

# 2022 Quality Account



**Banyule  
Community  
Health**

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# WELCOME

2021/2022 will be remembered as one of our most significant years.

As we navigate challenging times, we applaud our staff and volunteers who continue to demonstrate their agility and professionalism. It has been inspiring to see Banyule Community Health always finding a way to best respond to community need. Our COVID-19 response teams have been outstanding in their support to our community. Testing, vaccinations, community support, and pathways support to COVID-19 positive community members have become a crucial part of our service arm throughout the pandemic.

Our desire to strengthen our relationships with First Nations communities has been a key part of our work in 2022. Under the guidance of First Nations expert Karen Milward, we have worked with Reconciliation Australia, local First Nations

leaders and community to develop our first Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). We are planning a launch and you will be observing significant activation of the plan.

We thank our funders and partners for their ongoing support. The opportunity to deliver our *Purpose – Address inequity. Building healthy, inclusive, and just communities* is supported by a range of partnerships. We are proud to work in such crucial areas of social policy and bring our experience and values to new programs. We look forward to developments in the NDIS, mental health and Community Hospitals, as well as new ways of addressing the growing health and welfare pressures in our communities.

We would like to thank our Board of Directors who provide such astute leadership for Banyule Community

Health. This year we acknowledged the retirement of Peter Ogden and Anita Brown who provided many years of stewardship. We also farewell former Board Chair, Chris Deakin who finishes her term as a community elected Director at this coming AGM. We are fortunate to have a highly skilled and engaged governance group making significant contributions to our community.

Finally, a big thank you to our community who continue to help shape our work. Our services continually evolve based on your feedback, needs and lived experience.



Michael Smith  
Board Chair

Mick Geary  
Chief Executive Officer

We Welcome Everyone who walks in our door - Our communities are diverse in cultures, beliefs, abilities, bodies, sexualities, ages, migration status and genders.

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the lands where we provide our services and pay our respects to Elders and leaders past, present and emerging.

**Banyule Community Health**  
**5 CEOs, 1975 - 2022**



# VOLUNTEERS

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A 3081 ANGEL



### 3081 Angels have distributed (2021-2022)

- 88 prams
- 80 cots and bassinets
- 177 bedding packs
- 39,500 items of clothing
- 82 car seats
- 2,000 nappies

# VOLUNTEERS

**9.00 am** Volunteers arrive at Rosanna Baptist Church bringing in bags of donated clothes and linen that they have washed at home. The more dedicated have ironed them as well!

**9.30 am** The coordinator goes through the referrals with the 10 volunteers who are on deck today. She has been talking with 11 families this week finding out what they need, the sizing of clothes and delivery details.

**10.00 am** Working in pairs, volunteers choose what is needed for clients today. Most volunteers have been with the Angels for five years. With their experience they take great care to match the right items to the right people.

In the garage, prams, cots and car seats are being checked by a volunteer to make sure they are safe.

Someone authorised to sign-off that baby equipment meets Australian Standards visits the Angels regularly. She has already approved some of the cots in the garage and pops in again today to inspect the car seats. Other volunteers will take the car seats home for cleaning.

Two delivery teams head out – the teams include a driver and at least one woman volunteer. Most of our clients are highly vulnerable women. To help them feel safe, we always make sure that one of the delivery team is female. Before deliveries start, a quick stop is made by one of our team at the Mall pharmacy to collect baby formula.

Once the volunteers are organised for the day, the coordinator returns to calling clients in preparation for the days ahead.

The door opens and closes all morning as donors arrive with prams, clothes, toys and all manner of items. They are greeted

with a warm smile and many thanks by our Angels. With so many orders to fill this morning, donated goods are stored in our holding area. They will be sorted, cleaned and processed later in the day.

**11.00 am** Morning tea time. The drivers have returned and one of the volunteers has baked scones with jam and cream. With a shared commitment to supporting people in crisis, morning tea is a very chatty and social time. Today, we also discuss our stall at a community festival and hear the good news that a grant application was successful.

**11.30 am** Back to work, sorting donations and making clothing and bedding packs to stock shelves ready for delivery.

**1.00 pm** The Angels finish for the day and take home bags of washing, a load of goods to share with a local Op Shop and some dolls that need dressing.

## Some of our clients today

- An asylum seeker recently had her baby prematurely. Although still in Mercy Special Care, the family are preparing for her homecoming. They need clothes, linen and a pram. Clothes, shoes and toys are needed by a family of six.
- A teenage mum needs everything for her baby who was born yesterday.

## Referrals for today

Agencies who have referred clients for today include Mercy Hospital, the Aboriginal Women's Refuge, Maternal & Child Health Nurses from Banyule City Council, a supported playgroup, Orange Door, Berry Street, Kids First and the Lighthouse Foundation.

# HOLISTIC AND RESPONSIVE SERVICES





## PAIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Every year, Banyule Community Health offers staff the opportunity to implement an idea or project that will support our community in new and innovative ways. Awarded by the Board of Directors, the Francis Baum Fellowship is a legacy of Sister Francis Baum, who for decades, listened to and worked with, the community to bring about change. In 2021-2022, the fellowship provided for development and implementation of an inter-disciplinary program named the Pain Management Group.

Banyule Community Health recognises that an increasing number of the community experience persistent pain (also called chronic pain). The increase is a result of an ageing population that are

living longer with chronic and complex health conditions. The Pain Management Group was a program informed by research that has changed the way that persistent pain is understood and managed.

An inter-disciplinary team worked with a group of clients for 12, three-hour sessions, provided over six weeks. The team consisted of Physiotherapists, Counsellors, Occupational Therapists, and Dietitians. The program helped clients to reduce pain and pain medications, reduce fear and stress, improve movement and mood, and increase their confidence to self-manage and reduce their own pain.

