



Banyule  
Community  
Health



2024

Quality Account



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## CHAIR AND CEO REPORT – 2024 WELCOME

Welcome to our 2024 Quality Account. You will see a range of stories that reflect the impact and achievements of the past year. A year that our health and social care system has experienced considerable challenges and stress.

We are proud of the impact Banyule Community Health has across our many catchment areas and communities. We have strengthened our commitment to lived experience workforces – an area we have a rich history in. We invest in our people as their development and wellbeing are a top priority. Our facilities and infrastructure are continually being improved. And most importantly, we have grown our services and scope to reach our community.

We thank our funders, partners and peak bodies for their continued support. Partnerships and collaborations are at the centre of all of our work, and we truly value our relationships.

Rainbow Tick accreditation was achieved in 2024, capping off many years of dedicated and passionate work to ensure that Banyule Community Health is a safe and inclusive environment for the LGBTIQ+ community. Led by our community and supported by staff, this important piece of work establishes Banyule Community Health's reputation for being a truly equitable service.

In October 2024, members voted unanimously in favour of a merger with Merri Health. Delivering on our purpose, growing our reach, and having a greater impact on our community was the focus in the merger conversations between Banyule Community Health and Merri Health. We value and trust Merri Health and have great comfort in our shared journey ahead.

We are thankful for the progressive and forward thinking of the leaders and members who contributed to this process over the past year. This significant strategic

step is possible due to the work of many leaders, community members, staff and volunteers over the past 50 years who have all contributed to developing Banyule Community Health into an incredible community asset.

Finally, we take this opportunity to thank our staff and volunteers. We continually observe the positive, life changing impact that their care and expertise bring to our community every day and are privileged to have such a committed team who drive our purpose to build healthy, inclusive, and just communities.

Anthony O'Donnell  
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.





## LIVED EXPERIENCE

# PEER SUPPORT SERVICES EXPO

*"I felt honoured to speak on a subject like Gambling that is so destructive but with the help of the peer group I can see a way forward."*

**Lisa, Community participant**

Banyule Community Health has a strong commitment to providing health and wellbeing services, that are underpinned by the voices of its community and lived and living experience. It has long been acknowledged that lived experience workers, who have firsthand experience with mental health challenges and harmful addictive behaviours, play a valuable role in improving the safety, effectiveness and accessibility of healthcare services. Banyule Community Health has supported individuals with lived and living experiences within the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug, and Gambling Harm programs.

To foster integration between these programs and provide mutual support for peer support workers, the Peer Support Workforce Community of Practice (PSWCOP) is a space for peer workers to exchange their collective insights and experiences, identifying areas for support and development. Recognising the importance of increasing awareness for peer support services, the PSWCOP identified the need for a promotional event to take place in 2024. The purpose was to highlight the diverse range of peer support services accessible to the community, expanding awareness of the significant positive influence that peer support has on a community member's healthcare journey.

The Peer Support Services Expo offered insights into the peer support programs focused on Alcohol and other Drugs, Gambling Harm, and the Stepped Care Model for Mental Health programs, with a

spotlight on firsthand experiences and reflections from clients. During the expo, three peer support workers and five clients shared their experiences and perspectives with an audience comprising of over 70 staff members, clients, external stakeholders, and service providers.

The peer support workers recounted their personal lived experiences from service users to peer support workers and elaborated on the profound impact of their work within the community. The clients who presented at the event shared emotionally uplifting stories about how the Peer Support Services at Banyule Community Health had been instrumental in their recovery journeys, outlining the unique and valuable benefits of peer support. Furthermore, the peer support workforce unveiled the new "Banyule Community Health Peer Support Services" logo and promotional materials, including distribution of posters to attendees and display of an internal poster within Banyule Community Health.

The Expo received positive feedback and highlighted the value peers bring to improving safety, access and effectiveness of care at Banyule Community Health.



**Banyule  
Community  
Health**



**PeerSupport  
SERVICES**

PEER SUPPORT CELEBRATION





## UNITING FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

# BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH MERRI HEALTH MERGER

This year we embarked on an exciting merger exploration with Merri Health to enhance services, improve community health outcomes, and strengthen our ability to meet the growing demands of the evolving care sector.

Banyule Community Health and Merri Health are both highly respected, community-driven organisations with similar histories, shared values, and great people. The merger has the full support of both Boards and will enable us to improve services for our communities, while developing and growing to meet current and future needs. Together we can:

- Achieve better services for our clients and communities.
- Provide a bigger platform for stronger advocacy for our community and health services.
- Provide broader career pathways and opportunities for employees.

