



Department of
Rural Health



Health in Cobram

Crossroads II

A population health study 2016-2018

The Study

Crossroads II is a study of health, use of health services and undiagnosed disease in rural and regional communities in northern Victoria. It was conducted in 2016 – 2018 as a follow up of a baseline study, Crossroads I, conducted between 2001 and 2003. The aim of this report is to provide local residents with information about local health needs.

Households in Cobram township were randomly selected from council lists and visited by university researchers who asked a range of questions. Following, an adult was randomly selected and invited to a health screening clinic where key health tests were conducted. This study reports on 431 residents of Cobram who completed an extensive health questionnaire and 121 adults who attended a screening clinic in 2017 and 2018. While a small sample and more likely female and older, the respondents were selected randomly and visited repeatedly to achieve a response rate of 60% for the household questionnaire and 67% for the clinic.

Key Findings

- ▶ **78%** rated their health as good or better
- ▶ **95%** said they had visited a GP in the previous 12 months
- ▶ **86%** of respondents indicated they were bulk billed
- ▶ **44%** of respondents indicated they visited a medical specialist in the past year
- ▶ **23%** reported using a hospital Emergency Department (ED) or Urgent Care Centre (UCC) in the past year
- ▶ **12%** reported using mental health and wellbeing services in the past year
- ▶ **43%** identified that they had seen a dentist or dental professional in the previous 12 months

78% reported their health as good to excellent

69% are happy or very happy



Levels of happiness increased from 15 years ago

Clinic findings

- ▶ 13% at risk of psychological distress
- ▶ 43% had some hearing loss
- ▶ 23% had lower than normal lung function
- ▶ 40% were overweight and another 37% were obese
- ▶ 49% of men and 35% of women returned high blood pressure measurements; 55% of those aged 65+ and 23% of those 18-64 had high blood pressure.

Use of health services

Have you had your health checks?

In the past year:

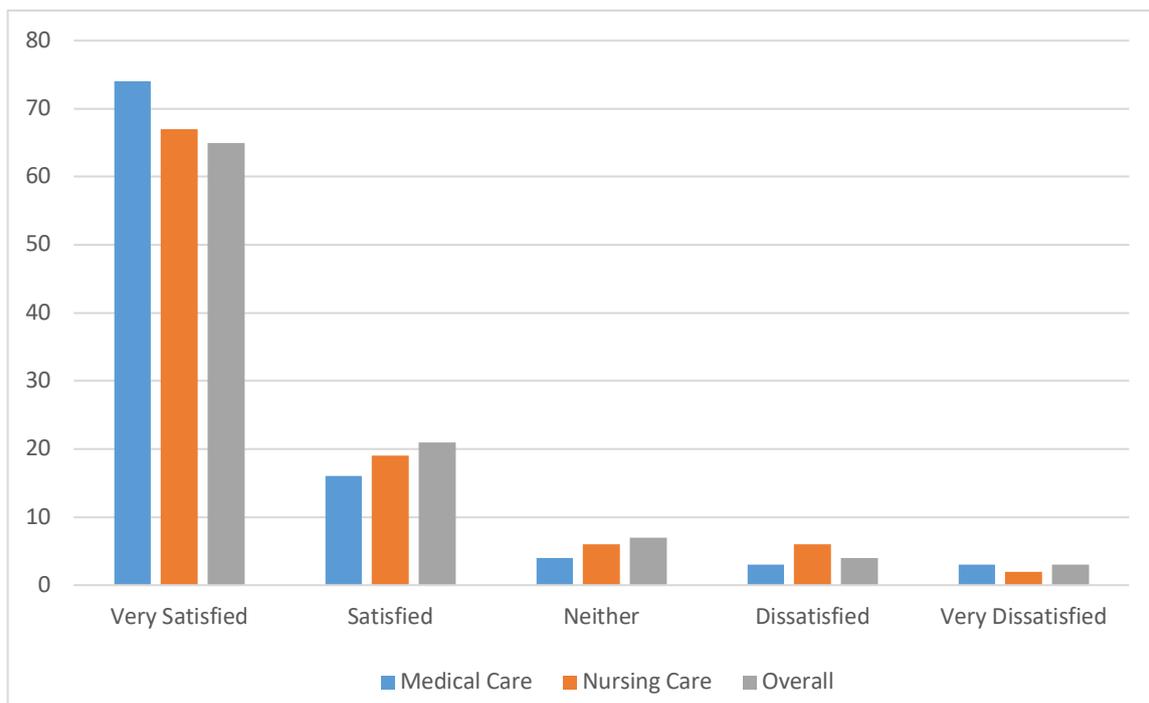
- ✓ 93% had a blood pressure check
- ✓ 78% had undergone a cholesterol check
- ✓ 69% had been checked for diabetes/high blood sugar
- ✓ 43% had a bowel examination
- ✓ 44% had a skin examination for lesions or cancers

