



Merri Health
Healthcare that moves with you

Research + Innovation

Volume 16. February 2021



.....
Inside
this
issue:

- 1.** Cutting edge tech for NDIS
- 2.** Adapting to COVID-19
- 3.** Vital mental health support
- 4.** Webinars honouring older people

Inside this issue:

2 Welcome

3 Vital mental health support for older people

4 How we're working through COVID-19

5 Cutting edge communication device approved for Merri Health

6 Carer Gateway helping new arrivals access support

7 Awards won by Ready, Set, Prep! and NDIS

7 COVID-19 outbreak at Glenville Lodge

8 Wisdom and Resilience webinar series



Above: photo by Maxime

Welcome

Welcome to our first Research and Innovations edition for 2021! It's been an eventful start to the year. As we continue to adapt to the new COVID-normal, our commitment to health care goes beyond providing health services. We pride ourselves on being an active participant and contributor to research and innovation.

As an organisation, we adapted quickly to COVID, adjusting the delivery mode of essential services and our workforce communications. We introduced telehealth and have continued to provide health and wellbeing support services, remotely via telephone, videoconference and face-to-face.

We set-up COVID testing sites almost overnight, and ran them seven days a week for over five months. Some services have grown, including the Carer Gateway program which supports unpaid carers Victoria-wide.

All Merri Health sites are now open and more face-to-face services and programs are resuming, with limited numbers to stay COVID-safe. Telehealth remains an important part of our service delivery, enabling us to support our diverse community.

In this edition you will find information on a cutting edge communication device approved for Merri Health NDIS, our Stepped Care mental health service for people aged 65+, recent award-winning programs and much more.



Cutting edge communication device approved for Merri Health

“The device is amazing because it can help people. They did a great job because they got this for me.”

- Kym

Above: Merri Health consumer, Kym

The Merri Health NDIS team worked with consumer, Kym, to get approval from the NDIA for an upgrade in assistive technology to meet his NDIS goals. This is how Kym got the MyEye.

Kym had a heart attack and stroke in his fifties which left him with a severe communication impairment. He was diagnosed with aphasia – a condition brought on by the stroke – that affects reading, writing and understanding language.

For Kym, having aphasia has impacted his word-finding, numeracy and reading abilities. With the help of his Merri Health team, speech pathologist Philippa Sawyer and occupational therapist Craig Jackman, the now 61 year old has received an NDIS approved, cutting-edge technology device to help him communicate.

The MyEye features a camera that attaches to Kym’s glasses with a tiny speaker resting above his ear. It allows him to read and has improved his overall confidence and independence.

The funding and support from Kym’s NDIS plan has allowed him to work with the Merri Health Allied Health team to meet his NDIS goals. However, Kym had been struggling with the assistive technology that is available on the market. Kym’s team provided evidence to the

NDIS that this current technology was not suitable for his needs.

Kym is now an advocate for other people with aphasia. He would like to have the MyEye available to more people with this condition. With the help of Philippa, he is looking at ways to create awareness in the aphasia community. He has publicly spoken out about his experience in a series of YouTube videos and continues to work with Aphasia Victoria.

“It took a significant amount of time and work to successfully apply for the MyEye. I’m so glad that I’m able to assist Kym with meeting his communication goals.”

- Philippa Sawyer

Find out more about the MyEye



<https://bit.ly/3s6ai3O>

Urdu Women's Group helping new migrant women



Above: Community Engagement Officer, Sarwat Nauman

Merri Health's Urdu Women's Group began with projects such as creating awareness about mental health, pregnancy and dental health. However, after researching the increasing stories of racism and abuse, it evolved into something more.

Community Engagement Officer, Sarwat Nauman, was interviewed by SBS about how the Urdu Women's Group started and how, through researching and interviewing the community, it has become a support system for women who have migrated to Australia.

Read the article



<https://bit.ly/2XkPkA5>



Above: photo by Jakayla Toney

How we're working through COVID-19

Some services such as NDIS, exercise groups, allied health and aged care support have switched to telehealth to continue supporting our consumers safely.

Over the coming weeks, we will be continuing to roll out our COVID-19 roadmap in line with the Victorian Government's COVID-Safe Summer Plan which will see more services and groups resuming.

In 2020, we held mobile testing sites throughout Glenroy, Fawkner and Brunswick before establishing a base testing site in Fawkner. We thank our staff for helping with the coordination of the testing site, as well as those who door knocked local homes to drop off self-testing kits.

In order to make sure we are looking after the mental health of our consumers during these trying times, some of our teams have developed how-to videos of activities such as cooking and gardening.

Our drop-in mental health support service is also still accessible to anyone by calling 1300 637 744.

View the how-to videos on our channel.



<https://bit.ly/3i6B8o1>

Telehealth is when health care and related processes like education, are delivered over-the-phone or using video conferencing.

Visit the DHHS website for more updates



<https://bit.ly/35lbXZF>



Above: photo by Damir Bosnjak

Vital mental health support for older people

Older adults will benefit from increased mental health support as the Stepped Care for Older Adults program receives further funding.

Stepped Care for Older Adults provides free tailored support to help older people meet their mental health and wellbeing goals through mental and physical health assessments, health coaching, home visits and more.

Thanks to the North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (PHN), the service will run for a further 18 months to combat mental illness in older adults due to COVID-19.

The new service began 15 December 2020, and will provide psychological therapies and wellbeing support for community members in a broader catchment area that covers all the North Western Melbourne PHN region:s

The team are accepting referrals across the catchment for older adults experiencing, or who are at risk of, mild to moderate mental illness. Also

those experiencing loneliness or isolation who may need assistance reconnecting with social networks or early intervention to manage low levels of situational distress and COVID-19 impacts.

