

Mildura and Northern Mallee Regional Service Plan


Community Engagement Report
November 2020



Victorian Health and Human Services

BUILDING AUTHORITY



An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. A wide river flows through the upper half of the image, surrounded by dense green trees. Below the river, the land is divided into a patchwork of agricultural fields. Some fields are bright green, likely corn, while others are brown or tan, indicating different stages of cultivation or different crops. Small clusters of houses and buildings are scattered throughout the landscape, particularly along the river and in the lower right. The overall scene is a mix of natural beauty and human-made agricultural land.

Welcome to Country

The Mildura region has a long and rich Aboriginal history and its towns are located on the lands of the Latji Latji, Wergaia, Ngintait, Nyeri Nyeri and Ngargad nations. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Future health care needs for Mildura and Northern Mallee

Introduction

On 23 August 2019 the Victorian Government announced that the Mildura Base Hospital would transfer from private to public operations on 15 September 2020.

As part of the hospital transition, to better understand and shape the future of health services in the Mildura and Northern Mallee region, the Victorian Government has been working with the local community to develop a Regional Service Plan.

As part of the engagement process, the Victorian Health and Human Services Building Authority undertook a community engagement process to ensure voices from the local community were heard and views were captured. This is a summary of the survey report findings.

Community engagement overview



A community consultative committee was formed in November 2019 to represent community perspectives.



A survey seeking community feedback was made available via the Engage Victoria website.



Education campaign to inform locals about how and where they could have their say.



Distribution of information materials to more than 20 local stakeholder groups, informing them about the survey.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, face-to-face engagement activities were cancelled.

Community consultative committee

The committee was established in November 2019 to facilitate community involvement in the regional service planning process. The group met five times during the period November 2019 to November 2020 and was chaired by Member for Mildura, Ali Cupper.

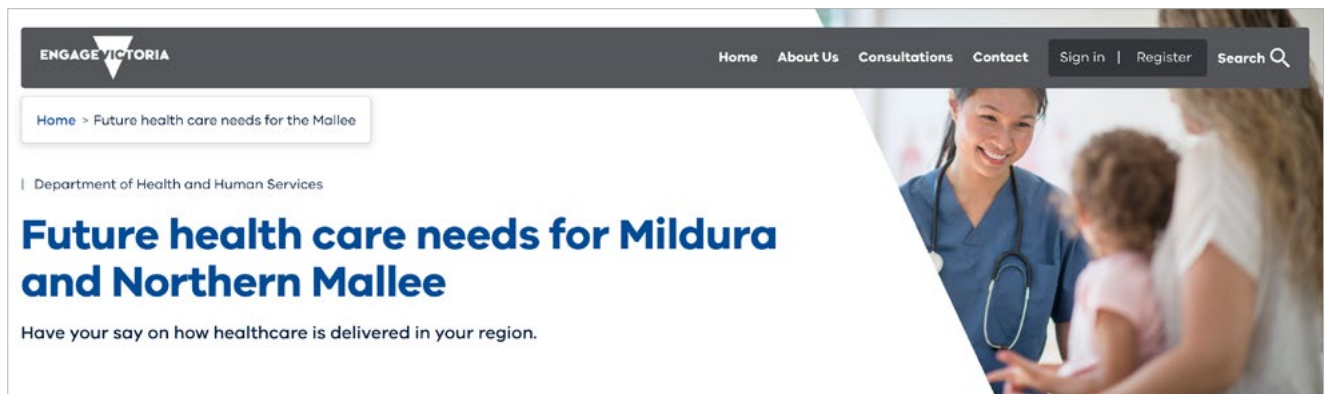
The committee members included:

- Barb Kelly
- Charles Albanese
- Darren Perry
- David Hall
- Dylan Brook
- Hannah Hayes
- Joanne Rodda
- Jessie Lu
- Nicole McLeod
- Paul O'Neill
- Rebecca Hynam
- Sandra Stewart
- Sarah Philpott
- Sheryldine Wilson
- Tony Alessi



