



**Merri Health**  
Healthcare that moves with you

# MerriNews

Volume 28. December 2021

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# Welcome.

A message from Chief Executive Officer, Tassia Michaleas

Welcome to the final edition of MerriNews for 2021! I hope you are all enjoying our new freedoms as we navigate towards a COVID-normal way of life.

**We have been keeping busy with a number of initiatives, including the Lift the Lid Walk for Mental Health which we sponsored in October.**

We are very proud to have been a part of this walk which raises much needed funds and awareness for mental health research.

**It's that time of the year where we launch our annual report – detailing what we've been up to this past year.**

Learn about the new services and programs we've launched, our awards, recognition, and how we've adapted our service delivery during COVID-19.

**We had a surprise visit from Magda Szubanski!**

Our Integrated Family Services team were treated with a Zoom visit from Magda and had the chance to tell her all about the work we do with local families to support better connection.

**Speaking of treats, our Supported Residential Service residents were given some fun African drum lessons during the lockdown period.**

The residents were able to get creative and produce some African

drum beats together via Zoom. It's been a real hit!

**We have also provided some COVID-19 vaccination tips that may be handy for you.**

We have reached 90% fully vaccinated here in Victoria. We are so proud to have been a part of this effort through the work of our vaccination and High-Risk Accommodation Response teams.

Now that we are opening up and those who are fully vaccinated are enjoying some freedoms, we've included some tips on how to have your vaccination certificate handy, how to navigate MyGov and Medicare, and where to pick up your free "I got my COVID-19 vaccine" badge!

I hope you enjoy the remainder of the year and are able to join in some end of year festivities now that we are able to come together.

# Our achievements, how we've adapted, and what's next for Merri



Each year in our annual report, we reflect on our achievements, our challenges and what we have been doing to support our community.

We adapted to COVID-19 and many of our services turned to telehealth. We were also able to launch brand new services such as Kinder Partnerships - allied health support for early childhood professionals, Homelessness to a Home – support for people living rough, and our Chronic Pain Service that helps you manage pain.

In addition to this, our Social Support Program was named a finalist in the Leading Age Services Australia Excellence in Age Services Awards, our Family Foundations service was a finalist in the Victorian Early Years Awards, and we were one of only seven organisations who received the Employee of Choice citation through the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

We launched our annual report at our Annual General Meeting on 22 November which was hosted by our Chair, Carlo Carli.

This is Carlo's final year on the board after nine incredible years of service.

“Over the past nine years Merri Health has grown and become a much bigger, stronger and more visible organisation. Most importantly we have delivered more and better services for our community, especially to the most vulnerable.”  
- Carlo Carli

Read the report:



<https://bit.ly/3kJ9z6M>



## COVID support for those in high-risk settings

Merri Health has supported residents in supported living throughout this pandemic in a number of ways. These included vaccine Q&A sessions, pre and post vaccine support, supplying taxi vouchers to get to vaccine hubs, vaccinating people at their doorstep, supplying PPE and wellbeing packs for during lockdowns.

Lockdown was especially hard for these residents with some experiencing poor mental health.

Our High-Risk Accommodation Response team put together numerous strategies over many weeks to help improve this.

A weekly newsletter was supplied that included activities, positive quotes, and information on supports available. There was also a lockdown activity poster and packs, certificates for managers and staff for staying COVID-safe, positive affirmations sent in the post, an art competition for residents, and we supplied “I got my COVID-19 vaccine” cookies to residents.

Check out the video of residents sharing their vaccination stories.



<https://bit.ly/3FBt0q4>

# Merri sponsors Lift the Lid Walk for Mental Health



Above: Carolyn Wallace

Merri Health steps out to support mental health awareness, research and local services in a partnership with Moreland Rotary's Lift the Lid Walk on World Mental Health Day 2021.

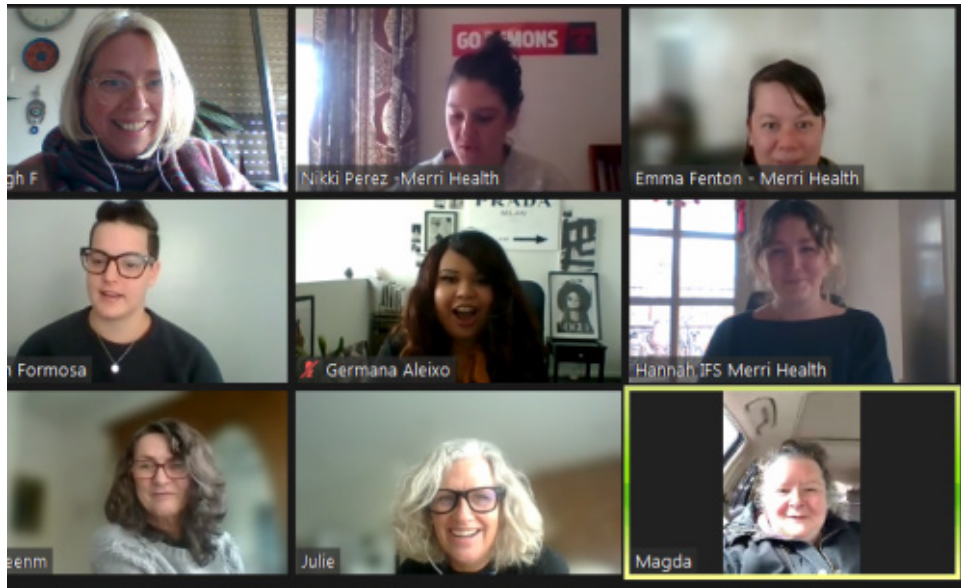
The walk raises funds for mental health research, awareness of supports available to those experiencing mental health issues, and helps break down the barriers associated with mental ill health.

