

Towong VitalSigns®

Discover the heartbeat
of our community

MAY 2024



BORDER TRÜST
Your Community Foundation,
activating the power of giving

OVERVIEW

We hope you find this Towong VitalSigns 2024 report of value.

It provides an overview of the Towong Shire, one of six Local Government Areas (LGAs) we've explored for our VitalSigns Project.

The VitalSigns project helps our understanding of local needs and informs where funding and support is directed. You will find the report on our entire region and a link to our online dashboard here: www.bordertrust.org.au



NATURAL DISASTERS

2001

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Towong Fires **2003**

2004 Border Trust Established

Region Wide Drought **2006**

2008 Global Financial Crisis

Black Saturday Fires **2009**

Local Floods **2018**

Black Summer Fires **2019/20**

2020/21 COVID-19
Border Closures

Albury Wodonga & Federation
Floods **2022**

2023 Cost of Living Crisis



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Border Trust acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their enduring connections to land, waterways and community. We pay our respects to elders past and present.

>> TOWONG

ABOUT

The Towong Local Government Area (LGA) is situated in northeastern Victoria, Australia, nestled in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains and bordering New South Wales along the Murray River. It spans over 6,600 square kilometres of wilderness areas, pristine waterways and sprawling national parks. In addition to the Murray River, Towong is bordered by Lake Hume and is home to the Mitta Mitta River and Lake Dartmouth.

Our region includes six Local Government Areas across Victoria and NSW.



Towong LGA is home to more than 6,000 residents and is characterised by its close-knit communities and strong rural identity. Residents benefit from a range of community services and facilities, including schools, healthcare centres, and recreational amenities. The region’s economy primarily relies on agriculture, forestry, tourism, and small-scale industries.

Towong has an ageing population, with 28.5% over 65 (16.8% for Victoria) and only 17.8% aged between 25 and 44 (29.1% for Victoria). The population of the Towong community has less diversity than Victoria with 17.6% born overseas, in comparison to 34.9% for Victoria overall.

According to the 2015 VicHealth Indicators Survey:

Towong Shire residents reported significantly greater wellbeing than all Victorians. Residents gave their wellbeing an average score of 80.8 out of 100, compared with the Victorian average of 77.3. Just over eight out of 10 (80.6%) Towong residents agreed that they felt safe walking alone in their local area after dark, which is significantly more than the Victorian estimate (55.1%) The proportion of Towong residents who agreed that people in their neighbourhood are willing to help each other out was 89.6%, significantly more than the Victorian estimate (74.1%)

During the Black Summer fires of 2019/2020, 25.4% (39% according to Helen Haines MP) of the LGA and more than 380,000 hectares of land was burnt including 34% of its farmland and 43% of its forests, resulting in widespread damage to property, infrastructure, natural landscapes and ecosystems. As many as 82 homes, hundreds of properties and buildings, businesses, 6,000 livestock, and agricultural properties were destroyed or damaged, leading to substantial economic losses for residents and local businesses. In 2022 the LGA experienced the highest levels of inundation (floods) for over 20 years, with 2.5% of land impacted.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Our Village - if Towong was 100 people

Our region has a population of 6,000 people. In our village of 100 people, 1 person represents 60 people.

51 males
49 females
2 Indigenous
23 under 25
48 between 25 and 65
29 over 65
89 speak English at home



Diversity



Housing

30 live alone
57 families with no children
10 single parent families
77 home owners
15 renters

2 born in England
1 born in New Zealand
1 born in Asia



Immigration



Health

22 have a long term condition
6 need assistance
13 aged 15-55 struggle with mental health

18 children have no access to quality early childhood education
38 completed Year 12
17 have a Certificate level qualification
44 have a Bachelors Degree



Education



Employment

28 households earn less than \$800pw
56 in the workforce
15 work in healthcare
58 work full-time
24 work in agriculture

PHILANTHROPY makes a positive difference, now and into the future.

We're a generous community and the potential for donations to make a positive difference is huge. In our region, it is estimated that \$7.4 billion will be transferred between generations from 2026 to 2035, involving almost 8,956 households and averaging \$827,936 per household. If each household donated just 1%, equivalent to \$8,279, we would collectively raise \$74 million.

Local philanthropy will play an important role in the future of our region. Imagine if just 1% of this wealth was gifted to stay local. By giving to Border Trust, donations are invested, then distributed as grants to local community groups and not-for-profit organisations to fund life-changing initiatives, now and into the future.



UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION

Early Childhood



89% of early childhood education places are at centres rated as meeting or exceeding National Quality Standards.

4 & 5 years olds enrolled in pre-school



57.8% in Towong

59% in Victoria



13.9% of children are developmentally vulnerable on 2 or more domains, in comparison to 10.2% for VIC.



High School Completions

38.5% of adults have completed high school, significantly lower than Victoria (61.8%).



ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT



From 2011 to 2021, median household income for Towong increased 50.5%, more than the 44.7% increase for VIC.



More households in Towong have a total income of less than \$800 a week (36.8%), compared to VIC with 27.2%.

UNEMPLOYMENT

2.20%

Towong

3.49%

Region

3.67%

VIC

Towong is ranked in the 49th percentile for Victoria on the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD). In 2023, Walkers Mill announced it would be closing, impacting families across multiple generations.



There is a higher percentage of volunteers aged 55 and over (58.3%), compared to Victoria (38.7%).



PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH



21.4% of the adult population smoke, compared to 16.4% for Victoria.



Across Border Trust's region, there are just under 40 General Practitioners per 10,000 residents. In Towong this rate is 79.2.



Males in Towong had the highest rates in the region of alcohol consumption in excess of two standard drinks per day on average, at 33.92.

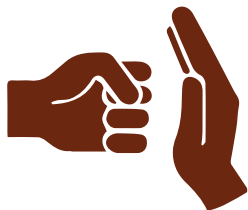


In 2018 fewer adults (10.4 males and 13.9 females) experience high or very high levels of psychological distress, lower than Victoria (11.5 males and 14.9 females per 100). 58.3% of adults were overweight in 2020 compared to 51% for Victoria.

Across Towong 15.3% of residents provided unpaid assistance, with this figure jumping to 25.3% for Indigenous residents. In Victoria 12.9% of persons over the age of 15 provided unpaid assistance.



SAFETY & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



From 2020 to 2021 in Towong, there was an increase in domestic violence common assaults and a decrease in serious assaults, which is consistent with Victoria (VIC). Despite a short decrease in 2022, the rate in early 2023 was higher than it has been for five years.



Incidents of property damage in Towong have decreased 43.3% since 2016.



More residents in Towong feel safe walking alone at day (95.9%) and night (80.6%), in comparison to the state average (92.5% and 55.1%).

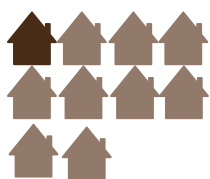
The number of sexual offences per 10,000 persons in Towong has decreased from 227.27 in 2020 to 96.64 in 2022.



HOUSING SECURITY



According to the most recent census, there is a far smaller percentage of homeless people in Towong Shire (0.08%) compared to VIC (0.47%). These figures do not account for residents who are living in temporary accommodation on their own property.



1 in 10 households with a mortgage have repayments over 30% of their household income. While almost 3 in 10 households who rent have payments that are over 30% of their household income.



From 2011 to 2021, the median household rent in Towong Shire has increased by 40%, while the rent in VIC has increased by 32%.



At \$1,200 the median monthly household mortgage payment in Towong is \$659 less than the Victorian Median (\$1,859).

The median price of established house transfers in Towong Shire is \$255,000, significantly less than VIC (\$669,000).



From 2019 Jan-Mar to 2023 Jul-Sep, the number of recipients in Towong Shire receiving Commonwealth rent assistance decreased by 9% to 230, compared to VIC which decreased by 1.6%



FOOD SECURITY



Since 2018, the total kgs of food distributed by the Corryong FoodShare Services in Towong has increased 24x, from 924 to 23,395 in 2022.

Corryong community members have cited cost of living pressures as a contributing factor to more residents needing to turn to FoodShare for support.



666,670 hectares across the Border Trust region (29%) are dedicated to food production. In the 2019 fires, 926 hectares of field crops were destroyed and over 6000 livestock lost in Towong.



ENVIRONMENT, WATERWAYS & LANDSCAPES



In the 2019 fires, 60 homes were destroyed or damaged, with 1,162 other buildings such as community facilities also destroyed or damaged. Over 275,000 hectares were burnt, including 44% of state forests and almost 60,000 hectares of agricultural land. Scorching of forest canopies has reduced the ability of the environment to rejuvenate, while damage to ground matter resulted in severe erosion. Rain that followed led to land slips and run off polluting waterways over the following months.

The Australian Disaster Resilience Index, designed as a strengths-based, comparative approach, provides a snapshot of the capacities for disaster resilience in Australian communities and rates Towong as Moderate overall. Of note, the Capacity measure of the community is rated as low, with one barrier identified as low access to information. The Towong Municipality identifies the restoration and resilience of telecommunications as a priority area within their Bushfire Recovery Plan.

TOWONG VitalSigns Report 2024

Connecting the dots for community.

We hope you find this report of value. It provides an overview of the Towong Shire, one of six LGAs we've explored for our VitalSigns Project. While this project helps us to understand elements of our region, we are aware that other data exists that is not yet publicly available. Our next step is to engage further with community, local agencies and government to collect data and research and include this on our VitalSigns platform, so it is easily accessible.

Activating the power of giving for lasting impact across our region.

The VitalSigns project helps our understanding of local needs and informs where funding and support is directed. This project provides benchmark data from which we can measure impact, not just across our 5 impact areas, but also across the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

AUTHORISED AND PUBLISHED BY:

BORDER TRUST

ABN 34 111 519 012 Trustee
ABN 11 064 494 169 DGR 2 Trust
ABN 64 221 473 179 Trustee for Towong Community
Bushfire Disaster Relief Fund

CONTACT US: admin@bordertrust.org.au
www.bordertrust.org.au

VitalSigns is a community-driven data program used by community foundations around the world to measure the vitality of their communities and identify significant trends in a range of quality-of-life areas.

We acknowledge with appreciation the work of the Toronto Foundation that has developed and shared the VitalSigns concept. The VitalSigns trademark is used with permission from Community Foundations of Canada.

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For inquiries, contact
info@cfaustralia.org.au

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



**LOCAL ISSUES
LOCAL ACTION**

**COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS
AUSTRALIA**

To see the details of the full Border Trust VitalSigns project, and find references for data noted in this report, please visit the project dashboard at;
www.bordertrust.org.au