

# BEING WELL AND STAYING WELL IN THE HEART OF TASMANIA



A Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of  
Central Highlands Residents 2020-2025

February 2020

## THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

### MANY COMMUNITIES WITH BIG HEARTS

#### *The most beautiful and important area of Tasmania is the Central Highlands*

*The Central Highlands provides us with an abundance of beautiful areas for enjoyment and celebrations. Our Central Highlands area contains the highest altitude of Tasmania, as well as Australia's second largest freshwater lake, yingina/Great Lake and Australia's deepest freshwater lake, Lake St Clair.*

*Our Council area covers 798,241 hectares of land, including national parks and world-recognised wilderness heritage areas.*

*We are committed and dedicated to working together to improve the health and wellbeing of our Central Highlands residents. As Mayor, I have negotiated and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Health Action Team Central Highlands (HATCH).*

*This MoU is a formalised agreement to work together to improve the health and wellbeing of Central Highlands residents. It acknowledges our current health services and the importance of networking with organisations to meet the needs of our community.*

*It is well known that the shortage of permanent health care professionals means that communities, particularly those which are small or non-metropolitan, like the Central Highlands wider community, are facing greater challenges in attracting and retaining health care professionals and services. I continue working toward addressing issues such as this.*

*There is an ongoing commitment from council, to contribute to our community health services groups, clubs, not-for-profit organisations and other programs.*

*My priority is the health and safety of our people across our Central Highlands community, and to continue to identify, support and implement programs and services to meet recognised needs.*

*The Central Highlands community have the opportunity to be part of the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2020-2025.*

*Council and HATCH always welcomes fresh ideas and input from the community to make the Central Highlands a great place to live.*

**Loueen Triffitt, Mayor Central Highlands Council**



## ABOUT CENTRAL HIGHLANDERS - THE STATISTICS<sup>1</sup>

The 2016 Census statistics provide vital information about Central Highlanders. Compared to other Tasmanians and Australians people living in the Central Highlands on average:

- ▶ Are older
- ▶ Often live alone or as a couple
- ▶ Earn quite a lot less
- ▶ Have lower educational attainment
- ▶ Are slightly less likely to be employed
- ▶ Are slightly more likely to volunteer.

This combination of factors is summarised in what's known as SEIFA – Socio Economic Indexes for Areas. It ranks all 574 Local Government areas in Australia according to their relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage.

The Central Highlands SEIFA is 883. It ranks 57 among LGAs in Australia which means it experiences relatively higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage.

Communities that experience relative socio-economic disadvantage generally experience poorer health. In addition, rural and remote communities are also more likely to experience poorer health and lower life expectancy.

*Central Highlanders are older and are more likely to live alone compared to Tasmania & Australia*

- ▶ 2 in 5 (42%) are over 55 (TAS 34%, AUS 28%)
- ▶ 1 in 5 (20%) are under 19 (TAS 24%, AUS 25%)
- ▶ 1 in 20 (5%) are Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) People (TAS 4.6%, AUS 2.8%)
- ▶ Median age is 50 (TAS 42, AUS 38); median age of ATSI People is 27
- ▶ Over half (55%) are couples without children & almost a third (31%) are couples with children (TAS 43/38%, AUS 38/45%)

*Central Highlanders have considerably lower median weekly incomes compared to Tasmania & Australia*

- ▶ \$467 personal – nearly 20% lower than Tasmania & 30% lower than Australia (TAS \$573, AUS \$662)
- ▶ \$1074 family – nearly 25% lower than Tasmania & nearly 40% lower than Australia (TAS \$1399; AUS \$1734)

<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017, *2016 Census QuickStats*, Australian Government

*Fewer Central Highlanders have reached Year 12 and beyond compared to Tasmania & Australia*

- ▶ Less than 1 in 10 (9%) have attained Year 12 (TAS 12%, AUS 16%)
- ▶ About 1 in 10 (9.5%) have a Bachelor degree or above (TAS 16%, AUS 22%)
- ▶ Just over 1 in 5 (22%) have a Diploma or Certificate III or IV (TAS 25%, AUS 25%)

*Central Highlanders are slightly less likely to be employed full or part time & slightly more likely to be unemployed*

- ▶ 85% are employed full or part time (TAS 87%, AUS 88%)
- ▶ 8% unemployed (TAS 7%, AUS 7%)
- ▶ Almost 1 in 3 (30%) parents with children are not working (TAS 25%, AUS 20%)
- ▶ The most common occupations are managers (24%), labourers (21%), & technicians (15%)
- ▶ Top industries of employment are specialised sheep farming, sheep-beef cattle farming, local government administration, specialised beef cattle farming, accommodation

