



Quality Account & Annual Report 2021-2022





Our Cover

For nearly 50 years we have worked to keep our community connected to health and wellbeing. In a year unlike any other, our connection with those around us has been more important than ever, as we worked through the world health crisis to build a strong foundation for a better future.

Connect Health & Community acknowledges that this work was created on the traditional land of the Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. We offer our respects to Elders past, present and future. We recognise and respect the cultural heritage of this land and extend this to the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia.



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Connecting with our community

CEO and Chair Report

Last year we commented that it was a year like no other as we continued to keep our community safe and healthy, operate with a COVID-free workplace and respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year has been a continuation of the same.

Several new or expanded initiatives occurred during the year, including the High Risk Accommodation Response (HRAR), SACC COVID-19 Vaccination, COVID-19 Testing and COVID Positive Care Pathways. Most recently we have been advised of our successful application for a GP Respiratory Clinic.

These initiatives would not have been successful without the collaboration of many others including Alfred Health, Royal Children's Hospital, Monash Health, South Eastern Public Health Unit, South East Melbourne Primary Health Network, Bayside, Glen Eira and Kingston local governments, Central Bayside Community Health Services and Star Health; as well as local community groups and residents.

A number of strategic projects were completed over the year, including replacement of the pool roof at the Bentleigh East site, augmented by installation of solar panels as part of our action on climate change. This work was made possible through funding received from the Victorian Metropolitan Health Infrastructure Fund.

Other strategic projects are referenced in this report.

A significant event and milestone for Connect Health & Community this year was that the Members of Connect Health & Community voted in favour of a voluntary amalgamation with neighbouring community health services - Central Bayside Community Health Services and Star Health - under the principles that: it must be better for clients, better for staff and volunteers, and better for the communities we are here to serve.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we have continued to deliver the highest quality community health and disability services possible, across the whole of our local community.

The pandemic has seen the three organisations strengthen their collaboration with each other, to partner on numerous initiatives in a highly coordinated way, and as a consequence, we believe that we can operate better together, than when we are apart.

In doing so, we can achieve both better health and wellbeing outcomes for our community and improve service delivery. We can reduce duplication of services within adjoining local government boundaries and while our services differ, there is an opportunity for us to collaborate more closely with each other to provide greater service access to clients.

More information about the rationale for the voluntary amalgamation can be found at www.voluntaryamalgamation.com.au

We thank our staff, volunteers and supporters for their ongoing contribution and added value they bring to our work. Without them we could not deliver the great level of service that we have been able to.



Amanda Murphy

Chief Executive Officer



Lars Schiphorst

Chair, Board of Directors



Building healthy people, healthy communities

For nearly fifty years Connect Health & Community has been proud to help support members of our community to achieve their best health and wellbeing.

Our organisation arose from innovation and a commitment to support the people of the southern Melbourne bayside area. Four doctors; Dr Jago, Dr Rose, Dr de Crespigny and Dr Fredman, secured funding to build and operate a community health centre in the area in 1973.

The facility aimed to provide the local population of 20,000 with primary medical care by doctors and allied professionals, regardless of financial status.

However, in 1974 other local doctors opposed the concept, fearing they would lose business, but the centre went ahead - operating without doctors. Shortly after, our site at Gardeners Rd, beside Moorabbin Hospital, was purchased.

By 1975 we were up and running as East Bentleigh Community Health Centre with five staff ready to serve the local community. The following year, momentum had gathered and we welcomed more than 700 new clients, established our volunteer program and began providing hydrotherapy.

In 1978 our first mini-bus was donated to enable transport services for older clients and those living with a disability.

From there we have never looked back.

Over the five decades we have operated, we have worked to support all members of the community to connect with their health and wellbeing across the spectrum of physical and mental health needs, for all the family.

The culmination of this dedication to community was possibly best reflected in our work addressing the challenges of the past three years. As the COVID-19 pandemic stopped the



world in its tracks, it became more apparent that now, more than ever, our community needed us.

From early on, our staff were on the frontline.

Working with our subsidiary, Sandringham Ambulatory Care Centre – administering COVID tests, distributing vaccines, working to keep older isolated, disabled and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients safely connected to the world, supporting those in high-risk housing communities and those with young families emerging from seemingly endless hibernations to name just a few – Connect Health & Community has emerged from this test stronger and more connected to our community than ever.

As we look to a new era of community health in our voluntary amalgamation with Star Health and Central Bayside Community Health Services, we draw on a proud and rich history knowing we will continue our work to support and build healthy people and healthy communities.

This year, we proudly provided the following services for families in our communities: cardiac rehabilitation, children's services, community nursing, community transport, counselling (children and adults), dental, diet and nutrition, exercise groups, Gambler's Help, hydrotherapy, high risk accommodation support, occupational therapy (children and adults), physiotherapy, podiatry, psychology, safe driving program, social support groups, speech pathology, volunteering, youth support, COVID testing, vaccination, positive care pathways and a GP respiratory clinic.



