

Safe and inclusive services

Annual Report 2020



Merri Health
Healthcare that moves with you

Annual Report 2020

Merri Health creates healthy, connected communities through local health services for people at every age and stage of life.

We're a not-for-profit community health organisation that has been part of your community for over 40 years.

Merri Health's work is grounded on respectful and inclusive practice that meets the unique needs of the Victorian community.

In December 2019, Merri Health launched its largest campaign to date: Safe Spaces. The campaign called on people to support safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ people. Inspired by the campaign, this year's report is dedicated to Safe Spaces and beyond: how we support Victoria's diverse communities with safe and inclusive services.

Our purpose

To enrich diverse communities through quality health care and support services.

Our promise

To provide you with an outstanding customer experience through genuine relationships, positive outcomes and community presence.

Our values

We are **MERRI**: we Motivate, Engage, Respect, Respond and Innovate.

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 [@merrihealth](https://www.facebook.com/merrihealth)  [goo.gl/gWrGqi](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goo.gl/gWrGqi)
 [@MerriHealth](https://twitter.com/MerriHealth)  [Merri Health](https://www.linkedin.com/company/merri-health)



Accreditation

Merri Health is an accredited health service provider. This means we complete regular accreditation reviews by independent bodies to ensure that our policies, procedures and systems meet safety and quality requirements, and our services are safe and responsive.

Our services are accredited under the following Standards:

- Early Childhood Intervention Standards
- Mental Health Service Accreditation
- Quality Improvement Council
- Human Services Standards
- Community Care Common Standards
- National Safety and Quality in Healthcare Standards — dental services
- Rainbow Tick Inclusive Practice Standards

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as traditional custodians of the land and waters and acknowledge and pay respect to their Elders past and present.

We acknowledge the financial support received from the Victorian and Federal Governments in addition to several local government areas and revenue we generate through our other activities to support service delivery.



Cover image: Merri Health team at the launch of the Safe Spaces campaign in December 2019. Read more about this on pages 22–23. Russ (centre) highlights the campaign's hashtag #RainbowHealthMatters.



SPREAD

LOVE

NOT GERMS

About the report

Learn about our organisation, how it's structured, Board of Directors and governance, our services and financial reporting.

About the Annual Report

The Annual Report provides you with information about our organisation, how it is structured, Board of Directors and governance, our services and financial reporting.

Every year, we also include our Quality Account in this report, which provides you with insights about our services and performance. Due to COVID-19 and in line with reporting requirements from Safer Care Victoria, the Quality Account is not required this year.

Instead, we have extended this year's Annual Report to share how we're tracking: our performance, actions and achievements, in the following six areas:

1. Safe and inclusive services
2. Closing the health gap
3. LGBTIQ+ health
4. Family violence and gender equality
5. Healthy communities
6. Healthy ageing

How do we put this information together?

Many teams across the organisation are involved in the preparation of this report. When deciding what should be included, we are guided by statutory requirements and Merri Health's areas of priority based on our Strategic Directions.

We review this report with lots of people: our Board, leadership team, staff, clients and Community Engagement board sub-committee. We do this to ensure the information is correct, easy to understand and informative.

Where to find this report

This report can be found at each of our sites. See page 71 to find an office location near you. The report is also available on our website, merrihealth.org.au.



Chair's report

In 2020, Merri Health finds itself in unprecedented times as the organisation faces the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this public health crisis, Merri Health has again demonstrated its resilience and importance to our community.

Leadership

The year has had some major successes with the securing of Federal Government funding to lead carer support services in Victoria. Carer Gateway sees Merri Health become the leading commissioner of carer services in Victoria, in partnership with seven Victorian health and social support providers. Collectively, we bring more than 100 years of experience in the field.

Merri Health was also prominent on our streets as a Yarra Trams Community Partnerships Program recipient for 2020. Championing social inclusion, the campaign supported one of our identified priorities from our 2018–20 Strategic Directions. With statistics from the Black Dog Institute finding that 'same-sex attracted people are twice as likely to experience anxiety disorders and three times more likely to experience affective disorders

compared with the broader population', the campaign is especially important right now, as we see a surge in mental wellbeing needs.

Advocacy

A key success of Merri Health is its ability to work with and advocate for marginalised and vulnerable groups. In response to a broad range of consultations and evolving reform agendas, we have advocated on behalf of consumers within primary healthcare reforms, aged care and mental health reforms, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and in the transition to Client Directed Care.

Investments

The Board has continued its investment to enhance the standard of our governance, reporting and transparency to the community we serve. We have partnered with Governance Evaluator to improve our governance performance. Governance Evaluator combines technology, consultants, sector specific resources and insights to inform and improve future governance performance and decision making. We are committed as a Board to provide good and open governance.

Our strong financial performance has allowed us to continue to invest into local healthcare needs. In early 2020, we finalised the upgrade to our Glenlyon Rd. Brunswick site that offers dental and clinical support, improving accessibility, wayfinding and resources for staff.

Changes

2019 saw our long-term chief executive, Nigel Fidgeon move on. Nigel had been our chief executive for over eight years and led the transition in a period of expansion. Nigel also provided valuable leadership to the community health sector. Nigel's support was also critical to the many initiatives we undertook that led to some incredible outcomes. As a Board, we wish to extend our gratitude for his leadership and hard work.

Merri Health was pleased to announce the appointment of Tassia Michaleas as our new chief executive in November 2019. Tassia commenced her career in community health in 1996 and since

2008, has been a long-standing, highly valued member of the Merri team.

Tassia is now leading Merri through the COVID-19 pandemic while implementing our new Strategic Directions. The new plan will ensure responsive and dynamic services to the many communities we support.

Exceeding targets

We again met ambitious targets and grew the organisation — the introduction of Carer Gateway provides Merri with \$30 million in carer funding across five years, and services such as aged and NDIS have seen significant growth, equivalent to \$3.2 million for aged, excluding fee for service. NDIS allied health services welcomed three new staff, Support Coordination supported its largest number of clients to date (225) and welcomed two new staff, and MerriKids saw an increase in NDIS funding packages — a \$6,000 increase on average per client.

On behalf of the Board I would like to thank Merri Health staff and management for their work. I would also like to thank my fellow Board members for their contribution and dedication, and acknowledge the departure of three long-term Board members who made a significant contribution — Marleine Raffoul, Michael Malakonas and Katerina Angelopoulos. In their place we welcome Sam Garrasi, Sheena Watt and Seide Raffoul, and we look forward to our future with optimism and a determination to do even better.

Carlo Carli
Board Chair



CEO's report

While the past 12 months has seen many challenges and uncertainty, Merri Health has continued to grow and significantly expand its service offerings and reach. Our service has remained innovative, responsive and agile, and we have continued to invest in our people, facilities and infrastructure to provide timely, appropriate and effective services.

A new beginning

It was with tremendous pride and great privilege that in November 2019, I stepped into the role of chief executive after being part of the Merri Health team for 12 years. I have a deep passion for making a difference to the health and wellbeing of communities and I look forward to the challenge of driving Merri Health to continue to deliver high quality, safe, innovative and vital services.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my predecessor Nigel Fidgeon, who after eight years of service leaves a strong legacy. We will be ever grateful for his dedication and forever proud to call him a fierce friend of Merri Health.

Strategic Directions

This year signaled the end of our Strategic Directions 2018–2020. Throughout this year's report you'll find a snapshot on how we performed and delivered on our strategic intent addressing disability support, aged care, carer support, mental wellbeing, social inclusion, prevention of violence against women and chronic conditions.

While we reflect on the successes of the past, planning for our future identifies a challenging, complex and volatile environment. Our soon to be released Strategic Directions 2020–2025 deliberately creates an authorising and enabling environment, which ensures we are ready to respond to the ever changing and complex needs of our communities.

Trends

Current trends and emerging issues that will significantly impact community health include mental health, our ageing population and increased incidence of chronic disease. A priority focus of Merri Health is workforce innovation and expanded scope of practice. This will assist us to keep health care costs manageable and support increased demand. Some of the ways we're addressing these are by redesigning job roles and system improvements, and the 'teaching' role we undertake by supporting students — learn more on page 51.

Achievements

Some notable successes of the past year include:

- successful organisational accreditation across 31 standards in November
- a consecutive Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency
- our community partnership with Yarra Trams advocating for safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ communities
- expanding service offerings to families in regional Victoria with our school readiness program
- the continued success of our Family Foundations pilot program, offering education for new parents in partnership with Murdoch Children's Research Institute

- our expanded aged care supports in mental wellbeing and social inclusion, and elder abuse prevention work
- launch of Ready, Set, Prep, a school readiness program for Fawkner children and their families.

Adapting and responding to change

Two significant and unprecedented external events; the bushfires over the summer months and the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, has seen the organisation challenged and respond with great agility and tenacity. Read about how we adapted service provision and modalities for safety on pages 24–25.

We are also proud to support the Department of Health and Human Services in responding to COVID-19.

In June, we supported the set-up and running of three testing clinics in Brunswick, Glenroy and Fawkner. Fawkner drive-through tested more than 7,800 people over three weeks.

Partnerships

The complexity of the service system means that partnerships are key to delivering comprehensive and seamless services.

At a local level, we continue to partner with local government to improve community wellbeing, such as our three-year community engagement project Hello, Fawkner! supported by Moreland Council. The project has engaged more than 500 people via its electronic newspaper. State-wide, our partnership with six other Victorian health and social support providers allows us to support more than 742,990 carers across Victoria as part of Carer Gateway.

Finally, I would like to thank our Board of Directors who generously offer their time and expertise, and our staff and volunteers who offer leadership and support to our communities. Together we will continue to build a resilient and strong organisation that is responsive, agile and at the forefront of innovation.

Tassia Michaleas
Chief Executive

Our reach

The North and West Metropolitan region

The North and West Metropolitan region is one of the most diverse areas, covering 2,981 square kilometres with 14 local government areas. The region is forecast to grow by over 20% to more than two million by 2020.

Diversity

Being a highly cultural and socio-economically diverse region, 33% of the population were born overseas. 28% of those people came from non-English speaking countries. There are five main regional ethnic community councils and migrant resource centres in this region.

Health

The North and West Metropolitan population faces a number of health issues and concerns. Currently, more than 90% of people over the age of 70 have two or more chronic health conditions. These conditions include diabetes, obesity and arthritis.

It is forecast that in 2021, more than 72,000 people will be affected by, or at risk of, a mental health condition. Mental health disorders contribute to 49% of disease and injury among people in Australia between 15 and 24 years of age.

More than half of the adult population (54%) are estimated to have an increased lifetime risk of alcohol-related harm. These numbers are particularly high in Moonee Valley and Hume.

Languages spoken

Within the culturally diverse population, 36% speak a language other than English.

Italian is the most popular language spoken at home other than English, followed by Arabic, Urdu, Greek and Turkish.

Age groups

The median age for the population is 35. The percentage of people aged between 15–64 sits at 66%. Currently, only 2% of the population is aged 85 and over.

Disadvantage

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities are highly disadvantaged in the region. They are less likely to report a total weekly household income of \$1,000 or more compared to non-Indigenous people, and only 47% of those aged between 20 and 24 have completed year 12 or its equivalent.

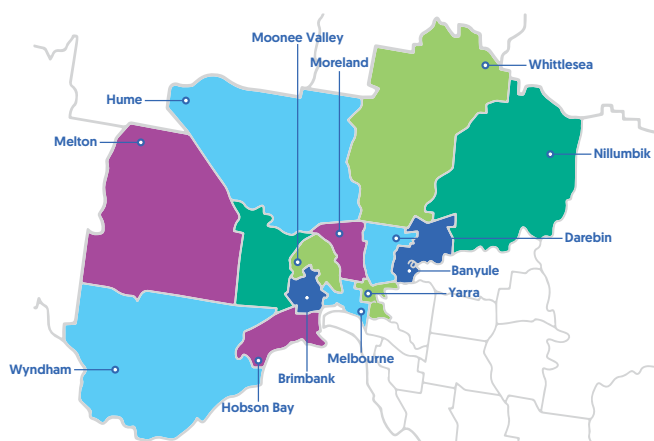
Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate for the region sat at 7%. It is also reported that 4% of people suffer with food insecurity.



90%

of people aged 70+
have two or more chronic
health conditions

North and West Metropolitan region



Wider Metropolitan Melbourne region

The wider metropolitan Melbourne region covers the north, east, west and south of Melbourne. It is comprised of an area with 31 municipalities and is home to 4.9 million people. This region is undergoing significant growth and change.

Diversity

Of these 4.9 million people, 56% were born overseas and 0.5% identify Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Of those born overseas, the highest numbers come from India, China, England, Vietnam and New Zealand.

Health

Anxiety and depression remain a large cause of sickness, and chronic disease is a leading cause of premature death in the region. Obesity and high blood pressure has risen 40% in the last decade whereas smoking has fallen 21%.

Languages spoken

48% of people speak a language other than English at home. The main non-English languages spoken are Mandarin, Greek, Italian, Vietnamese and Cantonese.

Age groups

The median age of this region is 36 which is a year younger than the state's average of 37. The population is also highly made up of people between the ages of 25 and 34. These numbers fall to just over 83,000 for people over the age of 80.

Disadvantage

The poverty rate in this region is roughly 13% of the population. However, the poverty rate for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples sits at 21%. People under the age of 15 are more likely to experience poverty.

Hume region

The Hume region covers north eastern Victoria and the Goulburn Valley and includes 12 Local Government Areas. Hume has one of Victoria's fastest growing populations. Currently, there are 233,471 people living in this region which is a 4% increase from 2019.

Diversity

The population of Hume is also diverse in culture and language: 36% of the population were born overseas and 38% speak a language other than English at home. Of the total, 81% speak English fluently.

Health

The percentage of people who have need for assistance with core activities is currently 6%. Residents of Hume have a wellbeing average score of 75.9 out of 100. Victoria's average is 77.3. A higher score suggests a better wellbeing rating.

