



Merri Health  
Healthcare that moves with you

# Research + Innovation

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 Merri Health

 @MerriHealth

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# Welcome

Our commitment to health care isn't restricted to providing services. We pride ourselves on being an active participant and contributor to undertaking research and evaluation.

*Research and Innovation* is Merri Health's bi-annual publication that highlights some of our recent and current achievements in the areas of research and evaluation.

By conducting ongoing reviews of our programs and services, we ensure that they are based on best practice, are evidence-based and aligned to the population health needs of our community.

*Research and Innovation* highlights current research and provides the opportunity to identify new opportunities for collaboration, share our learnings and contribute to evidence base for population health and wellbeing.

In this edition you will find information on our recent health and wellbeing festival, our population health team's work in Fawkner, and our new services that are having a positive impact on our community.

This newsletter is aimed at current and potential partners, stakeholders, funding bodies and key players in the community, health and primary care field, such as the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Health and Ageing, academic institutions, Medicare Local, Primary Care Partnerships and other community health organisations.

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## Be Merri

Wellbeing of residents was on the radar this holiday season, as Moreland celebrated its first health and wellbeing festival.

An initiative of Merri Health, Be Merri took place from 4 to 8 December, with key health, wellbeing and social activities across Coburg, Fawkner and Brunswick.

“Be Merri was an opportunity to connect with locals through fun activities, while talking to them about their needs and what local services they could access,” said Merri Health chief executive Nigel Fidgeon.

“It was the first time we’ve done something like this and it was incredibly successful. It was great to see so many people get involved and stop by for a chat”.

Free activities included health checks, mindfulness sessions, community gardening, photo booth, face painting, children’s activities and screen printing, and Fawkner’s low cost community grocer.

Merri will continue to explore different options for engaging with locals, with a few businesses already making contact to discuss ideas for collaboration. If you have an idea or would like to be involved in 2018, get in touch at [communications@merrhealth.org.au](mailto:communications@merrhealth.org.au)

**234** PEOPLE GOT INVOLVED IN OUR ACTIVITIES

**171** PEOPLE WERE NOT EXISTING CLIENTS



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# Hello Fawkner

Fawkner continues to be a main focus for Merri Health's population health team, and will continue into 2018.

Addressing areas of disadvantage with a focus on social cohesion, connections and food security, the team is expanding their support with the introduction of an e-newsletter; 'Hello, Fawkner!'

'Hello, Fawkner!' will further strengthen already existing projects in the area, such as Ready Set Prep, a school-readiness program; The Community Grocer, an accessible fruit and vegetable market, and the Urdu-speaking women's group.

'Hello, Fawkner!' is an opportunity for locals and those living in surrounding areas to learn more about Fawkner, the locals, projects and things of interest taking place in the area.

Stay connected to 'Hello, Fawkner!' by subscribing at [goo.gl/1pn1De](http://goo.gl/1pn1De)



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## Knock, knock: Taking it to the streets

As part of our new Integrated Health Promotion Plan 2017-2021, staff from our community health promotion and youth health promotion teams took to the streets, to learn about residents' perspectives on wellbeing, their communities and living in Fawkner. Talking to more than 50 Fawkner residents, we covered topics related to the Integrated Health Promotion Plan priorities of social inclusion, preventing violence against women and food security.

The information from residents will help inform the types of projects we will do in Fawkner over the next four years, as well as help identify who we should speak to further.

### Who we spoke with:

- > 50% had lived in Fawkner 10+ years (17% for 50+ years).
- > Cultural backgrounds: Australian, Pakistani, Maltese, New Zealander, Italian, Turkish, Indian, Lebanese, Cypriot and Greek.

### Other demographic factors:

- > People from different religious backgrounds (Catholic, Christian, Muslim).
- > People with disability and/or mobility issues, or carers of people/children with disability and/or mobility issues.
- > 37% mentioned being a parent.

