of rural areas, and the small towns located within them, that are particularly appealing to many residents - such as less crowds and traffic, close and connected communities, wide-open spaces and a slower pace of life - are the same characteristics that can present liveability challenges such as limited access to services and public transport due to smaller populations and lower population density.

Finally, it should be noted that:

1. Many aspects of liveability are subjective. What one person or one population group finds liveable may be different to the next. When considering the liveability qualities of the Wimmera PCP region, it is important to consider the specific needs and values of its different population groups.

2. Major events can shift societal values and 'flip' liveability concepts and assumptions. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered an increased appreciation of locations with lower population density; while significantly increasing adoption of telecommuting practices and of telehealth service delivery.

Summary

The key liveability attributes arising from the available data were:

Residents have a high level of life satisfaction and purpose

- In 2018, compared to Greater Melbourne, state averages and many regional Victoria averages, residents of the Wimmera PCP region reported notably higher levels of satisfaction with many aspects of their life, including: their standard of living, what they are currently achieving in life, their personal relationships and their future security.
- Residents of the Wimmera PCP region (especially Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack) were also notably more to give a high rating (above 80 out of 100) for the level of meaning and purpose they feel their life has.

Communities are generally considered welcoming, trustworthy and close-knit

Compared to state and Greater Melbourne averages, a greater proportion of Wimmera PCP region residents report that:

- This is a close-knit community
- People are willing to help each other
- Most people can be trusted
- I have an opportunity to have a say on issues that are important to me
- I feel welcome here
- I feel part of my community, and
- My community is a great place to live.

Residents are connected to their community, family and friends

Compared to state Greater Melbourne averages, a greater proportion of Wimmera PCP region residents:

- Are more likely to participate in their local community, its groups and events
- Have higher levels of satisfaction with their personal relationships
- Are more likely to chat with neighbours regularly/all the time

Natural assets and low population density

- Compared to state and Greater Melbourne averages, the Wimmera PCP region - particularly Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack - has a much larger amount of land dedicated to national park or other protected areas per population
- More than one third of land in Hindmarsh and almost one fifth of all land in West Wimmera is dedicated to national park or other protected areas

- There are over 3,000 wetlands across the region - including a Ramsar site and nine nationally significant wetlands - that provide habitats for a vast range of flora and fauna as well as migratory birds - in addition to offering recreational pursuits such as swimming, fishing, sailing and bird-watching for the region's population
- The Wimmera PCP region has a much lower population density than the regional Victoria, the Greater Melbourne and the state average - with density in Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack less than one person per square kilometre
- A greater proportion of private dwelling in each Wimmera PCP region LGA have installed small-scale solar systems, compared to Greater Melbourne and state averages

Low unemployment and less time commuting to work

- The June 2020 unemployment rate in all Wimmera Region PCP LGAs was lower than state, Greater Melbourne and regional Victoria averages
- The median distance travelled by working population in the Wimmera PCP region was less than six kilometres
- Workers living in the region spend less time sitting per day compared to the state average

Affordable and spacious housing

- Compared to regional Victoria, Greater Melbourne and state averages, a much greater proportion of private rental properties in the Wimmera PCP region are classified as affordable lettings
- Median rents are approximately half the state average in Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack and much lower than the Greater Melbourne average
- Median house prices are substantially lower than Greater Melbourne, regional Victoria and the state average, with the 2019 median house price in less than \$110,000 in Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack
- Compared to regional Victoria, Greater Melbourne and state averages, fewer dwellings in the Wimmera PCP region need an extra bedroom to accommodate the number of residents in the household

Residents feel safe and property crime is lower

- Compared to regional Victoria, Greater Melbourne and state averages, Wimmera PCP region residents are much more likely to report they feel safe walking alone at night time
- Compared to regional Victoria and state averages, Wimmera PCP region residents are also more satisfied with how safe they feel and much less likely to report the safety of the local area is poor, and
- The overall rate of property-related crimes is much lower than the state average.