"Merri Health was pleased to sponsor the Lift the Lid Walk for Mental Health. Walking and talking are both great for our mental health. The more people talk to each other about their mental health, the better off we all are." Carolyn Wallace, General Manager of Family and Communities.

Especially in these recent times, it's crucial to raise awareness of mental health issues, talk to someone if you're not feeling 100%, and get some physical exercise.



<https://bit.ly/3kJ9z6M>



## SURPRISE! It's Magda Szubanski!

**In September, the Integrated Family Services (IFS) team had a very special virtual guest, Magda Szubanski, who joined in on a Zoom chat with the team.**

Many of you will be aware of Magda's work in the community, including using her platform to have discussions on complex social topics.

Magda is a well-liked Australian comedy actress, author and LGBTIQ+ rights advocate. You may recognise her from the TV show Kath & Kim as Sharon Strzelecki.

She has spoken openly about her struggles with anxiety, trauma, and suicidal thoughts in her teens. She has advocated for LGBTIQ+ rights and, in 2017, promoted same-sex marriage in Australia.

The IFS team were able to introduce themselves to Magda and explain the work the team has been doing, particularly over the COVID-19 pandemic. It was certainly a thrill and a big morale boost after a tiring period.

The IFS team loved the event and thanked Magda for taking the time to chat with them, and social worker Soraya Christensen for organising the event.

[Learn more about our Integrated Family Services.](#)



<https://bit.ly/3oA2Op0>



## NDIS participant back home with her husband after five years

An NDIS participant, Susan\*, who was in a care facility for five years, is now back in her own home with the help of one of our occupational therapists.

Susan has a condition where she is unable to move most of her body and is unable to talk.

There were some challenges involved in having Susan in the care facility, including travel and language restrictions with her husband.

Being mindful of Susan and her husband's culture, the occupational therapist liaised with different support networks within their community, to help develop trust and form a relationship

Being mindful of Susan and her husband's culture, the occupational therapist liaised with different support networks within their community, to help develop trust and form a relationship.

To get Susan back at home, there were many steps involved:

- understanding what care Susan needs
- bathroom modification
- safe entry and exit points in the house
- bed modifications
- sleep schedule (seeing how many times she needs to be turned in the night)
- review of equipment needed at the home.

After lots of training for Susan's carers to learn how to use her new equipment, Susan is now back at home with her husband!

Since the move back, Susan has been making great progress. She is now about to make some sounds to communicate, and has been

able to hold eye contact.

\*Name has been changed to protect privacy.

Learn more about our NDIS services.



<https://bit.ly/3Hwt9Np>

"It was rewarding for me, I've never seen the husband smile, until he got told the clearance she was able to come home"

"For the first time in my life, she smiled and gave me eye contact, attempting to speak, trying to move around, tried to communicate and make noises. At the start it was nothing."

- Susan's carers.

## Are you an LGBTQIA+ carer?



Merri Carer Services, along with Yarra City Council, have been working on a project to launch an LGBTQIA+ peer support group for carers.

The team are looking for LGBTQIA+ people in the Yarra, Banyule, Darebin, Moreland, Hume, Nillumbik and Whittlesea areas to be part of, or run, a peer lead carer group.

You could be a carer or someone who assists a friend, family, or partner with a disability, mental health issues, alcohol and drug use or chronic illness. Some people provide care all the time, while others do so only occasionally.

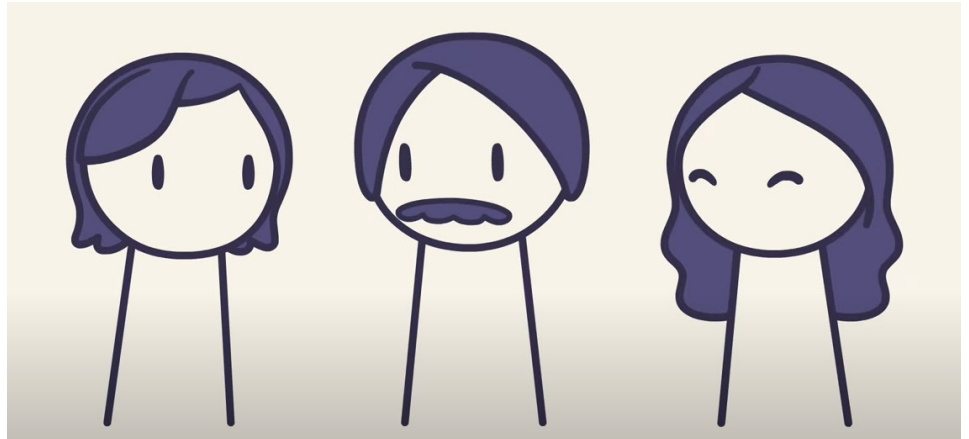
This group could be a space for you to connect through shared experiences, socialise and relax. There is scope for you to create specific groups in your area of interest, age and identities.

