



Health Promotion

Narrative report 2017-2021



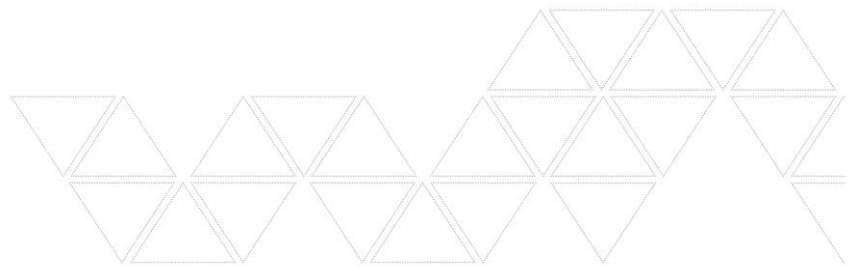
Merri Health
Healthcare that moves with you

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Merri Health acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land, water and skies where we work. We acknowledge and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.





Executive summary

Merri Health is funded by the Department of Health (formerly Department of Health and Human Services) to deliver health promotion initiatives within the Moreland local government area.

In 2017, Merri Health developed a new Integrated Health Promotion Strategy to guide its strategic direction over the next four years.

Guided by population health data and input from local stakeholders, Merri Health identified violence against women, social inclusion, and access for affordable, nutritious foods as key health and wellbeing priorities for Moreland communities. Taking an approach that addresses the social determinants of these health issues, we prioritised the following impact areas:

- social cohesion, connection and inclusion
- educational preparedness and attainment
- employment, civic participation and volunteering

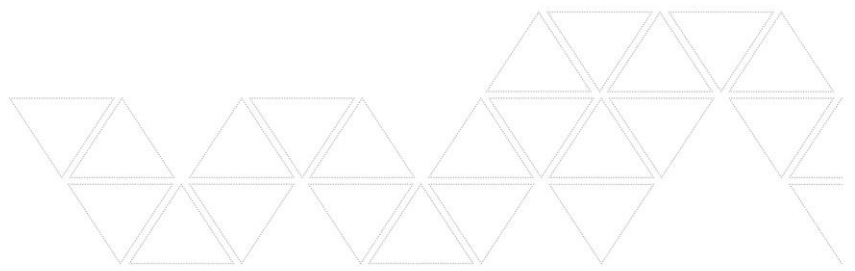
In four years, Merri Health has delivered more than 25 initiatives that have realised impacts across these three areas. Our initiatives directly engaged 14,940 people. Through changes to settings, one-off event engagements, and social media our initiatives also indirectly reached approximately 180,000 people who live, learn, work or play in Moreland.

Partnerships are foundational to our work. Our 139 partners over four years span schools, early years services, neighbourhood houses, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, community groups, culturally-specific organisations, universities, local and state government. Merri Health's initiatives were also supported by 11 different funding bodies. They also could not have been possible without the support and collaboration of 17 other teams from Merri Health.

For some of our longer-running initiatives, we have included five case studies that detail:

- project aims
- activities implemented
- impact over the duration of the initiative

Merri Health's initiatives over the past four years have also been acknowledged through statewide and local awards for their quality, community engagement and innovation. We also have a strong history of sharing our practice and learning with the sector.



Introduction

Since 2017, Merri Health has delivered more than 25 initiatives under its Integrated Health Promotion Strategy 2017-2021 (IHP Strategy).

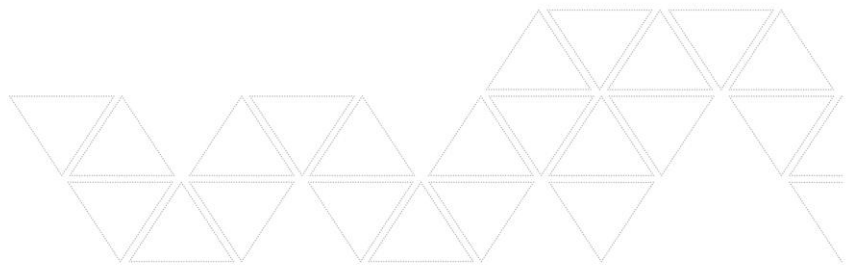
The IHP Strategy is led by Merri Health's community wellbeing team; a multidisciplinary team of health promotion, community engagement and community arts professionals.

This report aims to provide an overview of the work implemented by the community wellbeing team under the IHP Strategy from 2017-2021, including:

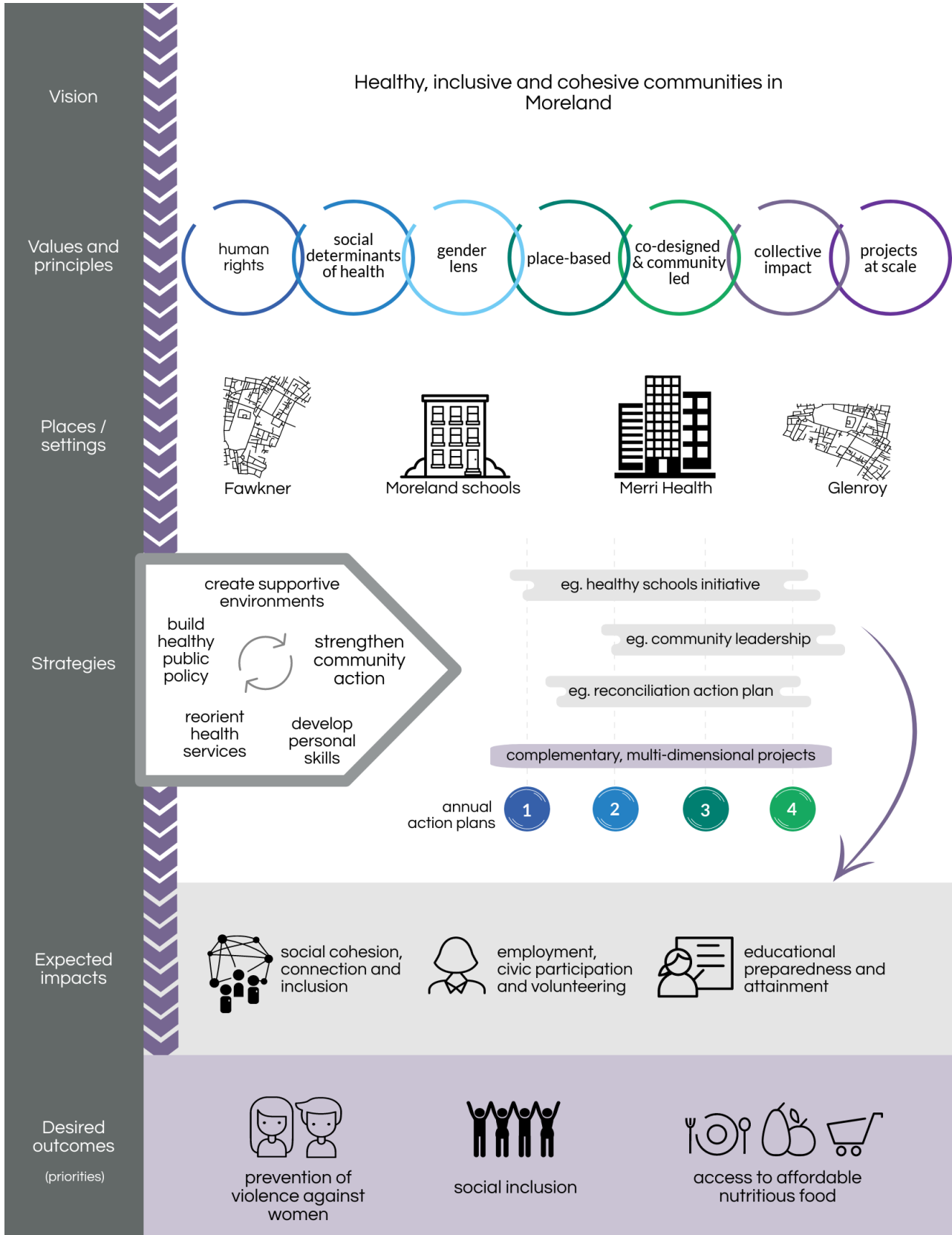
- health and wellbeing priorities identified
- key impact areas
- priority communities
- priority places and settings
- what we achieved
- key challenges and what we learnt from them
- how we adapted COVID-19

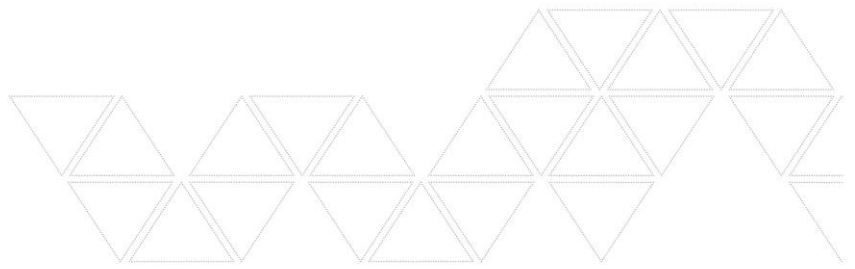
Also included are five case studies of multi-year initiatives implemented by the Community Wellbeing team at Merri Health. These case studies detail activities implemented, and the impact on community.

This narrative report also forms part of Merri Health's annual report for activities implemented in 2020-2021 under the Integrated Health Promotion Strategy 2017-2021. It sits alongside the Integrated Health Promotion Progress Report 2020-2021, but aims to provide more detail of the stories behind the projects implemented this year.



The strategy





How the strategy was developed

In January 2017, Merri Health began the process of developing a new four-year strategy. This process included:

- engaging Keleher Consulting to review identified priorities
- reviewing local data
- consulting with staff
- community consultation through a local door-knocking effort in Fawkner
- staff and partner planning day, with representation from Moreland City Council, Women’s Health in the North and the Inner North West Primary Care Partnership.

Local data was analysed to identify which groups within the local community experienced the highest levels of inequity and inequality in relation to the identified priorities. To ensure we were best able to impact our priorities at the local level, Merri Health reviewed the social determinants of each priority and assessed our sphere of influence over these determinants. Through this process, our target groups were identified and our priorities from 2013-2017 were reconfirmed with some minor adaptations.

The Integrated Health Promotion Strategic Plan 2017-2021 (IHP Strategy) was developed in the context of relevant local, state and federal government policies.

Priorities

Merri Health identified three health and wellbeing priorities for the IHP Strategy.

Preventing violence against women

Violence against women is a prevalent, serious and preventable human rights abuse that causes significant harm to individuals, families and communities. In 2017, we identified family violence as continuing to be one of the most critical issues affecting women in Moreland, with a steady increase in the rate of reported family violence incidents over the previous decade.

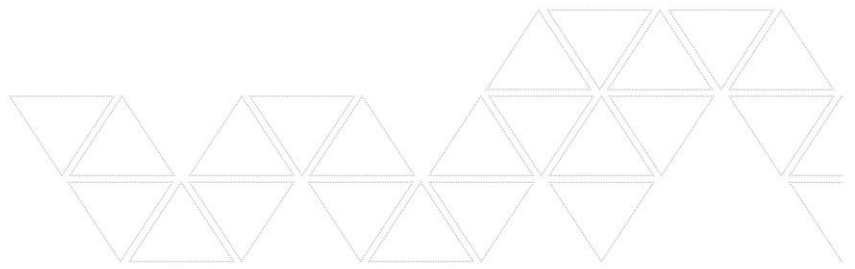
Violence against women is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. International and national research indicates that to prevent violence against women before it occurs, we must take action to increase gender equality. This is now widely validated through national frameworks and policies, with considerable investment and policy change within Victoria.

Social inclusion

Social inclusion forms a critical part of the health and wellbeing of any community.

‘Social inclusion’ refers to policies or programs designed to remove barriers to participation in mainstream society, so that all Australians will have the resources, opportunities and capability to learn, work, engage in the community and have a voice.

The term ‘social connections’ refers to the people we know, the friends we confide in, the family we belong to and the community we live in. ‘Social and community cohesion’ refers to the absence of social conflict, the presence of strong social bonds exhibited through levels of trust and participation in neighbourhoods and communities.



Although the residents across Moreland reported high levels of community acceptance of diversity, a positive sense of community, and moderate levels of community engagement in 2017, we also know that social exclusion and discrimination is more keenly felt amongst specific population groups. This is particularly relevant for: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities; refugees and asylum seekers; people with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, asexual and queer (LGBTIAQ+) communities; and women.

Access to affordable nutritious food

Access to nutritious, good quality and affordable fresh food is a critical component of good physical and mental wellbeing, with strong correlations between consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables and improved health outcomes. In 2017, trend data suggested that nearly half of Moreland residents (46%) were not meeting fruit or vegetable recommendations.

People experiencing disadvantage – particularly economic disadvantage – are most at risk of food insecurity, and are more likely to have poor access to affordable, nutritious foods locally. This, in turn, contributes to increased rates of overweight and obesity.

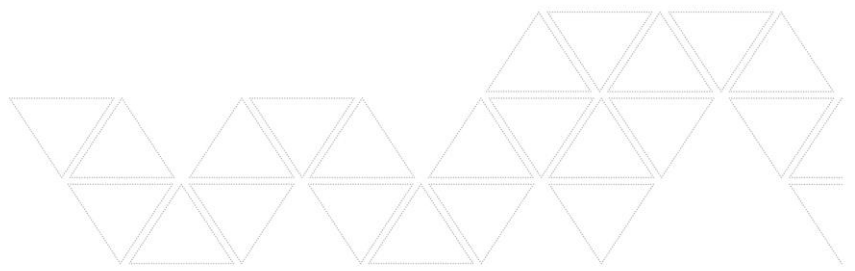
After more than 10 years prioritising food security or food access, Merri Health made the decision to transition from investing significant resources in this area. Following advocacy and community mobilisation through the Moreland Food Gardens Network, Merri Health and community partners had successfully engaged Moreland City Council to prioritise food security locally through a formal food systems strategy and dedicated resourcing. Recognising the essential role of local government in food systems, Merri Health's food security interventions were finalised or transitioned to another provider in the first two years of this strategy.

Expected impacts

In line with the principles of our IHP Strategy, Merri Health analysed the social determinants that underpin the chosen health and wellbeing priorities. We also assessed whether these determinants are within our scope of influence.

Following this assessment, we identified the following social determinants as the priority impact areas to focus our efforts:

- social cohesion, connections and inclusion
- employment, civic participation and volunteering
- educational preparedness and attainment



Target groups

The following target groups were identified as those who experience the highest levels of inequity and inequality in relation to the three health and wellbeing priorities. Merri Health worked in partnership with these groups to codesign, implement and evaluate projects and initiatives that improve health and wellbeing within their communities.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, asexual (LGBTIQA+) communities
- culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities
- people who are newly arrived, seeking asylum or are refugees
- women
- children and families
- young people
- older people

Settings

Aligning with planning guidelines, Merri Health's new IHP Strategy strengthened its focus on place-based approaches and continued to engage settings as key sites for sustainable health promotion action. By concentrating resources towards places and settings, Merri Health aimed to increase opportunities for collaboration, leveraging across projects and ultimately impact.

Initially, four places or setting types were chosen:

1. Fawkner
2. Moreland schools
3. Merri Health
4. Glenroy

Over four years, the scope and investment towards interventions within these places/settings fluctuated.

