



Merri Health
Healthcare that moves with you



Merri Health

**Community Health – Health Promotion
Narrative Report 2022-2023**



Merri Health supported community-led parties for National Reconciliation Week 2023

Acknowledgement

Merri Health acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land, water and skies where we work. For the Merri-bek local government area, this is the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and acknowledge emerging leaders within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We also recognise our role in working towards reconciliation; to listen to and be led by the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to honour truth-telling so we can learn from the wrongdoings of the past, and to do the heavy lifting to lead change.

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Key messages

- This report provides a narrative overview of work delivered by Merri Health under the *Community Health - Health Promotion* (CH-HP) program in 2022-2023.
- This year, Merri Health delivered eight initiatives across three Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan priorities:
 - Improving mental health
 - Preventing all forms of violence
 - Increasing active living
- Recognising the value and impact of applying a social determinants approach to these health priorities, these initiatives particularly focus on reducing discrimination and social exclusion for communities experiencing the greatest health inequities in the Merri-bek local government area.
- Merri Health has directly reached 5,189 people through its initiatives, and with approximately 20,154 people indirectly benefitting from programs delivered by Merri Health or changes made within settings supported by Merri Health.
- Of the demographics collected during 2022-2023, 77% of our reach was to multicultural women, 1% was to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and of the 12-24 year old's reached, 40% identified as LGBTIQ+.
- Across our eight initiatives this year, results have shown that:
 - 84% of participants report increasing their social connections
 - 92% of participants report that they have increased their appreciation for different communities
 - 86% of participants report increasing their sense of belonging
 - 94% have increased knowledge, 93% have increased skills and 91% have increased confidence
- These initiatives would not be possible without effective partnerships with more than 80 local agencies.
- This year, Merri Health increased its resource allocation to active living – a key area of focus for the Department of Health – from 0% to 30%.
- Following extensive community and stakeholder engagement, Merri Health identified:
 - a need to increase participation of girls and women in active living within the Merri-bek catchment
 - persistent barriers to participation relating to inclusion, equity, accessibility, cost and experiences of different forms of violence
 - a selection of evidence-based strategies to address the above, including flexible, settings-based approaches such as Monash Health's *Healthy Sports Clubs* framework and community-driven solutions that build on successful models developed by Merri Health.
- In addition to work to increase active living, it is clear there is a continued need to support school settings with longer-term, organisational change initiatives that aim to improve student mental health and wellbeing, particularly in relation to safety and inclusion for students from priority communities.
- Further, we acknowledge our ongoing commitment to partnering with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations under this program and note these organisations are chronically under-resourced, which can limit their capacity to collaborate with mainstream organisations.

Executive summary

The following annual report details progress and impacts from key initiatives that were delivered by Merri Health in 2022-2023. Our strategies were informed by Merri Health's [Health Promotion Strategic Statement 2021-2025](#) (revised edition, published 2022).

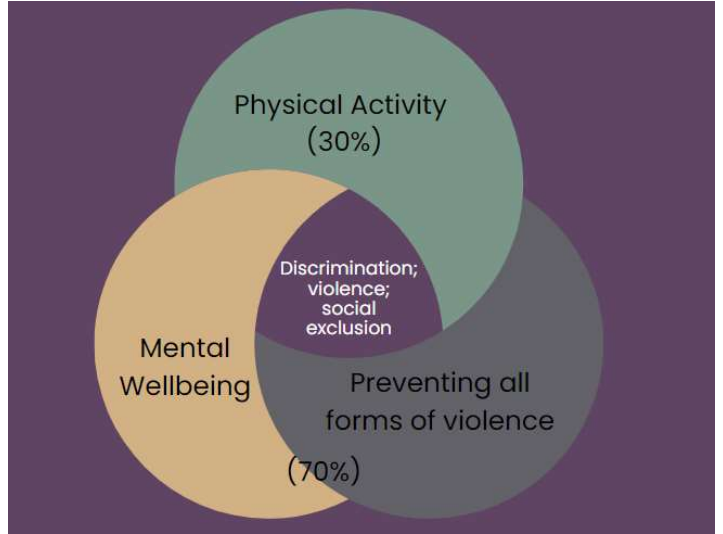
Priorities and social determinants

Our work aligns with the following Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan priorities:

- Improving mental health
- Preventing all forms of violence
- Increasing active living (2022-2023 resource allocation of 30%)

Merri Health applies a social determinants approach to its health promotion action.

Given the intersections between mental health, violence and active living, Merri Health's areas of focus are reducing: discrimination; violence; and social exclusion.