The Boards and leadership teams worked closely throughout the exploration phases, and the merger was officially confirmed in October 2024, through successful votes by members of both organisations.

We're committed to maintaining our current services at current locations, delivered by the same trusted people. We look forward to the future where there is potential for exciting opportunities. A new name and brand, shaped with input from staff and the community, will honour our shared histories and united future as a 'New Organisation.'

### What did we achieve?

- Successful independent due diligence confirmed the compatibility of both organisations.
- Positive staff consultation on the merger, and 180 staff and stakeholders involved in name/brand development workshops.
- Merger confirmed following robust exploration, and positive member vote.
- New Board appointed with four Directors

from each organisation and one new Director, to ensure continued efficient operations.

### What's next?

- Planned integration of both organisations to build on our strengths and improve community access to services and programs.
- Support and engage staff through the transition to foster shared culture and operations.
- Involve community in developing our new name and brand.
- Launch our new name and brand, targeted for March 2025.

*"We firmly believe the merger will improve services and health outcomes for communities and ensure our long-term sustainability, strengthening our ability to meet the opportunities and challenges of the evolving health and social care sector."*  
**Tassia Michaleas, Merri Health CEO / Mick Geary, Banyule Community Health CEO.**



## 2024 JAN PENTLAND MEMORIAL AWARD RECIPIENT CONGRATULATIONS Cathy McKenzie



*Cathy's efforts have enabled access to the highest level of financial counselling support offering access to advocacy, information, and advice for community members.*

Cathy McKenzie was presented The Jan Pentland Memorial Award. This prestigious annual award recognises an Accredited Member of Financial Counsellors Victoria (FCVic) who has demonstrated excellence in financial counselling service to the wider community above and beyond their normal duties as a financial counsellor.

Cathy McKenzie, Banyule Community Health Financial Counsellor, is employed in the same role that Jan Pentland held at Banyule Community Health over 30 years ago. Cathy embodies many of the values and skills that Jan had as a Financial Counsellor when she worked in our local community. Like Jan, Cathy is a great connector with the wide array of health, welfare, and legal workers at Banyule Community Health, ensuring community members get a truly integrated response.

Cathy started at Banyule Community Health in 2013, quickly becoming an asset to the team by bringing her previous experience of working in the corporate sector, with a thirst

to bring her financial counselling skills and a strong social justice lens to her work.

Cathy excelled in the role, bringing her skills and knowledge to a range of teams. Cathy has strong working relationships with many of our teams at Banyule Community Health including our Family Violence team, our Community Legal Service, our Gamblers Help team and our Aboriginal Health team. Her efforts have enabled access to the highest level of financial counselling support offering access to advocacy, information, and advice. These relationships ensure she is always accessible to those in the community most at need of her services.

In recent years, Cathy has seen a significant increase in demand for financial counselling services. The need to respond to this demand required innovation and a mindset shift. The need to create greater capacity to respond was essential, but funding to the sector was not matching the need. Cathy innovatively expanded capacity by creating

a model that integrates Financial Counselling students and volunteers. Cathy developed clear and well-designed models of orientation and support with students, creating opportunities, mentoring and feedback that made the student/volunteer experience a rich one. This level of additional resource has essentially doubled our Financial Counselling resources to the community, and additionally provided a platform for mentoring the next wave of Financial Counsellors in our sector.

Cathy consistently goes above and beyond to advocate and change systems. She loves the chance to improve the conditions for a person who is experiencing hardship and provides them with the tools and resources to rebuild their lives.

Congratulations Cathy on being recognised by your peers and FcVic for your ongoing commitment and leadership in the financial counselling sector.



## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF... A REFERRAL & INTAKE WORKER

The Referral and Intake team are a multi-disciplinary team who provide our community with initial needs identification. They review risk, eligibility, and priority for service assessment, and are integral in providing a range of information, referral pathway options, and follow up for clients requesting access to services and groups at Banyule Community Health.

### 9.00am

The day starts with following up on anything outstanding from the previous day. The phones and emails are checked for any messages and the team shares the load to respond as quickly as possible.

