





## *the* CENTRE



#### Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the friends of the Centre for contributing your memories, stories and photographs to this book.

The Centre 40 years of Banyule Community Health

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Front Cover: West Heidelberg Community Centre building 1978

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40 Years of BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH



The staff are helpful. It is a blessing. So wonderful. People are cheering for their jobs; to help the community. Some are getting better. Others are sick. Thanks to the staff. There's a lot happening at the centre.

Betty Fiddes and the Engellenner boys



#### Graeme Engellenner

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Reclaim the Night - Jim Pasinis and Judy (2015)



## Foreword

When we discussed what a 40 Year celebration book should be titled, the answer lay within the detail. Person after person referred to Banyule Community Health, and its forerunners West Heidelberg Community Health Centre and Diamond Valley Community Health Centre, as *The centre*. It was a reference to how comfortable and trusting people are of this service that has grown with the community over the past four decades.

The story of Banyule Community Health is a remarkable one. It entails struggles, success, heroes, setbacks, characters, advocates and importantly a strong culture of sticking by your community. *The centre* captures only some of the events over the first 40 years. It's impossible to capture every story or every person who has influenced or been influenced by the centre. You will find throughout this book strong themes of trust and respect. Programs and services have always been community driven and community led. This dates back to the early 1970's when a movement for a local health centre emerged. We

owe a debt of gratitude to those pioneers in the early 1970's who established a responsive community owned service that addressed local health issues in a manner that matched the needs of the time.

When I was a boy, my father ran a local business in West Heidelberg and I have vivid memories of visiting the Olympic Village with my sister in 1956 to see the athletes. Little did I know then that my life would always have a deep connection with this community. I have worked in this community for over 30 years, the past 26 as the CEO of Banyule Community Health. I'm incredibly proud of this community and the health centre it has created. I know I am not alone.

Enjoy the read and be captivated by some of our old and new photos telling our story our way.

Jim Pasinis

CEO 2015





Open Day (1984)



## Olympic Village

'The real story is what happened after the games...'

"People came from Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy and Camp Pell struggle was the norm."

Judith Smith

West Heidelberg's Olympic Village housed big dreams. It was a 118-acre garden showcase built to accommodate the athletes of the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games and a model estate for the Victorian Housing Commission.

The Commission proudly announced what its £2,700,000 investment bought:

"841 dwelling units, dining halls, community centres, dental clinic, hospital, and shopping centre, and 50 acres of lawns and nature strips containing more than 10,000 trees and shrubs – a most commendable achievement which reflects great credit on the Housing Commission employees ... and all others who had a hand in this great project." Housing Commission Victoria Annual Report 1955-1956

There was enormous excitement when the athletes' village opened. For the first time, athletes and officials were out of barracks and into semi-detached houses and flats. For local volunteers and residents, the games were a giant neighbourhood party. A team of international chefs was recruited to feed the 6,000 athletes and officials from 57 nations. Many of those chefs stayed on in the Village after the games and found work in local hotels or started their own restaurants, kicking off Melbourne's love-affair with European, Asian and Middle-eastern food.

After the games about 600 of the houses were allotted to the Housing Commission, while the rest were snapped up at auction.

"The houses and flats at Heidelberg which will have helped to make history for Australia will become the homes of 841 Australian families, thus fulfilling their ultimate purpose." *Housing Commission Victoria Annual Report* 1955-1956

Olympic Village was designed as an open garden, with no fences. The flats, semi-detached and concrete homes were built at break-neck speed to meet the Olympic deadline. When the games ended and a host of public housing tenants moved in, it was no surprise that cracks began to appear.





Holiday program (1979)



# Olympic Village

"The Olympic Village was fabricated. The real story of the village is what happened after the games. It's a living, close community." **Wendy Ogden** 

Judith Smith arrived in West Heidelberg in 1956 as a 13 year old, just before the village was invaded by athletes from around the world. She remembers all the excitement that went with the Olympics. Judith recalls the challenges of that time too. Judith left school early, to work – it was common for a girl her age to be sent to work at a young age to contribute to the family. "Mum worked long days cleaning houses in Toorak and I worked too."

"People came from Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy and Camp Pell – struggle was the norm. We all shared that. No one knew what depression was back then, but there were lots of worried people. You just looked after each other." Judith Smith

The Hansens were early residents, with three generations attending Olympic Village Primary School.

"We used to have a bit of trouble with 'snow droppers' that's what we called the kids who would nick your clothes off the clothes line. We didn't have fences around our yards back then and kids would come along and just nick your clothes. It got a bit hard sometimes because you couldn't just go out and buy more things." Pauline Hansen

By 1960, Heidelberg was Victoria's largest housing estate with 4,362 properties. The tenants who resettled from overcrowded inner-city Melbourne or post-war emergency housing were delighted to call the Village home. The Fiddes family arrived in 1957.

"I remember it all so clearly; the screams of delight from the children as they ran from room to room, then out into the back yard and back inside again calling to each other, 'It's so big!'" **Betty Fiddes** 



# MOTHERS IN

West Heidelberg residents attacked the poor health and welfare facilities in the area, at a recent

public meeting.

180 than More the

objectives for the West Heidelberg Community ment, which is almost impossible to obtain. The meeting decided Service: To provide high

# THE HEI **Council wants cash for**

outreach

workers

Heidelberg Council has asked the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Recreation for money to fund two outreach workers for West Heidelberg.

This follows a report by council recreation planner, Mr Tom Stokes, who is on the Outreach Youth Work Committee.

Mr Stokes evaluated results and experiences of outreach work within Heidelberg over the past three years and together with the tee recommends that two outreach workers are

female to effectively cover problems of



40 Years of

## District A – District of special need

'A Health and Welfare Centre would go a long way to meet the needs of residents of the Olympic Village'

Olympic Village in the 1950s was the lucky country's vision splendid. Ten years on, with scores of unemployed and single parent families living there, it was neither lucky nor splendid.

> "It was a readymade community facility, but people were put here in great haste and often without the preparation and the foresight that was required for all the community support that's necessary." John Cain

Olympic Village was not alone. Poverty was on the rise in the land of plenty. In August 1972, Prime Minister William McMahon set up a Commission of Inquiry into Poverty and appointed Professor Ronald Henderson from Melbourne University's Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research as Chair. The Whitlam Government, elected later in 1972, expanded the size and scope of the inquiry to include a focus on the groups most at risk and issues relating to housing and welfare services.

Enter Mary Morgan, a social worker with the City of Heidelberg in the early 1970s and fearless social advocate. A high proportion of Mary's caseload came from the Village "the vulnerable populations such as lone parent families, large families, and sick and unemployed were higher in the Olympic Village, and the numbers of dependent children to adults were very much higher."

The Henderson Inquiry asked Mary to study and report on "District A, a sub-district of the West Heidelberg Housing Commission Estate known as the Olympic Village".

Mary and her team interviewed professionals, social workers and volunteers working in the area, and 30 local families completed a questionnaire on what it was like to live in West Heidelberg.