In an effort to consolidate effort and impact, the IHP Strategy was structured according to places and settings, rather than the priorities themselves. High-level goals and objectives were identified for each place or setting, with more specific sub-objectives identified for each initiative.

Alignment with local government

The IHP strategy contributed to and align with the following goals from the Moreland Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021:

- Moreland residents are socially connected and participate in community life
- Moreland residents are safe and part of a resilient community
- Moreland residents have access to lifelong learning opportunities
- Moreland has a growing economy that promotes a diversity of local jobs
- Moreland residents are eating nutritious foods and local food production is supported

Social cohesion, connections and inclusion



60% Hello, Fawkner! participants felt they know a lot of people in Fawkner (253% ↑)



84% of Speak Up, Speak Out participants intend to take upstander action



85% YGLAM participants felt a stronger connection to community



943 people from diverse cultural backgrounds were supported to participate in sport



96% Hello, Fawkner! participants said they learnt about new cultures and traditions



59% Fawkner residents surveyed felt there was a positive change in social cohesion over the last 4 years

Educational preparedness and attainment



100% Fawkner schools now have relationships with feeder kindergartens (49% ↑)



36 new partners join the collective effort (566% ↑)



Decrease in Fawkner children starting school developmentally vulnerable (28% ↓)



100% Fawkner schools are now offering 7+ transitions sessions (150% ↑)

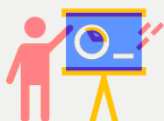
Employment, volunteering and civic participation



89% Stand Out MOREland participants felt confident in their ability to run an event (39% ↑)



76% Urdu women developed skills and confidence to be a community leader (40% ↑)



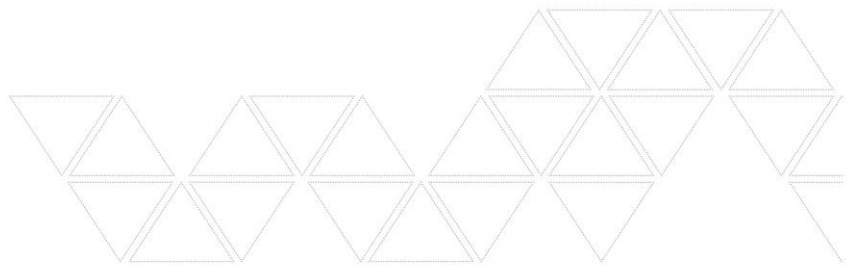
318 staff completed Aboriginal Cultural Appreciation training



80% Hello, Fawkner! participants developed skills to run a community project (60% ↑)



Awarded citation as Employer of Choice for Gender Equality



What we achieved

Merri Health has delivered more than 25 initiatives under its *Integrated Health Promotion Strategy 2017-2021*. Four initiatives have run for the full duration of the IHP Strategy, whilst the remaining initiatives ran for an average of 1.5-2 years.

Of the 25 initiatives delivered, all included direct participation components and nine included organisational development strategies.

The aims of our initiatives were typically deliberately multifaceted, contributing to more than one impact area.

Achievements by impact area

Social cohesion, connections and inclusion

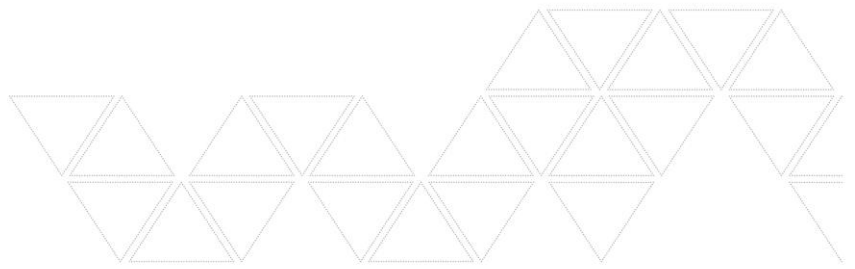
Efforts to increase social cohesion, connections and inclusion were a key priority under the IHP Strategy, with all 25 initiatives contributing to positive outcomes in this area.

A key strategy to building social cohesion and inclusion has been by **empowering community members** to advocate for their needs, lead change and take action. Through fostering community leadership, or enabling community-led projects, we have seen changes to community members knowledge, confidence, skills, connection to others and/or community. Predominately fostered through direct participation programs, examples of this work include:

- structured leadership programs, such as Hello, Fawkner!, the Urdu women’s group and Speak Up, Speak Out
- linking community to structured leadership development opportunities, for example supporting Count Me In Too participants to become trainers and referees for local sport
- unstructured or informal leadership development opportunities, such as fostering student leadership through Stand Out groups or supporting Count Me In Too participants to take on public speaking roles
- upstander (active bystander) training, upskilling community members to respond to inequity, exclusion and discrimination
- community governance of our initiatives, such as steering committees, focus groups and community champions

Many of our initiatives also used awareness raising strategies to shift **community attitudes to diversity**. This work included large-scale events that engaged the broader community in the experiences of LGBTIQ+ young people, and events and activities hosted by community members. Examples include:

- a multi-school march for International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia that won ‘Event of the Year’ and incorporated a short film with almost 16,000 views on social media
- a theatre performance by YGLAM exploring barriers that LGBTIQ+ youth face, which was attended by 200 people
- Harmony Day parties hosted by community members, bringing together more than 2,006 people to celebrate cultural diversity in Fawkner
- a Meena Bazaar delivered by the Urdu women’s group; an event that promoted cultural foods and wares



Beyond leadership development, several initiatives also aimed to increase **social connections** for target communities, and **broaden connections** in order to contribute to more cohesive communities. Examples of this work include:

- stronger connections between neighbours and other locals from different backgrounds, facilitated by Hello, Fawkner!'s Harmony Day parties and The Great Idea Program
- broader social networks and increased connections through group programs, such as the Fawkner Urdu women's group and LEAP (for parents/carers of children with additional needs)
- increased opportunities to meet and connect with people at community venues, like The Community Grocer (outside the Fawkner leisure centre), and Count Me In / Count Me In Too (sports clubs)

Participants also reported stronger **connections to their community** or **connection to culture** as a result of participating in our initiatives. Examples of this work include:

- the Community Grocer, where 90% of respondents felt more connected to their community after attending the weekly market
- YGLAM participants, who reported feeling a stronger connection to community after delivering a theatre performance that shared the experiences of LGBTIQ+ young people
- 80% of Speak Up, Speak Out respondents felt more connected to their culture after completing the program

This work also demonstrated **co-benefits for mental health**. For example, 100% of YGLAM participants felt participation in the musical had improved their mental health; and Count Me In participants saw a positive correlation between participation, resilience and wellbeing as a result of many children and young people joining a sports club for the first time.

In addition to direct participation initiatives, our organisational development work with settings has enabled us to also create more **inclusive, accessible and welcoming environments**. Examples of this work include:

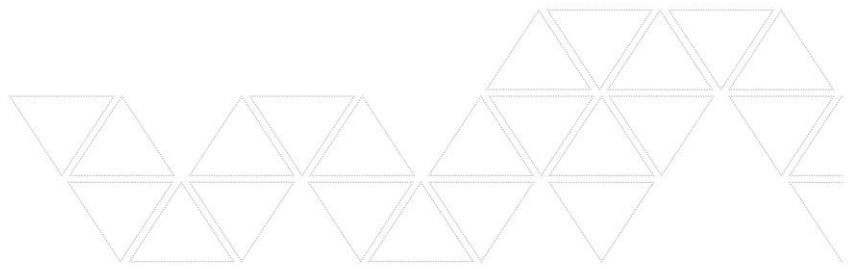
- changes to policies and physical environments within Merri Health to be more welcoming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- changes made within sporting clubs through Count Me In and Count Me In Too saw increased participation from community members from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds, particularly girls and women
- changes to family engagement strategies within schools and early years services, to support an improved transition to school
- student-led action within schools leading to more visibility of issues faced by LGBTIQ+ young people, and changes to physical environments (eg. rainbow flag raising)

Please see case studies below that detail activities and impact over multiple years.

Educational preparedness and attainment

Ready, Set, Prep! is the key initiative under this impact area, and has contributed to considerable change in Fawkner in relation to educational preparedness.

Using a collective impact approach, Ready, Set, Prep! initially worked with all five schools in Fawkner to strengthen their transition process. As a result, 100% of participating schools now offer 7+ transition sessions covering 9 topics and have established relationships with their feeder kindergartens. This change ensured schools are more prepared to welcome and support new children and their families.



RSP also worked directly with families through targeted interventions, including Word Play and LEAP. Word Play increased participants confidence to read and speak English, changed how participants read to their children and improved social connections and school readiness. LEAP increased participants knowledge of parenting support programs and resources for children with additional needs.

At a population level, Ready, Set, Prep! aims to see changes to Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data for Fawkner children. Importantly, the latest AEDC data shows an 11% reduction in the number of children starting school developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains from 2015 to 2018 in Fawkner. While there are still improvements to be made, Ready, Set, Prep! partners welcome these positive changes. In 2020, Merri Health decided to expand the Ready, Set, Prep! partnership to encompass all of northern Moreland.

Please see a detailed case study for Ready, Set, Prep! below.

Although the initial IHP Strategy included an aim to address **educational attainment**, Merri Health decided to consolidate its resources towards educational preparedness. However, we do recognise the cobenefits of our initiatives that create safer and more inclusive environments for students, and increased participation or engagement in education.

Several initiatives implemented in youth settings aimed to reduce bullying and discrimination for target communities, including: Standout MOREland, The Alliance, The Domino Effect, Speak Up Speak Out, the Little Long Walk and Young Change Makers. Students report that these youth-led initiatives have made schools safer and more inclusive environments, built their confidence and leadership skills, empowered them to lead change and connected them with mental health and social supports. Further, teachers involved in the Speak Up, Speak Out initiative reported **improved school attendance** from participants; an unintended outcome of the program.

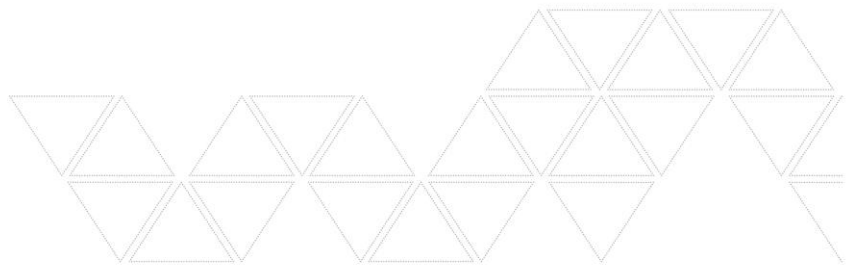
Employment, civic participation and volunteering

Merri Health's efforts to address employment, civic participation and volunteering span multiple initiatives. Key aims include:

- increasing participation of target communities in community action or volunteering
- increasing skills, knowledge and confidence that are useful for employment or leading community action

Merri Health prioritises **community capacity building** by creating opportunities for community members to inform the design and implementation of our initiatives. Across our initiatives, the format of these opportunities varies; spanning short interactions to gather input (such as community surveys), to more in-depth community governance structures where community members are central to decision-making. Examples of this work includes:

- establishing a volunteer committee of management for the Urdu women's group
- inviting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and staff to participate in Merri Health's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Committee; the key body that develops our RAP and monitors progress
- establishing panels of community members to review and select projects to be supported through The Great Idea Program (Hello, Fawkner!)
- establishing a steering committee for Ready, Set, Prep! that includes five community members



In the Fawkner setting, the Hello, Fawkner! initiative provided a multitude of opportunities for civic participation, volunteering and employment. The Harmony Day Parties were organised by local volunteers, who reported that this experience **empowered them as community leaders** and inspired them to organise more community events in the future. Local residents participated further by contributing to the Hello, Fawkner! newspaper and e-newsletter.

Our initiatives also provided opportunities for participants **to develop new employment-related skills**. Examples of this work include:

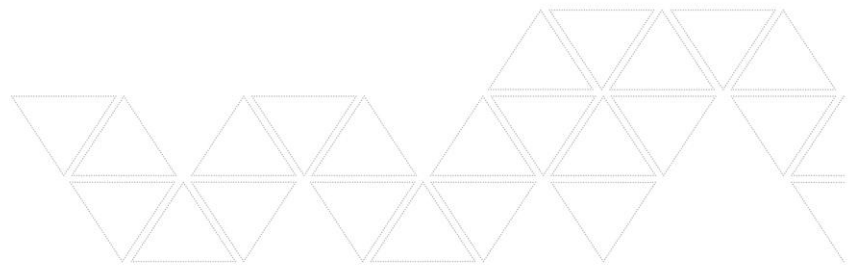
- participants of Hello, Fawkner!'s The Great Idea Program were supported to run projects in Fawkner, developing their project management, business, finance and networking skills.
- the Urdu Women's Group built participants' leadership and management skills through a range of professional and personal development workshops
- the Community Grocer initiative often engaged health promotion students as volunteers, providing a useful opportunity to upskill and build confidence in community engagement
- the Speak Up, Speak Out initiative supported the Aboriginal staff involved to develop their skills to plan, implement and evaluate primary prevention initiatives to address family violence

Please see a detailed case study for Hello, Fawkner! below.

Merri Health also aimed to create new employment opportunities within the community wellbeing team for people from target communities. Primarily, this was achieved through new grant-funded projects. The last four years has seen the successful employment/appointment of eight people from the following communities:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- young people
- LGBTIQ+ communities
- international students

Merri Health has also developed and enacted policies on gender equality, violence against women, disability inclusion, elder abuse and LGBTIQ+ inclusion, and submitted the second RAP for approval. These policies and practice create a safer and more inclusive workplace which increases employment and retention of marginalised groups.



Achievements by place/settings

Fawkner

About Fawkner

Fawkner is the most disadvantaged suburb in Moreland. 2016 Census data confirmed that communities in Fawkner experience disadvantage across multiple indicators including:

- lower household incomes
- lower year 12 attainment
- high rates of children starting school developmentally vulnerable
- higher rates of food insecurity

Fawkner communities are culturally and linguistically diverse, with high rates of newly-arrived migrant families particularly from a Muslim background. The area has experienced rapid demographic change as a result of migration, gentrification and an ageing population.

Through a community survey in June 2017, Merri Health identified that whilst many residents knew their neighbours and felt part of the community, many people also felt isolated and were wary of new communities. Almost 40% of the respondents reported experiencing or witnessing some form of discrimination, with Muslim migrants and women often bearing the brunt of hostilities.

Objectives

Project objectives spanned all impact areas, with a focus on realising positive change to:

- social cohesion, connection and inclusion, particularly for Fawkner's culturally diverse communities
- educational preparedness, particularly school readiness and early childhood development indicators for children and families in Fawkner
- civic participation and employment-related skills, particularly leadership development

Participation and reach

Our Fawkner initiatives directly engaged 7,451 people over four years.

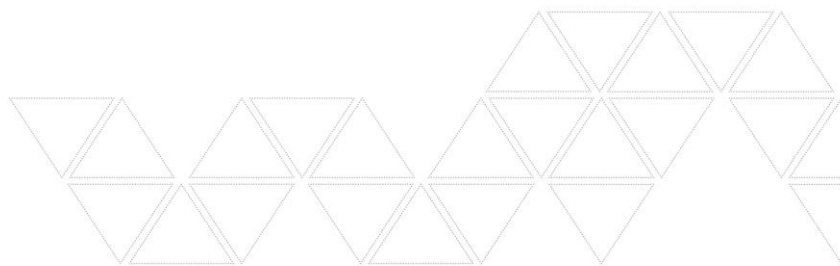
We estimate the indirect reach of changes made to settings to be approximately 45,816 people.