### 9.30am

Once follow-up is completed, the daily tasks are allocated amongst the team. It includes returning phone calls, new referrals, following up on outstanding referrals and checking in on our clients on the waitlist. It's important to the team that the highest priority clients are dealt with first and that urgent messages are replied to as quickly as possible. In the team, our Duty Worker attends to all new referrals and enquiries – this can be extremely busy due to the volume and complexity of referrals and enquiries that can come in on any given day. There are approximately ten different referral pathways into Banyule Community Health. The Referral and Intake team triage and address referrals for many services, so there is a wide spectrum of referrals and enquiries. The Duty Worker needs to ensure referrals meet eligibility and are appropriate for Banyule Community Health. This can involve a lot of liaising with other teams for clarification.

### 10.00am

A weekly team catch up is an opportunity for us to all be in the same 'room' together and discuss any issues that may have arisen over the week. As they deal with many services – there are many different processes and changes that they need to keep up with and be informed by.

### 11.00am

Reception call saying there is a client visiting the premises, who is seeking physiotherapy. A member of the team goes out to see the client. The client is an over 65yo so the worker discusses MyAged Care and assists with accessing this service. Referral and Intake provides information for the client but also makes a referral to the Navigation Service to help. During the discussion the client shares information about their experience with family violence and the intake worker discusses their options, including assisting the client with a referral for The Orange Door, Seniors Rights Victoria, and counselling services at Banyule Community Health.

### 11.30am

A follow-up is made on a referral that seems high risk. The Intake Worker has to call the parent regarding their son and have a discussion about their child, including what supports are in place for them. The Intake Worker then consults with the Child Health Team and follows up with the referrer. Paediatric cases often present as complex and the Intake Team likes to work closely with and use the expertise of the Child Health Team in these cases.

### 1.00pm

Time for lunch. Some of the team gather for lunch in the sunshine outside. The team is trying to get outdoors in lunch breaks and if there's time, have a short stroll around the block.

### 1.30pm

A call comes in from a young person currently homeless, couch surfing in a suburb outside of the Banyule catchment. Client appears to have few supports, has moved to Melbourne from Queensland and

is not familiar with local services. The Intake Worker spends time discussing his options and liaises with a member of the Social Work team for advice. Client also presents with several mental health issues. The Intake Worker discusses Stepped Care Mental Health program with client and an Initial Assessment is completed over the phone. The Intake Worker also provides contact for local housing service and makes an appointment for him to see a social worker and connects them to our emergency relief services.

### 3.00pm

It has been a busy morning with phone call requests. Other team members are tied up on the phone and there have been several walk-ins. The team spend a lot of time calling clients – today we are doing a mail out to clients whom we have been unsuccessful contacting. Clients often respond to mail if we can't get hold of them via their phone.

### 4.00pm

A team member calls a Gambler's Help client who had requested a late afternoon call. The client is distressed, as their partner has just discovered their gambling. The client has significant gambling related debts, and their rent is overdue. There is family conflict and the client's partner is threatening to leave the relationship if they don't get help. The Intake Team offer counselling and financial counselling appointments to help them get on top of their debts as well as discuss their distress with someone. The Intake Team also offers support to their partner as an affected second party.

### 5.00pm

Another busy day in the office ends.



*The Referral and Intake team are the behind-the-scenes workforce that has a vital role and impact in the everyday functions of community members accessing services at Banyule Community Health and beyond.*



## WEST HEIDELBERG COMMUNITY LEGAL HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP

### Integrated Practice Improving Access to Justice for People Experiencing Mental Ill-Health

It is our relationships that make our health justice partnership work. Closer ties between the legal service and health teams at Banyule Community Health produce better client outcomes.

Elizabeth Frampton, Senior Community Lawyer, is working in a program designed to improve access to justice for people experiencing mental health issues. This year, to build links with Banyule Community Health's Mental Health Stepped Care Program, Elizabeth spent two days shadowing Madi Guven, Mental Health Nurse. She wanted to get a deeper understanding of Madi's work with clients experiencing a range of mental health conditions. Madi took Elizabeth under her wing, sharing case studies and providing a direct insight into her approach.

"It was illuminating", said Elizabeth of the experience. "Mental health work can be much more flexible than legal practice which is based on planning about very specific problems that have a process which plays out, often in Court. On the other hand, Madi wades into the abyss, and with the client uncovers the issues, and then works on managing them."

"This experience has broken down the barrier that is sometimes felt between programs, when clinicians are uncomfortable to have quick chats or ask questions in hypothetical situations", reflected Madi. "It surprised me that although Elizabeth didn't have formal mental health training, the foundational knowledge was there. The compassion and understanding of the clients was evident.

After shadowing me through a few days, she continued to ask questions and show a passion for client recovery."