### Josephine

I have a better understanding of how chronic and persistent pain works and the type of pain I have. I've learnt not to be afraid of my pain. I know now to ask myself if my pain is warning me of danger to my body or is it just something that I am feeling and can deal with? It is OK to feel the pain, it isn't going to go away but it doesn't need to interfere with my life.

Learning about pain has made me more confident to question and do my own research when planning with my health care professionals. I have every right to question what we are doing because it is my health and I know my pain. There are still a lot of out-dated ideas out there.

I have a much better quality of life because I understand my pain and manage it so that it doesn't dictate what I can and can't do.

### Michelle

Every day, I feared the pain when I walked up and down the stairs at home, so I avoided them. Now, the anxiety has gone even though the pain is still there. I know that my pain is not doing me any harm and that the stairs are good exercise for me. The clinic taught me how to change my mind-set and now I don't avoid them.

Each member of the group has taught me something. When you are the only one talking with a health professional, you can pick and choose what you want to hear. When you are part of a group, these points are talked about again and hearing it in different ways helped me to accept some things.

My attitude to pain is different now and I accept it. I was very uncomfortable talking to people about it because I felt like a broken record repeating myself all the time.

# LEADING AND INFLUENCING WITH PURPOSE

*Address inequity by building healthy, inclusive and just communities*

## ADVOCACY

Banyule Community Health advocates in many ways to bring about positive change for the communities that we serve. Health providers advocate daily for individual clients, staff report on service needs at committees, whilst government inquiries and the community participate at all levels of the agency. At Banyule Community Health, people with lived experience are a valuable part of our workforce and community members have a voice in service design and delivery.

### Investigation into Complaint Handling in the Victorian Social Housing Sector

The legal service and the occupational therapy team worked together making submissions to the Victorian Ombudsman about delays in modifying public and community housing for people with disabilities.

The Principal Lawyer of the West Heidelberg Community Legal was invited to contribute to a short film to launch the report. Click on the link (2.16 min) to hear her comment on the role of the Ombudsman in supporting vulnerable tenants.

<https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/our-impact/news/social-housing-renters-failed-by-poor-complaint-handling-systems-ombudsman-says/>

### Social Housing Regulation Review

Understanding the connection between safe and secure housing and health outcomes, the legal and health service teams also jointly submitted to the Social Housing Regulation Review. The

submission stressed the importance of strengthening housing rights for public and community housing tenants.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PLAN

Banyule Community Health launched the Diversity and Inclusion Plan at the Annual General meeting in November 2021. The plan commits to bringing about positive change for the First Nation communities and the LGBTIQ+ communities. We use our Diversity and Inclusion plan as an advocacy and engagement tool. It describes what can and will be done, to improve the experience of different communities both at Banyule Community Health and also in the wider community.

### Reconciliation Action Plan

Developed under the guidance of Yorta Yorta woman Karen Milward, Banyule Community Health developed a Reconciliation Action Plan. It is currently waiting to be endorsed by Reconciliation Australia. We are at a critical time in Australian history with federal government plans to hold a referendum to ensure an Indigenous voice to parliament, in addition to the Victorian Treaty with First Nations people. Our Reconciliation Action Plan contributes to these federal and state commitments by working locally for a shared Australian identity. Banyule Community Health recognises the 'wrongs of the past' and the impact experienced by the local First Nations community for generations. The Reconciliation Action Plan describes how we will develop opportunities for First Nations people, built on trust and respect and free from racism.

## LGBTIQ+ Community

To improve the health and wellbeing of the LGBTIQ+ community, Banyule Community Health is critically evaluating its own practice to become a culturally safe and inclusive service. Organisational systems are being improved according to Rainbow Tick standards.

### Rainbow Shapers & Shakers Working Group

#### Tommy

As a Social Worker in the Diversity and Inclusion team, I have been working to improve the cultural safety of Banyule Community Health for the LGBTIQ+ community. Working closely with the community, I understand that services need to be welcoming and accepting of who they are.

We have relationships and systems in place to enable us to actively listen, acknowledge and engage with the LGBTIQ+ community to provide a safe service. Better outcomes are possible when we understand the impact of discrimination on the LGBTIQ+ community. Banyule Community Health has developed resources and our whole workforce is currently undertaking training on how to create a culturally safe and inclusive service. These are just some of the things that we are doing to make sure Banyule Community Health is a service that is responsive and respectful of everyone's gender and sexual identity.



# RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

## TRANSITIONING TO LIFE AFTER COVID

### Head to Health

Banyule Community Health is a hub for the Head to Health stepped care mental health program. It supports individuals with mental health needs, their families and carers. When a client's mental health needs change, they can 'step' into different levels of care without having to change services. Psychologists, social workers, mental health nurses, peer support and care coordinators work together as a team to provide clients with seamless and coordinated support. In a partnership with the Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network, staff work with GPs and other relevant healthcare providers to meet the increasing demand for mental health services, brought about by COVID-19.

#### MEI

In early 2022, Mei called Head to Health with symptoms of anxiety and depression. These symptoms were not new to her as she had stopped work due to an injury just before COVID began. Mei was also the main carer for her disabled aunt. Although the adjustment to unemployment was difficult, Mei said her symptoms had worsened during the two years of restrictions. Mei went on a waiting list for counselling and the nurse provided ongoing support.

*"My initial contact was with the nurse on the phone. After that she called me weekly and the conversations were like lifelines."*

As Mei watched other people return to their work and social lives, she became more socially withdrawn with memory and concentration difficulties. Lockdown had been tough because her usual activities and therapies had been put on hold. In addition, Mei's aunt required longer periods of care because her condition had deteriorated over the past two years. Although her family helped where they could, Mei felt that they did not understand the effect on her mental health.

