

# BATTLE FROM BIRTH: Geelong's north being 'left behind'

## Great divide a real killer

HARRISON TIPPET

GEELONG'S most disadvantaged residents are living shorter lives and facing far bigger health issues than those living in the region's more affluent areas, alarming figures reveal.

The vast inequality between the city's haves and have-nots has prompted the leader of one key community organisation to warn "the city's north has been left behind".

Data released by Torrens University's Public Health Information Development Unit (PHIDU) today reveals a startling gap in health outcomes between disadvantaged and

advantaged individuals.

It shows residents in Corio-Norlane, the city's most socio-economically disadvantaged area, had shorter life expectancies, higher rates of psychiatric distress and mental or behavioural problems, greater reliance on income support and higher rates of lung cancer when compared with the region's most advantaged postcodes.

Even babies born in Corio-Norlane face greater health risks, with almost twice the likelihood of being born underweight when compared with those born to parents from parts of the Bellarine Peninsula.

Corio-Norlane has the third-lowest index of relative socioeconomic disadvantage in Victoria, while three of the region's areas sit in the top 20 per cent, including Lorne/Anglesea/Torquay, Highton/Newtown and Ocean Grove/Barwon Heads/Queenscliff.

The data shows the median age at death for Corio-Norlane residents is 75, at least five years younger than those who live anywhere else in the region, with Grovedale residents adding an extra 11 years on their northern neighbours.

Corio-Norlane also shows a series of sorry health statistics, including: THE highest smoking rate in

Australia, with 22.2 per cent of adults compared with just 10 per cent in Highton/Newtown;

THE second highest rate of lung cancer in Victoria, at a standardised rate of 174 compared with just 63 in Ocean Grove/Barwon Heads/Queenscliff. (The baseline standard for Australia is 100);

THE highest standardised rate (21.2 per cent) of high or very high psychiatric distress levels in adults in regional Victoria — almost double the rate in Highton/Newtown (11.2);

THE second highest rate of 'government support as main source of income over past two years' in the state (56.6 per cent), compared with 17.4 per cent in

Lorne/Anglesea/Torquay.

The figures were labelled "alarming" by Northern Futures executive officer Lyn Morgan, who said improved employment outcomes would help reduce disadvantage and improve health outcomes.

"People need jobs. I am convinced that lifting the employment rate would certainly have knock-on effect, including better health outcomes," Ms Morgan said. "Geelong is thriving ... however, this wealth is not being shared. The city's north has been left behind."

"Some people accept that Corio and Norlane will always be associated with disadvantage and unemployment and I

think this attitude has eroded our determination to have a fair and equitable city where wealth is shared."

Northern Futures is a not-for-profit organisation working to address disadvantage in Geelong's north by helping improve employment outcomes.

PHIDU director Professor John Glover said the figures showed the "magnitude of the differences in health status that exist in Australia".

He said the figures "disturbingly reveal, yet again" the poorer health outcomes for the most disadvantaged.

The series of modelled estimates are based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data.

## Fined over sex rules breach

RUSTY WOODGER

A GEELONG sex offender has been fined for failing to notify authorities that he had been intimate with an underage girl.

Brendon Walkingshaw, 23, of Norlane, kissed and cuddled the 17-year-old girl inside Geelong hospital's emergency department last August.

The Geelong Magistrates' Court heard the incident happened two years after Walkingshaw was placed on the sex offenders registry.

As a registered sex offender, he was obliged to report any contact with an underage child within 24 hours.

He pleaded guilty yesterday to failing to comply with reporting obligations.

Walkingshaw, who has an intellectual disability, was put on the sex offenders registry in 2017 for eight years.

That order was made after he admitted indecently assaulting an eight-year-old girl when he was aged 18.

Defence lawyer Bill Sizeland said his client believed the girl was 19 years old.

He said Walkingshaw's disability made his capacity to comply with reporting obligations "extremely onerous".

Magistrate John Lesser fined Walkingshaw \$400, without conviction.

"The orders are quite strict and it's important you know what they are and understand them," Mr Lesser said.

## PEDESTRIAN HIT

A WOMAN in her 20s was taken to hospital after being hit by a car in Geelong West yesterday morning.

Paramedics were called to Britannia St about midday to treat the woman for upper body injuries.

She was taken to Geelong hospital in a stable condition.



FOR THE BUSH: Spiegeltent owners Colin Davis and Melissa Head (centre back) with band members Rory Crossgrove, Ros Crook, Tony Armstrong-Carrigg and John Crossgrove.

Picture: MIKE DUGDALE

THE Spiegeltent at Barwon Heads will be hosting a fun night of great local music on Saturday to raise money for bushfire relief.

A number of musicians from around the region have come together

in the name of charity forming the Super Groovin' Big Band.

Musician John Crossgrove said others had jumped at the opportunity to raise money for charity when a performance spot became

available. It will be a conglomeration of at least 10 performers coming together over a two-hour performance beginning from 8.30pm.

The event will have a gold coin donation entry price.

## Still a good sport, says the PM

SCOTT Morrison has defended embattled deputy Nationals leader Bridget McKenzie for her role in allocating \$100 million in community sports grants in marginal seats.

A report by the Auditor-General found while Senator McKenzie was sports minister she awarded most of the grants to seats being targeted by the Coalition during the election last year.

Labor has called for the now-agriculture minister to resign and pointed to their former sports minister, Ros Kelly, who stepped down from the ministry and then parliament in 1995 following a similar affair.

But Senator McKenzie is refusing to apologise and has the support of the Prime Minister, who said no rules were broken despite allegations of pork-barrelling — funding sports clubs in marginal seats rather than on merit.

"I endorse ministers running programs that change local communities for the better," Mr Morrison told reporters in Canberra yesterday.

He said Sports Australia ultimately signed off on the cheques but the Government was taking the auditor-general's report seriously.

The report also raised concerns over whether the minister was legally able to approve the grants.

Attorney-General Christian Porter has been tasked with looking at it.

Labor small business spokesman Brendan O'Connor accused the Government of corruption, and scolded Mr Morrison for allowing it to happen on his watch.

"There's no doubt that having looked at what's been said by the auditor, that we have a problem with the way in which the Government has dealt with this matter," Mr O'Connor said Melbourne.