Madi and Elizabeth have since settled into a monthly lunch date schedule and are continuing to develop their collaborative relationship by jointly assisting clients. "I have spoken to multiple legal staff and feel very confident in referring my clients to the service", said Madi. "The importance of being a clinician, who your client trusts, and bringing in another service showing and expressing your trust in them is very important in the client developing trust towards that other service."

## WEST HEIDELBERG COMMUNITY LEGAL

### Integrated Family Violence Legal Support in the Community

West Heidelberg Community Legal continues to partner with local services to reach more clients who need legal help. This year, we have provided family violence focused outreach clinics at two drug and alcohol residential support services located in Banyule.

One service provides a short-term residential detox program, including a dedicated mother and baby service. The other provides a medium to long term residential rehabilitation program, including dedicated family units so that parents can participate in rehabilitation services while caring for their children.

Outreaching to these services means that residents can easily access legal help at a

time when they are embarking on their recovery journey. Clients frequently present to the legal service experiencing a range of complex co-occurring issues, including problematic substance use, mental health concerns, disability, precarious housing or homelessness and limited social supports. Timely access to a lawyer can help reduce the burden created by unaddressed legal needs, which may otherwise be a barrier to their engagement in treatment.



## Making Space



*"This project has given us the freedom to re-imagine our legal service from a new starting point. Some of the physical changes that we have made are easy to spot in our offices and waiting area, but as important as new physical items is the strengthened connection that we hope has been developed through engagement with the community over the project journey."*

**Stephanie Price, Principal Lawyer, West Heidelberg Community Legal**

This year, West Heidelberg Community Legal celebrated the culmination of a five-year journey into redesigning aspects of our legal service to better welcome children, and clients with care of children, into our service. The project called **Making Space** – explored what changes we could make to our physical office, processes, and practice and was informed by extensive research including in-depth interviews with clients and colleagues.

We are proud of the wide range of initiatives we were able to establish during the design phase of this project, including: improving our child-focused referrals; developing worker resources to enable us to be more trauma-informed and child-centred in our practice; establishing simple, colourful wayfinding throughout our office space; acquiring appropriate toys and equipment for our appointment rooms; collecting community input towards new, interactive

artwork celebrating the local area for our reception area and offices; and setting up a process for offering snacks and drinks to clients and their children who may need it.

**Making Space** was made possible by a major grant from the Victorian Legal Services Board & Commissioner.



*"The lawyer listened to me, which was what I needed given my situation. She was patient and the advice she provided was valuable. I left my appointment feeling more hopeful."*



## JASMINE'S STORY\*

# INTEGRATED CARE APPROACH

Jasmine first engaged with Gambler's Help Services at Banyule Community Health in 2015. She re-engaged in the service in Spring 2023, whilst attending the WISE Mental Health program run at Banyule Community Health. Jasmine's wellbeing was severely impacted by the stress and anxiety caused by the financial hardship that their family was experiencing, and was encouraged to book an appointment with

the Gambler's Help Financial Counselling service by a Banyule Community Health counsellor. Jasmine's partner was engaged at the same time to address substance use and mental health.

The first appointment with the Financial Counsellor identified key actions to prioritise and to co-produce a service plan. The primary issue was rental arrears with a Notice

to Vacate issued by their estate agent.

The Financial Counsellor referred Jasmine to West Heidelberg Community Legal Service for support defending the VCAT hearing and the Notice to Vacate.

There were also other debts Jasmine was trying to manage, causing her considerable distress. The Financial Counsellor secured a three-month payment delay for all other





debts providing breathing space for Jasmine. Jasmine and the Financial Counsellor also worked together developing a household budget and on Jasmine's capability to manage household budgets and pay bills.

The Lawyer successfully helped Jasmine and her family avoid eviction, with a payment plan agreed via a compliance order, and the Financial Counsellor helped reduce the arrears via a grant through the Gambler's Help program. Additionally, the Lawyer assisted the client to contest a rent increase by securing a notice from VCAT that it was not valid.

## Other outcomes

- Long term payment arrangements were made with Jasmine's utility providers to create a viable solution for addressing those arrears.
- The client's fines registered under Fines Victoria's Work and Development Permit scheme. A scheme enabling people experiencing vulnerabilities and disadvantage to address their fines by non-financial means. In this case by attending sessions with the Gambler's Help financial counselling service and Banyule Community Health's WISE Mental Health program would reduce the amount owed.
- Jasmine's child was referred to the Northeast Primary Mental Health Team for a Disability Support Pension assessment.
- Jasmine completed the WISE Mental Health program.
- Client's partner completed the drug and alcohol program.
- Jasmine's stress and anxiety were reduced, feeling much better about her family's situation, as well as more confident managing the household budget and bills.