*Primary Health Tasmania analyses multiple data sources to produce a Community Health Profile for all LGAs in Tasmania. The Central Highlands Community Health Profile finds:*

- ▶ Nearly 1 in 5 assess their health as fair or poor
- ▶ Just over 1 in 10 report high or very high psychological distress
- ▶ About 16% of people smoke
- ▶ About 15% of people don't engage in enough moderate or vigorous activity
- ▶ Over 9 in 10 don't eat enough vegetables
- ▶ 3 in 5 don't eat enough fruit
- ▶ About a quarter of people are rated as obese
- ▶ Nearly 2 in 5 consume alcohol at levels that cause lifetime harm.

Councils are well placed to promote public health by creating supportive environments to:

- ▶ reduce **S**moking
- ▶ improve **N**utrition
- ▶ reduce harmful **A**lcohol use
- ▶ promote **P**hysical activity
- ▶ reduce **S**tress.

Together these five factors are known as **SNAPS** risk factors. They impact wellbeing but improvements can be achieved through community-led, Council-supported action.

By reducing smoking, alcohol and stress, and increasing healthy eating and physical activity, the Central Highlands community will enjoy better health, fewer hospital admissions and longer lives.



## ABOUT CENTRAL HIGHLANDERS - WHAT YOU TOLD US

While statistics are important, understanding the lived experience of Central Highlanders is essential. To help develop this Plan, a series of community conversations were held across the Central Highlands in 2019.

Several themes emerged from these conversations. This is what people told us.

### Communication

Communities acknowledged there are already several communication channels in use across the Central Highlands. But Central Highlanders also told us:

- ▶ Often there are activities happening that people don't know about – getting the word out is an important part of ensuring people are engaged in their community
- ▶ Communication is very 'town-specific' with not a lot between towns and villages where there may be interesting activities going on
- ▶ Many don't have a computer and people need to be internet savvy to use Facebook
- ▶ Mobile coverage is problematic, for locals and tourists.

### People and community

There is a strong community spirit in most communities across the Central Highlands. Central Highlanders told us:

- ▶ In a crisis there is support – people pulled together during the bushfires in 2019
- ▶ Various 'hubs' are the heart of community interaction – you can step into a community and choose how to participate, but some villages don't have a hub
- ▶ The community comes together around food
- ▶ Sometimes it's a struggle to get involved especially if you have kids at home
- ▶ There is some fracturing in some communities and newcomers are not always welcomed into communities.



### Transport

Lack of transport was identified as one of the most important things affecting individual health and wellbeing. Road quality was also seen as a barrier to getting around safely. Central Highlanders told us:

- ▶ There are no or poor bus services and connections between towns across the Central Highlands and with Hobart
- ▶ They need easier access to transport for medical appointments – reliance on volunteer drivers and community transport can be problematic
- ▶ Some experience difficulties navigating transport services, especially parents with young children and older people.

### Community support

In many conversations, people expressed concern about changes to the Rural Primary Health Service. Central Highlanders told us:

- ▶ They would like Council to appoint a community development officer to drive change
- ▶ A community development officer, even part-time, could support communities to

develop ideas and connect people to healthy activities

- ▶ A community development officer could tap the commitment of communities to their own health and wellbeing.

## Volunteering

Volunteers were recognised as crucial to many activities and services across the Central Highlands. However, there was grave concern about the ageing volunteers and volunteer work falling to just a few – a new approach to attracting and retaining volunteers was needed. Central Highlanders told us:

- ▶ There has been a decline in volunteers over the last 20 years
- ▶ One person is often volunteering across several groups
- ▶ There is a need to mentor and bring younger volunteers through
- ▶ You should never stop asking and engaging to grow the volunteer base
- ▶ It's important to access opportunities like Work for the Dole
- ▶ Volunteers are vital to ambulance and fire services.

## Footpaths and walking tracks

Central Highlanders want to be active, but they need some improved walkability in their towns and villages to help them. They told us:

- ▶ Wider, flat, gravel footpaths would promote a culture of walking
- ▶ Footpaths that encourage walking can help bring communities together
- ▶ Walking tracks and paths protect against heavy traffic passing through towns.

## School/industry connections

Central Highlanders want to see their high schools better embedded in their communities, with more connections between local employment opportunities and education pathways. They told us:

- ▶ Higher skilled school graduates are needed, with technical skills and digital literacy
- ▶ School-based apprenticeships offer a promising pathway for local young people to get local jobs
- ▶ TAFE is important, and there needs to be more respect for practical, skills-based jobs
- ▶ There is a cultural disconnect between local employers and local job seekers – it's important to get locals and give them a go
- ▶ A wide range of opportunities are available for young people including hospitality, guiding (fishing and bushwalking), tourism, agriculture and horticulture
- ▶ Young people need to finish Year 12 wherever possible
- ▶ Lack of transport can be a barrier to employment and further education.