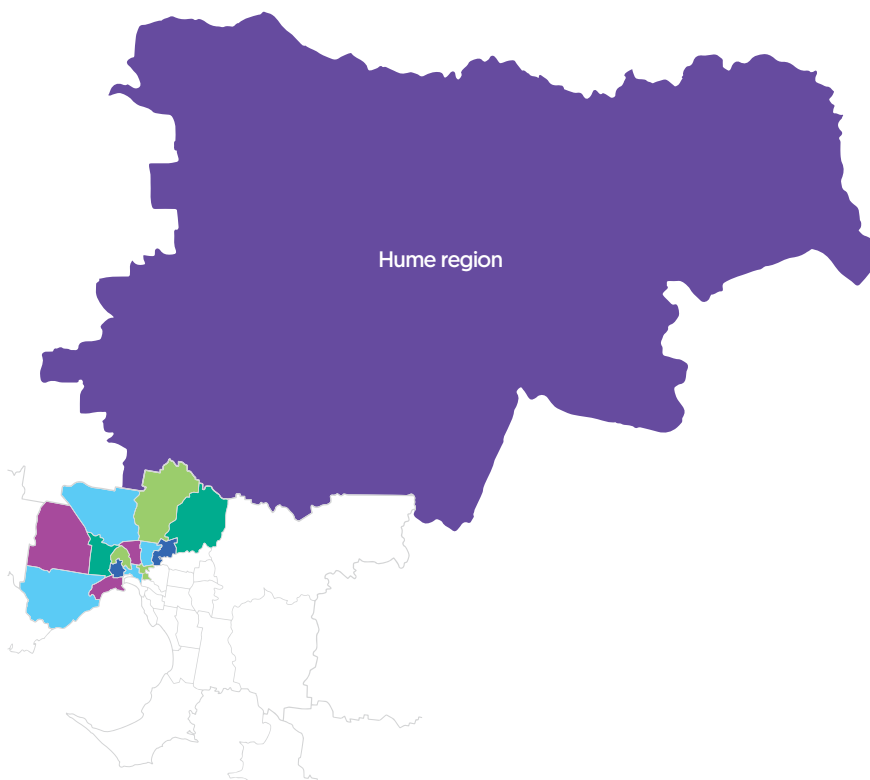
Age groups

The median age is 33 with 67% of people aged between 15 and 64 years. There is also a large number of children aged 0–4.



speak a language other than English at home

Hume region



Wider

Regional Victoria

Regional Victoria, also known as Country Victoria, has a population of approximately 1,458,785 people and covers the greater area of Victoria excluding Melbourne. It is made up of 48 local governments.

Diversity

The most common ancestries in regional Victoria include Australian 50%, English 20%, Australian Aboriginal 9%, Irish 7% and Scottish 5%. With approximately 24,211 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the region, Yorta Yorta and Wergaia are the most common Indigenous languages spoken.

Health

It is reported that people living and working in regional Victoria are at higher risk of developing a mental health disorder. This is due to a higher amount of pressure than those living in Metropolitan Melbourne. These pressures include loneliness, financial issues, natural disasters and low employment opportunities.

Age groups

The median age in regional Victoria is 21, which is 15 years younger than the median age in Metropolitan Melbourne. However, there are more people between the ages of 5 and 14 than any other age group.

Resources

profile.id.com.au/hume/population-estimate?WebID=170

itt.abs.gov.au/itt

health.vic.gov.au/regions/northwestern

melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-melbourne

vcoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Every-suburb-Every-town-Poverty-in-Victoria-VCOSS.pdf

profile.id.com.au/australia/population?WebID=190

creative.vic.gov.au/glossary/regional-victoria

quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au

healthdirect.gov.au/victoria-rural-and-remote-health-services

Our profile

Merri Health is one of Victoria's largest not-for-profit community health providers, with a range of health and wellbeing services to support people at every age and stage of life.

We support our clients by working together: we find out what is important to them, and link them with services and programs that support their health, wellbeing and social goals.

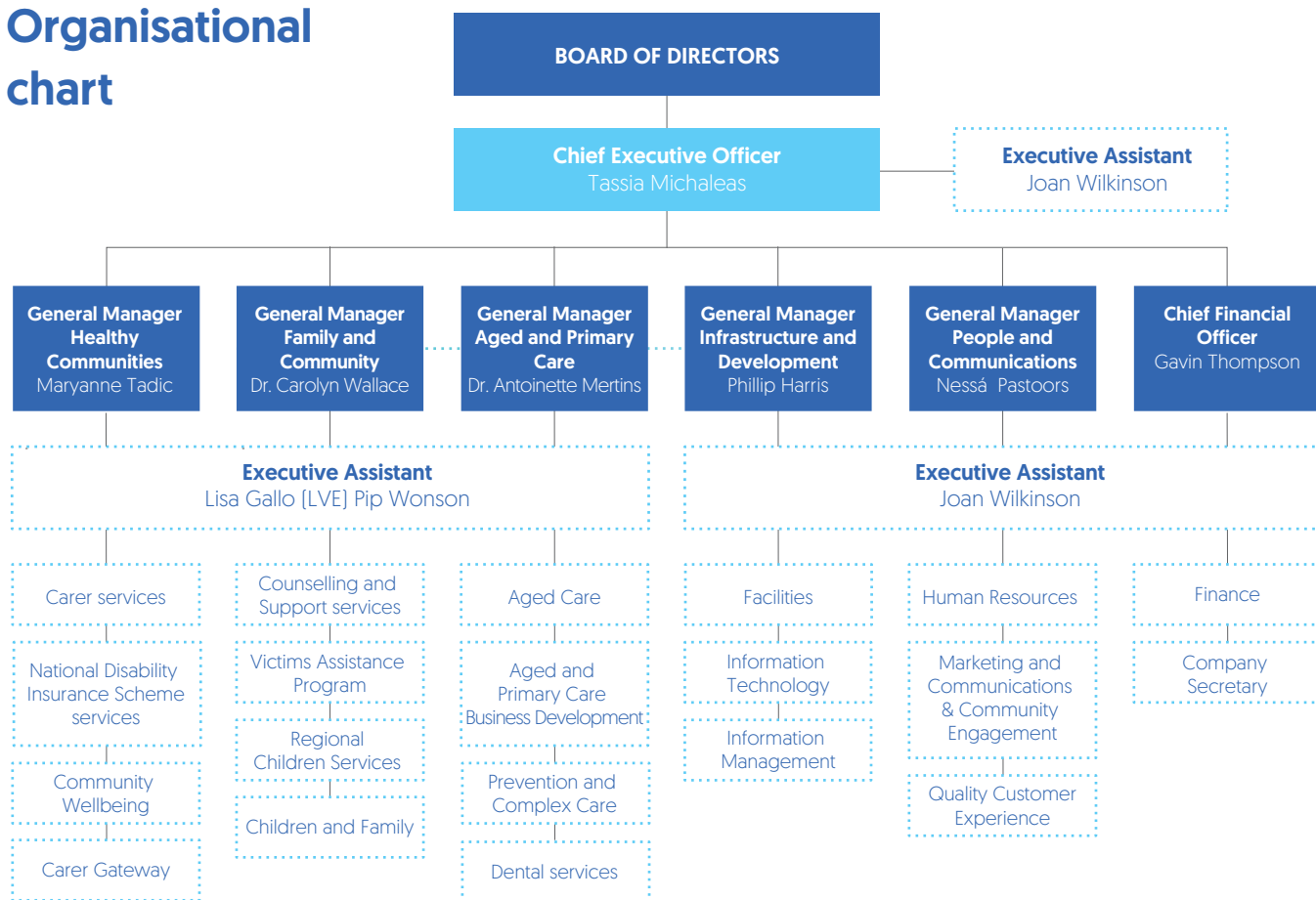
Our 392 staff and 99 volunteers support us to improve health outcomes particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, young and older people, people with disabilities, from culturally diverse backgrounds, with complex health needs, and with various gender identities and sexual orientations.

Over the past year, data from four of our main systems shows we've provided 224,671* service instances from our 10 base locations and beyond. We currently provide 60+ diverse services to support better health across our community.

Service divisions

We have three divisions; Aged and Primary Care, Healthy Communities and Family and Community, in addition to three service support divisions; People and Communications, Infrastructure and Development, and Finance.

Organisational chart



Above: Local older person takes part in our social groups.

* There are many other client systems that are not included in this total.

Our services

We provide many short-term activities, programs and groups to meet the changing needs of our communities.

Above: Staff Christine supports a local to stop smoking.

Aged services

For anyone over 65 years, or 50 years for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, our aged care services support choice, connection and independence. We provide carer support, short-term education and exercise groups, health services like occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and more, respite for carers or frail older people who live at home, social groups and Wellness at Home through our Home Care Packages.

Carer support

Merri Health is the lead organisation for Carer Gateway in Victoria, and is one of seven regional partners across the state providing flexible and individualised support for all types of carers.

Child and family services

Promoting happy, healthy children and strong families with services like counselling, support for children with a disability, education, family services, family violence and support for victims of crime.

Chronic conditions

Treatment and support to help you live well with your chronic condition, such as diabetes, heart and respiratory conditions.

Dental services

Promoting good, oral health through education, community screenings and general dental support.

Disability services

Supporting people with a disability with flexible health services and greater choices. We are a National Disability Insurance Scheme approved provider and can help with carer support, help for children with a disability and their family, education, health services like speech pathology, occupational therapy and more, social groups and Wellness at Home.

Health and wellness services

Supporting you to stay healthy and well with short-term education and exercise groups, health services like physiotherapy, occupational therapy, podiatry and more, support to stop smoking and a Healthy Eating Activity and Lifestyle group.

Mental health services

Supporting recovery, better health and wellbeing through local group activities, one-on-one support, counselling, support for victims of crime and support for residents and proprietors of Supported Residential Services.

Young adult services

Helping put young adults on track for a healthy and fulfilling life with carer support, counselling, education, one-on-one help, support for young people that identify same-sex attracted or gender diverse, group activities and support for victims of crime.

NDIS made easy

The National Disability Insurance Scheme known as the NDIS is a national government initiative for people living with a permanent and significant disability. As of the 1 July 2016, Merri Health started to provide services under the NDIS including support for children with a disability and their family through MerriKids, support coordination, allied health services like occupational therapy, physiotherapy and more, and mental health support.

Community wellbeing

We respond to the changing health needs of our community. We help shape healthy schools, support sport participation for refugee or newly arrived people, address poor school readiness among migrant children through a partnership with local primary schools, support newly arrived women through an Urdu-speaking women's group, support gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer inclusiveness, and much more.

Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors manage the business of Merri Health, providing a governing approach and expert advice.



Carlo Carli
Chair

Carlo is a Moreland resident and has been involved in public policy for most of his professional career. Carlo has been a public advocate for access and equity, multiculturalism and broader human rights issues and was a Member of Parliament for Brunswick for 16 years. He is fluent in English, Italian and Spanish and has a good command of the French language.



Sheena Watt
Deputy chair

Sheena Watt is a public health advocate and company director. A proud Yorta Yorta woman, Sheena is also a Board Member of the Victorian Council of Social Services, Women's Health Victoria, VicHealth (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation) and Progressive Public Health Australia.

Sheena is the Executive Manager for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Programs at Australian Football League (AFL) SportsReady, a national not-for-profit that delivers employment and education for young people.



Julie McCormack
Board member

Julie is the manager of the clinical training unit at Dental Health Services Victoria, where she has been since May 2012.

Julie has a background in education and public health and is a Director of a small business called Incompany, Women in Trades. Julie holds a Masters in Public Health (Women's Health), Graduate Diploma in Education and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, Bachelor of Arts and a Graduate Diploma in Frontline Management. She has trained as a mediator.



Darryl Annett
Board member

Darryl has lived in the northern suburbs of Melbourne for over 22 years and has been actively involved in the community through local school groups and sports clubs.

Darryl is a lawyer who has 30 years' experience, with a legal career in the public sector and private practice, in criminal defence advocacy and criminal prosecution work. He held a four-year appointment as Deputy Chair of the Business Licensing Authority and is currently the coordinator of the Salvation Army's Urban Justice Centre.



Joseph Caputo Board member

Joe lives and is active in Melbourne's northern suburbs and has been involved in advocacy for the rights of minorities throughout his adult life. During 1970–80, he was involved in promoting the rights of migrant workers, and was a member of the Victorian Multicultural Commission from 2001–2011.

Joe has served as Councillor and Mayor in the former City of Brunswick and as Councillor and Mayor in the City of Moreland. Joe is a founding member of the Moreland/Hume/Aileu (Timor Leste) Friendship Committee, is an expert in industrial relations and holds a Master of Business from RMIT.



Benjamin Maxfield Board member

Benjamin Maxfield is the Government Relations adviser for Victoria's \$11 billion Metro Tunnel project. Prior to joining the metro tunnel project Benjamin worked as a senior adviser in both the Gillard Government and then the Shorten Opposition.

Benjamin has a keen interest in defence and foreign policy. In recent times Benjamin has worked with Social Democratic Parties and organisations around the world to improve their electoral standing and human rights record.

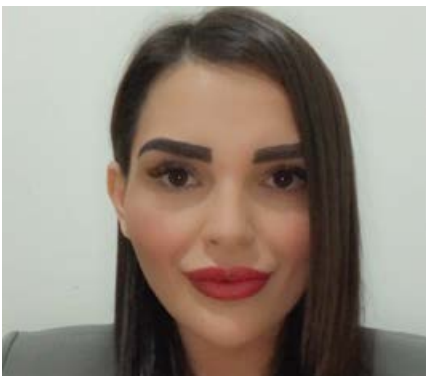


Ann Taylor Board member

Ann is an active member of the community and has been a resident of Moreland for more than 40 years.

With an extensive background in public education, Ann has worked as a teacher, policy officer for the Education Department, and assistant principal and deputy president of the Australian Education Union.

Now retired, Ann hopes to continue to improve the lives of community members through her work at Merri Health.



Seide Raffoul Board member

Seide has lived in Moreland for most of her life and has been actively involved within the Moreland community.