The range of services provided to Jasmine and her family demonstrates the value of an integrated care approach that a community health provider, such as Banyule Community Health, offers. Whilst Jasmine's financial situation is not completely resolved, Banyule Community Health has helped her and her family in a range of ways, including assisting them remain in their home.

*"It was so helpful to be able to come to the one place to get help. I was overwhelmed by where to go to get help. The Financial Counsellor was able to help me with repayment options and also helped to reduce some of the fines I was facing, which were causing more stress. Being able to get help in the one place really eased the stress on me."*  
**Jasmine, Client.**

*Jasmine's Story\* not the client's real name*

## 12-MONTH TRAINEESHIP PROGRAM TO GET TRAINEES CONFIDENT AND READY TO BE EMPLOYED

# ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS TRAINEESHIP PROGRAM

At the beginning of this year, the state funded Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Program at Banyule Community Health was successful in obtaining funding to employ two full time trainees as part of the Victorian AOD Traineeships project. This program has been funded as part of the 2023-2024 Victorian state budget in response to workforce supply concerns in the AOD sector, with an aim to fund 84 AOD trainee positions over two years. (42 per year).

The project aims to develop the AOD workforce pipeline at entry level by providing on-the-job learning opportunities in specialist AOD services combined with the AOD study expanding trainees' experience in a range of service settings. We successfully employed two AOD trainees.

Whilst the main aim of the 12-month traineeship program is to get trainees confident and ready to be employed in the AOD sector, our trainees had the additional experience of being employed in a community health setting, where they can see firsthand the benefits of working in an integrated wrap around service. The trainees have also spent time learning about our other community wellbeing programs at Banyule Community Health and understand the importance of working from a person centred, integrated approach.

The program is still in its early stages, we have had an extremely positive experience thus far. Both Trainees are enthusiastic and keen to learn about the many different facets and programs within the drug and alcohol sector. They have come with their own knowledge and life skills and are both undertaking additional training. Staff within the AOD team have also enjoyed sharing their knowledge and skills with the trainees and the whole team approach has worked well.

### Conan

*"I'm currently undertaking the 12-month alcohol and other drug traineeship at Banyule Community Health, after completing my Bachelor's Degree in social work earlier this year. Completing the AOD traineeship in a Community Health setting provides a valuable insight into how a wide range of services operate. During my traineeship, I've gained experience and training in counselling and alcohol and other drug assessments. I've also had the opportunity to participate in group work as part of the North East Recovery and Support Program and to visit other services like the medically supervised injecting room and Odyssey House. Most of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my colleagues, as they have been extremely welcoming and supportive, and they have generously shared their time, knowledge, and experience with me."*

### Deniz

*"My Australian journey started nearly 10 years ago. I came to Melbourne from Turkey as an international student in 2015 and I successfully completed my Diploma of Nursing and Bachelor of Community Services Programs. During my education, I had a chance to work in aged care and multicultural community services. Since April, I've been working for Banyule Community Health as an alcohol and other drug trainee, and I've been studying alcohol and other drug Skill Set course as a part of this traineeship program as well. I think this well-designed traineeship program is an important opportunity to learn theoretical and practical knowledge of drug and alcohol problems and to apply this knowledge into the clinical practice, so far, I've had a chance to gain a lot of knowledge on a wide variety of topics including Victorian alcohol and other drug system, intake and assessment, harm reduction strategies, withdrawal and rehabilitation services etc. Finally, I would like to thank the alcohol and other drug team and other members of Banyule Community Health for their encouragement, friendliness, and patience. It is a big pleasure for me to work as a part of this inclusive and diverse organisation."*



*"I've had a chance to gain a lot of knowledge on a wide variety of topics"*

**Deniz**

*"I've gained experience and training in counselling and alcohol and other drug assessments"*

**Conan**





## BANYULE COMMUNITY HEALTH OUR SERVICES

In the last 12 months we received:



- 51 compliments about care in the last 12 months
- 52 complaints predominantly about appointments and availability
- 6 suggestions



Been supported by  
104 volunteers



Paediatric Speech  
Therapy was given  
to 1,030 children  
between 9 months  
and 6 years.