Voluntary Amalgamation, better for healthy communities



In April 2022, the Members of Connect Health & Community, Central Bayside Community Health Services (CBCHS) and Star Health voted in favour of a voluntary amalgamation to form the Better Health Network (BHN).

Better Health Network will become one of the largest community health services in Victoria, serving more than 600,000 people across 18 sites in Melbourne's southeast.

The guiding principle of the amalgamation is to be better for clients, the community, staff and volunteers. The formation of Better Health Network will allow more access to coordinated services and improved health, wellbeing and support outcomes for people across these communities.

Our staff and volunteers will be vital to the future success of Better Health Network, and exciting opportunities will become available

to those wishing to work across different programs at BHN. This is all part of a promise to be a better organisation for everyone in the community.

Clients of Connect Health & Community will not notice any changes to their services as we continue to operate under this name until the legal finalisation of BHN in the 2022-2023 financial year.



Healthy people and capability

With a focus on 'Healthy People, Healthy Communities' throughout 2021/22, we continued to offer flexible working arrangements to ensure staff could remain safely working from home and capitalise on technology to provide inclusive experiences and upskilling opportunities for our people.

In November 2021 the organisation recognised and rewarded staff on their achievements during an Internal Awards event. Staff from all areas of the organisation presented reflections on the previous year and the amazing work undertaken every day across Connect Health & Community to continue supporting our community.

Throughout the year, we recruited 40 new staff members, giving us a total of 171 employees. Pleasingly, staff turnover decreased in 2021/22 compared with 2020/21.

Our staff completed 805 hours of professional development training at a total investment cost of \$55,000.00 (wages and training costs). This represented an increase of 17% in training spend compared with 2020/21; a reflection of our commitment to develop and retain our valued staff members.

Key training outcomes included:

- 100% of staff completed the Mandatory Hand Hygiene Module through the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.
- We tripled the number of online learning modules for staff (compared to traditional face-to-face training) and the uptake was approximately 90% for each course.
- Clinical and administrative staff completed My Health Record Training in readiness for this system's implementation.

- Relevant staff completed Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) training which supports staff to identify, assess and manage family violence risk effectively.
- 38 staff members completed First Aid Refresher Training during the year. This was delivered through a mix of onsite and hybrid training to suit the varying needs of our workforce.

We also supported a staff member to obtain their Certificate III in Dental Assisting through an Australian Apprenticeships arrangement.

Early this year we participated in a study by Deakin University and the Victorian Healthcare Association (VHA) to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on community health staff.





The research assessed the impact of COVID-19 on our teams, and compared our impact with staff in other organisations.

The results showed our people compared favourably with other organisations, demonstrating greater confidence, flexibility and teamwork in the face of COVID-19.

Connect Health & Community staff were slightly less concerned (42%) for their families' health than other health care workers (48%) and less concerned their clients would contract the virus (25%) compared with other healthcare colleagues (36%).

When it came to diversifying their work, our people experienced a bigger change to the work tasks they did (85%) compared with their industry colleagues (81%), and more Connect Health & Community staff (37%) staff said the situation brought them closer to their manager than broader peers (32%).

And with greater change in roles, Connect Health & Community staff didn't feel as much reduction in workload (6.3%) compared with their industry colleagues (12%).

But like their industry peers (51%), half of Connect Health & Community staff (52%) believed the pandemic brought them closer to their families.

Healthy people through workplace wellbeing

With feedback from staff showing COVID-19 had impacted their mental health and wellbeing with less opportunities for social interaction and a feeling of a loss of connection to each other, we established a Workplace Wellbeing Committee during the year.

The committee was established to address some of these issues and provide opportunities for staff to come together, learn from each other, celebrate achievements and feel part of a bigger team.

With regular input from staff, the Committee takes on suggestions in an effort to keep meeting the needs of the organisation.

So far staff have participated in staff and volunteer lunches, Easter celebrations, Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, celebrations of staff milestones, coffee vouchers, birthday cards and vouchers and staff appreciation days, among other events.

In a survey conducted after the program was launched, staff indicated an increased sense of connection to their peers and the organisation.

Healthy communities through better access

After the merger of the Intake and Reception teams to form the new Service Access team, our focus has been on improving our clients' experience in accessing our services.

A key area of achievement has been an improvement in our waitlist management - specifically in the areas of physiotherapy and podiatry, two services that are always in high demand.

The waitlist management project resulted in a substantial reduction in the number of clients that were on the waitlist at any one time, and the reduction in the number of weeks a client had to wait for an appointment after first contact.

This has allowed us to deliver health services in a timelier manner to meet the needs of our clients.





Reconnecting in person

As COVID-19 restrictions eased through the year, we were able to resume face-to-face services for our older clients.