Northern Moreland

7,451

45,816



Our initiatives 2017-2021

Since 2017, Merri Health delivered eight initiatives as part of our place-based approach in Fawkner.

1. **The Community Grocer***
A weekly market to improve access to affordable, nutritious food and increase social connections.
2. **Count Me In**
Increasing social connections and community cohesion by supporting children and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to join sports clubs.
3. **Count Me In Too**
Increasing social connections, community cohesion and sports participation amongst girls and women from culturally diverse backgrounds.
4. **Dental screening at Fawkner schools***
Supporting children to access essential dental services and oral health information.
5. **Fawkner Primary active travel project***
A whole-school approach to increasing active travel.
6. **Hello, Fawkner!**
Building community cohesion, connection and respect for diversity through increased community leadership, local communication, social interaction and connection.
7. **Ready, Set, Prep!**
A collective impact approach to improving school readiness and family engagement.
8. **Urdu Women's Group**
Increasing social connections, leadership capacity and access to services for newly-arrived migrant women.

*These initiatives were legacy projects from Merri Health's previous IHP Strategy 2013-2017, and were finalised in the first year of the current strategy.

For detailed case studies about initiatives implemented in 2017-2020, please see previous annual reports.

Initiatives delivered in 2020-21

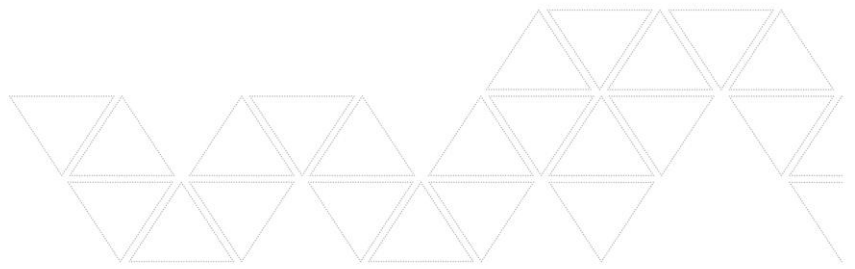
Ready, Set, Prep!

Ready, Set, Prep! (RSP) is an award-winning collective impact approach to improving early childhood development, school readiness and life outcomes for children and families. Together, community members and service providers work on priorities to benefit local children, now and into the future.

Since commencement, the RSP partnership has grown from just six partners – Moreland City Council and the five primary schools in Fawkner – to more than 40 partners across the early childhood and education sectors. This past year, RSP expanded from Fawkner to the northern Moreland area, comprised of Fawkner, Glenroy and Hadfield.



Community members and Merri Health staff at a Ready, Set, Prep! community workshop.



RSP utilises a proportionate universalism model, combining a place-based approach with a mixture of targeted interventions for vulnerable cohorts. Many of these innovative interventions arose through partnership collaboration and were co-designed with the culturally diverse community. The initiatives increased two-way trust, understanding and relationships between parents/carers and services, and improved social connections between parents and carers. RSP also prioritises building community capacity through leadership opportunities.

RSP was also funded by the William Buckland Foundation and Helen McPherson Smith Trust.

Please see the detailed case study below about the activities and achievements of Ready, Set, Prep! over four years.

Hello, Fawkner!

Hello, Fawkner! focuses on building social connection and respect for cultural diversity in Fawkner – providing many opportunities to build community leadership and participation.

Key activities include:

- The Great Idea Program (leadership training)
- community-led Harmony Day activities
- a community newspaper
- a monthly e-newsletter



This year, participants of *The Great Idea Program* implemented five projects they had designed for the Fawkner community, including projects promoting Fawkner businesses impacted by COVID-19, social events for new parents, and STEM and arts projects. Ten community leaders participated in the leadership program.

Hello, Fawkner! released the third edition of the *Fawkner Times* community newspaper, with 3,000 copies delivered to households, businesses and community venues across the suburb.

13 editions of the e-newsletter were also distributed during the reporting period, with 586 subscribers. The e-newsletters included approximately 212 different articles celebrating Fawkner's diversity, with 34% of articles contributed by residents.

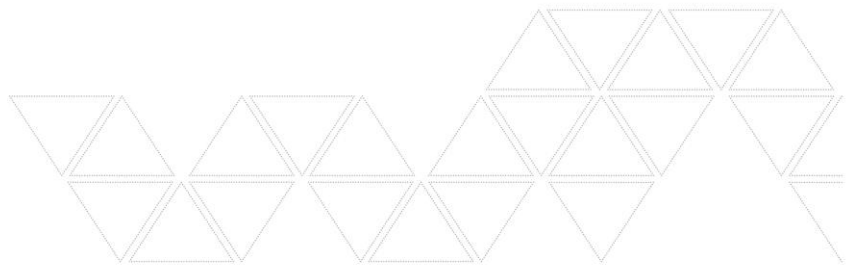
There were 29 community-led Harmony Day events this year, attended by 818 Fawkner locals. 96% of event hosts learned about new cultures and traditions, and 92% learned new skills through this experience.

Hello, Fawkner! was also funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

Please see the detailed case study below about the activities and achievements of Hello, Fawkner! over four years.



Community members enjoying a Harmony Day Party.



Count Me In Too

Count Me In Too (2) was a sports participation program that supported girls and women from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds to participate in sport. The project redressed the drivers of violence against women by promoting women's independence, challenging gender stereotypes, fostering social connection and inclusion, and role modelling.

In the previous reporting period, more than 620 girls and women were engaged through Count Me In Too. This year, the project was finalised; resources were developed and disseminated to partner sports clubs and state sporting associations to share learnings from the project and support ongoing engagement of culturally diverse women and girls in sport.

The project was delivered in partnership with Moreland City Council, and in 2020 was awarded an LGPro Award for Excellence for collaborative partnerships. Count Me In Too was also funded through the Victorian Governments Free from Violence Local Government Project Grants.

Youth settings

About youth settings

Initially, Moreland schools were identified as the priority place/setting for this work. However, over the course of the IHP Strategy, this work was expanded to include other settings frequented by young people in Moreland.

Youth settings included work delivered in partnership with or within:

- primary schools
- secondary schools
- community settings, such as youth centres

Merri Health has a long history of working partnership with Moreland's primary and secondary schools across a range of different priority areas. At the beginning of the IHP Strategy, Merri Health began consolidating its school-based work to focus on settings in northern Moreland, and towards work focusing on social inclusion and gender equity.

Objectives

Project objectives spanned all impact areas, with a focus on realising positive change to:

- social cohesion, connection and inclusion, particularly for LGBTIQ+ young people, and young people from culturally diverse backgrounds
- skill building through leadership development opportunities
-

Participation and reach

Our initiatives in youth settings directly engaged 6,355 people over four years.

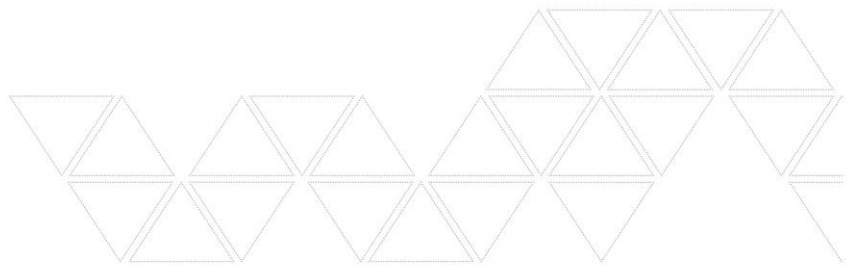
We estimate the indirect reach of changes made to settings to be approximately 139,014 people, including social media reach.



Schools and youth settings

6,355

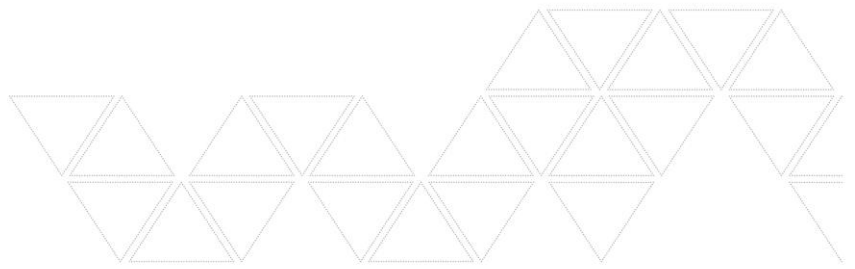
139,014



Our initiatives 2017-2021

Since 2017, Merri Health has delivered 14 initiatives within youth settings in Moreland.

1. **Coburg Primary School healthy eating project**
A whole-school approach to healthy eating*
2. **Coburg North Primary School**
A whole-school approach to mental wellbeing*
3. **Gender equity in schools (RRRR)**
Supporting primary and secondary schools chosen as lead providers of the RRRR curriculum.
4. **Moreland Youth Movement**
Increasing leadership skills amongst VCAL students through an applied school-based project aiming to increase social inclusion
5. **The Little Long Walk**
Engaging primary school students in reconciliation
6. **The Alliance**
Supporting student-led action to improve safety and inclusion for students from culturally diverse communities, LGBTIQ+ communities and females
7. **The Peace Patrol**
A large-scale community arts event for the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia engaging students across Moreland
8. **The Domino Effect**
A large-scale community arts event for the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia engaging students across Moreland
9. **Speak Up, Speak Out**
Increasing knowledge, skills and leadership capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to identify respectful relationships, and respond to harmful attitudes and behaviours
10. **Stand Out groups**
Supporting and connecting LGBTIQ+ young people in Moreland secondary schools
11. **Upstander training**
Support schools and organisations in Moreland to reduce discrimination through bystander / 'upstander' action
12. **YGLAM**
Increasing social engagement of LGBTIQ+ young people in Moreland through the arts
13. **Young Change Makers**
Build the capacity of young people in Glenroy and Fawkner to promote social cohesion in their communities



14. Youth-led resilience project

Supporting youth leaders to create a short film that discourages bullying

*These initiatives were legacy projects from Merri Health's previous IHP Strategy 2013-2017, and were finalised in the first year of the current strategy.

For more detail about initiatives implemented in 2017-2020, please see previous annual reports which include detailed case studies.

Initiatives delivered in 2020-21

Below is an overview of the four initiatives delivered in youth settings in 2020-2021.

Upstander training

Upstander training (or bystander training) focuses on building the knowledge, skills and confidence of participants to safely and appropriately intervene in situations where they feel uncomfortable, or where they disagree with what is happening.

This year, the training was adapted to an online setting due to COVID-19. The initiative was also extended to pilot Responding to Resistance training. This additional segment supported participants to safely and effectively negotiate resistance when intervening as an upstander. The pilot was successful and the Responding to Resistance segment will be incorporated into the upstander training curriculum going forward.

Please see the detailed case study below about how upstander training has been used across various settings and impact areas.

Young Change Makers

Young Change Makers aimed to build the leadership capacity of primary school students to lead change in their communities.

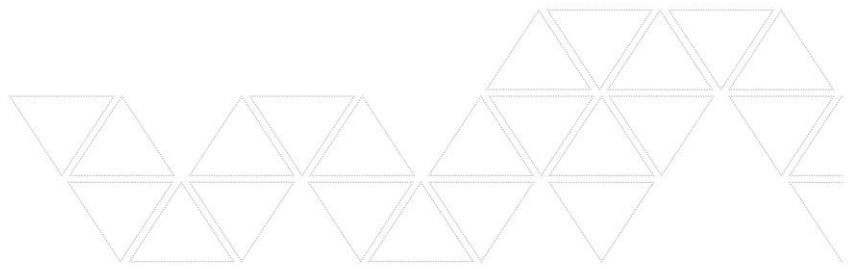
This project was delivered in partnership with Corpus Christi Primary School in Glenroy. In early 2020, upstander (or 'bystander') training was delivered to 72 students and leadership training was delivered to 10 student leaders from years 4-5.

Following the training, student leaders were supported to design a project that would promote harmony and celebrate diversity in their school community. Students adapted to COVID-19 changes and engaged the entire school community in the creation of a mural. In late 2020 students from across the school contributed their own 'puzzle piece' to the mural, which was installed in early 2021. Participation in the project increased participants' awareness of cultural diversity, cultural sensitivity, and celebration of difference.

Young Change Makers was also funded by the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet through the Community Harmony grants program.



A collection of 'puzzle pieces' for the Corpus Christi Primary School mural.



YGLAM: Queer Youth Theatre Ensemble

Operating for more than 20 years, the YGLAM queer youth theatre and performing arts ensemble combines weekly peer support and skill development workshops, with large-scale public art.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, workshops ran in-person and online this year. The online sessions kept YGLAM participants engaged socially and creatively during periods of isolation and lockdown. Online sessions included developing poetry, writing skills for short stories, and character and world creation portfolios. Young people led the direction and artistic voice of the workshops.

YGLAM enabled strong peer support among participants and also supported participants to engage with mental health support services.

Please see the detailed case study below about Merri Health's efforts to improve LGBTIQ+ inclusion over the past four years.



Character creation during online YGLAM workshops.

Stand Out groups

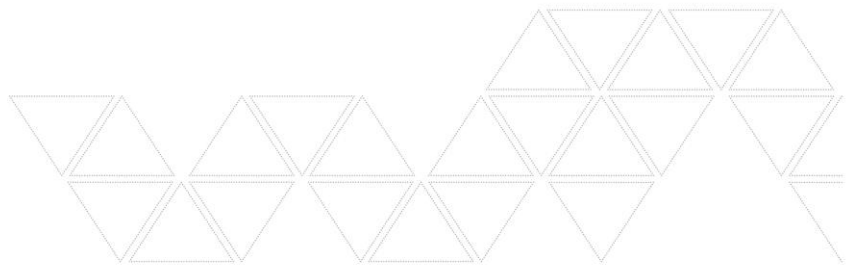
Stand Out groups are a youth-led alliance of students, aiming to increase safety and inclusion for LGBTIQ+ young people in school environments. This past year, several actions were implemented to support and connect LGBTIQ+ young people in Moreland secondary schools.

Stand Out groups were run at Coburg High School and Pascoe Vale Girls School. 57 participants attended these sessions throughout the year, including students, school staff and Merri Health staff. Sessions were held in person and online as determined by COVID-19 restrictions. The sessions created safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ students, fostered social relationships and support and identified opportunities and led change for schools to become more inclusive.

Additionally, 4 cross-school collaboration sessions were held online as a direct response to the experiences of isolation reported by many participants during the stage 4 COVID-19 lockdown. These sessions allowed students from the participating schools to share ideas and experiences and build connections.

Through these activities, 16 LGBTIQ+ young people were also connected to mental health support services.

Please see the detailed case study below about Merri Health's efforts to improve LGBTIQ+ inclusion over the past four years.



Merri Health

About Merri Health

Although Merri Health's origins are in the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne, it has expanded rapidly in the last 12 months to deliver services across Victoria in partnership with other health and community organisations. Merri Health now has more than 420 staff.

Objectives

Project objectives within Merri Health focused on realising positive change to:

- social inclusion and cohesion within Merri Health, with a particular focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; and people of all genders or sexes
- employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as staff, volunteers and students
- equity of employment opportunities for staff regardless of their sex or gender, age and cultural background

Participation and reach

The above initiatives directly engaged 1,134 people over four years.

