

# Future of Health

forward thinking approach



Annual & Quality of  
Care reports 2018



**Merri Health**  
Healthcare that moves with you

# Contents

Merri Health creates healthy, **connected communities** through local health services for people at every age and stage of life.

We're a not-for-profit community health organisation that has been part of your community for over **40 years**.

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## Our purpose

To enrich diverse communities through quality health care and support services.

## Our promise

To provide you with an outstanding customer experience through genuine relationships, positive outcomes and community presence.

## Our values

We are MERRI: we Motivate, Engage, Respect, Respond and Innovate.

## Connect with us

 Merri-Health  
 @MerriHealth  
 [goo.gl/gWrGqi](https://goo.gl/gWrGqi)

## Acknowledgement

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as traditional custodians of the land and waters and acknowledge and pay respect to their Elders past and present.

We acknowledge the financial support received from the Victorian and Federal Governments in addition to several local government areas and revenue we generate through our other activities to support our service delivery.



# About this report

## Annual report

Learn about **our organisation**, how it's structured, Board of Directors and governance, our services and financial reporting.

### About the Annual & Quality of Care reports

The first section of this report is our Annual Report. This section provides you with information about our organisation, how it is structured, Board of Directors and governance, our services and financial reporting.

The remainder of the document is our Quality of Care report. This report is broken up into three sections:

- consumer, carer and community participation
- quality and safety
- comprehensive care.

It highlights how we've supported our communities in the last financial year. We share this information through client stories, which are told with their permission, service and program updates, our systems, processes and learnings.

### How do we put this information together?

Many teams across the organisation were involved in the preparation of this report. With the support of our community engagement and marketing team, we consulted with our clients about what they wanted to see in this report by attending different sites across three weeks. We asked clients if they had seen the report before, what they liked and didn't like about it, and what they wanted to see in this year's report. We also shared the final stages of the report with our Community Engagement board sub-committee.

We review this report with lots of people, in addition to our Board, executive leadership team and management leadership team, to ensure the information is correct, easy to understand, and informative.

### Where to find this report

This report can be found at each of our sites. See page 102 to find an office location near you.

The report is also available on our website, [www.merrihealth.org.au](http://www.merrihealth.org.au).

# Chair's report

The year has seen our team demonstrate their resilience and strength in adversity.



“Merri Health survived a major fire, rebuilt and continued to prosper.”

Surviving a major fire at its head office in Harding Street, Coburg, Merri Health's team rebuilt and continued to prosper with the launch of its new corporate offices at Pentridge, Coburg in early 2018.

We again met ambitious targets and grew the organisation: we have innovative plans for the future of Merri Corner; our building on the corner of Sydney Road and Bell Street, and are planning for expansions elsewhere. The future demands that we not only continue to provide valuable local services, but also meet the challenges working under a changing policy environment.

In June 2018, Minister for Health Jill Hennessy announced the establishment of the Community Health Taskforce. The Taskforce is expected to take 12 months to complete a report on the future direction of community health in Victoria. We see this as an opportunity to firmly cement the role of community health in the Victorian health care system.

Merri Health has been advocating for a number of years the need for the State Government to thoroughly review the community health sector. We believe that there is a lack of understanding in government,

of the role of community health in the overall architecture of health care provision. Merri Health believes that community health needs to have a policy framework, which emphasises our crucial role in providing services to vulnerable communities, and supporting people with chronic and complex conditions who are poorly served by the current system.

It demands for the Government and the health sector, to better understand and support the role of community health.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the staff and management team of Merri Health for their work. I would also like to thank my fellow Board members for their contribution and dedication to Merri Health.

**Carlo Carli**  
Chair, Merri Health

# Chief Executive's report

It gives me pleasure to report on the achievements of the organisation for the past 12 months in what has been a challenging and rewarding year.



The beginning of the financial year was both the best and worst of times with the complete destruction of our corporate office on 3 July when it was gutted by fire. As the fire was extinguished, the reality and enormity of the loss of our much loved Coburg site hit home. We successfully implemented our disaster recovery and business continuity plans that saw no disruption to any client services. All affected staff were relocated to other Merri sites, and within five business days, we had a brand new corporate office in operation. The resilience, dedication and efforts of the entire Merri staff were outstanding during this challenging time. Fast forward to 2018, and we are pleased to be back in our heartland in Coburg, in new offices in the Pentridge precinct where we have continued to grow as an organisation, and the number of services we provide across the diverse communities we serve.

Innovation has been a key objective for the organisation over the past year: we've seen the development of creative service delivery models, our first app to address childhood healthy eating, increasing use of technology including social media and online channels to communicate and connect with communities we support, new community events such as 'Be Merri', and leading our biggest social activation to date, Peace Patrol, in partnership with Victoria Police and Moreland Council for International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia. We've demonstrated to be an agile and responsive organisation as we continue to respond to the changing environment, while navigating an ongoing complex health and social services policy reform.

Collaboration is key to the success of our work. Partnerships with organisations that share our commitment to supporting communities have been invaluable, and we thank our many partners for their support: collectively, we achieve positive outcomes for individuals, families and communities more broadly.

I would like to extend this appreciation to our funders, the Commonwealth Government, the National Disability Insurance Agency and State

Government, who support and fund us to provide diverse services to communities across Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Endorsement of Merri's strategic directions 2018–2020 in late 2017, demonstrates our Board of Directors support for our bold and ambitious directions, that will see continual growth and service provision to the communities we serve — thank you!

To our staff and volunteers: thank you for enthusiasm, commitment and hard work — our success is possible due to your support of the health and wellbeing of thousands across the north, west and regional Victoria.

Our growth in services has seen an increase in the number of client services we provide and our expanded geographical reach across regional Victoria. The prudent financial management of the organisation has allowed our continual reinvestment into our capacity and capability that continue to support this ongoing growth, and expanded services to support communities.

**Nigel Fidgeon**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Our reach

## North and West metropolitan region

The North and West metropolitan region covers 2,981 square kilometres and 14 local government areas. The region has experienced strong population growth and is continually growing. In the last four years, the resident population has grown by over 150,000 people, and is expected to reach more than two million by 2020. It has the most diverse population in the state.

### Diversity

The region is home to an estimated 1.9 million people, with an estimated one third of the population born overseas. Common countries of birth outside of Australia include India, China, Vietnam, Italy and England.

Darebin, Wyndham and Hume have the highest populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the region.

## Health

Chronic health is a big concern in northern metropolitan Melbourne with high rates of diabetes, obesity, heart problems and some cancers. In Darebin, Moonee Valley, Moreland and Hume, there are a high proportion of people with diabetes and hypertensive disease, as well as a high number of people 40 years and over being admitted to hospital for heart failure. Obesity is also of concern in Moreland and Hume, with a high percentage of people who are overweight.

Smoking is higher in Darebin and Hume, with young people taking up smoking at high rates in Yarra, Moonee Valley and Moreland, and lung cancer at its highest in Darebin.

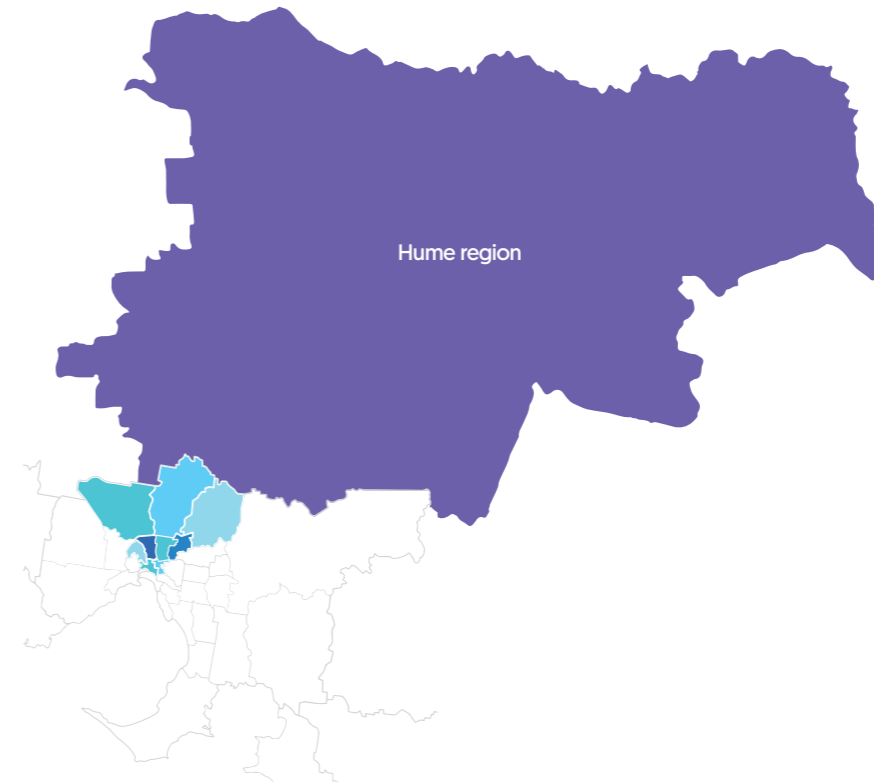
## Languages spoken


Nearly 38% of people living in the area speak a language other than English at home (2012 Regional health status profiles: North and West Metropolitan region). The top five languages spoken other than English are Italian, Mandarin, Arabic, Greek and Turkish. Our interpreter and translator data show that Arabic, Italian and Turkish are the most requested languages.

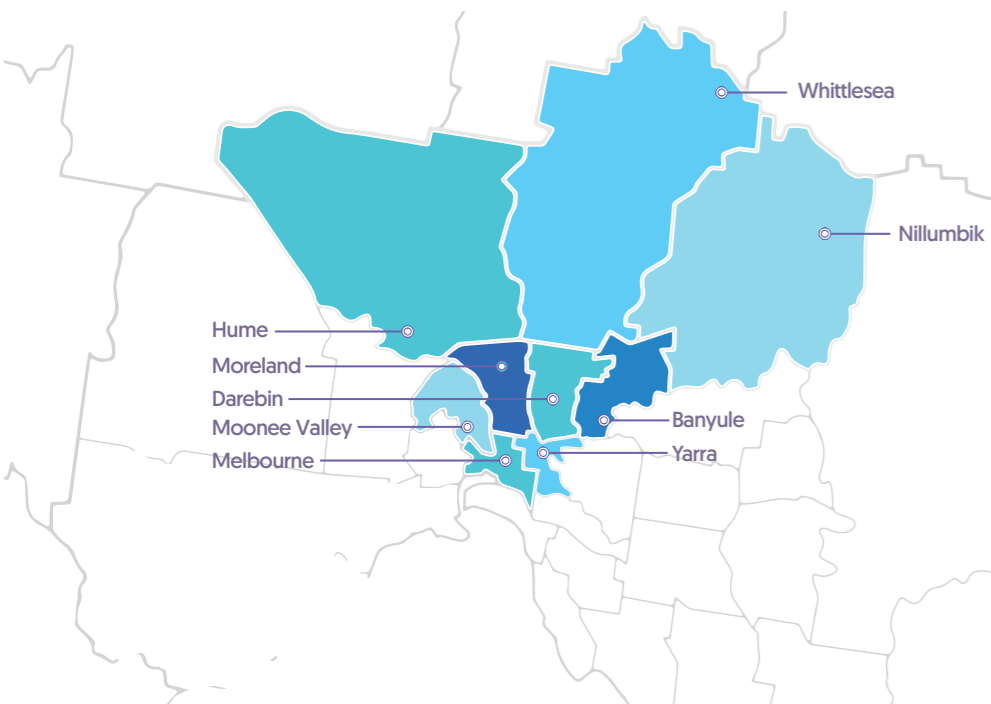
## Age groups

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the majority of our population is under 45 years. People aged 25–44 years represent the largest group at 37.6%, with a median age of 34 years in Moreland. The median age sits at an average of 35 years across the region, with youngest median age of 28 in Melbourne and the oldest at 40 in Nillumbik.

Children aged 0–14 make up 16% of the population, while people aged 65 years and over represent 13.8% of the population in the area.



-  **173,000+** people call this region home
-  **150,000** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
-  **1/3** are overweight or obese



-  **1.9m** people call this region home
-  **150,000** new residents in the last four years
-  **1/3** are born overseas

## Disadvantage

This region includes some of Victoria's most disadvantaged areas, particularly in the Local Government Areas of Brimbank and Hume. For example, high numbers of people are experiencing food insecurity, rental or mortgage stress, and have high levels of psychological stress in Brimbank and Hume.

The area overall has a high proportion of developmentally vulnerable children, low levels of students participating in secondary school education at age 16, and low numbers earning or learning at ages 15 to 19. The area also has a high proportion of age pension recipients.

According to the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage, Brimbank and Hume are among the 20 most disadvantaged areas in Victoria: Hume has a SEIFA score of 951.8, which places it 12 on the scale, and Brimbank has a SEIFA score of 925.8 that places it third. A higher score on the index means a higher level of disadvantage.

## Hume region

The Hume region covers north eastern Victoria and the Goulburn Valley and includes 12 Local Government Areas. Hume has one of Victoria's fastest population growth that is projected to grow by over 38% over 20 years to 2031. Currently, there are 173,680 people living in this region, which has increased by 3486 people from 2016.

### Diversity

The region has a small percentage of people born overseas with 18.4% compared to Victoria at 35.1%. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population percentage is twice the Victorian average.

### Health

The region has high numbers of people that are overweight or obese, representing 55% of the population.

## Age groups

The region has a large younger population — those aged 45–64 years represent the largest group with 28.5%, followed closely by those under 19 years, representing the new generation of residents at 23.9%.

## Disadvantage

Most of the Local Government Areas in the Hume region score close to 1000 on the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage. Greater Shepparton is the most disadvantaged area, scoring 967.8. The areas with highest disadvantage are Shepparton, Wodonga, Benalla, Wangaratta and Myrtleford.

### Resources

- <http://profile.id.com.au/hume/seifa-disadvantage>
- <http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/regional-advisory-councils/regions/north-west-metropolitan>
- Regional Health Needs August 2016 Assessment, North Western

# About Merri Health

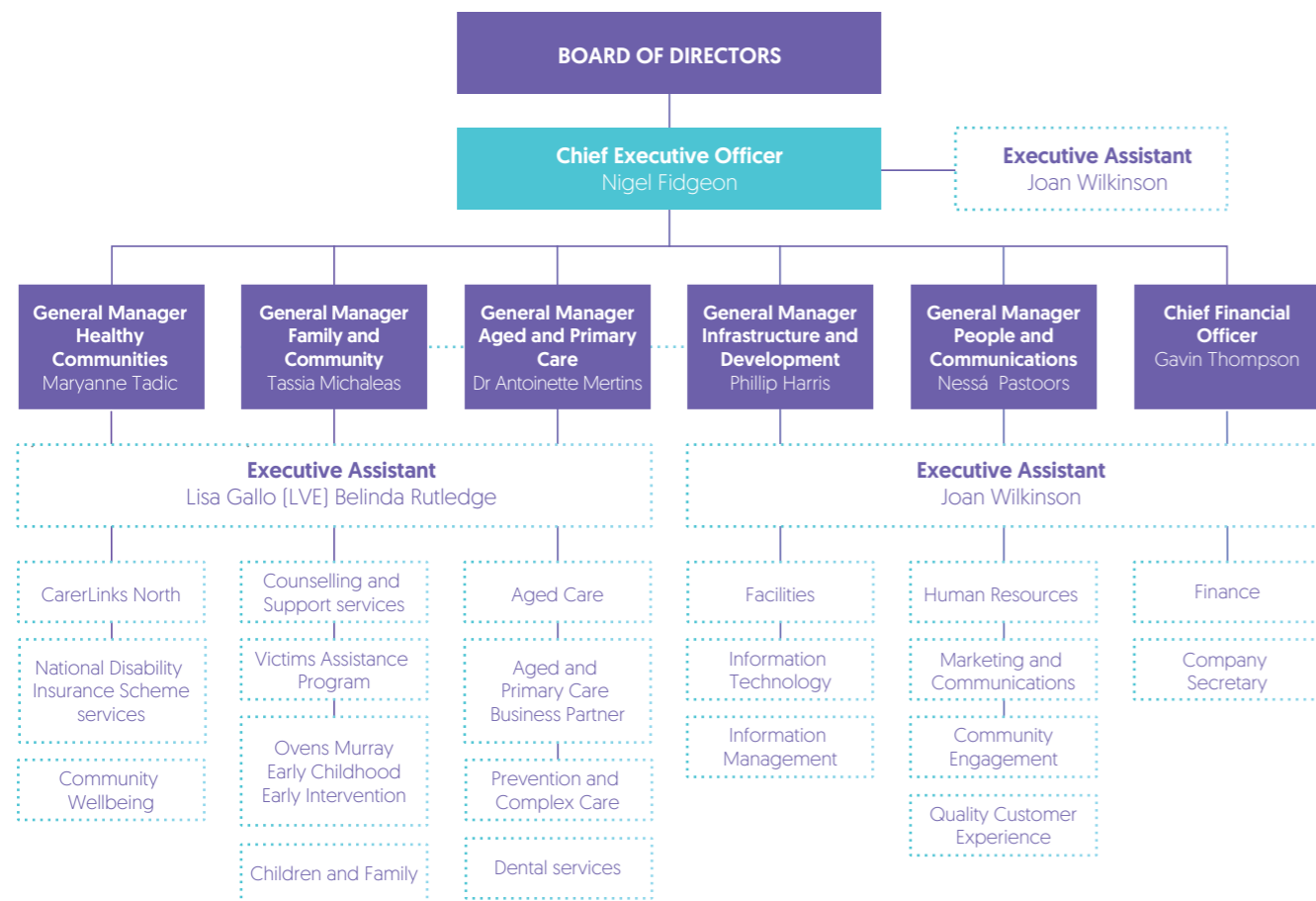
Merri Health is one of the largest community health providers, with a range of health and wellbeing services to support people at every age and stage of life.

We support our clients by working together: we find out what is important to them, and link them with services and programs that support their health, wellbeing and social goals.

## Service divisions

We have three divisions; Aged and Primary Care, Healthy Communities and Family and Community,

in addition to three service support divisions; People and Communications, Infrastructure and Development and Finance.



## Our growth

In addition to our 10 existing sites, we have reviewed how we can make it easier for you to access our services locally. We have introduced:

**Pop-up sites:** a short-term location where we provide services or a space to connect and provide information to community.

**Satellite sites:** spaces in the community where we take residence to provide our services outside of our existing sites. For example, we launched a satellite site in Broadmeadows, providing support to families with a child with a disability. This location means families in and around Broadmeadows are able to access support, without having to travel too far.

This year also saw the introduction of Merri Central, our new location based in the Pentridge precinct in Coburg. Merri Central was built following the loss of our head office in Harding Street in 2017 due to fire, which saw our support services team temporarily relocated to Preston.

Merri Central is now home to our support services, Wellness and Home and Community Wellbeing teams.

## Our workforce

As one of Victoria's largest community health providers, Merri Health continues on its journey to establishing its footprint as an inclusive employer of choice. Situated in one of Victoria's most diverse catchments, and with 90% of our employees living in the area, we recruit, develop and retain a competent, committed and diverse workforce that provide high quality services to our clients, their families and the wider community.

We value the diversity of skills and professional experience that each team member brings to our organisation. Ongoing support is provided to our employees through education, training, regular appraisals, clinical supervision, good employment provisions and flexible working options to ensure all employees are given every opportunity to succeed in their roles. Our success is very much attributed to the performance and contributions of all our employees.

**We're 2018 Employer of Choice finalists!**

National finalists, Australian HR awards under non-for-profit/public sector

	No. of employees	% of total workforce
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### Workforce profile

Male	63	15.69%
Female	330	83.80%
Gender diverse	2	0.51%
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Basis of employment

Full-time	141	35.70%
Part-time	198	50.13%
Casual	56	14.17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.01%</b>



## Inclusive workplace

The diversity of workforce is our driving force in establishing an inclusive workplace. Looking beyond current initiatives that support our culturally diverse workforce, we have strengthened our inclusive practice over the past year, with additional approaches that centre on support for employees that identify same-sex attracted and gender diverse and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

We took a three-step approach:

1. establish cultural/inclusive capability
2. strengthen Rainbow Tick accreditation practices and Reconciliation Action Plan initiatives
3. strengthen practices.