Throughout the second pandemic year we had continued our cardiac rehabilitation program through a variety of video, telephone conference, single consultation and group consultation formats. And while feedback was generally positive, clients were pleased to return to group face-to-face sessions where they could reconnect with their community.

From December through to February, our Bentleigh East hydrotherapy pool was extensively renovated, and thanks to the assistance of the City of Glen Eira we were able to move our classes to the Glen Eira Sports and Aquatic Centre.

By March our pool renovations were complete, and hydrotherapy returned to our Bentleigh East site, along with a new hydrotherapy service opening at the Danny Frawley Centre in Moorabbin. At the same time, we recommenced our land-based groups – in all a busy period for our physiotherapy service.

We also expanded our suite of land-based exercise groups with the latest evidence-based program for hip and knee osteoarthritis pain, called GLAD.

Our Social Support groups returned to face-to-face gatherings after a long period of remote connection, through the delivery of activity packs and telephone conference calls. Some clients were unable to return, but those who did were overjoyed to meet up with friends again.

Our dietitian and occupational therapists reviewed their service processes to reduce wait times for clients and introduced electronic appointment reminders for dietetics clients.

Learning from pandemic response demands, some of our services have been redesigned to provide staff with the flexibility to work from home through telephone and video conference options for clients, where requested. As we head into the new year with the exciting prospect of the Better Health Network, we look to more opportunities for staff and further enhanced client services.





Delivering healthy smiles

During the year, our Dental service remained a key area in working to help keep our community connected to health and wellbeing.

Our team treated 4820 clients (3505 adults and 1315 children) and provided 467 specialist referrals to ensure clients received the most appropriate and timely dental care.

Throughout this time, our team attended to clients whose dental care was either deferred or discontinued because of the COVID-19 restrictions, enabling us to clear backlogs.

Between January and June 2022, we managed to significantly reduce the wait times for general dental care by approximately 19 months. Routine denture care appointment wait times were reduced by approximately 10 months and priority denture care wait times were reduced by four months.

As part of our commitment to better dental health care for all, we also began working closely with Dental Health Services Victoria to implement the new Centralised Waitlist Management initiative.

With the return to 'new normal', we resumed our outreach work in Early Childhood Settings (ECS) to promote key oral health messages and early detection of tooth decay for improved oral health outcomes for pre-schoolers. We are currently assisting a number of preschools in our community to achieve their Smiles 4 Miles award by December 2022.

During the year we continued to invest to acquire new equipment to ensure services delivered are of the highest quality and comfort for our clients.

The team has continued to participate in infection control training, adopting and applying revised dental infection control guidelines on a daily basis throughout the pandemic. All Dental practitioners have continued to keep abreast of industry specific changes and apply current evidence to practice, to ensure better clinical outcomes.

Our Dental program continues to undertake capacity building activities to ensure all dental services delivered are in line with the Dental Health Services Victoria's value-based service model.

Community Connections

As with many organisations who rely on volunteers, the COVID-19 pandemic had significant implications for volunteering at Connect Health. Despite the disruption caused by COVID-19 and the need to follow strict public health directions, we continued to support clients with transport to medical appointments. We even managed to recruit a few new volunteer drivers during the lockdown period.

The experiences of our more than 100 volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic was diverse.

Many volunteers had positive experiences, reporting that their voluntary work helped them maintain a connection with others, kept them active and busy, and gave them a sense of purpose. For others, the public health restrictions reduced their satisfaction with volunteering, some noting the loss of connection.

The focus for the Community Connections team was on the wellbeing of our volunteers and most vulnerable clients, making sure we stayed connected with them during the unprecedented experiences of the pandemic.

Despite the challenges of the year, our volunteers helped keep our community healthy, travelling nearly 30,000 km taking our clients to important appointments through our community transport service, and supporting the full range of Connect Health & Community services with more than 6000 hours of volunteer work.

As we looked to our return to 'new normal' we stopped to consider the plan for our volunteers returning and imagined what a sustainable future would look like for both the volunteer program and the organisation.

