

S O C I A L

Research + Innovation

Volume 15. August 2020

D I S T A N C

A N C

.....
**Inside
this
issue:**

1.
Job boost
during
COVID-19

2.
COVID-19:
your next
visit

3.
School
readiness
findings

4.
Online
support:
LGBTIQA+
folks

Inside this issue:

2 Welcome

3 Job boost during COVID-19

4 Wellness at Merri

4 What to expect at your next visit

5 Supporting people with chronic conditions

6 School starting age in Fawkner

7 Be school-ready video series

8 Online support for LGBTQIA+ folks



Welcome

Our commitment to health care isn't restricted to providing services. We pride ourselves on being an active participant and contributor to undertaking research and evaluation.

Research and Innovation is Merri Health's bi-annual publication that highlights some of our recent and current achievements in the areas of research and evaluation.

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

In this edition you will find information on a recent job boost in community health in response to COVID-19 changes, insights into the COVID-19 Fawkner test site we are supporting, and service changes to

support you during this time.

This newsletter is aimed at current and potential partners, stakeholders, funding bodies and key players in the community, health and primary care field, such as the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Health and Ageing, academic institutions, Medicare Local, Primary Care Partnerships and other community health organisations.

Job boost during COVID-19

Merri Health has received an employment boost with the introduction of 16 new roles.

The six-month roles will respond to changing community needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on community and administrative support, engagement and wellbeing initiatives.

Merri Health's chief executive Tassia Michaleas said the boost will bring some relief to locals.

"The new roles provide an opportunity for those that were left unemployed to get back to work, and support our teams to offer a COVID-safe workplace."



Photo by Claudio Schwarz

The roles are advertised on SideKicker, the Victorian Government's recruitment partner. Go to www.getsidekicker.com to set up your profile. Jobs that match your profile will be sent to you through SideKicker.

The employment boost comes as a result of the Victorian Government's Working for Victoria scheme that will create more than 3,000 jobs in critical community-support organisations.

Fawkner tests 7,000+ people

Over three weeks in July, Fawkner's coronavirus [COVID-19] drive-through test site processed more than 7,800 tests.

Supported by Merri Health, the test site was set-up in response to the high number of COVID-19 positive cases in northern metropolitan Melbourne. It provided locals with an opportunity to get tested close to home.

Merri Health continue to

support the COVID-19 test site at Fawkner, which is now a walk-in service from 10am – 4pm, 7 days per week at Sports Hall, CB Smith Reserve 79 Jukes Road, Fawkner

Testing is done by clinicians from partnering clinics, and supported by the Department of Health and Human Services and Moreland Council.

Discover more testing sites



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

My experience getting tested

"I went to my local hospital to get tested... the tester asked me to lie down on a bed and took a swab from both my throat and my nose. It was over within a few seconds so it was very straight forward.

After the test we were asked to stay home while waiting for the results. We found out about our results via text message.

If you're worried or nervous, don't be. Just get it done and you're doing your bit."

– Sarah, Moreland local

Wellness at Merri - helping our staff stay happy and well



COVID-19 has presented us with many challenges, from our work to personal life. Our staff's health and wellbeing has been our ongoing concern and it is for this reason that we launched Wellness at Merri. It is a 12-week wellness program to provide additional support both physically and mentally to staff during these times.

Over the weeks we had a number of activities and webinars which were chosen and designed to support staff based on feedback and recommendations.

What was on offer?

- Yoga, pilates and virtual movement sessions
- Healthy eating and cooking webinars
- Mental wellbeing and mindfulness webinars
- Virtual walking challenge

We are currently using these insights to offer a similar option for locals, to keep them connected virtually.

Learn more



communications@merrihealth.org.au



COVID-19: what to expect at your next visit

Merri Health has new COVID-19 screening measures in place for clients visiting four of our sites for face-to-face appointments at:

- 93 Bell St. Coburg
- 79 Jukes Rd. Fawkner
- 11 Glenlyon Rd. Brunswick
- 5D Cromwell St. Glenroy

Before entering these sites, you will be asked whether you are unwell or have a fever, about your travel history and whether you have had close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case. You will also have your temperature checked.

If we have any COVID-19 concerns, we will let you know – please follow our team member's instructions.

These processes have been introduced to keep you, our team and broader community safe and well. We will have these measures in place until further notice and will be guided by the Chief Medical Officer and official Government advice before easing screenings across our sites.

We thank you for your patience and understanding during this time.

The State of Emergency has been extended until 11.59pm on 16 August 2020. If you live in metropolitan Melbourne and the Mitchell Shire you must wear a mask when you leave home for one of the four reasons.



