



Merri Health
Healthcare that moves with you

Research + Innovation

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Hello and welcome to the first edition of Research and Innovation for 2022! With new easing of COVID restrictions, I hope you are all enjoying getting back to doing the things we all love.

At Merri, we are certainly enjoying our staff slowly returning to sites in bigger numbers.

The 'new COVID-normal' still challenges us and others in the sector to be more innovative in our thinking and service offerings, and our response to the changing of community needs.

We have a strong commitment to remain active participants and contributors to research and innovation. With our newly developed Research and Evaluation Community of Practice, we have been able to provide a forum to build the research and evaluation knowledge and capability of staff,

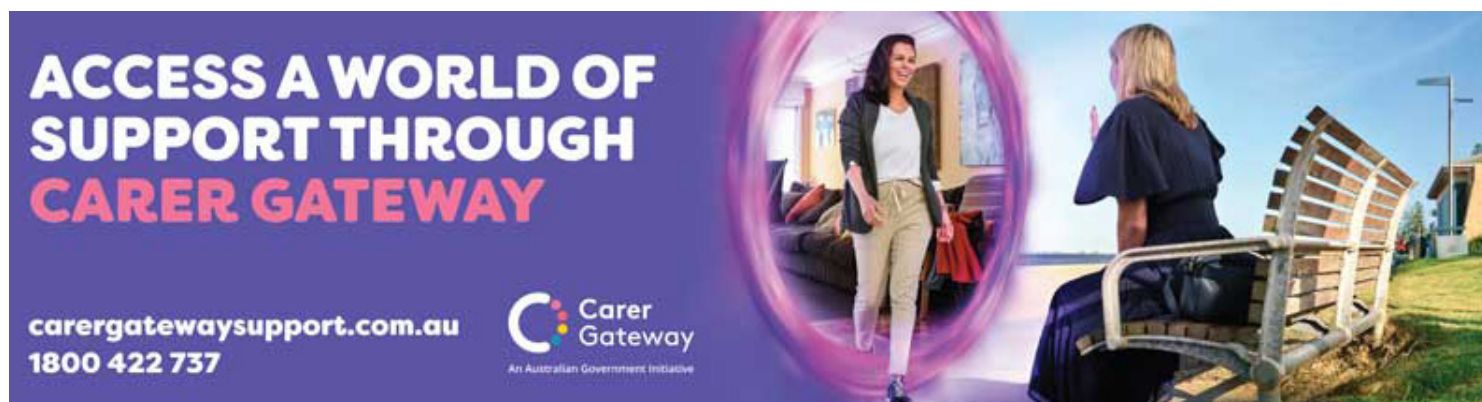
and to promote an organisational culture of knowledge translation. We share our ideas and work on strategies together to build on Merri's offerings.

In this edition you will see how we've used new technology platforms with young carers leading the way through TikTok, how the Ready, Set, Prep! theory of change is helping the community grow, what our Upstander champions have been achieving, and much more.

Happy reading!

Tassia Michaleas, Merri Health CEO.

Bold Carer Gateway campaign opens a new door for carers



We launched our powerful new carer Gateway campaign ‘Your Gateway to Support’ in February.

The campaign encourages Victoria’s 700,000+ unpaid carers to get the support they need via the federal Government’s Carer Gateway service.

Developed with carers and featuring carers, the campaign reaches out through TV, radio, digital marketing, public-relations and outdoor signage, and will also be promoted widely on social media.

Tassia Michaleas, CEO of Merri Health, the lead Carer Gateway agency in Victoria, said the campaign will address the issue of Victoria’s unpaid carers not accessing the assistance they need.

“Many thousands of Victorian carers are not receiving any supports,” Ms Michaleas said.

“Being a carer all-too-often brings increased stress, detrimental physical- and mental-health effects and financial hardship.”

“It is vital that carers and their families get all the assistance possible and for that reason we have designed this awareness campaign that urges Victoria’s carers to “don’t wait until you break” before seeking help.”

“The campaign is designed to let Victoria’s army of unpaid carers know that help is available at no cost

via Carer Gateway. All they need to do is make a free phone call or visit the website.”

The “Your Gateway to Support” campaign features a gateway that carers step through to find the support they need. It was designed to grab carers’ attention, make them aware of the service and illustrate how Carer Gateway can enhance their lives.

A campaign webpage is now live, providing carers with an easy to remember path to follow to receive support. It will direct carers straight to the Request a Call Back page to help streamline the process of contacting Carer Gateway.

We hope you can all join us in promoting this exciting campaign so we can connect with the carers who need our support.

Carer Gateway services are delivered across Victoria by Merri Health, Alfred Health, Ballarat Health Services, Barwon Health, Bendigo Health Care Group, FamilyCare, and Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Ltd.

[Find out more about the campaign](#)



carergatewaysupport.com.au

Merri Health supporting the community to get jabbed



A new service from Merri Health is now available to help community members overcome obstacles in getting COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters for themselves and those they care for.

The Merri COVID-19 Vaccination Support Service can help:

- Book appointments
- Arrange transport
- Provide reliable information
- Organise child-minding services

Call us on 8419 2608 or email merrivax@merrihealth.org.au for assistance.