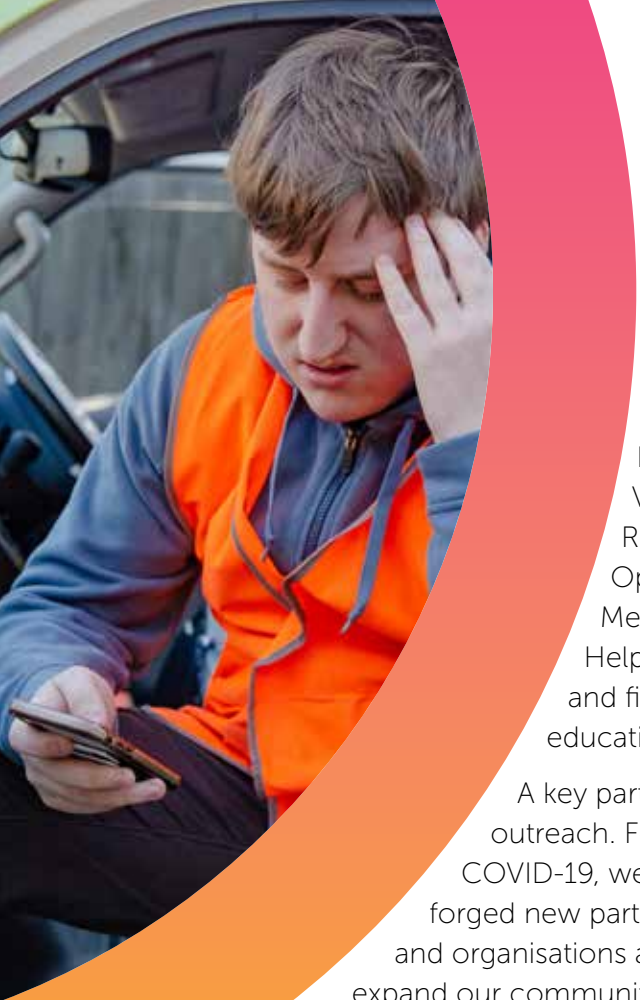
To do this we worked with an external provider to develop a Volunteer

Strategy that would support us all into a healthy, sustainable future.

Under this new Volunteer Strategy, our focus and commitment going forward is to:

- promote best practice
- understand and respond to emerging trends
- identify future opportunities
- continue to streamline recruitment
- ensure the volunteer program is responsive to the needs of the organisation and our volunteers.





Gambler's Help Southern

Our Gambler's Help Southern program is the largest gambler's harm support service in Victoria funded by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. Operating across 13 locations in Melbourne's south-east, Gambler's Help Southern offers therapeutic and financial counselling, community education programs and venue support.

A key part of our work is community outreach. Following the challenges of COVID-19, we have revitalised networks and forged new partnerships with local councils and organisations across south-east Melbourne to expand our community outreach programs.

Between 2021-2022 we increased our culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) services, partnering with clubs and organisations to provide cultural-specific gambling support resources in collaboration with translation services. Through this, we delivered a number of Gambler's Help presentations, including a collaborative session with Settlement Services International for more than 200 members of the Bangladeshi community.

This year our school outreach program exceeded targets, delivering 55 sessions to schools, youth networks and TAFEs to increase awareness

of gambling risks and harms. We received positive feedback from schools and students with several recommending the program to other campuses.

Gambler's Help Southern also delivered professional development sessions in a range of sectors, including alcohol and other drugs, justice, mental health, family violence and community support. These sessions armed health professionals with the tools to identify, understand and refer clients experiencing gambling harm.

Partnering with organisations that provide services to at-risk groups including Reconnect, ReSPIN, Three Sides of the Coin, WHISE and HALT has enabled us to deliver joint activities and address the intersection between gambling and domestic violence, substance abuse and homelessness.

Promoting health for healthy communities

Throughout the year our Health Promotion Team continued its work encouraging healthy minds and healthy habits. A major focus for the team has been supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people and public housing residents.

Ongoing work with Sandringham College and Brighton Secondary College on the Boss Brain project, saw teens engaging with mental health first aid training to gain the tools to support themselves and their peers.

VCAL students and teachers at Sandringham College worked together to implement a mental health awareness day at the school. The program has since been embedded in the VCAL curriculum as part of the school's personal wellbeing project.



Analysis of our work showed 77% of students at Sandringham College who took part in the Boss Brain mental first aid training reported an increase in their ability to recognise signs and symptoms of mental illness, and 81% said they were more likely to seek support for mental health concerns.

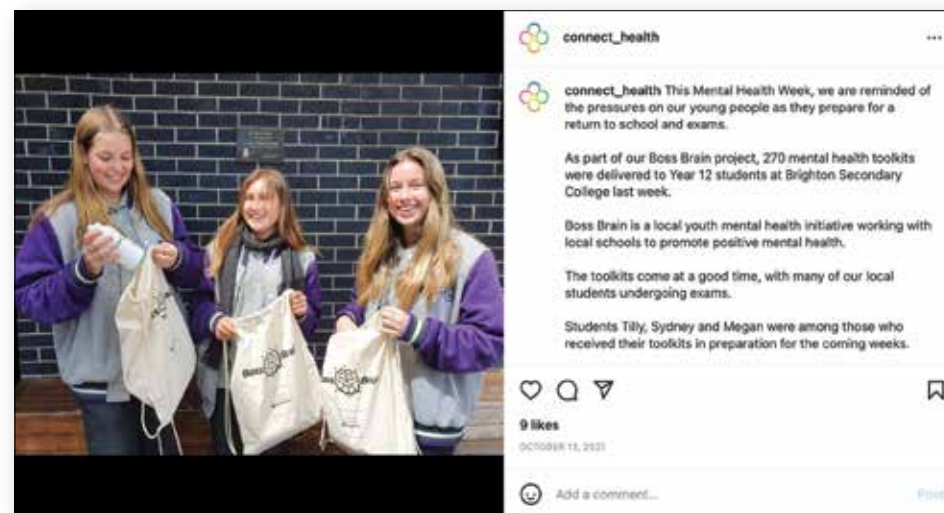
The Health Promotion Team has also worked closely with public housing residents to support healthy eating habits through the implementation of community gardens, and provided hands-on help during COVID outbreaks as part of the High-Risk Accommodation Response (HRAR) program.