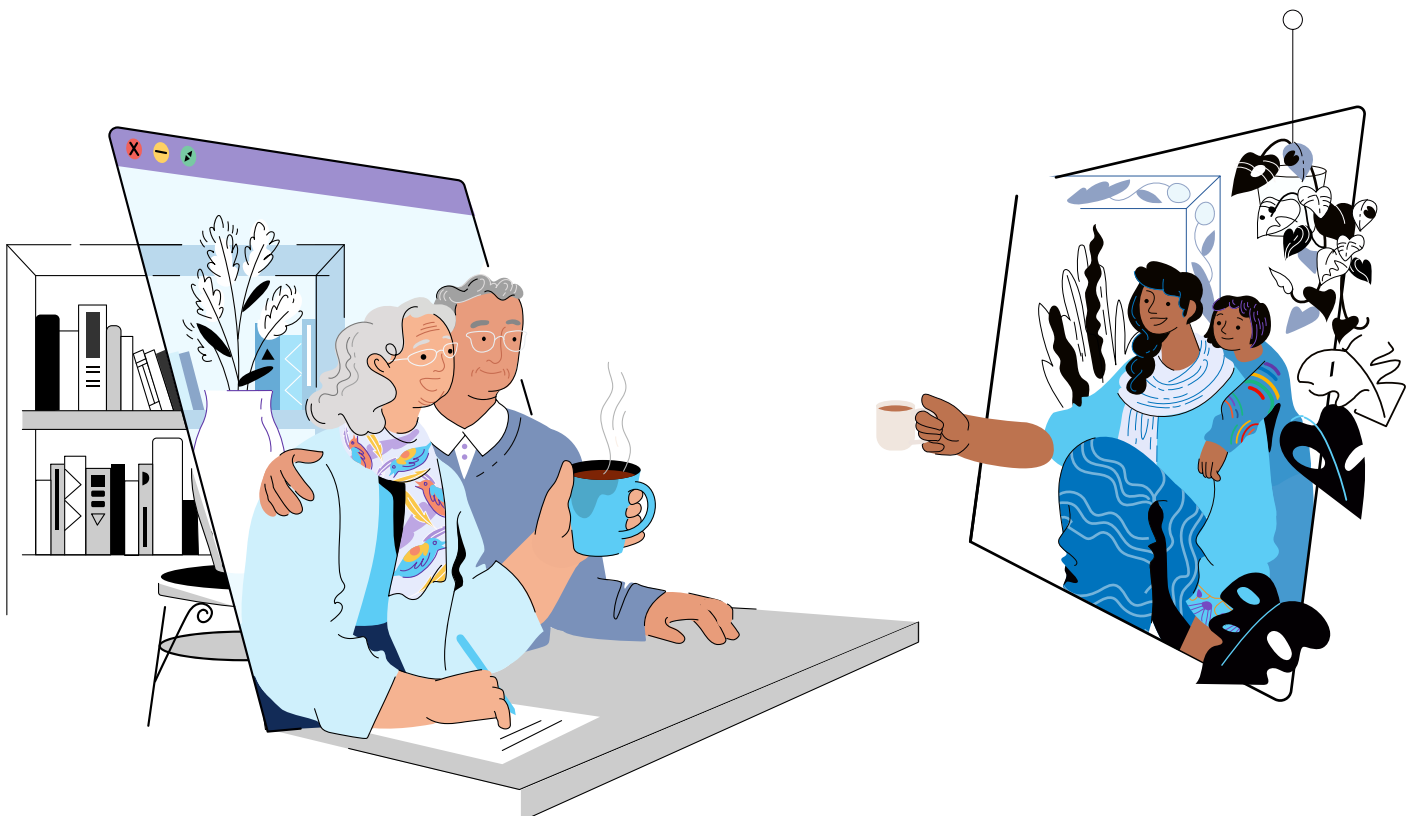
Committee members meeting, pre-COVID-19 restrictions

Survey engagement overview



To better understand the current health and health service issues facing the residents of the Mildura and Northern Mallee region, a survey was developed asking residents about their health, the health services and service providers they used and what health services they felt were needed in the region in the future. The survey was available on the [Engage Victoria website](https://engage.vic.gov.au/future-health-care-needs-mallee) <engage.vic.gov.au/future-health-care-needs-mallee> from Wednesday 20 May until Sunday 12 July 2020.

This survey followed on from another that the Department of Health and Human Services undertook from 11 October 2018 to 28 February 2019, where feedback was sought from residents on the preferences and views regarding the provision of public health care services in Mildura and surrounding areas. We listened to what the community had to say and on 23 August 2019 the then Minister for Health, Jenny Mikakos announced that the Mildura Base Hospital would be transitioned back to public sector management.



Survey campaign

An education campaign helped to inform locals about the survey, using a mix of advertising on local radio, in the Sunraysia Daily newspaper and targeted social media. The Victorian Health and Human Services Building Authority's website and social media channels were also used to keep locals updated.