Priority populations and interventions

In 2022-23, Merri Health delivered eight key initiatives delivered through complementary strategies:

- Community Champions
- Stand Out Groups and Youth in the North
- Ready, Set, Prep!
- Reconciliation in Merri-bek
- Hello, Merri-bek! and The Great Idea Program
- Social Inclusion Measurement Project
- Active living (needs assessment)
- We're Game

In 2022-2023, we refined our priority populations, with initiatives specifically targeting:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- LGBTIQ+ communities, particularly young people
- Women and girls, particularly those from multicultural and multifaith communities
- Children and families of northern Merri-bek

Partnerships and reach

Merri Health estimates its health promotion action reached more than 25,343 people, working in partnership with 88 separate agencies in 2023-2024. This was achieved through its direct participation programs, support for community-led initiatives, organisational changes within settings, communications, events and community engagement activities.

Participants

The number of individuals who participated in a program delivered by Merri Health. As the intended beneficiaries of the program, these individuals typically participate in impact evaluation¹.



Direct reach

Number of individuals who attended a program, event or workshop delivered by Merri Health, a formal partner, or a participant of a Merri Health programⁱⁱ.

Individuals who receive and engage with Merri Health communications strategiesⁱⁱⁱ.

Individuals who directly benefit from settings-based change^{iv}.



Indirect reach

The number of individuals who indirectly benefited from programs delivered by Merri Health, or changes made to settings through partnerships with Merri Health^v. This is often a conservative estimate based on available information.



Events, information sharing and advocacy

Our reach has been calculated across our various activities that include ‘**events**’: number of project events coordinated by Merri Health (e.g. groups, community engagement, training, project events); ‘**Advocacy**’: number of submissions made by the project that support our priority health issues; and ‘**Info & evaluation sharing**’: number of times project information or evaluation findings were shared.



This year, Merri Health has also produced an [interactive data dashboard](#) to collate our reach and partnerships data. The dashboard also displays shared impact indicators collected from across our collective initiatives. The impact indicators relate to our identified objectives and key measures.



Objectives and key measures

To improve/increase:

- engagement of priority communities
- capacity for leadership and civic participation
- social connections within and between communities
- quality, safety, inclusiveness of settings
- access and participation in local services, programs and opportunities
- local partnerships and collaborations

Key measures:

- Community influence over Merri initiatives
- Leadership skills
- Social connections
- Participation in community activities
- Knowledge, skills and confidence
- Sense of belonging
- Changes made within settings
- Partnerships for collaborative health promotion action

Results

The image to the right provides a snapshot of impact data from across our eight initiatives this year.

Please refer to our [new dashboard](#) for a complete dataset including demographics and the ability to disaggregate data by project, demographics and timeframe.



Progress towards outcomes and equity

Key priority: Active living

Needs assessment

To determine where to allocate resources following the release of the updated CH-HP guidelines in October 2022, Merri Health commenced a targeted [needs assessment](#) between July and September 2022 which focused on the Department of Health's focus areas of healthy eating, active living, and tobacco-related harm (including vaping).

In undertaking the above process, we reviewed available data, research, and reports about these three issues, spoke to 42 community members from diverse population groups, and 78 people from local services, schools and groups across Merri-bek.

After analysing the data, we considered the current capacity, networks and partnerships of the team and decided to focus our work on 'active living' going forward.

The key barriers in relation to active living that were found through the needs assessment process included; financial barriers, time, access, inclusivity, safety and accessibility, behavioural factors, awareness of what's available, and social aspects. Key groups affected are women and older women, LGBTIQ+ people, people from multicultural backgrounds, people with disabilities, people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In addition, time and cost are significant barriers for parents and big families. Significant inclusivity barriers were identified for LGBTIQ+ people, girls and women (including Muslim women).

Following the needs assessment process, we undertook stakeholder conversations with 6 community health services and 2 councils to better understand:

- What they have been doing to increase active living, especially for women and girls
- What has/has not worked?
- What would they recommend for us?

Stakeholders recommended working with sports clubs as a setting and involving the community in the codesign of physical activity initiatives. Overwhelmingly, the Achievement Program and Vic Kids Eat Well were not recommended by stakeholders.

The following settings, partnership and frameworks emerged as common themes.

Settings	Partnerships	Frameworks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Sports clubs•Leisure/recreation settings•Community•Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Local Government•State Sporting Associations•Community specific organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Whole of club•Small grants to support community•Partnership across sectors•Communities of Practice

Following these stakeholder conversations, Merri Health reached out to Monash Health to learn more about their *Healthy Sports Club* framework. *Healthy Sports Clubs* encourages clubs to create healthier environments that promote good health and wellbeing. The initiative is built around a framework that focuses on a whole club approach. It brings together existing health and wellbeing efforts and looks at how they can be strengthened. Going forward, Merri Health will work closely with Monash Health on implementing the *Healthy Sports Club* model in Merri-bek. We will be developing a suite of other initiatives under this portfolio in 2023-2024, aligning these to the CH-HP impact measures practice guide.