These had all increased since the study 15 years earlier

Distance reported travelled to key health services (%)

	Less than 10km	11-50km	50-100km	More than 100km
GP	92	4	3	1
Dentist	79	4	14	3
Medical Specialist	5.5	0.5	61	33
Hospital	78	1	16	5

Figure 2: Satisfaction with hospital stay among those hospitalised in past year (Crossroads II)



We're on the right track....

We acknowledge the hard work of local health services, local health practitioners and the local Shire to provide services, increase access to services and provide appropriate health care, as demonstrated through the new GP clinic, the new Rehabilitation Centre, increased access to GPs, medical specialists and allied health professionals, development of telehealth services and a range of initiatives in the local area focused on health care, aged care and healthy living since Crossroads I.

Health behaviours

Health behaviours are key to people's long-term health and wellbeing.



52% eat recommended daily fruit



10% eat recommended intake of vegetables daily



66% reported participating in physical exercise



Increase in take away food consumption



16% are current smokers, less than Victorian average



64% of adults reported not drinking alcohol

Health conditions reported by respondents in Crossroads I and II

Health Check	Crossroads I (%)	Crossroads II (%)
High blood pressure	24	40
High cholesterol (blood fats)	12	33
Arthritis	19	31
Depression	8	24
Digestive problems	11	24
Hearing loss	15	23
Chronic pain	NA	22
Heart problems	8	21
Respiratory problems	7	18
Disability that restricts daily living	NA	18
Cancer	12	13
Circulatory problems	4	11
Diabetes	7	11
Thyroid problems	3	10
Osteoporosis	3	9
Kidney disease	4	6
Stroke	2	4

With this in mind, three recommendations are proposed:

1. strategies to improve management of chronic disease in Cobram are developed for all ages;
2. strategies to increase access to quality services are considered, particularly in relation to mental health and health promotion;
3. strategies to improve health behaviours are enhanced, including fun, community activity programs in Cobram to engage people of all ages in exercise and social participation.

Overall

- Measure of health and happiness had increased slightly over the past 15 years and were above state average;
- Some of the most prevalent health conditions were related to ageing, including eye problems, arthritis, heart problems and hearing loss;
- Rates of chronic disease were identified as higher than found in the previous Crossroads I study, particularly high cholesterol, high blood pressure, depression, allergies, arthritis, heart problems, thyroid problems, diabetes, respiratory problems, circulatory problems eye problems, osteoporosis, digestive problems, hearing loss, stroke and kidney disease;
- Rates of mental health conditions were found to be high while use of mental health services was less frequent;
- Use of services had increased, particularly use of medical specialists, dentists, optometrists, physiotherapists and osteopaths;
- Access to services has increased significantly since the Crossroads I study, although it is still a concern for some residents;
- Age is not related to hospitalisation, satisfaction with services or happiness; and
- Health behaviours, with the exception of smoking, had not improved since Crossroads I and increases in the prevalence of obesity are concerning.



A note of thanks...

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Contact Details:

- ✉ drh-info@unimelb.edu.au
- 📍 <http://go.unimelb.edu.au/so6r>
- 📞 +61 3 5823 4500

Lisa Bourke
Department of Rural Health
49 Graham Street
PO Box 6500 Shepparton VIC 3632

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