Find out more:



Nicholas.Colicchia@merrhealth.org.au

## Young carers are not alone



Above: Young carers animated video

Are you under 25 years of age and support a family member or friend with disability, mental illness, addiction, age or health issues? Does it make it hard to work, study or find time for friends?

You are not alone.

Three young carers, together with our Carer Gateway team, have developed an animated video titled 'Young Carers are not alone' to raise awareness of young carers and the support available to them.

This video provides insight into what it means to be a carer while promoting the free Carer Gateway service, which provides counselling, respite, financial support and more to carers.

One in 10 people under the age of 25 is a young carer. However, many don't realise they are in a caring role.

Extra caring responsibilities at a young age can impact education outcomes, employment, mental health and other areas of life, leading some young carers to feel isolated and alone.

This video aims to help raise awareness of the challenges young carers face and ensure they receive the support they

need, along with highlighting that peer support, a form of support that utilises people using their own experiences to help each other, can be very powerful.

Three young carers across Victoria, Robert, Taylah and Zachary, shared their stories and advice on being a young carer to Carer Gateway, providing content for the video.

The video was launched at our Caring for Young Carers webinar during Carers Week in October 2021, an event where young carers came together to find out more about who young carers are, what issues they face and what support is available to them through Carer Gateway.

The animation was promoted on Youtube in October and has since received over 21,000 views. The video has also reached more than 8,000 users under the age of 34 on Facebook and has had 7,000 views on LinkedIn.

A community service announcement developed from the animation voiceover has been played over 16,000 times on Spotify, to people aged 25 and under.

Watch the video.



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

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## African drumming a hit with residents in supported accommodation



Continuous lockdowns and uncertainty from COVID-19 have not stopped our service delivery. We've used our creativity to ensure we can continue to support existing residents and engage new people coming in.

The SAVVI team have introduced a new Zoom activity, "African drumming". This activity has been a real hit with the residents and we are lucky enough to have recorded a session!

[Watch the video.](#)

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

Our team also put together welcome packs for new residents. These packs include an information booklet about the facility, names and photos of all staff and the SAVVI team, house ground rules and timetables for in-house, community amenities and

visiting services. The pack also contains toiletry items, magazines and snacks.

To ensure the team can maintain excellent service for customers, they have an agreement with each proprietor to alert them as soon as they have a new resident moving into their lodge. The aim of this agreement is for the team to engage with residents sooner and offer our services after they move in.

[Learn more about what the team do.](#)

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

# Merri's COVID-19 vaccination tips



Anyone aged 12 and over can now get vaccinated. You can get vaccinated at a GP, Pharmacy, or a vaccination centre.

Get vaccinated so we can get back to the things we love.

## How to get your COVID vaccination certificate

Log in and select Medicare, then select Immunisation History and then “view COVID-19 digital certificate”. This can be saved or printed.

## If you don't have a MyGov account

Contact The Australian Immunisation Register on 1800 653 809. You will require a Medicare card.

## If you don't have Medicare

Log in to MyGov, select Medicare, select Individual Healthcare Identifiers service, select view immunisation history.

## Want a vaccination badge?

Free 'I got my COVID-19 vaccine badges are available now for you, your family and friends'. Ask our friendly reception staff next time you are at one of our sites.

To receive this newsletter electronically or to update your details, email [communications@merrihhealth.org.au](mailto:communications@merrihhealth.org.au)

### Quick contacts

T: 1300 637 744  
Carers 1800 422 737  
Victims Assistance  
1300 362 739

### Brunswick

11 Glenlyon Road  
Brunswick VIC 3056

### Brunswick West

382–386 Moreland  
Road Brunswick West  
VIC 3055

### Coburg

93 Bell Street  
Coburg VIC 3058

### Coburg

21 Victoria Street  
Coburg VIC 3058

### Coburg

Ground floor,  
19 Pentridge Blvd  
Coburg VIC 3058

### Craigieburn

120 Hothlyn Drive  
Craigieburn VIC  
3064

### Fawkner

79 Jukes Road  
Fawkner VIC 3060

### Glenroy

5D Cromwell Street  
Glenroy VIC 3046

### Preston

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

### Preston

Level 1 and 2,  
110 Chifley Drive Preston  
VIC 3072

### Wangaratta

Level 3, 62-68 Ovens  
Street Wangaratta  
VIC 3677

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