We're Game – preventing violence through sport and active leisure settings

'We're Game' is a project that brings together community and women's health, leisure centres, sports clubs, local government, state sporting associations, research partners and community to take a whole-community approach to tackling gender-based violence in sport. The project draws on Sports and Recreation Victoria's 'Guidelines for preventing violence against women: Tackling action through community sport' to harness the power of sport to drive action on gender equity in Merri-bek while also increasing the participation of girls and women in active living.

Throughout 2022-2023, eight settings were engaged in We're Game including Brunswick Baths, Coburg Leisure Centre, Oak Park Leisure Centre, Pascoe Vale Outdoor Pool, Coburg Olympic Swimming Pool, Coburg Football Club, Moomba Park Tennis Club and Coburg Tennis Club. Three settings have completed gender equity audits to date. In completing the audits, participants are encouraged to draw on their own experiences, priorities and personal motivations. Partners (such as WHIN) attending audit and planning sessions has successfully built relationships, supported discussion, and assisted participants see other perspectives on their work and environment.

Impact data and a final report will be available in July 2024. Meanwhile, we will also leverage these sporting club partnerships to commence the *Healthy Sports Clubs* framework strategy in 2023-24.

Key priority: Mental wellbeing

Community Champions

'Community Champions' recognises that building the capacity of well-connected community members can support service access to a range of important health services and improve health knowledge and literacy. This 'boundary spanning' work started as an initiative of Ready, Set, Prep! in 2021, and utilises an evidence-based framework: 'Identify, Enable, Connect'^{vi}. In Ready, Set, Prep!, ten well-connected community members voluntarily shared reputable messages in relation to early childhood development with the community. For more details of the initial process, a case study completed last year can be viewed [here](#).

Over five quarters, the Community Champions reported sharing messages with an average of 2,003 people per quarter, including an average of 400 new people per quarter. In addition, Community Champions undertook training with other organisations (Dental Health Services Victoria, Spectrum) and delivered peer education sessions.

There were very positive outcomes from this model, for the organisation, wider community and individual Community Champions. 89% agreed that participating in Community Champions had:

- improved their knowledge of local services for children and families
- increased their ability to be a leader



100% agreed that:

- the key messages and information shared with them were beneficial
- participating in Community Champions had increased their confidence to share information with others
- they had contributed to changes in services
- they had increased social connections and an increased sense of belonging in the community.

“I love being a part of this team. I feel we can achieve so much working cohesively as a community.”

Five Community Champions were retained during the last year to work on School Ties - a COVID recovery grant funded through the federal government. Volunteer attrition is a challenge of this work, as community members gain confidence and become employed with other organisations.

Due to the success of this work and its impact on the wider service system, a review of the model was undertaken to determine its appropriateness for other work within the team. As part of this review, seven internal and seven external meetings were held to learn how programs with community leaders operate within different teams. A new Community Champions model was proposed, and this will be utilised to share information in relation to active living in our 2023-24 CH-HP plan.



Youth in the North (including Stand Out groups)

Youth in the North aimed to reduce experiences of discrimination, mental ill-health and exclusion faced by LGBTIQ+ young people in northern Merri-bek secondary schools; promoting safety, inclusion, understanding, and celebration of diversity. This included supporting Stand Out groups in schools, which are student-led groups that provide a safe space for queer young people and their allies.

To focus our resources, this work largely took place within two secondary schools, John Fawkner College (JFC) and Pascoe Vale Girls College (PVGC) who were committed to this work and supported by external funding from HEY Grants through YACVic. For PVGC, this work supported the expansion and strengthening of their Stand Out group, while JFC undertook foundational steps to ensure safety when a Stand Out group is established. The latter also included a focus on gender equality within the setting, as a precursor to safe spaces and discussing perceived complex topics such as gender diversity.

Some outcomes of this work are:

John Fawkner College	Pascoe Vale Girls College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Established working group with staff and lived experience consultant to explore LGBTIQ+ inclusion in the setting – Organised Safe Schools training which all staff attended (Foundational) – Began development of gender affirmation policy – Discussed practicalities of Stand Out group, including learning from PVGC – Ran art therapy group for 11 weeks for 5 students exploring their gender identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Decorated dedicated Stand Out room safe space – Held 35 weekly meetings, with 25 students (average 15 attendees) and 5 staff – Hosted ‘visibility days’ for Wear It Purple (bake sale) and IDAHOBIT (garden party) for whole school. 35 staff and 60 students participated in IDAHOBIT event – Ran pride-themed fundraising stall for library – Students ran training with staff on pronouns, and supported content for health class on IDAHOBIT – Organised Safe Schools training which 50+ attended (Responding to discriminatory behaviour)

Additionally, each school had representatives attend an inter-school training organised by Merri Health (JFC= 5 representatives, PVGC= 2 representatives). This half-day training was delivered by consultant Budi Sudarto and addressed LGBTIQ+ safety and inclusion in multicultural and multi-faith school contexts. This was in response to feedback from schools that it can be challenging to have conversations about LGBTIQ+ safety in northern Merri-bek, given its cultural and faith-based diversity.