*"I had self-doubt and was not coping with the changes. My lack of confidence was affecting daily decision making. Many strategies were used to help me get 'unstuck,' so that I could cope until I saw a counsellor."*

Shortly afterwards, Mei started 12 sessions of counselling. Like many people, Mei's anxiety and depression had increased during extended periods of COVID isolation. She recognised that she was not coping with the changing care needs of her aunt, even though COVID restrictions were ending. With the right mix of services, Mei was able to ensure her own self-care needs were met while also supporting her aunt to move into residential care.

*"It was an enormous relief that counselling would be face-to-face and would be in a calm and supportive place. The counsellor already knew my symptoms and some of my story so I didn't have to repeat*

*myself. He was a great listener. He let my story unfold and I felt safe to talk about my low mood and difficult times."*

*"The nurse and the counsellor have had a major effect on my life, especially with caring for myself, communication and looking for better things to enter my life. The Head to Health program allowed time for myself to heal and to start moving forward with my life."*



## Financial Counselling

During the pandemic, Financial Counsellors at Banyule Community Health continued to support communities that experienced high levels of financial hardship. Although the federal and state governments provided some economic support, there were many families who found themselves in financial difficulty due to job loss. With unexpected and prolonged periods of unemployment and financial commitments such as rent and school fees, clients were at risk of debt that would continue to cause financial hardship even after the pandemic.

### BELINDA

Belinda is a single mother of two who separated from her husband and the father of her children because of family violence. The emotional and financial abuse continued after her divorce which affected her mental health. When Covid 19 struck, she had no option but to leave her job to care for her children. It was not long before Belinda found herself in severe financial hardship that kept her awake at night. In an effort to find solutions, Belinda searched the internet and found companies that, for a fee, would help her pay off her debts. It was not long before Belinda came to Banyule Community Health for Emergency Relief services because she was unable to keep up with the fees and payments.

Belinda was referred to the Financial Counselling team with a large Debt Agreement as well as utility and 'buy now - pay later' debts. In addition, she was receiving no child support, had mental health issues from years of abuse and the isolation experienced during COVID.

The Financial Counselling Team worked with Belinda to have her Debt Agreement varied with payments reduced which saved her a significant amount of money. Her utility debt was cleared, and she was supported to apply for a COVID rent relief grant. Belinda was also referred to the Banyule Community Health mental health support and the West Heidelberg Community Legal Service to assist with child support and property settlement matters.

Belinda has been able to look to the future without significant debt: debt that would have impacted further on her mental health and possibly, her ability to work. As restrictions lifted in 2022, she gained employment and has paid the Debt Agreement in full. Her confidence improved greatly over the four months that she worked with the counsellor and she is now saving for a holiday with her two children.



# LIVED EXPERIENCE





# ReSPIN

GAMBLING AWARENESS  
SPEAKERS BUREAU

The expertise of people with lived experience is recognised by Banyule Community Health in encouraging and supporting people to make changes in their own lives. The ReSPIN Gambling Awareness Speakers Bureau is a state-wide service of Banyule Community Health where volunteers bring the often-hidden experiences of gambling harm into the open. Speakers receive training, ongoing professional development, and debriefing. Giving voice to people with lived experience is essential to removing stigma and shame, which act as a barrier to seeking support. In the last 12 months, ReSPIN volunteers shared their story of hope and recovery across 101 engagements with community groups, students, professionals, leadership groups, decision making bodies, and the media (2021-2022).

## KEN

I take a very raw approach to telling my story and am brutally honest.

I know how to justify gambling, how thoughts are manipulated and the lies you tell yourself and others every day. I hope that my honesty helps someone to come out from behind their lies and have a 'moment of reality' where they see that they could have a problem and seek support. Such a raw story may not be the way some people want to hear about gambling harm, but I also want them to remember my words. It may help them in the future to recognise gambling harm in themselves or someone else and remove some the stigma and shame. Sometimes, I literally startle people. I will clap my hands and shout "Bang! That's the prison gate shutting behind you." There is nothing better for self-reflection than jail. It is just you, a sink with a cold tap, a steel toilet in the corner and time.

Worse than prison was the despair and misery I felt in the years leading up to going to jail as a 'functioning' problem gambler. I was playing senior games of football and cricket at just 16 years old because I was good at sports. The older players picked me up for games and

would stop on the way to place bets. I admired them so much when they talked about their wins on the oval or pitch. Gambling and drinking was part of the culture growing up. Fast forward ten years and I'm a father of two, have left the police force due to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and have a gambling addiction. I would lay awake at night with such deep shame and guilt, hiding from my wife why there was no money for bills.

I had my own 'moments of reality' where I recognised that gambling was harming myself and everyone around me. I ignored these thoughts until many years later when I was arrested for stealing from my job. I volunteer for Re-Spin to try and tap into these 'moments of reality' for gamblers or for those who may know a problem gambler. I think if someone had recognised and asked me earlier in my life about what I was doing, I believe I may have got help sooner. If I can help someone else to seek support, then telling my story has been worth it.

# COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

## VACCINATION CLINICS

Banyule Community Health collaborated with other health services to ensure that vulnerable communities had access to the Australian COVID vaccination program. In August 2021, during the sixth lockdown in Melbourne, COVID vaccinations became widely available. Although the state-wide vaccination campaign was successful for most of the population, large communities in the northern suburbs of Melbourne were not taking part. Banyule and Darebin had some of the lowest vaccination rates. Misinformation, vaccine hesitancy and negative media within culturally diverse groups was common in these areas. With a shared commitment to reach these groups, vaccination teams from Banyule

Community Health, Your Community Health (Darebin) and healthAbility (Nillumbik), joined together to provide a coordinated service across these three local government areas.

### Finding the Workforce

At a time when healthcare workers were in high demand, the partnership used their networks to find vaccinators. Allied health staff, healthcare workers who had recently retired and nursing, medical and paramedic students were trained to give vaccinations. Committed to providing a culturally safe service, eight languages were spoken within the team who worked across Banyule, Darebin and Nillumbik.