Print advertisements

Want better health services in the Mallee?



We're planning the health services Mildura and the Northern Mallee will need in the future and we'd love to hear your thoughts. What's important, what's working, and what isn't?

Share your thoughts for a healthier community in the Mallee via our online survey.

Be quick as it closes Sunday 12 July.

Make your voice count at engage.vic.gov.au/future-healthcare-needs-mallee or scan the QR code to access the survey on your mobile phone.



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Social media

Sponsored/targeted social media posts using Facebook.



During the campaign period, Facebook advertisements reached 57,445 people in the region. Women were the most engaged across all age brackets.

Mallee residents, we need to talk



**Victorian Health and Human Services Building Authority** May 26 · 🌐

Mildura and Northern Mallee communities, we want to hear from you! We're planning the future of health services in the Mallee and this is a great opportunity to have your say.

Share your ideas and join the conversation via our survey: <https://bit.ly/3g87CN4>... See More

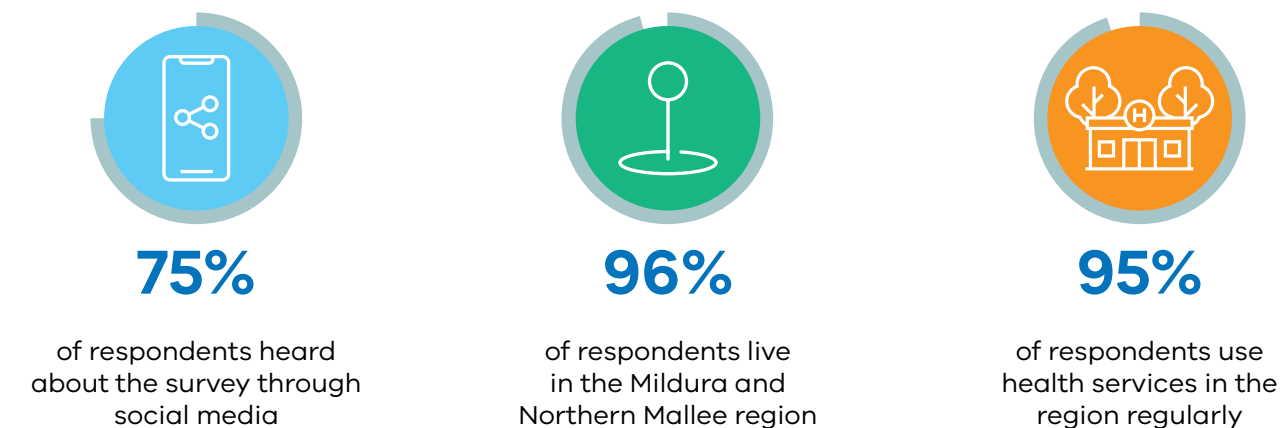
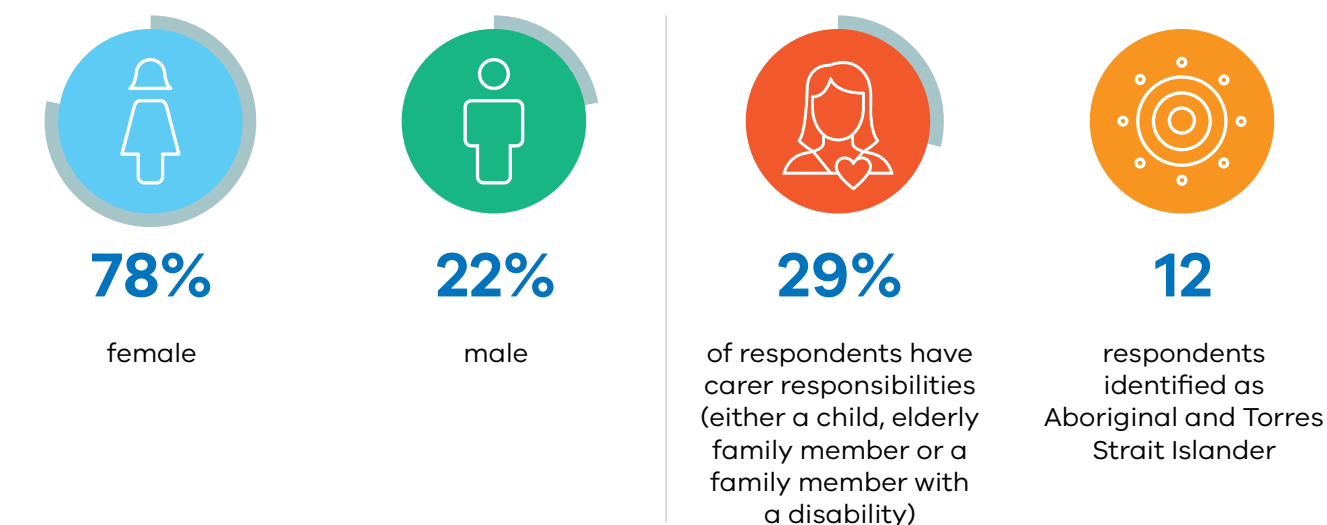
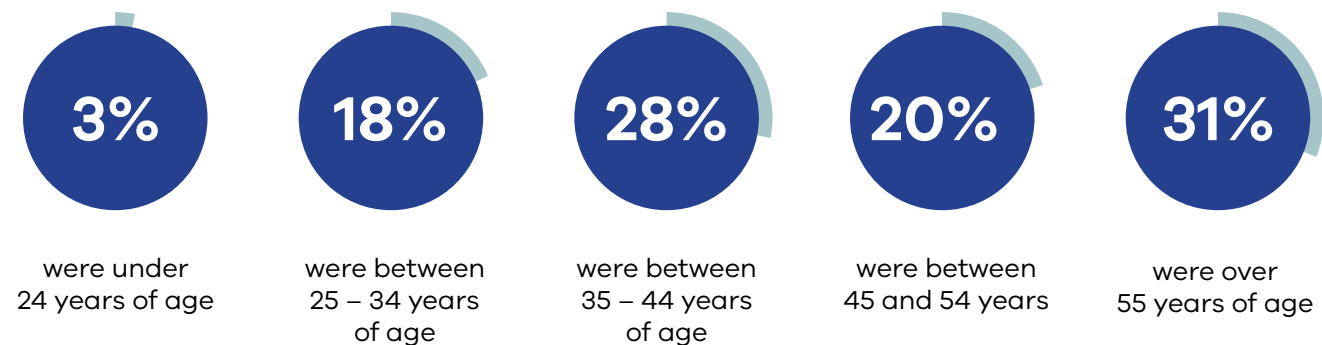