21 service providers attended this training, with 100% of respondents indicating they had increased knowledge and appreciation of different communities, increased knowledge of the intersection between multicultural multi-faith communities and the LGBTIQ+ communities and the training had increased their ability to support inclusion in their setting.

This work is multi-faceted and challenging and takes time to see progress. Our commitment will therefore be continued into the next plan, as we assist these schools to embed this work and look to support others.



Safe space created at PVGC



Participants at the inter-school training event learn about LGBTIQ+ inclusion and intersectionality

Hello, Merri-bek! (The Great Idea Program)

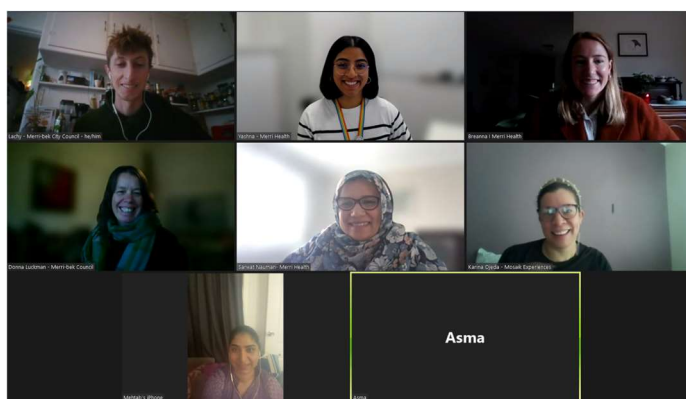
The aims of Hello, Merri-bek were as follows:

By June 2023, increase Hello, Merri-bek! participants’:

- social connections within and between communities
- capacity for leadership, social and civic participation

The Great Idea Program was a program of Hello, Merri-bek, supporting community-led action by multicultural women in Merri-bek’s northern suburbs. Rather than a traditional ‘service delivery’ model, these projects are community-led, thereby ensuring the projects have relevant and lasting impacts at the local level, whilst simultaneously empowering local residents. In 2023, 17 applications were received, and a selection panel of ten multicultural women chose the three successful projects:

1. A playgroup for Autistic children
2. A wellbeing program for women aged over 55
3. A women’s social group



The Great Idea Participants meet online

Participants were supported by Merri Health staff with project planning, budgeting, community engagement, promotion, COVID-19 safety, risk management and evaluation planning. Merri Health staff had regular online and in-person meetings with participants. Participants were also provided with opportunities to collaborate; problem solve and network with each other and other local service providers during two workshops.

A post evaluation survey was completed by participants following their participation using the Merri Health social inclusion shared indicators. Results can be viewed on the [data dashboard](#).

“I appreciate The Great Idea Program for its support to foster community development projects in Fawkner and to create impact on this local community. It provided a platform for individuals to showcase our unique ideas, encourages collaboration and problem-solving. It was good to have the opportunity to expand connections with organisations such as Merri Health, Merri-bek Council, Neighborhood House, and Seniors Citizen group. The experience of engaging with a community of seniors to bring wellbeing for them was very special.” – The Great Idea Program participant.

MINDFUL LIVING FOR SENIORS – WELL-BEING PROGRAM



A well-being program that focuses on the self and community connection as well as a connection between mental, emotional, and physical health, based on creative and cultural activities such as exploring arts, music, movements, and body language!

LOCATION
Senior Citizen Centre Hall, Juke Road, Fawkner

DATE and TIME
Wednesday, 11 am
21st June, 19th July and 23rd August

AGE
Well-being program for women aged 55+

Workshops - Description:

- June - Workshop: "Exploring Drama for Life - The Stage of Wisdom"
- July - Workshop: "Exploring Music" and its Connections with Emotions and Feelings
- August - Workshop: "Exploring Artful Aging" and its Connection with Emotions and Feelings

If you want to get more information about the program, CONTACT:
North Melbourne Council on 0410866159 (Karina Ojeda)



MY PLAYGROUP

Safe and fun Playgroup designed for children aged 0-5 with Autism and similar needs. Children do not need a referral to attend.