### Partners

The North East Melbourne vaccination response was a partnership with Austin Health and North Eastern Public Health Unit that was led by Your Community Health (Darebin) with Banyule Community Health and healthAbility (Nillumbik). This program would not have been successful without the countless community partnerships that supported the team to go where community members could comfortably connect with them. Amongst other places, the teams went to local markets, festivals, sports and shopping centres, cultural gathering places, women's refuges and supported residential services.



***“We are prepared to go into challenging settings at all hours, rain or shine, to deliver the vaccines these people need and who are so often overlooked”***

**- Nurse**

***The consortia gave over 5,000 vaccines to people who would not, or could not, access large scale vaccination clinics or GP services.***



## AT THE MALL

A popular meeting place for the local Somali Australian community is the West Heidelberg Mall. For this reason, a pop-up clinic was run at Shop 48, the Harmony Centre, also the home of Himilo, a community led service. An older man was so thankful to be able to talk with a Somali speaking worker. They had a thorough conversation where it became clear that the client had complex medical issues and did not know how the vaccine would react. He had problems explaining his concerns to a GP and said he had given up and would not be vaccinated. After the worker gave him the contact details for a Somali speaking doctor, the man returned and was vaccinated. Informed bi-lingual workers were essential to the increase in vaccination rates, that was evident in Melbourne’s northern suburbs.

**Banyule Community Health Medical Clinic gave 8,939 COVID-19 vaccines (2021 - 2022)**

## AT THE PARK

Going to events and running pop-up clinics was a convenient way for the community to learn about, and even receive vaccinations. An Easter event at Macleod Park had a petting zoo, choir and egg hunt. Talking to one of the team, a father was worried that his son was not vaccinated because of his fear of needles. The young boy became very upset whenever it was mentioned. Two workers took the time to show him the vaccination area, they explained things to him, took him through every step and gave him a gift pack. Everyone clapped and cheered when he had his vaccination. The opportunity to go to a clinic where other fun things are happening and being able to take the time to look around with calm and skilled workers helped this young boy.

***“Experienced community health nurses talk with clients with complex health needs to make sure that they are given the time and skilled care that they need to make decisions about the vaccines that they want.”***

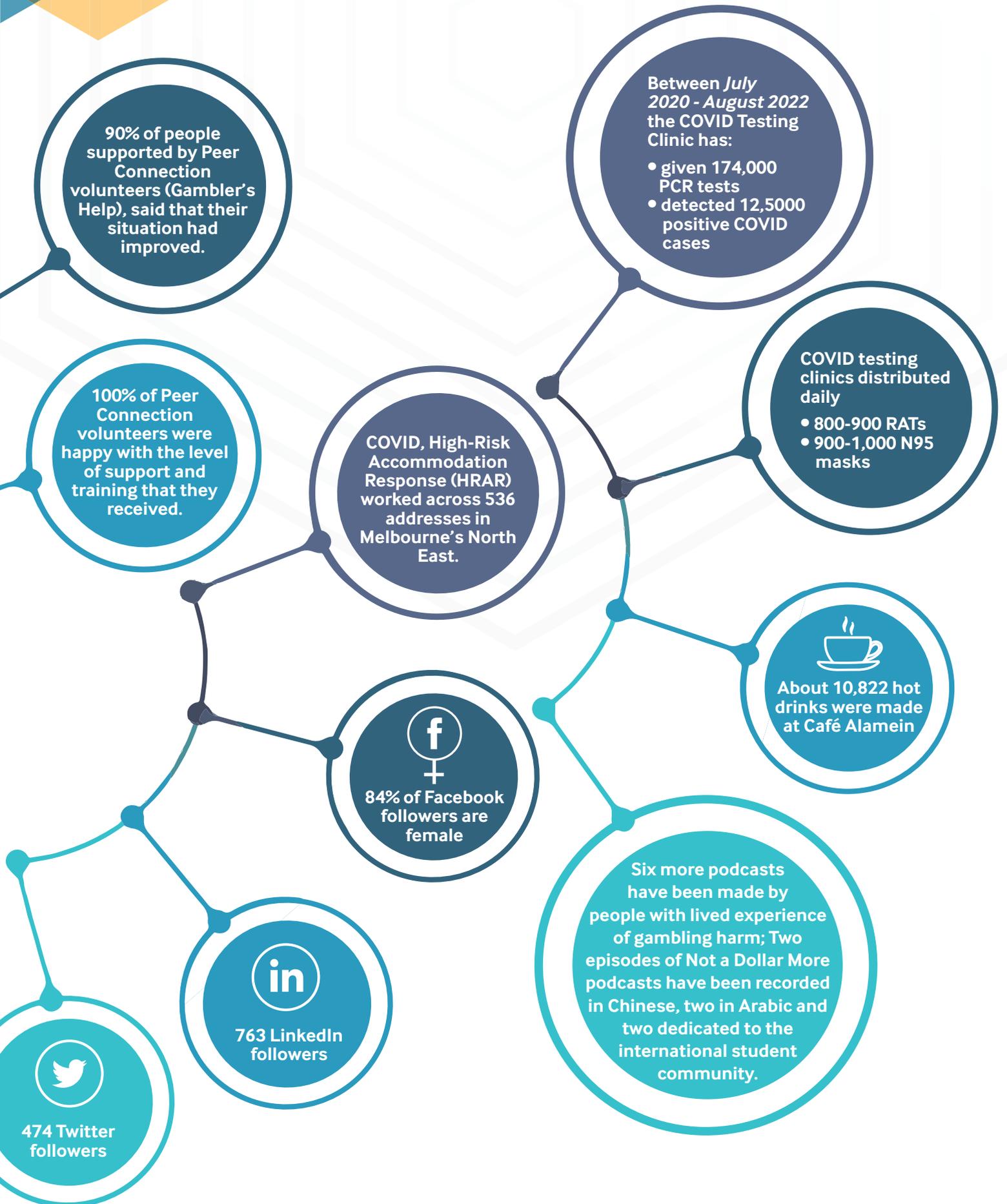
**- Social Worker**

*We acknowledge the contributions made to this article by Your Community Health.*

# OUR SERVICES

IN 12 MONTHS  
SOME OF OUR SERVICES ....