### What we learnt:

- > Most people do their main food shopping outside of Fawkner, as it's easier/more convenient to go somewhere that has everything in one place, and fresh produce at main shops in Fawkner is not always great quality or cost-effective. Quite a few people also relied on someone else to be able to purchase their food, due to different issues like mobility, not having a license or only having one car.
- > People with young families have lots of good entry-points to services that keep them connected with the Fawkner community and meeting different people. This includes places like schools, leisure centre and library.
- > For residents without children, there are a lot more barriers in keeping connected and participating in local events.
- > There is a disconnect between older and newer communities.
- > Lots of people had never heard of Merri Health. This is important as it tells us we need to look at new ways of connecting with this community.

# Food security for all

Now in its second year, The Community Grocer continues to grow with more than 100 visitors per week and 75 markets held.

The Community Grocer Fawkner is a social enterprise model that looks to improve food security through access to a low-cost healthy produce market in Fawkner. The market was created in response to a 2015 needs assessment by Merri Health, which showed food security was a significant issue in Fawkner.

Partnering with The Community Grocer Carlton to form The Community Grocer Fawkner, we address food security through access to fresh, seasonal and healthy produce in an area with limited fresh food options, and lacking public transport.

Since it first opened its doors, the market has supported:

- > 35 local residents with volunteering opportunities.
- > Affordable food options for the 68% of people identifying as low-income.
- > An increase in reach, growing from an average of 69 customers per week in April 2016 to 97 in April 2017.
- > More locals to attend with a 40.5% increase in customer numbers from 2016 to 2017.



## Where to for The Community Grocer Fawkner?

We will explore:

- > Trialing a delivery system so residents can receive fresh produce even if they can't get to the market.
- > Expanding our 'mystery box' program to community groups.
- > Launching a weekend market to create more shopping options for local residents.



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## Small steps make big impact

The Little Feet and Limbs Clinic continues to go strong, having launched earlier this year.

Little Feet and Limbs clinic is one of the services targeted at helping children grow and reach their full potential. The Little Feet and Limbs Clinic has:

**ACHIEVED A 97%  
ATTENDANCE RATE**

**SUCCESSFULLY  
ASSESSED AND  
PROVIDED  
TREATMENT PLANS  
FOR 44 CHILDREN.**

**FOUND THAT  
'IN-TOEING GAIT'  
WAS THE MOST  
COMMON PROBLEM  
IN CHILDREN.**

A service of Merri Health, the clinic provides help for young children who are having foot or leg problems affecting the way they walk, with support from a physiotherapist and podiatrist.

Since launching earlier this year, the clinic has helped more than 40 children under the age of eight, who have been experiencing different problems impacting on their development.

Team leader of prevention and chronic illness care, Jason Dunn, said that these problems are better treated while a child is young, to prevent further complications later in life.

“If some of these conditions are left untreated, then a child may compensate with other joints, therefore creating subsequent symptoms later in life.

“Some conditions may indicate neurological conditions which should be picked up as early as possible,” he said.

Taking into consideration the clients' needs, the clinic provides joint assessments with a physiotherapist and podiatrist where possible, allowing ideas to be shared and discussed, while avoiding duplicate visits and costs.

Throughout the past six months, the clinic has achieved a 97 percent attendance rate, hinting towards that success of the new approach.

The clinic has been able to strengthen relationships with local maternal and child health nurses, with many referrals coming directly from them.

The Little Feet and Limbs Clinic will continue to expand in 2018, to continue to cater for high demand.

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**“Problems may arise when a child begins to walk; they may experience frequent tripping or falling, may not meet growth milestones or experience growing pains at night.”**



## Glad to have GLAD

Sufferers of hip or knee osteoarthritis can now access support in the community with the introduction of GLAD.

GLAD stands for Good Living with Arthritis in Denmark™ and is an education and exercise program that uses current research-based recommendations to treat knee and hip osteoarthritis.