With an extensive background in early childhood education and care, Seide currently sits on the Victorian Multicultural Commission as a regional advisor for the north and west metropolitan region.

Seide is fluent in English and Arabic and through her work at Merri Health, has a vision to improve the lives of young people and the wider community.



Sam Garrasi Board member

Sam is the Chief Financial Officer at the Royal Women's Hospital and has over 20 years experience in a range of senior management and executive roles in the acute public health sector, and has worked in local government and telecommunications.

With a strong interest in public health, financial governance and risk management, Sam is currently a committee member on Merri's Finance and Audit Risk Management Committee and Recommissioning Committee.

Executive Leadership Team

The Executive Leadership Team lead the staff of Merri Health to achieve common goals that are in line with our purpose, promise and values.



Tassia Michaleas
Chief Executive Officer

BEC, BSW, MBA, AFCHSM, GAICD

Tassia has extensive experience in the not-for profit and community sector and commenced her career in community health in 1996. Tassia has strong skills in advocacy, streamlining of systems and processes, effective engagement of stakeholders and developing partnerships. Tassia holds a Bachelor of Economics, Bachelor of Social Work and a Master of Business Administration. She is an Associate Fellow of the Australian College of Health Service Management and a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Dr. Antoinette Mertins
General Manager, Aged and Primary Care

DrPH, PDipHRM, BBSc, GAICD, AFCHSE

Antoinette has experience working in the public and not-for-profit sector across various organisations. Antoinette has strong skills in driving workforce reform, development of innovative community-based models of care and developing partnerships across sectors.

Antoinette holds a Doctor of Public Health degree, a Post Graduate Diploma in Health Research Methodology and a Bachelor of Behavioural Sciences (Psychology). She is a recent graduate and member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Dr. Carolyn Wallace
General Manager, Family and Community

BA, GDip, MA, PhD, GAICD, AFCHSM

Carolyn has held numerous roles managing local services on the social determinants of health, and seeks to influence state and national social policy. She has a passion for regional development and has held senior roles in local government and local development in Victoria and Ireland.

Carolyn holds a Bachelor of Arts in psychology, a Graduate Diploma in Education, Master of Public Policy and Management, and Doctor of Philosophy.



Gavin Thompson
Chief Financial Officer

B.Bus [Acc], GAICD, CPA

Gavin has held a range of senior finance positions across not-for-profit, corporate and international sectors. He has worked in financial management in the homelessness and community service sector as well as roles in a variety of industries such as aerospace, investment banking, software development, retail banking, hotels and trustee services.

Gavin has skills in providing strong financial stewardship to organisations while maintaining a co-operative and helpful approach to aid service delivery programs.

**Nessá Pastoors****General Manager, People and Communications***BCCJ, MER, EMBA*

Nessá brings a wealth of knowledge with 12 years of leadership and management experience in employment relations, project management and governance. Nessá has been instrumental in driving organisational capacity and cultural change across various roles in the non-for-profit sector, and holds a Bachelor of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Masters of Employment Relations, Certificate in Business and Human Resources Management, and an Executive Masters of Business Administration.

**Phillip Harris****General Manager, Infrastructure and Development***MBA, GAICD*

Phill has held senior executive roles within information technology and infrastructure management portfolios spanning a number of industries: education, government, telecommunications and media, and most recently within the health sector.

Phill has a Master of Business Administration, is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has a Graduate Certificate in Leadership in Education and Training, as well as ITIL Service Management and Prince2 Project Management qualifications.

**Maryanne Tadic****General Manager, Healthy Communities***MPH, BHSc, AFCHSM, MAICD*

Maryanne has over 15 years of experience working in the community health sector and has a background Public Health, Health Promotion, and Community Based Research.

Maryanne holds a Master of Public Health degree and a Bachelor of Health Sciences. She is also a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and an Associate Fellow of the Australian College of Health Service Management.

Our workforce

As one of Victoria's largest community health providers, Merri Health continues on the journey to establishing our footprint as an inclusive employer of choice.

In the 2019/20 financial year, we were granted Employer of Choice for Gender Equality for the second year in a row. Merri Health's success is underpinned by a highly competent and culturally aligned workforce that can respond and adapt to an evolving and complex operating environment.

Workforce profile

| Gender | No. of employees | % of total workforce |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Gender diverse | 3 | 1% |
| Female | 329 | 84% |
| Male | 60 | 15% |
| Total | 392 | 100% |

Employment type

| Gender | Full-time | Part-time | Casual |
|----------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Gender diverse | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Female | 118 | 180 | 31 |
| Male | 23 | 30 | 7 |
| Total | 141 | 213 | 38 |

Inclusive workplace

Providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment and practices for clients, visitors, partners and staff are key priorities at Merri Health. The diversity of our staff, clients and community is the driving force behind this.

Education and training offered by Merri that address systemic discrimination which affects people's health and wellbeing includes:

- inclusive practice training focusing on cultural and linguistic diverse communities
- LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice training
- cultural appreciation training focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Education and training

We provide mandatory and optional training as part of our commitment to supporting ongoing learning for our staff.

Examples of mandatory training include:

- child safety
- hand hygiene
- leadership development.

Some optional training includes:

- recruitment and selection
- gender equality
- reviewing staff performance.

In addition, in 2019 we developed our own online gender equality training led by our Family Violence and Gender Equity Committee. The training focuses on empowering staff and leadership by addressing issues, attitudes, practices, structures and differential power relations that may negatively impact their participation, and progression in the workforce because of their gender.

Performance review

Our Individual Performance Review framework outlines our commitment to continuous development for our staff. It's designed to maximise individual accountability, enable open and transparent communication, clarification on performance, and realign direction. The tool supports managers to identify career aspirations, future leaders and succession planning opportunities.

Every year, staff complete their Individual Performance Review using values-based reflective practices. In 2019/20, we had an 87% completion rate. This is 5% lower than 2018/19. In response, our human resources team are running *Merri Talks* sessions to equip leadership staff with the tools to increase completion rates, and we have provided a longer lead time for completion. *Merri Talks* is a communications initiative used when

introducing or reinforcing processes, which takes into account different learning styles: face-to-face and online.

Workforce highlights

1. We were awarded Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency for the second year in a row.
2. To streamline our recruitment process, we introduced an e-recruitment system that includes candidate management, contractual employment, variations and on-boarding.
3. We developed an Employee Screening and Credentials framework.
4. We launched and successfully delivered Wellness at Merri, a 12-week program offering free online health and wellness activities to support staff wellbeing.

Occupation health and safety

1. We completed a full review of our Home and Outreach Visiting practices to ensure best practice and compliance.
2. We redesigned our Infection Control and Outbreak Management framework, broadening and specifying key outbreak management plans such as influenza.
3. We successfully delivered our wellness roadshow including healthy lunches, healthy hampers, mindfulness hubs, massages and more during National Safe Work month.



87%

Completion rate of staff performance reviews for continuous development

Our volunteers

Volunteers provide support in many ways and are an extension of our workforce.



Above: Volunteers Deb and partner Pete practicing in the Merri Health band.

Volunteers are highly valued and are involved in activities such as:

- helping clients in their home
- group support
- administrative support
- supporting mental health clients during creative group programs such as painting and music groups
- supporting groups in the community such as carer groups.

Due to COVID-19, we have seen an overall decline in volunteering due to a period of uncertainty, however interest remains strong.

What did we achieve?

During the 2019/20 financial period we had:

- 99 engaged volunteers
- three volunteers nominated for the Victorian Health Minister's Awards and certified by Volunteers Victoria
- a celebration for our volunteers in Coburg to thank them for their ongoing support
- all Merri Health training and educational opportunities made available to our volunteers too.

What's next?

As our 2020–2025 Strategic Directions document is now underway, we will use these directions to identify strategies to improve volunteer engagement and opportunities over the next three years.

Post COVID-19, once we return to somewhat of a normal work pattern, we will also review ways to reengage volunteers as our services adjust to the changes.



number of engaged
volunteers in 2019/20

Organisational planning

Strategic Directions 2018–2020

Our Strategic Directions provides a framework for our direction, detailing our commitment to community, priorities, core service offerings, growth, results we're looking to achieve and our financial principles.

From pages 21 onwards, you'll find a snapshot of our performance based on our strategic intent outlined in our directions 2018–2020.

Our 2020–2025 Strategic Directions document has been finalised. The next phase will see it presented to the organisation and each division will plan and provide input into how they will support directions over the next five years.



Above: Graduates from our second Speak Up, Speak Out program that supports our commitment to reconciliation.

Diversity plan

Diversity and disadvantage are defining characteristics of the area we serve. Our diversity plan sets the overall direction and goals for our organisation, in relation to diversity planning and practices for hard-to-reach groups.

The plan focuses on five special needs groups:

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
2. culturally and linguistically diverse communities
3. people with dementia
4. people experiencing financial disadvantage
5. LGBTIQ+ communities.

The plan is reviewed quarterly with updates on our progress provided to our funders.

Gender equity plan

Gender equity at Merri Health is a phased, whole of organisation approach to the primary prevention of violence against women. The project looks to prevent violence against women before it happens. We do this by building our organisational capacity to ensure we have an equal, inclusive and discrimination-free workplace where everyone thrives, regardless of their gender identity.

Our family violence and gender equality committee is made up of representatives from across different teams at Merri Health that support the implementation of our annual plan. The committee also provide recommendations and direction for our family violence policy and procedure. Learn more about our outcomes on page 49.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Merri Health has a vision for reconciliation, where the wellbeing of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be restored through respect, equity and recognition. We support this vision through our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Learn more about the plan, achievements and future direction on page 37.

Marketing and communications plan

Marketing and communications is important as it sets out how we will provide information to our communities and what marketing is needed to ensure that people are kept informed about how we can support them.

Our plan details how we will communicate with our clients, what methods we will use and campaigns that we will run. It sits alongside and complements our digital plan, which details strategies for communicating with our community in digital format.

Community Relationships Framework

Merri Health has a long-standing commitment to consumer, carer and community participation and engagement. Our Community Relationships framework details our commitment to support consumers, carers and community members to improve health outcomes.

Awards and achievements

Key achievements over 2019–20 include:

- one of only five organisations in the health/social assistance industry nationally awarded Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency — our second consecutive year! Learn more on page 50
- two highly commended awards at the Victorian Public Healthcare Awards 2019, for Premier's Primary Health Service of the Year and the Secretary's Award for excellence in culturally diverse health for Word Play, a free literacy program for Fawkner families to learn English together
- one of two finalists at the Victorian Public Healthcare Awards 2019 for the Chief Health Officer's Award for supporting healthy populations for Count Me In. The program builds resilience and supports the wellbeing of refugees and newly arrived migrants
- Australasian Reporting Awards 2019 silver award recipient, acknowledging good, honest and transparent communication in our annual report — this is an improvement on last year's bronze result
- the launch of our biggest campaign and partnership with Yarra Trams, Safe Spaces that resulted in a Merri Health Melbourne tram. Learn more on pages 22–23
- Victorian Early Years Awards 2019 recipient for our partnership program Word Play, supporting families and their children to learn and get school-ready in a fun and supportive learning environment
- Human Resources Director Innovative HR Teams award recipient 2019, acknowledging the team's collaborative and consultative approach to gender equality in the workplace
- Merri volunteer Jack received high commendations for Volunteer of the Year at the Moreland Awards for her contributions to the community and our consumers.



Above: Word Play team at the Victorian Early Years Awards 2019.





Safe and inclusive services

How we champion social inclusion through safe, inclusive and responsive services.

Safe Spaces



Above: Our team and chief executive Tassia Michaleas (centre), at the Safe Spaces tram launch.

This year's report is inspired by our largest campaign to date, Safe Spaces campaign.

Safe Spaces called on people to support safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ people. The message made its way across Melbourne in our very own rainbow tram, highlighting the need for safe and welcoming spaces for LGBTIQ+ people for better health. It was supported by a range of activities and activations in the community across three months.

Why?

Merri Health's work is grounded on respectful and inclusive practice to ensure we're continuing to meet the unique needs of the Victorian community.

In 2016, we also became the first Victorian metropolitan community health provider to receive Rainbow Tick accreditation, demonstrating LGBTIQ+ inclusive services and practices, and a commitment to pride, diversity and inclusion.

The facts

- statistics from Human Rights, Face the Facts 2014 show that 6 in 10 people that identify LGBTIQ+ have been a victim of verbal homophobic abuse.
- the Black Dog Institute reports that 'same-sex attracted people are 14 times more likely to attempt suicide, twice as likely to experience anxiety disorders and three times more likely to experience affective disorders compared with the broader population'.

Background

The campaign was inspired by LGBTIQ+ advocate Alison Black and followed years of discrimination and harassment that left Alison scared to travel alone or access services.

"You can feel the eyes on you because you look different, you move different, you act different.

"Seeing the tram, I can imagine quite a few people wanting to use public transport again. I would and I'm somebody who was used to hiding all the time," Alison said.

As a local, Alison sits on our LGBTIQ+ working group and supports our work, with insights and recommendations based on lived-experience.

The tram

Merri Health was a tram wrap recipient of the 2020 Yarra Trams Community Partnerships Program, which provided \$1 million of free advertising value annually to eight community organisations making a positive impact on diversity and inclusion in Melbourne.

Our rainbow tram ran on routes 48 and 109 from 19 December 2019 to 24 March 2020.

It was designed by Mary Lin, a local designer and LGBTIQ+ ally. The design highlighted that sexuality and gender is fluid.

"We've had experience with helping an LGBTIQ+ person being bullied while instore. We feel strongly about supporting this campaign."

— **Costanzo, local business, Safe Spaces campaign**

Highlights: what did we achieve?

Online engagement

- 450% increase in average page views on Merri Health's website on our go-live date
- 142 average page views on the campaign landing page, across three months
- Facebook: 11,774 people reached via campaign posts across three months

Face-to-face engagement



From left: Qin and Nia ready to support our Safe Spaces street activation.