We estimate the indirect reach of changes made to settings to be approximately 2,929 people.



1,134

2,929

Our initiatives 2017-2021

Since 2017, Merri Health has delivered 2 key initiatives within Merri Health, while also achieving employment outcomes through targeted roles.

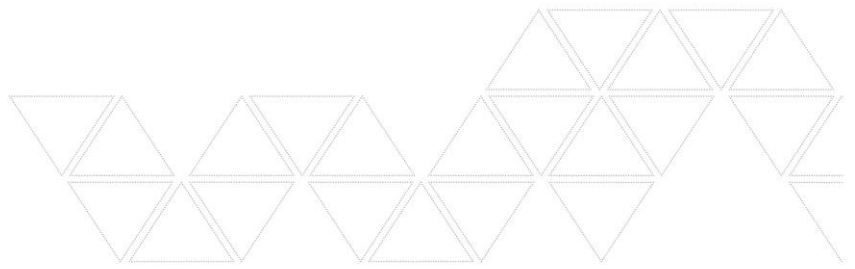
1. **Reconciliation Action Plan**
Creating a safer, more inclusive and equitable environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, staff, volunteers and students
2. **Gender Equality at Merri Health**
Creating a safer, more inclusive and equitable environment for Merri Health staff, students and volunteers, regardless of gender

Initiatives delivered in 2020-21

Below is an overview of the two key initiatives/strategies delivered at Merri Health in 2020-2021.

Reconciliation Action Plan

In 2021, Merri Health's new Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was submitted to Reconciliation Australia for review and approval. The Innovate RAP focuses on supporting all areas of Merri Health to incorporate



reconciliation action into their plans and programs. Artwork for the new RAP has been produced by a local Koorie artist and a launch is being planned for later in 2021.

COVID-19 presented multiple challenges for planned RAP activities during the reporting period. In the past, face-to-face events bringing staff and/or the community together would be a critical component of the RAP. Despite this, Merri Health adapted and ran online activities for NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week. These activities included team quizzes, Koorie Conversations with local Elders and a damper making session hosted by Mabu Mabu, Melbourne's only Torres Strait Islander café.

Staff training also moved online including four Cultural Awareness training sessions. The Koorie Community Engagement Officer also visited team meetings across Merri Health to talk about the RAP and promote the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Additionally, relevant resources were made more accessible on the Merri Health intranet, including information about the RAP, the RAP Committee, upcoming events and the Acknowledgement of Country policy.

Please see the detailed case study below about Merri Health's efforts over 4 years to work towards reconciliation, and increase safety and inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Employment

As a large organisation, Merri Health has the capacity to support employment outcomes for local community members through the way we do our business.

This year, we expanded our commitment to employing people from target communities with five roles. One community engagement officer role for the Ready, Set, Prep! initiative, and the addition of four community engagement caseworkers/officers funded for 6 months through the Working for Victoria initiative. Through recruitment, we actively sought candidates with lived experience or high levels of understanding of our target populations. As a result, of the five new recruits:

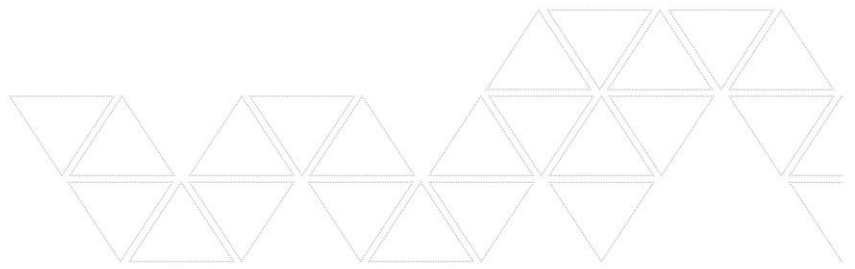
- two lived in Moreland, and two in a neighbouring local government area
- four spoke at least one language other than English
- two were currently or had previously been an international student

The Working for Victoria team conducted community engagement activities to understand the impacts of COVID-19 at the community level. This informed how our projects and services adapted to appropriately support the changing community needs. The caseworkers also provided support to community members including referrals, wellbeing checks and social support. The caseworkers worked with the broader team also conducted community consultations for our Integrated Health Promotion Strategy 2021-2025.

Two health promotion students completed placements with us this year. During this time, they undertook needs assessments for Glenroy and Hadfield, and another for employment in northern Moreland. The needs assessments were incorporated into our Integrated Health Promotion Strategy 2021-2025 planning.

Glenroy

At the commencement of the IHP Strategy, Glenroy was identified as a priority place/setting. The main aim at the time was to establish networks and initiate a place-based approach in Glenroy. Due to several factors – including staffing changes and a reallocation of resources to consolidate existing efforts on projects in Fawkner – this coordinated place-based approach has not progressed as initially planned.



Despite this, Merri Health has continued to run a number of initiatives across both the Fawkner and Glenroy settings, as well as in youth settings in the Glenroy area. These initiatives have been reported elsewhere in this document.

Going forward, Merri Health will shift from a separate approach in Glenroy and Fawkner towards a 'northern Moreland' approach, incorporating a wider area that includes neighbouring suburbs of Hadfield and Pascoe Vale.

Other achievements

Prevention of violence against women

In order to ensure Merri Health's initiatives contribute to our health and wellbeing priority to prevent violence against women, we applied a gender lens to the work implemented under all impact areas and across all settings. This includes:

- collecting gender disaggregated data, where possible
- identifying how initiatives might impact people of different genders differently
- identifying whether initiatives reinforce, perpetuate or exploit harmful stereotypes

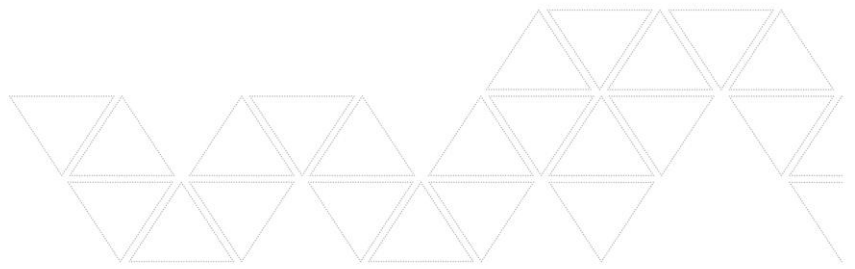
Importantly, we also aimed to ensure that our initiatives contribute to gender equality as a driver of men's violence against women.

Over the past four years, Merri Health has delivered six initiatives that explicitly identify project objectives that support gender equality outcomes. These initiatives span all target settings and places, and include initiatives such as the Urdu women's group, Count Me In Too, Speak Up Speak Out and Merri Health's workplace gender equality initiative.

These initiatives saw improved:

- participation in social life, including community groups and sporting clubs (particularly women who are newly arrived, or from culturally, linguistically or religiously diverse backgrounds)
- leadership capacity (particularly newly-arrived women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people)
- knowledge and skills to identify respectful relationships, and respond to harmful attitudes and behaviours (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people)
- employment conditions at Merri Health
- referral pathways to essential services, including family violence support services

For more information about some of Merri Health's initiatives that contribute to gender equality, please see case studies included in [Preventing Violence against Women: Stories of achievement from Melbourne's north 2020](#), produced by Women's Health in the North.



Partnerships

Working together for impact

Our work is firmly embedded in partnerships and collaboration, and this is evident across the initiatives detailed within this report.

Partnerships are integral to our project design, implementation and evaluation. Partnerships ensure our work is place-based, community-led and responsive to community needs. Our partnerships support collaboration and enable the sharing of information, resources and approaches across the sector.

Over the past four years, we have engaged with more than 139 different partners, networks or committees, 17 teams across our organisation, and worked with 11 different funders.



Types of partners 2017-2021

Local government

Moreland City Council is a critical partner for this action plan. Our work directly aligns with the municipal public health and wellbeing plan and its Victorian counterpart, creating a transparent line-of-sight from state policy through to local action.

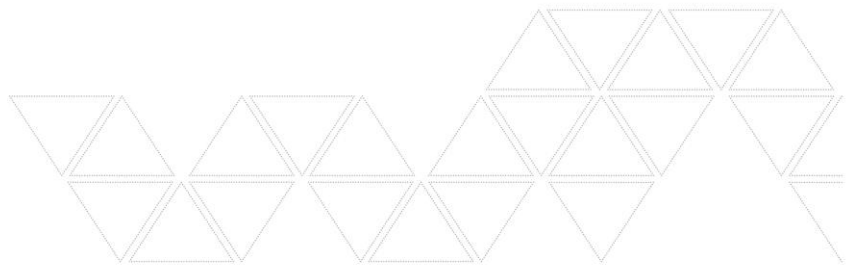
Our collaboration spans about approximately 70% of all initiatives delivered under this four-year strategy, with different roles played by Council for each initiative. Engagement with Council includes:

- Fawkner and Glenroy libraries
- Maternal and Child Health
- Children's services
- Early Years, childcare and kindergarten
- Youth services
- COVID-19 response
- participation on each other's networks, committees and working groups.



The Ready, Set, Prep Transition Network.

The strength of our partnership has been clearly evident throughout COVID-19, with Merri Health and Council staff collaborating to better support the needs of community members.



Regional partnerships

Throughout the IHP Strategy, we prioritised working with regional partners across shared priorities. Regional partnerships represent an important opportunity for:

- collective effort across shared priorities
- sharing resources
- building workforce capability more efficiently and effectively
- improving the quality of local interventions

In 2017, we recommitted our participation in the [Building a Respectful Community](#) partnership led by Women's Health in the North (WHIN). We are proud to work alongside WHIN, community health organisations, local government and other organisations in the northern metropolitan region to prevent violence against women in our community. This past year, the partnership has focused on evaluating our collective impact. Merri Health contributed three case studies to WHIN's [Preventing violence against women: Stories of achievement from Melbourne's north](#).

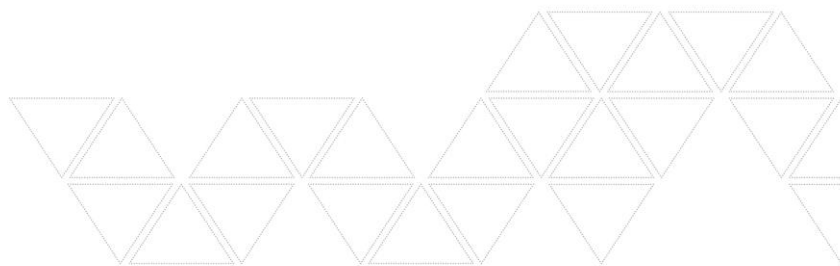
Merri Health also continues its commitment to working with the Inner North West Primary Care Partnership (INWPCP) on our shared priority around social inclusion. We are an active member of the INWPCP's governance group, prevention alliance, access and equity alliance, and Koolin Balit partnership.

We were also involved in the INWPCP's initiatives to develop shared measurement tools to strengthen monitoring and evaluation practice. Merri Health has expressed interest to continue working with the INWPCP and prevention alliance partners to embed the [Social Inclusion Measurement Framework](#) within the evaluation framework for our next *Health Promotion Strategy 2021-2025*.

Over the last three years, we also worked with the Hume Moreland Prevention Partnership, led by the Department of Fairness, Families and Housing (formerly Department of Health and Human Services), to explore opportunities for collaborative planning and projects in relation to social inclusion. Due to COVID-19, these activities were paused for most of the last year.



Three Merri Health initiatives featured in WHIN's regional publication ([link](#)).



Challenges and learning

Over the duration of the IHP Strategy, Merri Health experienced a range of challenges that affected planning, implementation and evaluation of its health promotion initiatives. These challenges have led to learning and adaptation. We have summarised our key challenges and learning below.

Staffing

Due to a high number of grants obtained to amplify our health promotion work, at times, Merri Health also has high numbers of staff on fixed-term contracts that align with grant funding. During this period, we experienced moderate staff turnover from staff in fixed-term positions, with employees opting for ongoing employment elsewhere.

Reduced grants available

Also contributing to staff turnover mentioned above, the last two years of the IHP Strategy have seen a reduced amount of grants available. This is mostly attributable to the impact of COVID-19 on the state government and philanthropic sector.

We anticipate this is likely to change as part of a COVID-19 recovery strategy. However, a consequence of these events is that very successful grant-funded initiatives – such as Count Me In Too – could not continue without funding additional to IHP resources.

Consolidating priorities and strategies

Over this period, Merri Health also identified a need to reduce the number of priorities of focus, and strategies delivered across the team. In the past, Merri Health might have allocated a single person to work on one priority in an attempt to increase the breadth of our impact. However, we identified this as a risk; to the depth of our impact, and the loss of momentum and partnerships if staff turnover occurs.

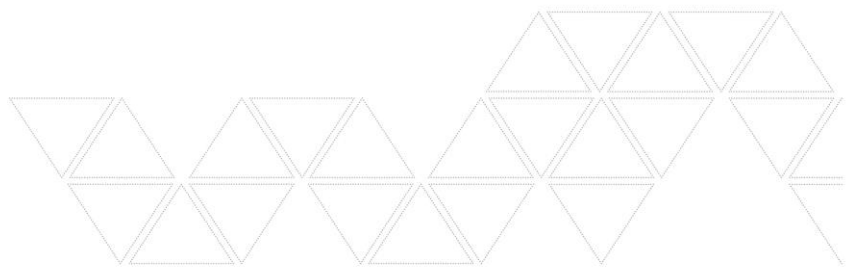
As a result, we have changed our practice towards investing more resources into a single initiative. This enables us to reach more people and new communities, improve the quality of our initiatives, and ultimately realise more change.

Evaluation planning

As a result of delivering a broad range of initiatives, with different start times and funding requirements, we had some challenges with aligning evaluation planning across initiatives.

Although Merri Health's initiatives across multiple settings are complementary, some initiatives used different impact measures making it difficult to draw comparisons across projects.

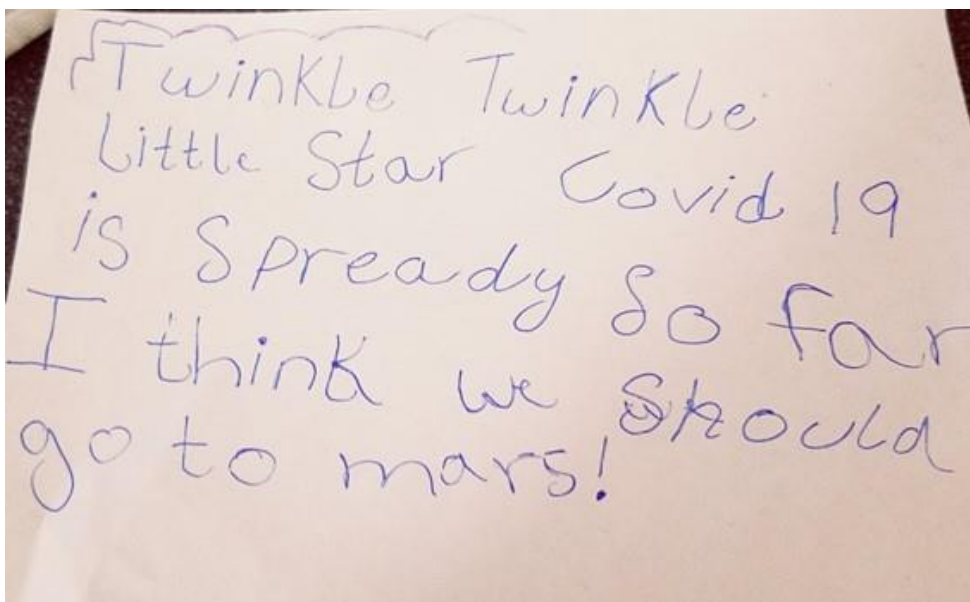
To rectify this, Merri Health has commenced developing a single theory of change to guide its health promotion initiatives for its IHP Strategy 2021-2025. A supporting evaluation framework will support teams to use common measures and tools for their initiatives.