Mary's report *District* A – 'district of special need' stated that "the services in the Olympic Village are unco-ordinated, understaffed and there are many gaps: limited child-minding facilities, no after-school play groups, the paramedical services are inadequate, emergency accommodation is lacking, the services which are present are overtaxed and understaffed."

"Everything possible should be done to give every family the opportunity to achieve competence, participate in decisions which affect them, and to have a sense of pride and dignity in themselves and their community."

Mary Morgan



## District A – District of special need

With a good working knowledge of the local Council, hospitals, welfare and support agencies, Mary's recommendations were astute and practical. She advised that the Housing Commission review its allocation policy and work to "improve its public image in the district", that the Education Department give priority to upgrading the Olympic Village school facilities, and that the Heidelberg Council and Housing Commission work together to improve local facilities, play areas and waste management. She also called on the Heidelberg Council "to act as a catalyst to set up a Community Health and Welfare Centre in the district."

The Henderson Inquiry report was tabled in Parliament in 1974 and published in 1975. It was a watershed study into the nature and extent of poverty in Australia, and was released in the last golden year of the Whitlam government. There was still a strong public and political appetite for social reform – including among the community of West Heidelberg. "It was the middle '70s and there was a feeling that everything was changing and whatever it was that was needed you could probably do it. From the old Australia to the new, this was the Whitlam government and everything was in a state of turmoil, change, excitement.

"There was a feeling that we were going to do it. Change things for the better, give people an opportunity to do what they wanted to do. Make people of West Heidelberg feel they were entitled to what everyone else was entitled to." **Bill Newton** 

Mary's recommendations on establishing a community-run service provided the blueprint for establishing the Interim Committee of the West Heidelberg Community Health and Welfare Centre.

Mary Morgan's fearless advocacy and capacity to bring the community together will always be remembered. She was awarded Life Membership of the Centre in 1979.

40 Years o BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH





Keiran Ryan, Fred (the horse) and Local West Heidelberg Children

## The community response

'The need is urgent'

A chapter of the Henderson report covered Mary Morgan's recommendations on establishing a community health and welfare centre in the Village.

With the Henderson report tabled, Federal support secured and public opinion on their side, Mary Morgan and Heidelberg Mayor Jean Baker wasted no time. Mayor Baker called for a public meeting to form an interim committee to seek funding for a community health centre in West Heidelberg.

"The people themselves must see the need and be involved in the planning and decision making." Mary Morgan A Community Health and Welfare Centre Report to the Henderson Poverty Inquiry

Wendy Ogden was at that first meeting. "There was a leaflet in my letterbox – I think it was April 1974. It was a call for people to come to a public meeting to set up a community health centre as part of the Whitlam government's community health program."

Over 200 people attended the public meeting at St Columbus Anglican church, which stood on the corner of Oriel Rd and Morobe St (now the Morobe Street children's centre). Wendy Ogden recalls: "There were lots of community identities there – Tom Rossell, Ron Haining, Ron Brown – and others who formed the original committee."

"The West Heidelberg community had a number of outstanding local citizens who offered to serve on the committee of management." John Cain An interim committee of 15 was elected at that meeting – 12 were local residents. The committee included two men who would be instrumental in establishing the Centre; founding Chair Cr Tom Rossell and CEO Bill Newton.

"The Interim Committee considers that many of the residents of West Heidelberg have been deprived of essential medical, dental and welfare services for far too long. The need is urgent and the service should commence immediately." Submission to the National Hospital and Health Services Commission, April 1974

Working with Mary Morgan, the interim committee's thoroughly researched funding submission was well-received. A follow-up community meeting was held in August to deliver the news that funding was approved and a community health centre would be established in the Village in early 1975.

"40 years ago a group of courageous and visionary community members identified the requirements to support a community bereft of adequate services for our local people. This unique beginning ensured Banyule Community health was, and would always be, accountable to its local community. Over time a formidable reputation has evolved with a respectful and trusting relationship with the community and its partners." John Ferraro "It probably needed the impetus of a grand reformer like Gough Whitlam to recognise the needs of the outer suburbs."

John Cain



Local Olympic Village Children (1970s)



Early years

'We did what seemed to be necessary at the time'

On 3 February 1975, the West Heidelberg Community Health and Welfare Service started with two staff – CEO Bill Newton and receptionist Val Rodman – in a block of Housing Commission flats at 20 Morobe St.

"We responded to the needs of the community and did what seemed to be necessary at the time. We could focus just on the needs of our small constituency.

"I think there was only one doctor in the whole of West Heidelberg in those days, and we lobbied the Health Department very strongly to get salaried doctors. It took a year but we managed.

"We expanded pretty fast. Bernie Geary was the State's first detached youth worker and it was obvious that the place he should be was in the community centre. Bernie's was the first of the not strictly health services that we included and helped us realise that there's a lot more to community health than doctors and nurses." **Bill Newton** 

"Bill was pretty good at bringing people in, like myself. People who were connected in social services, people like housing workers, people like Helen Szoke who is the current CEO of Oxfam. She was our community education officer.

"I found a generosity in this community that I don't think people give this community credit for – generous with outsiders and generous with each other. We shared sadness and good stuff and we were well led. Bill let people do what they were good at." Bernie Geary

"We took a fairly broad view of what constitutes health. These were the days when community health centres were really quite independent and a lot of the funding came from the Commonwealth, so the State Health Department mostly thought that if they left us alone we probably wouldn't cause too much trouble.

"The formal name was West Heidelberg Community Health and Welfare Service. Very early on people in the community came and said 'they'll think you're the welfare and you'll come and take our kids' so we had to take that out. Community centre was more what it was because we provided a lot of services that affected people's health but weren't funded by the Health Department. We knew if you haven't got a house or a job then your health is affected.

"The people of West Heidelberg saw us as their organisation and used us for everything they could. The response was amazing in those early days, from the community. They really supported us, used our services. That was the most gratifying part of it. We were obviously providing what the community needed.

"The Board of management were all local people, so everybody knew what was going on and West Heidelberg is not that big a place. We were only

back, over all those years, and say, yes I remember the start of this and what a great success it's been."

"It's great to be able to look

David McKenzie



Judy Stephen, Bernie Geary and Julie Rodman



## Early years

servicing the housing commission estate basically. We did a lot of work with the Olympic Village Primary School so the word got out quite quickly that here was an organisation that was specifically designed for the people of West Heidelberg." **Bill Newton** 

"I started work in April 1976 as a medical records clerk. There were eight staff – one doctor, two community health nurses, one social worker, one welfare worker and one typist. I thought – how am I ever going to remember the names of all these people!

"It was such a different role in terms of how the staff worked with community. They were so caring. I remember a social worker was working with a family and they had no money. It was one kid's birthday so she bought a present and a cake.