## Young people

Young people are seen as the future of the Central Highlands, particularly given its declining population. It was said, *'Youth is what will keep our community going'*. Central Highlanders told us young people:

- ▶ Will provide us with fresh ideas
- ▶ Need to be encouraged to volunteer
- ▶ Need exposure to a youth leadership program
- ▶ Need to feel wanted
- ▶ A Youth Policy would be a good place to start.



## Facilities

Central Highlanders recognise they have a range of quality facilities that are underutilised by communities. They considered this a 'lost opportunity' to contribute to health and wellbeing. They told us:

- ▶ Schools were a valuable resource in some towns
- ▶ The pool at Bothwell would be used more often if it was covered
- ▶ There are opportunities to 'ramp up' the Men's Shed in Hamilton and the Women's Shed in Bothwell
- ▶ The new community and football centre in Bothwell could be better used during the week
- ▶ There are some fantastic parks and playgrounds that have been developed for communities.

## Social isolation

The dispersed nature of people across the Central Highlands makes social isolation a risk – while some come to get away from it all, social isolation is a major contributor to poor health and wellbeing. Central Highlanders told us:

- ▶ Older single people, particularly women are at risk
- ▶ Lack of easy transport contributes to social isolation
- ▶ Young parents are a risk group for social isolation
- ▶ A buddy system can support individuals in a way that is comfortable for them.



## Health services

There was a united voice across all the conversations that health and aged care services were not meeting the needs of the community. Central Highlanders told us:

- ▶ They want better access to reliable health services, including allied health care, as a fundamental human right
- ▶ The withdrawal of the Rural Primary Health Service had a big impact on communities
- ▶ The new pharmacy in Bothwell has made a real difference
- ▶ Resources are needed to improve health literacy – a place-based approach, such as The Right Place, could help improve service knowledge and access
- ▶ It would be advantageous to map current services and provide a directory to local GPs
- ▶ A wellness practitioner could help support communities to stay healthy and well
- ▶ There is a shortage of aged care packages, and limits to service delivery, particularly in more remote parts of the Central Highlands
- ▶ The Health Action Team Central Highlands (HATCH) plays an important role in planning and facilitating health and wellness across the Central Highlands
- ▶ Service rules set by Governments don't always apply appropriately to rural and remote areas.





## ADVANCING WELLNESS

The Central Highlands Health and Wellbeing Plan: *Being Well and Staying Well in the Heart of Tasmania* aims to prevent ill-health and build better health. It builds on strengths and provides ways for Central Highlanders and Central Highlands communities to connect with their own health and wellbeing, the services they need, and a healthy and well future.

The Plan builds better health and wellbeing across three domains:

1. Healthy Communities
2. Better Health
3. Future Wellbeing

### Healthy Communities

#### Aim

*To increase community leadership and continue Council support for community-led actions that build social support and address the SNAPS factors (smoking, nutrition, alcohol, physical activity and stress).*

Central Highlanders care about each other. In the many diverse and distinctive towns and villages across the landscape, small groups of Highlanders get together to deliver practical action and build the social ties needed for good health. These small community-led actions advance wellness and help prevent physical and mental ill-health.

#### Measures of success

- ▶ Reduced smoking
- ▶ Improved nutrition
- ▶ Reduced harmful alcohol use
- ▶ Increased physical activity
- ▶ Reduced stress
- ▶ Increased volunteer participation.

### Better Health

#### Aim

*To increase knowledge of, and access to, services that are responsive, caring and supportive of good health.*

Better services support people to get well and stay well – like transport connections to local primary health care, and in-home services for aged and chronic care. Better health also results from improved service system networks and service knowledge. Council has a leading role in advocating for, and supporting primary health services, access to specialist and aged care services, appropriate transport connections, and emergency response.

#### Measures of success

- ▶ Continuous GP practices at Ouse and Bothwell
- ▶ Increased in-home care services
- ▶ Current comprehensive service directory

### Future Wellbeing

#### Aim

*To ensure children and young people are invested in life in the Central Highlands and are connected to education and employment opportunities that capitalise on our natural assets.*

By addressing the needs of infants, children and young people, and supporting education and employment across the Council area, there'll be a better future for everyone.