Partnerships

Merri Health is committed to a partnerships approach to strengthen collective impact and streamline resources. Challenges can arise however when there is a change to a partner's funding, staffing or direction.

This was the case with the *The Great Idea Program*, as part of the *Hello, Fawkner!* initiative. Initially, this component of the initiative was to be designed and delivered by a partner organisation. Early in the program, a key partnership was unexpectedly discontinued, Merri Health pivoted and was able to design the initiative in-house. Whilst this was a significant learning experience for the *Hello, Fawkner!* team it ultimately led to a program that is tailored to the needs of the Fawkner community and owned by Merri Health.



A submission to the children's edition of The Fawkner Times, from a Fawkner resident

Adapting to COVID-19

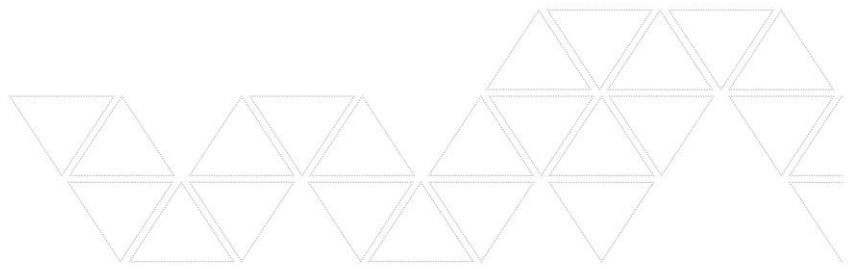
COVID-19 has presented significant and unexpected challenges for IHP initiatives and for the Moreland community.

The Fawkner settings was particularly hard hit during late 2020 with a significant COVID outbreak in an aged care facility that impact morale and many local families. Evidence shows that areas with low socio-economic status, such as Fawkner and Glenroy, have been particularly affected by COVID-19 and have also experienced an increase in racism.

Youth settings, particularly schools, were also affected by the move to remote learning, with consequences for mental health and educational attainment.

Health promotion efforts

After initial interruption to delivery at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, initiatives under the 2020-21 Action Plan were able to be adapted with the majority of work, engagement and delivery moved online from



the second half of 2021. This shift to online delivery has positioned the Community Wellbeing team to be able to quickly pivot between face-to-face and online delivery in response to the snap lockdowns throughout 2021.

Whilst most aspects of each initiative were moved online, this was less feasible for some activities. The following were postponed in late 2020 and have since occurred face-to-face in 2021:

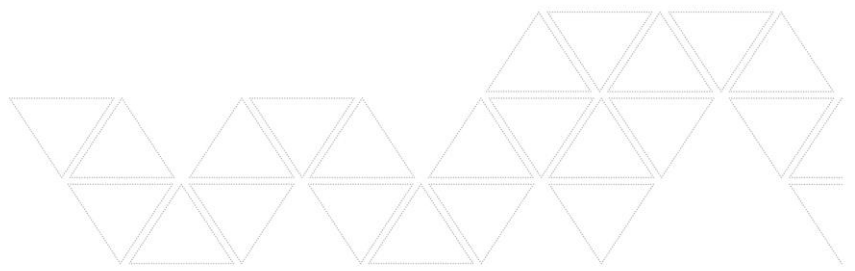
- Harmony Day parties to celebrate cultural diversity (*Hello, Fawkner!*)
- LEAP's 6-week program to connect parents and carers of children with additional needs (*Ready, Set, Prep!*)
- A co-design workshop to develop a new theory of change for *Ready, Set, Prep!*
- Interactions with individual schools, which had reduced capacity and heightened stress during periods of lockdown and remote learning

We have received both positive and negative feedback from community members, partners, stakeholders and team members about the move to an online environment and the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. Some specific challenges include:

- Maintaining momentum whilst transitioning back and forth between online and face-to-face engagement
- Re-energising participants after each lockdown
- Developing new relationships and recruiting participants
- Distributing physical resources
- Screen-time fatigue, especially for young people
- Supporting community members whilst in isolation yourself
- Maintaining team and community members wellbeing and resilience

Despite these challenges, this experience has created opportunities for innovation and capacity building. Some ways we have provided extra support and directly responded to community needs include:

- Piloting an online social support group for LGBTIQ+ young people
- A virtual launch of *Ready, Set, Prep!* video suite and regular social media targeted to COVID-19 support strategies, eg. sharing learning at home tips
- Empowering community members to contribute photos for the *Fawkner Times* newspaper as the photographer was unable to visit the community during lockdowns
- Establishing a children's version of the *Fawkner Times* e-newsletter
- Supporting Great Ideas community members to undertake COVIDsafe risk assessments
- Providing extra funding for The Great Idea Program and Harmony Day parties to implement COVIDsafe measures
- Providing COVIDsafe resources to participants (eg. masks, sanitiser)
- Building the capacity of community members to participate in online activities
- Conducting phone and video wellbeing checks with isolated community members
- Developing a suite of videos in multiple languages to share COVID-19 information
- Increasing frequency of one-on-one online support to community members and participants
- Holding focus groups and co-design workshops online
- Developing strategies for relationships building and engagement in online settings
- Shifting focus to grant writing, strategic planning and reporting in periods of reduced delivery



Broader organisational efforts

Since March 2020, Merri Health has continued to work with the Department of Health, Moreland City Council and other partners in a range of capacities to support the public health response to the pandemic and the plan for recovery. This includes:

- developing an organisation-wide communications strategy around COVID-19
- supporting the establishment of three COVID-19 testing clinics in Moreland
- conducting community engagement in relation to COVID-19 and linking community members to essential information, supports and services in multiple languages
- advocating on behalf of community needs
- listening to barriers and disseminating information to reduce vaccine hesitancy
- partnering with DPV Health to increase vaccine delivery and uptake in Moreland and for vulnerable groups
- opening the first pop-up vaccination hub in Coburg, in partnership with DPV Health

A key part of Merri Health's COVID-19 response is through our ongoing High-Risk Accommodation Response (HRAR) work – a state government initiative to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in public housing and other high-risk accommodation with shared facilities. Under the HRAR Moreland initiative, Merri Health has supported residents, public housing landlords and managers at 161 properties, including: rooming houses, low rise public housing, high rise public housing, community housing and supported residential services. It also provided essential information to more than 1,200 households.

During the last 12 months, the Community Wellbeing team supported the work of HRAR Moreland by:

- facilitating two secondments of staff to lead community engagement and partnerships
- sharing information about vaccinations and eligibility through our communications (eg. newsletters and Whatsapp)
- promoting community forums to community through WhatsApp
- providing ad hoc outreach support to doorknocking efforts
- linking the HRAR team with partners and community networks



Merri Health HRAR team support community members in supported living to get vaccinated



Case studies

Inclusion for LGBTIQ+ young people

Introduction

Although many LGBTIQ+ people live healthy and happy lives, research shows that LGBTIQ+ young people experience disproportionate rates of social exclusion, violence, abuse, harassment and discrimination; lack of support from family and friends; and barriers to accessing appropriate services. Experiences of discrimination, stigma and exclusion also contribute to other adverse health and social wellbeing outcomes for LGBTIQ+ young people¹.

Secondary school settings are particularly challenging environments for LGBTIQ+ young people, with many experiencing homophobic bullying from peers and exclusion from school life. A recent study on the experiences of LGBTIQ+ young people showed²:

- 60% of those at secondary school felt unsafe or uncomfortable
- 64% of those at school frequently heard negative remarks regarding sexuality
- 38% missed days of school because they felt unsafe



Stand Out groups in action

Evidence shows that social support, community connections and peer networks are important protective factors for LGBTIQ+ young people, and secondary schools are a critical setting for addressing discrimination and promoting the human rights of LGBTIQ+ communities. This evidence has informed our approach to promoting and supporting LGBTIQ+ youth inclusion in Moreland.

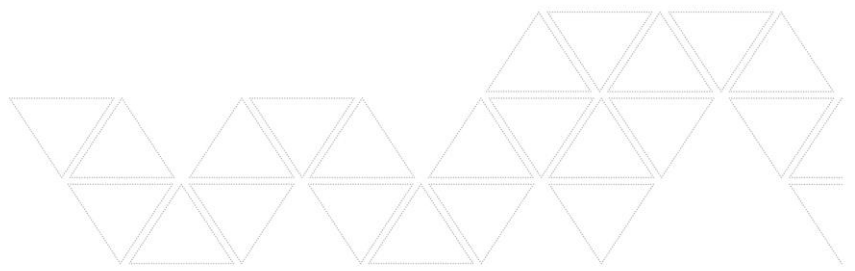
For the past four years, we have supported LGBTIQ+ inclusion and safety by delivering several interrelated health promotion initiatives, including:

- YGLAM - A queer youth theatre ensemble
- Stand Out Groups
- LGBTIQ+ Upstander Training
- Large-scale community arts events

This case study provides an overview of these initiatives, including YGLAM's theatre performance of 'Self-Care: An Anti-Musical' and 'The Domino Effect', a large-scale public art event that aimed to show the power of the bystander.

¹ Hill, A. O., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M. & Lyons, A. (2020). Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia. Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.

² Hill AO, Lyons A, Jones J, McGowan I, Carman M, Parsons M, Power J, Bourne A (2021) Writing Themselves In 4: The health and wellbeing of LGBTQA+ young people in Australia. National report, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University



YGLAM

YGLAM is a queer youth theatre and performing arts ensemble that provides a safe space for young queer people to come together and explore their sexuality and gender identity through artistic expression. YGLAM aims to increase social connection and inclusion, develop confidence and support positive mental health for young queer people, by combining weekly peer support and skill development workshops with large-scale public art and events.

Through these public events, YGLAM also provides participants with an opportunity to connect with local Moreland residents. It aims to develop a safer and more accepting community through community education that builds understanding and empathy. In 2019, YGLAM developed 'Self-Care: An Anti-Musical', which they performed at the Melbourne Fringe Festival. The theatre performance explored themes of discrimination, exclusion, mental health and self-care from a young LGBTIQ+ perspective.

"I come to YGLAM coz there's a wonderful sense of community, and I feel like we're all like, you know, friends. It's always just really fun and a place to forget about the troubles that you might have and just have a good time"

Participant

"I come to YGLAM because I'm not fully out at home or at school, and YGLAM is a safe space where I can be around other people that have similar experiences and I can feel safe being myself and everyone respects who I am."

Participant

Stand Out Groups

Stand Out Groups are a student led, social justice groups that 'stands out' against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia that provide group members with opportunities to work together on actions and initiatives to make their schools safer and more inclusive for LGBTIQ+ students. The groups also provide an important source of peer support for queer students by providing a safe space for them to be themselves within the school environment.

Through our Community Arts and Development Officer, Merri Health works in partnership with Moreland secondary schools to support LGBTIQ+ students with Stand Out Groups activities. This includes:

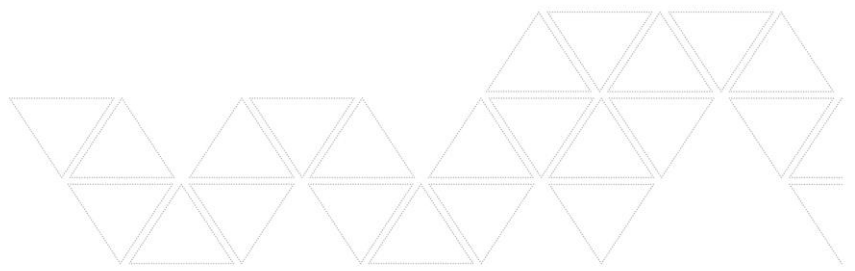
- Providing students with leadership training and mentorship, and LGBTIQ+ specific upstander training
- Supporting groups to plan and implement youth-led advocacy activities
- Developing strategies for engaging whole-school populations in queer-specific advocacy
- Developing and nurturing community networks
- Engaging students as leaders in school-based and large-scale community arts events

"There are many benefits from the partnership that we have with Merri Health with the Stand Out group.

Firstly, from a 'student support' level the students have been able to have space to feel safe, to feel confident, like they can access relevant information and support.

The students have also benefitted from access to opportunities for personal development and leadership as well as planning events and programs..."

Teacher



Reach and participation

Year	Reach
2017-2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Four groups/schools engaged – 82 participants
2018-2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Four groups/schools engaged – 71 participants
2019-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Four groups/schools engaged – 94 participants – 36 sessions attended
2020-2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Two groups/schools engaged – 57 participants – 51 sessions attended – 4 online networking sessions delivered

“Other benefits of the partnership on a staff level is that as staff we have had access to relevant training and information and resources in this space to make sure that we are able to respond appropriately and effectively in terms of including and supporting [LGBTIQA+] students in this space”

Teacher

“The biggest impact of the partnership between (our school) and Merri Health would be the growth of group itself which has then led to more change within the school. So with a bigger group, with strength in numbers, with supported confident young people in a safe space, they’ve been able to do so much more”

Teacher

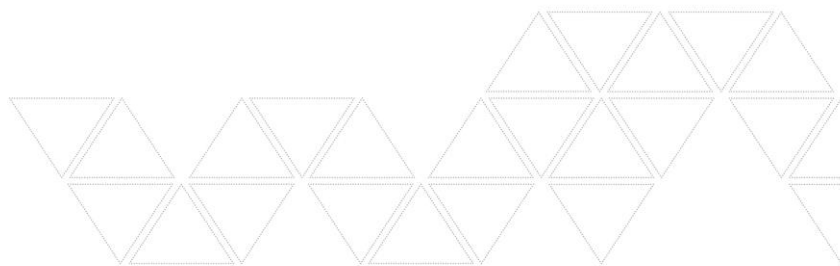


*Promotional material for Self-Care:
An Anti-Musical*

Self-Care: An Anti-Musical

Introduction

Self-Care: An Anti-Musical was produced and performed by YGLAM in 2019. The performance piece explored themes of discrimination, exclusion, mental health and self-care and featured abstract portrayals of young LGBTIQA+ people’s lived experiences, juxtaposed with self-care tips and activities. Taking inspiration from Dante’s Inferno and incorporating horror themes, the interactive performance was in the style of promenade theatre and actively engaged the audience in self-care strategies. These strategies created moments of reprieve from the nightmarish world of the anti-musical, simulating the daily struggles of navigating unsupportive spaces as a queer young person, and the importance of engaging in self-care strategies to maintain positive mental health.