"We were in a block of four units in a typical Housing Commission walk up. There was administration in one unit, social work offices in another; there was a community room, a meeting room with a few offices and the medical surgery." Wendy Ogden

"We were operating in the single block of housing commission flats, and we very quickly realised we needed a much bigger building. We lobbied the Health Department and we were greatly helped by the City Council. At the time the mayor, Vin Heffernan, was very strong in his support for the Centre. He used to run a service station up in West Heidelberg and so he knew West Heidelberg and he did a lot to get us that funding." **Bill Newton** 

On 16 July 1979, the Centre moved into refurbished buildings with a new reception area and new meeting rooms.

"It was fantastic to have that new building because more services could start. Programs were extended using whatever funding was made available by the Department of Health and other agencies – dietician services, dental, podiatry, a community education officer, financial counselling, extension of the legal service, more social workers. Bill Newton and Bernie Geary were good operators getting funding." Wendy Ogden

"There was furious objection from the AMA to doctors working in community health services. Their notion was that private practice is the only way for general practice to be managed. We wrote to every doctor in the City of Heidelberg saying if you don't like this let us know now. We received not one reply, which indicated to us it was just the AMA who was objecting." **Bill Newton** 

"It's those funding submissions that were done 30 and 40 years ago that helps the client still. We often hear from clients how important it is to come to a building that is in their community." **Michael Geary** 

40 Years o BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH





CC Variety Group (1990s)

## Doing health differently

'We used health as the peg to hang a lot of other services on'

"I came to Australia in 1974. I'd been living in the South Pacific, where doing things in the community was the standard. I was surprised to find that in Australia this was considered very new. A community based service was a nice fit for me. My wife was Polynesian so I had a daily reminder that there are different ways of doing things." **Bill Newton** 

"There were programs that ran to assist the community. Some were socially oriented such as the men's room and a small group that went to Vic Market every week. These were all extensions of staff ideas. There was the mix and move group for elderly people. The no-interest loans group was set up where you paid in \$1 a week until you reached \$32 then you were eligible for a \$100 loan." Wendy Ogden

"There's this misconception that health is merely the absence of disease and it's not. Good health means that you are emotionally in a good place, that you're mentally in a good place, that you're physically in a good place, you're environmentally in a good place and in some cases you're spiritually in a good place, regardless of what you believe in. All those factors contribute to your wellbeing. So it's no good saying to people, 'What's wrong with you? Get a job. Lift yourself out of these doldrums.' You've got to get to the stage where you feel you can compete in the first place – that your self-esteem is at a certain level for you to sit there and answer questions about a job." Jim Pasinis

#### To Witt

"We had this guy who was dressed in an owl costume who used to go around the secondary schools talking about legal education and he was called 'To Witt'. He was an owl. Took me ages to get that." **Bernie Geary** 

### Legal Service

"We used health as the peg to hang a lot of other services on – the legal service, we had youth workers, we had a community education worker funded by the Education Department. At one time we had the Commonwealth Employment Service in the building. We had someone from the Housing Commission. A whole lot of things that wouldn't usually be regarded as health services but which actually addressed the issues that affect people's health like housing and poverty."

"I'd enquired around about starting a legal service. Someone said, 'you should ring John Cain'. I didn't have a clue who he was – if I had I

"Work doesn't have to look like work. The community choir, the baby choir, the breast cancer support group, our playgroups. A lot of what we try and bring out in the community is a joy – in being together, in doing things that are enjoyable – that distract you from the everyday awful crap that people have to put up with."

Elishchka Sageman

<sup>40</sup> Years of BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH





Women of West Heidelberg (2013)

# Doing health differently

probably wouldn't have tried. I just rang him and he readily agreed. He was terrific." **Bill Newton** 

"The Legal Aid Act was passed in 1978 and government resources started to flow from the early '80s. The legal service has since flourished and provided, for the last 40 years, a service which people needed. It's a very competent and sophisticated service now." John Cain

"People say 'Why have a legal service in a health centre?' But when people say to us 'You need to improve people's health. You need to tackle diabetes, asthma, you need to put in programs that are going to have a health outcome.' Well if people are confronted with issues around infringement notices. They've got court cases hanging over their heads. They are facing eviction. They are living in substandard housing and they are told to 'eat properly'. In terms of priorities, my priority would be to keep out of gaol." Jim Pasinis

#### Bernie's Boys

"Bernie's boys were kids I connected with who were detached from some of the classic youth organisations such as the scouts or the Try youth hall over the road.

"I thought my role was to do whatever they wanted to do and a lot of it was reactionary – going to court for them, helping get them the dole, stopping them fighting with their families. There were some dangerous stuff going on but I never felt at risk." **Bernie Geary** 

"Someone donated a wiz bang mower and it went missing the next day. One of Bernie's boys admitted to it 20 years later. It was Bernie's boys that gave lots of kids a start in addressing youth unemployment." Wendy Ogden

### PUSH Employment

Julian Singh, a local since migrating with his family from Fiji in the 1960s, was a lad and often found himself in scraps with the boys from Crevelli Street East Preston. When Bernie Geary started as a youth worker they connected and with other local boys started up a work crew. Bernie arranged odd jobs with council, pensioners and local businesses for local youth.

Julian remembers initiatives like the PUSH Printing Press, building the BMX track for local kids and a catering program. Julian later worked at the Centre as a youth worker and later at Try Youth Club.

"I was one of the village louts at that time. Bernie Geary took me under his wing. Then Jim Pasinis came along and he straightened me out a bit more. And then I started helping them. I had an income, responsibility and we got things done for the community." Julian Singh



# Doing health differently

Malcolm Brown moved into West Heidelberg with his Mum and 12 brothers and sisters in the early 1970s. "I left school at 14 and PUSH was my first real job. It focused me and I started to volunteer at the Centre in 1977." Malcolm's volunteering was to ensure clients had good access to services. He would drive around in his blue two-door Monaro GTS and pick clients up for appointments. One of his roles was to look after the cars and bus: "Mum pulled down her front fence in Brunei Crescent so we could park all the cars at home on the lawn on weekends. Mum loved the Centre too. She would bake scones for the Family Fun Day."

#### ZAPTheatre

"Rhondda Johnson was a playwright and a welfare worker with the Centre. One of her plays Dream Kitchen was based on Betty Carter, who set up the first women's refuge in West Heidelberg. Rhondda and Betty were a great team.

"Rhondda and writer and actor Ray Mooney teamed up in 1996 to form the ZAP Community Theatre which employed around 10 young people. They put on several plays and events, including Love Me Tender at the Malthouse and Sideshow Alley at St Martins Youth Arts Centre in South Yarra." Jim Pasinis

#### CCs

"We had a weight reducing group that used to meet on Monday's at 6. No staff were willing to take it on because the participants weren't serious about losing weight. They'd been meeting for many years and become a social group. Someone bought in a pair of tap shoes from the op shop, we found a few could tap and the CCs started. The first show was in 1988 and they would have done about 400 shows since then. Val Steel was a diabetic who'd had toes removed from both feet. She still tapped with only about three toes left.