Our journey to inclusive employer of choice has seen the activation of 100+ practices, developed and led by employees that identify lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and partners. Outcomes are measured via our employee climate and inclusive practice surveys, and audits that show an upward trend of results, demonstrating high employee satisfaction in our direction/procedures. Examples of some updates for inclusive practice include:

- embedding of various mandatory and optional LGBTIQ+ inclusive training available online or face-to-face
- an annual LGBTIQ+ inclusive staff survey to measure staff attitudes, inclusive practice and knowledge
- training of Victim Support employees to out-post at Koorie Hearing Days and the Koorie Court
- introduction of Indigenous school-based traineeship for Victorian tertiary school students, by which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are supported in the completion of a certificate 2 in community services.

## Workforce highlights

1. We undertook a project to ensure Merri is compliant with all legislative requirements that have come out of changes to the Disability Worker Exclusion Scheme (DWES). The project required the coordination and processing of DWES checks for all relevant employees and volunteers (over 200), reviewing current documentation and processes and updating as needed, producing a toolkit to support managers in the investigation process, and educating managers via Merri Talks sessions: a new model that sees key changes communicated to employees in different formats to meet everyone's needs.
2. New training modules were added to our Learning Management System, supporting our workforce and volunteers to access training at a time and place that is convenient to them. This included hand hygiene, health literacy, LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice, Child Safety Standards and recruitment and selection.
3. Our Human Resources team partnered with managers across Merri to support them in presenting the 2017 engagement survey results to their team, and rolling out changes/improvements where required.
4. Refresh of our organisational values in collaboration with our employees. Learn more on page 20.

## Occupational health and safety

1. The year saw the review and ongoing implementation of the occupational health and safety strategic safety plan 2017–2018, with annual objectives and performance indicators for the committee to monitor and report on a quarterly basis.
2. Introduced of quarterly occupational health and safety training for employee representatives.
3. Commenced development of Mental Health and Wellness Framework.
4. Updated and rolled out safety data folders across Merri to ensure compliance.
5. Reviewed and updated emergency management procedures.



## Awards and achievements

We have had an incredible year of achievements with our teams formally recognised for their efforts under a range of areas and awards, such as:

### Employer of choice

Merri Health is a national finalist for Employer of Choice under the Australian Human Resources award 2018, under the non-for-profit/public sector category. The awards recognise innovative and leading engagement, leadership, communication and employee benefits.

### HR manager of the year

Our Human Resources manager Amie Reed is national finalist for HR manager of the year under the Australian Human Resources award 2018. The award recognises leaders that have demonstrated excellence at a management level in leadership, communication, strategy, drive and results.

### Service of Excellence

Our Hume Victims Assistance Program was a finalist at the Wangaratta Business Awards under Service of Excellence. While we didn't find out who nominated the team as it was an anonymous nomination, we learnt that the person had said our team 'saved their life'. Petrina Paice from the team was also directly nominated, in addition to the team.

### Leading Age Services Australia innovation award

Our carer support service CarerLinks North's Health and Wellbeing Coaching team were awarded most outstanding team in the 2018 Excellence in Age Services Award for Victoria/Tasmania, by Leading Age Services Australia.

# Our Board



**Carlo Carli**  
Chair

Carlo is a Moreland resident and has been involved in public policy for most of his professional career. Carlo has been a public advocate for access and equity, multiculturalism and broader human rights issues and was a Member of Parliament for Brunswick for 16 years. He is fluent in English, Italian and Spanish and has a good command of the French language.



**Darryl Annett**  
Deputy Chair

Darryl has lived in the northern suburbs of Melbourne for over 22 years and has been actively involved in the community through local school groups and sports clubs. Darryl is a lawyer who has 30 years' experience, with a legal career in the public sector and private practice, in criminal defence advocacy and criminal prosecution work. He held a four-year appointment as Deputy Chair of the Business Licensing Authority and is currently the coordinator of the Salvation Army's Urban Justice Centre.



**Joseph Caputo**  
Board member

Joe lives and is active in Melbourne's northern suburbs and has been involved in advocacy for the rights of minorities throughout his adult life. During 1970–80, he was involved in promoting the rights of migrant workers, and a member of the Victorian Multicultural Commission from 2001–2011. Joe has served as Councillor and Mayor in the former City of Brunswick and as Councillor and Mayor in the City of Moreland. Joe is a founding member of the Moreland/Hume/Aileu (Timor Leste) Friendship Committee, is an expert in industrial relations and holds a Master of Business from RMIT.



**Michael Malakonas**  
Board member

Michael is a strategic Executive with more than 28 years' experience in finance, accounting, operations, enterprise risk strategy, governance and general management.

Michael has worked for large multi-national corporations, predominantly in the financial services industry, and is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Zeal Solutions Pty Ltd, and a non-executive Director, chairing the Finance and Audit Risk Management Committee at Merri Health.

Michael is a Fellow CPA, holds a CPA MBA from Deakin University, majoring in leadership and communication, and is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



**Katerina Angelopoulos**  
Board member

Katerina is an experienced Director with a background in corporate management, health issues planning, human resources and community engagement. In 2008 Katerina was appointed to the University of Notre Dame School of Medicine Advisory Committee, and is actively engaged in governance activities with a number of Melbourne-based organisations.

Katerina has lived in the Brunswick and Coburg areas for 45 years. For 25 of these years she has been involved in community service, including the local YMCA, Ethnic Communities Council and councillor with Moreland City Council.



**Michael Beahan**  
Board member

Michael is a retired government relations consultant but continues to provide strategic advice to the community sector. He has been a Brunswick resident for the past 10 years and serves on the board of Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, and the Chair at the Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association.

Michael was a senator in the Australian Parliament for nine years and served for three years as President of the Senate. Michael has degrees in arts and education from the University of Western Australia and was awarded an AM in the 2011 Australia Day honours.



**Julie McCormack**  
Board member

Julie is the manager of the clinical training unit at Dental Health Services Victoria, where she has been since May 2012.

Julie has a background in education and public health and is a Director of a small business called Incompany, Women in Trades. Julie holds a Masters in Public Health (Women's Health), Graduate Diploma in Education and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, Bachelor of Arts and a Graduate Diploma in Frontline Management. She has trained as a mediator.



**Marleine Raffoul**  
Board member

Marlene has been a resident of the City of Moreland for 13 years and has been involved in various committees within the area. Marlene has been educated in three languages and her knowledge extends to teaching and business expertise. She is passionate and committed to improving health services to the multicultural community of Moreland, and looks forward to extending her expertise to its residents.



**Benjamin Maxfield**  
Board member

Benjamin Maxfield is the Government Relations adviser for Victoria's \$11 billion Metro Tunnel project. Prior to this, Benjamin worked as a senior adviser in both the Gillard Government and then Shorten Opposition. Following his stint in federal politics he joined the Australian Council of Trade Union's where he led their national health and safety campaigns. Benjamin has a keen interest in defence and foreign policy. In recent times Benjamin has worked with Social Democratic Parties and organisations around the world to improve their electoral standing and human rights record.



# Our Executive Leadership team



## Nigel Fidgeon

MHA, BN, GAICD, FCNA, FCHSM  
**Chief Executive Officer**

Nigel has extensive executive management and CEO experience in leading and managing complex organisations across the public and private health sector, at both strategic and operational levels in acute and non acute settings.

Nigel holds a Master of Health Administration, a Bachelor of Science (Nursing) along with educational experience gained at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Philadelphia, USA and executive training at the Harvard School of Business in Boston USA.

Nigel is a graduate and member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, a Fellow of the Australasian College of Health Service Management, a Fellow of the College of Nursing Australia, and a Wharton Fellow.

Nigel is a Board member of the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association, Chair of the Health Committee of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Nigel is passionate about social justice issues and helping people and communities achieve the best.



## Antoinette Mertins

DrPH, PDipHRM, BBSc, AFCHSE, GAICD  
**General Manager, Primary Care and Carer Services**

Antoinette has extensive experience working in the public and not-for-profit sector across a diverse range of organisational forms. Antoinette has strong skills in driving workforce reform, development of innovative community based models of care and developing partnerships across aged care, health and primary care sectors.

Antoinette is a public health practitioner with an extensive background in community based health care leadership and management, service planning and development, and leading diverse multidisciplinary teams to deliver innovative services.

Antoinette is committed to population health approaches as a means to improve health and wellbeing outcomes. Antoinette holds a Doctor of Public Health degree, a Post Graduate Diploma in Health Research Methodology and a Bachelor of Behavioural Sciences (Psychology). She is an Associate Fellow of the Australian College of Health Service Management and a recent Graduate and member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



## Tassia Michaleas

BEC, BSW, MBA, AFCHSM, GAICD  
**General Manager, Family and Community Support Services**

Tassia has extensive experience in the not-for-profit and community sector and commenced her career in community health in 1996. Tassia has experience working across leadership and operational areas and takes a pro-active approach in developing and delivering innovative services and programs, to identified and emerging community needs.

Tassia has strong skills in advocacy, streamlining of systems and processes, effective engagement of stakeholders and developing partnerships. Tassia has a Bachelor of Economics, a Bachelor of Social Work and a Master of Business Administration.



## Phillip Harris

MBA, GAICD

**General Manager, Infrastructure and Development**

Phill has held senior executive roles within the information technology and infrastructure management portfolios spanning a number of industries including education, government, telecommunications and most recently, the health sector. Phill's experience includes strategic planning, business process improvement, project management, procurement and facilities management.

Phill has a Master of Business Administration, is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has a Graduate Certificate in Leadership in Education and Training.



## Gavin Thompson

B.Bus (Acc), GAICD, CPA

**Chief Financial Officer and Company Secretary**

Gavin has held a range of senior finance positions across not-for-profit, corporate and international sectors. He has worked in financial management in the homelessness and community service sector, as well as roles in industries such as Aerospace, Investment Banking, Software Development, Retail Banking, Hotels and Trustee services.

Gavin has skills in providing strong financial stewardship while maintaining a co-operative and helpful approach to aid service delivery programs. Gavin holds a Bachelor of Business and is a Certified Practising Accountant (CPA).



## Nessá Pastoors

BCCJ, MER, EMBA (in progress)

**General Manager, People and Communications**

Nessá has worked in the non-for-profit sector for 12 years and has 10 years of leadership and management experience in employment relations, project management and governance, with a proven track record of building workforce capacity contributing to organisational growth. Nessá has been instrumental in driving organisational capacity and cultural change in previous roles.

Nessá's strengths lie in industrial relations, change management, stakeholder engagement and communications and marketing. Nessá holds a Bachelor of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Masters of Employment Relations, Certificate in Business and Human Resources Management, and is currently completing an Executive Masters of Business Administration.



## Maryanne Tadic

MPH, BHSc, AFCHSM, MAICD

**General Manager, Healthy Communities**

Maryanne has over 15 years of experience working in the community health sector within both leadership and operational contexts, and has a strong understanding of the diverse range of service delivery areas as well as reform challenges within the community health environment.

Maryanne has a background in population health and has experience in leading a number of community-based research projects, with extensive skills in strategic planning and evaluation.

Maryanne holds a Master of Public Health degree (Health Services Management) and a Bachelor of Health Sciences (Health Promotion). She is an Associate Fellow of the Australian College of Health Service Management and a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

# Our volunteers

Merri Health has a large pool of committed volunteers that stand alongside our team to support our community.

 **114**  
active volunteers  
in 2017/18

Volunteers provide support in many ways and are an extension of our workforce. We highly value their diverse skill sets and what they bring to our many services. Without them, many of our services and outcomes would not be the same.

## Engaged volunteers

At the end of the 2016–2017 period, we had 114 active volunteers committing their time and effort at Merri Health.

One third of our current active volunteers have been with Merri Health for at least two or more years and half of these volunteers have been with Merri Health for 5 years or more. Our longest serving volunteers have been with our organisation for up to 14 years and still going strong!

Our volunteers are more engaged than ever, with more volunteers taking up opportunities to move around and assist different programs.

The MerriVols newsletter was established, providing our volunteers with regular updates on new opportunities, social outings and program updates. A volunteer's social group has also been set up, with the first outing scheduled for August!

## Support and processes

Volunteers are provided with induction and appropriate training sessions to help them prepare and succeed in their role. Recognising that our volunteers have commitments outside of their roles and may have difficulty attending workshops and training during work hours, we have rolled out the online training platform. This gives volunteers access to training opportunities including:

- equal opportunity
- gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender and intersex inclusive practice
- working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients
- cultural diversity
- professional boundaries and volunteering.

We've also developed the volunteer framework which specifies our action plan for the coming year. This will help us better support our volunteers and acknowledge their work by committing to nominating them for more awards.

## Awards and celebrations

National Volunteer Week in May 2018 was a time where once again, we showcased and celebrated the outstanding work and achievements of our volunteers. We were excited to see Deb Valante, who volunteers as leader of the Carers' Chorus, as a finalist of the Minister for Health Volunteer Award of the Year for Improving the Patient Experience. Well done Deb!

Our volunteers also enjoyed the annual National Volunteers Week dinner in May at Basco Brunswick. This year the invitation was also extended to their supervisors, who were grateful to be able to formally acknowledge their commitment. Certificates of appreciation were presented along with a small gift to each volunteer.

“Without them, many of our services and outcomes would not be the same.”



From left: Adam from Merri Health, volunteer Deb and Sandy from Merri Health.

# Our services

Merri Health provides 60+ base services across north and west metropolitan Melbourne and into the Hume region.

We also provide many short-term activities, programs and groups to meet the changing needs of our communities.

## Aged services

Supporting choice, connection and independence for anyone 65 years and over, or 50 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We help with carer support, short-term education and exercise groups, health services like occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech pathology and more, respite for carers of frail older people who live at home, social groups and Wellness at Home through Home Care Packages.

## Carer support

Flexible and individualised support for carers of all ages.

## Child and family services

Promoting happy, healthy children and strong families with services like counselling, support for children with a disability, education, family services, family violence, respite and support for victims of crime.

## Chronic conditions

Treatment and support to help you live well with your chronic condition.

## Dental services

Supporting good oral health through education, community screenings, and general dental support.

## Disability services

Supporting people with a disability with flexible health services and greater choices. We can help with carer support, help for children with a disability and their family, education, respite, health services like speech pathology and community nursing, social groups and Wellness at Home.

## Health and wellness services

Supporting you to stay healthy and well with short-term education and exercise groups, health services like physiotherapy, occupational therapy, podiatry and more, support to stop smoking and a Healthy Eating and Lifestyle group.

## Mental health services

Supporting recovery, better health and wellbeing through local group activities, one-on-one support, counselling, support for victims of crime and support for residents and proprietors of Supported Residential Services.

## Young adult services

Helping put young adults on track for a healthy and fulfilling life, with alcohol and drug support, community nursing, carer support, counselling, education, one-on-one help, support for young people that identify as same-sex attracted or gender diverse, respite, group activities and support for victims of crime.

## NDIS made easy

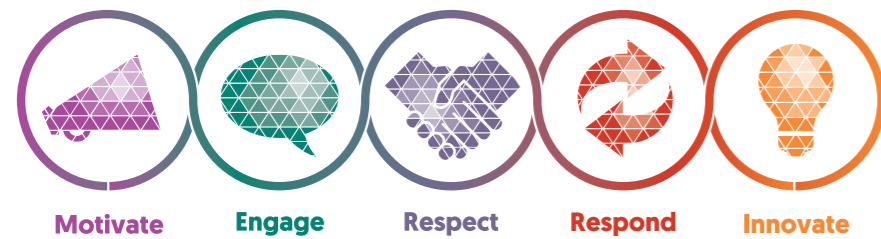
The National Disability Insurance Scheme known as the NDIS is a new national government initiative for people living with a permanent and significant disability. As of the 1 July 2016, Merri Health started to provide services under the NDIS including support for children with a disability and their family through MerriKids, support coordination, puberty and human relations education and mental health support.

## Health initiatives

We respond to the changing health needs of our community. We help shape healthy schools, support sport participation for refugee or newly arrived people, increase food security through The Community Grocer Fawkner, address poor school readiness among migrant children through a partnership with local primary schools, support newly arrived women through an Urdu-speaking women's group, support gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer inclusiveness, and much more.

# Our values

Organisational values shape the culture and principles that guide an organisation.



The team during the co-design session, developing our new values.

In early 2017 we set out to learn about what was important to our employees. Our Operational Leadership team told us that Merri's existing values needed a refresh: they no longer resonated, were too long to remember and needed to be more inclusive.

Following the feedback, we chose to use a co-design process to review our existing values, and guide the refresh. Co-design is a collaborative process where the end user is engaged in the development process to support better outcomes.

## Our co-design process

- Following feedback from our leadership team, we brainstormed different values that were guided by our existing work and culture.

- We asked employees their feedback via an anonymous survey, which they completed online.
- We brought together a group of 25 employees that represented different teams across Merri. The group took part in a half-day co-design workshop with activities and creative sessions to learn about what was important to them. The responses from the online survey guided this session and were used to learn about the behaviours we value as an organisation.
- At the end of the session we had settled on four values, and had an emerging value which employees were incredibly passionate about: innovation! We also had colours and

imagery the team felt represented each value, and statements about how we put those values into practice.

- Using the information from the day, and with the support of a graphic designer, we finalised our values, and confirmed the colours, icons and statements for each value.
- The findings were presented to our Executive Leadership team and Board of Directors who endorsed the values.
- We introduced our new values to everyone!

Following the refresh of the values, we used the language and findings from the day to guide the redevelopment of our Capability Matrix, which details behavioural expectations that bring our values to life.

Once we had everything finalised, we ran 10 information sessions with our leadership team, that included activities and an introduction to our Capability Matrix, along with fun merchandise and biscuits shaped like our values, to guide them on the journey and provide training for their teams.

We are MERRI: we **motivate, engage, respect, respond** and **innovate**.

“ I love the value stamped cookies — what a cheeky way to make sure I don't forget the values!”

— Merri employee

# National Disability Insurance Scheme

## Supporting regional Victoria's transition to the NDIS

Merri Health is the Early Childhood Partner for Early Childhood Early Intervention in Ovens Murray.

Launching in late August 2017, the team have successfully helped over 500 families prepare and gain access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or other appropriate services — many who have transitioned from block funded State programs.

We have planned and facilitated approximately 20 NDIS family information sessions, in towns across

the Ovens Murray region, extending as far as Rutherglen and Myrtleford.

Partnering with communities has been and will continue to be the focus of engagement in our region. Through information session delivered on our own and in partnership with the NDIA, Department of Health & Human Services and La Trobe Community Health, we have reached over 1,000 families and carers; service providers; and health, education and government employees to inform them on how to navigate the NDIS.

We have travelled widely across the region, conducting over 80 meetings and information sessions in Wangaratta, Wodonga, Benalla,

Mansfield, Corryong, Beechworth, Bright and Mansfield.

Our team has also been present at 13 events ranging from the 2017 Albury Wodonga Disability Expo, City of Wodonga Children's Fair, International Celebration Day for People with a Disability and the 2018 Plan Management Partners Albury Wodonga Disability Exposition.

In the 2018/2019 period, we will continue to concentrate on strategies to address workforce development and build capacity of families, carers and communities to confidently and successfully navigate the NDIS.



# Strategic and activity planning

## Strategic Directions 2018–2020

Our strategic directions provides a framework for our direction over the next two years, detailing our commitment to community, service streams, priorities including core service offerings and growth, the results we're looking to achieve and our financial principles. You can find out more about our directions on our website, under **About us**.

### Diversity plan

Diversity and disadvantage is a defining characteristic of the area we serve. In northern and western metropolitan Melbourne, 29.8% of residents were born in non-English speaking countries and

unemployment is among the highest in Victoria. Our diversity plan sets the overall direction and goals for our organisation, in relation to diversity planning and practices for hard-to-reach groups.

The plan focuses on five special needs groups:

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
2. culturally and linguistically diverse communities
3. people with dementia
4. people experiencing financial disadvantage
5. same-sex attracted and gender diverse communities.

The plan is reviewed quarterly with updates on our progress provided to our funders.

## Gender equity plan

Gender equity at Merri Health is a phased, whole of organisation approach to the primary prevention of violence against women. The project looks to prevent violence against women before it happens. We do this by building organisational capacity to respond and support victims of family violence.