Table 1: Midsumma, 19 January 2020
— education materials distributed

| Item | Total distributed |
|----------|-------------------|
| Badges | 400 |
| Stickers | 290 |

Table 2: Street activation,
Bell St. Coburg, 12 March 2020

| Success of campaign | Approx. total interactions | Approx. total business participated |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| 5/5 success rate with 5/5 footfall rate | 70 | 30 agreed to display the Safe Spaces poster, 12 declined |



Above: Merri staff Jeremy at the Safe Spaces tram launch.

Education

As part of the campaign, we released online educational resources to support locals, schools, organisations and businesses, to offer safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ folks.

It included information about:

- LGBTQIA+ acronym
- pronouns and their importance
- Rainbow Tick accreditation
- cultural safety
- inclusive practice in your workplace, school and community.

Visuals

To create a safe space, visuals are key. In addition to educational resources, we provided visual materials for people, groups, schools and businesses to display and share, including Safe Spaces posters, a 2020 calendar, stickers, badges, social media tiles and a phone screen.

These were created by:

- Johanna Villani, a Melbourne-based designer and person that identifies LGBTQIA+
- Mary Lin, a Melbourne-based designer and LGBTQIA+ ally

Earned media

We secured earned media in the following publications:

Digital

- Herald Sun (reach: 2.4 M)
- Moreland Leader (average weekly page views: 22,873)
- Northern Leader (average weekly page views: 55,000)

Print

- Moreland Leader (readership: 45,000)
- Northern Leader (readership: 55,000)

What's next?

Due to COVID-19 and restrictions in Victoria, some physical activations were put on hold. This included a mural and street posters. These will be activated once all restrictions are lifted.



Learn more

merrihealth.org.au/ally

COVID-19: a new normal

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared the coronavirus outbreak, also known as COVID-19, a pandemic. This was the start of one of the biggest changes and challenges many of us would experience, both personally and professionally.

For many Merri Health staff, 24 March 2020 marked the first day of working from home, as we moved towards a COVID-safe workplace.

How we delivered services and support changed too. For many, we moved to

telehealth, delivering healthcare and related processes like education over-the-phone or via video-conferencing. This change was to support our team members and consumers, keeping them as safe as possible. Of course, in-person support was crucial for many services,

so this continued with extra processes in place for safety.

Below is a snapshot of how some of our services and support have changed, and what we have achieved working under a new normal, from March to June 2020.

| Area | Outcomes |
|------------------|--|
| Service delivery | <p>Continued service delivery, in-person or via telehealth. Examples include:</p> <p>In-person support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our podiatrists continue to see high risk foot clients that require ongoing care, and monitor changes that may result in hospitalisation. • Aged care support: our Home Care Packages team remain flexible in their approach, and continue to provide essential home support, shopping and personal care so that consumers are safe and supported. • Aged care nurses: employment of a new team nurse to meet demand, and continued in-home health assessments to address health concerns that impact people's quality of life or independence. • Our dental team continue to provide emergency dental care for those most in need, to address dental related pain and prevent unnecessary hospitalisations. • Our occupational therapists continue to work with people in their homes, including those with dementia and their carers, to support independence and improve daily living. <p>Telehealth support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged care support: to address loneliness and isolation among people aged 50+, our Living Well, Ageing Well team are supporting people over-the-phone, connecting them with virtual groups and local opportunities. They have also developed a COVID-19 local online resource. • Aged care support: unable to run weekly social groups, the team has changed its support to include weekly activity packs that are delivered to each participant's home. They also provide regular over-the-phone support. • Our Victims Assistance Program team continue to support victims of crime remotely: counsellors are using telehealth to continue sessions, and intake workers and case managers are triaging and allocating clients by phone and email. • Our MerriKids team continue to support children with a disability and their families by video, teaching parents and children how to play and interact with their child, using everyday experiences and household items. • Our Healthy Mind Hub team continue to support people experiencing mental health issues, over-the-phone and by video. They also developed a wellbeing program guided by a workbook, which is being delivered over-the-phone and by video. • Our team developed a series of videos on chair exercises, gardening and arts and craft, to share with people living at Supported Residential Services. |



Above: Merri Health staff and partners supporting the COVID-19 test sites in the north.

| Area | Outcomes |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Support and advocacy | <p>Our community wellbeing team engaged 79 community members in conversations about their experiences of COVID-19. Community members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • were aged from 7 to 70+ • spoke a language other than English — approximately 75% • spoke more than 20 different languages combined • represented more than 15 cultural backgrounds. <p>We advocated to the local and Victorian governments about community members' concerns and needs.</p> <p>Our community wellbeing team collaborated with Moreland Council and other partners on stakeholder engagement. They worked across more than six newly established sub-groups, four existing networks, and new partnership projects, and supported the Department of Health and Human Services with a community engagement strategy in Moreland.</p> <p>Our aged team developed a list of vulnerable consumers to establish extra support needed during COVID-19 restrictions.</p> |
| Communications and engagement | <p>We developed a COVID-19 communications plan to identify areas of support and resources.</p> <p>Increased social media presence, sharing resources, tools and advice, as well as regular availability to respond to online enquiries and direct messages during business hours.</p> <p>After-hours online support via social media, to respond to enquiries while we ran COVID-19 test sites.</p> <p>With the support of locals, we developed video resources in other languages about the COVID-19 test experience, to breakdown and address concerns or fears, and increase testing among community members.</p> <p>Shared our communication insights with other community health centres, in the lead up to their COVID test sites going live. Provided weekly organisation-wide updates to staff, and regular communications to more than 800 people on our emailing list.</p> <p>We launched Wellbeing at Merri; a three-month initiative to support the wellbeing of staff, with weekly online cooking classes, online yoga and exercise sessions, and webinars.</p> <p>See page 27 to compare community engagement across the organisation before and during COVID-19.</p> |
| Testing | <p>Supported by the Department of Health and Human Services, we launched and managed three COVID-19 test sites in Fawkner (drive-through), Brunswick and Glenroy (walk-in), to support increased testing in hot spot areas. The sites were run in partnership with Moreland Council, Royal Melbourne Health, the Australian Defence Force, and local doctors and clinicians.</p> |
| Processes | <p>We supported approximately 300 staff to continue working from home, ensuring continuity of service for vulnerable and at-risk populations. Total of 13 new processes and toolkits developed to support staff and managers. Held weekly Board briefings for good governance and oversight — more on page 68.</p> <p>Ensured staff and client safety by introducing clinical measures and processes swiftly, in response to Department of Health and Human Services guidelines.</p> <p>Established the Merri Health COVID-19 taskforce to identify and implement COVID-19 changes. Group representation included executive staff, human resources, marketing and communications, occupational health and safety, information technology and facilities.</p> <p>Developed an action plan for rapid response to identify close contact or COVID-19 positive cases.</p> |

Carer support



Above: Our team and carers attend a peer support session.

In August 2019, Merri Health was selected to deliver Victorian carer services for the next five years.

Partnering with six other Victorian health and social support providers, the group started delivering new, improved and expanded services to carers under the brand Carer Gateway in April 2020. Carer Gateway represents the single biggest reform to carer support in more than a decade.

Led by Merri Health, partners include Alfred Health, Ballarat Health Services, Barwon Health, Bendigo Health Care Group, FamilyCare, and Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Ltd. As a collective, we have been supporting Victorian carers for more than 100 years.

What did we achieve?

- we are one of 10 service providers to be established in Australia
- the consortium will support approximately **742,990 carers** across Victoria
- the carer reform will see **\$700 million** over five years into carer services in Australia — a record commitment by the Federal Government
- **\$30 million** in carer funding across five years is being invested into carer support across Victoria

Support

From 6 April to 30 June 2020, 9,168 service instances were provided to carers across Victoria. Services included:

- activities and workshops
- assessment and planning
- self-guided carer coaching
- carer engagement
- counselling
- dementia advice
- health and wellbeing coaching
- peer support
- planned and emergency respite
- support for young carers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers.

In addition, we are one of two states (South Australia and Victoria), piloting carer coaching with 100 Victorian carers before it is rolled out across Australia. It will launch in August 2020.



Above: Angelina (left) takes part in a health coaching session.

Community engagement

While Merri Health has been committed to community engagement for many years, we lacked one central report where we could review our efforts. In response, in early 2019 we introduced a new format for collecting and evaluating our community engagement.

This year, we're pleased to report on our first full year of community engagement data that captures initiatives and engagement type, from across the organisation. This information helps us evaluate how we invest in community engagement for better outcomes.

It's important to note that there are engagement activities that took place that may not be reflected in this report as the process hasn't yet been fully embraced by all our teams and is currently not mandatory. Our community engagement advisor continues to work with our teams to increase reporting.

What did we achieve?

From 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, we had:

- 474 community engagement activities
- 89 activities occurred more than once
- 32 activities occurred more than five times
- 204 activities engaged our consumers and community members.

Engagement type spectrum

Our Community Relationships Framework outlines the spectrum of support; inform, consult, involve, co-design and empower, so that we can identify our level of engagement.

Inform and **consult** are lower types of engagement, as consumers may inform or be informed, but do not have equal decision-making responsibilities. These engagement types still play an important role as they provide the first steps to higher engagement, and in some cases, offers enough insights to support consumers.

Involve, co-design and empower sit on the high end of the spectrum, as they support an equal partnership between consumers and Merri Health.

Community engagement during COVID-19

Our data shows that COVID-19 and lockdowns have not negatively impacted our engagement activities.

Involve, co-design and empower engagements have increased by 8%.

Compared to previous quarters, our total number of engagement activities have remained stable.

These outcomes highlight:

- our teams' efforts in continuing to adapt service delivery and engagement so that it's consumer-centred
- that challenges can create opportunities.

Table 1: Total engagement activities by type from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020

| Engagement type | Total number of activities | Total percentage |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Informing community | 169 | 36% |
| Consulting community | 141 | 30% |
| Involving community | 84 | 18% |
| Co-designing with community | 59 | 12% |
| Empowering community | 21 | 4% |
| Total | 474 | 100% |

Table 2: Total % of engagement activities before and during COVID-19

| Engagement type | Before COVID-19 Jul 2019–Mar 20 | During COVID-19 April–June 2020 |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Informing community | 35% | 38% |
| Consulting community | 32% | 21% |
| Involving community | 17% | 20% |
| Co-designing with community | 11% | 18% |
| Empowering community | 5% | 3% |
| Total | 100% | 100% |

Table 3: Comparison of engagement activity type (%) before and during COVID-19

| Engagement type | Before COVID-19 Jul 2019–Mar 20 | During COVID-19 April–June 2020 | Difference |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| Low engagement type: inform and consult [combined data] | 67% | 59% | -8% |
| High engagement type: involve, co-design and empower [combined data] | 33% | 41% | +8% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | |

Partnerships for better outcomes

Merri Health is a member of the North Western Melbourne consumer and carer participation working group, which brings together 13 organisations to better engage and empower consumers in healthcare.

Members include cohealth, IPC Health, Primary Health Network North Western Melbourne, St Vincent's Hospital, Dental Health Services Victoria,

The Royal Melbourne Hospital, Sunbury Community Health, Your Community Health, DPV Health, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Eye and Ear Hospital, Western Health, and Merri Health.

Every year the group run a Consumer and Carer Networking forum, which brings together consumers from across the north and west metropolitan area,

to support them in their role as consumer representatives at their respective health services. After careful planning and due to COVID-19 restrictions, the 2020 forum was cancelled.

The group continues to meet bi-monthly to discuss opportunities for consumers and carers and how we can support one another.

Partnering with consumers

Our Consumer Participation Register continues to be a priority. The register is an evolving database of consumers and carers that have registered their interest in using their experiences to contribute to decision making of Merri Health projects. This includes design, planning and evaluation phases of projects, marketing collateral and programs. People register their interest, including topics they would like to contribute to based on their experience.

What did we achieve?

As of 30 June 2020:

- there are 27 consumers registered
- the Consumer Participation Register registration form was reviewed with the support of a consumer to ensure it makes sense, is accessible, inclusive and relevant
- a marketing postcard was developed and tested with the support of our Independent Living team that support older consumers. Feedback found that a strategy is needed to ensure the postcard and register is understood, supported and shared by teams.

Where did we fall short?

While our target was to increase the register by 40% in 2020, external circumstances including COVID-19 and a change within the team meant this strategy was put on hold.

As of early June 2020, our newly appointed community engagement advisor has picked up this project once again, and is working on an engagement strategy to ensure consumers are supported to participate, and their recommendations and opinions are valued. As part of our strategy, we are reviewing options for:

- consumer participation training
- regular meet and greet or get-together
- an annual thank you event during volunteer week
- regular check-in.

Where to next?

Our community engagement advisor is reviewing options to embed the register into everyday practice, so it's supported and championed across the organisation.

These include:

- capturing consumer interest in joining the register at intake
- training and information for staff to support uptake by consumers.

Feedback: how are we tracking?

Feedback is important to us. Learning about the experiences of consumers and their suggestions helps us improve how we do things and the health care system.

Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey

The Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey (VHES) is a state-wide survey that collects, analyses and reports on the experiences of people, 16 and over, attending Victoria's public healthcare services.

At Merri Health, we use the report to identify what we are doing well and what needs improvement.

In 2019, 1,236 questionnaires were distributed by Merri Health staff. A total of 125 questionnaires were completed which gives us a 10% client response rate — this is a 1% increase from 2018.

Who completed the survey?

Overall, Merri Health's satisfaction rate was 97% which was 1% above peer state average for the community health sector (96%).

When compared to the state average, Merri Health performed statistically higher in 39 out of 49 areas. The greatest improvements were in the areas of privacy at reception, ease of making an appointment, consumer experience, overall politeness of staff, client interaction and satisfaction when dealing with clinical staff, transportation access and adequate waiting time on day of appointment.

 **97%**

overall Merri Health satisfaction rate by consumers

How did we do?