"The CCs went to nursing homes, retirement homes, even masonic lodges. It was good exercise – people don't see it's about health but it was about health." **Wendy Ogden** 

#### Men's Shed

In late 2008, a group of committed men came together to talk about setting up a men's shed in West Heidelberg – a place for blokes of all ages and backgrounds to come together to talk, and to build and fix stuff. These days, the shed supports hundreds of men, providing a safe and healthy space to connect and create.

"The shed is a fine example of locals finding and driving their own vision of what a healthy and caring community can look like, focusing on wellness rather than illness.' **Jim Pasinis** 

40 Years o BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH



## Community advocates

'You Victorians certainly know how to fight!'

"In the 1970s the Fraser government announced they were going to cut community funding. We used to work closely with the community on political campaigns, organising letter campaigns to Commonwealth and State MPs and departments. A Commonwealth bureaucrat came down with a suitcase full of letters and said 'I hope you don't think these letters have influenced our decision'. Well, we ran a very effective campaign in Victoria and they reinstated the funding. I got a postcard from a community health friend in NSW 'You Victorians certainly know how to fight!' I thought that was real recognition. We had the community connection that enabled us to have ordinary people writing to the Commonwealth saying 'we don't agree with you' whereas in other states they didn't have that close connection.

"It's very good for the community to know that it can influence decisions at the highest national level. The things that we did to enable the people of West Heidelberg to express themselves and take action did more for their self-esteem and health than anything else. Receiving a letter signed by the Prime Minister in response to a letter to him is significant – ordinary people can have an influence on what happens." **Bill Newton** 

"In the late '70s the school had 521 students – under the magic 525. They were asked to

adjust staff numbers which meant taking four of the most senior staff out; teachers that really wanted to be there. We had a public meeting and the suggestion was made to block the Minister for Education's phone – as one person hung up another would phone. We kept that going and wrote letters. John Cain, the local Member, rang and said the Minister would meet with a delegation provided we stopped the phone calls. We kept those teachers for a further 18 months." Wendy Ogden

**Geoff Smith** lived at the back of the Centre in Midway Street. He was wheelchair bound for the last 15 years of his life, which didn't stop him volunteering and being a fierce community advocate – if there was a problem, Geoff would take it on. Geoff led community programs on improving public housing, healthy school canteen projects and was a disability advocate for many locals. He was crucial in establishing the Men's Lunch that connected isolated men and linked them into the service. Geoff was often seen scouting the Centre for hungry staff to give them a meal too.

"We can't give people proper incomes, we can't give people proper housing but we can certainly work in ways to help people advocate for themselves and help them bring about some change in their lives, even if it's the slightest thing." Jim Pasinis "One of the things that seemed important to me was enabling the people of West Heidelberg to have things that people in wealthier suburbs take for granted. The people of West Heidelberg can ask for things too."

**Bill Newton** 

40 Years of BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH



## Women of West Heidelberg

'Women in the community have a strong voice'

"These were local mums. Everyone could get a meal from someone. If your electricity was cut off, they'd run a lead from next door."

Wendy Ogden

West Heidelberg women are wise, generous, committed to their community and powerful campaigners. Women such as Sr Francis, Mary Morgan, Beryl Burkett, Wendy Ogden and Betty Carter have been at the Centre's heart from the beginning.

"Nancy Spence was a local lady whose prime focus was on education. At that time we had the disadvantaged schools program and La Trobe High School sent a submission to the disadvantaged schools program describing West Heidelberg as a ghetto. Joan Kirner said she always remembers Nancy Spence saying 'Just because we're poor doesn't mean we don't love our children'. She was more than a housewife. She left an indelible mark on a former Premier.

"We had the support of the local matriarchs – Betty Carter who worked with Rhondda Johnson setting up a women's refuge in early 1980s. It was a new concept and the refuge still exists. Later Betty's daughter Amanda Carter, who's a four-time Paralympian, got involved. "The Women's Auxiliary was started in 1976 by Beryl Burkett; she was a local lady who was grateful for services she'd received as an asthmatic. The auxiliary raised funds for the Centre, ran an op shop in the old block of flats and organised social outings." Wendy Ogden

"There was a great woman, Sr Francis Baum who was on the Board for a long, long time and she was a great enabler. I think she perpetuated that philosophy of making sure you let people use the talents that they've got." **Bernie Geary** 

Sr Francis (Veronica) Baum is a West Heidelberg legend. Her connection dates back to 1958 when Frances, a young nun from the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, was shipped out to the St Pius X Primary School in West Heidelberg. Francis spent nine years as teacher in the fast growing community. "I had 90 Grade 2's in my class as a first year teacher." Francis spent another six years as Principal at St Pius, all before the Centre was established.

40 Years o BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH



 $Best\ friends-Margaret\ Gahagan,\ Betty\ Fiddes\ and\ Violet\ Janson$ 



## Women of West Heidelberg

Francis and her colleagues lived and worked in West Heidelberg which meant that they were teachers by day and community workers thereafter. "Providing support, guidance, care and sometimes a lift to a footy match was all part of the role." Francis' commitment to West Heidelberg and social justice never ended. She was a Board member for the legal service for 30 years and the Centre for 25 years, providing a voice for the local community with a keen eye to support those most disadvantaged.

"For four years the Women of West Heidelberg group has been raising money and funding ourselves for International Women's Day and it's been such a highlight on the Centre's program. This year we had 159 women come along; the year before about 130 and the year before that was about 80 – so it's growing! This year we had a focus on domestic violence and our guest speakers were Helen Riseborough [CEO of Women's Health in the North], Aunty Fay Carter [Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Elder] and Jenny Macklin [Federal Member for Jaga Jaga]." Wendy Ogden

"I started as a Community Health Nurse in West Heidelberg in 1983. The locals taught me early on of the power of community leadership and community knowledge. I worked alongside passionate and influential community members like Betty Carter and Betty Fiddes who just made things happen. Our first Diabetes Group meeting had 60 people attend. I didn't feel like the professional - the community were running everything and I was the support. We worked schools, in people's homes, in in neighbourhood houses. I attended funerals, went to court, delivered emergency relief - it was nursing and much more."

#### Meni Stefanovski

"The women of West Heidelberg have created a legacy, where women in the community have a strong voice that's heard and called upon."

Michael Geary

40 Years o BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH






40 Years of BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH







40 Years of BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH



John Cain – Open Day (1979)



#### Powerful friends

'The Board were all people that lived in West Heidelberg and they knew their community very well'

The centre has always had good friends and allies – community heroes, politicians, local businesspeople, workers, volunteers and clients.

"The Whitlam government was determined to change policy on health and social security. The associated reforms which led to the establishment of community health were driven by Dr Doug Everingham and Dr Moss Cass who were both former GPs and the Ministers for Health and The Environment respectively. They believed that community health was as important as Medibank in providing a comprehensive range of medical services which would be available to all members of the community." David McKenzie

"We knew everybody that was using the Centre because the community is quite small and the Centre was one of the focal points in those days. The Board were all people that lived in West Heidelberg and they knew their community very well. Some of those early members of the Board had been the ones that did the work to get the Centre up in the first place. Tom Rossell was the chair – he lived just down the road. Ron Brown was another pillar of the community. Mac Gregory was the Austin Hospital's nominee. He was a fantastic supporter of the Centre and the community of West Heidelberg." **Bill Newton** 

"I had a law practice in High St Preston and had been working on a casual basis at Fitzroy legal service, which was the community legal aid pioneer. The legal aid concept grew in intensity during those years of the Whitlam government. West Heidelberg had this community health service, and an ally of that was a legal advice service.