This service is free and available to all Moreland residents.

 8419 2608

 merrivax@merrihealth.org.au



Ready, Set, Prep! use co-design to develop a new roadmap

Ready, Set, Prep! improves service quality and access, learning and educational opportunities, for families in northern Moreland.

The program prepares children and their families for a great start to primary school.

The team work with community members, primary schools and early years providers to support early learning, family engagement and transition to primary school.

The team has developed their theory of change to roadmap its vision for the next two years.

They conducted research and co-designed workshops with their steering committee and community members. This included conversations with community members and service providers, research data, local population data and child case studies.

From this, they were able to outline seven activity areas for achieving outcomes for families. These include:

1. Convene Transition Network
2. Support organisational development in schools and kinders
3. Continue core business of partners
4. Recruit and train community champions
5. Develop a communications plan
6. Launch working groups
7. Initiate partnership projects to support families

This will help more families to be school-ready with improved early childhood development, wellbeing, and life outcomes.

[Learn more](#)

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



Partnering with Little Dreamers to bring in-person support to young carers

Carer Gateway worked in collaboration with Little Dreamers for the Young Carer In-Person Peer Support (IPPS) Pilot.

The purpose of this program is to provide a safe space for young carers to connect with each other and learn about different caring roles and responsibilities

The sessions include ice breakers and games and activities to provoke discussions on health and wellbeing, identity and caring roles.

The core objectives of the pilot were:

- To increase Carer Gateway registrations

- To establish one or more Young Carer IPPS groups
- To trial and fine-tune processes involved in the implementation of Young Carer IPPS delivered by Little Dreamers.

The pilot was successful in achieving the three objectives. As a result of direct outreach, 11 new young carers have been referred to Carer Gateway.

A total of 22 young carers have been referred to Little Dreamers for support. Two young carer in-person support groups were

established during the pilot period for a total of 10 young carers.

Find out more about the Carer Gateway.



<https://bit.ly/3vQH654>



Uniting the Moreland community

We have expanded our successful Hello, Fawkner! initiative across Moreland. Hello Moreland! aims to build community cohesion, connection and respect for diversity in Moreland.

After consulting with community members and evaluating our past initiatives to build on our next four-year plan for the community, we used evidence-based research to identify priority groups and objectives* for the people of Moreland.

Hello, Moreland! is offering \$100 gift cards to Fawkner, Glenroy and Hadfield residents who wish to throw an event or party in their community. The parties are about celebrating culture and diversity, learning something new, and meeting new people.

Events can be in-person, such as a BBQ at your home, a pot-luck party for your street, a picnic in the park or anything else that you think of (COVID-safe, of course)! It could even be an online event.

In 2022, parties will celebrate one of the following dates:

- International Women's Day (March 8)
- Harmony Day (March 21)
- IDAHOBIT (May 17) applications
- National Reconciliation Week (May 27-June 3)

They are also running The Great Idea Program in Glenroy.

This program encourages people with an idea to bring the Glenroy community together during COVID-19 to come forward and apply for a grant.

The successful people will be supported to:

- Further develop the idea and create a project plan
- Develop a budget (up to \$5000 will be given to support your project)
- Put the idea into action.

*IHP Objectives

- Increase capacity for leadership, social and civic participation
- Increase social connections within and between communities
- Increase understanding and celebration of diverse communities in Moreland
- Increase capacity to act against disrespect, discrimination, violence and exclusion
- Increase quality and inclusiveness of local settings
- Increase access to and participation in health, community, education and early years services, and social activities.

IHP Priority Groups

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- LGBTIQA+ communities
- Older people
- People living with a disability
- Multicultural communities, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and newly-arrived communities
- Children and young people
- People experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage.

Find out more about Hello, Moreland!



<https://bit.ly/344eJ87>

Young carers leading the way through TikTok!

Carer Gateway partnered with Barwon Health to work with a group of young carers from Geelong to create TikTok videos showing what it's like to be a young carer.

The project gave young carers an opportunity to gain volunteer work experience, develop social media content, gain social connections and creative expressions.

Barwon Health Young Carer Support Worker, Elizabeth McCracken, identified a group of young carers with an interest in creating content for the social media platform TikTok. This partnership was an effective way to communicate to other young carers.

A total of seven young carers were involved in a series of peer-led workshops run by Blue Bird Foundation (local community arts organisation), to develop their ideas and create five 30 - 60 second video clips.

In a focus group, they agreed that being involved in groups like this are beneficial for the mental wellbeing of young carers. One participant shared the value of being able to connect and share experiences across different cultures.

The Youth Arts Practitioner also had some great observations,

“Part of what I loved about supporting these sessions was learning about each individual person; their personalities, interests, hopes, troubles, concerns, and fostering a safe space in which they could freely share their stories. I believe this project was very beneficial to these young carers, and I could see the joy, comfort, and sense of accomplishment in their faces throughout the process to the end.”



Do you know a young carer?