Project overview

The project was conducted over three phases: i) skill building; ii) content creation, and ii) rehearsals and performance. The show was developed through stories and experiences collated by YGLAM participants, as well as members of Stand Out Groups from the various schools we work with in Moreland. The project aimed to:

- Build performance skills and confidence in YGLAM participants
- Educate YGLAM participants and wider audiences about managing mental health using self-care strategies
- Contribute to building a stronger, more connected and educated community for queer young people



YGLAM performs Self-care: An Anti-Musical

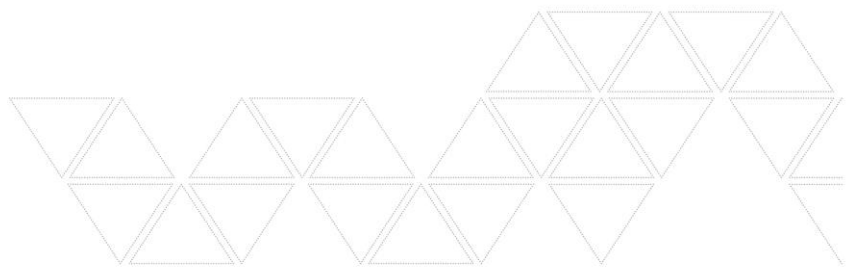
Project activities

Phase	Activities
Skill building	There was a relatively new cohort of YGLAM participants in 2019, many of whom had limited experience with live performance, so the first portion of the year was dedicated to building theatrical knowledge, skills and confidence. This included general theatre skills, physical theatre skills, improvisation skills, and vocal coaching.
Content creation	This phase focused on creating content specific to the show. This mainly took place in the form of impromptu storytelling. Over multiple sessions, YGLAM participants were given particular prompts and themes to explore through written stories and poetry, as well as improvised short scenes. They were also involved in discussions around their experiences managing mental health and engaging in self-care practices.
Rehearsals & performance	The final phase consisted of the practical steps involved in putting together the show, including developing the set and costumes, acquiring a performance venue, and advertising the show. There was two weeks of intensive rehearsals including dress rehearsals and tech runs, and then six performances spread over the course of two weeks.

Key achievements

The theatre performance brought together a community of queer young people in Moreland, which expanded their networks and fostered a sense of belonging and togetherness.

YGLAM participants also felt a sense of pride and achievement and ownership over the creative direction of the performance. It also had positive outcomes relating to their sense of self and identity, with some participants reporting they came out to family member after participating in the performance.



Other achievements included:

- 94 students from 5 Stand Out Groups were consulted about their self-care strategies
- 38 YGLAM sessions were delivered, including skills development, content production and rehearsals
- 12 YGLAM participants were involved in YGLAM activities
- YGLAM delivered six performances of the theatre production at the Melbourne Fringe Festival
- 26 Stand Out Group Participants attended the theatre performance
- The performance reached an audience of over 200 people, raising awareness of the experiences of LGBTIQA+ young people

Impact

An evaluation of the project also showed that 100% of participants agreed that participating in YGLAM:

- ✓ Made their life better
- ✓ Improved their mental health
- ✓ Helped them create and maintain meaningful friendships
- ✓ Made them feel more comfortable with who they are
- ✓ Helped them deal with negative feelings such as blue mood, despair, anxiety, depression

"I came out to my parents for the YGLAM show - that had a big effect on relationships and even though it was a hard thing to do, it was a good thing to do, because I finally told them this thing I'd been waiting to tell them and yeah, and it didn't go as bad as I thought it would"

Participant

The Domino Effect

As an adjunct to the theatre production project, Moreland City Council provided additional funding to support the development and delivery of 'The Domino Effect' Project, which encompassed upstander training for Stand Out Group participants, large-scale satellite events at secondary schools and the creation of a video.

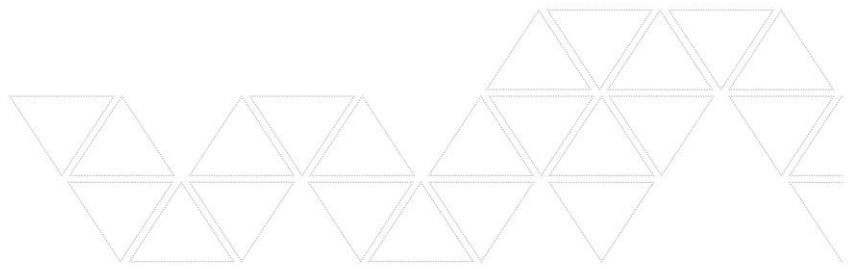
Wear it Purple Day

In 2019, YGLAM queer youth theatre ensemble, Stand Out Groups, Victoria Police and other local partners collaborated to deliver a large-scale public art event to celebrate Wear it Purple Day in

2019. The event aimed to show the power of the bystander by highlighting how a bystander, much like the falling of dominoes, can have a real impact on the experiences of those affected by discrimination.



Film: Coburg High School participates in The Domino Effect ([link](#))



The event brought together more than 2,500 students and 125 teachers and staff from five schools in Moreland to form a giant human rainbow in support of safe and inclusive communities for LGBTIQ+ young people. There were also 53 LGBTIQ+ young people involved in leading the event. Specifically:

- 12 YGLAM participants engaged in the creative direction of the event
- 43 Stand Out participants had leadership responsibilities at the event
- Stand Out participants were also responsible for planning and managing Wear It Purple day events at their own schools

The Short Film

The large-scale art event was filmed from above by a Victorian Police helicopter and the footage formed part of [The Domino Effect short film](#), which we use as part of the broader project to promote active bystander actions to address bullying and discrimination of LGBTIQ+ people.

Several Stand Out Groups were involved in the development of the film, and Coburg High School and Pascoe Vale Girls College hosted screenings of the short film for Wear It Purple Day.

The creation and dissemination of the film through social media contributes to a wider conversation and visibility about the issues facing young LGBTIQ+ young people. To date, the film has had more than 22,000 views on Facebook and 1,800 views on YouTube.

"I think the Domino Effect has brought in more allies to the group. And especially some people who weren't so open to coming before, after seeing what we're about and what this whole group is about, I think it's really opened some people's eyes made us feel some love from people we didn't really expect"

Participant

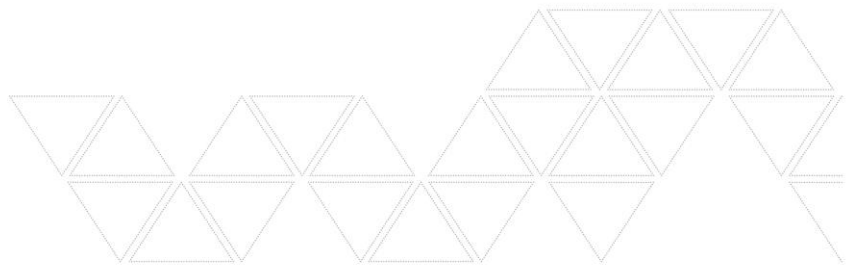
"The Domino Effect meant that our Stand Out group was no longer a secret little group that was hiding.

We were known to the whole school, which brought more people aware of what we were basically advocating for I guess"

Participant

LGBTIQ+ Upstander Training

Upstander training (or bystander training) focuses on building the knowledge, skills and confidence of participants to safely and appropriately intervene in situations where they feel uncomfortable, or where they disagree with what is happening. As part of the Domino Effect and our involvement with Stand Out Groups in



Moreland secondary schools, LGBTIQA+ students are provided with LGBTIQA+ specific upstander training, which aims to:

- Increase knowledge about the best way to respond to homophobia, biphobia or transphobia
- Increase confidence to respond to someone who is openly resistant to LGBTIQA+ advocacy
- Increase knowledge of support and services available, and confidence to access them if needed

In 2019-2020, we delivered upstander training to four schools: Coburg High School; Pascoe Vale Girls College; The Island; and Sydney Road Community School. A total of 21 sessions were delivered, involving 95 participants from Stand Out Groups.

Impact

- ✓ 35% increase in knowledge about the best way to respond to homophobia, biphobia or transphobia
- ✓ 21% increase in confidence to respond to someone who is openly resistant to LGBTIQA+ advocacy
- ✓ 20% increase in confidence to access support and services if needed
- ✓ 14% increase of students feeling that they could identify three services they could go to for help



Upstander training

Introduction

Over the past four years, Merri Health has been working to reduce experiences of discrimination in Moreland by delivering upstander training to our key partners across various settings. We have developed a comprehensive upstander training (otherwise known as bystander) program that includes gender equality, LGBTIQ+ discrimination and anti-racism specific training packages.

We initially identified the need for training that encouraged upstander action as part of our work supporting the implementation of the Victorian Government's Respectful Relationships Program in secondary schools. As a result, we developed our first Upstander training package with a focus on gender equality and prevention of violence against women (PVAW), and over time incorporated the objectives and principles of the gender equality training into LGBTIQ+ discrimination and anti-racism specific Upstander training packages.

This case study provides an overview of our Upstander training program, including its evolution, reach and impact across settings and cohorts.

Training objectives and learning modules

The aim of Upstander training is to build the knowledge, skills and confidence of participants to safely and appropriately intervene when they witness discrimination or other harmful behaviours. While the training packages are tailored to their specific topic, they are each comprised of four key learning modules:

1. **The role of the bystander:** This includes an overview of the power and purpose of the bystander, and reinforcing the message that if you say or do nothing, you are indicating that you endorse the discrimination and harmful behaviours.
2. **The evidence:** Provides topic and context specific information on experiences of discrimination, why addressing it is important, and how discrimination plays out in everyday life.
3. **The four bystander actions:** This examines the different ways that people can respond to discrimination, depending on who they are, where they are and who they are with.
4. **Bystander actions in practice:** Participants have an opportunity to put the bystander actions into practice by engaging in role play activities with peers and facilitators

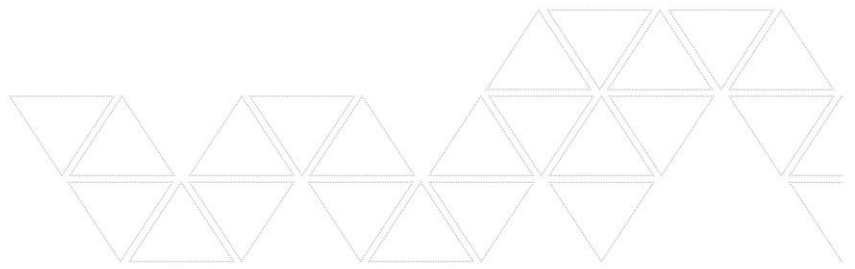
Bystander action framework

Direct – addresses the issue at the time of the incident

Indirect – addresses the issues before or after the incident

Distract – does not address the issue, take non-confrontational action

Protocol – uses pre-established group rules



Upstanders for gender equality

In 2017-18, we developed our first Upstander training on gender equality, and in 2018-19 commenced delivering it across various settings, including to Merri Health and Moreland City Council staff, secondary school students, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in the Speak Up, Speak Out program (see below).

In 2019-20, we increased our capacity to do this work by training three Merri Health staff to deliver upstander training, and scaled up our reach by partnering with the Victorian Department of Education and Training to co-deliver upstander training to lead schools in the Respectful Relationships Program. We also continued to deliver the training to stakeholders across six different settings, including schools, workplaces, Moreland City Council 'Youth Services' staff and Yarra Trams.

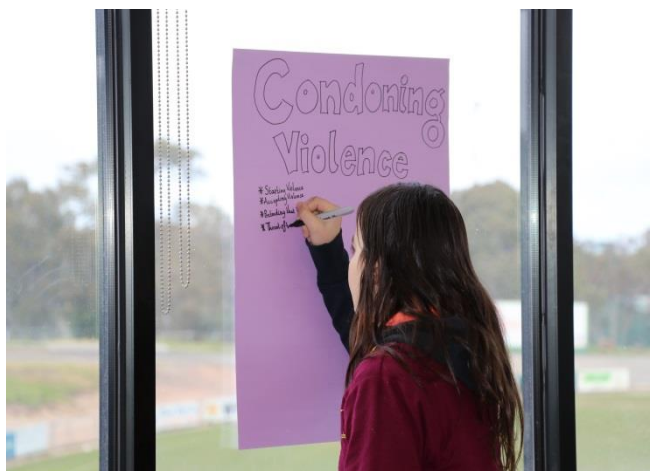
In 2020-21 our focus was on developing online training models that would enable us to continue its delivery during COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, as well as expanding the content to include a module on responding to resistance and backlash to gender equality.

Year	# organisations	# sessions	# participants
2018 - 19	4	16	107
2019 - 20	6	19	302
2020 - 21	4	4	83

Speak Up, Speak Out

Speak Up, Speak Out was a pilot project that we delivered in 2019 in partnership with The Long Walk Trust. The project was delivered over two programs and aimed to test a new approach to preventing family violence within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

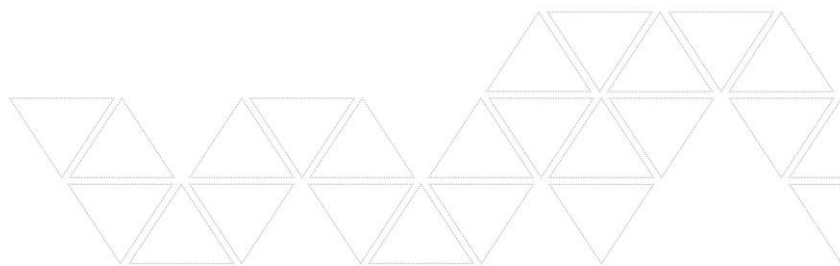
For both programs, the curriculum was split into either fortnightly (Program #1) or weekly (Program #2) yarning circles of 2-2.5 hours each, which included a session on gender equality and respectful relationships, followed by one on Upstander training, which we adapted in consultation with local Aboriginal Elders groups and community members to ensure the content was culturally appropriate for Aboriginal young people.



Participant learning about respectful relationships

Across the two programs, we engaged a total of 26 Aboriginal young people aged 9-12 years from the Moreland and Hume local government areas in the Speak Up, Speak Out project.

An evaluation of the Speak Up, Speak Out project showed a significant increase in participants knowledge, skills and confidence to take upstander action. We observed a greater increase across most outcomes in the second program, which likely reflected the improvements we made to the program to embed upstander content across the whole curriculum.



Impacts

Measure	Group 1	Group 2
Intention to take upstander action to address sexism and violence-supportive attitudes	84%	84%
Increase awareness of the role they can play in taking upstander action	72%	90%
Learnt strategies for upstander action	68%	100%
Can correctly identify the four upstander actions	13%	70%

LGBTIQA+ Upstanders

In 2019-20, we adapted our gender equality Upstander training for LGBTIQA+ cohorts, with a specific focus on responding to homophobia, transphobia and biphobia. We deliver this training to Stand Out Groups in Moreland secondary schools as part of our broader commitment to promoting LGBTIQA+ inclusion. The LGBTIQA+ specific Upstander training aims to:

- Increase knowledge about the best way to respond to homophobia, biphobia or transphobia
- Increase confidence to respond to someone who is openly resistant to LGBTIQA+ advocacy
- Increase knowledge of support and services available, and confidence to access them if needed

In 2019-2020, we delivered a total of 21 training sessions to four schools, involving 95 participants from Stand Out Groups.

Impacts

- ✓ 35% increase in knowledge on how to respond to queerphobia
- ✓ 21% increase in confidence to respond to resistance to LGBTIQA+ advocacy

Upstanders on anti-racism

In 2019-20 we also adapted the Upstander training to have an anti-racism focus and delivered it to 72 students at Corpus Christi Primary School in Glenroy as part the Young Change Makers initiative, in partnership with the University of Melbourne.