The following table shows the areas where Merri Health performed statistically better than the benchmark.

| Areas | Merri Health % | State results % | Performance variance |
|---|----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Overall satisfaction rate | 97 | 96 | +1 |
| Politeness of reception staff | 99 | 96 | +3 |
| Health service felt welcoming | 97 | 90 | +7 |
| Ease to make an appointment | 86 | 73 | +13 |
| Privacy at reception | 92 | 81 | +11 |
| Transportation facilities (e.g. car parking, access to public transport, foot paths, taxi drop off areas) | 82 | 74 | +8 |
| Feeling physically safe | 96 | 93 | +3 |
| Adequate waiting time on day of appointment | 97 | 79 | +18 |
| Treated with respect and dignity | 93 | 91 | +2 |
| Listened to and understood by health workers | 92 | 86 | +6 |
| Confidence and trust in health workers | 94 | 89 | +5 |
| Health workers spent enough time with consumer | 93 | 87 | +6 |
| Compassionate health workers | 91 | 88 | +4 |
| Concerns taken seriously by health workers | 95 | 88 | +7 |
| Sometimes, one health worker will say one thing about your issue or care and another will say something quite different. Did this ever happen to you at this service? | 88 | 78 | +10 |
| Health workers considered all of the consumer's needs, like health, culture, living and family situation, and age | 80 | 74 | +6 |
| Consumer is aware of who to contact if they have questions about their care | 88 | 85 | +3 |
| Health workers helped set goals for health and wellbeing | 75 | 68 | +7 |

Who completed the survey?

- Age: the average age of respondents was 65
- Gender:
 - 71% identified female
 - 21% identified male
 - 8% preferred not to answer
- Diversity:
 - 4% of respondents identified from the LGBTIQ+ community
 - 4% preferred not to say
 - 2% were at risk of or were homeless
- 79% of clients said they had completed the survey on their own, and 11% said they had someone help them
- 48% of clients said they had accessed 2–3 Merri Health services over a 6-month period
- 69% travelled by car to access our health services, and 22% by public transport.

Areas for improvement

The following were identified as areas where Merri Health could improve:

- providing information such as leaflets to clients in their language
- creating greater community awareness of Merri Health and its services

- referring clients to additional services to help improve their health and wellbeing
- cleanliness of our sites.

The following table shows the areas where Merri Health performed statistically the same or worse than the benchmark.

| Areas | Merri Health % | State results % | Performance variance |
|--|----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Referral to other health services to improve health and wellbeing | 77 | 88 | -11 |
| Provided information such as leaflets in the consumer's preferred language | 36 | 55 | -19 |
| Cleanliness of the health service | 78 | 79 | -1 |
| Easy to find out that the community health service exists | 70 | 79 | -9 |

Improvements

Every year, we review this data and develop an action plan for areas for improvement. From 2019 to 2020, the following were the areas where Merri Health improved on its results:

- Privacy at reception — 11% increase
- Ease of making an appointment — 10% increase
- Client concerns taken seriously — 9% increase

Our sites

The following table shows client satisfaction based on sites. The percentage of client survey return calculations are measured by VHES and based on the total number of surveys distributed by each site to clients, compared to the total number completed/returned back.

| Site | Response % | Total surveys returned | Site satisfaction % |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 11 Glenlyon Rd. Brunswick | 6% | 8 | 95% |
| 382–386 Moreland Rd. Brunswick West | 6% | 9 | 96% |
| 93 Bell St. Coburg | 6% | 18 | 100% |
| 19 Pentridge Blvd. Coburg | 26% | 36 | 91% |
| 21 Victoria St. Coburg | 13% | 18 | 94% |
| 79 Juke Rd. Fawkner | 19% | 26 | 92% |
| 5D Cromwell St. Glenroy | 10% | 10 | 100% |

What's next?

The following is what we will focus on in 2020/21 to improve client satisfaction and experience, based on the areas that need improvement.

1. Identify new ways to let the general public know of our community-based services and locations.
2. Promote the availability of client information that is available in other languages.
3. Investigate the possibility of increasing translated materials.
4. Work with our Facilities team on the ongoing cleanliness of our sites.
5. With the support of clients, and in partnership with our volunteers, identify how we can increase the number of completed surveys returned.

Feedback and complaints

In addition to the Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey, we provide many other ways for people to provide feedback. These include:

- over the phone by calling our dedicated feedback line
- by completing a feedback form: hard copies are available at all Merri sites and an electronic form is available on our website
- by email
- in person by sharing feedback with reception, a clinician or staff member who then logs the feedback into an electronic system
- by using the electronic feedback kiosk available at select Merri sites.

Results

Compliments

In 2019/20, we saw a **19.5% increase in compliments** received compared to the previous year. Themes included:

- treatment/care of consumers by clinicians
- administrative staff (access and reception)
- positive clinical outcomes for clients
- our aged care service and its programs.

Complaints

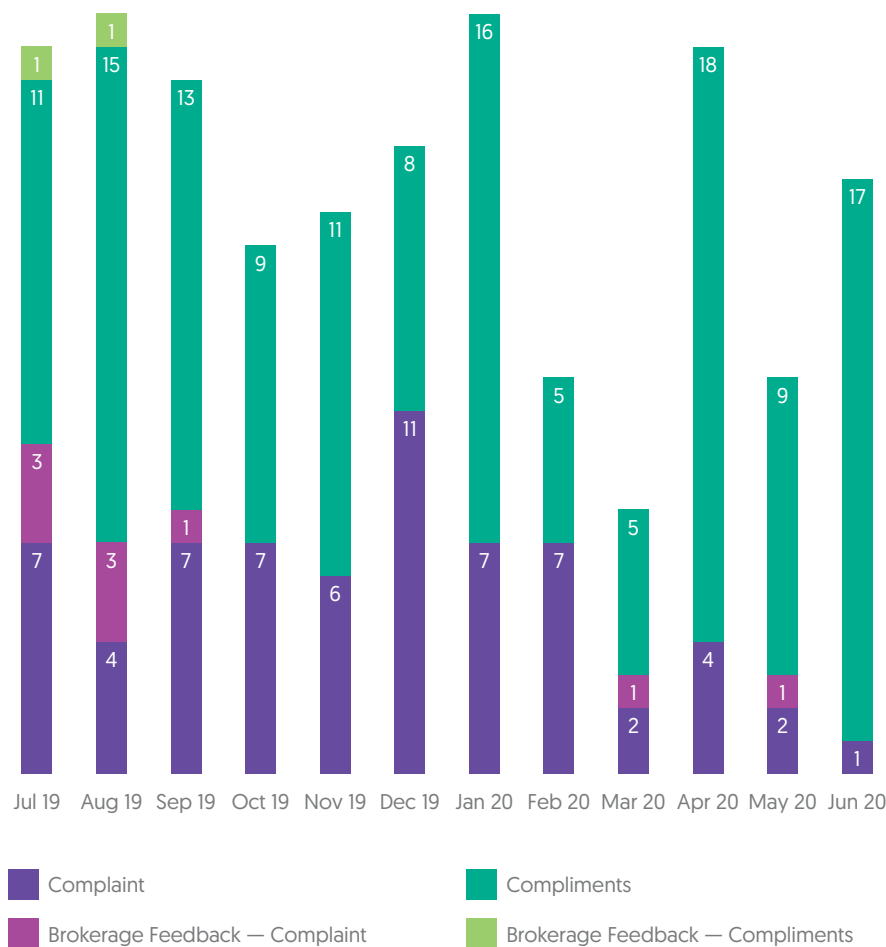
In 2019/20, we saw a **75% increase in complaints** received compared to the previous year. Themes included:

- communication/lack of information
- accessing a service
- service availability.

“You have been very good for my state of mind Merri — thank you.”

— Hugo*, consumer

Total Complaints, Compliments and Brokerage Feedback



“I have been sitting in the foyer waiting for my mum and have been impressed with the way your front desk has answered calls on this new virus. Very commendable! Excellent phone manner.”

— Samia*, consumer

* Name has been changed to respect the privacy of our clients. Stories and quotes have been included with the permission of the client.

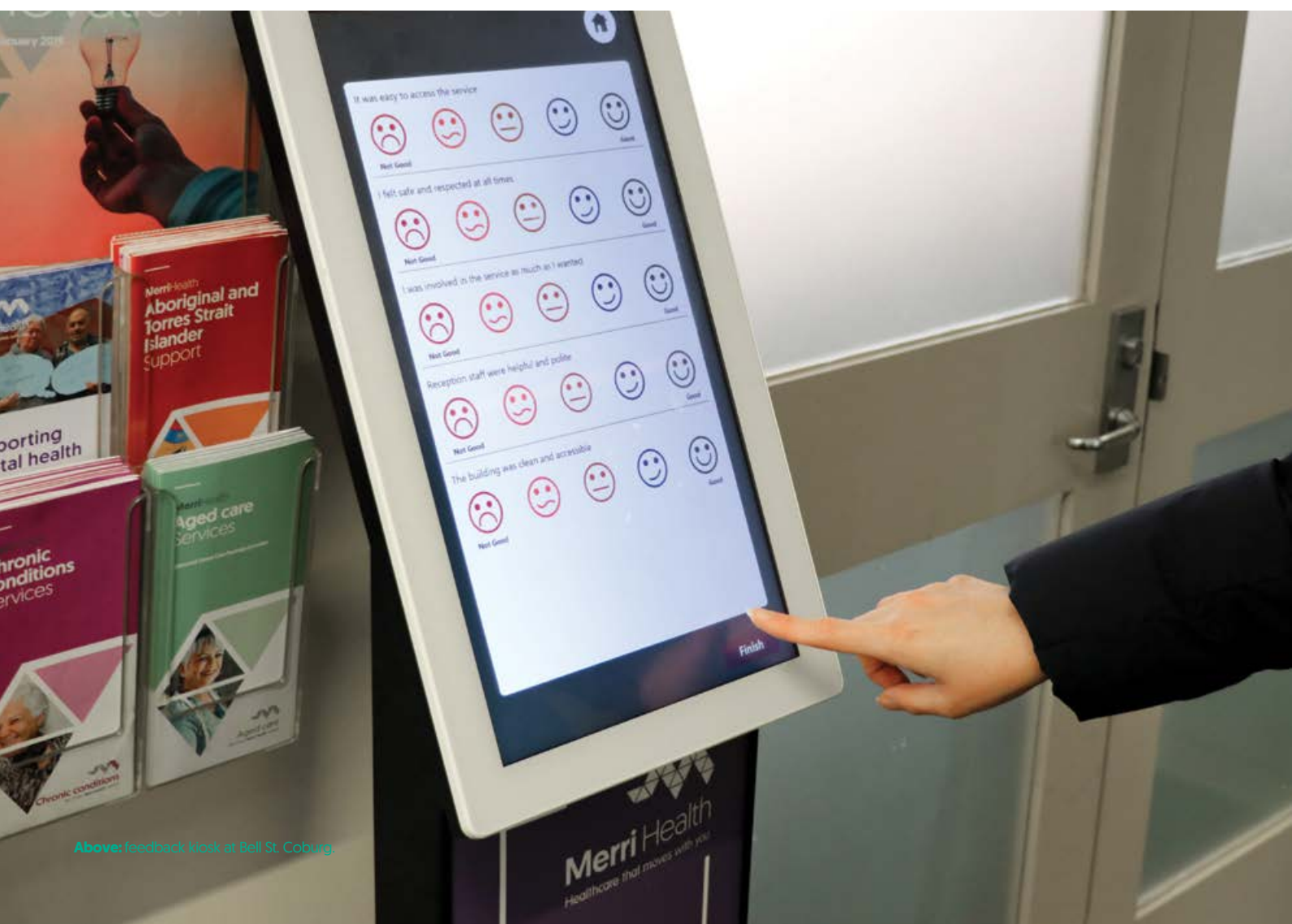
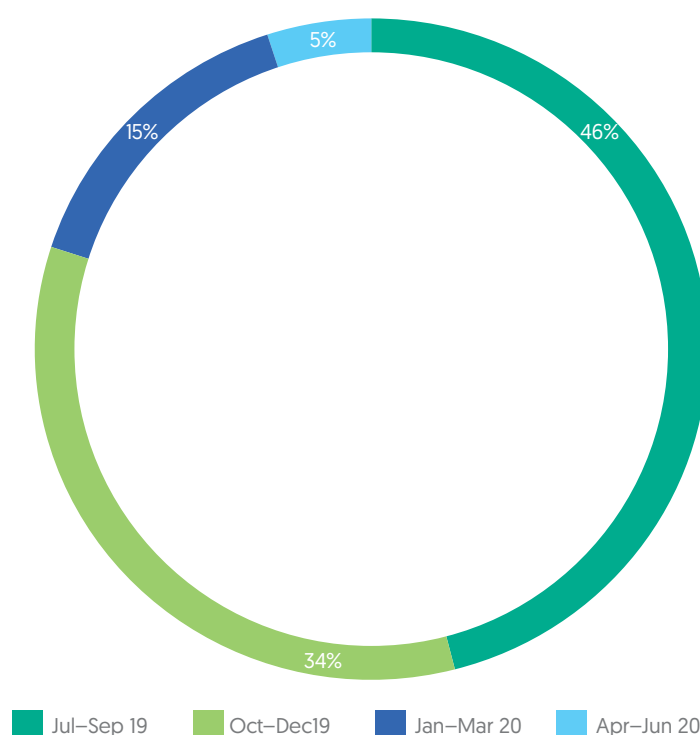
Feedback kiosks

In May 2019, we introduced electronic feedback kiosks at three Merri Health sites in Coburg and Brunswick. The kiosks have been popular among consumers, and allow Merri to receive feedback in real-time.

Throughout the 2019/20 financial period:

- 1,986 consumers provided feedback via the kiosks
- 115 compliments and 137 compliments were recorded
- 93% scored their experience and satisfaction rating as 100%
- consumer satisfaction was at its highest between April–June 2020: 97% scored their experience and satisfaction rating as 100%.

Client satisfaction — consumer kiosks



Above: feedback kiosk at Bell St. Coburg.