We currently have a family violence committee that is made up of representatives from across different teams at Merri Health. The committee monitors implementation and outcomes from our family violence strategy 2017/18, and provide recommendations and direction for our family violence policy and procedure.



People working together to plan.

## Reconciliation Action Plan

Merri Health has a vision for reconciliation, where the wellbeing of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be restored through respect, equity and recognition. We support this vision through our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Key achievements in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people include:

- all Closing the Gap initiatives led by RAP committee, with 40% representation from local Aboriginal community
- our carer service has worked collaboratively with the Wandarra group to improve engagement with the local Aboriginal community
- creating welcoming Merri Health sites for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with representation of artwork, flags and newspapers
- celebrating the third year of the Little Long Walk, an initiative formed with the Long Walk Trust and our RAP committee, to educate younger generations in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

## Marketing and communications plan

Marketing and communications is important as it sets out how we will provide information to our communities and what marketing is needed to ensure that people are kept informed about how we can support them.

Our 2018/19 plan details how we will communicate with our clients, what methods we will use and campaigns that we will run. It sits alongside and complements our digital plan, which details strategies for communicating with our community in digital format.

## Community Relationships Framework

Merri Health has a long-standing commitment to consumer, carer and community participation and engagement. Our Community Engagement Relationships Framework details our commitment to support consumers, carers and community members to improve health outcomes.

Some actions we have identified include:

1. Establish a consumer participation register and consumer participation committee that represents a diverse membership, including people that identify as same sex attracted and gender diverse, culturally and linguistically diverse, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, young people, older people, and people living with a disability. Committee members will work with staff to implement consumer-led action plan for projects, while members of the register will be supported on an ad-hoc basis to get involved with projects of their interest.
2. Review our current volunteer process and opportunities to apply a strengths-based approach to diversifying and increasing volunteer engagement and participation.
3. Support consumer and carer representatives to participate in networking and/or development events, training and other opportunities, to support them in their role.
4. Investigate partnership opportunities with radio stations to engage with their audience.

 **36,773,223**  
total revenue

 **257,902\***  
instances of service in 2017/18

 **15,454\*\***  
number of unique clients supported in 2017/18

 **395**  
staff members

 **114**  
active volunteers

\*Estimate based on our two main data systems. Clients may be duplicated in these systems. There are many other client systems that are not included in this estimate.

\*\*Estimate based on three main data systems. There are many other client systems that are not included in this estimate.

 **10+**  
Sites

 **125+**  
partners

 **40+**  
years of serving the community

# Research and innovation

Merri Health is an active participant and contributor in ongoing research and evaluation.

By completing ongoing reviews of our programs and services, we can ensure they are based on best practice, are evidence-based and aligned to the needs of our community.

In the past financial year we:

- Developed a prototype of our first health and wellbeing app, using a co-design process. The app addresses childhood obesity by teaching young children aged 7+ about healthy choices, with some fun activities. Find out more about the app on page 36.
- Organised a social activation that saw 500 students contribute to a largescale art development, sending a message of inclusivity and support in Melbourne's north, in partnership with Victoria Police and Moreland Council. Read more about the project on page 63.
- Launched Family Foundations, a new program that provides important insights and skills for parents expecting a child or have a child under 12 months of age. Adapted from the US model developed by Dr Mark Feinberg, a Research Professor at Pennsylvania State University, Dr Feinberg facilitated a three-day training session in Australia with our team. Find out on page 59.
- Launched Healthy Steps, a new program that supports people experiencing mental health issues to take control of their physical health. More on page 67.

- Supported the introduction of a new cardiac support service, in response to evidence suggesting culturally and linguistically diverse groups respond to healthcare services differently. Led by the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the cardiac phone coaching program is adapted to meet the needs of Greek and Italian populations.

Find out more on page 70.

- Introduced an accessible telephony system coupled with one entry point, to address client accessibility, through a co-design process of 180 participants. Learn more on page 34.

*Merri Health and drummond street employees with Dr Mark Feinberg, developer of Family Foundations.*



# Partnerships

Partnerships are important as we can bring expertise and resources together for better outcomes for our community.



*Launch of Elder Abuse Prevention Network.*

We work with many partners like universities, TAFE, other community health providers, hospitals, Primary Healthcare Network, community groups and neighbourhood houses. Some examples of projects and services we've developed or continued to provide, in partnership with organisations include:

**QHealth:** in partnership with drummond street, QHealth provides free, confidential counselling to people identifying same-sex attracted and gender diverse, experiencing alcohol and drug issues.

**iHeal:** a new recovery program for and driven by victim survivors of family violence from diverse

backgrounds. **iHeal** is a partnership between drummond street, Victorian Aids Council and Merri Health.

**Count Me In:** improves physical and mental wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds by linking them to sports clubs. Since 2016, Count Me In has reached 172 children from 28 schools and 9 countries. The initiative is a collaboration between The University of Melbourne, Moreland City Council, Merri Health, local schools and sports clubs.

**The Community Grocer Fawkner:** low-cost fresh food market created in response to 2015 needs assessment

showing food security was a significant issue in Fawkner. The market continues to grow, with more than 100 visitors per week; a 40.5% increase from 2016 to 2017, and 75 markets held to date.

**Knee and hip osteoarthritis clinic:** in partnership with St Vincent's Hospital and North Western Primary Health Network, this community-based clinic provides timely, non-surgical treatment as a first option for knee and hip osteoarthritis. Patients avoid acute hospital outpatient waiting lists, accessing timely specialist health expertise and services to manage their condition.

# Victorian Carers Recognition Act

Merri Health acknowledges the contribution carers make in the community and is proud to support carers across every age and stage of life.

## What is the Act?

The Victorian Carers Recognition Act 2012 sets out principles that recognise and support people in care relationships, including the responsibilities of organisations that support carers.

This Act complements the Federal Government's Carer Recognition Act 2010 and is supported by the Victorian Charter supporting people in care relationships.

## Our responsibilities

We have a number of measures in place to ensure our responsibilities are being met under the Act. This year we are excited to highlight some of the innovative services we have set up to help carers in the community.

### 1. Ensure that employees and agents have an awareness and understanding of the care relationship principles.

- Staff education through a recruitment and orientation process.
- Reinforcement through team meetings, clinical staff supervision and peer supervision focusing on privacy and confidentiality requirements, informed consent and person-centred practice.
- Documented organisational policy and procedures regarding advocacy and complaints processes.
- Carers are actively involved in developing individualised goal oriented care plans appropriate to their needs, and the needs of the person for whom they care.

### 2. Ensure that persons who are in care relationships and receiving services have an awareness and understanding of the care relationship principles.

- Service delivery through culturally appropriate printed materials and staff training.
- Carers are provided with information about their rights and responsibilities, privacy and confidentiality, and complaints process.
- Culturally safe services are delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
- Continued commitment to improving access for culturally and linguistically diverse carers including partnerships with key regional stakeholders and strengthening relationships with providers.



Above: Diana with carer at our Koorie Lunch during National Carers Week.  
Below: Male carers at Men's Health Week BBQ lunch.



### 3. Ensure that the organisation and its employees and agents reflect the care relationship principles in developing, providing or evaluating support and assistance for persons in care relationships.

- Staff are provided with professional development opportunities and ongoing training.
- Carers are encouraged to provide feedback through different avenues available.
- Inclusion in sub-contracted providers' service agreements and associated review process.



# Quality of Care

How we've supported our **communities** in the last financial year.



# National Disability Insurance Scheme

## Supporting your transition to the NDIS

At the end of last year, marketing and communications, community engagement and NDIS teams got together with design creatives to create a workbook that would help clients make the transition to the NDIS.

The preplanning workbook helps NDIS participants think about the supports and services they might need to help achieve their goals. It prompts them to reflect on their support network, current routine and supports they receive to identify areas of need and help their planner create a suitable NDIS plan.

Feedback about the preplanning workbook has been positive: NDIS participants have found the workbook helpful in their planning, and organisations have recommended the workbook to clients, to help them stay on track.

Since October 2017, our Support Coordination team has provided preplanning support to 49 NDIS participants. Support has included general information and tips about the planning meeting and process, and help with developing individual goals and support plans. It has been provided via email, telephone and in person.

▶ Interested in preplanning for the NDIS?

☎ 1300 637 744

## Growing with MerriKids

Over the past 12 months, early intervention service MerriKids, has been busy welcoming new families and helping with the rollout of the NDIS.

Supporting children aged 0–8 with a developmental delay or disability, and their families, MerriKids supports children to learn, develop and reach their full potential, with support provided from the family’s home, child care, kindergarten or school environment.

To date, MerriKids has supported 50 families to transition into the NDIS and will be working with another 90 Hume Moreland clients, transitioning from September.

To support the growth of the service, we have recruited three new therapists and introduced new groups and specialty services for children with complex needs.

These include an individualised Easy Eating clinic, providing advice and assistance for parents of children who are fussy eaters.

We have continued to run our very popular weekly Music and Movement group for clients, focusing on early language development, listening skills, as well as practising turn taking and waiting.

Working closely with families, we provide personalised therapy services as well as information and advice to help children learn, develop and reach their full potential.

“Sessions have had a great and positive influence and impact in our lives”.

— MerriKids parent

A recent client survey reported 100% satisfaction with MerriKids staff, rating them as being very good to excellent in their efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of families.

85% of respondents rated their quality of life prior to starting with MerriKids as poor. Post receiving support from our team, 100% agreed their quality of life is ‘good to excellent’.

All respondents said that they would recommend MerriKids to others with similar needs.



Children learning and taking part in activities.



## Relate respond to NDIS


Under the NDIS, sexual health education program Relate has been working with people with a disability to learn about their changing bodies and appropriate public and private behaviours.

The program was recently delivered to a group of men from across the northern suburbs. Delivered at the Darebin North East Community Hub, the team led the men through an eight week program, including friendships and relationships, public and private behaviours, laws in relation to sexual behaviour, consent, conception and contraception.

Relate provided the opportunity for participants to ask questions and learn in a fun, safe and engaging group environment.

Human relations program supports people to develop a healthy sexuality which increases self-esteem, builds on strengths and provides positive social behaviours within an individual's cultural values.

Historically, the program has been run to a younger cohort, in schools, TAFE and other educational settings. As the NDIS continues to roll out across Victoria, the program has expanded its reach to support older people with a disability.

 **Learn more:**  
social know-how  
and sexual health education  
[youtu.be/iON8OKdFDbs](https://youtu.be/iON8OKdFDbs).

## Kookaburra

### For consumers by consumers.

Healthy Mind Hub client Marg has established a newsletter for mental health clients.

Since 2012, the Merri Kookaburra has been a regular update for consumers to let them know what's going on in their community and offers them a space to showcase their creative writing.

Marg launched the newsletter during her time in the Day 2 Day Living creative writing group. Since then, she has gathered clients' poems, stories and other creative pieces to fill the newsletter with topics that matter to them.

Receptionists at our Vic Place site help Marg set up and type each newsletter edition.

## Mental health clients established the NAAG (NDIS Advisory Group).

The platform gives them the opportunity to discuss their progress in applying for the NDIS and assist others through their own learnings.

Find out more about mental health services under the NDIS at [merrihealth.org.au](https://merrihealth.org.au).


## Peer support

CarerLinks North's peer support service has certainly had a busy first half of the year.

Guided by carers' interests, the peer support service has established a number of new opportunities for carers to meet and socialise:

- Carers time-out movie peer support group meet monthly at Cinema Nova.
- Dementia peer support group was established following some very insightful dementia education sessions.
- The walk and talk peer support group continues to support carers to put a health step forward, with walks taking place regularly in the Darebin area.
- The meet and greet peer support group meet monthly over morning tea for carers interested in learning about peer support group opportunities.
- Art therapy peer support group provides carers with the opportunity to get creative in a non-judgemental space.
- The Carers' Chorus which continues to entertain and brighten the mood of those listening to their voices.
- The carers lunch peer support group meet monthly at various locations to share stories, coping strategies and support each other.

There are also drop-in opportunities for carers to learn more about the peer support program.

 **Interested in joining a peer support group or establishing your own?**

 03 9495 2500

 [peersupport@merrihealth.org.au](mailto:peersupport@merrihealth.org.au)

## Co-design leads to greater support for young carers

CarerLinks North's young carer support program underwent a refresh to better support the needs of young carers living in the northern metropolitan region.

The co-design process has led to a more relevant program that responds to their needs as carers.

One of the issues facing young carers was the lack of opportunities to socialise and attend extracurricular activities due to the impact of their caring role.

Since relaunching, the program has helped young carers access regular peer support in a youth-friendly environment.

As part of the program, young carers have participated in interactive workshops to empower and build capacity.

The program enables young people to foster positive peer relationships with others who have similar experiences.

Young carers were also involved in providing feedback on marketing material to ensure that it was relevant and appealed to a younger audience.

 **Find out more about the young carer support program**

 03 9495 2500

 [CarerLinksNorth@merrihealth.org.au](mailto:CarerLinksNorth@merrihealth.org.au)

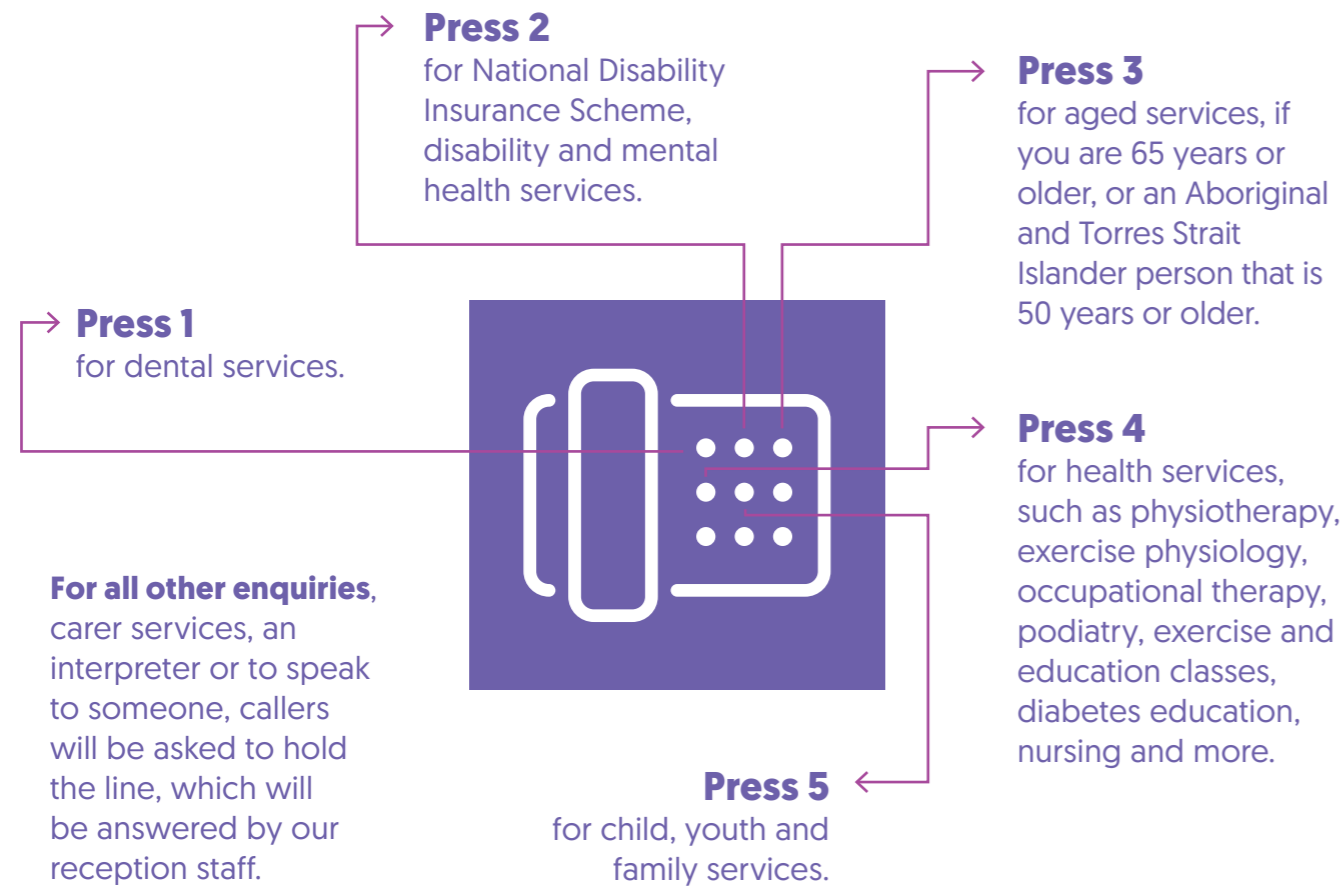
Watch the young carer's video: [goo.gl/gxWPnc](https://goo.gl/gxWPnc)

*Two young people supporting one another.*



# Improving access

You can now call 1300 637 744 (MERRI H) and chose from the options to take you to the right service, person or team faster.



Following feedback from our clients and partners, we replaced individual site contact numbers with one, easy number.

This move will help us streamline access to our services as clients will only need to remember one number, regardless of which service or site they access.

We considered the needs of our community and involved them in the process from beginning to end, to ensure that the navigation system was easy to understand.

The navigation system is in plain English allowing callers to easily connect to OnCall Interpreters to assist with their enquiry, if needed.

This move comes following the launch of our new website last year, which is compliant to Level A of the Web content accessibility guidelines version 2.0.



# Moosh



Art work of new game, Moosh.

Merri Health has developed its first app to help young people learn about healthy eating and a balanced diet.

Co-designed with Merri Health dietitian Julie Lew, community wellbeing team, marketing and communications, Coburg Primary School and app and design creatives, Moosh is an app that educates young people about health eating; balance, sugar and portions, as a fun, accessible game.

Local statistics and experience working with our community shows

there is still a need for education around healthy food choices. The app seeks to address this, with pre and post-game data being collected from grade 3 and 4 students from Coburg Primary School, in addition to other young people across our catchment who have committed to providing feedback.

For the purpose of the prototype, testing was coupled with classroom education, which allows us to collect anecdotal information about their understanding and experience playing the game.

▶ **Play the game or provide feedback**

[monster-moosh.firebaseio.com](https://monster-moosh.firebaseio.com)

✉ [Communications@merrihealth.org.au](mailto:Communications@merrihealth.org.au)



Grade 3/4 student playing Moosh for the first time.

Data collection is key, with quantitative and qualitative data being collected through classroom, face-to-face and electronic feedback. This data will help us improve the quality of the game, to ensure that the learning components are relevant.

Following data analysis from the prototype, the app will be revised and we are hoping to roll it out as a mobile app available on iOS and Android devices.

# Our values



## Our values

**In early 2017 we set out to learn about what was important to our employees.**

Our Operational Leadership team told us that Merri Health's existing values needed a refresh:

they no longer resonated, were too long to remember and needed to be more inclusive.

Following the feedback, we chose to use a co-design process to review our existing values, and guide the refresh. Co-design is a collaborative process

where the end user is engaged in the development process to support better outcomes. Read more about how co-design shaped our new values on page 20.

# A treasured experience



Urdu speaking women's group enjoying celebrations.

Leaders aren't born, they are made, and they are made through hard work and dedication. Their skills are polished by the organisation where they work, flourish and ultimately lead.

I became a member of the Leadership Committee of the Urdu social group of Merri Health in July 2017. Joining the leadership committee was one of the decisions I will cherish for the rest of my life. It proved to be a pathway that opened doors to new horizons.

This versatile experience gave me a chance to give back to a community which has been my clan for years and to make new friendships that I will always relish. During this time, I developed a better understanding of this important yet delicate field of work and I could have never imagined that by the end of this journey, I would be holding a recognised qualification in this field; Certificate IV in Community Development.

Today, I stand my ground as a person, molded beautifully to confidently voice her opinions in front of others, and strong enough to deliver the best for my community. Not only am I professionally groomed but also more poised and empowered.

Merri Health taught me how to lead: not to follow a path laid out by others but to pave my own way.

I am grateful to the team leaders and management of Merri Health for the encouragement during highs and lows and overwhelming support. I hope forums like the Leader Committee continue to flourish as they are major contributors to community wellbeing and development.

Cheers to the last 12 months!