Starting from Term 2, Thursday May 4th, then continuing weekly on Thursdays (during school term)

When: Thursdays, 10am-12pm

Where: 67 Alec Crescent (next to Moomba Park Kinder) Fawkner, Victoria 3060

Cost: gold coin donation

For more information contact Mehtab on
Phone: 0452 584 548
Email: Myplaygroupfawkner@gmail.com

Flyers designed by participants

Hello, Merri-bek! (International Women’s Day Party Program)

The International Women’s Day (IWD) Party Program supported community-led events on and around 7 March 2023. Event hosts were provided with \$100 gift cards and an activity pack to support their event. A total of 33 events took place for IDW 2023, with 686 participants.

Following their events, a survey was undertaken with hosts, capturing shared impact indicators. The results can be seen on the Merri Health data dashboard. Use the drop down options to see results for the Party Program.

Qualitative data highlighted some of the key benefits of the parties for hosts and participants:



Highlights from one of the International Women's Day Parties

“We love the buzz that these types of events create in our community. We especially love that we can deliver them at low cost but create such a huge impact on each attendee. Everyone felt welcomed and no one felt left out. Our mission is to build a club where everyone feels that they are welcome and included, irrespective if they are a player, a volunteer, a committee member, a family member, community member or local business owner. We will continue to host Cheese and Greet nights throughout the year for our female members and we are now also looking at introducing an event for our male members. We have also encouraged our junior members to come to us with ideas for events that will appeal to the younger community and work on giving back to the community.” – Sporting club

Ready, Set, Prep!

Ready, Set, Prep! (RSP) was a six-year initiative that finished in December 2023. During this time, it was funded through CH-HP and philanthropic means (William Buckland Foundation, Helen Macpherson Smith Trust). This allowed Merri Health to play the backbone role, bringing together over 40 partners as well as community members to support early childhood development and wellbeing outcomes in northern Merri-bek.

Together the partnership worked towards their co-designed vision: *Ready, Set, Prep! is a partnership between community and early years service providers to improve service quality and access, learning and educational opportunities, for families and children in northern Merri-bek. Together, we are creating a healthy and happy community.*

To meet these aims, there were a range of tailored opportunities that community members and services could become involved with. These key activities were a Transition Network, organisational development work, [Community Champions](#), communications, working groups and targeted interventions.

In total, RSP has reached over 4,700 people directly and 17,000 people indirectly over the 6 years of the project. 92% of the community members and service providers involved in making decisions for RSP reported that working together had improved outcomes for families in the local community. This includes delivering new and improved services, as well as increasing access to information about health and early childhood development, and local community services for families.

As this work was time-limited due to funding, RSP aimed to create sustainable change beyond the life of the initiative. This includes strengthening partnerships and relationships, developing accessible resources for consistent messaging and increasing community capacity and leadership. This will allow the foundations that have been put in place to be used to support positive change into the future.

Together, the results achieved from the various RSP activities demonstrate that positive change has started to occur for children and families in northern Merri-bek. However, place-based work takes time and there is continuing need for this work. Merri Health has now received a 12-month COVID recovery grant to support children in the early years of primary school. This project, 'School Ties', uses successful models from RSP, such as Community Champions and targeted interventions. For further information about RSP, you can watch an animation [here](#).

Reconciliation in Merri-bek

Reconciliation in Merri-bek (RiM) aimed to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples to live free from discrimination, violence, and exclusion, as well as improved mental wellbeing.

Acknowledging that work in relation to reconciliation takes time, RiM had a strong focus on strengthening relationships with stakeholders with the intention to draw on these partnerships in future. This includes Reconciliation Victoria, Merri-bek City Council and Sowing Sistas (closely linked with the Merri-bek Alliance Network), as well as two Merri-bek secondary schools.

RiM comprised several additional interventions including community engagement and communications activities related to the Voice to Parliament, microgrants for community-led National Reconciliation Week events (Party Program model), and student-led reconciliation projects in secondary schools. Key outputs have included:

- Engaging with more than 50 community members about the Uluru Statement from the Heart, a Voice to Parliament and the upcoming referendum.
- 25 social media posts (with a reach of 13,820 people)
- An easy-to-read Information Sheet about the Voice to Parliament



- 32 community-led events for National Reconciliation Week (NRW) 2023, with approximately 569 attendees
- Supporting/funding 2 schools to undertake student-led projects in relation to reconciliation

Providing opportunities and resources for community members to have discussions in relation to the Voice to Parliament has shown encouraging results. Following a facilitated discussion at Merri Health’s Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC), all eight participants agreed that it had increased their knowledge about the Uluru Statement from the Heart. One person said they did further research into Treaty, and three people said they had further discussions with friends/family.