# LEGAL LITERACY FOR WOMEN



The West Heidelberg Community Legal trialled a Legal Literacy program in 2021-2022. The course empowered vulnerable women to be more confident in understanding legal issues, and in turn, also support their family and friends. Open to women with a connection to West Heidelberg, eight sessions on legal literacy built on the existing knowledge and skills of interested community members. The course was run twice, and it is anticipated that peer educators will be involved in future programs.

#### Topics included

1. legal aspects of family violence, intervention orders, care of children, child protection and property separation as well as,
2. information about support services (e.g. financial counselling, family violence services), and
3. skills (e.g. boundary setting, self-care, and searching for legal information online).

The program was a partnership between West Heidelberg Community Legal, Women’s Legal Vic, Olympic Adult Education, Banyule Community Health and Exodus Community.

## WHAT THE WOMEN SAID

*"I benefited so much from doing the course that I just wish it had been there before I needed it."*

Quite a few years ago, I found myself having to deal with the legal system and it was very intimidating. I had to go through legalities that I knew nothing about, at a time in my life when I was less than my usual assertive self. Family violence just eats away at your self-esteem and confidence. In the course, I learnt about support services that could have helped me and about strategies that I could have used to calm the anxiety and fear that I felt every day.

Taking part in the course after I had gone through the legal system was triggering in some ways. If a topic could possibly be upsetting, the people teaching us were amazing and would let us know. We also had access to proper counselling sessions and could call the course coordinator or counsellor after a class to talk about any issues or debrief.

Although I regret that I didn't have all this knowledge when I was going through my own legal issues, I'm confident that I could at least point someone else in the right direction, so that they wouldn't be alone like I was.

WEST  
HEIDELBERG COMMUNITY  
LEGAL

For me, doing the course was about being able to help family and friends. I've got real life experience, but you need to have the right knowledge as well. I learnt how to access information and to ask questions if I don't understand something. Talking to senior people at court can be nerve wracking! I found out how to talk to people wearing uniforms and be confident, assertive and advocate for myself and other people.



*"The course was empowering and easy to follow."*

# THE TWO OF US

Kristen is an Aboriginal Early Years Officer at Banyule Community Health who supports families linked with the Community Midwives and Maternal & Child Health Nurses. She leads the Aboriginal playgroup, coordinates services for families, advocates for the Aboriginal community and educates staff to provide culturally safe services. Babarrbunin Beek is a local Aboriginal led gathering place that is supported by Banyule Community Health.

## KRISTEN

Tammy was the first client I had when I started work with the Community Midwives. I remember how stressed she was, her family was going through a difficult time. Since then, Tammy has 'come full circle.' She coordinates services and supports families who are in a similar position to where she was. In the four years I have known her, Tammy has completed a Certificate IV in Community Services, volunteers in the Banyule Community Health Aboriginal playgroup and is looking for work.

I remember when Tammy's four children were aged 5 years and under and we sat together and planned and prioritised the services that they needed. Tammy decided her oldest child needed support first so that she would be developmentally ready for school the following year. I introduced her to the Speech Pathologist from the Child Health Team, made some appointments and even attended a few with her. It was part of my role to educate staff and support Tammy so that she felt culturally safe. Given the significant stress in her life at that time, it was important that referrals were staggered so that she wasn't overwhelmed by addressing all the family's needs at once. As Tammy's confidence and knowledge of services grew, she started to make the appointments herself, advocated for her children's needs and coordinated their services. It was never that Tammy could not do these things herself, rather, that at that time in her life she needed some additional support.

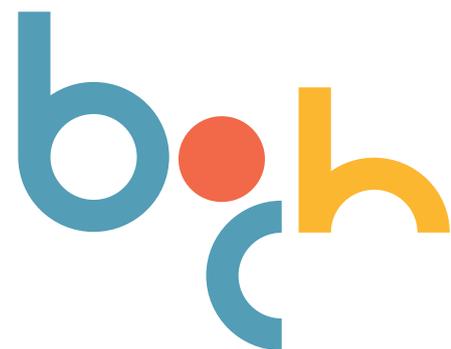
During those years I "walked alongside" Tammy rather than doing things for her.

## TAMMY

I met Kristen when my kids and I had just moved to the area. I had no connection to the local community and as a proud Aboriginal woman I felt really isolated. I think like most parents I was nervous taking my kids to playgroup for the first time, but it was a great way to get to know local Aboriginal families. My children have seen the Paediatrician here as well as had Speech Pathology, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy. I remember going to appointments or doing groups with one child and having to take the other three was impossible. Kristen organised appointments at times when one child was at kinder and if the baby was awake, she would play with him while I was in the appointment or group.

Now that the kids are at kindergarten or school, I wanted to do something to support my community. I completed a Certificate IV in Community Services and did my student placement with Kristen, working at the same playgroup that had helped me when I first moved here. I still volunteer at the playgroup and at Babarrbunin Beek, the local Aboriginal gathering place. Kristen has always been a great support for me and because she works with community our paths always cross. There was an event at the Darebin Arts Centre recently and Kristen reminded

me to go because there would be job opportunities. I was nervous but Kristen met me there. I also helped with catering because Babarrbunin Beek were providing lunch. While I was doing the sausage sizzle Kristen came and got me because she had been talking with some people who wanted to interview me for a position. We ended up doing the interview there, at the event, which was far more relaxing for me than going to an interview at the magistrate's court, which is where the job was. I got the job and am starting work in the Family Violence Team in the Heidelberg Magistrate's Court supporting Aboriginal families. When I first met Kristen, she was supporting me through a really difficult time and I have learnt so much from her. She will still be "walking along-side" me but in a different way because now we will work together and support vulnerable families in our community.





# INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

## HIMILO

Himilo is a community led service that supports social cohesion and inclusion of the Somali-Australian community living in West Heidelberg. The agency joined Banyule Community Health in 2020 and provides an essential pathway for our health services to deliver culturally sensitive support in the local Somali community. Himilo means 'positive aspirations' in the Somali language and it is apparent in numerous programs, not least of which is Himilo Careers.

### Talking Employment

Wanting to know more about Himilo Careers, I sat down to talk with Nicole, the Careers Coordinator and two of her participants, Aisha and Ladan.

#### **What first brought you together?**

**Aisha:** I was already working, but on short term contracts in jobs that were no longer available after COVID. A position was advertised in education and a friend suggested that I call Nicole because I wanted to put in a good application.

**Ladan:** I met Nicole at an employment readiness course that she ran at LaTrobe University. I was finishing my degree in Public Health and learnt so much from her that I followed her up for support when I applied for a job.

**Nicole:** Although I met Aisha and Ladan at different times, they were both wanting to apply for positions that would start them on their chosen career path. They both wanted to feel confident with their application and employability skills.

#### **What were the benefits of using Himilo Careers?**

Both ladies laugh and agree, "all of it!"

**Aisha:** Nicole showed me how to tailor my writing for the job which made answering the selection criteria much easier. I think I gave better examples in

my applications of how the skills I had used in my previous jobs were relevant to the job advertised.

**Ladan:** I asked Nicole to proof-read my cover letter and resume because I really wanted to get an interview. The best thing for me, I think, were the mock-interviews. We did quite a few and I felt more confident and prepared for any tricky questions when I went for real interviews.

**Nicole:** Once Aisha and Ladan had applied for the specific jobs that had brought them to Himilo Careers, we planned their approach to finding other jobs. I supported them to identify the range of employable skills that they had, how to look for secure employment and where to look for jobs that would give them a good start in their chosen career. I supported both girls with several direct referrals such as to Jobs Victoria Careers Counsellors and Jobs Victoria Employment Services.

#### **Can you tell me a bit about where you are now?**

**Aisha:** Nicole first helped me to get a job in a call centre during university holidays. A few months later in July 2022, I left that job because I had secured three other positions that increased my industry experience. I work part-time as an Education Support Officer at Al Taqwa College, a Project Officer at Yarra Plenty Regional Library and in the health promotion team at Banyule Community Health. I also have a mentor for industry specific mentoring and career advice through the Vocational Mentor Exchange program that was also organised through Himilo Careers

**Ladan:** Aisha and I now work together because I recently got a job, also in the health promotion team at Banyule Community Health. I have a community

development role in the Female & Reproductive Rights Education program. I will be working in many community settings across different groups of people, which is great industry experience.

**Nicole:** I keep my participants in mind when jobs are advertised and have contacted Aisha and Ladan to support them with applications. One of the most rewarding parts of my job is seeing people employed in jobs that they enjoy and kick starting someone's career through industry specific experience.

**125 job seekers have been supported by Himilo Careers program to secure employment (2021-2022).**



**Himilo**  
Community  
Connect



# COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Community groups from Banyule Community Health have worked together to deliver a book swap library that promotes literacy in our community. Child sized book houses were made by men from the Banyule Men's Shed, with books donated by 3081 Angels. Decorated by children from the community, the book houses were placed in the reception area of West Heidelberg Legal Service and where supported playgroups are held. A post on social media led to community members asking for a book library to be made for adults. Once a larger bookcase has been made by the Men's Shed, it will be decorated by women from the Wellbeing Group and made available for the 'grown-ups' to swap and share books.



# PERSON CENTRED CARE

## CARER SUPPORT

The Carer Support Service at Banyule Community Health continues to see an increase in the stress and social isolation experienced by both carers and the people they care for. COVID-19 remains a concern for those who care for individuals at risk.

### Rose

Jim's not the only one with problems. My health has got worse because I stopped going to appointments during COVID and I've had to do more of the jobs around the house as well take care of Jim. After all the lockdowns though, I had to get the cleaner back because I'm just so tired and I have a lot of knee and back pain. Cathy (Carer Support Worker), kept in touch with me the whole time during COVID. It was such a relief knowing that I could call her for help on the days that I was struggling. She put me in touch with a counsellor at a time when I really wasn't coping well. Cathy even showed me how to connect to a social group that met on the internet, at my age! Going out still makes me nervous and I wear a mask all the time because I could still get COVID. The internet group is planning a get together soon and I think I may go, but only if it is held outside.

### Cathy (Carer Support Worker)

It is totally understandable that during and after COVID, Rose went out as little as possible and didn't want people coming into the house. Like many carers during the pandemic, Rose found that some of the regular supports that she relied on to help care for her husband Jim, were put on hold. She also stopped going to her own appointments, because she worried about the long-term effects on her and her husband's health if they caught COVID. Even as restrictions have lifted, Rose is not going out and getting the breaks in her caring role as she did before. Although I have been encouraging her to pick up some of her old activities it is important to understand that what people want and need now may be different than before the pandemic. It has been important to encourage carers to focus on their own emotional health and wellbeing. I have suggested that Rose goes to the physiotherapist and possibly the Falls Prevention Group. These will provide benefits in strength and movement as well as some valuable social interaction. Although Rose is reluctant, I will suggest it again later because it will give her more energy and gets her out of the house. It is important that carers can transition out of COVID restrictions at their own pace.