"Bill invited me to volunteer at West Heidelberg. We were all volunteers. We were seen as an interim emergency service; operating on a shoestring with no secretarial support and no facilities.

"I was elected as Member for Bundoora in April 1976 and retained an interest in the legal service. When I became Attorney General in 1982, we moved quickly to shore up and provide greater resources for legal aid.

"What's been achieved here over the years has been terrific. I remember three Ward councillors – Tom Rossell, Ron Haining and Harold Weinberg – were great advocates for the place." John Cain "Moss Cass put it well. He didn't see why communities should be deprived of the best health services possible just because they happened to be wealthy. Community based services are obviously the best way to deliver health services and the fact that they are focussed on disadvantaged areas is just bad luck for everybody else."

Bill Newton



Ron Haining and Brian Howe (1984)



#### Powerful friends

"Peter Staples, the local member for Jaga Jaga and Minister for Employment in the Hawke government, wanted to increase employment opportunities for young people in the area. He hosted the Poverty Summit seminar series in 1985, which was opened by Bob Hawke. They talked about skilling and getting job ready. Programs like the ZAP theatre, gardening groups and furniture removal were started." Wendy Ogden

"In my role as Children's Commissioner, I think that there is a great capacity for community health to get involved in child protection issues and bring child protection into the community in a much less fearsome way." Bernie Geary

"Vin Heffernan, the State member for Ivanhoe and Minister for Youth affairs in the Kennett government, had been mayor of Heidelberg and had a keen interest in the Centre. He and John Siddons were both local businessmen and were instrumental in establishing programs around disenfranchised young people in the area. John Siddons went on to become an independent senator. Vin helped us secure a grant to fund the Berkana centre which increased the capacity to support young homeless.

"Craig Langdon, the member for Ivanhoe and current mayor of Banyule, helped get the Centre put onto the Department of Health's capital works list for the new building." Jim Pasinis

"The Victorian approach was different due to the Victorian Hospitals and Charities Act 1958 which provided for hospitals and health services to have government funding but be self-governing. When the community health program started they could be funded by the Health Department but they all became independent local organisations. In NSW they were all part of the Health Department.

"In Victoria the community health centres all battled to remain local employees employed by local agencies. In NSW the big battle was to become public servants – they never established the close community connections." **Bill Newton** 

40 Years of BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH





Mariene, Ros, Gay, Carole, Lou and Jacqui – Diamond Valley Community Centre staff (1992)

# West Heidelberg and Diamond Valley merge

'Our main objective had to be to look after the people who needed our services most'

"It is now up to all of us to work together to ensure it is successful in benefitting the entire community."

Ron Haining

"The Community Health Centre will in the foreseeable future amalgamate with the Diamond Valley Community Health Centre; not because it is something that we set out to do, but because those that control the purse strings have decreed that is shall be so. Given that this will happen it is now up to all of us to work together to ensure it is successful in benefitting the entire community."

#### Ron Haining, President's Report, West Heidelberg Community Health Centre 1995 Annual Report

"In 1995, when Jeff Kennett became Premier, local governments amalgamated and the Shire of Diamond Valley amalgamated with the City of Heidelberg to form Banyule. Marie Tehan, the Minister for Health at the time, made a decision that there should be one community health centre per local government area, so we went ahead and merged.

"It was hard to make sense of how the merger would work considering the different cultures at the two centres. There were pockets of disadvantage within the northern part of the new municipality however it was hidden. In comparison West Heidelberg, disadvantage and hardship, was there for all to see. We initially tried to replicate the West Heidelberg model in Greensborough. It didn't work as the difference between the two centres was palpable. It took time but eventually we got there, and this is the result." Jim Pasinis

"Diamond Valley Health Centre started round about 1990, which is quite a while after the establishment of the West Heidelberg Centre. That grew and developed and, with the amalgamation of the municipalities, Diamond Valley became part of that new Banyule Centre and we amalgamated.

"What was always in my mind, although I came from that Diamond Valley area which was more middle class economically, was that our main objective had to be to look after the people who needed our services most and I think that spirit's prevailed." David McKenzie







GP of the Year Award 2014

# Tackling challenges

'In this community, people don't put their heads in the sand'

"The Board took a courageous step in setting up the needle syringe program at a time when Victorian public opinion was opposed to needle exchange."

Jim Pasinis

"AIDS was a controversial topic in the late '80s. We had a guest speaker from Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital come in to talk about IV drug use and AIDS and blood borne infections. The people there were really interested in the talk and agreed that we should be proactive and include needle exchange as part of our health education work. As a result, the Board agreed to introduce disposal bins in centre toilets and a needle exchange program which was one of the first in Australia." Wendy Ogden

"All the data coming up around the world was that the major danger entry point was through injecting users. In the US 85% of injecting drug users were HIV or Hep C positive. Those 85% are citizens in the community and they do normal things in the community. In Scotland, where they were the first to introduce needle exchange, the percentage of infected injecting users was something like 0.1%.

"The Board took a courageous step in setting up the needle syringe program at a time when Victorian public opinion was opposed to needle exchange. It was all about 'not in my backyard'. In this community, people don't put their heads in the sand – there's acceptance and a willingness to do something about contentious issues. They say it takes a community to raise a child but it also takes a community to realise its problems and act on it. At that time there was some confusion around the possession of drug paraphernalia, so informal arrangements with the local police were made that allowed access.

"Down the track we've broadened our drug and alcohol program's catchment to Whittlesea and Nillumbik and we've continued to provide this valuable program. All our GPs are pharmacotherapy trained – as all GPs should be in communities." **Jim Pasinis** 

"We had a student in the medical practice and at the end of her four weeks she said she'd changed her perceptions completely. She was contemplating becoming a pharmacotherapy provider because she's seen how much the client responds to the GP and the outcomes the GPs get for the clients." **Rose Deleo** 

"It's been my privilege to work and learn from many committed, passionate and inspiring colleagues. Over the years I've seen the growth of services to the elderly, development of needle syringe programs and pharmacotherapy programs. I'm most proud of the development of the GP clinic that sees thousands of clients every month. It's a truly great service that values its community, isn't afraid to take on the most disadvantaged and employs good people – staff with the right philosophy and values makes all the difference." Meni Stefanovski



## Local characters and volunteers

'Spectromatic!'

"People in West Heidelberg have each other's back. We look after our own."

Michael Hollman Snr

**Graeme Engellener** moved with his mum, stepfather and six brothers and sisters to Midway Street, West Heidelberg when he was nine. He attended Olympic Village Primary School and it was here that Graeme's love for words and poetry started.