A post survey with all 32 recipients of NRW microgrants (event hosts) found that:

- 94% said the program has increased their knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture
- 94% said the program has increased their knowledge of an 'Indigenous Voice to Parliament' and what it means
- 94% said participating has increased their confidence to talk about matters relating to reconciliation
- 91% said participating in this program has increased their ability to take action towards reconciliation

“The guests suggested that this was the first time they have done some hands-on learning and proper discussion about the Indigenous history as they have always been listening only in the media about it.” – NRW event host

Although many Aboriginal-led organisations show great interest in working with us on reconciliation work, a common thread is the lack of time and resources available to work in partnership on projects outside of their core work. In addition, a lack of staff members with lived experience has made it challenging to engage in a meaningful way with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. Merri Health is currently advertising for an identified position; however, recruitment has been challenging.

The well-documented need to ‘close the health gap’ between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities indicates that the work in this space is far from finished. The upcoming referendum poses an important opportunity to support meaningful and lasting change through continued community education around reconciliation.

Social Inclusion Shared Measurement Project

Merri Health has led the Social Inclusion Shared Measurement project since 2022. It is currently funded through DFFH but is being used to measure impacts in CH-HP funded projects across the region. This project builds upon work first commenced by the Inner North West Primary Care Partnership in 2018.

As a partnership, we now have five co-designed post-program evaluation questions. This suite of questions asks about improvements in: activity participation; social connections/networks; belonging; community action; and appreciation of diversity.

When funding ceased for Primary Care Partnerships, Merri Health took on the lead role to maintain the momentum of this work. Since then, activities completed include:

- Creating Partnership Agreement signed by nine partners
- Producing three resources and templates to support data collection
- Establishing data dashboard to display collective data
- Developing processes for partners to upload data
- Upskilling new partners regarding evaluation (e.g. library, YMCA, neighbourhood houses)
- Hosting two workshops for partners (average 19 attendees) to guide work and strengthen partnership

This has resulted in the following:

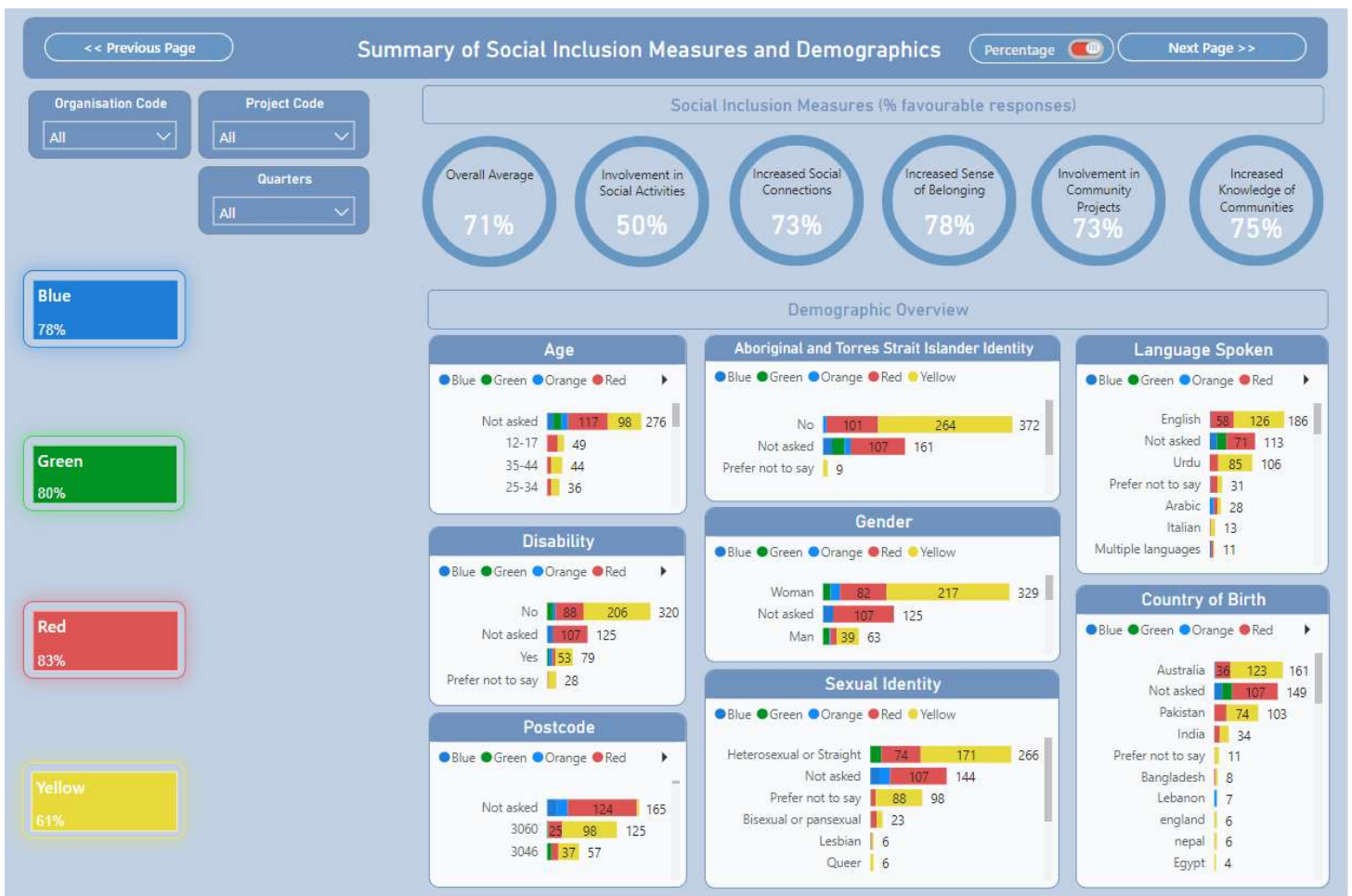


Attendees at the Social Inclusion Shared Measurement Workshop

- Five organisations contributed data to the dashboard
- 21 projects included in the dashboard
- 552 respondents captured in the dashboard
- Partners rate satisfaction with dashboard and Merri Health support as 4.2/ 5, and satisfaction with overall partnership as 4.6/5.

Overall, 71% of respondents agree that participating in an activity by one of the partner organisations had improved their social inclusion. However, this is a live dashboard that is updated daily and can be viewed by those with access via the Victorian state government portal. This can inform planning, reporting, advocacy and identifying any service gaps.

Being able to view the data also helps show the benefits of participation to new partners. Merri Health will continue to lead this work for the next six months (to December 2023) to ensure processes are embedded by partners, new partners are onboarded, and data is reviewed and used. See an upcoming Prevention Health blog for further information.



Learning and insights

Ways of working

This year, Merri Health took time to explore whether our well-established models and frameworks used to improve social inclusion might also be appropriate to other health priorities. We determined that our Community Champions model and commitment to community-driven initiatives were appropriate strategies to utilise underactive living in the next annual plan. A comprehensive review of our Community Champions model and community-driven initiatives also revealed the following key insights:

- Allow time for building and sustaining relationship with priority communities
- Numerous networks already exist to link with priority communities and related stakeholders.
- Employing workers with ‘lived experience’ is key for building relationships with priority communities such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, LGBTIQ+ and multicultural women.
- The Community Champions model is a two-way exchange. Community members must get something out of it and reimbursing people for their time is important.
- Plan for evaluation, including the time this takes with community members (and reimburse their time)

Data dashboard

This year we also explored a new way of displaying process and impact data. We worked with DPV Health to develop our first ever data dashboard ([Merrihealth - Power BI](#)). It displays a shared suite of impact indicators collected across our various initiatives and can be disaggregated by timeframe and demographics. Our dashboard also highlights our reach, advocacy, partnerships, events and information sharing data.

Active living

Active living is a new priority area for Merri Health and we therefore undertook significant research to explore how best to approach a growing investment in this space. A summary of the needs assessment is above, however, we wish to highlight the following key learnings:

- Thorough consultation with community health and local government organisations highlighted successful and not-so-successful approaches to active living
- The evidence-based *Healthy Clubs Framework* is a comprehensive model that takes an organisational change approach to improving club environments, culture and policy. This will be adopted by Merri Health over the coming six years, coupled with community-driven approaches.
- It will be important to take an intersectional approach to our active living work (including We’re Game)

Schools as settings

Merri Health continues to recognise schools as important settings for health promotion intervention. Merri has long-standing relationships with most of the schools in the Merri-bek area and in the 2022-23 period, partnerships have been deepened with 3 high schools. Our learnings include:

- A continued need to focus on mental health and wellbeing. Schools have been particularly responsive to support with LGBTIQ+ inclusion, healthy masculinities and reconciliation. These will continue to feature in our 2023-24 plan, alongside new support for active living initiatives within a healthy schools framework.
- In multicultural and faith-based communities, promoting LGBTIQ+ safety and inclusion can be challenging. The following approaches have been helpful: taking a human rights approach; utilising the expertise of lived experience consultants; and beginning with a focus on gender equality.

Working with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities

This year we have had a significant focus on education with community in the lead up to the upcoming referendum on the Voice to Parliament. We have learnt the following:

- Work with Aboriginal owned/led organisations and groups takes time, as these groups are often under-resourced with limited capacity to take the lead or sometimes even collaborate on the work.
- Having pre-defined health priorities will make it difficult to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, as there is a need for a high degree of flexibility and responding to need.
- Merri Health is committed to employing an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person within our team to continue our commitment to reconciliation in school settings.

Appendices

1. Prevention blog story – Social Inclusion Measurement Project (page 17)

Prevention Victoria Blog story template

prevention.health.vic.gov.au

1. Release date – let us know if there are any timing issues we need to be aware of.

Anytime

Date specific:

2. Give us a short, snappy heading, 5-6 words is plenty.

Working together to measure social inclusion.