Through collaborative design with residents at Kenneth Street public housing estate in Sandringham, a community garden was established with seasonal produce planted and weeds removed in the area. Despite COVID lockdown delays, residents enthusiastically engaged with the project and enjoyed gathering onsite for community garden events and workshops.

As recognising healthy eating habits starts with our kids, the team expanded its focus by adopting state-wide programs, including Vic Kids Eat Well. Our staff supported parents and babies through the INFANT program and connected with sporting clubs to promote healthy eating habits.

Through engagement with sporting clubs across Glen Eira and Bayside councils, we distributed cooking appliances to 38 canteens as part of the Healthy Appliance Pack Initiative.

The project has kickstarted conversations around healthy food choices at local sporting clubs and enabled canteens to offer better food and beverage options through the distribution of air fryers, slow cookers, NutriBullets, popcorn makers and sandwich presses.





Connection through counselling

Therapeutic Counselling

The Gambler's Help program spans all of southern metropolitan Melbourne, providing services from 13 sites from South Melbourne to Rosebud, and out to Dandenong and Cranbourne. With 14 therapeutic counselling clinicians working across the entire catchment, we provided more than 11,000 hours of service to more than 1000 clients. With counselling sessions provided both in person and via phone and video because of the pandemic, the gradual re-opening of society saw a high percentage of clients choose to maintain phone or video services.

Financial Counselling

Payday loans have emerged as a growing issue for many clients this year. It is just one of the many systemic issues for which we have been advocating change this year.

Imagine having \$900 taken from your wage each fortnight to pay off six Payday loans that increase each day, but you couldn't afford it and shouldn't have been offered it in the first place. This general scenario is facing many.

While many factors, including socio-economic situation, family life and cultural background, vary widely, the common factor is gambling - with clients facing gambling losses or being affected by another's gambling. They seek assistance with crippling debt, budgeting or ideas to protect their money from gambling.

This year we provided 3953 hours of service to 289 individual clients. This was through face-to-face appointments at East Bentleigh, St Kilda, Rosebud, Frankston and Dandenong, as well as via telehealth and telephone appointments.

Carmel, a counsellor with us for 21 years says she loves supporting our clients.

"When they're committed, we can get good outcomes. Like Bob*, a former client, who rang me recently to tell me he'd had five years of not gambling. He'd gone bankrupt but is now

looking forward to buying a house. He had been gambling since he was a teenager and he's now in his mid-40s."

Other advocacy issues this year included the often unaffordable use of Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) products, utility bills, ATO debts, car loan arrears and rental or mortgage arrears.

We've observed an increase in clients attending with debts resulting from speculation on the share market and/or cryptocurrency and have upskilled to ensure we move as technology does.

As a Work Development Permit (WDP) sponsor we have helped clients pay off \$207,036 worth of Fines Victoria fines through counselling. We've also supported clients in financial hardship with Recovery Assistance Payments to keep their cars on the road, move to cheaper housing, buy food, while working through the issues related to gambling and getting their lives back on track, just like Carmel's client Bob did.

**not his real name*

Gambler's Help Southern's therapeutic counsellor, Gretta, published her first book chapter, 'Single Session Therapy with Those Affected by Gambling: Listening to Clients and Their Therapeutic Counsellors' in the book 'Single Session Thinking and Practice in Global, Cultural and Familial Contexts: Expanding Applications,' this year.

Gretta has been part of the Connect Health & Community team for more than 10 years and was selected with her co-authors to contribute a chapter to the book after presenting at International Single Session Therapy Symposium, 'Single Session Thinking: Going global one step at a time' in 2019.

She undertook extensive research with her co-authors, Vicky and Bonita, and says the book chapter blended their individual strengths in the field.

In the work, Gretta explains a 'single session therapy' model where Gambler's Help Southern (GHS) clients and their families are offered one-off therapeutic consultations with a family therapy team of Alfred and GHS counsellors, as part of their ongoing counselling at GHS.

Gambler's Help Southern Counsellor, Anastasia, was invited to give her clinical perspective on the Reset App launched by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (VRGF) and The Hon, Melissa Horne MP.

Reset is a free, confidential web application designed to help people understand and manage their gambling.





Mental Health

The Mental Health team provides programs designed to assist people in all life stages.

