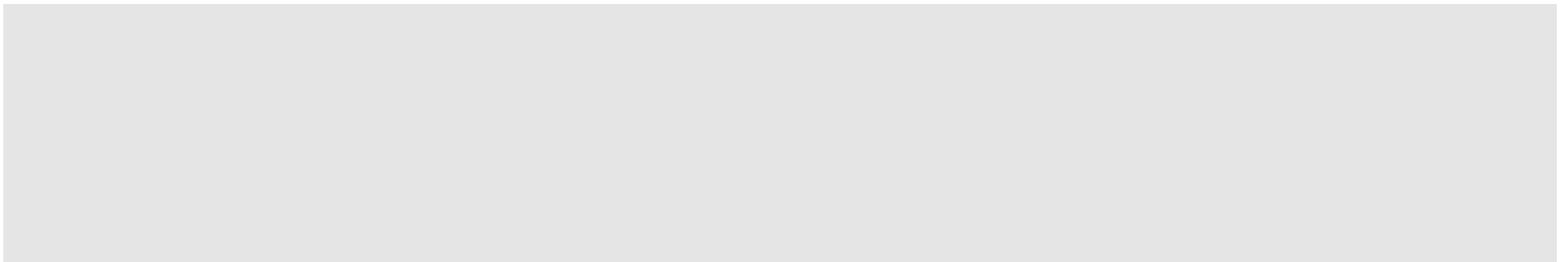


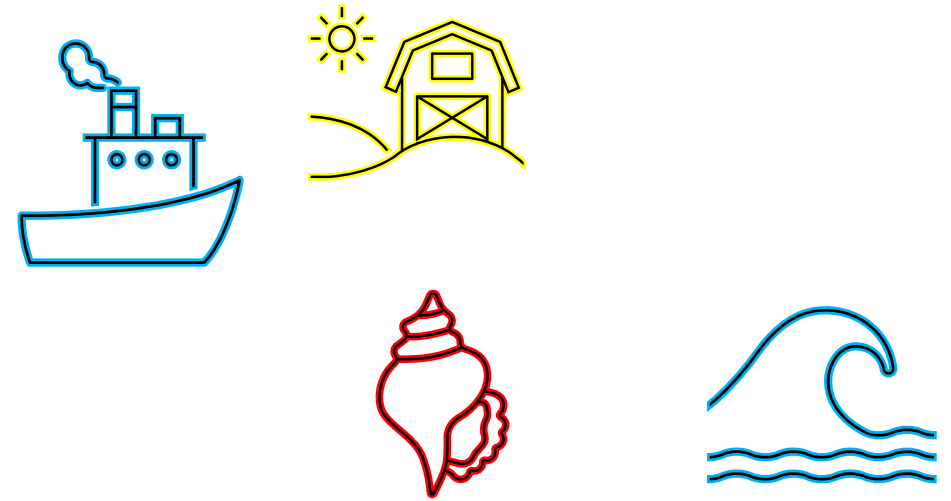
Mallacoota and District Community
Consultation on Health Services
Gippsland PHN
April 2021



About Mallacoota

Mallacoota is a small, very remote community in Far East Gippsland, with approximately 1,000 permanent residents.

Gippsland Primary Health Network (PHN) commissioned Health Issues Centre (HIC), an independent consumer advocacy organisation, to consult with the Mallacoota community to better understand their experiences of health services in the area.



About the consultation

The aim of the project was to determine if local health services are meeting the needs of the community. A survey was made available online and disseminated in hard copy in March 2021 through local social networks and community organisations to hear from the community about:

- What services they use
- Frequency of service use
- Accessibility of services
- Quality of the services they use



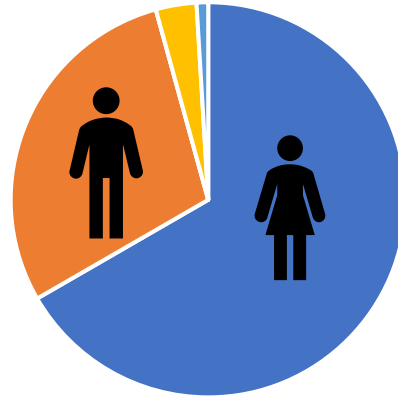
Who Participated and how

There were 218 responses indicating that approximately 20% of the total population participated.

