



Identifying health and social priorities in South West Victoria: A Delphi study

A Project completed by the
Deakin University/DH/DHS Strategic Alliance
www.deakin.edu.au/dhs/index.php

Background

Since 1998 the Victorian Department of Health, the Department of Human Services and Deakin University have been engaged in the Barwon South West Alliance (SW Alliance). The SW Alliance provides a vehicle for policy and practice innovation and enables conversations and collaboration between the Departments of Health, the Department of Human Services, Deakin University, and other relevant organizations across the Barwon South West region. The SW Alliance is structured to include the following three advisory groups (www.deakin.edu.au/dhs/advisory-group-tor.php):

- The Prevention Capacity Building Advisory Group aims to help the development of whole of system responses to address health and social problems and improve population outcomes in the Barwon South West Region.
- The Workforce Advisory Group has recently assisted the completion of a regional workforce strategy through the Department of Health
- The Research Advisory Group facilitated the study reported in this document that has been planned to coincide with the local and regional health priority setting activities occurring across the region in 2013.

Method

This paper reports on a Delphi survey (a forecasting and innovation consulting survey technique) conducted with people from across the Barwon South West Region of Victoria in 2012/13. The aim of the study was to identify priority health and social problems and actions and research to address these priorities. The sample invited to participate was identified using available databases of employees working in a range of sectors across the region. Invitations to participate in the study were sent to 90 people working in the region and 50 responded (56%).

Results

The respondents described their employers as: State government (18%); Local Government (26%); Health services (24%); Regional planning (6%); University and other academics (8%); and other employers (8%). The respondents described the following as the geographic area most relevant to them: All the South West Region (29%), G21 (www.g21.com.au) or Geelong (14%), Other LGA in G21 (10%), Great South Coast (GSC: www.greatsouthcoast.com.au) region (16%), Warrnambool (14%), Other LGA in GSC (16%).

The table below reveals the main health and social priorities listed by respondents were obesity (50%), mental health (40%), Service gaps (40%) and Education and Disadvantage (each 30%). In addition to those listed, other priorities were: Disability (3 respondents); Prevention (3); Indigenous (3); Housing (3); Respiratory health (3); Climate change (2); Oral health (2); Gambling (1); and Injury (1).

Table: Health and social issues listed as one of the three main priorities

Health and social issue listed as one of top three priorities	% of respondents	Differences
Obesity – <i>diabetes and chronic disease</i>	50%	Area
Mental Health – <i>including in sub-populations</i>	40%	
Service Gaps – <i>e.g., allied health, telemedicine, immunisation, community services, coordination, oral health, respiratory health</i>	40%	
Education – <i>e.g., Year 12 completion</i>	30%	Employer
Disadvantage – <i>including in sub-populations</i>	30%	Area
Children and Youth	18%	
Alcohol and Drugs	16%	
Economy/ employment	14%	Area
Workforce	10%	
Violence	8%	
Ageing	8%	

N = 50 respondents. Respondents were able to nominate up to three priorities. Differences - significant when respondents were grouped by geographic "Area" or "Employer" and the percentage listing priorities were compared using the Chi-square test

There were three priorities that showed significant differences for respondents describing different geographic areas:

- Respondents in Geelong or the other G21 areas were less likely to report obesity as a priority compared to respondents in the west of the region ($p < 0.016$)
- In relation to disadvantage, respondents from Geelong or other G21 areas, were more likely to report this issue as a priority ($p < 0.003$) compared to respondents in the west
- Finally, respondents familiar with Geelong and other G21 areas or "All" the region were the only ones to rate economy/employment as a priority ($p < 0.04$).

One priority showed differences for those in different employment settings:

- Respondents employed in local government were more likely to report education as a priority compared to respondents in other employment settings ($p < 0.019$).

In addition to examining health and social priorities the Delphi also examined participant perspectives on actions and research to address these priorities.

More detailed reports from the Delphi study are planned in the future for:

- different stakeholders including local government and regional planners at G21 and the Greater South Coast
- research publication

This brief overview report prepared 19th August 2013.

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