Graeme worked on the PUSH program doing odds jobs in the community and getting a sixer on a Friday. "It was great fun with Mick Mulvahill, Julian and Rob Ware – I called him Lee Majors the \$6 Million Dollar Man." Nowadays, Graeme is famous in the community for his made-up words and his poetry: "I love it when someone says to me it's a spectromatic day or looks like liquidlodian storms today. The words are getting around."

Michael Hollman Snr's connection with West Heidelberg dates back to the 1960s when his father set up a weaving mill business in the industrial estate. Michael's family worked in West Heidelberg for over 30 years and Michael moved in to the area in 1979. The family's German background meant both Michael and his Dad had a special connection with Heidelberg. Michael stayed connected to the Centre with his family over the years and, in later years, strengthened his connection volunteering as a bus driver, at the Men's Lunch, at the Olympic Village 50th celebration and in any way to lend a hand: "Whenever I pop in I'll get a listening ear – a client, a manager, the CEO or a worker. The Centre is like a family and I feel at home in this place."

Nan Caple is a Board Member of the local Bendigo Bank. In 2008 Nan and others from the bank partnered with the Centre to deliver a program to young people in West Heidelberg, Youth Foundation 3081: "Life has been tough for many West Heidelberg community members, but with difficult journeys comes resilience and connections and neighbourliness in abundance. The sense of support for and from people within this community is very strong and special. Banyule Community Health is a wonderful centre of service for the West Heidelberg community. It is a hub of goodness with great people striving to serve and add value to the local community."

40 Years o BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH



## Local characters and volunteers

'Volunteers are the backbone of our agency and our community'

Stan Doughty grew up in Port Melbourne and spent over a decade in the Corps as a musician, playing the xylophone, the bugle and the guard drum. He's known to pull out his harmonica these days too. Stan ended up in West Heidelberg in 2006 and, in 2009, he became guite unwell. It was at this time he made his first connection with the Centre, when he started to see an outreach nurse. Sharon. Sharon identified Stan's interest in a range of activities and he was soon linked into the Choir, the Men's Lunch and other community based activities: "Sharon was like an angel. She changed my life. I walk every day from home to the Centre. In the past I would just stay home all day. I feel like part of the family at the Centre, it's got a family atmosphere here."

"We had such good connections with the community that they were always saying 'What about this? What about that? Why can't we take people to the market?'" **Bill Newton** 

The Centre has around 60 volunteers who provide an essential service in keeping the community

connected and improving health. Volunteers bring a wide range of skills and life experience – some have lived with conditions such as problem gambling, others are diehard locals. Wherever they came from, all of the Centre volunteers say that they gain a great deal of personal satisfaction from volunteering and are glad to be part of the Centre community.

"Volunteers are the backbone of our agency and our community. We must never underestimate their value to creating a healthy and happy community. Some people choose to volunteer and care for the community. This is as valuable, or possibly more valuable, than paid employment." Jim Pasinis

"Billy King worked at VATMI, the disability service provider. He would come in every day after work and tell us how hard he's worked. We gave him a volunteers badge – he helped us out posting the mail. When he turned 21 all the staff chipped in and got him a bike." Wendy Ogden



## Local characters and volunteers

The Gamblers Help Peer Connection Program was started by the Centre as a small community education activity in 2006, with the aim of linking problem gamblers together with ex-gamblers who had successfully managed their issue and to offer confidential telephone peer support. The program has grown in leaps and bounds and, at the 2011 Volunteer Awards Ceremony, was acknowledged with a Special Commendation Award from the Minister for Health.

New volunteering program 3081 Angels highlights the capacity of community members to give of their time, contacts and knowledge to support families struggling with the demands of a new baby. It provides a rewarding volunteering experience for a host of new volunteers for the Centre. At 2015 Volunteer Week celebrations, 3081 Angels volunteer Suzanne Crellin commented "the celebration was a good reminder of the many positive things that happen in our community."

"We shouldn't underestimate the value that volunteers have on the health of our community. Volunteering saves the community money, but more importantly provides some of the most telling and important services in our local community. The Centre is blessed with some of the most dedicated people I have ever met." Jim Pasinis

> 40 Years of BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH

Left: Beryl Burkett (1979)



 $\label{eq:staff} Staff and community-celebrating the announcement of funding for $$ the new building (May 2004)$ the new building$ 



## Campaign for a new building

'We wanted something that the community could be proud of'

"When I started working here it was in an old building on the same site. I remember being up in the second building upstairs. If it was cold weather the heaters would take about three days to heat up so by Wednesday it would be hot and by Friday you couldn't breathe in your office.

"I remember the desperate need for offices and space. Someone would go on holidays and come back to their room being cut in two, or a toilet would be taken out and that would become a photocopy room. The space wasn't adequate for the services. But remarkably the staff and the community made do with what they had. And in many ways that was a true West Heidelberg approach to things, we'll make do but we are going to make a bit of noise and advocate for ourselves because we deserve better." Michael Geary

"I just laid the foundation and it rolled along on its own. The campaign was over 10 years talking to politicians about the need for a new facility. We wanted something that the community could be proud of. We were told every year that we'd be on the capital improvement list – that was for quite a few years." Jim Pasinis

"It would have been opportune to report to members that the service is currently waiting to move into its new premises but, alas, all efforts to ensure that this happened were to no avail. As happened last year the Banyule Community Health Service was thwarted at the eleventh hour." Denis Swift, President's Report, Banyule Community Health Service 2001 Annual Report

"I remember the day there was an announcement of us receiving, I think it was, 12 million dollars to build this building. That was a special time for the staff and the community to be truly acknowledged by the state that we were deserving of a purpose built facility for the health of this community." Michael Geary

The announcement of funding for the West Heidelberg redevelopment came in May 2004. Two years of construction led to services being offered from portables, rented houses, disused office blocks and shop fronts.

"We were in a dingy old building for a year or two but we could look over the road and watch Xanadu being built." **Paul McGuire** 

On 26 September 2007 the doors opened to the new Banyule Community Health, West Heidelberg Centre – flush with five medical suites, an eight chair dental clinic, community rooms and a wide range of specialist areas.

"With the new building we expanded all our areas. People were enthused and invigorated and wanted to take on new things. The place they were working gave them a sense of pride. People sought new opportunities and new areas of funding.

"There was also a significant cultural shift. It was more collaborative. Our policies reflected staff as valued resources and acknowledged that our reputation depended on the work they did. The real beneficiaries were our clients.

"This building was not about creating a health facility but a community facility that people saw as an extension of their own homes – people come for a coffee, kids come and do their homework.

"You can gauge the acceptability of a facility by the amount of graffiti it has on its walls. People graffiti and vandalise their own area – it's about acceptance or non-acceptance within their own community. There's no graffiti here." **Jim Pasinis** 

about creating a health facility but a community facility that people saw as an extension of their own homes."

"This building was not

Jim Pasinis



# Community work

'I have seen two generations of a very close-knit community that was very loyal to us'

"It was a community that taught me so much and actually changed the way I worked forever."

