

Wimmera Primary Care Partnership

Liveability Challenges 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 challenges arising from the available data are:

Rates of violence against persons - including alcohol-related violence

- Compared to the state average, the rate of assaults per population is much higher in Horsham RC, Yarriambiack and Hindmarsh
- Rates of sexual offences are also much higher than the state average in Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack
- Rates of family violence are much higher than the state average in Horsham RC as well as in Yarriambiack
- Rates of alcohol related assaults and of alcohol related family violence incidents are much higher than the state average in each Wimmera PCP region LGA
- Compared to the regional Victoria, Greater Melbourne and state average, a much greater proportion of the population living in the combined region of Ararat RC, Horsham RC, Northern Grampians and Pyrenees reported that domestic violence is a 'large problem' in the local area.

Climate

- The region has a much higher number of days that were 40C or over, compared to Greater Melbourne
- Hopetoun weather station recorded 22 days of 40C or greater in 2019
- In general, maximum daily temperatures are much hotter than in Greater Melbourne
- The daily maximum temperature is projected by the CSIRO to continue to increase
- Rainfall is notably lower than Greater Melbourne
- December 2020 water storage levels in the Wimmera Glenelg system were 38.7%, compared to 75% for Melbourne storage, and were much lower than most other Victorian storages
- In 2017, 67% of surveyed residents of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Region reported they had observed more water shortages and drought over the past ten years and this proportion was notably higher than the state average (47%)
- 63% of surveyed residents of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region reported they had observed more severe bushfires in the past 10 years, 55% reported they had observed more severe storms and floods, 54% had noticed more crop failures or declining agriculture, and 45% had noticed more heatwaves

Low levels of access to health services

- The rate of GPs per population is much lower than the regional Victoria, Greater Melbourne and state average
- The rate of dental practitioners per population in 2016 was zero in all Wimmera PCP LGAs, except Horsham RC
- Compared to regional Victoria, Greater Melbourne and the state average, the Wimmera PCP region had a substantially higher proportion of persons that reported 'poor' levels of access to:
 - GPs/general health services,
 - specialist health services, and/or
 - mental health services.

Low levels of access to public transport

- Just 3% of the population of the combined Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack area reported good/very good access to public transport - compared to the regional Victoria average of 33% and the state average of 61%
- A very low proportion of residents (less than 10% of residents in West Wimmera and Yarriambiack) live within walking distance of a bus or train stop
- There were 807 private homes in the region in 2016 that had no motor vehicle.

Poorer access to fast, reliable internet and digital divide

- 40% of Wimmera PCP region residents reported 'poor' access levels to fast and reliable internet
- A notably lower proportion of households were accessing the internet via any device or connection type in 2016, compared to regional Victoria and Victoria.

Active living and access to food

- Compared to regional Victoria, Greater Melbourne and the state average, a notably smaller proportion of residents in the region reported they had 'good' access to fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Residents of the combined Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack region were notably less likely to report that lack of affordable food/groceries was 'not a problem'
- 2017 data suggest that residents of the Wimmera PCP region were slightly more likely to experience food insecurity than the state and Greater Melbourne average, however figures should be interpreted with caution owing to low level statistical reliability
- Residents of Horsham RC and West Wimmera were less likely than the state, regional Victoria and Greater Melbourne average to consume the recommended daily serves of vegetables

- Residents of all Wimmera PCP region LGAs were less likely than the state, regional Victoria and Greater Melbourne average to consume the recommended daily serves of fruit
- Residents of Hindmarsh and Yarriambiack were more likely than the regional Victoria and state average to be obese
- Wimmera PCP region residents were more likely to have insufficient levels of physical activity (for health).

Wimmera Liveability Challenges Summary Table

	Hindmarsh	Horsham RC	West Wimmera	Yarriambiack	Greater Melbourne	Regional Victoria	Victoria
Violence and safety							
Family Violence Rate (per 1,000 pop)	1,021	2,372	1,212	1,652			1,282
Assault offence rate	856	1,124	553	1,457			683
Sexual offence rate	615	256	579	653			206
Alcohol-related FV incidents	30	51	28	30			17
Alcohol-related assaults	18	29	15	18			10
	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, N. Grampians, and Pyrenees		Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack				
% agree: 'Crime is a large problem in local area'		48%		32%	47%	44%	47%
% agree: 'Domestic violence is a large problem in local area'		47%		33%	29%	36%	31%
Employment							
	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, N. Grampians, and Pyrenees		Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack				
% Agree " There are plenty of jobs available around here at the moment"		12		19	22	14	20
% jobs in region not in agricultural sector	72	92	70	51		92	98
Food and food safety							
% persons that consume take-away food >1 day p/week	17	17	15	2			15
% persons who are obese	29	24	23	27		24	19
	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, N. Grampians, and Pyrenees		Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack				
'Good' access to fresh fruit & vegetables		68		52	82	76	81
Lack of affordable food/groceries 'not a problem'		51		39	48	49	48
% persons that eat recommended daily serves of fruit	37	40	41	41	43	43	43

% persons that eat recommended daily serves of vegetables	6	4	3	5	5	6	5
Physical activity							
% persons insufficient activity	47	47	57	49	45	42	44
% persons participate in any organised activity	24	25	25	26			29
% persons participate in any non-organised activity	66	66	60	57			71
Housing diversity							
% houses that are flat/unit/terrace	8	11	2	2	32	10	26
Tolerance of diversity							
Some groups who live in this community aren't made to feel welcome	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, N. Grampians, and Pyrenees	Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack					
		41		28	31	30	32
% agree that multiculturalism makes life in their area better	47	38	40	46	56	45	53
Climate							
	Edenhope	Nhill	Horsham	Hopetoun	Melbourne Airport		
Days over 35C (2019)	28	39	44	50	23		
Days over 40C (2019)	6	14	12	22	9	-	-
Average rainfall (2019)	266	288	273	202	359	-	-
Water storage level (December 2020)		Wimmera-Glenelg System: 38.7%			75.4		

Access to services							
Rate* of dental practitioners working in LGA (2016) *per 1.000 population	0	0.6	0	0	0.6	0.4	0.5
Rate* of GPs working in LGA (2016) *per 1.000 population	1.4	1.7	1.0	1.2	2.3	2.0	2.3
% persons that reported ' <u>poor</u> ' access to:	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, N. Grampians, and Pyrenees		Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack				
General health services e.g. GP, general health consultation services		44		60	8	23	12
Mental health services e.g. psychologist, psychiatrist		52		59	15	39	22
Specialist health services (other than mental health)		56		64	13	40	21
	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, N. Grampians, and Pyrenees		Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack				
% persons reported 'poor access' to mobile phone reception		27		29	12	26	15
% persons reported 'poor access' to high speed, reliable internet		40		40	21	36	25
Internet# accessed from dwelling	70	75	71	71	86	78	84
	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, N. Grampians, and Pyrenees		Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack				
% persons reported 'good/very good' access to public transport		25		3	72	33	61
Live near public transport*	21	55	9	8			74

Perceived liveability and community attributes						
	Ararat RC, Horsham RC, N. Grampians, and Pyrenees	Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack				
This community has a bright future	73	56	77	75	76	
The liveability of this community is getting better	60	54	59	61	60	
The local economy of this community is getting better	33	36	57	48	54	
The local landscape and surrounds of this community is getting better	69	65	68	70	69	

#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.