We will continue to deliver anti-racism Upstander training in 2021-2022 and beyond as part of our role in the STARS (Standing Together Against Racism in Sport) project. The project will be led by the University of Melbourne and will create an evidence-based, co-designed anti-racism intervention and contribute to the research evidence on experiences of racism in sport.

Our role will be to provide training and capacity building activities in local sports settings, including to young people, their families and club staff). In doing so, we aim to build knowledge, confidence and skills of participants to address racism and Islamophobia in sports and other environments.



Reconciliation Action Plan

Introduction

The Merri Health Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) formalises and consolidates Merri Health's ongoing commitment to our vision for reconciliation. Our vision is that the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who live in Moreland will be enhanced through respect, equity and recognition in all aspects of our community. It recognises the considerable work still necessary to close the gap in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It also acknowledges the important role that mainstream health organisations, like Merri Health, should play in leading efforts to close the health gap.

Our reconciliation journey started in 2014 and since that time we have developed two RAPs, which were endorsed by the governing body, Reconciliation Australia. Following a comprehensive review of our 2017-2019 RAP, we recently developed our new Innovate RAP, which will be launched in 2021 following its endorsement by Reconciliation Australia. Our priority for the future is to foster shared ownership of the RAP across the organisation to ensure that we offer a culturally safe and secure environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and staff across all our services, programs and teams.

This case study provides an overview of our RAP activities and achievements over the past four years, including two community-based projects we delivered with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

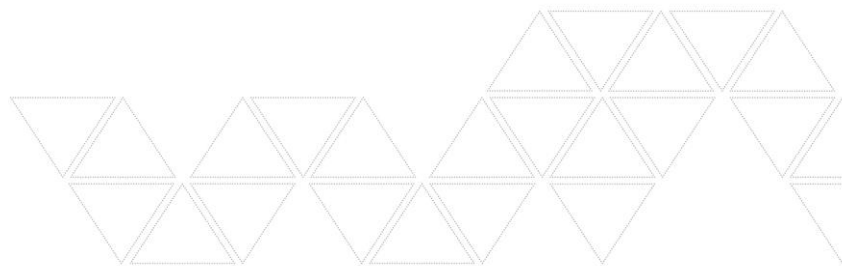
Project overview

Our RAP seeks to create a safer, more inclusive and equitable environment within Merri Health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, staff volunteers and students.

Since 2014, we have implemented a range of strategies to embed reconciliation across our practice, and to become a health promoting service with respect to safety and inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This includes:

1. A multifaceted **cultural learning** strategy for employees
2. A workplace culture and **social environment** that is proud and celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements
3. Creating welcoming **physical environments**
4. Staff and community **engagement** that puts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices at the centre
5. **Partnerships** with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations
6. **Policies** that embed our practice
7. **Community projects** that align with the objectives of our IHP Strategy





Project activities

1. Cultural learning

Employees play a critical role in creating a welcoming and accessible environment for community members, and for other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. Given this, Merri Health has prioritised the implementation of our RAP through a multifaceted cultural learning strategy, the aims of which include:

- Providing opportunities to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories
- Building the capacity of staff to provide a culturally safe, welcoming and inclusive service and workplace

Cultural appreciation training

Each year, AJ Williams Chen of Girraway Ganyi Consultancy facilitates four cultural appreciation training sessions entitled 'Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. This workshop is formally structured, and is integrated into the human resources training calendar as optional training for all staff, students and volunteers. The training aims to support participants to:

- Identify factors that affect contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and families
- Discuss the impact of history on current Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing
- Provide strategies to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and families

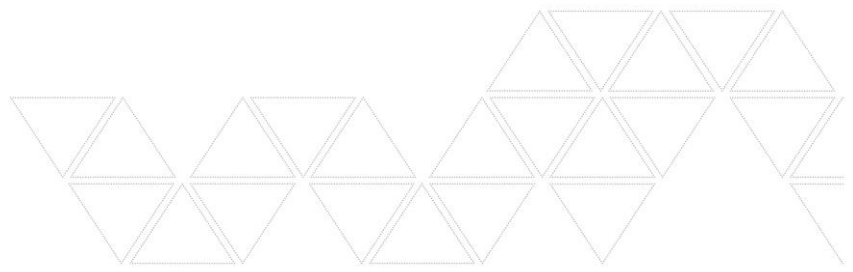
Participants are given a thorough history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to broaden their knowledge and understanding of health and other factors affecting communities. The facilitator also shares his own personal story, providing the opportunity for attendees to connect with history in a different way.

Koorie Conversations

Koorie Conversations are informal cultural incursions held over lunch time at a Merri Health site. The informality, small number of participants and cosy setting aims to create a safe, intimate space for sharing and asking questions. These conversations provide staff the opportunity to hear diverse life stories and experiences of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who may choose to speak about their work, passions or life journeys.

Participation and reach

Measure	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Total
Number of cultural appreciation training participants	66	113	57	82	318
Number of staff attended Koorie Conversations	56	40	27	77	200
Number of staff attended NAIDOC and NRW events	20	23	250	64	357



2. Workplace culture and social environment

Acknowledging and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories is a key strategy under Merri Health's commitment to reconciliation.

A key element of reconciliation work involves honouring key days and events of significance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week (NRW). Each year employees and Merri Health board members are encouraged to participate in these celebrations as a show of solidarity and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, either through events delivered by Merri Health, or by our partner organisations.

We also regularly acknowledge or celebrate significant dates through our public communications, recognising our role as a local leader and responsibility to promote reconciliation within our sphere of influence.

3. Physical environment

With more than 10 Merri Health sites across Victoria, our physical environment can play an important role in creating safe, welcoming and inclusive spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and staff.

Merri Health's Koorie Community Engagement Officer conducts site audits regularly (typically, every two years) to assess whether any changes can be made to reception and staff communal areas to be more welcoming.

The last audit conducted in 2018 across 9 sites recorded an average score of 6.44, out of a possible 9. Audits in 2020 were postponed due to COVID-19.

Changes made as a result of audits include:

- subscribing to the Koorie Mail, and making it available in reception and staff rooms across six sites
- increasing the availability and visibility of targeted information and culturally appropriate resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers
- displaying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags
- acquiring artwork from an Aboriginal artist to display in public/communal spaces
- ensuring an Acknowledgement of Country plaque is erected near the entrance of each site

4. Engagement

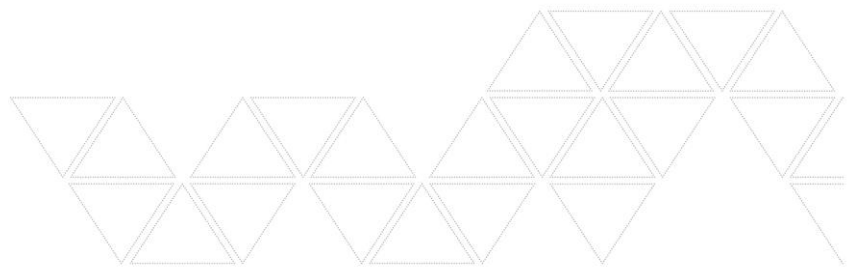
A key pillar of our reconciliation action is ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are leading and informing all aspects of the work.

The RAP Committee is the key governance mechanism for this work, overseeing the planning and implementation of the RAP and acting as an advisory committee for initiatives as they arise. On average, the Committee meets four times per year.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and students are invited to sit on the Committee, and community representatives are invited to also join.

Over the past four years, the RAP Committee has comprised:

- 7 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members
- 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees
- 6 different teams across Merri Health



The Committee is chaired by the manager of the community wellbeing team, and sponsored by the general manager of the healthy communities division.

Merri Health's Koorie Community Engagement Officer and the RAP Committee chair also regularly present to engage the broader organisation in the RAP, including presentations to all staff, management teams and the Merri Health board

5. Partnerships

Partnerships with community-controlled organisations is central to ensuring our programs and services are culturally safe and of high quality. It is also an important measure to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination. Over the past four years, Merri Health has established or maintained partnerships with 14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and Aboriginal community networks.

In addition to partnerships with health and community organisations, Merri Health is also aiming to increase the amount of goods and services it procures from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses. Since 2017, we have spent \$95,846 with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses.

While not all procurement is through a formalised contract, Merri Health has signed 9 contracts with businesses during this time (some ongoing/recurrent).

6. Policies

Policies are an important mechanism for embedding principles and practice for the long term.

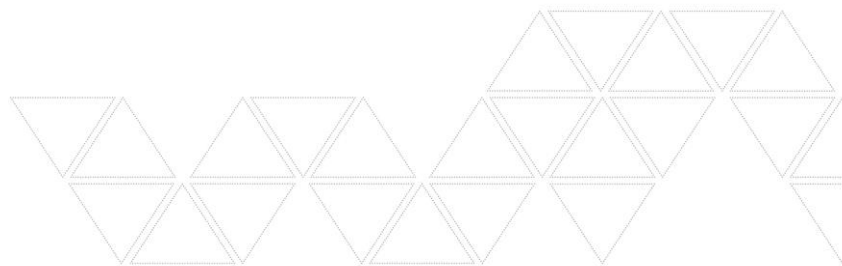
Over the past four years, 10 policies, forms or toolkits have been developed, reviewed and/or updated to better support safety and inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees at Merri Health. The following key documents were reviewed and updated:

- Authority to recruit and advertise
- Interview template
- Recruitment and selection policy and procedure
- Acknowledgement and Welcome to Country policy and procedure

Five policies were also updated to ensure language referencing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities is consistent.

A new toolkit was also developed for managers recruiting to positions targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Merri Health also implemented a new online recruitment system. Following consultation with the RAP Committee, the human resources team embedded an additional optional question for job applicants to identify whether they are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander at the point of application. In future years, this will enable Merri Health to monitor recruitment data to help identify if there are any barriers to employment at this stage of recruitment.



7. Community projects

In addition to our efforts to make and sustain changes to our practice as an organisation, Merri Health has also prioritised delivering health initiatives that partner with and engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the regions we operate.

Through our IHP Strategy, Merri Health has delivered two key initiatives in the last four years: The Little Long Walk (delivered twice in this reporting period) and Speak Up, Speak Out. These projects contributed to IHP Strategy aims, with a particular focus on:

- increasing inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- increasing connection to culture and community for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- increasing knowledge and skills relating to gender equity and respectful relationships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Please see detailed accounts of The Little Long Walk and Speak Up, Speak Out below.

We have also contributed to community initiatives delivered by other teams at Merri Health such as the Koorie Carers Lunch.

The Little Long Walk

Introduction

The Little Long Walk was a partnership initiative between Merri Health, The Long Walk Trust, Aboriginal Community Elders Services (ACES), and local schools. The event commemorates Australian Rules footballer, Michael Long's historic trek in 2004 from his home in the suburbs of Melbourne to Parliament House in Canberra, to get Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues back on the national agenda.

The event was a key commitment under our Reconciliation Action Plan, and formed part of our work with schools to support them to adopt a health promoting schools framework and improve health and wellbeing of the whole school community.

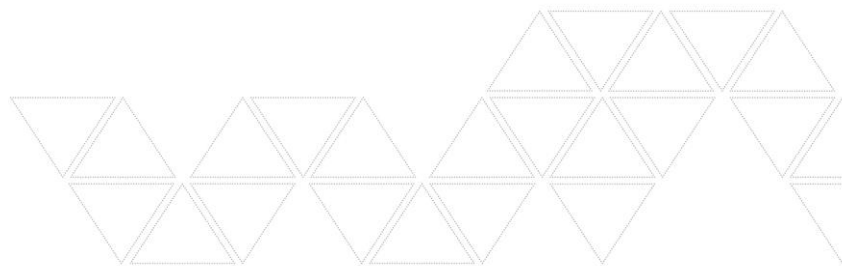


Michael Long and students at the 2017 Little Long Walk

Project overview

The Little Long Walk encouraged schools to explore reconciliation, research historical events and raise awareness of Australia's shared history. It also gave schools the opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the school setting and broader community through their families and friends.

Students participated in cultural activities that introduced them to Victorian Aboriginal art practices and use of natural resources. They were also taught about the history behind music and the significance of traditional stories in Aboriginal culture. By visiting the residents at ACES, children saw firsthand the respect shown to Elders and why they are cherished.



Key activities

Schools in the Moreland local government area are invited to submit an expression of interest to participate in The Little Long Walk, with one school selected to work in partnership with Merri Heath on the event.

Our Koorie Community Engagement Officer and a Health Promotion Officer worked closely with the selected school to prepare for The Little Long Walk with the grade 5/6 class, which included coordinating students to participate and developing learning activities for students to research and discuss leading up to the event.

We also worked with the school to coordinate the event schedule, transport to Aboriginal Community Elders Services (ACES), the route of the walk, contingency plans in case of weather, cultural activities at ACES, and the roles of Merri Heath and school staff on the day.

Our Koorie Engagement Officer also worked closely with The Long Walk Trust which has a significant involvement in the event, including arranging for patron Michael Long to attend when available and address the assembly before joining the children on the walk.

Learning activity topics

- What is Reconciliation?
- What is National Reconciliation Week? including the significance of the dates – incorporating National Sorry Day on 26 May, Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum on 27 May, and Mabo Day on 3 June
- The National Reconciliation Week theme
- Michael Long
- The Long Walk to Canberra
- The Long Walk today
- Difference between an Acknowledgement of Country and a Welcome to Country
- Importance of the role of Elders

Speak Up, Speak Out

Introduction

Speak Up, Speak Out (SUSO) was a pilot initiative funded by the Victorian State Government through the Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Fund in 2019. The project engaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people from Hume and Moreland in gender equity and respectful relationships education, upstander training and provided opportunities for connection to culture and community.

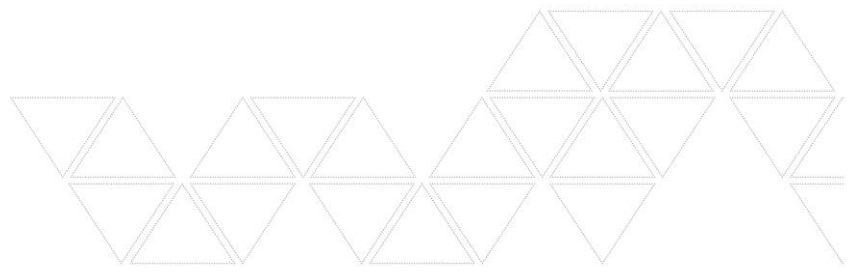
A key aim of the initiative was to strengthen the evidence on effective primary prevention initiatives to address family violence and violence against women in Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Traditional owner, Kellie Hunter, welcomes participants with a smoking ceremony

Project overview

The Speak Up, Speak Out project was delivered over two programs, and engaged a total of 26 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people aged 9-12 years from the Moreland and Hume local government areas.



The first program was held at the Essendon Football Club with the second at the Greenvale Football Club. Both programs utilised fun and engaging activities, role play and group discussion to teach equal and respectful relationships, gender equity and upstander actions. They also had a strong focus on connecting the young people to their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and community.