ENGAGE.VIC.GOV.AU
Future health care needs for the Mallee
I have your say on how future healthcare is delivered in Mildura and the...

Who we heard from...

472 people completed the survey

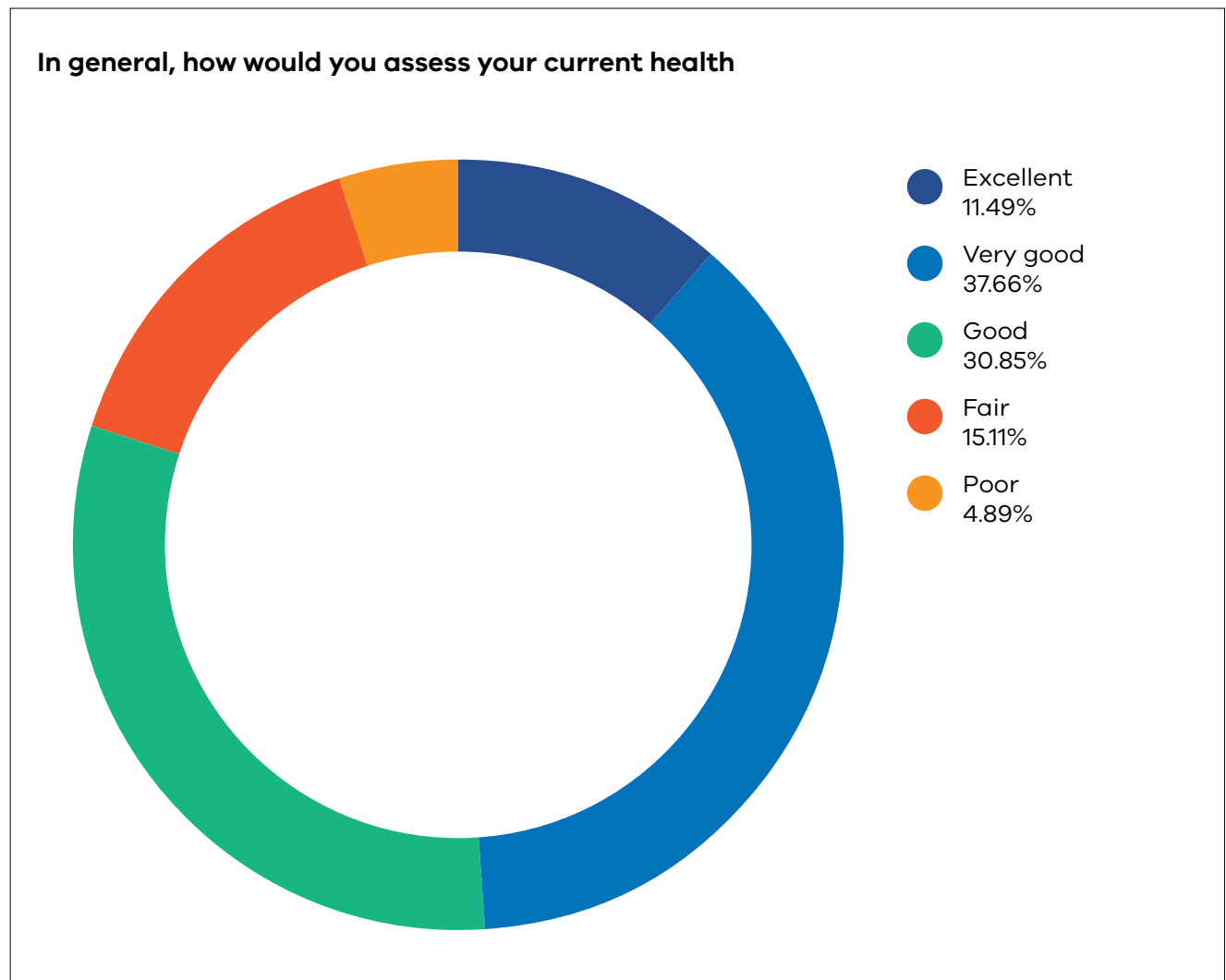
About the respondents



What you told us...