Find out more



<https://bit.ly/38p743S>



Carer Gateway helping new arrivals access the support they need

Joanne Lau first became a carer when her son was born 13 years ago. As a full-time worker who emigrated from Malaysia, Joanne has experienced challenges finding the support she needs to be a carer for her son while returning to work to help support her family.

We spoke with Joanne about her experience and how Carer Gateway has helped.

Find out more about the Carer Gateway



<https://bit.ly/2XkLalv>

“As much as I love him, caring for my son comes with its challenges. Some mornings I’d have to call up sick to care for him, which made it difficult to balance my career. My husband was working full-time to support our family financially so I was left to care mostly for our son. He didn’t want to eat, would rarely sleep and was under developed.

He was in childcare from 9 months old so that I could return to work part-time. However, I noticed he was very different from the other kids. He wouldn’t settle and he was very upset every time I tried to take him to childcare. I spoke to the childcare worker who said his emotions were due this new transition. I wasn’t familiar with the Australian childcare system yet I chose to keep him in it.

From grades three to five, he didn’t want to go to school. He wanted to stay in a cupboard and would cry. My son wouldn’t eat or drink, he would spend hours playing Lego and seemed to never really enjoy anything.

When things weren’t getting better, I thought it was the school that was the problem and I was trying to make it change. I didn’t have information or support.

Being a migrant has clearly made things difficult. It made it hard to understand how the systems work and how to access support where and when we need it. Carer Gateway has made it easier for our family to access support and help me transition back into work. Now my son is doing much better. He is well prepared and we have much better access to information and support through the Carer Gateway.

Carer Gateway has helped in so many ways. It has made it easier for me to prepare information for my son, linked us with a carer to help around the house – which has meant I can go back to work one day a week – and the carer also has given me information about looking after myself.”

Above: photo by Kevin Liang

Journey to Primary School resources win Victorian Multicultural Award

Video series and posters support school readiness in Fawkner.

This award recognises the great work of the Ready, Set, Prep! partnership and the Fawkner community to improve school readiness and life outcomes for children and families.

Developed by Merri's Ready, Set, Prep! Team, the resources won the 'Excellence in Education' category at an online ceremony on 16 December.

The resources include an illustrated poster (available in

English, Arabic, Bangla, Hindi, Nepali, Pashto and Urdu) outlining a child's journey through education from birth to primary school, and a video series of informative videos detailing the importance of early childhood learning.

The Ready, Set, Prep! initiative (currently operating in Fawkner) will be expanding to Glenroy and Hadfield in 2021.

Check out the resources



<https://bit.ly/398LzmZ>

Our regional NDIS team take home the "We Take Care" award

Our Early Childhood Early Intervention team in Ovens-Murray have been awarded the "We Take Care" award for the Light Up Awards by the NDIA.

They were nominated by the team at Partner Performance Vic Tas who congratulated them on their amazing commitment to the families and communities that they work with.

They noted the team's knowledgeable feedback and contributions to various projects and meetings with the agency was also to be highly commended.

The team were nominated for being role models for our values, going above and beyond in their role and for achieving significant results.

Thank you to Partner Performance Vic Tas team!

Find out more about our Early Childhood Early Interventions services



<https://bit.ly/2LIPvCM>

Supported Residential Services COVID-19 outbreak at Glenville Lodge



Above: photo by National Cancer Institute

In early 2020, a casual staff member of the Supported Residential Service Glenville Lodge team tested positive for COVID-19.

Watch how the situation was handled by the team as we captured their experience and advice to assist others working in other supported residential services.

Watch the video



<https://bit.ly/3pX9tbM>



Wisdom and Resilience

A four part webinar series

Above: photo by Logan Weaver

We teamed with guest speakers such as Dr Marlene Krasovitsky, director of Every Age Counts and Ilsa Hampton, CEO of Meaningful Ageing Australia to help combat ageism in the community through a four part webinar series.

On International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, our team shared in a women's community café to celebrate the wisdom and resilience of older women. Proudly brought to you by Merri Health and the Elder Abuse Prevention Networks North and West.

The webinar was filmed and has been edited in

four parts to watch on-demand on our YouTube channel.

Topics include:

- Ageism in a time of pandemic
- Meaning and purpose in later life
- Grief and loss during COVID-19
- Mental health through story

Watch the four part series



<https://bit.ly/3hRks3y>

Quick contacts

T: 1300 637 744
Carers 1800 422 737

Victims Assistance
1300 362 739

Brunswick

11 Glenlyon Road
Brunswick VIC 3056

Brunswick West

382–386 Moreland
Road Brunswick West
VIC 3055

Coburg

93 Bell Street
Coburg VIC 3058

Coburg

21 Victoria Street
Coburg VIC 3058

Coburg

Ground floor,
19 Pentridge Blvd
Coburg VIC 3058

Craigieburn

120 Hothlyn Drive
Craigieburn VIC
3064

Fawkner

79 Jukes Road
Fawkner VIC 3060

Glenroy

5D Cromwell Street
Glenroy VIC 3046

Preston

Ground floor, Suites
3-4, 306-308 Bell Street
Preston VIC 3072

Preston

Level 2, 110 Chifley Drive
Preston VIC 3072

Wangaratta

Level 3, 62-68 Ovens
Street Wangaratta
VIC 3677

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is provided by Merri Health and is for general information purposes only. While information is current at the time of publication, subsequent changes to events may occur. Merri Health ventures to provide current and accurate information and we make no representations or warranties, express or implied, about the completeness, accuracy, reliability, or availability, with respect to this publication. Any reliance you place on such information is therefore at your own risk. In no event will Merri Health and its employees be responsible or liable for any loss or damage including without limitation, indirect or significant loss or damage, or any type loss or damage whatsoever, suffered by any person as the result of reliance on information contained in this publication.