## COVID CARE PATHWAYS

Banyule Community Health delivers the COVID Care Pathways program in partnership with Austin Health. In six months, the program supported 16,120 people who had tested positive to COVID and were isolating in the community. Clinicians provided support for clients to manage their symptoms at home and ensured that the right care was provided at the right time when a person's condition worsened. People who reported moderate or severe symptoms on the government app were provided tele-consultations. Daily contact was made with other people who would not, or could not report their symptoms, for example if they did not have data for their phones.



# HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP

The relationship between social conditions like legal issues, and physical and mental health is well established. Providing accessible legal services to vulnerable communities is one way that Banyule Community Health can achieve our purpose - to "Address inequity. Building healthy, inclusive and just communities."

## BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

West Heidelberg Community Legal Service has partners with other Banyule Community Health services to provide support in a range of easily accessible places. Throughout 2021-2022, lawyers worked in the community as part of the multi-disciplinary COVID High-Risk Accommodation Response (HRAR) team. The state government funded HRAR project that came to an end in June 2022,

was established to prevent, prepare for and respond to COVID infections amongst people living in public housing and other high-risk accommodation settings. The program later also worked to improve vaccination uptake.

## CLIENT STORY

### Alex

At a pop-up stall in the local shopping strip, the team was approached by Alex, a 21-year-old father of one. He lived in nearby public housing but had never visited the health centre or legal service. Alex had been dealing with substance use issues and a mental health condition, so accessing services had not seemed possible. At the local shops, however, he mentioned an upcoming court date and that he had not spoken with a lawyer. The lawyer at the pop-up stall quickly booked him an urgent one-to-one appointment for the next day. Alex had been charged

with possession of a drug of dependence and because of his prior criminal history was at risk of serious penalty. The lawyer gave Alex advice about his options and assisted him at Court.

As they talked and the lawyer supported Alex, he started to trust the lawyer and asked for help in other areas of his life. Alex said that he was struggling to manage the costs associated with having a young child. He also wanted to do something about his substance use so that he could better support his family. To meet his short term needs the lawyer connected Alex to 3081 Angels - a volunteer service that assists young families (see pp 2&3), and Emergency Relief services at Banyule Community Health. For further support, Alex was referred to Financial Counselling services and Drug & Alcohol services also at Banyule Community Health. Alex remarked that although he sometimes 'dropped in and out' of seeing services he was on his way to recovery.



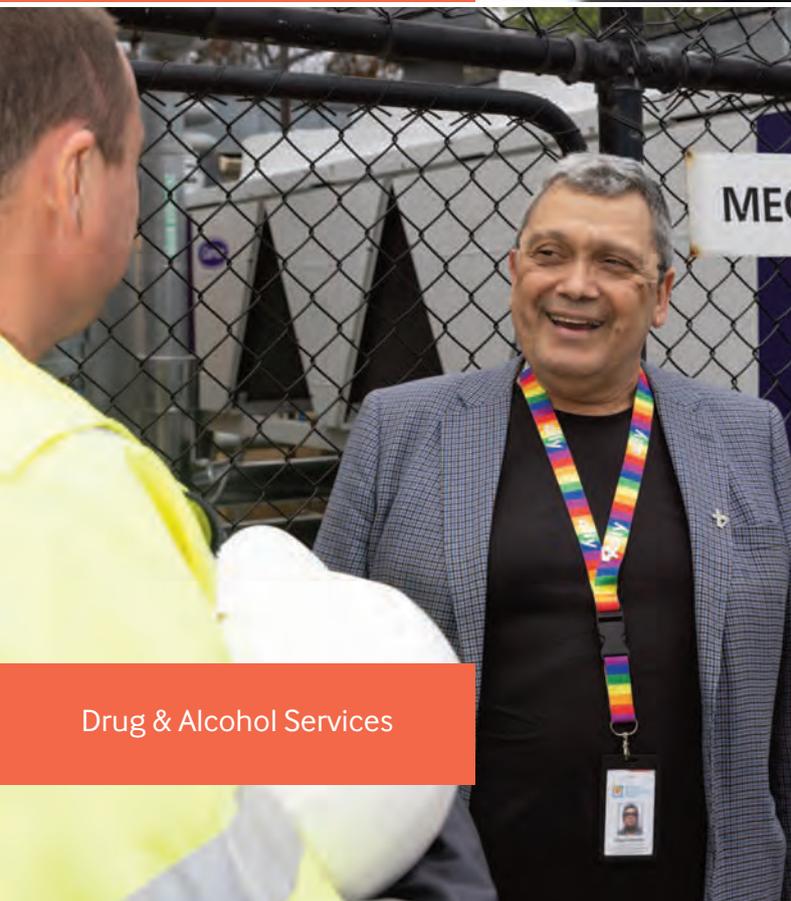
HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP CONT...