647 visits were made  
to Buna Garden



124.25kg of produce  
was harvested from  
Buna Garden for  
Barrbunin Beek's food  
security program



50 referrals are  
received to our  
Referral & Intake  
team each day





# Quality Account 2024



5,640 students examined through Smile Squad in 30 different schools



- 100% of our clients under 18 feel that they are supported, safe, and listened to (VHES)
- 97.2% of clients feel they were treated fairly (VHES)
- 91.5% of consumers report that they are always listened to (VHES)
- 100% of our consumers feel that attending Banyule Community Health helped them meet their goals (VHES)



34 different language providers over 877 appointments



11,220 hot beverages were sold at Café Alamein



3,164 appointments over our Stepped Care Program



2,351 of our clients identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



1,443 phone call or face to face appointments for Emergency Relief



- 169 dentures were provided
- 3,762 teeth were treated across 12 months
- 73 teeth were extracted



4,044 Physiotherapy appointments

VHES Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey

## SUPPORTING OUR OLDER GENERATION AND LOOKING OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER LOOKING OUT PROJECT

It all started with a visit to Wendy's home. A friendly knock on the door, a brief chat, and an offer to assist with anything she needed. Wendy simply needed help with opening her window blinds so she could enjoy the sunlight and watch people pass by. This simple request highlighted that the small things can make the biggest impact.

We all have a role to play in supporting our older generation and looking out for one another. And so, with this little gold nugget of information from Wendy, the heartwarming **'Looking Out'** project was born.

The **'Looking Out'** project aimed to reach older people, 65+ years living in West Heidelberg, Macleod and Watsonia. The project provided targeted information and support to assist with staying connected to the local community. We conducted three pop up events at the local libraries and with the Women of West Heidelberg, to discuss issues important to seniors and how stronger community connection could be made across all ages.

Over 30 seniors from our local community were interviewed, sharing their stories about their experiences during, and after, COVID-19 lockdowns and what was important to

them. Local artist, Lou Endicott, was brought on board for this project to offer something joyful and meaningful in return for their time and valuable input. Lou created custom temporary hand-drawn window art on 15 senior's home windows. The window art aimed to be a visual reminder of their connection to things they identified with and felt passionate about. Common themes that emerged was a love of **nature, art, animals, and football!**

As part of the **'Looking Out'** project, Jane, Health Promotion Officer at Banyule Community Health, spent time with the Aboriginal Women's Elders Group. The women in this group shared their stories, thoughts and feelings as a collective voice and participated in art sessions led by Lou. This group created art pieces on mirrors to reflect their own identity and stories. The **'Looking Out'** Project culminated in a delightful celebration event held at Banyule Community Health. Participants, their family, and community members were treated to an afternoon tea with entertainment including live music, poetry and a video compilation of the many windows that were adorned during the project. Each participant also received a framed photograph featuring themselves in front of their window art.

### Meet Wendy



*'Small things can make the biggest impact'*



Meet John



Meet Mary



Meet Cheryl and Stan



Meet Wendy B



Meet Aidi and Dongliang





## SOCIAL PRESCRIBING REFERRAL NETWORK MODEL FRANCIS BAUM FELLOWSHIP 2024



The Francis Baum Fellowship is awarded to a Banyule Community Health staff member each year. The fellowship looks for an innovative and creative idea that explores new and meaningful ways to engage and support the community, which should have a direct positive impact on the community and align with Banyule Community Health purpose and values.

Zara Poole, a Peer Programs Coordinator was the recipient of the Francis Baum Fellowship in 2024. Zara is coordinating a project called 'Connections' which aims to explore ways in which a social prescribing referral network model could be implemented at Banyule Community Health.

Social prescribing is a more holistic approach to healthcare, which promotes community-based integrated care and helps to de-medicalise health service provision. For example, social prescribing could include re-introducing a client to social activities, hobbies, learning new skills, volunteering or physical activities.

'Connections' aims to strengthen pathways between mental health and wellbeing services by raising awareness of the range of non-clinical services at Banyule Community Health and in the broader community. It supports clinicians to think much more creatively and holistically by linking their clients into community initiatives and activities that suit their wellbeing needs and ultimately improve health and well-being, build social connectedness and reduce loneliness.

*"Following the pandemic, I noticed the emerging trend of loneliness and lack of connection across our client population. After reading some articles on Social Prescribing and how this had been implemented overseas with great success, it was clear to me that this was an important initiative for preventative health and improving health outcomes for our client community."*

**Zara Poole, Peer Programs  
Coordinator**



## GROWING KNOWLEDGE FOR THE FUTURE TASTE OF TUCKER

**Taste of Tucker** engaged communities in West Heidelberg to enhance their knowledge and skills in preparing, growing, and accessing nutritious food. Using a community-led, intergenerational approach, the program reached 424 individuals, including 223 primary school children and 96 youth.