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



Be Well, Live Well

Supporting people with chronic conditions

Above: our team guiding a group exercise activity

A new program to help you manage chronic conditions

Be Well, Live Well is a new program for anyone 18 years and over that has a chronic illness like diabetes and asthma, and would like support to live as healthy as possible.

The program is now being held via telehealth [phone call or video conferencing] and is now taking one-on-one appointments.

We offer education, support and exercise programs to help you manage your health.

This program is suitable for people who have, or are at risk of, chronic cardiac or respiratory disease or diabetes, or people who need to change their lifestyle.

Get in touch



service.access@merrhealth.org.au



1300 637 744

Do I need a referral?

No, you do not need a referral to access this service. You can self-refer or you may have a referral from a doctor, health professional or hospital.

If am 65 and over. Do I need a My Aged Care referral?

No.

Will I need a pre-assessment?

No, an initial assessment is completed with our clinicians before starting the program.

Sooner or Later: school starting age in Fawkner

A research project: what is the impact of the school starting age in Fawkner?

View the full study under 'More information'



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

Ready, Set, Prep! is a Merri Health initiative that prepares children and their families for a great start to primary school. Earlier this year, the team completed a research project to better understand the impact the school starting age in Fawkner has on children and their families.

The study reviewed data from local schools (sample of 182) and collected findings from consultations with more than 50 Fawkner locals.

Key findings were that Fawkner children start school at a statistically significant earlier age than the Victorian and Moreland average, and that it is linked to families having a Language Other Than English (LOTE) background and/or additional needs.

Understanding this trend, the team have made a number of recommendations to better support local children and their families through their first year of school. Stand outs include:

- the need for extra community-based program or initiatives to provide families with support and information
- linking education providers with community leaders so they can influence social norms
- linking families with local carer services to support children with extra needs.

Be school-ready: watch the video series

Video series supports school readiness in Fawkner.

The Ready, Set, Prep! educational video series and materials have been released on Merri Health's Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts.

The videos are part of the larger Ready, Set, Prep! initiative to support children and families in Fawkner to have a great start to primary school. As part of the project, schools, kindergartens and early years settings in Fawkner provided feedback that they wanted a sustainable resource that shared key educational messages with community, to support children to have the best start in life and at primary school.

Through a six-month consultation with families and early years services in Fawkner, a video series answering some of the most common questions about starting school was chosen as the preferred resource. This would also be something the community could share for years to come.

During the consultation, many newly arrived families shared their experiences about starting school in Victoria. We found that families want the best for their children, but aren't always sure about how to access or enrol in many early years health and education services.

"There are huge gaps for migrants, they don't have much information about the school system here and they can struggle to find the



Above: Maria at St Mark's Primary School

information," said Henna*, a local parent.

From July to December 2019, families, schools, kindergartens and early years settings supported filming of the videos. Over two huge days, 72 people were involved in the filming across 12 locations in Fawkner. The messages in the videos were then edited and refined following a second round of consultation with the community in early 2020. In total, over 200 local community members and staff in early years health and education settings in Fawkner have contributed to the co-design, filming and editing of the series.

The Ready, Set, Prep! partnership, made up of over 20 local schools, kindergartens and early years services, are hoping these videos will be used and shared to support early childhood health, wellbeing and development. These videos are just one of the many strategies the partnership is working on to increase the number of children starting school 'ready' and developmentally on track in Fawkner.

View the videos



<https://bit.ly/39sCvcb>

*Name has been changed to respect the privacy of our clients.

COVID-19 impacts on community



We respond to the health needs of our communities through a range of initiatives. Our organisation-wide initiatives take place across Victoria.

Initiatives by our community wellbeing team are based in Moreland, with a focus on Fawkner.

We're working with local community members and organisations to understand how COVID-19 is changing people's daily lives. Take a look at the fortnightly reports to understand local needs, and how we're supporting community.

View the reports under 'COVID-19 updates':



<https://bit.ly/2WT8FZg>



Online support for LGBTIQ+ folks

An online approach to keep young people connected.

YGLAM is a Merri Health service that provides a space for young queer folks to come together and explore sexuality and gender identity through artistic means.

As we continue to isolate at home, YGLAM have taken an online approach to keep young folks connected using video chat. The sessions are fun and provide a safe place to practice and explore different skills without judgement.

Recent activities held virtually have included blackout poetry, character creation and game nights. All activities are completely optional and open to your own interpretation.

Connect or find out more



community.wellbeing@merrhealth.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 2, 110 Chifley Drive
Preston VIC 3072

Wangaratta

Level 3, 62-68 Ovens
Street Wangaratta
VIC 3677

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