#### Measures of success

- ▶ Reduced youth unemployment rate
- ▶ Increased school retention to Year 12
- ▶ Increased activities for young children and parents

## ACHIEVING OUR AIMS

This Plan forges an ambitious future for the health and wellbeing of Central Highlanders. It places communities at the centre and enables Central Highlanders to be well, get well and stay well.

The Plan will be implemented across the three domains – Healthy Communities, Better Health and Future Wellbeing. The Aim of each domain sets out what needs to be achieved overall, while the Actions support achievement of the Aims. A low, medium, or high priority is assigned to each Action to recognise the limited resources of Council, the vastness and diversity of the Central Highlands, and the need to genuinely engage with communities.

The priority ratings are:

- ▶ HIGH – within one to two years
- ▶ MEDIUM – within two to three years
- ▶ LOW – within three to five years

The Central Highlands Council, in collaboration with specialist organisations and the community, will lead implementation of the Plan. Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan Working Group, led by the Mayor, in partnership with the Health Action Team Central Highlands (HATCH), will drive the Actions and report on achievements. Priorities will be implemented in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation with key organisations.



## HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

### AIM

*To increase community leadership and Council support for community-led actions that build social support and address the SNAPS factors (smoking, nutrition, alcohol, physical activity and stress).*

ACTION	ORGANISATION	PRIORITY
<p>1. Engage a community development officer to build community leadership and facilitate tailored, community-specific programs that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Reduce smoking</li> <li>▶ Increase healthy eating especially fruit and vegetables</li> <li>▶ Reduce alcohol use</li> <li>▶ Increase physical activity</li> <li>▶ Reduce stress</li> <li>▶ Increase use of local facilities</li> </ul>	Council	High
2. Implement Highlands Healthy Connect Project targeting healthy eating and physical activity	HATCH THS	High
3. Connect older people with community activities to decrease social isolation and increase general wellbeing	Council Community Service Providers	High
4. Prioritise supportive infrastructure that increases walkability and liveability of towns and villages in consultation with local communities	Council	Medium
5. Examine ways to better publicise and increase knowledge of activities taking place in towns and villages across the Central Highlands	Council HATCH	Medium
6. Partner with Volunteering Tasmania to increase volunteer participation in communities	THS Volunteering Tasmania	High
7. Build bushfire resilience in local communities that recognises the unique location, risks, hazards and resources of each community	Council Community Tasmanian Fire Service	High

## BETTER HEALTH

### AIM

*To increase knowledge of, and access to, services that are responsive, caring and supportive of good health.*

ACTION	ORGANISATION	PRIORITY
1. Implement the Community Education of Available Health Services Project to increase community knowledge and understanding of available health services	Council THS HATCH	High
2. Collaborate with Primary Health Tasmania and Corumbene Care to maintain and expand in-home care for chronic conditions	Council Corumbene PHT	High
3. Advocate for increased in-home care services that meet the needs of older Central Highlanders	Council	High
4. Continue to support, and where needed, subsidise general practice and allied health services at Ouse and Bothwell to ensure Central Highlanders get clinic- and home-based care based on need	Council	High
5. Advocate for increased bus services between Central Highlands' towns and between these towns and major centres (Hobart, Launceston) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue and where possible, expand Council and community-based transport services</li> </ul>	Council	High
6. Identify and collaborate with an aged care training provider to deliver certified training locally to increase trained aged care support workers in the Central Highlands	Council PHT	Low
7. Lead development of a strategic services plan that maps health services and quantifies service type and demand as the basis for future service planning	Council	Low
8. Collaborate with Ambulance Tasmania, the Tasmanian Fire Service and Volunteering Tasmania to increase the number of trained volunteers to respond in emergencies	Council THS Volunteering Tasmania	High

## FUTURE WELLBEING

### AIM

*To ensure children and young people are invested in life in the Central Highlands and are connected to education and employment opportunities that capitalise on our natural assets.*

ACTION	ORGANISATION	PRIORITY
1. Engage with young people to develop a Youth Policy that increases their participation in, and commitment to, the Central Highlands	Council	High
2. Develop an information resource, together with a visiting employer and work experience program, to engage upper primary and secondary school students in local employment options and opportunities	Council Local business Department of Education	Medium
3. Develop and seek funding for an innovative collective impact project that engages young people in new ways in the life of the Central Highlands	Council	Low
4. Develop a whole-of-Central Highlands program for children and their parents that creates strong community connections between towns, drawing on previously successful programs and community-led activities	Council	Medium
5. Report on and renew the <i>Central Highlands Destination Action Plan 2016-2019</i>	Council Implementation Leadership Group	High
6. Support tourism infrastructure and development that align with the qualities, strengths and values of the Central Highlands	Council	High