Based at Merri Health's Brunswick clinic, the program provides a supervised, graded neuro-muscular exercise program delivered by appropriately trained physiotherapists. It includes two to three education sessions and two group exercise sessions per week, for a total of six weeks.

The low cost clinic is open to anyone under 64 years, and accepts self-referrals. Those 65 years or over will need to refer to the clinic via My Aged Care – let them know you want Merri Health as your preferred provider.

Professionals or referrers are welcome to get in touch with senior musculoskeletal physiotherapist, Yashwant Rathi for more information.



### Get in touch

*For referrals and questions*

 03 9388 9933

 [info@merrihealth.org.au](mailto:info@merrihealth.org.au)

## Keeping our pets safe

Supporting women and children to leave violent homes sooner, with temporary accommodation to house pets safely.

Initiated by Merri Health's Victims Assistance Program community educator Jo Seymour, Keeping our Pets Safe is a project that commenced in 2016, looking to improve and coordinate the northern metropolitan region's response to pets in family violence situations.

A recent study published in the Journal of Interpersonal Violence, found that one in three women delay leaving family violence due to concerns about leaving their pets behind.

The project brings together representatives across the sector that will be able to support and bring about change, such as local councils, Victoria Police, the integrated family violence service system and animal welfare agencies, such as the Lort Smith Animal Hospital.

While there is still work to be done, we are nearing closer to supporting families leaving a violent relationship, with the option of boarding their pets while searching for more suitable accommodation.

As of the 30 June 2017, the Northern Integrated Family Violence Services coordination team was providing specialised training on animal abuse in the context of family violence to all animal management teams at local councils, with Victoria Police also involved in the training.

The project comes in response to recent family violence findings and Moreland City Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan 2013–2017, under which they offered free housing for animals where needed to support women and children.



## Merri volunteer and project take out 2017 Victorian awards

Merri Health volunteer and local sport participation project have taken out two Victorian-wide awards.

James Simpson volunteers with Merri Health's Healthy Mind Hub, supporting locals' mental health through music.

James was awarded the Premier's Volunteer Champion Awards in the impact category for his work.

"I lead a community singing group with guitar and I'm there for the participants. We're a group of locals that get together, enjoy each other's company and make music.

"The work I've done here has honestly been life changing. The most important thing I've learnt about volunteering is the importance of making a connection with people," James said.

James' award follows a win by local sport participation project Count Me In that took out this year's VicHealth awards.

Awarded for building health through sports, Count Me In improves the physical and mental wellbeing of children and young people

from refugee and migrant backgrounds by linking them into sports clubs.

Since September 2016, Count Me In has reached 172 children from 28 local schools and nine countries.

In late 2016/17, Merri Health received a further two research grants, supporting further development and evaluation of the program, allowing it to reach more children and their families for better wellbeing.



Find out more about Count Me In and our other health initiatives



<https://goo.gl/xf12kk>

### Brunswick

11 Glenlyon Road  
Brunswick VIC 3056  
t: 03 9387 6711

### Brunswick West PAG

382-386 Moreland Road  
Brunswick West VIC 3055  
t: 03 9386 3575

### Fawkner

79 Jukes Road  
Fawkner VIC 3060  
t: 03 9357 2444

### Thornbury

298 Victoria Road  
Thornbury VIC 3073  
t: 03 9484 5314

### Chifley Drive, Preston

Level 2, 110 Chifley Drive  
Preston VIC 3072  
t: 03 9495 2500

### Coburg

93 Bell Street  
Coburg VIC 3058  
t: 03 9350 4000

### Harding Street, Coburg

1st Floor, 368 Sydney Road  
Coburg VIC 3058  
t: 03 9319 7400

### Glenroy

5D Cromwell Street  
Glenroy VIC 3046  
t: 03 9304 9200

### Victoria Street, Coburg

21 Victoria Street  
Coburg VIC 3058  
t: 03 9355 9900

### Interchange North West

Shop 9E Anderson Street  
Pascoe Vale VIC 3044  
t: 03 9350 4600

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