**Written by: Lala Rukh, community member and participant of the Urdu speaking women's group**

## The contributions of the Urdu speaking women's group leadership committee were celebrated on Tuesday, 26 June.

Thirteen leaders from 2016 and 2017 were presented with certificates and thanked for their participation and contribution to community activities.

Some of the activities that the team were involved in included:

- organising and managing the Fawkner Urdu Women's Group social group sessions
- coordinating the Fawkner Meena Bazaar community festival in 2016 and 2017
- participating in leadership training
- participating in the Clothesline project 2017 to raise awareness about Violence Against Women.

Moreland City Council and Merri Health staff were present at the celebration, recognising the tremendous contribution the group has made to community.

# Community participation

In February 2018, over 80 consumers, carers, members, staff and community got together to inform and shape the community engagement activities at Merri Health for the next year.

As well as staff from across Merri Health, a cross-section of the community were invited to ensure our plan reflected their needs and that of community.

Attendees were given the opportunity to review the newly developed community engagement Relationships Framework and brainstorm its action plan.

The material gathered was used to create two specific action and evaluation plans to focus on internal (consumer participation) and external (community engagement).



## More information

Learn more about the Relationships Framework on page 23.



# Responding to diversity

Merri Health provides services in some of Victoria's most culturally and linguistically diverse areas.

▶ Interested in preplanning for the NDIS?

📞 1300 637 744

Responding to the needs of our community, we regularly provide interpreter services to ensure clients are supported at every stage of their health care journey. This includes translating key materials in the top 5 languages spoken in our community.

Throughout 2017/18, we provided 1,885 instances of interpreter support to clients.

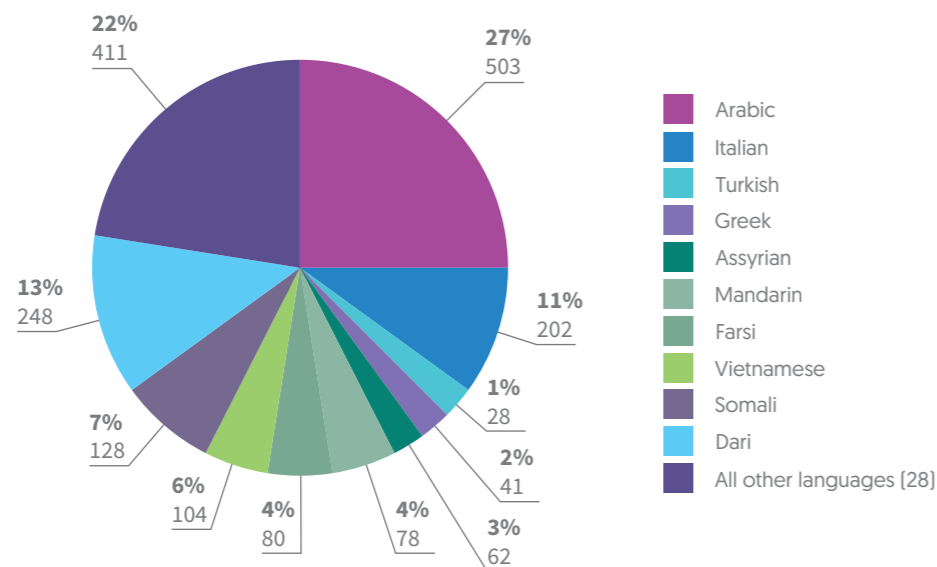
Every year we review our top languages based on statistics from OnCall; Merri Health's main interpreter service, and statistics of top languages from surrounding councils. Currently, the top languages are:

1. Arabic
2. Italian
3. Turkish
4. Greek
5. Assyrian

Knowing this information, we are able to cater our services and communication to different cultural groups.

The data identifies a growing number of Assyrian-speaking people who access our services and the decline in the number of Vietnamese-speaking people from previous years. The use of interpreters has also helped us cater to more diverse communities, as 11% of interpreter bookings were not for the top 10 languages.

The introduction of our new phone system has also meant that more of our clients have access to interpreter services when needed, helping improve the process of triaging and understanding the needs of our clients.



# Be Merri festival

Our first health and wellbeing festival went off with a bang!



Child making planters with MerriKids team leader, Dianne.

Wellbeing of residents was on the radar in December 2017, as Moreland celebrated its first health and wellbeing festival.

Led by staff from across Merri Health, Be Merri took place from 4 to 8 December, with key health, wellbeing and social activities taking place in Coburg, Fawkner and Brunswick.

"Be Merri was an opportunity to connect with locals through fun activities, while talking to them about their needs and what local services they could access," said Merri Health chief executive Nigel Fidgeon.

"It was the first time we've done something like this and it was incredibly successful. It was great to see so many people get involved and stop by for a chat".

Free activities included health checks, mindfulness sessions, community gardening, photo booth, face painting, children's activities, screen printing, and Fawkner's low cost community grocer.

We will continue to explore different options for engaging with locals, with a few businesses already making contact to discuss ideas for collaboration.



Screen printing at our Vic Place site.

Planning has begun for the second Be Merri event. If you have an idea or would like to be involved, get in touch at [communications@merrihealth.org.au](mailto:communications@merrihealth.org.au)

# Hugo ready for school



Children participating in a language learning group at Merri Health.

Starting school can be a difficult time for children who need a bit of extra help.

In term 4 of every year, children who are receiving speech pathology or occupational therapy services with our child health team, are invited to attend weekly 'Ready, Set, School' groups to help them prepare for their first year of school.

Over four weeks, the children work through learning activities to make them aware and more comfortable with school themes such as packing their bag, lunch boxes and what happens at school.

Parents are invited to attend their own sessions, allowing them to have their questions answered and receive resources and supports as their child prepares to enter the schooling journey. This can include discussing referral pathways if children have ongoing developmental concerns and will require specialist services at school.

Mother Julia Difiore is grateful for the progress her son Hugo has made with the help of the group. Hugo attended

the Ready, Set, School group at the end of 2017 and it provided him with the confidence and everyday skills he needed to start school.

"Hugo gained confidence in being able to put his hand up to contribute and to speak in front of a group. He was happy and excited about starting school all thanks to Ready, Set, School," Julie said.

Sessions are run by child speech pathologists, occupational therapist and/or a psychologist.

Children in the group have been referred to Merri Health often by maternal and child health nurses or kindergarten teachers, with concerns about their language, fine motor, social skills and attention.

The child health team also run other groups throughout the year, such as the Let's Talk Together group for 1-2 year old late talkers, and the Handy Work group, working with children and their families on developing fine motor, sensory and language development.

“My favourite part about Merri Health was doing the cooking and reading stories”.

— Hugo, young participant



Children reading a book together with child occupational therapist Noni.

“Thanks to all of the team at Merri Health for their programs that support the development of young children”.

— Julia, parent

# Support for newly arrived and refugee communities in Ovens Murray



Our Early Childhood Early Intervention team in Ovens Murray have participated in a number of region-wide projects in collaboration with other organisations to help vulnerable communities develop their understanding of disability and supports available.

To date, we have become an active contributor of the Vulnerable Children's Provider Network in Wodonga Region, and engaged with Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation (Wodonga), Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service, and Albury-Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council.

The team will continue to explore opportunities to support newly arrived and refugee communities in Ovens Murray.



# Pondering at Moreland Road

Partnering to help support older people and people with dementia or cognitive issues.

Nature is restorative and can have positive effects on people's health, wellbeing and quality of life. With this in mind, a pond and water feature were planned for the garden of our Moreland Road site, to support older people and people with dementia or cognitive issues.

Partnering with Bunnings Warehouse, Coburg, who helped fund and manage the project and Strathmore Men's Shed, who provided the muscle on the day, we built a raised garden bed with a fish pond inset.

As many people who attend a planned activity group are from overseas, having migrated from places near the ocean, the pond will help stimulate sight, sound and touch, allowing them to reminisce. This act of reminiscing can be highly beneficial to their wellbeing and interpersonal skills.

For older people and people with dementia, gardens can also have cognitive and physical benefits as they can lessen confusion and agitation.

The pond acts as a focal point for groups to sit and enjoy the open air and meet participants' goal of beautifying the garden.

Participants ensure that the water levels are maintained, provide ongoing garden maintenance... and also chat with the 'home grown' fish each day, which one of the participants kindly donated!



Participant enjoying the outdoors after the pond was installed.

# Closing the health gap



During National Reconciliation Week, Merri Health participated in multiple events to celebrate and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their history, culture and achievements.

## Employment strategy

**We recently updated our recruitment and selection framework to make it more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander friendly.**

In an effort to assist us in attracting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers, we researched best practice recruitment procedures and sought feedback from community. As a result the following changes were made:

- Advertising template — updated to include a link to Merri Health's Reconciliation Action Plan [RAP]. This is now live on our website.
- Manager recruitment toolkit — updated to include 'recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates' section which provides further information on advertising/sourcing, the application process and the interview and selection process. This is currently in the hands of the RAP committee for feedback.
- Interview guide — Acknowledgement of Country added. This is currently with the RAP committee for feedback.
- Recruitment and selection policy and procedure — policy statement under review to include the following: 'Merri recognises and values

Indigenous Australian knowledge and acknowledges the skills and experience that Indigenous people bring to Merri. Merri will develop close ties and partnerships with local and other Indigenous communities and promote employment opportunities to ensure that Merri is seen as an employer of choice for Indigenous people.' This is currently with the RAP committee for feedback.

In addition, we have introduced an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school-based traineeship for Victorian tertiary school students, by which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are supported in the completion of a Certificate II in community services.



Maddy Phillips and Essendon AFL player Courtenay Dempsey.

## Little Long Walk

On Friday 1 June, we hosted the annual Little Long Walk; a local event to commemorate Michael Long's 2004 walk from Melbourne to Canberra to meet our then Prime Minister, and put Indigenous issues back on the national agenda.

An initiative of Merri Health's Reconciliation Action Plan committee, each year, a local primary school takes part in the event, which takes them on a little walk along the Merri Creek up to the Aboriginal Community Elders Services.

This year, grade 5/6 students from St Mark's primary school took part in the event. Following the walk, students participated in storytelling with Ron Murray from Kinja, and an art workshop with Annette Sax from Yarn Strong Sista, helping to increase their appreciation for, and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

## Video

Watch the Little Long Walk video from 2016:  
[youtu.be/zcHcmPKDLcs](https://youtu.be/zcHcmPKDLcs)



## Respect and recognition

Merri Health's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) committee first came together in 2015. While we already had a long standing commitment to closing the health gap, the RAP committee ensures Aboriginal voices guide this work into the future.

RAP is a partnership with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people and organisations, offering staff the opportunity to get feedback from local community members about how to improve services and program planning.

The committee raises awareness of the importance of reconciliation, and highlights events of significance such as Sorry Day, the Apology, and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's day.

### RAP committee insights:

- 4 RAP Committee meetings
- 7 Merri Health teams represented
- 3 Aboriginal organisation representatives who attended in the last 12 months (The Long Walk, Aborigines Advancement League, Aboriginal Community Elders Service)
- 1 resident/community member (Sue)
- average of 10 attendees per meeting
- total of 6 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander representatives on the committee (both staff and external).

Members of Merri Health's Reconciliation Action Plan Committee attended the Long Walk Trust's Long Lunch Event at Crown.

This year's event celebrated and recognised the incredible contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players and people to the game of Australian Football League (AFL).

The event was hosted by media personality Shelley Ware and key note speaker Tanya Hosch, General Manager, Inclusion and Social Policy at the AFL and included performances from Spinifex Gum and Christine Anu.

### Video

Watch Closing the gap — our journey to reconciliation video: [youtu.be/qfuSMrNL4jk](https://youtu.be/qfuSMrNL4jk).



Merri Health team at The Long Lunch 2018.



Robert Bamblett playing didgeridoo at Smoking Ceremony.

## Smoking ceremony at Merri Central

On 20 June, we held a Smoking Ceremony at Merri Central, our new site.

We were joined by Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Di Kerr, who welcomed everyone and acknowledged our new site stands within the walls of the former Pentridge Prison, a place that holds a dark and sad history, not only for the Wurundjeri people on whose traditional lands it stands, but many other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men, women and children who experienced great hardship, brutality and death, until its closure in 1997.

This is the first Smoking Ceremony that has taken place on the site since its closure, and we were incredibly honoured to be part of such a moving and important ceremony.

A big thank you to Aunty Di and Robert Bamblett, who shared traditions and stories, and to our staff who came from across many sites to be part of this day.

During the Koorie celebrations, we were able to connect a new carer with extra support. They had attended by chance with their mother who received an invitation. The carer had recently moved to Melbourne with her family from Western Australia and was feeling very isolated. Now a registered carer with CarerLinks North, she has begun receiving services to support her in her caring role.

## Koorie carers celebrate

The annual Koorie Carers Lunch was the first event to commence the celebrations for National Carers Week in 2017.

With 60 carers, care recipients and service providers in attendance, the event was a huge success!

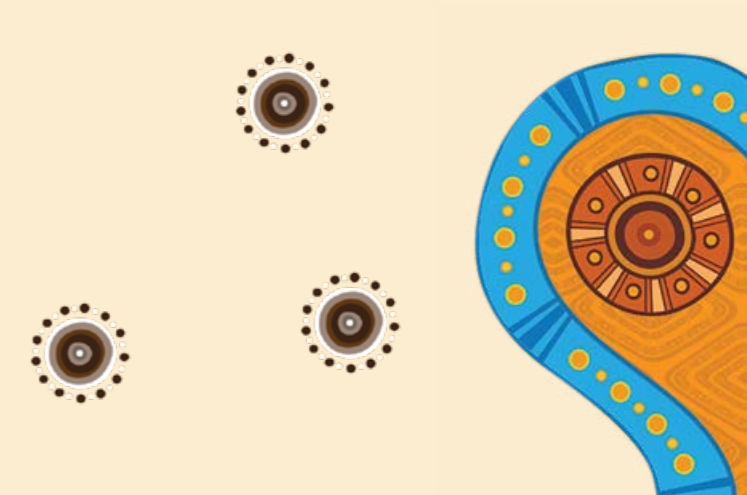
Following feedback from previous events, the lunch was moved to a more accessible and central location at the Aborigines Advancement League in Thornbury, to allow more community groups to attend.

Community were welcomed with a performance by The Stray Blacks — an Aboriginal band who perform a blend of country, rock and reggae. It was great to see everyone get up to dance!

Guests were gifted a gratitude pack, along with a native plant provided by the Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Co-operative, as a symbolic gesture to acknowledge the 20th anniversary of CarerLinks North.

Bunnings Warehouse, Preston generously donated door prizes. They also had representatives from their community support program, who were excited to be part of the event.

Find out more about the health and wellbeing coaching program on the next page.





## Health and wellbeing coaching

The 2017 Koorie Carers Week evaluation identified that participants would like more information on health coaching.

Using co-design principles, members of the Wandarra Aboriginal Community Group in Hume, identified diabetes and stress as key common concerns needing addressing.

Following this process, a five-week health and wellbeing education program was developed.

Aboriginal Liaison Officer at Diabetes Victoria, Colin Mitchell and Merri Health clinicians facilitated sessions focusing on diabetes education management and prevention.

A mindfulness activity was run at the beginning of each session to assist carers to better manage their stress, with practical tips and resources provided to participants to take home and continue practising at home.

Following the completion of the program, carers indicated feeling more confident in managing diabetes and stress and have a better understanding of support services available to them.

Health and wellbeing coaching is available for carers, providing techniques to support them to achieve better health outcomes.

**Interested in health and wellbeing coaching?**

03 9495 2500

info@merrihealth.org.au

## Working in partnership to close the gap

We're excited to pilot the From Symbols To Systems Framework to help us develop workforce capacity and employ and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Developed by Inner North West Primary Care Partnership, the award winning framework will be piloted by Merri Health and Diabetes Victoria, under Garralak Consultancy. Results will be provided to partnership organisations within the Primary Care Partnership, to support and assist mainstream organisations make progress in closing the gap.

The cultural tool was informed by current best practice, cultural security frameworks, and policies, with input from 60 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, from the Working in Two Worlds forum held in March 2017.

## Community leadership

Every year, Moreland City Council recognises local people, groups and organisations whose activities have improved the quality of life in Moreland, via the Moreland Awards.

In 2017, we were excited to support Dr Sue Lopez-Atkinson, Yorta Yorta woman, Moreland resident and longstanding member of our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) committee, as recipient of the Lisa Belleair Award for Contribution to Reconciliation Activities. Sue was recognised for her untiring commitment to restoring the wellbeing and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In addition, we were equally excited that Coburg Primary School also shared the award with Sue, as they were recognised for their participation in the Little Long Walk, an initiative of our RAP committee, in partnership with the Long Walk Trust. The event is in its third year in 2018.



Dr Sue Lopez-Atkinson receiving the Lisa Belleair Award for Contribution to Reconciliation activities.

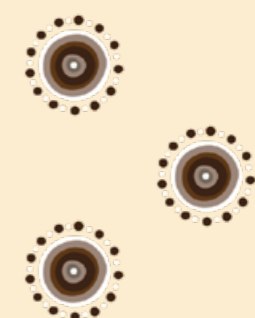
## Restoring health and wellbeing

In March this year, Liz Phillips, our Koorie community engagement officer, presented to more than 50 workers at Vincent Care, to support them to in their reconciliation journey. Leanne Brooke, general manager at the Long Walk Trust and longstanding member of our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) committee, suggested Liz who provided her experience in the development of the Merri Health Reconciliation Action Plan, from the perspective of an Aboriginal employee in a mainstream organisation.

Liz has been instrumental in guiding our own reconciliation activities and provided guidance on best practice and consideration in how to form a working group or committee.

## Cultural appreciation

Every year, we run a cultural awareness training program for our employees and volunteers. Delivered by Girraway Ganyi Consultancy and supported by Liz Phillips, our Koorie Community Engagement Officer, we delivered 4 sessions in 2017/18. The half-day session provides an insight into best practice, cultural appreciation and respect, when working with clients that identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and is an opportunity for our team to ask questions to help them support clients.





# Feedback and complaints

Feedback of any nature is encouraged at Merri Health. It provides us with information about what our consumers believe we are doing well, areas for improvement and any gaps in providing services.

We encourage clients, carers and families to provide feedback which can be provided in many different ways, including:

- phone
- feedback forms
- email
- in person
- over the phone via our dedicated feedback line
- website.

We have ensured that our compliments and complaints are entered, managed and monitored via our updated Victorian Health Incident Management System (VHIMS). All staff have received training in its use and the importance of feedback in assisting us to improve our services.

When we receive a complaint, our first priority is to work to resolve the matter for the client and their family. We also look at each matter and ways we can improve to prevent other consumers from having a similar experience. Upon receiving a complaint we aim to respond within two working days and our Clinical Governance Board monitors our responses, response times and actions.

## Compliments and complaints by program area (June 2017–2018)

Department	Compliments	Complaints
Aged care services	29	5
CarerLinks North	7	2
Child and family services	4	4
Counselling, youth and family services	4	0
Dental	6	3
Disability/NDIS	6	9
Primary care services	2	8
Access and reception	4	3
Victims Assistance programs	5	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>34</b>

Main compliment themes focused on:

- treatment/care of clients by clinicians and administrative staff
- clinical outcomes for our clients and their carers
- benefits of our social support programs for clients and their families/carers.

The main themes for complaints were:

- communication/information
- accessing a service.

As a result, quality improvement activities this year have centred around these issues.

# Client satisfaction

Consumer participation in healthcare is widely recognised and valued as an aid to improve health outcomes and quality of healthcare, as well as to ensure accountability is strongly identified throughout healthcare organisations.

One way that we do this is by surveying our clients using a questionnaire that asks about the care we give them, our reception, how their life has changed and how they think we can improve.

From October to December 2017, we received 145 responses to our questionnaire.

## Overview of responders:

- 8% were from the LGBTIQ+ community
- 15% spoke another language other than English at home
- 2% were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
- 8% required assistance understanding English
- 28% had an interpreter arranged for them by Merri Health, 3% had a health worker interpret for them and 17% had a relative/friend interpret
- 30% had attended a health service more than 10 times
- in the previous 6 months, 36% had accessed one service and 54% accessed two services
- 63% travelled by car to go to the health service and 22% by public transport.