3. In one sentence – tell us what is important about this story and why it of interest to your sector.

Implementing our social inclusion question suite ensures consistent measurement and helps to tell the story of our work across the partnership.

4. Tell us your story!

Social connection and relationships are significant protective factors for mental health and wellbeing. It has therefore been a priority for many organisations, however there wasn't a consistent way of measuring it to show impact. In 2018, the Inner North West Primary Care Partnership commenced the Social Inclusion Shared Measurement Project and brought partners together to develop a Framework. Later, partners co-designed 5 questions to include in program evaluations.

With the wrapping up of Primary Care Partnerships, Merri Health took on the lead role to maintain the momentum of this work. 10+ partners from Melbourne's north and west are now including 1, 2 or up to all 5 co-designed questions in participant surveys post intervention. The suite of 5 questions asks about improvements in: activity participation; social connections/networks; belonging; community action; and appreciation of diversity.

To date, 500+ responses have been collected with over 70% agreeing that these programs had improved their social inclusion. In 2023, a data dashboard was created and can be viewed by partners in real-time via the Victorian state government portal. This can then be used to identify gaps, to learn from others to improve programs and services, and for advocacy.

Factors contributing to the success of this partnership include:

- All viewing social inclusion as a priority
- All management committing via formal partnership agreement
- All seeing their contribution to the collective dataset via the data dashboard
- One organisation playing a lead role to support resource development, partner capacity building, and partnership induction

The partnership is now focusing on sharing our work, to support advocacy for social inclusion and to grow the partnership for a larger collective dataset. Get in touch if you are interested in having your organisation get involved!

5. Add a call to action – What do you want people to do as a result of your story?

We invite others focusing on social inclusion to join us! Current partners include community health, local government, youth services, libraries, YMCA and neighbourhood houses. However, there are no limitations to participation, as these questions can be used with any social inclusion activities in Victoria.

To become a partner, please email Kat Thorn, Health Promotion Officer at Merri Health: kat.thorn@merrihealth.org.au

You can also view the questions and learn more about the project by visiting: <https://www.merrihealth.org.au/get-involved/health-initiatives/the-inner-north-west-care-partnership-resources/social-inclusion-resources/>

6. Provide up to four tweets – What message would you like to communicate to people?

Using data to tell our story about social inclusion work @MerriHealth #partnership #socialinclusion #datadashboard

Do your activities focus on social inclusion? Join us to collectively measure our impact @MerriHealth #partnership #socialinclusion

The Social Inclusion Shared Measurement project helps us to measure our social inclusion impact @MerriHealth #partnership #socialinclusion

7. Finally help us to place your story on the website.

Highlight what setting/s your story relates to:

Community	School and early years	Local government area	Recreation and sport
Industry	Hospitals and health services (inc. community health)	Workplaces	Food and hospitality
State	Policy to action	Outcomes	Partnerships

8. Collective effort across the state

Does your story relate to one of the focus areas of the Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019-2023?

Please highlight Tackling climate change and its impact on health

- Increasing healthy eating
 - Increasing active living
 - Reducing tobacco-related harm

Or another priority of the Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019-2023?

Which one/s? Improving mental wellbeing

What elements of good population health practice does your story demonstrate? Please highlight

Develop and deliver prevention initiatives at scale

- Ensuring programs and projects are collectively contributing to a clearly defined population health outcome
- Developing and supporting leadership at every level
- Using a mix of universal and targeted approaches to address inequity
- Working with priority populations to develop and implement initiatives to maximise ownership and outcomes
- Work to create healthy and sustainable environments

How to submit

Please submit your story through your DHHS Contact or to Prevention@health.vic.gov.au

Image

Download from: <https://merri.sharefile.com/d-sabe0645cdcc34c1e9ef071cf8d634d30>

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Explanatory notes and references

ⁱ For example, The Great Idea Program, Stand Out participants, Community Champions, The Party Program, steering committees and working groups.

ⁱⁱ For example, people who attended events/activities hosted by The Great Idea program participants.

ⁱⁱⁱ For example, the average open rate for the RSP What's on for Northern Moreland Families newsletter.

^{iv} For example, Prep students who benefit from changes to transition programs.

^v For example, members of sporting clubs who benefit from organisational change as a part of 'We're Game', subscribers to Merri Health communications strategies where level of engagement is difficult to confirm (eg. newsletters subscribers, WhatsApp group members)

^{vi} Wallace, C., Farmer, J., White, C., & McCosker, A. (2020) [Collaboration with community connectors to improve primary care access for hardly reached people: a case comparison of rural Ireland and Australia](#), BMC Health Services Research, 20:172.