1 in 10 Victorian carers are young carers. Young carers are children and young people aged up to 25 who care for a family member. This can be a parent or sibling with a disability, mental illness, chronic condition or terminal illness. Young carers may also look after an older person with care needs.

Take our 30 second quiz to find out if you know a young carer:



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

Delivering free oral care to Moreland



Merri Health is teaming with Dental Health Services Victoria for the Smile Squad program from April 5, 2022 until the end of 2023.

Smile Squad is a Victorian Government program that delivers mobile dental health and care to primary and secondary school children in Victoria. Merri Health will be delivering dental services to schools across Moreland.

The program gives Merri's dental team an opportunity to see children who may have barriers to access dental services, whether this be geographic or financial barriers. The aim is to provide timely access to care and treat dental disease.

Dental Health Services Victoria says,

“With a strong focus on education and prevention, we want every student we see to walk away with the tools and knowledge they need to eat well, drink well and clean well – for life. Together we can reduce the burden of oral disease and minimise its impact on the lives of young people and families across the state.”

Find out more.



<https://bit.ly/3lhx7IW>



\$661k boost delivers new equipment, spaces and service access at Merri sites

Four Merri Health clinical sites are being upgraded after Merri successfully received \$661k through the Victorian Government's Metropolitan Health Infrastructure Fund (MHIF).

The upgrades at Bell St Coburg, Brunswick, Glenroy and Fawkner include new equipment and improved spaces that will benefit staff and clients; enabling Merri to provide even better-quality care and access to key podiatry, physiotherapy, audiology, dental and rehabilitation services.

Work has begun and will be completed by May this year. Clinical leads and team members across services are partnering with Merri's Grant Infrastructure Project Team to deliver this exciting program.

"These substantial grants from the Victorian Government to further upgrade our spaces and equipment recognise the health and wellbeing outcomes our dedicated teams achieve and will ensure we provide even higher-quality care for our clients," Merri Health CEO Tassia Michaleas said.

The upgrades at Bell St Coburg, Brunswick, Glenroy and Fawkner include:

- New podiatry equipment including upgraded client treatment and clinician chairs, clinical procedure trolleys, examination lights, SmartDop and a new podiatry grinder unit

- New physiotherapy and consulting room equipment and treatment beds, x-ray viewers and weight scales
- New rehabilitation equipment including exercise bikes, treadmills, patient chairs and refurbished rehabilitation training stairs
- Complete refurbishment of Merri's audiology testing booth, new and replacement specialised audiology testing equipment including Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) machine, sound level meter and otoscope, and puppet screens and boxes
- New dental equipment incorporating intraoral cameras, hand instruments and new sterilisation equipment

Merri Health was one of 26 health organisations to share in the newly created \$200 million MHIF. The fund aims to ensure health services continue to provide world-class healthcare for all Victorians.

"We're investing in health services across the state, helping them deliver the high-quality care Victorians deserve." Minister for Health Martin Foley

Merri Health launches new Gender Analysis Tool

Merri Health has created a new Gender Analysis Tool to assist staff in applying a gender lens to program design and implementation.

Teams can use the tool during planning, design, review and/or evaluation of projects to ensure they are inclusive, gender-responsive and accessible.

The tool draws on different instruments across multiple organisations, with a move away from binary language to provide a more inclusive definition of gender. It encourages staff to consider the range of needs and experiences of people in the community, in regard to their gender identity.

Cassie Zurek, Health Promotion Officer at Merri Health, said through using this tool, staff will be able to produce projects that are safer for all people, including projects that respond to gender inequities in our community.

“This project came from an identified need for a tool that would help staff to actively and intentionally ensure Merri’s work is always inclusive and responsive to the needs of people of all genders,” Cassie said.

“All the tools we could find used a very binary definition of gender, so we decided to adapt our own. Team members who participate in the process can expect to have deep discussions about gender and equity. It is a reflective process that allows you to learn along the way.”

This project will help us work towards strengthening and formalising our commitment to gender inclusivity and safety. We look forward to implementing it”.



Above: Merri's Community Wellbeing team participating in the #BreakTheBias challenge for International Women's Day





Merri Health training community allies

Merri Health has been delivering upstander training to young people and professionals since 2018. Since then, we have worked with young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Stand Out groups (queer-ally-ship groups at local schools), primary and secondary schools, local Council, and Yarra Trams to name a few!

Upstander training equips participants with practical knowledge and skills to challenge and respond to violence where they live, learn, work and play. It recognises that we need a community of allies acting in different spaces and places to change broader sociocultural norms.

It expands and adapts upstander training developed and delivered by Merri in recent years, which focused on addressing gender-based violence, racism and LGBTIQ+ safety and inclusion.

Be Upstanding! will be delivered by Merri's Youth Health Promotion team to at least 100 students in 2022 across at least three Moreland secondary schools.

In addition, the Youth Health Promotion team are contributing to the STARS project, which aims to co-develop an anti-racism intervention in junior sports clubs. STARS is a partnership with University of Melbourne, Moreland City Council, Welcoming Clubs, Centre for Multicultural Youth. A key outcome for Youth Health Promotion will be to lead the co-development of an upstander educational video resource for use across sports and school settings.

Find out more.

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