## Results:

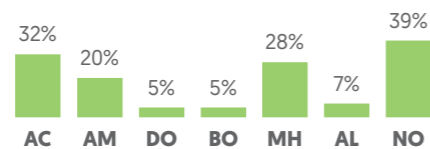
The results found there was a need to improve our communication around the cost of services and improving privacy in our reception areas.

While we involve our consumers in decisions made about their care, we could do better in making them aware that a written copy of their agreed health and wellness care plan is available.

After getting these results, we have made plans to:

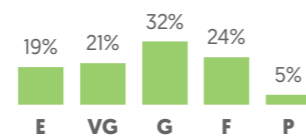
- consult with clients to identify what information they would like to receive following their appointments and how they would like to receive it
- investigate funding opportunities that would allow us to assist more clients and decrease wait times
- monitor outcomes from our new signage at Merri Health sites
- work with our facilities team to ensure frequency of cleaning services are based on specific location requirements
- work with our communications team on reminders to staff on the requirements of our privacy obligations.

## Which, if any, of the following long standing conditions do you have?



- AC** — Chronic illness
- AM** — A mobility impairment
- DO** — Deafness or hearing impairment
- BO** — Blindness or vision impairment
- MH** — Mental health condition
- AL** — Learning/development disability
- NO** —None of these

## In general, how would you rate your health?



- E** — Excellent
- VG** — Very Good
- G** — Good
- F** — Fair
- P** — Poor

**93%** of consumers felt they were treated with respect and dignity.

**97.2%** of our consumers received positive care which was above peer average.

**10 out of 12** aspects of our services performed statistically higher in comparison to the state average.

# Accreditation status

We successfully completed our organisational-wide, mid-cycle accreditation under the Quality Improvement Council Standards in July 2018. In addition, we were assessed under the following three sets of standards:

- National Safety and Quality in Health Service Standards, that apply to our dental service. We met all three of the standards that were reviewed in this cycle. There will be several met with merits for partnering with consumers. Our lead surveyor noted

that it was good to see community and consumer engagement throughout all of Merri Health.

- Home Care Standards for Commonwealth Home Support Allied Health and Therapy services, Social Support programs and Specialist Support Services [Linkages].
- Victorian Early Childhood Intervention standards. This was the first time that we had been assessed against these standards and we were pleased to have met them all.

Each accreditation presents Merri with a fantastic opportunity to showcase our purpose of enriching diverse communities through quality care and support services. It also provides a platform to demonstrate what sets Merri apart from other providers within our sector.

Our preparation has been an organisation-wide collaboration, with all program areas involved along the way — a testament to our responsive culture in an environment of continuous change.

# Infection control and cleaning



Healthy feet.

## Podiatry

Every year, our podiatry service reviews its infection control procedures using the Podiatry Board

of Australia's self-auditing tool. This is in line with the National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency guidelines.

This ensures we are meeting requirements, keeping good practice and ensuring the safety of clients and staff of Merri Health.

The audit highlighted that the team excelled in areas of instrument reprocessing, environment and cleaning, sharps and waste disposal, personal protective equipment and adherence to hand hygiene guidelines.

As a result of the audit, we have introduced additional staff training and a review of the podiatry program's infection control work practice documents.

Merri Health provides podiatry services across four sites and well as providing in-home appointments.

# Dental services



Patient's teeth being checked.

Our dental service provides dental treatment under the guidelines of Dental Health Services Victoria and is based at our Brunswick site at 11 Glenlyon Road.

The dental team includes dentists, oral health therapists, a dental prosthetist and dental assistants.

Each year we measure how well our dental service is responding to community needs and where we can improve. There are a number of ways we look at this data.

## How quickly we respond to emergency care

One of our main roles is to ensure patients who present to our service with an emergency are appropriately triaged, using a tool designed by Dental Health Services Victoria.

Triage is the process where we assess the order of treatment for clients based on urgency. We measure this by asking clients a number of questions, like whether they have been

experiencing facial swelling, which is classified as a category 1 emergency, or if they have chipped a tooth, which may be a category 3 emergency.

Our results show that we are very responsive in directing patients to receive appropriate care.

## Infection control

Each year the dental team conduct an infection control audit to check if we are complying with accepted standards.

Dental Health Services Victoria developed the audit tool which is used by all public dental clinics. We then develop an action plan to respond to any identified areas for improvement.

The 2017 audit result was 97% — this means that we are performing a very high standard of infection control. After this audit, we remained vigilant of our infection control and have recorded an increase to 100% as of April 2018.

### Category 1

Financial year	Merri Health	Target
FY 2015/2016	80.0%	85%
FY 2016/2017	94.6%	85%
FY 2017/2018	95.2%	85%

### Category 2

Financial year	Merri Health	Target
FY 2015/2016	96.6%	80%
FY 2016/2017	99.3%	75%
FY 2017/2018	99.0%	75%

### Category 3

Financial year	Merri Health	Target
FY 2015/2016	98.3%	75%
FY 2016/2017	98.9%	75%
FY 2017/2018	98.7%	75%

## Hand hygiene

The dental team also has a strong emphasis on maintaining proper hand hygiene. We conduct an audit on hand hygiene three times per year. The audit looks at how well staff perform the action of hand hygiene and if they are doing it when it should be done. Our last results showed 89% compliance with the action and timing of hand hygiene.

In addition to these audits, we monitor compliance to sterilisation and instrument tracking procedures. In these areas, we have noted a 100% compliance rate.

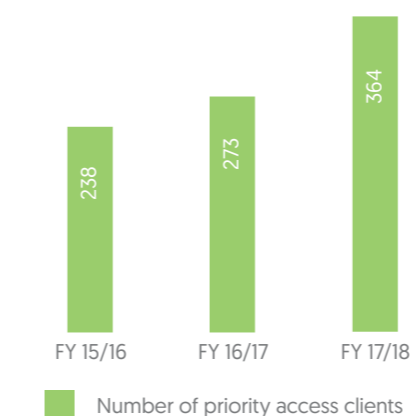
## Number of priority access clients we see at Merri Health

There are a number of clients that are eligible for priority access at dental clinics across Victoria. Priority access is when a person is offered the next available appointment for general dental care. This is determined by Dental Health Services Victoria. Priority access is given to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people who are or at risk of homelessness
- refugees and asylum seekers.

In addition to this, there is other criteria for priority access.

Our data shows we have been able to increase the number of priority access clients over the past few years, which shows that our service is active in seeking out vulnerable patients to deliver timely care.



## Chair utilisation

Our dental team continues to ensure our four dental chairs are used at full capacity. There are a number of factors that determine this such as funding, the number of vacant positions and how quickly we recruit if we have a vacancy within the team.

We continue to run Monday evening and Saturday morning dental services clinics, to support people that cannot attend dental appointments during work hours.

### Chair utilisation

Financial year	Merri Health	Target
FY 2015/2016	100%	100%
FY 2016/2017	95%	100%
FY 2017/2018	95%	100%

## Record keeping audit

Dental Health Services Victoria provide a dental record keeping audit toolkit to help agencies maintain good records.

In 2016/17, Merri Health had fantastic results in record keeping, outperforming the Victorian average in 17 out of 24 indicators.

We are working on an action plan for three areas that we were underperforming when compared to the state average and this has included a re-audit in six months. We hope that with continued monitoring and education, these areas will improve the quality of our records.

### Record keeping audit

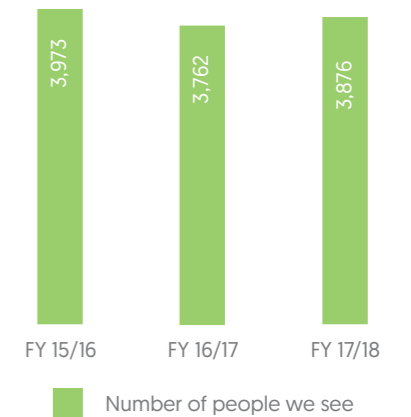
Financial	Number of indicators over 90% and above Victorian average
2016	18/25
2017	16/25
2018	17/24*

\* Dental Health Services Victoria have changed their auditing tool. There are now 24 indicators that we report on.

## Number of people we see

Over the past year, our dental team has been able to increase the number of people we see from 3,762 to 3,876.

Our commitment is to continue to meet demand and explore options to increase our capacity, so we can better respond to extra demands for dental services.



## Wait list response rate

This year we have been fortunate to secure extra funding from Dental Health Services Victoria to help us reduce our dental waitlist. We have been able to remove 755 clients of the waitlist to receive dental care.

We have 2,401 clients waiting on the general waitlist. This is up from 2,175 from the previous year. We are currently exploring new ways to increase capacity for the future and cope with the challenge of increasing demand.

**755** clients removed from our waitlist during the 2017/2018 period

# Child Safety

From 1 January 2016, Victoria introduced compulsory minimum standards that apply to organisations that provide services for children, to help protect children from all forms of abuse.

The standards aim to drive cultural change in organisations so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of leaders, staff and volunteers.

This will assist organisations to prevent child abuse, encourage reporting of any abuse that does occur and improve responses to any allegations of child abuse.

Merri Health is committed to child safety and has a zero tolerance to child abuse.

All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously. We have a legal and moral obligation to contact authorities when worried about a child's safety, which is followed rigorously.

We also aim to prevent child abuse by identifying risks early and removing or reducing these risks. All staff are responsible for the care and protection of children within their care and will report suspected child abuse.

We have robust human resources and recruitment practices, which ensures that all staff have the right training and education from on boarding.

# Reporting an incident

A clinical incident is an event or circumstance resulting from health care which could have, or did lead to unintended and/or unnecessary harm to a client or community. A clinical incident can be related to safety, usability, technical, and privacy and/or security issues.

All clinical incidents for both clients and the community attending a Merri Health site are recorded in our incident management system, the Victorian Health Incident Management System (VHIMS).

The use of a new VHIMS system has led to improvements in organisational wide incident reporting, monitoring and trending.

Merri Health's Quality and Safety committee monitor and respond to adverse events that, on occasion, occur in our centres. This committee monitors progress against health, safety and wellbeing targets and actions on a quarterly basis, and take action to address areas for improvement. Learnings are shared with Merri Health staff.

Key incident themes	
Fall/Near Miss	21
Client aggression/behaviour	11
Client risk	4
Clinical deterioration	27
Other	10
Client incident-Brokerage service	16
Injury	4

## Incidents:

There were a total of 97 registered incidents involving clients or visitors. Each incident is given a severity rating based on the level of harm incurred. 52 incidents were rated as near miss and no harm and 45 were rated as mild.

## Improvements:

Following an incident, we have improved our procedures around supervision and falls management in our social support groups.

Other improvements include:

- reviewing patients' current care plans
- adjusting how and where some of our groups happen
- updating policies in some high clinical risk areas.

# Clinical governance

Delivering quality health care and services.



Clinical governance describes our systems, processes, leadership and culture which are underpinned by continuous improvement. This ensure that we provide safe, effective, accountable and person centred health care to our community. Everyone, from frontline staff to managers and members of the Board, are accountable to our consumers and the community, assuring the delivery of a quality customer experience and outcomes.

Staff and clients are engaged in processes that review and monitor the care we provide, to continue to improve and minimise any risks.

At Merri Health, we have two committees that oversee this work:

- A Board Clinical Governance committee that oversees key strategies and higher level reports on clinical governance functions and,
- An internal Clinical Governance committee that oversees the Clinical Governance workplan.

The key areas of review include quality improvement activities, clinical risk and risk management monitoring, consumer feedback, clinical incidents monitoring, scope of practice and credentialing, medication safety, government compliance changes, waitlists, occupational health and safety incidents and mandatory training.

## Improvement activities:

- Telephone system was designed to make accessing information over the phone easier. It connects non-English speaking clients with interpreters as needed, at first point of call. This means we've been able to assist clients better over the phone and identify their requirements to improve triaging.
- Completion and monitoring of our child safe standards.
- Early Childhood Early Intervention services reviewed and improved to achieve accreditation under this standard.

Merri Health is committed to consumer, carer and community engagement/participation appropriate to its diverse communities. We have developed the Community Relationship Framework which provides both the strategic and operational frameworks for consumer partnership at Merri Health.

Merri Health revised its values, realigning its workforce to organisational behaviours that focus on best practice patient safety and quality. Using co-design principles, the process encompassed respectful and inclusive practice and innovative solutions. The co-design process was geared towards fostering responsive services tailored to meet the unique needs of our communities.

# Diversity awareness training

Merri Health is actively committed to ensuring a culturally safe environment for our staff, clients and visitors.

In order to achieve this, we run several cultural awareness training programs for our workforce throughout the year.

The aim of these programs are to increase the cultural competence of our workforce to engage in inclusive practice and how they interact with colleagues, consumers, community members and partnering organisations.

The programs provide staff with training around working with diverse communities and offer more specific learning and development in working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse people and same-sex attracted and gender diverse communities.

Our training programs are run in partnership with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, AJ Williams-Tchen from Girraway Ganyi Consulting, and Gay & Lesbian Victoria.

-  **30** completed diversity foundation courses.
-  **32** completed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander awareness program.
-  **126** completed gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, intersex, queer and asexual inclusive practice courses.

# Dementia friendly site

Our Moreland Road site underwent a refurbishment in 2017 to make it dementia-friendly.

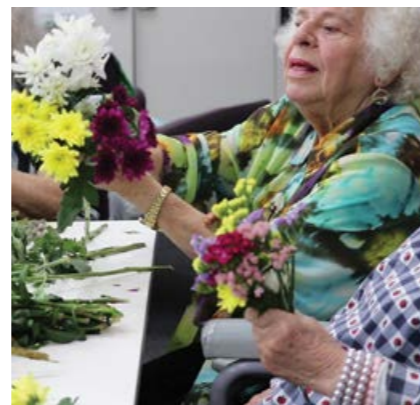
Announced by Health Minister Jill Hennessy, the Victorian State government provided an additional \$90,000 in capital funding for the upgrades.

Manager of aged and disability Lence Markovska said the improvements have provided locals with better support and safety.

“Following an audit, we identified the need for an improved dementia-friendly facility. The building was upgraded

throughout with dementia requirements applied, improved restroom facilities and a dedicated car park area for better client and staff safety at drop off and pick up,” Ms Markovska said.

The site is one of Moreland’s few dementia-friendly spaces; home to a range of social groups catering to the needs of older people, people with a disability, dementia and/or memory loss.



Participants making bouquets in new site.

# Family Foundations

New evidence-based program introduced to support new families.



Staff learning from Dr Mark Feinberg (far right), developer of Family Foundations.

Family Foundations is a new program that provides important insights and skills for couples (or whoever may make up the co-parenting team) expecting a child or have a child under 12 months of age.

Ideally commencing when the mother is pregnant, the couple will receive five pre-birth and five post-birth coaching sessions that will improve the outcomes for parents, their relationships with each other, and their infants.

A parent coach will visit the couple in their homes to help lay vital foundations that will benefit the child or children long term.

Adapted from the US model developed by Dr Mark Feinberg, a Research Professor at Pennsylvania State University, the program has demonstrated positive impacts on a range of outcomes, including birth outcomes, parent stress and

depression, parenting and co-parenting quality, family violence, and children’s long-term self-regulation, mental health, social competence, disruptive behaviour, and school adjustment.

Dr Feinberg facilitated a three-day training session in Australia, where he shared his learnings from the trials of Family Foundations in the US, and contributed to ensuring the fidelity of the program, adapted to the Australian context.

More than 50 families have participated in the program since commencing in March 2018.

Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. One couple who completed the program said it has been “transformative” for their relationship. Specifically, the father reported talking more about his feelings and needs, whilst the mother said she is more flexible, which is promoting

greater involvement from her partner in the parenting of their baby.

Family Foundations is being piloted in Australia in partnership between Merri Health, drummond street services and the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute.

 **50+** families involved in **Family Foundation** since March 2018.



From left: Dr Mark Feinberg with Merri Health, drummond street services and Murdoch Children’s Research Institute staff.

# Family violence

## Our strategy for equality

The 'Gender Equality in Merri Health' project is a phased, whole of organisation approach to the primary prevention of violence against women.

Gender inequality is the key driver of violence against women. Gender inequality and violence against women also impact on health and determinants of health — this is why we are committed to addressing this; promoting gender equality to staff as well as clients, partners and the broader community.

### Phase 1: 2013–2015

Scoping and collection of baseline data including:

- literature review on violence against women and workplace prevention of violence against women
- organisational audit of policies and procedures, sites and staff.

### Phase 2: 2015–2017

Developed a project plan endorsed in 2016 and overseen by Merri's Family Violence Project Committee, with project worker in the community wellbeing team.

Actions were implemented in the following areas:

- leadership and partnerships
- knowledge, attitudes and skills
- physical environment
- policy environment
- evaluation.



### Achievements include:

Communications strategy implemented including:

- iceberg posters displayed at Merri Health sites
- five all-staff emails for awareness raising
- social media posts on five awareness days.

Training from Women's Health in the North delivered including:

- all-staff forum on gender equity 101
- leadership team on gender sensitive practice
- two staff attended MATE train-the-trainer bystander training.

Increased staff knowledge of:

- violence against women and its causes by 13%
- gender equality by 13%
- different needs of users of specific gendered services by 13%

- identifying and responding to clients who experience family violence by 9%
- related policies: equal opportunity, parental/personal leave, flexible working arrangements, professional development, sexual harassment, bullying and harassment.

Changes to physical environment

- increased access to baby change tables for all genders
- increased access to technology for flexible working.

Changes to policy environment.

- working from home policy and procedure developed
- breast feeding information added to parental leave policy and procedure
- new supporting victims of family violence in the workplace policy and procedure developed.

Planning for phase 3 of the project is underway.

## Respectful relationships

Week without Violence is a global campaign to end violence against women. The campaign occurs in the third week of October each year. Coordinated by the community wellbeing team, Merri Health participate and facilitate a number of activities to support the empowerment of women through education and protest against violence towards women.

### Urdu speaking women's group training

In 2017, eight members of the Fawkner Urdu speaking women's group participated in training to support them with identifying violence, public speaking and event plan development.



Students t-shirts hanging for Clothesline Project.

### The Clothesline Project

Local students made their voices heard, standing together for gender equality.

Nearly 90 t-shirts were painted from students at Sydney Road community school and Coburg high school as part in the Clothesline Project during Week without Violence. The project sees students paint pro-active messages on t-shirts to raise awareness of gender equality, respect and empowerment, and its link to family violence.

Health promotion officer and gender equality champion at Merri Health, Kat Thorn, explained that local schools were involved in this year's event, in an effort to stop gendered violence from an early age.

"We're thrilled to be working with secondary school students this year. As the next generation of leaders, they have so much to say about how our community can work together to address gender inequality and disrespect. We know that family violence is an issue that young people care deeply about and Week without Violence is a great opportunity for their voices to be heard," said Kat.

The activity was led by Fawkner's Urdu speaking women's group, and saw the t-shirts on display at the schools, as lead schools in the Department of Education's respectful relationship initiative. The event was followed by the 16 Days of Activism campaign and White Ribbon in November; activities that raise awareness of gender-based violence.

### Information exchange seminar

20 students from the Coburg high school futsal team and Stand Out group, and seven members of the Fawkner Urdu speaking women's group exchanged information about gender equality, gender stereotypes and their impact on violence against women.

The purpose of this activity was to increase confidence when talking about gender equality. One woman from the Urdu speaking women's group said that she felt more confident and had improved communication. She was also happy to see the students grateful to be able to engage with the group.

We continue to support primary and secondary schools in Moreland with the roll-out of the Victorian Department of Education and Training's Respectful Relationships initiative, which will continue throughout 2018/19. Our focus is on supporting whole of school approaches and ideas for student-led actions.

Students reported:

- An increase in understanding of gender equality, and all questions regarding interest and enjoyment scored over 8 out of 10 on average.
- They would all talk to friends, neighbours family about gender equality after the seminar.
- They gained some practical ideas for addressing gender inequality, such as talking to dad and family, and speaking up to challenge stereotypes.
- They were able to remember key statistics such as 567 cases of violence reported each day and one woman is killed per week.



Staff making the pledge at the Victoria Street Mall for White Ribbon.

### Taking a stand

Merri Health is incredibly proud to have stood with our partners and local community, making our voices heard as we said no to violence against women.