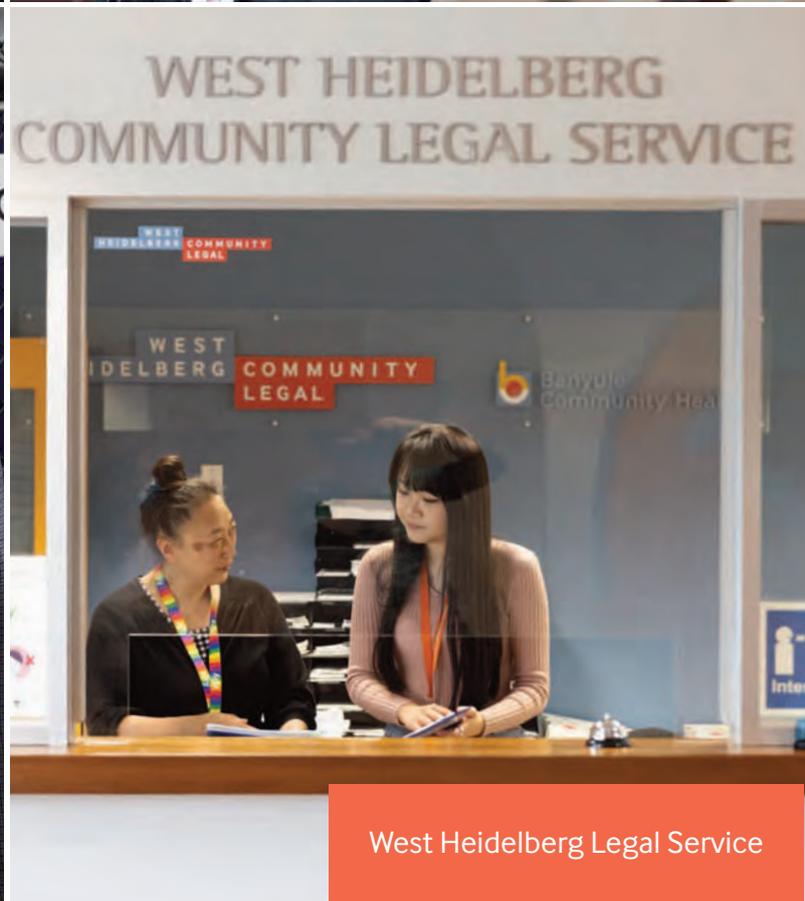
Financial Counselling



Emergency Relief



Drug & Alcohol Services



West Heidelberg Legal Service

# PEER SUPPORT

Banyule Community Health acknowledges the value of people with lived experience who, through a shared understanding, can support clients in recovery especially when it is difficult for them to talk to others. Banyule Community Health are increasingly employing people with lived experience in paid and volunteer positions providing clients with peer support.

## FROM PEER SUPPORT SERVICES TO LIVED EXPERIENCE WORKER

The story of Troy is an example of how one client, not only used Peer Support services for his own recovery with substance use issues, but in moving forward, will use his lived experience to support others as a clinician or peer support worker.

Travelling from the darker reaches of substance misuse into sunlight and renewed purpose is an epic journey. Not everyone succeeds. Troy (32), is one who did - he has survived years of heavy substance use. Now working full-time in construction, Troy is using his experience and studying to work in the drug and alcohol sector to help others.

Troy has a sharp mind and potential that was not fully met during his high school education. Instead, his curiosity caused him to experiment with a wide variety of substances. An intravenous drug user for six years, Troy used cocaine 'whenever I could afford it.' He also said that he would use 'whatever I could get my hands on'.

Troy's drug and alcohol use played a role in him being prosecuted and jailed on several occasions. In March this year, Troy presented at Austin Health Emergency Department after an intentional overdose attempt using medications and alcohol. Banyule Community Health have a Drug and Alcohol worker co-located in the emergency department and he gave Troy some information on services based in the community. After a second attempt that landed him in the Emergency Department again, Troy self-referred himself via Directline to ReGen, who linked him with Banyule Community Health.

Troy is a focussed young man with a clear determination to make a fresh start and set a good example for his children. He was actively seeking to change his behaviour, to "build better relationships with family and friends" and improve his work performance.

Troy attended the Drug and Alcohol Peer Support Group, from late March. Troy's self-reflections and insight provided useful contributions to the discussion. He has also continued regular weekly counselling sessions. For extra support, Troy enrolled in the North Eastern Rehabilitation and Support Program (NERaSP). He completed two days a week over 8 weeks while juggling a regular job in construction. NERaSP is a community based rehabilitation program run by Banyule Community Health. A group of clients attend the centre one day a week to learn strategies to manage substance issues. Troy is now studying his Certificate IV in Alcohol & Other Drugs to, as he puts it, 'give back little by little what I took from society.'





# LEADERSHIP

## SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM

Banyule Community Health was successful in receiving funding from the Department of Education and Training to provide a School Readiness Program in kindergartens (2020 – 2023). Developed by the child health team at Banyule Community Health, the team worked with 50 kindergartens in 2021 and are now working with 70 kindergartens across Banyule, Darebin, Nillumbik and Yarra local government areas. Paediatric

Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Family and Child Psychologists provide intensive allied health support to Early Years Educators, parents/carers, children and other childhood professionals in the kindergarten setting. The aim is to increase the knowledge, confidence and skills of educators and families/carers in identification of children with possible developmental delay and how to work with them. The School

Readiness program uses a capability building model focused on supporting kindergarten educators in the three School Readiness Funding priority areas;

- Communication (Language development)
- Wellbeing (social and emotional)
- Access and inclusion

## MEDAL OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA 2022



Congratulations to Nathalie Cook, Accredited Practising Dietitian at Banyule Community Health, who was awarded an OAM in January 2022 for her work in dietetics. Working at Banyule Community Health since 2006, Nathalie delivers individual care, health promotion and education in the community. Nathalie developed and delivered the Eat Well, Play Well program at Banyule Community Health that teaches parents/carers about nutrition for newborn babies to toddlers.

Nathalie has contributed enormously to the area of blood cancer nutrition having volunteered for many years providing expertise, education and advocacy for affordable access to medications. She continues to be a consumer representative in blood cancer research with the Walter & Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research and University of Western Australia.

*“Nathalie is truly deserving of this recognition. Her contribution to our local community, to her profession and to those experiencing blood cancers is exemplary. Her advocacy to enable access to medications on the PBS is an indication of her combination of passion and professionalism.” Michael Geary, CEO, Banyule Community Health.*



**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

The Commonwealth Home Support Programme is supported by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. Visit [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au) for more information.

Although funding for the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) has been provided by the Australian Government, the material contained herein does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Australian Government.

**ACCREDITATION:**

Banyule Community Health currently meets all the accreditation standards of and complies with:

- Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited (AGPAL)
- Diagnostic Imaging Accreditation Scheme (DIAS)
- Community Legal Centres Australia (CLCA)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (NSQHS)
- Quality Improvement Council (QIC)
- Aged Care Quality Standards (ACQS)
- Child Safe Standards

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**Banyule  
Community  
Health**

**Always here for you**



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