The counselling team offers both face-to-face and phone/online sessions to clients. The Accessible Psychological Interventions (API) program is funded via South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network (SEMPHN) for clients with a mild to moderate mental illness. Referrals for this are through the SEMPHN intake and there are no fees for this program.

Our family services/family violence program is run with referrals coming via The Orange Door. This provides case management and parenting support to families where there may be family violence or child protection concerns.

Our Innovative Health Services for Homeless Youth (IHSY) program provides support to young people who are at risk of homelessness and may be disconnected from family and community supports.

Once lockdowns ended, the team re-commenced working on site at the East Bentleigh office. It has been a positive experience for staff and clients to have face-to-face appointments.

The Mental Health team received 416 client referrals across our programs and provided a range of services such as counselling sessions, advocacy and family support. We also completed referrals to services within Connect Health & Community and to external services such as food banks, financial counsellors, GPs, and local community service providers. Through the four programs, the Mental Health team has provided 5503 direct service contacts hours to clients in our local community. This work has supported people in our community to enjoy a better quality of life.

A young person self-referred to our Youth Counselling service, presented with high anxiety levels and a chaotic home life. She asked for help to manage her anxiety. After a number of sessions, she started to practice some of the self-management skills provided by her youth

counsellor and began to show improvement in her day-to-day management of anxiety and started to live her life in a healthier way.

When the young person first presented to us, she demonstrated anxiety at a level 7 out of 10. Her goal was to gain more independence and fulfill her dream of travelling to Europe on her own. With time, the young person was able to find the courage to organise a trip to Europe with the hope of having the adventure and independence she had been seeking for many years. In her last session with her counsellor, she again completed an assessment tool to rate her anxiety levels, coming out at 4 out of 10. Her counsellor was pleased with the incredible progress and her presentation as more confident, with less complaints of anxiety. Two weeks into the Europe trip her youth counsellor received an email from the young person in Germany stating what a wonderful time she was having and thanking us for all the support.

Paediatric Allied Health

Our Paediatric Allied Health team provides services and therapies to young children and adolescents, including speech pathology, occupational therapy, dietetics, psychology, physiotherapy, podiatry, and allied health therapy assistance.

Services are delivered from East Benthleigh and Cheltenham sites, and may also occur at the child's home or educational setting. Since the easing of the COVID-19 restrictions, the Paediatric Allied Health team has offered a range of group programs aimed at helping children develop the skills needed with transitioning to school. This has included the Kinder Skills, School Readiness and Handwriting Groups.



Feedback received from the groups has been exceptionally positive:

"Luke* loves it, and he has developed so much this past year and half that he has been attending his occupational therapist and Kinder Skills group.

"I feel the most important part of the journey has been Luke's ability to make a connection with his therapist, Rachel. This has really helped his ability to take instruction and learn the skills that he needed to develop.

"And of course it is really good for helping him develop and be prepared for school, while giving him all the skills to help him with everyday life,"

**Not his real name.*



Healthy communities supported by High Risk Accommodation Response (HRAR)

The High Risk Accommodation Response (HRAR) service was established statewide to prevent, prepare for and respond early to coronavirus (COVID-19) infection within public housing and other high-risk accommodation setting across Victoria.

Our program focused on supporting residents and the management of high-risk accommodation settings across the cities of Glen Eira, Bayside and Kingston. These included public housing, rooming houses, caravan parks and community housing.

The program was designed to support these facilities across the lifecycle of the COVID-19 response, with catchment planning, community engagement, prevention and preparedness, active linkage to health and social supports and outbreak support.

We were the lead providers for the catchment spanning Bayside, Kingston and Glen Eira local government areas, engaging with housing proprietors and residents, and working closely with stakeholders.

During COVID-19 outbreaks, resources were diverted away from standard service delivery to focus on the immediate response to COVID-19.

Catchment Planning underpinned all the work of HRAR ensuring a localised and nuanced response to the impacts of the pandemic. Key stakeholders, including state and local governments and community agencies worked together, often as one team to adapt and respond to community needs. This strong sense of collaboration has continued beyond HRAR with additional collaborations developed.

Digital Event Launch

LEARNINGS FROM A PANDEMIC

Connecting with communities in social housing



Australia-first research

We formed a partnership with Swinburne University Centre for Global Health and Equity, Merri Health, Star Health, Peninsula Health and Bendigo Health, to capture the voices and experiences of HRAR residents. More than 800 social housing residents participated in a survey during the pandemic with an ‘action research approach’, allowing findings to be shared with partner agencies in real-time. This enabled the feedback provided to impact service delivery and responses across multiple sectors, including local government, health, community health and emergency services, as events transpired.

This research was launched to an audience of national and international health and community experts, receiving much acclaim.

The research report can viewed at <http://healthliteracyandsocialhousing.com.au/>

Community Engagement

Data analytics were used to ensure all community engagement during the pandemic was targeted and timely. In the initial phases of the program this included assessment of the risk levels of properties to ensure systems were in place to record and keep abreast of each HRAR property. This meant that when an outbreak occurred, all HRAR properties within five kilometres of that breakout were contacted within 24 hours. As the COVID-19 pandemic deepened, the focus shifted to isolation support.