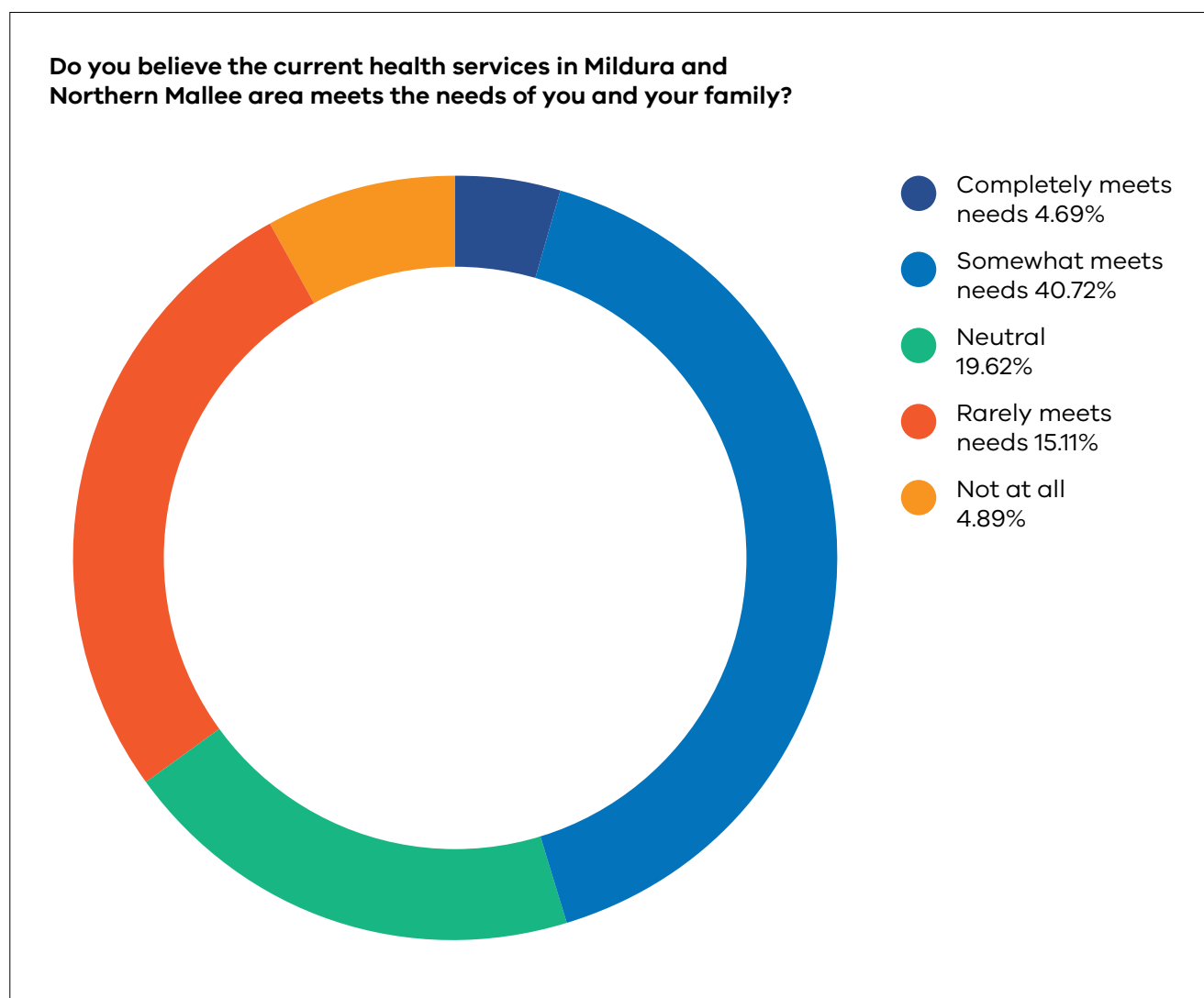
How respondents rated their health

We asked respondents how they would assess their current health and 80% of respondents rated their health as good or better.



How respondents rated their local health services

When respondents were asked if health services in Mildura and Northern Mallee area met their needs and those of their family, almost 41% felt that the current health services somewhat met their needs, and almost 5% felt that their needs were completely met.



For those who rated health services as '**not meeting their needs**', respondents felt:

- a lot of services are hard to reach or there is a long waiting time when being referred especially in the mental health area
- there needs to be better access to specialist services who visit the area more frequently (for example, mental health, cancer, paediatrics, cardiologists).

Top three health issues

Respondents rated their three most important health issues as:



1

Emergency treatment



2

Children's health services



3

Maternal health services

Frequency of visits to health services

When respondents were asked how often they or their family visited health services, 50% of respondents said that they visited a health service (GP or medical clinic) **'every few months'**.

When respondents were asked how easy it was to get an appointment to see a medical professional or service when they needed it, most stated they found it either **'difficult'** or **'somewhat difficult'**:

It's difficult to get an appointment with local paediatricians

Access to see psychiatrists, especially those with specialties

I have to travel 200 miles to Mildura for an MRI scan, and have appointments with a visiting orthopaedic specialist from Melbourne who consults in Mildura one day per month

It is difficult to see any specialist as most only come to the region monthly or fortnightly from a capital city. If they are local they are very busy and hard to see quickly

Accessing medical appointments/ treatments

Nearly 100% respondents **use their own vehicle** to get to their medical appointment/treatment and when they travelled to their last medical appointment, 55% of respondents stated it took them **less than 15 minutes** to get there.