On Friday, 24 November 2017, we took the oath to never remain silent, as we marched with our partners Moreland City Council, Victoria Police, Member for Wills Peter Khalil, and Northern Community Legal Centre as part of White Ribbon Day.

White Ribbon Day is the annual male-led campaign for the prevention of violence against women.



# Peace Patrol

Combating violence, harassment and discrimination in Fawkner.

Student-led, social justice group Stand Out supported one of the largest art displays in Moreland for International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT).

Led by young people from eight local schools, more than 1,000 students and locals took part in the large-scale event on Monday, 30 April.

Thousands of colourful, paint-filled water balloons were used to create an 80 metre rainbow mural along the fence of Fawkner Police Station, empowering young people to take a stand against threats, violence and discrimination.

The artwork symbolised a diverse community in which lesbian, gay,

bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual (LGBTIQ+) people are celebrated.

Merri Health's community arts and development officer Russ Pirie, said that the event showed Moreland's commitment to creating a safer and more inclusive community.

"The event is a fun and dynamic way for community members to engage in an act of LGBTIQ+ allyship.


"Everyone was welcome to come along and be involved," said Russ.

Stand Out has seen involvement by 48 young participants that identify as, or are allies of the LGBTIQ+ community, who have signed up as champions, with 100%

identifying the need to introduce Stand Out groups at Victorian schools.

IDAHOBIT is an annual celebration of sexual and gender diversities, raising awareness of the violence and discrimination experienced by this group.

This event is a Merri Health led initiative with support from Moreland City Council, Victoria Police, Bunnings Warehouse and Dulux.

 **Video**  
Watch the video from Peace Patrol: <https://youtu.be/DHHj5iybluA>.



# Fighting back pain

Back pain is the most widespread musculoskeletal condition and a leading cause of disability across the world. Although most people improve with good advice and simple treatment, around 10% end up with significant disability.

The Back pain Assessment Clinic (BAC) provides timelier access to specialist assessment and management for people with back pain.

The back pain project was established to provide improved patient access to evidence-based, non-surgical, multidisciplinary, individual and group therapy services in the community, sooner than they would be seen in a hospital.

Since it was established in 2014, the clinic has helped reduce patients wait times from 2 years for traditional spinal surgery clinics to 10 weeks with BAC.

Providing a single point of access for clients to neurosurgery, orthopaedics, rheumatology, pain services and physiotherapy has meant that clients are able to get the most appropriate care.

## Key outcomes from the project include:

### Access

- 578+ patients triaged to BAC and removed from outpatient surgical waiting lists annually
- 322 new patients seen in BAC annually
- patients assessed within six weeks of referral receipt and referred to community services within 10–28 days
- neurosurgery and orthopaedic outpatient waitlists reduced from an average of 2 years to 6 months.

### Appropriate and safe care

- 92.8% of patients are seen by the same clinician from their first to their second visits in BAC
- 12% of BAC patients referred to surgical services or another specialty
- surgical conversion rates for BAC referrals to surgical clinics is 62%, compared to state average of 5–10%
- 40% of patients referred for community physiotherapy
- 24% of patients discharged after initial assessment.

### Workforce optimisation and integration

- specialist and advanced practice physiotherapist presence in the community
- more efficient use of surgeons' time and skills
- upskilling of community health physiotherapists to manage clients with increasing complexity.

The Back Pain Assessment Clinic is a partnership between Royal Melbourne Hospital and is supported by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Merri Health senior musculoskeletal physiotherapist, Yashwant Rathi, presented at a recent General Practitioner (GP) education session aimed at strengthening confidence and skills in assessing and managing acute and chronic low back pain.

While back pain is the most widespread musculoskeletal condition and a leading cause of disability around the world, many GPs lack the confidence to provide treatment and advice to sufferers of back pain.

'Taking the pain out of low back pain' discussed non-surgical and non-pharmacological management of back pain and recognised the role of allied health professionals. Yashwant Rathi presented on physical examination for low back pain, aimed at helping GPs understand and interpret assessment findings including neurological and provocation examination.

As part of his talk, he led an interactive workshop on '4-minute back examination' providing the opportunity to practice and structure a quick, efficient and comprehensive low back pain physical examination.

Each session was designed to provide interactive plenaries and practical workshops steered by subject matter experts. 'Taking the pain out of low back pain' was hosted by the North Western Melbourne PHN, in collaboration with Royal Melbourne Hospital and Merri Health.

# Knee clinic

## Community-based knee clinic reduces the need for surgery.

Partnering with St Vincent's Hospital and North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network, we have improved patient outcomes for patients with osteoarthritis of the knee.

From March 2017, the clinic was located at our Brunswick site to support patients with assessment and appropriate treatment.

Experienced musculoskeletal clinicians from St Vincent's Hospital and Merri Health assessed and treated clients, adopting non-surgical treatment as a first option.

One of the greatest impacts for patients has been adopting non-surgical management of osteoarthritis of the knee, and care coordinators supporting them with ongoing therapy.

Patients had access to an orthopaedic surgeon, advanced practice musculoskeletal physiotherapist, care coordinator, dietician, and a GP experienced in musculoskeletal medicine.

Provided in the community, the project delivered:

- timely access to services (on average two weeks for an initial appointment)
- a high uptake (84%) of clients accessing ongoing therapy (this was 64% greater than patients attending the other St Vincent's Hospital specialist clinics)
- a low (12%) referral rate to surgery

- high patient discharge rate from the clinic to the care of a GP
- an improvement in client self-reported pain and functional capacity.

This is a St Vincent's Hospital-led clinic in collaboration with Merri Health and North Western Melbourne PHN, and funded by the Better Care Victoria Innovation fund. The clinic wrapped up in 2018.

The project supported Merri Health and St Vincent's Hospital to build a stronger relationship and share knowledge, with a vision to work together on future projects.





Group of people taking part in light exercise.

# GLA:D osteoarthritis support

Patients with osteoarthritis of the knee benefit from a symptom-specific clinic, aimed to manage pain and improve physical function.

GLA:D is an education and exercise based program that was developed using current research in the treatment of knee and hip osteoarthritis.

It provides patients with access to a supervised, graded neuro-muscular strengthening exercise program delivered by trained physiotherapists.

Established in Denmark, the program has reported strong positive results in relation to reduction of pain, intake of medication, walking speed and quality of life.

To date, more than 50 people have participated in the GLA:D program at Merri Health and early data suggests that a majority of participants have improved in functional activity such as walking speed and sit-to-stand functional fitness.

Patient outcomes are collected at baseline and discharge to measure any changes. Outcomes recorded for 14 clients have shown:

- improvement in 40-metre walk test
- small improvement in 30 seconds sit to stand (number of repetitions performed) activity
- improvement in BMI.

Despite only small improvement, these are great results from so early in the program.

Clients, Jane and Sheranne both completed GLA:D this year and found the program to be very effective for their knee pain. They also reported that staff were helpful and well informed.

The program is accredited internationally and linked with La Trobe University. Merri Health is among the first community health services in Australia to implement GLA:D.

# Healthy Steps

New lifestyle program supports people experiencing mental health issues to take control of their physical health.

Healthy Steps is supporting clients with a mental illness to improve their health and wellbeing and make positive behavioural changes through education.

The tailored approach addresses lifestyle factors like physical activity, diet and smoking, to prevent and treat obesity, cardiovascular and metabolic conditions. While the impact of these conditions are improving nationally, this is not the case for people experiencing a mental illness: they continue to have a lower life expectancy.

Our first participants reported positive changes at the end of the program, with many commenting they are more conscious about their food choices.

To continue to help them on their journey, many took the opportunity to receive support from our community nurse, dietitian, exercise physiologist, restorative yoga and other group programs, post the program.

▶ Interested in joining a peer support group or establishing your own?

☎ 1300 637 744

✉ info@merrhealth.org.au

# Victims support program to continue

▶ Do you need support?

☎ 1300 362 739

✉ VAPintake@merrhealth.org.au

The Victims Assistance Program at Merri Health has been offered a new funding contract to continue for another three years across both the Northern Metropolitan Region and the Hume Region. The new funding contracts will run from the 1 July 2018 – 30 June 2021.

The program supports people who have experienced violence, by helping them manage and recover from the effects of crime. We help with 'legal talk,' linking people in with support services and helping them feel safe again.

# Jeff's story



“By being involved in this program they have a safe place to explore their feelings and situation”.

Jeff\* was referred to Merri Health by their local council outreach worker. Jeff who identifies as being gay and lives with another man, has experienced issues of intimate partner violence and substance abuse.

Physical and mental health issues were also identified in the referral, such as cancer, agoraphobia, and depression. The client also experienced financial and accommodation stress.

With the help of QHealth, Jeff was able to get access to the support needed quickly, and due to the urgency of their condition, was able to bypass the usual waiting time for the generalist counselling service.

Our QHealth worker has been supporting Jeff to manage their relationship distress. This involves outreach, counselling and case work.

In the past Jeff felt isolated because of their mental health, agoraphobia and substance use. By being involved in this program they have a safe place to explore their feelings and situation. They are able to have honest conversations and consider new ways to move forward.

## More about Qhealth

Find out more about QHealth on page 93.

\* Names have been changed to respect the privacy of our clients. Stories and quotes have been included with the permission of the client.

# New approach to family violence

Victims of family violence receive support from a new recovery program, with support workers' lived experience at the centre of its success.

iHeal will support hundreds of Victorians, providing victims of family violence with case coordination, and individual and group peer support and recovery.

Centre to its success will be support workers' lived experience, with survivors of family violence providing peer support and learning to the recovery process.

A partnership project with drummond street services, Merri Health has employed four peer workers and one coordinator.

“Lived experience and diversity are key to ensuring we can support our community. Peer support workers are from diverse backgrounds, including culturally and linguistically diverse, same-sex attracted and gender diverse, and people living with a disability,” said Jemma Mead, manager of counselling and support services at Merri Health.

iHeal will employ a total of 12 support workers with lived experience who have completed a Certificate IV in Community Development. They will work alongside case coordinators in developing and delivering programs and activities that support the recovery needs of their peers.

“Support workers will be drawn from past and recent victim survivor clients of the agencies involved in the project,” said Jemma.

iHeal is being delivered from three trial service agencies; drummond street, Victorian Aids Council and Merri Health, across multiple sites in metropolitan Melbourne. The trial covers areas based on our existing geographic footprint and infrastructure, including the Local Government Areas of Melbourne, Yarra, Darebin, Moreland, Hume, Whittlesea, Brimbank and Stonnington.

The program was initially funded until the end of 2017–18 financial year, but due to its success, has now secured funding for another year.

iHeal is being delivered by drummond street services in partnership with Merri Health, Victorian Aids Council, Transgender Victoria, Switchboard and Blue Knot Foundation.

### Since launching, iHeal at Merri Health:

- has participated and presented at a regional forum on family violence and working with culturally and linguistically diverse children in their own rights;
- was invited to attend and present at the Australia Institute of Family Studies Conference end of July;
- was invited to the North Cobourg Community Centre/Nicholson Street to facilitate a couple of sessions for their Arabic speaking women's group;
- started to deliver sessions to the newly arrived Urdu speaking women's group in Fawkner, in partnership with AMES Australia;
- is in the process to collaborate with Action on Disability Within Ethnic Communities (ADEC) to develop programs for client with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse communities;
- hired and trained four recovery support workers that provide support to families and children from various backgrounds.

# Phone based cardiac support



Older person talking over the phone to health professional.

## Culturally appropriate service leads to better health outcomes.

Culturally appropriate phone-based support has been introduced by our cardiac and respiratory support program to cater for the diverse local community.

Hospital Admission Risk Program (HARP) Complex Care recruited Greek and Italian patients who experienced an acute coronary event or intervention, to receive coaching over the phone in their specific language by a nurse or dietitian.

Providing targeted, culturally appropriate secondary prevention intervention through dietary advice (which had a greater focus on a Mediterranean diet) and education, the program was able to achieve 5–10% body weight loss over a six month period.

In people with type 2 diabetes, weight loss of 5–10% was associated with significant improvements in cardiovascular disease risk factors at one year, with benefits increasing with further weight loss, particularly in patients with obesity.

Phone coaching for secondary prevention is used in many Australian hospitals and has been proven to improve control of modifiable cardiac risk factors such as high blood pressure and cholesterol, being overweight, smoking status and physical inactivity.

The program was adopted to the Greek and Italian population, as it was recognised that non-English speaking patients are disadvantaged in accessing cardiac rehabilitation programs as they perceive health, and respond to health care services and information, differently.

HARP Complex Care is a partnership between Royal Melbourne Hospital, Merri Health, cohealth and Bolton Clarke. The program provides specialist treatment, education and support for people with chronic and complex health issues to manage independently in the community and reduce the risk of being admitted to hospital.

### ▶ Full report and questions

To read the full report  
<https://goo.gl/VVxqf3>

For referrals and questions  
☎ 03 8367 2333

# Building connections through sports

Twelve month evaluation of Count Me In reveals an increase in health and wellbeing levels of refugee and newly arrived families.

Sports participation program Count Me In, was found to be a catalyst for change on an individual and community level for health and wellbeing.

Since the program's inception, levels of health and wellbeing among culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and their families have grown.

The program has supported families to get involved in physical activity as a way of helping them build on their social and support networks.

Results of the evaluation after the first 12 months, showed participation in Count Me In significantly increased resilience ( $p=0.047$ ) for the children, with a moderate positive correlation between resilience and wellbeing.

The program has not only played a role in driving health benefits, but in building community, confidence, resilience, social connection and cohesion.

Count Me In was able to improve the social network of participants, with children reporting that they felt there were people they could seek support or help from outside the home.

A social network mapping exercise found there was a decrease in children reporting that they had 'no-one' that they could talk to about things important to them.



Children playing sports and being competitive.

Alongside support for children, a badminton program was established in Fawkner and Oak Park for women and girls exclusively, to provide a culturally-safe space for those who did not feel comfortable playing sport in a mixed-gender environment.

Count Me In has supported CALD families in Moreland and Hume since September 2016, engaging and linking 277 children and youth from 165 families into mainstream local sports clubs.

Count Me In is a partnership project between Moreland Council, The University of Melbourne and Merri

Health and was the recipient of the 2017 VicHealth Award for Building Health through Sports.

277

children and youth have been linked to local sport clubs.

# Social support for older people

The social support program model underwent a refresh after listening to feedback from participants.

The new model is client-focussed, providing participants with more opportunities to choose what activities they would like to get involved in and move from room to room.

With a roster of over 23 social support programs, each considers and caters for the different needs, abilities, interests and culture of the participants.

These programs run over 5 days a week and support people to be socially engaged, meet with other people their own age, have fun and get involved in a range of activities which meet their goals and interests.

Activities include gardening, craft, cooking, and other recreational interests which can be centre-based or in the community.

The programs continue to evolve, in response to the interests and goals of current participants. We also try to plan for future programs which will engage and support a new cohort of clients.

 **Find out more**  
 **1300 637 744**



Participants and our team dancing at Social Support Program event.

# Putting a stop to elder abuse

Local organisations working together to improve responses to suspected elder abuse.

Following the findings of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, local elder abuse prevention networks will be established across the country to improve support and response to suspected elder abuse.

The elder abuse prevention networks will comprise of agencies and community organisations who will meet regularly to work on key objectives such as developing interagency protocols and raising awareness of elder abuse.

This network forms part of the Victorian Governments integrated model of care to respond to suspected elder abuse.

The integrated model of care aims to strengthen elder abuse responses and support within Victorian health services

by creating multiple entry points for older people and their carers and families, to access specialist support services to address suspected elder abuse.

Merri Health will lead the Northern Metropolitan Elder Abuse Prevention Network, which launched on June 14, the day before World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.



Older man sitting with young man.

## What we know:

- There are unique characteristics of family violence experienced by an older person, which warrant particular attention and a tailored response.
- It was found that in most cases, elder abuse is an intergenerational form of family violence.
- In 2016–17, people aged 60 years or over made up just over 5,400 of the family violence incidents recorded by Victoria Police.

# Local homeless support

Local groups are working together to help the growing number of people that are homeless in Moreland.

A new shower and laundry service has been visiting Coburg weekly, to support those who are experiencing homelessness.

Ray from OneVoice runs the service at the front of Merri Health's Vic

Place site and has seen first-hand the difference that a wash and clean clothes can make.

"When they first come to the service, you can tell they haven't had a shower in a long time. When they come out, it's like they are a whole new person — they have a bounce in their step," Ray said.

Merri Health has been operating a health clinic alongside the service to

address their health concerns and ensure it isn't neglected.

Community health nurse at Merri Health Jen Anderson, performs a health assessment including blood pressure and blood sugar checks, specific women's and men's health checks and provides alcohol and drug support.

The bus visits Merri Health's Vic Place site every Wednesday from 9–12pm.



# Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey

As an organisation we are committed to streamlining our client end-to-end journey across all touch points. Throughout 2017 and 2018, we have made investments in infrastructure, technology, training and people which has enabled us to prioritise individual needs of our clients and positively shape their client journey.

From initial contact to their first appointment, we have ensured that their access to care and information is simple and easy.

As a result of changes made at intake, we have had an increase in those reporting that they had received the right appointment information and that the reception staff were helpful and polite.

Since the last consumer experience survey, while we have improved the

way we involve our clients in the review and discussion of their care plan treatment, we also identified there is still more work to be done in this space. As a result, we will consult with clients to find out what information they would like to receive and how they would like to receive it.


The results acknowledged that there is a need to improve internal referrals and work together across services to help clients achieve their goals.

In order to improve the experience of priority groups, we plan to increase the amount of information that is available in other languages. This will ensure that culturally and linguistically diverse communities have the tools and knowledge needed to make an informed decisions about their health care.

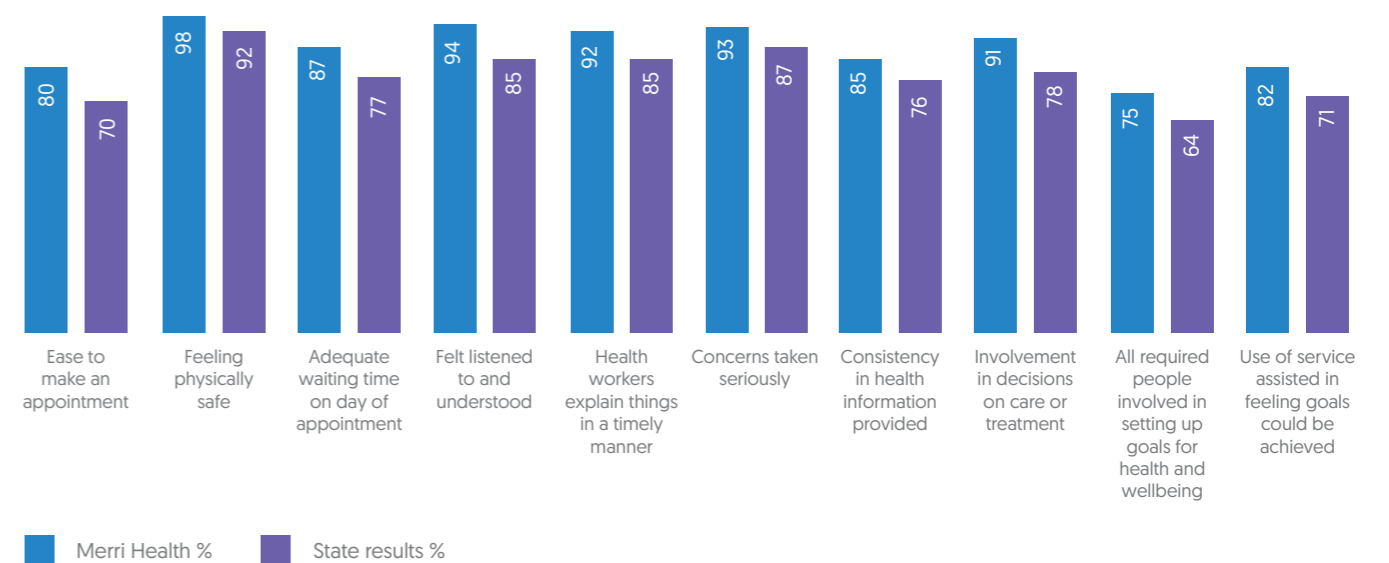
## Highlights: areas of success:

 **98%**  
reported feeling physically safe

 **94%**  
felt listened to and understood by health workers

 **93%**  
felt their concerns were taken serious

## Areas statistically significantly better than benchmark



# Carer support



Carers enjoying lunch and entertainment at annual event.