Results

Language utilisation

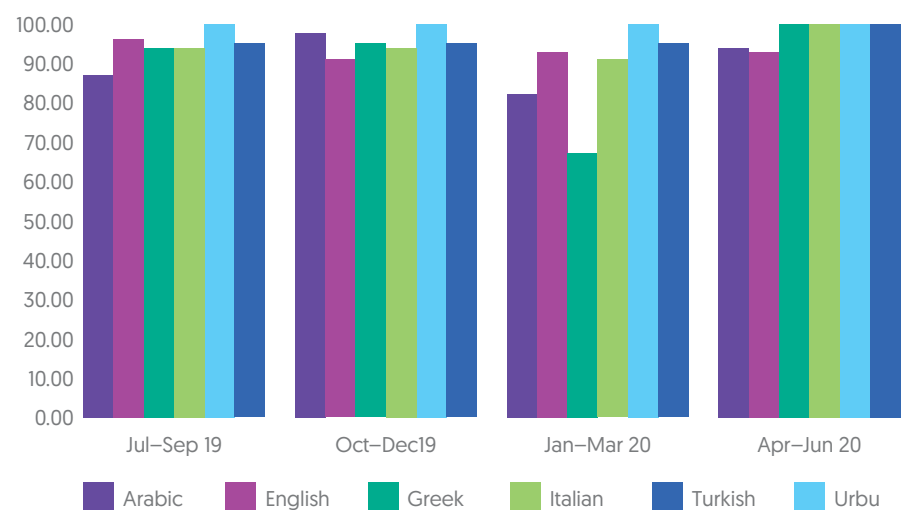
Feedback via our kiosks can be completed in six languages that were selected based on Merri Health interpreter data.

The graph to the right shows what languages consumers chose to complete their survey.

Themes based on comments

- LGBTIQ+ family friendly support
- Inclusive and non-judgemental services
- Polite and supportive staff

Average total feedback



National Disability Insurance Scheme



Above: Helping you to access the support you want and need to live a fulfilling and happy life.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) roll out began in North East Melbourne on 1 July 2016 and continues today. It supports people with a disability with flexible supports and greater choices.

Merri offer many NDIS services including help for children with a disability and their family, education, health services like speech pathology, social groups and support at home.

What did we achieve in 2019/20?

| Service | Outcomes |
|---|--|
| MerriKids Supporting children with a development delay or disability. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to successfully support 95 existing families Welcomed an additional 45 new families Successfully ran face-to-face and telehealth groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preschool ages: early communication and music groups across three terms, and a school readiness group in term 4, 2019 School-aged: school holiday junior science groups Achieved 89% of our billable targets Upskilled our workforce to provide telehealth services 70% client uptake of telehealth for service delivery during COVID-19 lockdown Provided 30 therapy packs and regular activity idea sheets to families who are not able to, or do not wish to access telehealth sessions Service reached its current capacity, and had an average increase in NDIS funding packages to \$14,500 per plan, per child, per year — a \$6,000 increase on average per client |
| Support Coordination Help to identify, coordinate and meet your needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcomed two new Support Coordinators Supported 225 clients |
| Allied health Support from an occupational therapist, physiotherapist, speech pathologist or dietitian for people with all type of disabilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued face-to-face support during COVID-19 based on consumer needs and demand Increased the team with a new part-time physiotherapist and two additional occupational therapists (1.6EFT) Developed a specialty in managing clients with a mental health diagnosis Clinicians continued to provide face-to-face appointments for vulnerable clients during COVID-19 where needed, to ensure a person-centered approach |
| Community engagement coordination Coordinating opportunities, growth and best practice, and acting as the first point of contact for new NDIS participants. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded referral networks — we now work with 50 Local Area Coordinators and 15 Support Coordinators from other support agencies, to provide better support for NDIS consumers Supported our NDIS leadership team to drive quality and efficiency Supported a partnership between our Health Mind Hub team (mental health support and activities) and the Brotherhood of St Laurence, to provide a smooth transition into the NDIS for 60 vulnerable Merri Health consumers |

Use of interpreters

Cultural and linguistic diversity is a defining characteristic of our area. As such, interpreters continue to be a key resource we use to support our community.

What does our data tell us?

Based on data from our interpreter service provider OnCall:

- we engaged on average 1,791 interpreters per annum, over the past three financial year periods
- over-the-phone interpreter support increased by 184 instances, from 2018/19 to 2019/20
- demand for over-the-phone interpreter support increased from March 2020, which we attribute to the change in service delivery to telehealth for many of our services, as a result of COVID-19.

Table 1: Comparison of interpreter usage at Merri Health over the last two financial years

Completed bookings

| Financial year | Face-to-face | Phone | Total |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| 2018/2019 | 1,154 | 664 | 1,818 |
| 2019/2020 | 943 | 848 | 1791 |
| Variance 18/19 to 19/20 | -211 | +184 | -27 |

Top 10 languages requested in 2019/20

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. Arabic | 6. Farsi |
| 2. Italian | 7. Assyrian |
| 3. Greek | 8. Cantonese |
| 4. Turkish | 9. Amharic |
| 5. Mandarin | 10. Spanish |



Above: Interpreter supporting a consumer during one of our exercise sessions for older adults.

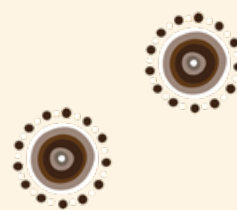




Closing the health gap

How we partner and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to restore respect, equity and recognition.





Reconciliation **Action Plan**

In early 2014, Merri Health formalised its existing work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by creating a Reconciliation Action Plan [RAP]. The plan details our commitment to closing the health gap and reconciliation.



Above: Smoking ceremony during a Speak Up, Speak Out yarning circle.

Working together and focusing on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, our plan looks to:

- make a positive difference in their lives
- ensure our sites and services are culturally safe
- improve service access and cultural appropriateness
- improve their health and wellbeing
- celebrate the contribution of locals, past and present.

What did we achieve?

Due to COVID-19, the development of our next RAP is on hold. Developing the plan in partnership with local communities is key for Merri Health, and as COVID-19 has presented some barriers, this has not been possible.

Until then, we continue to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander locals and staff on initiatives that support reconciliation and closing the health gap. The table to the right is a summary of how we achieved this during the 2019/20 financial year.

What's next?

Throughout the 2020/21 financial period, we will focus on:

- developing a new online learning module for cultural learning
- finalising our next Reconciliation Action Plan.





Above: From left: Merri staff Liz and Viviana with Natasha from 3KnD.



| Action | How | Achievements | COVID-19 considerations |
|--|--|--|---|
| Partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to identify opportunities for growth and development, and advance our commitment to closing the health gap. | Regular Reconciliation Action Plan committee meetings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four meetings held Committee membership total: 17 Committee membership makeup: Merri Health staff and at least 50% representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including local community members and staff from Aboriginal controlled organisations Started developing our next Reconciliation Action Plan One presentation to all Merri Health staff on RAP (reach: approx. 250 staff) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of Merri's next Reconciliation Action Plan is currently on hold |
| | Engage with 3KnD, Melbourne's first Indigenous owned and managed radio station to share information about support available locally. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two radio segments completed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to strengthen the partnership once restrictions are lifted |
| Promote safe, equal and respectful relationships in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. | Partner with The Long Walk Trust to establish Speak Up, Speak Out; a short-term education and skills development program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully completed the program in 2019 Total of 26 participants, aged 9–12 Students that participated were from nine primary schools across Moreland and Hume One new position created for an Aboriginal person | |
| Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness for newly inducted Merri Health staff and volunteers. | Partner with Girraway Ganyi Consultancy to run cultural awareness training. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four sessions held 33 newly inducted staff completed the training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face-to-face training suspended due to restrictions |
| Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness for Merri Health staff. | Continue Koorie Conversations initiative. Koorie Conversations offers the opportunity to learn from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander local about their culture, story and experience. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two Koorie Conversations sessions held Two local Aboriginal people engaged to share their story Engaged 27 staff | |



**Some
people
prefer
'folx'**



**Please
ask me my
pronouns**

#RainbowHealthMatters

LGBTIQA+ health

How we champion LGBTIQA+ inclusive practice.

LGBTIQA+

*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender,
Intersex, Queer and Asexual*

We acknowledge that the + sign is meant to account for the many possible ways a person can identify, but we also acknowledge that it's not explicit in accounting for multiple identities.

We are committed to providing safe and high quality services that are inclusive of all people. Through our work, we address health inequities and discrimination and offer tailored support.

LGBTIQA+ working group

Merri Health's LGBTIQA+ working group ensures Merri Health is responsive to issues related to sexual and gender diversity, and provides LGBTIQA+ inclusive services demonstrated by maintaining Rainbow Tick Accreditation.

The group meets every six weeks and its membership includes 11 very passionate staff and one community representative who identify LGBTIQA+, are LGBTIQA+ allies or have lived-experience.

What did we achieve?

During the 2019/20 financial period the group:

- supported Merri Health in its third Rainbow Tick accreditation
- supported the development of in-house LGBTIQA+ inclusive training

- provided recommendations to our marketing and communications team on inclusive practice for Merri Health's Safe Spaces campaign — learn more on page 22.
- supported the rollout of Merri Health's LGBTIQA+ all staff survey that measured inclusive practices, where we do well and where there is room for improvement, based on staff and volunteer feedback and experience — learn more on page 43.



Safe Spaces

Our 2019/20 Safe Spaces campaign called on people to support safe spaces for LGBTIQA+ people.

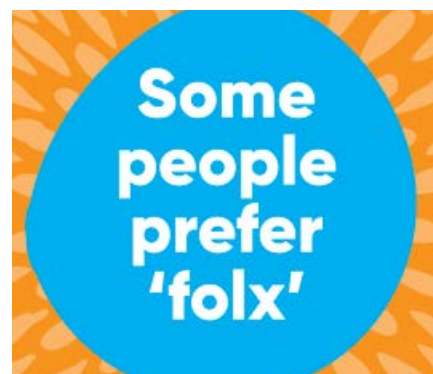
Learn more on page 22.

Community representation



Since December 2018, consumer and LGBTIQA+ advocate Alison Black has been supporting Merri Health in its LGBTIQA+ inclusive practice, based on their lived-experience.

Since joining the working group, Alison has provided invaluable insight into the daily challenges experienced by LGBTIQA+ folks and was the inspiration behind our Safe Spaces campaign. Alison shared their experience of travelling on public transport and community perceptions, all of which influenced our call out to Melbournians, to create and/or offer more inclusive and safe spaces in the community.



Folks or folx

These are common terms that are used collectively to refer to a group of people. Both are inclusive however some people prefer the terms be used with an 'X' which is specifically inclusive of the LGBTIQA+ community.

LGBTIQA+ all staff survey

Merri Health's LGBTIQA+ all staff survey measures our inclusive practices, where we do well and where there is room for improvement. It is based on staff and volunteer feedback and experience.

A total of 110 folks voluntarily completed this survey in 2019.


How did we do?

In the table to the right, we have highlighted some key findings from our 2018 and 2019 staff survey results, which show how we're tracking: where we are doing well and where we can do better.

Next steps

Based on the findings, we have identified that we need to:

- improve how we promote the importance of LGBTIQA+ inclusive training to increase participation and support staff to feel 'very comfortable' in providing support for LGBTIQA+ folks
- explore where we can do better so that Merri Health can improve as an LGBTIQA+ inclusive organisation
- offer extra training about how folks may be discriminated against based on their gender identity or sexuality, so that staff and volunteers can improve their engagement practice.



| 2018 results | 2019 results | ↑ or ↓ |
|---|---|--------|
| 107 completed the survey | 110 completed the survey | ↑ 3% |
| 63% said they believed Merri Health is an LGBTIQA+ inclusive organisation | 61% said they believed Merri Health is an LGBTIQA+ inclusive organisation | ↓ 2% |
| 60% said they work with folks that identify LGBTIQA+ | 71% said they work with folks that identify LGBTIQA+ | ↑ 11% |
| 79% said they were very comfortable with providing support for LGBTIQA+ folks | 71% said they were very comfortable with providing support for LGBTIQA+ folks | ↓ 8% |
| 75% said they don't believe there are barriers for LGBTIQA+ folks to access Merri Health services | 73% said they don't believe there are barriers for LGBTIQA+ folks to access Merri Health services | ↓ 2% |
| 53% said they are comfortable asking LGBTIQA+ folks about their gender identity | 62% said they are comfortable asking LGBTIQA+ folks about their gender identity | ↑ 9% |
| 19% have not attended training on working with LGBTIQA+ folks | 23% have not attended training on working with LGBTIQA+ folks | ↓ 4% |
| 49% said their program works on identifying LGBTIQA+ needs | 47% said their program works on identifying LGBTIQA+ needs | ↓ 2% |
| 93% said they have not experienced discrimination at Merri Health, based on their gender identity or sexual orientation | 95% said they have not experienced discrimination at Merri Health, based on their gender identity or sexual orientation | ↑ 2% |

Midsumma Carnival



Above: Merri Health staff Evan at the Midsumma Carnival.

Merri Health is a long standing supporter of the Midsumma Festival and Pride March. The annual celebration of queer, intersex, transgender, bisexual, lesbian and gay culture, held during the months of January and February is an outdoor dance party and celebration.

The Midsumma festival is one of many ways that we are able to proudly demonstrate Merri's commitment to inclusive practice, and engage and support LGBTIQA+ folks.

This year, our stall celebrated our Safe Spaces campaign. "Our focus was on the importance of asking people their pronoun and encouraging those that visited to do so." In addition, we had free merchandise on hand including 'ally' badges and stickers for people to take and proudly display. Visuals are one way to show a safe space for LGBTIQA+ folks.

How did we do?

| Item | Total distributed |
|----------|-------------------|
| Badges | 400 |
| Stickers | 290 |

Are you looking to create safe spaces for LGBTIQA+ folks?

Visit merrihealth.org.au/ally for visual, educational and fun resources.

Pronouns

Pronouns are what you use to identify yourself and others. They can often imply someone's gender, which is why folks that are non-binary use neutral pronouns; they, them and theirs.