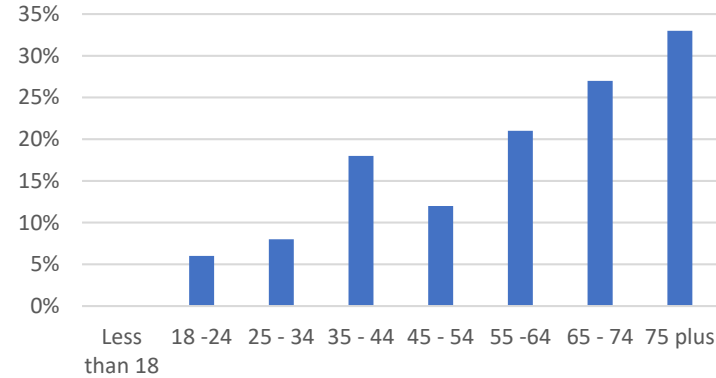
Most people completed a paper based version of the survey rather than online with 137 of the total 218 completed in this format.

Gender of participants

Approximately twice as many women completed the survey compared to men.



Age of Survey Respondents



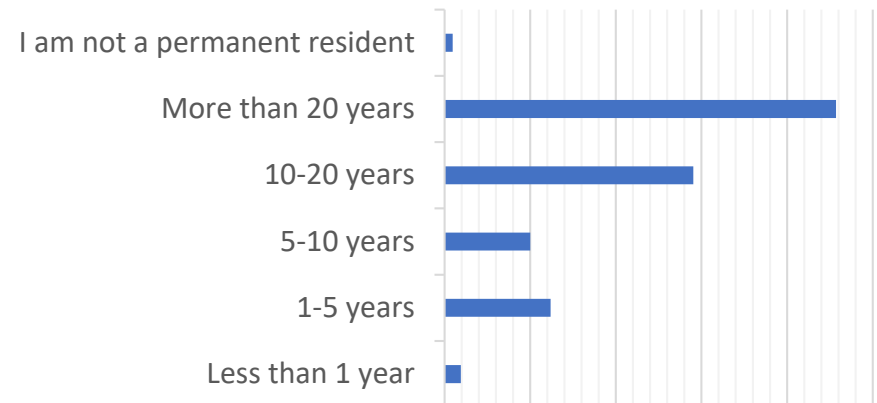
Age of participants

Most respondents were aged 65 years or older, with no one under 18 completing the survey.

Length of residence

A majority of the respondents (75%) had lived in Mallacoota for more than 10 years.

Length of Residence of Respondents



What health services do people use and where do they get them?

Services most commonly sourced locally are:

- General practice (82%)
- Pharmacy (78%)
- Allied health (57%)

Services most commonly sourced outside Mallacoota are:

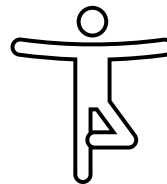
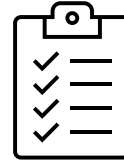
- Medical specialists (87%)
- Dentists (74%)

Most frequently used services are:

- Pharmacy (61% at least once a month)
- General practice (26% at least once a month and 50% between 1-6 months)

When asked about ability to access health services when needed, responses were:

- 67% always or usually
- 25% sometimes
- 8% struggle



What are people's view on the quality of services

The survey found that most people:

- were pleased with the ease of getting a referral to another service (72% positive)
- had confidence in the skills of their health professionals (69% positive response)
- thought that the cost was reasonable (69% positive)
- were happy with the ability to secure bulk billing services (62% positive)
- thought that the health services were appropriate to needs (55% positive score)

Respondents were less complimentary about:

- the choice of services available (45% negative) and
- services working together to provide quality care (45% negative)

Major findings

Generally happy considering remoteness

Many participants recognise the limitations of living in a remote area and complimented the local services for their quality and range.

Difficulty accessing specialist care

Many of the survey responses spoke of the difficulty accessing visiting specialists and the need to seek care in major regional centres. Others noted that the remoteness of Mallacoota means that in addition to long waiting lists, residents seeking specialist care out of town often incur the cost of an overnight stay. Several people pointed out that those that are most likely to require specialist care, i.e. the old and frail or those with chronic conditions are least able to manage the ordeal of travelling.

Burden of Travel

Closely linked to the need to access specialist care out of town is the need to travel for services beyond basic primary care. Others spoke of the lack of transport options available particularly for those that need additional assistance. Finally, there were also some people who expressed that the travel burden could be reduced through more telehealth.

After Hours Care

The need for services to be available other than 9-5 Monday to Friday featured in many submissions. People welcome the availability of the after hours ambulance service but were concerned about the need to be transported to a regional hospital for care.

Aged Care

The need for better aged and palliative care emerged in many submissions. This is related to the after hours theme particularly for those requiring aged care. Other people expressed concerns about how they will manage as they age and expressed that they may need to move if services are not available locally.

Better coordination of care

Another theme to emerge was that people believe that their care could be better coordinated across health service providers.