



Feedback from the 2019 Community Engagement Session

The 2019 annual Community Engagement Session took place on 11 June 2019 at the Morwell Bowling Club. Forty-two people attended the Session which was facilitated by Professor John Catford, Chair, Latrobe Health Assembly. Jane Anderson, the Latrobe Health Advocate, took part and provided concluding comments. A powerpoint presentation was used to guide the session. The Principal Investigators set the scene, reporting progress to date and providing examples of emerging outcomes from the study. There were five Roundtables and community participants all spent 15 minutes in conversation with researchers at three tables of their choice. Researchers outlined their proposed research activities for Years 6 – 10.

Key feedback from the community through Roundtable Conversations included:

Child Development

1. There was concern expressed about the adverse findings to date in very young children and a clear message that the health outcomes findings should be tracked over a prolonged period of time to see if there are long term implications for the health and wellbeing of the children.
2. There was support for the proposed allergy testing and interest in more detailed examination of immune function.

Psychological Impacts

1. General positivity about the operations of the study and the emerging findings.
2. Interest in how the mine fire effect was isolated from other factors, including lifestyle factors and broader societal influences like the closure of the Hazelwood power station.

Heart and Lung Health

1. Acceptance of the findings to date for the respiratory and cardiovascular streams and the proposed 5-year plan.
2. Acknowledgement of the importance of ongoing evaluation of outcomes via data linkage.

Health Service Use

- There was particular interest in mortality data - a few theories on people with pre-existing conditions and how the fire may have hastened their death. There was also mention of middle-aged men and risk taking during the fire leading to injury (e.g. falling off ladders).

Community Wellbeing and Older People

- General support to continue to measure the community's well-being and any changes over time.

Comments from the Latrobe Health Advocate

The Latrobe Health Advocate acknowledged the lively conversations and the desire and willingness of members of the community and the researchers to engage in the conversations.

What the Latrobe Health Advocate heard:

- Support for the study's methodology going forward.
- The desire for the findings to have an impact.
- The importance of the community understanding the impact of the study's findings – what have we learned?
- In particular, what impact is the study having on health services?
- The need to use the learnings to improve the future well-being of the community.