Carers smiling and having fun.



Carers' Chorus providing entertainment.

## CarerLinks North reaches milestone

National Carers Week 2017 was one of the biggest events hosted by CarerLinks North to date, as it coincided with the program's 20 year anniversary.

Throughout October, CarerLinks North organised events to recognise and celebrate the contribution unpaid carers make to our nation, and raise the profile of carers and their unique role.

The annual National Carers' Week lunch was attended by 200 carers past and present, who came together to commemorate 20 years of service at the Abbotsford Convent.

Throughout the day, carers had the opportunity to get involved in a number of activities.

The Carers' Chorus, which was a peer support group formed by one of the carers, provided the entertainment, performing a set that had everyone cheering!

Staff were available to answer questions and provide information to carers about the services that are available.

Other events included the Koorie Carers Lunch and Young Carers Festival which were both well attended and helped to recognise and acknowledge the role that all carers play in their community.

Thank you to everyone that attended and supported CarerLinks North in celebrating this incredible milestone!

## Carers get active

Carers completed over 479 hours of activity for Active April!

Carer Health and Wellbeing coaches at Merri Health embraced the Victorian Government initiative as a way of encouraging carers to increase exercise.

During the month of April, our carer service CarerLinks North, invited carers to join the Active April team and record their physical activity online, encouraging friendly competition.

16 carers participated in Active April with CarerLinks North staff completing over 479 hours of recorded activity!

Carer Health and Wellbeing coach and dietitian Collette Arnheim said the campaign is a great way to introduce carers to physical activity and connect with support services and other carers.

"Staying active and healthy is important for all carers so that they can maintain their caring role.

"Active April will help them see the big impact 30 minutes of exercise can have on their energy levels — and a bit of competition is a great motivator!" Collette said.

Active April complemented the team's free monthly walking sessions, where they take part in light exercise while learning more about support services.

As a fulltime carer of his father, Loddy Micucci has benefitted from the program which has helped him reach his goals of increasing his physical activity levels.

"The health coaching made me realise that it was okay to take time for myself and also supported me and guided me on how to do that," Loddy said.

## Join a walk & talk session

03 9495 2500

Watch the Carer Health and Wellbeing coaching video <https://goo.gl/XjREH4>.

Health coaches apply evidence-based health behaviour change principles and techniques to support carers to achieve better health outcomes and increase their capacity to prioritise their physical health and wellbeing needs.

Over 200 carers engaged with the carer health and wellbeing team in the 2016/2017 period to improve their own health and wellbeing.

We have delivered a number of workshops over the last financial year. The sessions cover educational topics around maintaining a healthy lifestyle and goal setting behavioural change principles.

The team have supported carers through group coaching workshops, attending our walk and talk sessions and one-on-one support with a health coach.

In 2018, CarerLinks North Carer Health and Wellbeing coaching team were awarded the Leading Age Services Australia, 2018 Excellence in Age Services Team Award for Victoria and Tasmania. They were recognised for their innovation and initiative in improving the lives of carers.

Congratulations to the team for championing Merri Health's value of innovation.

## Supporting male carers

Merri Health's carer support service acknowledged and celebrated male carers and put a lens on key health issues faced by men for Men's Health Week.

Male carers were invited to a barbecue on Wednesday, 14 June, to connect with others and learn about support available to them.

More males die at every stage of the life course, take their own lives and suffer from lifestyle-related health conditions than females at the same age.

"We know that carers experience some of the lowest wellbeing in Australia due to financial hardship, isolation and higher levels of stress and depression.

"Having a close social circle can have a positive impact on a person's mental health and overall wellbeing, which is why we offer support for male carers to identify and address their health concerns," said manager of CarerLinks North, Vicki Down.

CarerLinks North are currently exploring the opportunity to establish a male support group, allowing them to meet and share with other carers and learn from their experiences.

## For more information

03 9495 2500

PeerSupport@merrihealth.org.au

## Bright futures

Young Carers are making gains thanks to the support of the young carers program at CarerLinks North.

16 young carers were supported in applying for the Young Carers Scholarship through Carers Victoria. Winners were awarded up to \$500. Our young carers obtained a total of \$4700 towards school expenses, extracurricular activities or skill based activities.

Five of our young carers have also been accepted into the Big Dreamers 6 month personal development program by Little Dreamers.

This program has two retreats and monthly workshops which aim to empower, develop resilience, provide opportunity for building new skills and finding hidden talents.

They will also be eligible for a Big Dreamers Scholarship later in the year which will go towards school expenses and extra-curricular activities.

We are proud of and excited for these new opportunities for our young carers!

The Young Carers program at CarerLinks North has recently undergone a refresh. Read about the co-design process that took place on page 33.

# Terry's story



Two people holding hands.

“People don't understand the role of the carer and don't realise the amount of time that the caring role entails”.

— Terry

Terry came into his caring role very suddenly and unexpectedly.

He and his wife, Julie, went to bed Sunday night and at 6am the next morning, Terry was woken by Julie, who was completely disorientated and insisting that she had to go to the doctors immediately.

Once taken to the hospital, Julie went into a coma for 15 days and after conducting numerous tests, she was diagnosed with viral encephalitis.

Julie lost part of her memory as well as the ability to look after herself. Julie was in rehabilitation for 6 weeks learning to walk, eat and perform activities of daily living.

Terry has been a full time carer for Julie since 2010.

Julie is unable to be left alone for any length of time as she forgets what she is doing and wanders around the house — on occasion, she has left the stove on and burnt saucepans.

His caring role has made Terry tired and stressed; as he has to be constantly alert regarding Julie's movements.

“People don't understand the role of the carer and don't realise the amount of time that the caring role entails,” Terry said.

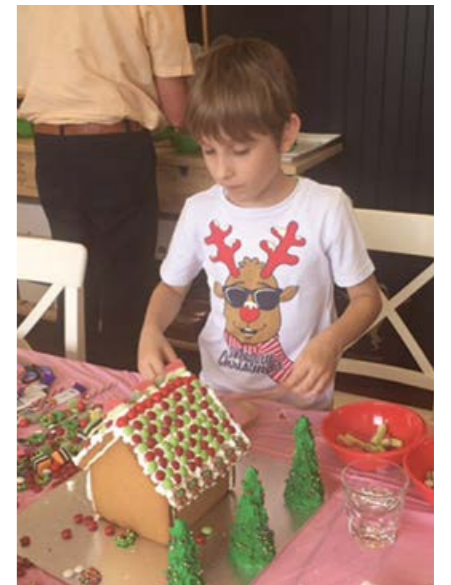
Terry receives support from CarerLinks North including short-term and emergency respite. Someone comes to his house to care for Julie for a couple of hours while he is out. This allows him to take a break from his caring role and have peace of mind that Julie is safe.

Terry believes that without the help of CarerLinks North he would not have been able to manage and Julie would have had to move into residential aged care permanently.

# Festive cheer



Carers and family members enjoy decorating their own gingerbread house.



Eighteen carers and family members of a person living with dementia, got together to design, drizzle icing and stick lollies on their own gingerbread house.

Participants had a lovely afternoon together; sharing advice and information they had learnt from their experience as a carer.

The gingerbread house making was followed by high tea, giving them more of an opportunity to get to know one another.

This activity forms part of CarerLinks North's dementia carer support programs, which provides education and support for carers of a person living with dementia.

In the 2017–2018 period, our dementia carer consultants facilitated 17 sessions to nearly 200 primary carers. Four of these sessions were offered after hours to better engage working carers or extended family.

Topics ranged from understanding the disease, managing changed behaviors, nutrition, environmental considerations through to understanding and promoting meaningful engagement through music and art.

The group welcomes any carers wanting to join.

▶ Find out more

☎ 03 9495 2500  
Ask to speak to one of our dementia carer consultants.





Person takes along their own bag to The Community Grocer Fawkner.



Fresh fruit and vegetables at the Community Grocer Fawkner.

## Plastic-free grocer

In July 2017, The Community Grocer Fawkner went plastic free. As a result, the team undertook the task of educating and empowering the local community to make better choices when buying their fruit and vegetables.

As part of their initiative, they:

- started offering paper bags and cardboard boxes
- used cardboard boxes used for deliveries
- minimised ordering fruit and vegetables wrapped in plastic e.g. continental cucumbers
- developed an electronic payment system so customers and staff can pay using online banking or banking apps on their mobile.
- displayed information posters on the harmful effects of plastic displayed on market days

- partnered with Second Stitch to sew produce bags
- had Sustainable Fawkner host two stalls providing reusable boomerang bags
- had Beeswax Eco set up a stall on two occasions and sell food wraps at cost to customers.

The Community Grocer Fawkner is a social enterprise model that looks to improve food security through access to a low-cost healthy produce in Fawkner. The market was created in response to a 2015 needs assessment by Merri Health, which showed food security was a significant issue in Fawkner.

### The Community Grocer Fawkner in numbers:

- 49 markets
- 85 customers per week
- 3693 transactions
- \$73,830.32 produce sold
- \$17.30 spent on average per customer
- 252 deliveries
- 16.6% of deliveries to Fawkner residents
- 32 volunteers

## Food security

In April 2018, five students from Monash University undertook an evaluation of four of The Community Grocer sites including Fawkner. They found that:

- 52% of market customers were identified to be from low-income households
- 8% of market customers were identified to be from food insecure households

- number of households worried about food insecurity was 10%
- on average, produce sold was found to be 66% more affordable than other supermarkets located within a 1km radius
- 90% of customers felt more connected to their community, with 70% stating that the grocer has helped them meet and connect with others.

# Trevor's story



“They're all very client focused. They treat me with respect. I couldn't ask for better help”.

— Trevor Crapper

Trevor Crapper has been a client of Merri Health since 2015, receiving supports to remain living at home and independent.

Through the support of the Wellness at Home team, he has a Home Care Package in place, which has provided him with the supports and services he needs to stay living in his home and remain active in his community for longer.

“My goal is to be more independent and self-sufficient in my general everyday life and be able to get out more,” said Trevor.

After meeting with Trevor to identify his needs and health condition, the team developed a plan that would help him achieve his goals. Trevor begun receiving home help, gardening and meals on wheels, which caters for his dietary requirements.

More recently, Trevor's health deteriorated and he suffered from falls, which reduced his level of mobility. He is currently waiting to receive a scooter which will support him to travel locally and maintain his independence.

He has found the supports have helped him live independently despite his mobility issues and get together with others in a social environment.


“We go for a monthly outing for lunch. We went to Mount Macedon last week, which was great. I look forward to it, in the sense that you're going somewhere and not stuck at home as I've got mobility problems,” said Trevor.


A tailored Home Care Package can help older people who have complex or changing care needs, with things such as case management to plan, coordinate and monitor services. The Home Package moves with your needs and we tailor packages to suit your changing needs.

The Wellness at Home team now support 115 clients through Home Care Packages and we have expanded our catchment to include eight Local Government Areas.

## Support

If you or someone you know could benefit from extra support to remain independent and connected in the community, get in touch.

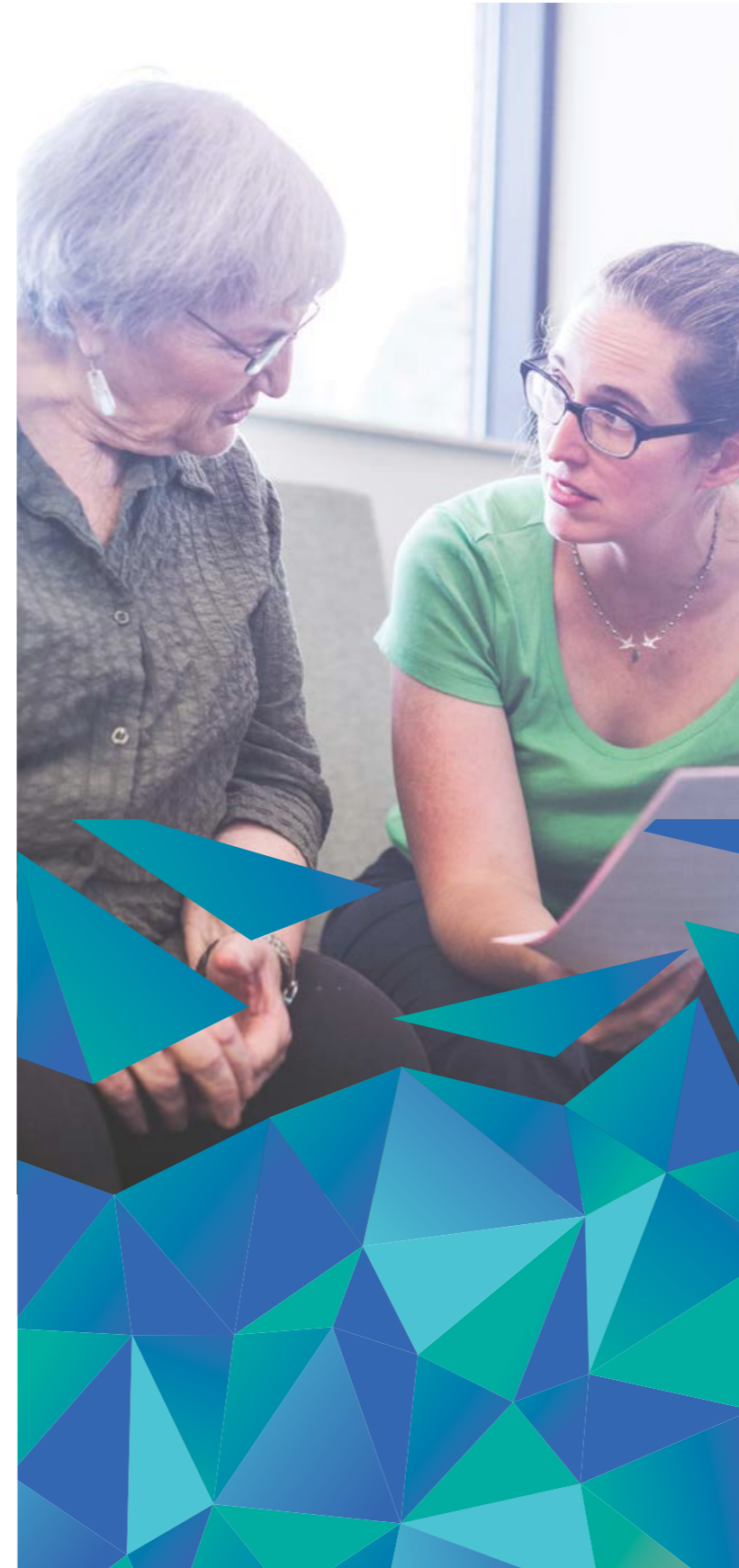
 1300 637 744

 [info@merrhealth.org.au](mailto:info@merrhealth.org.au)

## Video

Watch the video about Home Care Packages: <https://youtu.be/DqMPTRJ8woc>.

# Advanced care planning



Merri Health is a member of the 'Increasing Awareness of Advance Care Planning' Project, which involves going out to community groups to talk about advanced care planning.

We have facilitated discussion about advanced care planning to 15 of our social support groups.

In partnership with cohealth and Justice Connect, an information pack was developed to support older people in taking the steps needed for advanced care planning and improve their knowledge of the process.

This Project is funded by the North Western Melbourne Primary Healthcare Network.

# Ready, Set, Prep

Ready, Set, Prep continues to support families to be school-ready.



Children enjoying learning.

Using a 'whole of community' approach, Ready, Set, Prep works within education settings such as schools, to improve parent and carer engagement, and support families to be 'school-ready'.

The initiative supports local primary schools and early years services to build strong relationships with each other and with local families, in order to achieve a smooth transition to school.

Many Fawkner families are from low socio-economic, refugee or migrant backgrounds and face extra challenges when connecting with services and support, learning opportunities and the local community.

Disadvantaged groups have greater risk in educational progress and health.

The Ready, Set, Prep Family Engagement Officer is available as a resource to families to provide information about local schools and early years providers, local playgroups, the Victorian Education system and school preparation, and to connect them to local health, community and settlement services as needed. Since September 2017, 62 families from over 10 different countries have been engaged directly via the Family Engagement Officer.

Ready, Set, Prep also looks at ways to improve system coordination so that local services such as maternal and child health, early years providers and schools can streamline processes, ensure their services are welcoming and inclusive to diverse communities,

“ Having just arrived in Fawkner I found it stressful and hard to understand how things work. Having someone to talk to and help us understand how schools work was very helpful”.

— Fawkner resident

and communication between providers and community is improved.

Through Ready, Set, Prep, all five primary schools have seen improvements in their transition programs, noting:

- reduction in student challenges
- reduction of the number of children and families who were anxious about starting school
- improved communication between parents/carers and staff and
- increased confidence from foundation children.

All Fawkner schools have started planning new, extended and improved transition programs for 2018, based on their learnings from the Ready, Set, Prep collaborative.

# Smalls steps making big impact

Launching last year, the Little Feet and Limbs clinic continues to support young children with foot or leg problems.



Children's little feet.

The Little Feet and Limbs clinic provides help for young children that are having foot or leg problems affecting the way they walk, with support from a physiotherapist and podiatrist.

The clinic has helped more than 50 children under the age of eight, who have been experiencing different problems impacting on their development.

Team leader of prevention and chronic illness care Jason Dunn said that these problems are better treated while a child is young, to prevent further complications later in life.

“If some of these conditions are left untreated, then a child may compensate with other joints

therefore creating subsequent symptoms later in life

“Some conditions may indicate neurological conditions which should be picked up as early as possible,” he said.

Taking into consideration the clients' needs, the clinic provides joint assessments with a physiotherapist and podiatrist where possible, allowing ideas to be shared and discussed, while avoiding duplicate visits and costs.

82% of clients have benefited from joint appointments, aiding treatment for various presenting problems including developmental delay, inward turning feet, flat foot posture, delay in walking and sitting, knee and leg position and toe walking.

The clinic has achieved a 98% attendance rate, hinting towards success of the new approach.

The clinic has been able to strengthen relationships with local maternal and child health nurses, with many referrals coming directly from these sources.

The Little Feet and Limbs clinic continues to expand in 2018 to cater the high demand.

 82%

of clients have benefited from joint appointments.

# Keeping healthy from home

Older people in Moreland are benefiting from new at-home services. Clients 65 years and over\* will now have access to podiatry, physiotherapy, dietetics, diabetes education and more in the comfort of their own homes.

The introduction of home visits will help Moreland couples like Osvaldo and Rosa Civetta, who have found it hard to keep appointments due to declining health.

“Sometimes we don’t feel well and we need to cancel appointments. The podiatrist coming to our home would be good for us and makes it a lot easier,” said Rosa.

Attending regular appointments has been key in helping the couple keep their independence and hobbies such as gardening. At-home appointments will make it easier for them to stay on top of their health needs.

Aged and disability services manager, Lence Markovska said the introduction of home visits improves the health of older people by making it easier for them to access the service.

“We know that many of our older clients have trouble getting to their appointments. This additional support helps them stay healthy and active,” Lence said.

## ▶ Make an appointment

My Aged Care  
**1800 200 422.**  
Tell them you want Merri Health as your preferred provider.

\*At-home appointments are now available for clients 65 years and over or 50 years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Person receives health services at home to stay healthy and well.

# Jorge’s story



“Through the program, I was able to go on camps and build good friendships with kids from my school, as well as others”.

— Jorge

I started in the TRACKS program in 2014 when I was in year 7. At that time I was living in a family violence refuge with my mum and younger brother — and to make matters worse, I was getting really badly bullied at school. I was really angry and confused and not sure how to deal with this. My thoughts often went to hurting others or hurting myself.

The school welfare team were worried about me but not sure how to help so they referred me to a program called TRACK Out, and it changed my life.

Through the program, I was able to go on camps and build good friendships with kids from my school, as well as others.

I started to realise that I was likeable and that being bullied was more about the bully than me.

As part of the program, we had to tell our story which I really struggled to do at first. Gradually, I was able to make sense of what had happened and felt more in control. It gave me more confidence and helped me share my story, which supported others to do the same.