The HRAR Program undertook more than 15,800 individual property visits and delivered more than 63,000 fliers with information and support.

Prevention and Preparedness

Supporting residents and property managers to reduce risk of COVID-19 infection and manage outbreaks was a key component of HRAR.

Ensuring residents had easy access to COVID-19 vaccinations was fundamental to this work. Pop-up vaccination clinics were provided onsite at key public housing housing estates and rooming houses in partnership with our Sandringham Ambulatory Care Centre mobile vaccination team. We also assisted residents to access local vaccination clinics. Through this we supported the delivery of more than 27,700 vaccines.



As Rapid Antigen Tests became an important addition to the response, we supported clients and vulnerable communities with access to RATs, as well as information on how to use them. More than 15,200 RATs were distributed to individuals and groups.

Active links to health and social supports

Actively linking clients to health and social supports was a key challenge, as many community services were unable to offer service during the outbreak. Strong relationships were maintained with key networks, with the HRAR team often providing flyers and information on behalf of other services. A key focus of the individual support offered to clients as part of outbreak support was ensuring clients were linked to appropriate services where possible. The Swinburne Research noted earlier is also being used to guide and inform future service delivery access for HRAR residents.

Outbreak support

As the COVID-19 pandemic crisis deepened, the HRAR team pivoted the program response to provide individual outreach support to HRAR residents who were needing to isolate. The program ensured all HRAR residents who needed to isolate had the necessary supports and resources to isolate safely. This included providing access to medications, food support, testing and daily phone contact when required. 535 individual HRAR residents received outbreak support.

We were 'all hands on deck' working across Melbourne to support our community through the pandemic.

Working together, we partnered with Central Bayside Community Health Services and other agencies, door knocking different at-risk community housing sites in the Bayside and Kingston areas to screen for COVID symptoms, encouraging testing, checking on welfare and completing referrals for any assistance that might be needed.

Everyone at Connect Health & Community worked to help the community through the challenges of the pandemic. We were onsite in public housing estates, providing COVID-19 testing and vaccination information. We knocked on 1000s of doors delivering vital information to people who need it most. We also provided transport to make it faster and easier for these residents in our community to be protected from COVID.





Care at 'The Kids'

During the year we were proud to expand our Sandringham Ambulatory Care Centre (SACC) assessment and care service to those presenting to the emergency department at the Royal Children's Hospital in Parkville.

The service was implemented to speed the assessment and treatment of non-emergency cases presenting at the hospital.

CEO, Amanda Murphy, said the new general practice service would provide great benefits to patients attending the hospital, as well as the emergency medical teams.

"The new service will quickly assess and direct the needs of patients to ensure the best medical outcomes for all. By doing this, we aim to speed up access to emergency care for those who need it, while assessing and treating non life-threatening cases in a timely manner, without impacting on emergency department resources," she said.

The seven-days-a-week model was based on the one provided at the Sandringham Hospital for the previous two years.

"The service has been greatly received by the community and enabled a dynamic response to the changing needs of the community through COVID-19 with the provision of testing and vaccinations," Ms Murphy said.

Connection through better infrastructure

To enable us to better connect with our community and the environment, we upgraded some of our key infrastructure during the year.

Utilising two grants from the Melbourne Health Infrastructure Fund we upgraded our hydrotherapy pool, including a new roof, new windows and other structural repairs.

We also replaced the roof of our Gardeners Road site and installed a solar power system to save us \$16,000 in energy use per year and reduce our carbon footprint.

Our other green initiatives included converting all our lighting to LED, installing new pool dehumidifiers, additional insulation to the roof and a light-coloured roof to reduce our air-conditioning load.

Also this year, we engaged Kooya, Australia's first, largest and only Indigenous fleet management company, to manage our fleet of cars and buses.

We are now proudly solar powered

This year we finished installing more than 250 solar panels on our roof in Bentleigh East, enabling us to capture the power of the sun. This is a huge leap forward in reducing our environmental impact.

Conservatively, these panels will produce over 112,000 kWh of energy per year. That will reduce our CO₂ emissions by at least 43 tonnes:

43 tonnes of CO₂ is equal to:

- The average electricity consumption of 28 houses.
- 22 cars running on gasoline, each driving 15,000km per year.
- 72 flights to Sydney per passenger on a full flight.
- 150 Olympic sized swimming pools in volume





Compliance and quality

Throughout the year Connect Health & Community continued to work to meet our quality and clinical health governance requirements to ensure the best-practice treatment, service and support was maintained for all clients.

With the maintenance and adherence to policy, frameworks, governance bodies, strategic planning and sub-committees of our board of directors, each area of the business regularly reviewed and engaged in best practice processes to ensure the delivery of service that met safety and quality standards.