Wimmera Liveability Attributes Summary Table

	Hindmarsh	Horsham RC	West Wimmera	Yarriambiack	Greater Melbourne	Regional Victoria	Victoria
Physical attributes							
Hectares of national park/projected area per population	47	2	45	9	.003	2.5	0.6
% of LGA that is national park or other projected area	34.6	8.8	18.9	8.5	14.2	17.6	17.5
Population density	0.8	4.7	0.4	0.9	496.7	6.9	28.4
	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, Northern Grampians & Pyrenees		West Wimmera & Yarriambiack				
% Persons that like the environment and surrounds they live in		95		84	82	92	84
% Persons that agree there are attractive natural places in their community (e.g. parks, bushland)		92		82	81	91	83
Rate per 1,000 private dwellings with small-scale solar systems installed (since 2001)	268	210	201	259	137	222	160
Safety							
% Persons who feel safe walking alone at night	72	65	76	73	54	64	56
Crimes against property rate	2,712	4,139	1,947	2,899	na	na	4,672
	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, Northern Grampians & Pyrenees		West Wimmera & Yarriambiack				
Level of satisfaction (from 0 to 100) of satisfaction with 'how safe I feel)		83		87	70	79	73
% Persons agree safety of local area is 'Poor'		8		3	20	12	18
% Persons agree crime is a 'large problem' in local area		48		32	47	44	47
Housing							
Median rent (2019)	\$183	\$275	\$190	\$200	\$400	\$330	\$390
Median house price (2019)	\$105,000	\$275,000	\$102,000	\$109,000	\$680,000	\$380,000	\$572,000
% dwellings that are separate houses	90	88	97	95	68	90	73
% dwellings where extra bedroom is needed (to accommodate number of residents)	1.8	1.4	1.1	1.5	4.5	2.1	3.9

Employment							
Unemployment Rate (June 2020)	3.7	3.3	2.7	3.8	5.7	4.1	5.4
Median community distance to workplace (2016)	4.4	2.8	5.8	1.9	11.3	6.9	10.5
Physical activity							
Hours spent sitting on usual work day (of full time work-force)	3:02	4:09	3:46	2:21			4.29
	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, N. Grampians, and Pyrenees		Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack				
% persons that take part in sports groups or teams		28		45	28	31	29
Connection with family, friends and community							
I can get help** with care in an emergency (% agree)	85	90	93	89	86	91	87
	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, N. Grampians, and Pyrenees		Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack				
Level of satisfaction (from 0 to 100) with personal relationships		75		82	71	75	72
Make time to keep in touch with friends - regularly/all the time		21		17	17	16	16
Chat with my neighbours - regularly/all the time		54		61	48	57	50
Help out a local group as a volunteer (Yes, definitely)	41	35	51	37	18	25	20
	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, N. Grampians, and Pyrenees		Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack				
Attend community events such as farmers markets, festivals		59		64	42	58	47
Attend meetings/social events of local clubs/groups		26		60	18	29	22

Attributes of the local community							
This is a close-knit neighbourhood	84	77	90	87	-	-	61
People are willing to help each other	91	84	94	88	-	-	74
"Most people can be trusted" (% agree)	36	33	39	36	30	32	31
"I Have an opportunity to have a say on real issues that are important to me" (% agree)	37	32	30	52	30	30	30
	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, N. Grampians, and Pyrenees		Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack				
I feel welcome here		77		86	70	83	73
I feel part of my community		73		79	66	78	68
My community is a great place to live		85		86	83	87	84
I feel proud to live in this community		83		88	77	83	78
There's good community spirit around here		73		79	70	80	73
The friendliness of this community is getting better		66		79	61	67	63
Some groups who live in this community aren't made to feel welcome		41		28	31	30	32
<u>Low</u> support for gender equity score	30	28	37	38			36

#Any person living in dwelling connected to internet using any kind of device (including phone, tablet, desktop or laptop computer) and using any kind of connection. *Population that lives within 400 metres of a bus and/or tram stop and/or within 800 metres of a train station. **from a family member or friend not living in same household)