Mel and Ross from TRACKS gave me the opportunity to do a leadership

program. While I told them that I wasn’t a leader, they could see something that I couldn’t. The program was a real turning point for me and I started to see the qualities that they could see in me.

One time I got quite depressed but didn’t talk about it, so my mum talked to Mel who organised for some individual counselling with Codie, who had also been on camps with me and was part of the leadership program. As I knew him well I was comfortable talking about things — he helped a lot.

TRACKS has also been a great support for my mum and is now also helping my younger brother too!

This year I turned 18 and have commenced a Diploma of Community Services. Funnily enough my mum has started the same course! She also wants to give back.

Looking back, I was struggling at school and wasn’t sure what I wanted to do. Now, I’m a peer leader with TRACKS and will start placements with the team soon too — yet another opportunity!

I am so grateful for the TRACKS program; to Mel, Ross, Codie, Chris, Achmel, Tyson and Tracy who have all contributed to my life and my family — you’ve changed my life for the better!

TRACKS offer one-on-one and group support for anyone aged 16–25, experiencing, or at-risk of, drug or alcohol use. We can also help with family and group support.

Working with seven local secondary schools, Tracks established a student engagement program, which includes activities to build health and fitness, social connection, conflict resolution and student engagement with school, student welfare services and Merri Health.

With the primacy focus of early intervention and prevention, they facilitate fortnightly workshops and activities, including a gym program, for Track Out Youth Group.

During 2017/18 they provided leadership and mentoring opportunities for four TRACKS participants, such as work experience and peer leader roles. Four former TRACKS participants have now been offered paid casual employment as mentors at Merri Health.

# Healthy smiles for Fawkner students

More than 300 Moreland primary school students in Fawkner are benefiting from free dental checks and education.

Children from grade prep to 2 at Fawkner, St Matthew's, Moomba Park and St Mark's primary schools are being taught about healthy eating and good oral hygiene, followed by an onsite dental screen.

25% of the children assessed required follow-up treatment at Merri Health's Brunswick site within two weeks to further investigate and treat any dental problems that may exist.

This highlights the continued unmet demand for dental services across the Moreland area and demonstrates the need for oral health promotion strategies and increased dental services to these areas.

Merri Health's manager of dental services Jonathan Teoh said the service will help children develop healthy habits and address access to dental services.

"If children develop good oral hygiene early in life, these practices will stay with them for life.

"Fawkner is a very diverse area with children coming from many parts of the world. By delivering oral health education to newly arrived and culturally diverse children, we can improve their health through education, as well as connect them with quality, community-based dental services," Jonathan said.



Child's teeth being checked by dentist, Ann.

Merri Health offers free basic dental services for all children 12 years and under.

The program is based on the Little Smiles model, which visits Moreland

playgroups to help children and their family from vulnerable and marginalised communities, develop good oral health habits and connect with their local public dental service.

# Food savvy

Increasing nutrition knowledge of people living in supported residential homes.



Food being prepared.

Eight local Supported Residential Services (SRS) benefited from a 'Food SAVVI' program, developed to increase their knowledge around nutritional quality of food.

The program, which was an initiative of SAAVI, also known as The Supporting Accommodation for Vulnerable Victorians Initiative, covered cooking methods; how to

use more fruit and vegetables; and food safety and handling procedures to support better health and wellbeing for their residents.

With the aim of increasing compliance to the 'Food SAVVI' nutrition policy and capacity to provide healthy meals, the team delivered two food safety and handling training sessions, four nutrition training sessions for SRS staff

and one cooking demonstration for food service staff and proprietors.

Evaluation of the project is currently underway, however, initial feedback found that changes have already occurred at all facilities as a result of the education and training.

Reported changes include:

- improved food safety and handling procedures
- changes to the menu to include healthier options
- improved cooking methods
- increased vegetable use
- increased fruit offerings and consumption by residents
- decreased consumption of added sugar and sugary drinks among some residents
- increase water consumption among some residents.

The proprietors and staff of each SRS report that all aspects of the project have been beneficial and are enthusiastic for ongoing nutrition education and training.

# Streaming videos for education

Online resources provide extra support for residents of supported residential accommodation.

A significant number of Supported Residential Services (SRS) residents live with chronic health conditions which require food and nutrition to be managed well. Traditional training options available to staff do not offer the flexibility that SRSs need: they are limited by funding and time constraints and do not always respond to SRS specific challenges.

As a result, two tailored videos have been released on the Merri Health website on topics of health eating and type 2 diabetes management — areas of the SRS food and nutrition benchmarks that SRS staff have the greatest level of difficulty meeting.

The videos were developed using the co-design process with SRS proprietors, residents, and an academic lecturer. Their input was key to ensure the content was relevant

and evidence based, and met the needs of SRS staff.

As part of this kit, we have gathered supporting resources from a range of organisations that will support SRS to continue making improvements to their food and nutrition practices.

This includes templates developed in consultation with the SRS such as an individual diabetes management plan template, menu review checklist, dietary requirements log sheet, a weight monitoring template and blood glucose target ranges.

The content of the videos complements formal training provided to the lodges last year, further adjusted to incorporate participants' feedback.

It is envisaged that the videos will be used as part of training refresher

sessions at the lodges during diabetes week and at the start of our annual planning cycle with each of the SRS. SRS proprietors will also be encouraged to use them during the induction of new staff members.

The third video in the series will be released later this year.

We would like to thank all the SRS staff and residents that have been part of the Food SAVVI project and have contributed to the design of these valuable tools!

## Find resources

Resources available on our website at <https://goo.gl/tuYtvJ>.

# We love books

HIPPY 'We Love Books' festival caters for working families by hosting the event on the weekend.



Families enjoying book festival.

**The 'We Love Books' festival which was attended by 24 families and over 60 kids.**

In April, we hosted a HIPPY 'We Love Books' festival on a Saturday afternoon for the first time.

Families were invited to participate in a day full of fun for the whole family, highlighting the important role parents

have in supporting children's learning and love of books.

Craft activities were set up on tables in the garden with children enjoying the chance to get creative and decorate their own paper library bag. Many parents got involved as well!

We also facilitated an activity that focused on the senses of touch, sound and smell. It was nice seeing the parents having a go at this game and trying to identify the object without seeing it.

Other activities included making a zoo from paper animal cut outs, cardboard and other household items.

Activities were followed by a pizza lunch outside, with families enjoying the opportunity to chat, while the children relished the freedom of running from sandpit to climbing frame, to swings to cubby house!

The festival was generously supported by a local recycling company called Sustainable Resource Use who donated a large selection of second hand picture story books. All the children were delighted about being able to choose a handful of books to take home. One parent said "the kids were very excited to take home books and for the books to be theirs to keep."

It was great to have all our mums, dads, siblings and even some grandparents, come along to find out more about HIPPY and the different ways children learn.

HIPPY — Home Interaction Program for Parents & Youngsters is an early childhood literacy program that supports parents in teaching children skills around reading and writing, communication, creativity and social/emotional development and getting them ready for school.

# Rainbow pride



A happy family.

Merri Health is one of the first Victorian community health providers with Rainbow Tick accreditation. We are a proud inclusive service provider and we work closely with same-sex attracted and gender diverse community, to provide safe, supportive and all-inclusive services for everyone.

LGBTIQA+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and Asexual. The + represents other groups that identify among the Rainbow community.

# How are we tracking?

Every 18 months we circulate an LGBTIQA+ inclusive staff survey to measure staff attitudes, inclusive practice and knowledge. Our results to date have shown:

- 63% identified Merri as 'a lot' LGBTIQA+ inclusive, followed by 29% as 'a fair bit'
- 79% indicated they felt 'very comfortable' providing services to LGBTIQA+ people

- 32% rated their knowledge of LGBTIQA+ issues as 'very knowledgeable', followed by 51% as 'somewhat knowledgeable'
- 75% indicated they felt Merri presented no barriers to LGBTIQA+ consumers: 8% responded yes as a result of misunderstandings regarding gender identities.

The survey highlights our person-centred approach, ensuring that all staff are respectful. By having a coordinated approach at Merri Health, we are able to improve the quality of the services we deliver to the LGBTIQA+ community and responsive to their needs. This is in line with our refreshed values: Motivate, Engage, Respect, Respond and Innovate (MERRI).

# Pronoun initiative

Earlier this year, Merri Health provided the option for employees to include their personal pronouns, such as they/them/theirs, she/her/hers or he/him/his, in their email signature.

As a proud Rainbow Tick accredited organisation, the initiative was part of our commitment to supporting a safe and inclusive environment,

where employees will be referred to appropriately and respectfully, without having to verbally explain or ask the use of their pronoun.

A pronoun is a word that we use instead of a noun, such as when we say 'you' instead of using someone's name. Some pronouns imply someone's gender, such as when we describe them as 'she' or 'he'. Some people are non-binary and do not identify as neither 'he' or 'she', preferring neutral pronouns like 'they'.

# iHeal

Delivered in partnership with drummond street services, Victorian Aids Council, Transgender Victoria, Switchboard and Blue Knot Foundation, iHeal supports victims of family violence with case coordination, and individual and group peer support and recovery.

Centre to its success will be support workers' lived experience, with survivors of family violence providing peer support and learning to the recovery process.

**Want to know more?**  
Find our more on page 69.

# QHealth

QHealth delivers one-on-one, couple and family counselling, by queer staff in a safe and inclusive community setting, helping ensure clients are comfortable and responsive.

QHealth meets a health gap, addressing the high rates of drug and alcohol abuse among people

that identify same-sex attracted and gender diverse.

Since launching in March 2017, the program has assisted over 100 clients to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

Qhealth can give people access to a number of different services that best

suit their needs. Some clients just use the counselling service, while others have outreach and case work for longer sessions.

This program is in partnership with drummond street services.





# Stand Out MOREland

Empowering young leaders in Moreland to make their school safer and more inclusive.

Stand Out MOREland is an initiative to empower young people from across Moreland to lead projects that create safer and more inclusive schools and communities for LGBTIQ+ young people.

Through facilitated workshops, young people from different schools came together and learned key skills to become peer leaders.

Stand Out groups were formed and led by students at four secondary schools in Moreland. The students then coordinated projects in their schools to address key issues identified. The students also worked collaboratively on cross-school and community projects that engage all of Moreland's residents with LGBTIQ+ safety and inclusion.

The key issues identified relating to culture and attitudes varied from school to school, however some themes were universal. These themes included correct pronoun usage, inclusive language, disclosures, and casual homophobia.

Initiatives targeted staff, students and families and focused on the schools physical environment, social environment, learning and skills, partnerships and community partnerships.

At the year progressed, Stand Out groups became increasingly confident in their ability to plan and action their ideas, with groups gaining more experience and familiarity working together.

The students also worked collaboratively on cross-school and community projects that engage all of Moreland's residents with LGBTIQ+ safety and inclusion.

## Across participating schools, the following activities were undertaken:

- 11 events planned and managed
- 3 social media accounts launched
- 9 public speaking opportunities
- 2 resource sharing strategies relating to bystander action

# Proudly purple

Every year in August, our staff proudly pull out their best purple clothing to celebrate Wear It Purple; a day dedicated to bringing thousands of supporter voices together to show rainbow young people that they are not alone.

Wear it Purple is working towards a world where every young person feels safe, supported and empowered, regardless of sex, sexuality or gender identity.

We celebrated the day by decorating our sites purple, encouraging staff to wear purple, selling Wear it Purple wrist bands and having purple themed morning teas — and the all-important purple bake off!

# Midsumma



Our team at the Midsumma Pride March.

Merri Health once again joined in the Midsumma fun this January.

An annual celebration of queer culture, Merri Health takes part as a Rainbow Tick accredited provider, marching in the official celebrations and hosting a stall as part of the weekend fun.

The march is an opportunity to show our commitment to LGBTIQ+ pride and inclusivity, and an opportunity to talk to locals about their needs, and link them with services. Our group keeps growing every year and we'd like to see more community members join in.







# Financial report

## Board of Directors proceedings

### Board attendance at meetings July 2017–June 2018

Board Meetings	Eligible to attend	Attended
Carlo Carli — Chair	11	11
Darryl Annett	11	11
Marleine Raffoul	11	10
Michael Beahan	11	10
Joe Caputo	11	10
Michael Malakonas	11	9
Katerina Angelopoulos	11	8
Julie McCormack	11	9
Benjamin Maxfield	8	7
Hasan Erdogan	3	2

### Board engagement at subcommittees 2017/2018

Finance, risk and audit management	Possible	Attended
Michael Malakonas — Chair	6	5
Darryl Annett	6	6
Carlo Carli	6	6
Benjamin Maxfield	3	2
Katerina Angelopoulos	3	2

Clinical governance	Possible	Attended
Julie McCormack — Chair	4	3
Marleine Raffoul	2	2
Katerina Angelopoulos	2	2
Hasan Erdogan	2	2

Community engagement	Possible	Attended
Michael Beahan — Chair to Sep 2017	6	6
Joe Caputo	6	5
Marleine Raffoul — Chair from December 2017	4	4

### Community representation on Board sub-committees

Finance, risk and audit management	Possible	Attended
Geraldine Allen	6	5

Community engagement	Possible	Attended
Giuseppe Ardica	6	5
Sanjay Gund	6	2
Mairi Rowan	6	6
Mustafa Koukian	6	5
George Jiang	6	1
Suzy Pinchen	6	6
Deb Dean	1	1
Adua Rosso	1	1

Clinical governance	Possible	Attended
Cara Jane Millar	4	0
Deb Hill	4	1
Sheena Watt	1	1

## Financial statements

The following pages form the Concise Financial Report for Merri Health and are extracted from the Audited Financial Report.

The Concise Financial Report cannot be expected to display a full understanding of the financial performance, financial position and financing and investing activities of Merri Health.

A full copy of the Financial Report is available at [www.merrihealth.org.au](http://www.merrihealth.org.au)

### Statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2018

	2018	2017
State recurrent grants	20,999,344	18,976,397
Commonwealth recurrent grants	10,435,302	10,702,299
Other revenue from operations	2,645,354	1,896,874
Interest revenue	236,670	244,163
Profit on disposal of property, plant & equipment	-	21,463
Other revenues	2,193,967	371,212
Capital grants received for the acquisition of fixed assets	262,586	313,156
<b>Total revenues</b>	<b>36,773,223</b>	<b>32,525,564</b>
Employee benefits expense	24,219,763	21,267,363
Depreciation, amortisation & impairment expense	1,175,395	978,421
Finance costs	114,183	81,428
Supplies	233,664	273,762
Computer expenses	528,302	488,142
Consulting and legal costs	248,691	431,132
Client costs	4,198,781	4,028,924
Communication	326,513	263,735
Motor vehicle expenses	327,202	301,315
Occupancy costs	1,223,126	1,115,530
Payments to other agencies	1,794,184	1,576,585
Repairs and maintenance	226,356	239,227
Employment expenses	502,674	410,809
Loss on disposal of property, plant & equipment	283,435	-
Other expenses	1,101,932	847,735
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>36,504,201</b>	<b>32,304,108</b>
<b>Total operating surplus for the year</b>	<b>269,022</b>	<b>221,456</b>

## Sub-committees

### Finance, audit and risk management

This sub-committee oversees financial performance, compliance, risk management and internal and external audits for Merri Health. The sub-committee meet six times a year (or more frequently if required) and is made up of at least two Board members, at least one community member with financial expertise and members of the Merri Health executive team.

### Clinical governance

This sub-committee meet quarterly (or more frequently if required) to oversee key strategies and higher level reports on clinical governance functions. The subcommittee is made up of at least two Board members, up to three community representatives with clinical and members of the Merri Health executive team.

### Community engagement

This sub-committee meet quarterly (or more frequently if required), with the purpose to consult with community representatives on activities and services of Merri Health. The sub-committee make recommendations to the Board about how to engage with the community and obtain meaningful feedback, and potential improvements. The sub-committee is made up of at least two Board members, a minimum of four community representatives and members of the Merri Health executive team.

We are grateful for the support we receive in-kind from community representatives on our Board sub-committees.

### Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2018

Current assets	2018	2017
Cash and cash equivalents	13,452,644	11,831,381
Trade and other receivables	733,372	294,457
Other current assets	2,334,706	774,203
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>16,520,722</b>	<b>12,900,041</b>

Non-current assets	2018	2017
Property, plant and equipment	13,332,078	14,256,237
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>13,332,078</b>	<b>14,256,237</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>29,852,800</b>	<b>27,156,278</b>

Current liabilities	2018	2017
Trade and other payables	7,920,326	5,960,026
Provisions	3,030,145	2,619,159
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>10,950,471</b>	<b>8,579,185</b>

Non-current liabilities	2018	2017
Provisions	915,576	883,634
Borrowings	2,852,500	2,852,500
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>	<b>3,768,076</b>	<b>3,736,134</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>14,718,547</b>	<b>12,315,319</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>15,134,253</b>	<b>14,840,959</b>

Equity	2018	2017
Reserves	2,658,309	2,922,989
Retained earnings	12,475,944	11,917,970
<b>Total equity</b>	<b>15,134,253</b>	<b>14,840,959</b>

### Statement of cash flows for the year ended 30 June 2018

	2018	2017
Government grants received	36,496,248	34,993,316
Receipts from clients	526,174	470,046
Interest payments	(109,273)	(73,458)
Payments to suppliers and employees	(38,149,769)	(33,755,955)
Interest received	217,745	279,527

Other income received	4,288,044	1,839,674
<b>Cash provided by operating activities</b>	<b>3,269,169</b>	<b>3,753,150</b>
Proceeds from sale of property, plant & equipment	508,000	110,921
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	(2,155,906)	(5,837,680)
<b>Net cash used in investing activities</b>	<b>(1,647,906)</b>	<b>(5,726,759)</b>

Proceeds from borrowings	-	2,852,500
<b>Net cash provided by financing activities</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,852,500</b>
<b>Net increase in cash held</b>	<b>1,621,263</b>	<b>878,891</b>
<b>Cash at the beginning of the financial year</b>	<b>11,831,381</b>	<b>10,952,490</b>
<b>Cash at end of the financial year</b>	<b>13,452,644</b>	<b>11,831,381</b>

### Statement of changes in equity for the year ended 30 June 2018

	Retained earnings	Accumulated surplus	Asset revaluation
Balance 1 July 2017	14,840,959	11,917,970	2,922,989
Surplus for the year	269,022	269,022	-
Transfer from reserves	24,272	288,952	(264,680)
<b>Balance 30 June 2018</b>	<b>15,134,253</b>	<b>12,475,944</b>	<b>2,658,309</b>

# All services

We're with you at every age and stage of life.



# Contact us

## Our sites

### Brunswick

11 Glenlyon Road  
Brunswick VIC 3056

### Brunswick West

382–386 Moreland Road  
Brunswick West VIC 3055

### Coburg

93 Bell Street  
Coburg VIC 3058

### Pentridge Boulevard, Coburg

Ground floor, Unit 4  
19 Pentridge Boulevard  
Coburg VIC 3058

### Fawkner

79 Jukes Road  
Fawkner VIC 3060

### Glenroy

5D Cromwell Street  
Glenroy VIC 3046

### Preston

Level 2, 110 Chifley Drive  
Preston VIC 3072

### Preston

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

### Vic Place

21 Victoria Street  
Coburg VIC 3058

### Wangaratta

Level 3, 62–68 Ovens Street  
Wangaratta VIC 3677  
t: 1300 362 739

## Connect with us

 @Merri-Health

 @MerriHealth

 [goo.gl/gWrGqi](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=go0gl/gWrGqi)

## Your feedback is important to us

Your feedback helps us improve how we do things and better meet your needs. Tell us what you think of this report.

## You can provide feedback by:

 (03) 9389 2234

 [quality@merrrihealth.org.au](mailto:quality@merrrihealth.org.au)

 [www.merrrihealth.org.au](http://www.merrrihealth.org.au)

## All services

 1300 637 744

 [info@merrrihealth.org.au](mailto:info@merrrihealth.org.au)

## National Disability Insurance Scheme

 1300 637 744

 [ndis@merrrihealth.org.au](mailto:ndis@merrrihealth.org.au)

## Carer support

03 9495 2500

## Victims Assistance Program

1300 362 739

## My Aged Care\*

1800 200 422

\*My Aged Care is the first point of contact for aged care services.

[merrrihealth.org.au](http://merrrihealth.org.au)



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