Risk management, business continuity and incident and emergency management were regularly tested and maintained.

Our COVID-safe plan was regularly reviewed and updated when restrictions or infection control advice changed. Our workplaces remained COVID-free.

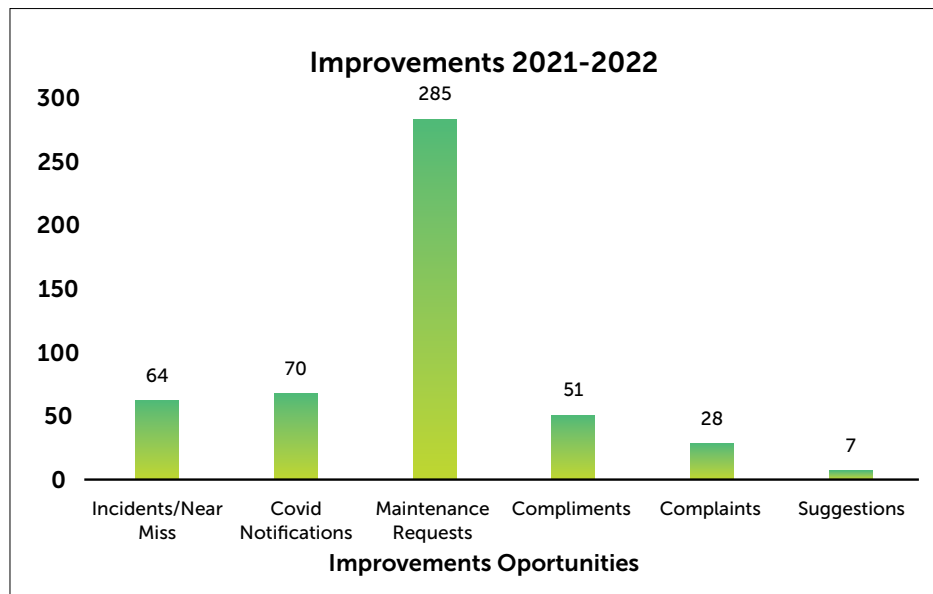
We maintained open channels of communication with clients for feedback, compliments, comments and complaints, with monitoring by the CEO and reporting to our Risk, Quality and Clinical Governance board committee.

Materials were created in accessible formats to ensure best-possible access to information and support for all. We are proud of the efforts of all our staff to ensure the best possible experience for all our community.

Connect Health & Community is a welcoming and child safe organisation.

We are accredited to the:

- NSQHS (National Safety and Quality in Healthcare) Standards
- NSMH (Mental Health) Standards
- NDIS (Disability) Practice Standards
- Aged Care (Older Adults) Quality Standards
- Human Service (Disability and Child/Youth) Standards.



This graph demonstrates our commitment to design and delivery of safe quality care to clients.

Each report, referral or request is dealt with in a timely manner.

We welcome all people and apply a zero tolerance to family violence/abusive behaviour.





Connect Health & Community nursing award

Congratulations to Dana-Quyen Thanh Do on receiving the Connect Health & Community Award at the Monash University MNHS Student Awards.

The MNHS Student Awards are held every year to celebrate the great achievements of students across the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences.

For over 10 years, the Connect Health & Community Award has been awarded to the student with top honours in the Bachelor of Occupational Therapy (Honours) research programs OCC3702 and OCC4091.

We are proud to support the emerging talent in the healthcare sector and congratulate Dana-Quyen on her achievement.

During the year we also offered the Connect Health & Community Scholarship to support an Indigenous student complete their studies in a bachelor degree awarded by the Deakin University Faculty of Health.

Our Partners

Alfred Health
Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
BAYCISS
Bendigo Bank
Bendigo Community Health Services
Bentleigh Secondary College
Brighton Secondary College
Cabrini Health
Castlefield Community Centre
Central Bayside Community Health Services
Commission for Children and Young People
Connect Health & Community Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group
Deakin University
Educating Mindful Minds
HALT
Hampton Community Centre
HDAA Australia
Hearing Australia
Highett Neighbourhood House
J-Air
Local Governments of Glen Eira, Bayside, Cardinia, Casey, Stonnington, Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Frankston and Mornington Peninsula Shire Councils
Merri Health
Monash Health
Monash University

Moongala Community Centre
NORTH link
NDIS
Peninsula Health
Reclink
ReSPIN
RMIT University
Rotary Club of Bentleigh Moorabbin Central
Sandringham College
South East Public Health Unit (SEPHU) Monash Health
Southern Melbourne Primary Care Partnership
Star Health
State and Federal Members of Parliament
Study Melbourne
Swinburne University School of Health Sciences Global Health and Equity
Three Sides of the Coin
WHISE - Women's Health in the South East
We acknowledge the continued ongoing support of key funding bodies:
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
Department of Health
Australian Government Department of Health
Dental Health Services Victoria
Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation
South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network



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