#### Maureen Fanning

"The community health nurses were fantastic. They were the most wonderful profession you could think of, because they had their own professional knowledge around the health system, around the health services. They were out there all the time. I can remember seeing them get through windows in relation to the safety of people. That sort of stuff – it's fantastic." **Bernie Geary** 

"When I was asked to be a Community Health Nurse (a role I had never heard of before) in the early 1970s at West Heidelberg Community Health Centre, my awareness of life and issues faced by people was sadly lacking. I had grown up five kilometres away in middle class North Balwyn and had no understanding that people so close were facing issues such as poverty, ill-health and unemployment on a daily basis.

"In my roles since as a health administrator and as a public speaker, I always tell the story of my experiences in West Heidelberg. I tell the story of working with 'wagon wheel' kids, who were given \$5 for the day, and the fish 'n' chip shop that opened at 7am. I tell the story of finding only a packet of sugar in the cupboard, on a Friday afternoon, visiting a woman with seven children, one who was very sick. I speak with passion about Gough Whitlam's social change and the story of the Olympic Village.

"My whole life has been shaped by my experience in West Heidelberg, and those days of working with Bernie Geary, John Cain, Helen Szoke and Bill Newton. What a privilege." **Marg Isom** 

"I got a job as a Community Health Nurse in 1978. I really had no idea what a Community Health Nurse did but I was very fortunate that I had Marg Isom there. I was able to learn from her. "Little did I know that this would be a major change in my life. My career from then on was always in community based organisations. I never went back to hospital nursing.

"West Heidelberg Community Centre was a wonderful environment to work in, everyone had similar goals and objectives and everyone considered that they worked for the community of West Heidelberg. And what a community it was, amazing people struggling to make do, and most just wanted to see their children get an education and get a better life than they had. It was a community that taught me so much and actually changed the way I worked forever.

"I have wonderful memories of my time at West Heidelberg and the supportive environment of working with others who shared the same ideals and dreams for the community." **Maureen Fanning** 

"I arrived in May 1991 and I was really thrown in the deep end doing things I knew nothing about but feeling incredibly supported by all the people I worked with.

"Sharleen Cook and I have seen two generations of a very close-knit community that was very loyal to us as an organisation and also as staff members. Between us we have nearly 50 years of service here. We always felt looked after by the community.

"Our clients have extended a lot of kindness to me – an Iranian family took a photo to send home to their family so that they could pray for me. I have elderly ladies praying for me daily in several different countries around the world.

"The community looked after us and we looked after the community. We've never really lost that aspect. There's a great ownership by the community of this organisation." **Elischka Sageman** 





Girls at Olympic Village School garden (2013)

## New country, new home

'All of us who are not of Aboriginal descent are new Australians'

Abdalla Ahmed

"In recent years there's been a big influx of people who came from Somalia who've settled in this area. All of us who are not of Aboriginal descent are new Australians, even those who can trace themselves right back to the early days." **David McKenzie** 

Yusuf Omar, like many Somalis, fled his homeland as a result of the prolonged civil war that still ravages his country. As a writer and a poet it was unsafe for Yusuf to return home so, after moving through Sudan and Malaysia, Yusuf got to Australia as an asylum seeker. After two harrowing years in detention in Maribyrnong he connected with friends and family in West Heidelberg in 2001. He studied at La Trobe University and now has a Masters in educational leadership and PhD in refugee studies, specialising in Somali youth. Yusuf works at the Centre as a coordinator for the Somali Men's Group: "Somali men feel disempowered and forgotten, but Banyule Community Health is important for them. This is because the Centre provides some essential services which respond to their needs, such as health and wellbeing, emotional support and social connection."

Amina Hussein's last memories of Somalia: "Listening to the sounds of war. Seeing the impact of war. They are unthinkable. No one should have to endure that." Amina has two degrees, speaks four languages and, before the Somali civil war, was married and had a comfortable life. Amina arrived in Australia two and a half years after being displaced by war. She settled in West Heidelberg and got back into study and work, all while raising her daughter Tahani and caring for her mother. Amina has been employed at the Centre since 2002 as a health worker with expertise on resettlement and on women's reproductive health: "The Centre is a beautiful service for Somali people – it provides everything they need – health, social, legal and education."

"Abdalla Ahmed was one of the first Somalis into Australia and, being a major resettlement sponsor, he's largely responsible for the creation of a Somali diaspora in West Heidelberg." Jim Pasinis

"The community here is very happy. The elders have the time to learn the language. There's a lot of woman using the Centre and receiving education here. Every part of the building, they are using. They feel welcome here.

"In this country, we are all the same, we are all Australian. We have to walk side by side." Abdalla Ahmed

"I've had profound lessons going into people's homes and learning about their culture. It takes away fear and prejudice because you realise that everybody fundamentally wants the same things in life – to feed their children, to be safe, to not have bombs dropped on their heads.

"I work with are people who have come out on certain visas and their visas have expired. They cannot go back; they have no income, nowhere to live, they can't access services – they fall through every crack. If those people aren't the most vulnerable in our community I don't know who is.

"Most of the Iranian families I deal with came through Christmas Island. One said, 'I had no idea we'd be locked up, because we have done nothing wrong.' These are all people wanting the same things as us – working hard to get jobs to provide for their families and live in harmony in this community." **Elischka Sageman** 



## Best of the best 2014

Health Service of the Year and GP Service of the Year

"We were awarded the Primary Health Service of the Year at the Victorian Public Healthcare Awards in October 2014. It was a long time coming and it's well deserved.

"The icing on the cake was receiving the inaugural General Practice Award. We've always said that doctors should operate in community health, but only a few have GPs. We've achieved this acknowledgement." Jim Pasinis

At the awards ceremony, this is what they said about the Centre:

"... a longstanding culture of working with a range of health professionals to provide comprehensive healthcare to those members of the community who are most in need.

"The practice's work in the fields of mental health and paediatric care is particularly noteworthy. The practice also has a strong focus on caring for people with alcohol and other drug problems and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"... a clear commitment to providing comprehensive and integrated primary care to the people of northern Melbourne." Ceremony Program, Victorian Minister for Health General Practice Awards 2014

"We were always aware that we were doing great work and we were meeting the needs of our community. We all knew that, but it's important for our peers to know that too. For an organisation of our size to achieve this recognition – it's a significant achievement and it's a reflection of where we are and where we've come from." **John Ferraro** 

"My involvement in community health has been long and it's something that I truly believe in because it offers people help and it's one shop, one stop. You can come to the doctors and if the doctors recognise there is something else wrong that they can't fix they can refer you on to the mental health team or social work or financial counselling." Wendy Ogden

"Last year at our Annual General Meeting, we'd just been awarded Health Service of the year by the State Minister and we won inaugural GP Practice of the Year and we were feeling pretty good about ourselves. I remember Jim telling our community that at our Annual General Meeting. He was crowing about how good we were and one of our women put up her hand and said 'What about our bus? You took our bus off us.' " Michael Geary

"Dr Doug Everingham who'd been a GP and was the Minister for Health in the Whitlam government and Dr Moss Cass who'd been interested in the Trade Union Clinic in West Melbourne were both very interested in the concept of community health. And that's why today, here, we provide a GP service, and Everingham and Cass hoped that it would develop universally, all over Victoria, all over the Commonwealth and maybe one day it will. I hope it will." David McKenzie

"You're working here because you really love being a doctor and practising what you've been taught and caring for the unwell. If you want to make money you're not in the right place."