The good news is that **most people don't delay** or put off seeking treatment or medical advice, despite 32% of respondents reporting that they **travelled beyond the region** to access treatment not available locally.



Top health issues

Respondents were asked to provide comments they felt would assist the planning of future healthcare services in their region. The key themes to emerge were:



importance of mental health services in the region



better access to GPs, particularly in the smaller towns outside the Mildura centre



cost can be a factor when requiring medical treatment or service



improved hospital services were asked for, including the emergency department



infrastructure is important in attracting GPs, medical specialists and services.

Other things we heard

It would be so nice as we get older to not travel many miles for a 30 minute appointment with the inconvenience of having to stay overnight when having to see two professionals over two days.

We need a good GP service and a proper medical centre with more than one GP as we are multicultural town. We need more services in smaller towns first like Robinvale. Please don't just fund Mildura it won't help the smaller outlying towns at all.

Most of the medical specialists, doctors and allied health clinics here do not bulk bill which makes it particularly expensive if you need ongoing treatment. I have had to budget to enable payment of treatment, tests, therapies.

I think this area is starting to die and one reason why is the lack of infrastructure. Healthwise we are too far from Melbourne and the standard of care is poor

Please consider whole of region requirements, including cross-border population. Wentworth Shire Council has formed an Interagency Group of agencies working in health and social determinants of health and they meet monthly.

Thank you

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to the survey. For more information and to keep updated with next steps, visit www.vhhsba.vic.gov.au/health/regional-facilities/mildura-and-northern-mallee-service-plan



Notes

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