Don't assume someone's pronoun: ask and share your pronoun. If the person you've asked does not understand, ask them how you can refer to them: he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs.

Supporting young queer folks

YGLAM is a space for young queer folks to come together and explore sexuality and gender identity through artistic means.

The group is open to anyone aged 14–25 and no experience is necessary — just enthusiasm and commitment.

What did we achieve?

In the 2019/20 financial period, the group:

- interviewed 94 LGBTIQA+ young folks for their performance, *Self Care: An Anti-Musical*
- launched *Self Care: An Anti-Musical* at the Melbourne Fringe Festival, performing for 160 audience members
- reported that their participation in *Self Care: An Anti-Musical*, was key in supporting their mental wellbeing.

What's next?

Due to COVID-19, in early 2020 the group moved their gatherings to a virtual platform, which supports members to stay in touch and work on creative projects.



Alcohol and drug support



Above: LGBTQIA+ couple.

QHealth is Merri Health's free counselling and support service for folks that would like to talk about their concerns or impacts of their alcohol and drug use. It is provided in a confidential, non-judgmental and queer-affirmative space. You can self refer and we also take referrals from service providers.

What did we achieve?

During the 2019/20 financial period, the service:

- supported 54 consumers
- exceeded its target during the initial funding period
- was successful in securing funding for an additional two years
- completed an independent service evaluation
- provided consultations and professional development activities to internal and external service providers
- developed partnerships to offer better support for consumers, such as referral processes
- saw an increase in self-referrals due to community engagement activities such as interviews on Joy FM and online promotion
- partnered with Thorne Harbour Health to develop the Defrosted program, an online group sessions for folks who are in sobriety during COVID-19. The two services also collaborated on issues of family violence within LGBTQIA+ communities.

What's next?

Throughout 2020/21, our team will focus on:

- exceeding their referral target to support more folks
- continuing to build partnerships in the community and with other service providers so that more folks are aware of this free support
- intersectional work, particularly on these two areas: cultural and linguistically diverse communities including international students, and victims of family violence
- sharing their knowledge and insights with professionals via conference presentations and workshops.

Young voices heard: The Domino Effect



WWW.WEARITPURPLE.ORG

Thousands of Victorian students came together to form a human rainbow in support of inclusive and safe communities for Wear It Purple Day.

Wear It Purple Day is an annual celebration of LGBTIQA+ pride for young people. It was celebrated on Friday, 30 August 2019.

Captured from above by a Victorian Police helicopter, students from Coburg High, Brunswick South Primary and Pascoe Vale Girls College created large-scale human art forms. The footage formed part of The Domino Effect, a short film supported by Merri Health, that promotes active bystander actions to address bullying and discrimination of LGBTIQA+ folks.

What have we achieved?

The Domino Effect resulted in:

- one major event
- one Victoria Police helicopter used
- 2500+ young people taking part
- five Moreland schools participating in the filming
- a partnership with Victoria Police
- four schools taking part in bystander training
- one young person from LGBTIQA+ communities employed to support the project
- one short film developed, The Domino Effect — watch at <https://bit.ly/2CrdfXT>
- the video received engagement of 1,500 and 22 positive comments on Merri Health's Facebook
- 134 positive comments received across social media on Merri Health channels — extra comments were received across Moreland Council's and Victoria Police's social channels that are not included in this total.

What's next?

Due to COVID-19:

- no public art events are scheduled for 2020
- we will continue to support Stand Out groups at secondary schools by meeting online. Stand Out are student-led, social justice groups run by young LGBTIQA+ identifying folks or allies.





Family violence and gender equity

How we address gender inequality and its impacts on health.

The 'Gender Equality at Merri Health' project is a phased, whole-of-organisation approach to the primary prevention of violence against women.

Gender inequality is the key driver of violence against women and impacts on

health and determinants of health — this is why we are committed to addressing this; promoting gender equality to staff as well as clients, partners and the broader community. On the next page is a snapshot of how we've supported this in 2019/20.

Our commitment to gender equality



Above: Working together towards gender equality.

Merri Health recognises that creating a workplace in which all people are equally represented, valued and rewarded requires leadership, accountability and a focus on gender equality as a strategic priority.

Over many years, Merri Health has been committed to eliminating gendered violence. We do this by targeting our work in different ways; by directly supporting those who have experienced violence, by intervening early with programs that tackle harmful attitudes and behaviours, and preventing violence by challenging the attitudes, norms and systems that underpin gender inequality, a key driver of men's violence against women.

We started our workplace gender equality journey in 2013 and have continued our commitment via many actions: our Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation from Workplace Gender Equality, Reconciliation Action Plan, LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice and equal opportunity training, and hearing directly from our staff through confidential surveys collected every 18 months.

The work is a collaboration between our community wellbeing, quality customer experience, and human resources teams, working in consultation with two groups: Family Violence and Gender Equity committee and LGBTIQ+ working group.

What have we achieved?

In addition to our successful Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation, during the 2019/20 financial period we:

- completed an independent remuneration review for management roles
- redesigned our flexibility policy that promotes positive work life balance regardless of gender or position
- developed and implemented our gender equality training module
- removed the eligibility period to access employer-funded paid parental leave.

What's next?

Over the next year, we are focusing on:

- further reducing gender pay gaps
- increasing secondary carer parental leave and paying superannuation while staff are on government paid leave.

Keeping track

Merri Health's family violence and gender equality committee is made up of representatives from across different teams at Merri Health. The committee identify and track our commitment to gender equality via their annual plan.

What did we achieve?

During the 2019/20 financial period, the committee:

- held four meetings during August, October, February and April
- were funded \$126,000 to support supervision trainers to become more aware of family violence — managers nominated 16 staff for family violence supervision training and a further 16 for general training
- made recommendations to our human resources team to improve our breastfeeding policy — while it is currently in line with industrial agreements, the committee is advocating for Merri to go beyond standard practice.

What's next?

Merri Health has committed to 60 student placements in 2020 across the organisation to expose students to a workplace with a proactive stance on family violence and gender equity at the start of their career.



Above: staff pledges for International Women's Day 2020.



Healthy communities

How we build and support healthy communities, locally.

Our community wellbeing team respond to the priority health needs of local communities in Moreland.

Current priorities under our health promotion strategic plan include:

- preventing violence against women
- social inclusion
- access to affordable, nutritious food.

We work in partnership with community members, local government, education and other providers to bring about better health and wellbeing for all.

On the next few pages is a snapshot of some of our projects supporting healthy and connected communities.



The Great Idea program is open to Fawkner residents who have an idea for a community project that will make Fawkner an even better place to live. This is a Hello, Fawkner! initiative. Find out more on the next page.

Hello, Fawkner!

supporting social inclusion

Hello, Fawkner! is a three year project [finishing up mid-2021] that builds community cohesion, connection and respect for diversity in Fawkner, via a range of targeted programs.

It includes a community leadership program for residents, a community newspaper and e-newsletter about Fawkner, and a 'small grants' program to support community Harmony Day events.

What did we achieve?

During the 2019/20 financial period, we:

- supported the start-up and completion of five community-led projects that were funded as part of *The Great Idea* program
- supported and funded Fawkner locals to hold 50 Harmony Day parties, bringing together locals and supporting community harmony
- developed and distributed our second edition of *The Fawkner Times* newspaper to 2,000 households
- developed 26 e-newsletter editions, distributed to 526 subscribers.

What's next?

We will support:

- round two and three of *The Great Idea* program
- Harmony Day activities to take place, with a focus on new approaches due to COVID-19
- the development and distribution of *The Fawkner Times*' final edition.



Above: From left: Massimo and Daniela from The Fork Shop café published in *The Fawkner Times*.

Addressing school readiness gaps



Above: Maria from St Mark's Primary School reading to children.

Ready, Set, Prep! Is a local initiative based in Fawkner that prepares children and their families for a great start to primary school.

The team work with community members, primary schools and early years providers to support early learning, family engagement and transition to primary school. When services and families work together, children are supported to have a smooth transition to primary school.

What did we achieve?

In the 2019/20 financial period, we:

- established a new Fawkner Transition Network for early years services and schools
- organised professional learning for schools and early years services on cross-cultural responsiveness and family engagement
- supported Fawkner schools to make changes to their transition programs
- developed a new film series highlighting the services, supports and opportunities available to families in Fawkner to give little people the best start in life
- completed the *Sooner or Later* research project, investigating the average age of Fawkner children when they start school
- held information sessions in partnership with schools and early years services in Fawkner, to provide opportunities for families to connect with essential services
- grew the *Ready, Set, Prep!* partnership from six to more than 20 partners.

What's next?

The Ready, Set, Prep! team will focus on securing funding for the next four years, with a view to expand support to northern Moreland: Fawkner, Glenroy and Hadfield.

Supporting sport participation for women and girls



Above: Community member playing tennis.

Count Me In Too supports women and girls from culturally and linguistically diverse communities to take part in sports to improve their physical and mental health, and social connections. It is a partnership program with sports clubs in Moreland and Moreland Council.

What did we achieve?

In the 2019/20 financial period, we had:

- 10 clubs take part in the program
- 461 girls and women take part in sporting opportunities at local clubs in Fawkner and Glenroy
- participants continue their involvement with clubs by supporting other activities including volunteering and registering players
- official partnerships developed with Tennis Victoria, Cricket Victoria and Netball Victoria.

What's next?

Although the project funding period has now ended, we know the changes made by local sports clubs will help engage more girls and women for years to come.

As part of our community wellbeing work, we also continue to work with local residents to create equal and inclusive communities.

Keeping young people on track with better choices



Above: Two TRACKS participants with their arms around each other.

Mental wellbeing support and early engagement are key to supporting young people to make better choices. TRACKS is a program offered under our counselling and support services that provides one-on-one and group support for anyone aged 16–25, experiencing drug or alcohol use.

TRACKS is one of our base services and has been running for many years.

What did we achieve?

In the 2019/20 financial period, we:

- provided 54 episodes of care to young people who were experiencing issues related to alcohol and other drugs and their families, through individual and group-based support
- engaged and trained two youth mentors to provide prevention and early intervention engagement at local secondary schools
- changed our service delivery during COVID-19 to online support, so that we could continue supporting young people.

What's next?

We will continue to further develop online and telehealth options for young people and their families to enable greater access and engagement with the program.



Healthy ageing

How we support choice, connection and independence for people 65 years and over.

Supporting mental and physical wellbeing



Above: A group of older people having tea together.

Stepped Care for Older Adults is a pilot program that provides free mental health support for older people living in the community and residential care facilities. It uses the stepped care framework, which is an evidence-based, staged approach that matches the level of intervention to the client's needs.

 **100%**

of respondents felt involved in making decisions about their life

When we first launched in October 2019, referrals were only accepted from health professionals, however we soon changed this to include self-referrals and referrals from aged care facility residents. This decision was made to lessen barriers to mental health support.

As a pilot project, it is currently available to locals from Darebin, Moreland, Brimbank, Hume and Melton.

What did we achieve?

In the 2019/20 financial period:

- we received 121 referrals
- 33 consumers were successfully discharged from the service
- the team grew from five to seven clinicians, and we introduced a psychiatric nurse who has a good understanding of the physical health impact on a person's mental wellbeing
- we expanded support further north, to support residents in Hume.

We supported all our program participants to provide anonymous feedback so we could improve our service. We translated the feedback form into four languages including Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, and Arabic, to encourage client feedback.

Results found:

- 100% of responses noted they "better understood the issues that were troubling them"
- 100% of responses noted "I felt involved in making choices about my life"
- 93% of responses noted they received "help that mattered to them".

What's next?

The funding period for *Stepped Care for Older Adults* was scheduled to end in September 2020 however it's been extended until December 2020. While funding for 2021 and beyond has not been confirmed, our team continue to explore other funding opportunities to continue to build on this new approach.

Healthy ageing from 50+



Above: Our Living Well, Ageing Well team support social isolation and loneliness in older people.

Living Well, Ageing Well was launched in September 2019, following a community consultation process that found a gap in community support for older adults aged 50 and over.

Living Well, Ageing Well provides healthy ageing support, for anyone at risk of, or currently experiencing social isolation or loneliness. We do this by offering one-on-one support, activities, social groups and volunteering opportunities to keep people active and connected.

What did we achieve?

In the 2019/20 financial period, we:

- introduced new social groups following a gap analysis, including a weekly women's social cafe and an explore Melbourne group to support people to confidently access public transport to connect with their community
- collaborated with health services across Merri to deliver health education to the community
- partnered with Neighbourhood House Networks, establishing a Memorandum of Understanding to run cooking skills classes under the Community Kitchen program — these are currently on hold due to COVID-19
- responded to COVID-19 restrictions by running the cooking group online. Participants pick a recipe, cook it independently and then meet virtually the next week to talk about their experience

- developed a calendar of events for consumers that included education sessions on how to navigate the aged care system
- developed a resource hub for consumers, detailing programs and services in the community, and local support available during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What's next?

Over the next year we are focusing on:

- expanding the program's reach to culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- growing volunteering opportunities for older people, as a pathway to community participation
- introducing a case management model for more complex needs to support mobility and mental health concerns
- expanding the use of telehealth groups, following the change due to COVID-19.

Social groups keeping people connected

Merri Health's social groups help older people, people with dementia and people with disabilities to stay healthy, active and connected with their community for as long as possible, through enjoyable and meaningful activities. This service is officially known as Social Support Programs.

What did we achieve?

In the 2019/20 financial period, we focused on offering services that were co-designed with participants, so they are reflective of their needs and wants. This resulted in:

- the introduction of four dinner dances with an average of 50 participants per session
- an art and craft exhibition completed by participants
- a partnership with Crossroads café in which participants built raised garden beds and grew veggies and herbs that were used on the café's menu.

What's next?

Our team has learnt a lot about what is possible and gaps as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. In response, over the next year we are working on:

- increasing participants' knowledge of and access to new technologies so they can stay connected
- supporting and up-skilling staff, and exploring flexible practices so that we are able to respond to changing environments as needed.