13 co-designed projects included cooking, gardening, cultural trips, destigmatizing food security, and creating community-made cooking videos and recipe cards. These activities celebrated participants' culture and heritage, providing practical, affordable, and healthy recipe ideas, as well as knowledge in growing and accessing food.

When we surveyed participants, it showed that:

- 95% learned new food-related information.
- 70% felt they strengthened community connections.
- 90% said they had tried new vegetables.
- 75% increased their vegetable consumption.
- 100% became more aware of the effects of sugary drinks.

The program's success led to:

- First Nations Local Elder securing employment with local organisations to make damper during events.
- 8 volunteers and 6 lived experience workers engaging in new and meaningful roles.
- 3 participants finding additional job opportunities.

Kristen from Barrbunin Beek Aboriginal Gathering Space reflected:

*"Taste of Tucker was capacity building at personal, community, and organisational levels. It has given us opportunities to work across programs and involved so many people."*

This project gave communities the opportunity to:

- Strengthen their capacity to grow, cook, and access food.

- Emerge as leaders and allow them to articulate what was important to them.
- Gain confidence in talking about challenges we experience around food.
- Share experiences and tips for low-cost healthy meals and create a sense of community and connection over this shared challenge.
- Connect with each other through having fun and sharing their memories and culture around cooking and growing food.

**Taste of Tucker** was inspired by community feedback and further developed by Jane, Lis and Alex (Health Promotion Team) and Leeanne and Kristen (Aboriginal Health Team). The program was funded by VicHealth.



424 individuals, including 223 primary school children and 96 youth were involved in this project.





## 40 YEARS OF BANYULE DIABETES SUPPORT GROUP

Living with diabetes can be a challenging journey that requires constant vigilance and emotional resilience. One way to navigate this path is by joining a diabetes support group or, in the case of our community, starting one.

An inaugural Diabetes Support Group meeting was held in November 1983 at the former West Heidelberg Community Health Centre. Beryl Burkett, Committee of Management member, was a driving force in establishing the group with the support of health staff, local GPs and community.

Joining a diabetes support group offered emotional support, shared knowledge, motivation, improved coping skills, accountability, and access to community resources at a time when resources were not as readily available as they are today. It gave people the space to bond and support one another with people who understood what they were going through.

Group members formed a committee to assist in the planning of meetings and produced a regular newsletter to inform members of the latest in diabetes management. Education, support, and social activities with guest speakers on topics related to diabetes and health issues, workshops and presentations were paramount in keeping group members informed.

Speakers dedicated to diabetes health through treatments, changes and new information were regular visitors to the group. Visitors included health and chronic diseases specialists, Diabetes Nurse, Diabetes Educator, Community Health Nurses, Podiatrists, and Dietitians.

In October 2021, Roslyn Brown, Banyule Diabetes Support Group Convenor, was awarded the Diabetes Victoria 2021 Outstanding Contribution – Lived Experience with Diabetes Award. This award recognised Roslyn's lived experience voice making a meaningful contribution to improve the lives of other Victorians affected by diabetes.

It is due to the commitment and efforts of many volunteers that the Diabetes Support Group remained active for over 40 years, as new information about diabetes became easier to access. Thank you to those group members who provided lived experience support to others in our local community.

We pay tribute to some of the wonderful volunteers who meant so much to the group over its long life of 40 years; including Beryl Burkett, Bob Dunn, Lyn Corcoran, Val Radford, Alan Pearce, Kerry Pearce, Denise Viskovic, Roslyn Brown, and Ian Brown.





# WORKPLACE WELLBEING INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Our workforce is our greatest asset in providing high quality, responsive, safe and inclusive services to our community. The 5 Ways to Wellbeing provide the organisation with a best practice framework to support our people's health and wellbeing, so they can bring their best selves to work.



Our Workplace Wellbeing Champions play a vital role in keeping wellbeing on the agenda for discussion and activation in each team. Blood donation is a new initiative this year, with a team of staff registering with LifeBlood to donate under the Crimson Compassion Collective.



We invest in our staff with training opportunities that align with our strategic priorities and support their ongoing professional development.

We participated in the national People @ Work survey, taking a proactive approach to hear from our workforce about the key psychosocial hazards and factors that have been associated with poor mental health and wellbeing.