Rose Deleo

Left: A happy playgroup participant (2014)

40 Years of

BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH



Aboriginal Health Team – Sharyn Lovett, Paula Russell and Madison Connors



"The way [the Centre] go about connecting with our local mob is the right way. Sitting back and listening is good."

Director, Victorian Aboriginal Health Service

## Aboriginal connections

'A long-term commitment to closing the gap'

From first steps of flying the flag, promoting artwork and building an indigenous garden, the Centre has been on a journey, guided by the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. This journey is a long-term commitment to connect and to help close the gap in indigenous health and wellbeing.

In 2012, the Aboriginal health team was formed to strengthen the Centre's relationship with the local Aboriginal community and regional Aboriginal controlled organisations.

Madison Connors, who is a Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung woman, answered the call for an Aboriginal health worker traineeship at the Centre. By her own admission she was a bit aimless at the time and thought she would 'give it a go'. Three years on, Madison has clear career goals and is close to completing a double degree in Arts and Health Sciences at La Trobe University. Madison is still in the Aboriginal Health Team working closely with local Aboriginal people to deliver a range of community based projects. "I worked out pretty quickly that I loved working in the community and it inspired me to get back into study. I wanted to learn more about my community and my culture."

Paula Russell volunteered to run the Aboriginal playgroup in 2012 and completed a Certificate 4 in Allied Health Assistance after successfully applying to do the traineeship at the Centre. Paula said it has led to opportunities that she didn't have before and also shown her children the benefit of learning and working. She is now a Board member for a women's service, sits on the Committee of Barbarrbunin Creek gathering place and is a lead member of the Aboriginal Health Team.

"The Aboriginal Health Team has ensured the Centre's services are more than 'flags and paintings'." **Jim Pasinis** 





The Keynote Singers Choir (2013)

"I have grown up in West Heidelberg and always felt it was a community that is protective of each other, which makes me protective of it."

Leanne Tutin

## More than a job

'They stay because they love their work and they love their workplace'

Leanne Tutin has West Heidelberg in her DNA. She attended Olympic Village Primary School and Heidelberg High School. Leanne was from a family of eight children, who all attended the Centre from when it was located at the flats in Morobe Street. "My local doctor was Dr Jennie Mills."

Leanne has worked at the Centre since she was 18, starting as a Medicare Clerk and is now on the Executive Management Team. "The staff I work with are committed and dedicated to helping our clients and share the same passion and values I do which makes my job very rewarding."

"I'm here for selfish reasons. I can make my own hours, there's a convivial atmosphere. It's interesting work with high needs clients. I've been in community health for such a long time I couldn't work anywhere else!" **Paul McGuire** 

"The organisation has a very low turnover of our health professionals. They're happy to be here and they have a very professional attitude to their work. It's a very happy place." **David McKenzie** 

Michelle Baker grew up in Morobe Street, a stone's throw from the Centre. She remembers fondly the Open Days, the BMX track and the colourful characters around West Heidelberg and the Centre. Michelle has held every role in the administration team over a 27 year career with the Centre and is now the team leader, overseeing the operations of nearly 200 staff and multiple sites. Michelle's local knowledge ensures she is an irreplaceable asset for the service. "It's more than a job – I know everyone and they know me – I still feel part of this community. I feel proud of Banyule Community Health and I know the locals are proud of it too."

"Being community health it's really family. Not only is the organisation family-oriented I think a lot of the clients need the sort of direction you give your own kids.

"Our clients come first and we respect clients for who they are. We have a great bunch of doctors. GPs working in community health aren't GPs looking for money. You're working here because you really love being a doctor and practising what you've been taught and caring for the unwell. If you want to make money you're not in the right place.

"We look at the patient holistically – they're not just looked at by the GP. I'm there with the nurses co-ordinating their care." **Rose Deleo** 

**Emel Akcay** joined the Centre in 1998 when the Gamblers Help Program was in its infancy and known as Break-Even Northern. Her first task as a community educator was to help coordinate a

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## More than a job

regional community forum – the impacts and harms of gambling within the community were relatively unknown at the time. "The community owned and community driven focus of community health makes this a special place to come to work every day".

"I'm a cog in the wheel here in a good way. It's not just a medical service. It's a dynamic onestop-shop." **Neil Cameron** 

Pauline Courtney has worked as a social worker with the Centre for 10 years and remembers with affection her first office in the old house in Catalina Street. Pauline's first roles included running the Somali Men's Group and as a carer support worker. "I was, and continue to be blown away with the commitment, the love and the resilience of carers. I feel privileged to walk alongside carers as they manage life's toughest hurdles." Pauline currently leads the pediatric team and brings her commitment to dignity and wisdom to a team working with vulnerable children and their families.

"One of the things that I've found, particularly in working here in West Heidelberg and Banyule Community Health, is people fall in love with the community and they fall in love with their job and they don't stay because they are incredibly well paid, they stay because they love their work and they love their workplace too." Michael Geary

**Rhonda Nelson** lived, worked and studied in Banyule for 40 years before she started working at the Centre in 2003. "It was a service I closely observed and respected before working here. Rhonda was employed as the Manager of Counselling Services and her role has grown to oversee significant development of the mental health, drug and alcohol and gamblers help services. "I love working for an organisation that 40 years ago had such strong and visionary community leaders committed to social justice."

"My career has spanned 25 years, 30 years in community health. I've met some great people; people that have had a profound impact on me as a person and as a CEO. I think the Board of Directors are fantastic. They've brought a different level of understanding about this organisation. We are just one cog in the wheel but we are an important cog and if you are a good CEO you leave a bit of yourself in an organisation. I will walk into the sunset knowing full well that this organisation has been extremely good to me." Jim Pasinis

"I was an accidental CEO. I wasn't very good at the admin stuff. I just continued being a youth worker – I was good at representing people and Wendy Ogden was a great support." Bernie Geary

"I couldn't tell you how many different funding streams we have; how many different client management systems; how many different rules. Compare our resources now to 20 years ago – now we need to adapt to the times. The challenge for us is 'How do we still have an impact in community, still listen to community and respond to what they say?'" **Michael Geary** 

"I think they've managed to keep the faith here, whereas some of the community health agencies have been absorbed into huge corporate entities. When I come in here I think, 'Oh yes – it's still going on. It's doing what we thought we were trying to do.'" **Bill Newton** 

> 40 Years of BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH

Left: Marg Isom (glasses) and local children (1979)







#### *the* CENTRE