Elder abuse prevention



Above: Merri Health supports locals and service providers with elder abuse information.

In response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence, the Victorian Government provided funding to establish 10 elder abuse prevention networks to collaborate at a community level, and focus on the prevention of elder abuse.

Merri Health leads the network for both the northern and western metropolitan regions. Established in early 2019, we partner with aged care and community organisations to address elder abuse through education, resources and campaigns.

What did we achieve?

During the 2019/20 financial period, we:

- advocated for elder abuse to be recognised as a form of family violence, by joining the Preventing Violence Together Partnership as an associate member
- raised awareness by:
 - joining the EveryAge Counts coalition and campaign to end ageism, and shared information and resources across Merri Health's digital channels
 - holding a number of events during World Elder Abuse Awareness Day to educate community — 11 members across the network ran events
- connected community with information and services, as an exhibitor at the CARE Melton Expo that had 500 attendees.

What's next?

The northern and western metropolitan networks will:

- support Victorian Seniors Week during October by:
 - providing elder abuse information to various community groups via presentations
 - explore options for members to celebrate virtually, as the event goes digital this year due to COVID-19
- offer web-based elder abuse training for health professionals in response to COVID-19
- continue to focus on raising awareness of ageism via digital strategies
- focus on increasing their support to Aboriginal-controlled and cultural and linguistically diverse organisations
- facilitate and share the Primary Prevention of Elder Abuse Framework.

Healthy ageing through exercise



From left: Staff Christine running an exercise group.

Merri Health provides a holistic approach to healthy ageing: we look beyond a person's current needs and consider their physical, emotional and social wellbeing as part of their wellbeing plan. Exercise and education are two key offerings that promote movement and information, to support older people to live well in the community.

What did we achieve?

During the 2019/20 financial period, we engaged 226 new participants to take part in:

- aquatic exercise groups
- a functional strength group
- a falls and balance group
- GLA:D — a group that offers education and exercise to manage osteoarthritis of the knee or hip
- introduction to exercise groups
- Help Yourself groups that provide ongoing support for those having difficulty with independent exercise.

What's next?

Over the 2020/21 financial period, we are looking to:

- implement Parkinson's support groups
- expand our functional strength group to Fawkner
- expand our Help Yourself group to Coburg
- introduce telehealth groups for Parkinson's with a focus on education, GLA:D management of osteoarthritis of the knee or hip, and functional exercise.

Supporting memory loss and dementia



Above: Our aged team support older people and their carers, with memory loss and dementia.

Our specialist memory loss and dementia service supports older people with health and therapy services to help them understand the changes they are experiencing and how to stay independent. We also offer support to carers to help them in their role.

What did we achieve?

During the 2019/20 financial period:

- our service was acknowledged for its innovative approach as Leading Age Services Australia Tri-State award nominee
- we upskilled staff by training two occupational therapists in Care of Older Persons in their Environment (COPE) model, an evidence-based approach to supporting people and their carers in a home setting
- we shared our learnings with other health professionals at the Leading Age Services Australia National Congress
- we established the service offering in Epping to expand local support
- we supported the introduction of fit-for-purpose Merri Health vehicles to be used by clinical staff.

What's next?

Addressing the changes to service delivery due to COVID-19, we are working on:

- continuing telehealth options for group-based sessions
- delivering services remotely.

We will also:

- focus on developing resources for consumers on behavioural support and dementia care
- recruit a social worker to help with supporting high risk consumers
- offer the COPE model of care training to additional occupational therapists
- expand to the western metropolitan region to offer support to locals.

Independence at home

Home Care Packages support older people who have complex or changing care needs to stay living in their home and community for longer.

What did we achieve?

During the 2019/20 financial period, we:

- supported 233 home care package recipients to live independently in their home and the community they love
- expanded our team with the introduction of extra community nurses to support a rise in continence referrals
- established relationships with key personnel at the Department of Health to provide regular updates and consultation on critical aged care issues.

What's next?

To improve services during COVID-19 restrictions, we will:

- offer time management training for staff in response to our new working from home model due to COVID-19
- move to an electronic version of CAB charge vouchers to support a seamless process while working from home
- take part in information sessions with the Department of Health to identify solutions due to the impact of COVID-19 on service delivery.



Above: An occupational therapist assisting an older woman to stand up.

Goal-based therapy

Our Rapid Reablement program supports older people to return to doing the things they enjoy the most through intensive, goal-based therapy. We connect consumers with short-term health services that are right for their needs, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, exercise physiology and speech pathology.

What did we achieve?

During the 2019/20 financial period, we increased consumer support by:

- processing 1,200 referrals
- providing more than 6,000 hours of service delivery.

What's next?

Our high referral numbers tell us there is an increased need for this type of support. With this in mind, we'll continue to:

- market our services further north and west in metropolitan Melbourne to increase referrals
- offer telehealth options where it is appropriate, which allows us to move beyond physical barriers.



Above: A care worker helping an older woman with her walker.





Board of Directors proceedings and **financial report**

Board of Directors proceedings

Board attendance at meetings 2019/2020

| Director | Eligible to attend | Attended |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Carlo Carli — Chair | 11 | 10 |
| Darryl Annett | 11 | 10 |
| Julie McCormack | 11 | 11 |
| Joe Caputo | 11 | 11 |
| Benjamin Maxfield | 11 | 10 |
| Ann Taylor | 11 | 11 |
| Sheena Watt | 7 | 6 |
| Seide Raffoul | 7 | 6 |
| Sam Garrasi | 5 | 5 |
| Marleine Raffoul* | 4 | 4 |
| Michael Malakonas* | 4 | 3 |
| Katerina Angelopoulos* | 4 | 4 |

* Ceased as a Board member during the year

Board attendance at planning retreat Feb/Mar 2020

| Director | Board retreat |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Carlo Carli — Chair | ✓ |
| Darryl Annett | ✓ |
| Julie McCormack | ✓ |
| Joe Caputo | ✓ |
| Benjamin Maxfield | ✓ |
| Ann Taylor | ✓ |
| Sheena Watt | ✓ |
| Seide Raffoul | Apology |
| Sam Garrasi | ✓ |

Board attendance at COVID-19 extraordinary meetings 2020

| Director | Eligible to attend | Attended |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Carlo Carli — Chair | 9 | 9 |
| Darryl Annett | 9 | 7 |
| Julie McCormack | 9 | 8 |
| Joe Caputo | 9 | 7 |
| Benjamin Maxfield | 9 | 8 |
| Ann Taylor | 9 | 9 |
| Sheena Watt | 9 | 8 |
| Seide Raffoul | 9 | 4 |
| Sam Garrasi | 9 | 9 |

Board attendance at sub-committees 2019/2020

Finance, Audit and Risk Management

| Director | Eligible to attend | Attended |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Michael Malakonas — Chair (part year) | 2 | 2 |
| Darryl Annett — Chair (part year) | 3 | 3 |
| Sam Garrasi | 3 | 3 |
| Carlo Carli | 5 | 3 |
| Benjamin Maxfield | 2 | 2 |
| Marleine Raffoul | 2 | 2 |

Quality, Safety and Clinical Governance

| Director | Eligible to attend | Attended |
|-------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Julie McCormack — Chair | 5 | 5 |
| Katerina Angelopoulos | 2 | 2 |
| Joe Caputo | 2 | 1 |
| Seide Raffoul | 3 | 1 |
| Benjamin Maxfield | 3 | 3 |
| Carlo Carli* | 2 | 1 |
| Ann Taylor** | 5 | 5 |

* ex officio

* not an elected committee member

Community Engagement

| Director | Eligible to attend | Attended |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Darryl Annett — Chair (part year) | 2 | 2 |
| Ann Taylor — Chair (part year) | 3 | 3 |
| Sheena Watt | 1 | 1 |
| Joe Caputo | 1 | 1 |

About sub-committees

Finance, Audit and Risk Management

This sub-committee oversees financial performance, compliance, risk management and internal and external audits for Merri Health. The sub-committee meets six times a year [or more frequently if required] and is made up of at least two Board members, at least one community member with financial expertise and members of the Merri Health executive team.

Quality, Safety and Clinical Governance

This sub-committee meets quarterly [or more frequently if required] to oversee key strategies and higher level reports on clinical governance functions. The sub-committee is made up of at least two Board members, up to three community representatives with clinical expertise and members of the Merri Health executive team.

Community Engagement

This sub-committee meets quarterly [or more frequently if required], with the purpose to consult with community representatives on activities and services of Merri Health. The sub-committee makes recommendations to the Board about how to engage with the community and obtain meaningful feedback and potential improvements. The sub-committee is made up of at least two Board members, a minimum of four community representatives and members of the Merri Health executive team.

We are grateful for the support we receive in-kind from community representatives on our Board sub-committees.

Community representation on Board sub-committees 2019/2020

Finance Audit and Risk Management

| Representative | Eligible to attend | Attended |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------|
| Geraldine Allen | 5 | 4 |

Quality, Safety and Clinical Governance

| Representative | Eligible to attend | Attended |
|----------------|--------------------|----------|
| Sheena Watt* | 2 | 1 |
| Simone Pike | 5 | 2 |
| Celine Johns | 5 | 1 |
| Roxanne Adams | 5 | 5 |

* not as an elected Board member

Community Engagement

| Representative | Eligible to attend | Attended |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------|
| Giuseppe Ardica | 1 | 0 |
| Sanjay Gund | 2 | 0 |
| Mairi Rowan | 3 | 3 |
| Mustafa Koukhan | 1 | 1 |
| George Jiang | 1 | 1 |
| Suzy Pinchen* | - | - |
| Adua Rosso | 3 | 3 |
| Fareed Ayub | 2 | 0 |

* Apology

Financial statements

The following forms the Concise Financial Report for Merri Health and are extracted from the Audited Financial Report. The Concise Financial Report cannot be expected to display a full understanding of the financial performance, financial position and financing and investing activities of Merri Health.

A full copy of the Audited Financial Report is available at merrihealth.org.au.

Statement of Profit & Loss and Other Comprehensive Income for the year ended 30 June 2020

| | 2020 \$'000 | 2019 \$'000 |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Revenue | | |
| Revenue from operations | 46,753 | 37,944 |
| Other revenues | 787 | 1,663 |
| Total revenues | 47,540 | 39,607 |
| Expenses | | |
| Employee benefits expense | 29,149 | 25,974 |
| Depreciation and amortisation | 2,458 | 1,240 |
| Finance costs | 210 | 120 |
| Supplies | 194 | 266 |
| Computer expenses | 834 | 485 |
| Consulting and legal costs | 830 | 259 |
| Client costs | 4,977 | 4,782 |
| Communication | 399 | 335 |
| Motor vehicle expenses | 287 | 314 |
| Occupancy costs | 1,028 | 1,511 |
| Payments to other agencies | 5,313 | 1,884 |
| Repairs and maintenance | 217 | 188 |
| Employment expenses | 480 | 509 |
| Loss on disposal of pp&e | 458 | 6 |
| Other expenses | 1,018 | 1,269 |
| Total expenses | 47,852 | 39,142 |
| Total operating surplus / (loss) | (312) | 465 |
| Revaluations | (246) | (422) |
| Total comprehensive income for the year | (558) | 43 |

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2020

| | 2020 \$'000 | 2019 \$'000 |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Current assets | | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | 14,325 | 14,127 |
| Trade and other receivables | 591 | 1,274 |
| Other current assets | 1,743 | 2,683 |
| Total current assets | 16,659 | 18,084 |
| Non-current assets | | |
| Lease assets | 3,330 | - |
| Financial assets | 7,193 | - |
| Property, plant and equipment | 12,356 | 12,412 |
| Total non-current assets | 22,879 | 12,412 |
| Current liabilities | | |
| Trade and other payables | 13,254 | 7,836 |
| Lease liabilities | 1,219 | - |
| Provisions | 4,020 | 3,568 |
| Total current liabilities | 18,493 | 11,404 |
| Non-current liabilities | | |
| Provisions | 1,413 | 1,062 |
| Lease liabilities | 2,160 | - |
| Borrowings | 2,853 | 2,853 |
| Total non-current liabilities | 6,426 | 3,915 |
| Net assets | 14,619 | 15,177 |
| Equity | | |
| Reserves | 1,497 | 2,236 |
| Retained earnings | 13,122 | 12,941 |
| Total equity | 14,619 | 15,177 |

Contact us

Our sites

Brunswick

11 Glenlyon Road
Brunswick VIC 3056

Brunswick West

382–386 Moreland Road
Brunswick West VIC 3055

Coburg

93 Bell Street
Coburg VIC 3058

Craigieburn

Connections @ Hothlyn
120 Hothlyn Drive
Craigieburn VIC 3064

Pentridge Boulevard, Coburg

Ground floor, Unit 4
19 Pentridge Boulevard
Coburg VIC 3058

Fawkner

79 Jukes Road
Fawkner VIC 3060

Glenroy

5D Cromwell Street
Glenroy VIC 3046

Preston

Level 1 and 2, 110 Chifley Drive
Preston VIC 3072

Preston

Ground floor, Suites 3–4
306–308 Bell Street
Preston VIC 3072

Vic Place

21 Victoria Street
Coburg VIC 3058

Wangaratta

Level 3, 62–68 Ovens Street
Wangaratta VIC 3677
t: 1300 362 739

All services

☎ 1300 637 744

✉ info@merrihealth.org.au

National Disability Insurance Scheme

☎ 1300 637 744

✉ ndis@merrihealth.org.au

Carer support

1800 422 737

Victims Assistance Program

1300 362 739

My Aged Care*

1800 200 422

* My Aged Care is the first point of contact for aged care services

merrihealth.org.au

Connect with us

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in Merri Health

Your feedback is important to us

Your feedback is important to us. It's good to give feedback as it helps us improve how we do things. We manage all feedback as quickly as possible and it is confidential.

You can provide feedback by:

☎ (03) 9389 2234

✉ quality@merrihealth.org.au

🌐 merrihealth.org.au



Merri Health
Healthcare that moves with you