Our results established that there are minimal job demands (aspects of work that require sustained psychosocial or physical effort) and ample and positive job resources (aspects of work that are helpful for achieving work goals) at Banyule Community Health, which is considered best practice for organisations. There is always room for improvement. The very nature of our work, helping those who are extremely vulnerable, means we experience emotional demand in the context of constant change. We have a commitment to constantly improve our consultation processes to keep our staff and communities informed and aware of changes across our organisation.

**IN 2023/24 COMPLETED TRAINING IN:**

- Our Leadership team have all completed Mental Health First Aid
- LGBTIQ+ Foundation training, and further training in Trans Affirming Workplaces and working with Older LGBTIQ+ people
- Aboriginal Cultural Awareness

## LGBTIQA+ INCLUSION

# INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY



In April 2024, Banyule Community Health achieved Rainbow Tick Accreditation. The Rainbow Tick is a quality framework that helps organisations demonstrate that they are safe, inclusive, and affirming employers and service providers for the LGBTIQA+ community.

Banyule Community Health established its commitment to diversity and inclusion with a range of targeted focus areas in the 2020-25 Strategic Plan. Improving safety, inclusion, and access for the LGBTIQA+ community was a priority and a commitment to achieving accreditation was a core goal across the organisation. The work in obtaining the Rainbow Tick comes on the back of a deep investment and commitment to co-design with community members, advocacy groups, and staff.

*"Whilst Banyule Community Health has always been inclusive and diverse, it was apparent that our commitment needed to be more explicit to the LGBTIQA+ community. We needed to lead and demonstrate our commitment in deliberate and targeted actions to improve the health and wellbeing of our LGBTIQA+ identifying community members."* CEO Mick Geary.

The commitment from Banyule Community Health Board, management, and staff included training from experts and people with lived experience, celebrating key milestones and events, reviewing policy and systems, being stronger advocates, and activating equitable pathways to service delivery.

*"I'm so proud of the work that our people have undertaken to achieve the Rainbow Tick. We will deepen our work in inclusion and engagement on the back of achieving Rainbow Tick" stated CEO Mick Geary. "Our plans are to ensure we attract and retain staff from the LGBTIQA+ community and ensure our services are safe and inclusive for the community."*

Tommy, Emergency Relief Social Worker and member of the LGBTIQA+ community, said: *"The journey to Rainbow Tick Accreditation ensures our workplace environment & services are welcoming, safe and inclusive for everyone, particularly the LGBTIQA+ community."*

Malcolm, a key community member of the Rainbow Shapers and Shakers Working Group, was elated with the news. *"Having my voice heard, to influence the look and feel of the centre, has made me feel proud to be part of the Rainbow Tick journey, and I feel honoured to be involved in the successful accreditation."*

We want to thank all those who were involved in Rainbow Tick, no matter how they helped, as we celebrate this key milestone in our inclusion journey.





*Having my voice heard, to influence the look and feel of the centre, has made me feel proud to be part of the Rainbow Tick journey, and I feel honoured to be involved in the successful accreditation."*

**Malcolm**

*"I'm so proud of the work that our people have undertaken to achieve the Rainbow Tick. We will deepen our work in inclusion and engagement on the back of achieving Rainbow Tick. Our plans are to ensure we attract and retain staff from the LGBTIQ+ community and ensure our services are safe and inclusive for the community."*

**Mick Geary**





## RECONCILIATION INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY



### *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan*

*66 of the 72  
commitments are either  
completed or ongoing.*



This year's theme for National Reconciliation Week was **Now More Than Ever**, a call to all Australians to stand up for First Nations Peoples' rights, recognition, and justice.

Our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan, launched in December 2022, provides a clear and practical framework for Banyule Community Health to progress our enduring commitment to Reconciliation. 66 of the 72 commitments are either completed or ongoing in the mandated key domains of:

- Relationships
- Respect, and
- Opportunities

Notably, there has been a strong and positive completion of mandated Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training, which was tailored to our organisation.

Working together with Barrbunin Beek Aboriginal Gathering Place, Banyule City Council and Reconciliation Banyule at a local level, and in partnership with the peak body of Aboriginal Health Services in Victoria, the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation to listen, to support and to progress true Reconciliation.

Banyule Community Health and Merri Health Reconciliation Action Plans are both at the Innovate level and both current RAP's finish in December 2024. We are committed to the development of a new RAP early in the life of the new entity.





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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
- Rainbow Tick Standards







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