Project activities

We worked in partnership with The Long Walk Trust to deliver the project. Planning for the project commenced in August 2018 and the programs were delivered in Terms 2 and 4 of 2019. The curriculum was split into fortnightly (SUSO #1) or weekly (SUSO #2) yarning circles. Key project activities included:

- Recruit an Aboriginal Project Officer
- Provide training for program staff (four facilitators)
- Develop the first program curriculum in consultation with Aboriginal Elders, and redevelop the program curriculum based on interim program evaluation
- Seek expressions of interest from schools in Moreland and Hume
- Recruit and register program participants
- Develop risk management frameworks and disclosure protocols
- Engage specialist contractors to deliver part of the program content
- Deliver two programs
- Communicate regularly about the program, including a weekly e-newsletter
- Create a Speak Up, Speak Out [video](#)
- Pre and post evaluation, including qualitative feedback session

Program Curriculum

Yarning circle #1	Welcome to Country and getting-to-know-you games
Yarning circle #2	Leadership
Yarning circle #3	Gender equality & equal and respectful relationships
Yarning circle #4	Upstander training
Day on Country (overnight camp for SUSO#1)	Welcome and smoking ceremony, possum skin burning and other cultural activities
Yarning Circle #5	Planning for the Family Day
Family Day, celebration & graduation event	Opportunity for families and teachers to come and see the students demonstrate their learning
Yarning circle #6	Evaluation

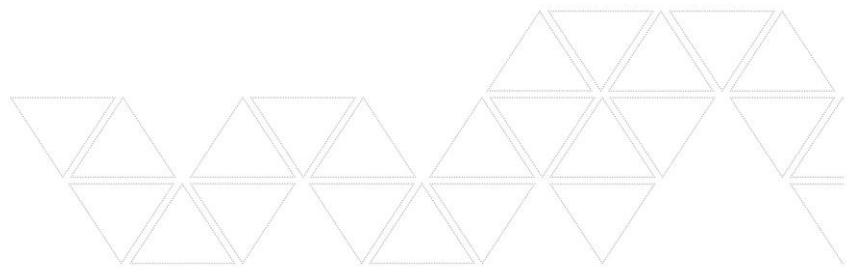
Impact

An evaluation of the Speak Up, Speak Out project showed a significant increase in participants' knowledge, skills and confidence to take upstander action. There was a greater improvement across most outcomes in the second program, which likely reflected the improvements made to the program structure and strategies implemented to strengthen participation and group dynamics in the second program.

A high proportion of participants in both programs reported increased knowledge and skills relating to gender equity and respectful relationships.

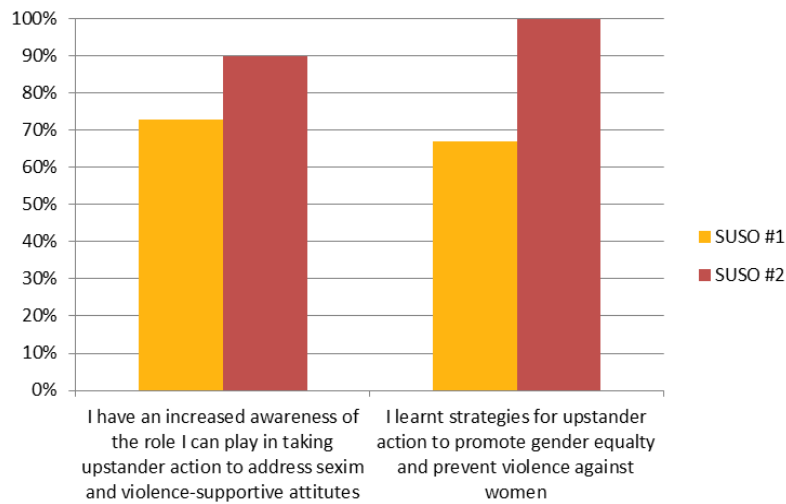


Speak Up, Speak Out participants (group 1)



Specifically, young people said:

- I have improved skills to maintain and build respectful relationships (80%)
- I am better able to identify gender equity in my home, community and school (79%)
- I am better able to identify respectful relationships in my home, community and school (89%)



The program also improved the knowledge and skills of young people in relation to upstander actions, particularly for participants in program two for whom upstander training was embedded across the whole curriculum.

Young people also confirmed that the program provided them with a greater sense of connection to their culture and community, and that they had made new friends as a result of being involved.

"In small ways, they are beginning to communicate respectfully about their feelings and actions they see."

Teacher

"It helped my son attend school on a regular basis and he gained a lot more confidence within himself"

Parent

Unexpected impacts

Both teachers and parents reported that the program had a range of positive impacts beyond the intended objectives.

These included:

- ✓ Increased confidence of young people to speak in public and in front of groups
- ✓ Increased school attendance of young people
- ✓ Families and teachers said they also learnt something about respectful relationships, gender equity, stereotypes or upstander action as a result of their child or student participating

"Really enjoyed the day on country with the kids. They all really liked the boomerang throwing"

Uncle Paul Ashton



Ready, Set, Prep!

Introduction

Ready, Set, Prep! (RSP) is a place-based, collective impact initiative that aims to improve early childhood development and school readiness in northern Moreland. The initiative grew out of an existing partnership between Merri Health, Moreland City Council and four Fawkner primary schools who were concerned about the 2015 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) results, which indicated that many Fawkner children were starting school experiencing developmental vulnerability (36.6%).

In 2016, the Ready, Set, Prep! partnership secured funding from the William Buckland Foundation, which Merri Health matched with Integrated Health Promotion funding from the Department of Health and Human Services. RSP has been a key component of Merri Health's 2017-2021 Integrated Health Promotion Strategic Plan, aligning with objectives to increase social inclusion, cohesion and educational preparedness and attainment in Fawkner.

"The families often are new to the Australian system, learning things like the importance of attendance and punctuality, what school readiness means, and how parents can foster independence in their child"

School #1 leadership, 2017

Project overview

The purpose of Ready, Set, Prep! is to improve early life outcomes for children in northern Moreland; supporting a better start to primary school and the best possible start to life.

"Historically, [school] receives high numbers of late enrolments, with children showing up on 31 Jan, not previously known to school. Still some families are not engaged in kinder prior to school – this has been reduced of late but there are still some families in this situation"

School #1 leadership, 2017

"Every year there are a good handful (up to 6 children) not school ready at all. The rest would score 'in between'. There are only a handful of children that are very school ready"

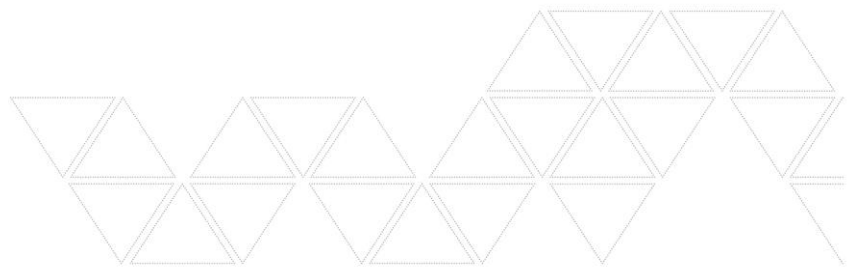
School #2 leadership, 2017

"Many of the children are not ready to commence school. ¾ of the Preps do not speak English. Oral language levels are low. Children need to learn the sounds of the language, write their names. They don't use many commonly used nouns"

School #3 leadership, 2017

Over four years, the partnership has grown from just six to more than forty service provider partners, as well as community members, who are all working together to:

- Improve school readiness for Fawkner, Glenroy and Hadfield preschool children and their families (including social, emotional, physical, language, communication and independence skills)
- Increase family engagement in primary schools, early years settings and with key support services
- Extend/improve transition processes and communication between early learning settings and primary schools in order to improve educational outcomes for children in northern Moreland
- Promote key messages regarding early childhood development and the Victorian education system to the culturally diverse suburbs of northern Moreland
- Facilitate targeted interventions to support the most vulnerable children and families



Where it started (2017-18)

Our early approach and focus

From its inception, Ready, Set, Prep! has involved a collaborative approach. Throughout, Merri Health has operated as a 'backbone' organisation to support and strengthen links and relationships between schools and early childhood services, and facilitate engagement and collaboration by key stakeholders more broadly. During the first phase of the initiative, we worked with five primary schools and five kindergarten providers in Fawkner, with a significant focus on enhancing foundation transition programs, strengthening partnerships, and providing direct service support to families.



Key activities

School transition programs and processes

Positive transition experiences enable children and families to establish relationships with their school environment, which provides a strong base that promotes long-term family engagement and future learning. All five RSP schools committed to modifying, extending and improving their transition processes. The increased frequency and/or duration of transition sessions enhanced support for incoming cohorts of children and their families. Between 2018-19, families reported a 23% increase in satisfaction with the programs and a 59% increase in confidence about their child's readiness to start school. With the assistance of a \$30,000 grant obtained in partnership with Merri Health, one primary school introduced an extended, six-month, twice-weekly transition program called Steps to Prep, which provides a program of inquiry learning activities on the school site, with a foundation teacher present. The program is intended to complement kindergarten attendance and has resulted in more ready and settled children and more timely applications for classroom support for students with additional needs.

"My son has been enjoying school so much and there has never been a day where he's wanted to miss school. I really believe that the school transition program is the reason why he's thriving at school!"

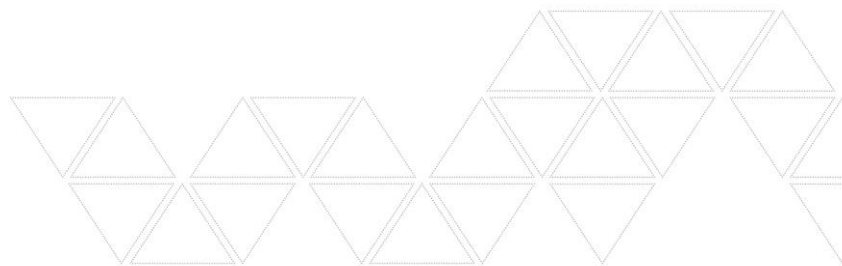
Parent

Support for schools

The ability to embed improvements to transition was supported through a small grants program, with all five schools applying for and receiving a grant of up to \$10,000. The grants also improved perceptions among schools about the value of the work, and facilitated their engagement with Ready, Set, Prep! more broadly. This included attending RSP school meetings facilitated by Merri Health twice per term. These meetings provided a platform for guest speakers to present on events, activities, programs or services that support early childhood development and family engagement in the Fawkner community. A key strength of these meetings was that it encouraged collaboration between government, independent and Catholic schools.

"Without transition these skills would have taken longer to achieve and led to less learning time in other areas"

Foundation teacher



Support for families

Parents and carers play an important role as the first educator of their children, therefore their involvement to support and promote early childhood development and learning is critical. Recognising the need to better support families to improve school readiness, we established a Family Engagement Officer position who was based within each school one day per week. The Family Engagement Officer also attended playgroups, school transition sessions and other family events in Fawkner. Their role was to provide families with an opportunity to access:

- Advice on choosing schools and support during the enrolment process
- Resources about playgroups and other social and learning activities
- Referrals to services, including health, dental, counselling, financial support, housing, food relief, migrant and refugee support

Between May 2017 and December 2018 the Family Engagement Officer provided direct support to 104 families, which included referrals and service support for 75 families.

Word Play pilot program – a targeted intervention

A key element of our approach to capacity building involves partnering with other services to develop and deliver programs in the community that complement the aims of Ready, Set, Prep!. The Word Play program aims to improve the English literacy levels of both parents and children. This unique program is underpinned by the Abecedarian Approach, which prioritises children's language acquisition and encourages quality interactions between children and their families.

Word Play was piloted at Fawkner library in Terms 2 and 3 of 2018. An evaluation of the pilot program showed it had a number of positive impacts on children and families, including 90% of participants agreeing Word Play had:

- Increased parent's/child's confidence to read or speak English
- Changed the way parents read books to their children
- Improved their family's social connections
- Helped their family to become more school-ready

Due to its proven effectiveness, the Word Play program was incorporated as part of the regular programming by Moreland City Libraries, and continues to be delivered to families in Fawkner and Glenroy.

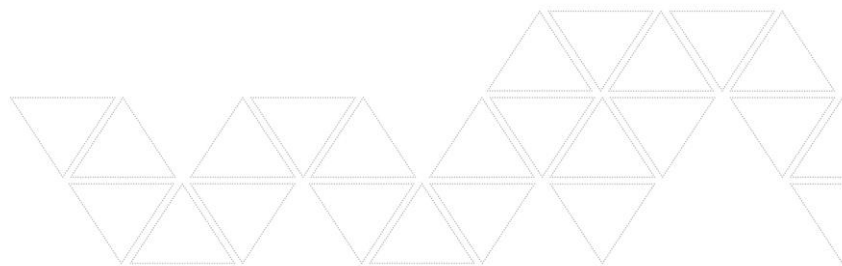
A new strategic approach (2019-2020)

The 2018 AEDC showed that there were fewer children experiencing vulnerability upon starting school in Fawkner compared to 2015 (25.5% compared to 36.6%). A contribution analysis indicated that RSP had played a role in improving early childhood outcomes, together with other local efforts. Given this early success, and following extensive stakeholder and community consultation, Ready, Set, Prep! took on a new strategic direction in June 2019.

Firstly, we broadened the scope of the initiative to include families with children from 0-6 years, to better support early childhood development outcomes. Secondly, we adopted a capacity building model and collective impact approach to promote the ongoing sustainability of the initiative beyond the funded period. During this phase of the initiative, we



Word Play session at Fawkner Library



focused on expanding the partnership, building the capacity of settings through professional development activities, developing and widely disseminating information resources to families, and providing further targeted interventions.

The Transition Network

In 2020, Ready, Set, Prep! launched a Transition Network with a model that was co-designed by partners from health, education and early years settings. The aims of this network are to strengthen links and relationships between schools, early years and community services, and provide a platform for collective professional development. The Transition Network has grown from 19 attendees at the first meeting, to an average of 32 representatives attending each meeting, despite being held online due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Getting our messages out

Following extensive consultation with 200+ stakeholders, we co-designed a suite of resources to promote Ready, Set, Prep! messages in ways that were relevant and accessible to families in northern Moreland. This included a series of six videos featuring local families and children across various early years and education settings in Fawkner, and containing messages about early health, wellbeing and learning opportunities.

The videos were supported by an illustrated 'journey to primary school' poster that highlights key places and spaces that support early childhood development and learning prior to starting school. This poster was translated into six languages and is available for download from the Merri Health website. To date, the videos have now had 3,129 views and continue to be promoted via social media, e-news, our new WhatsApp group and via project partners.



'Journey to primary school' poster

LEAP pilot group – a targeted intervention

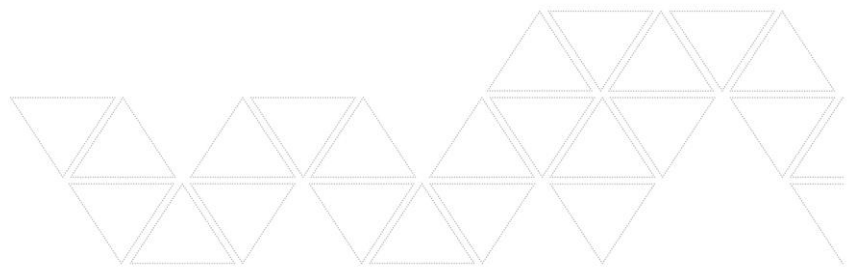
In 2019, the RSP team supported the delivery of a pilot LEAP (Learn, Engage, Appreciate, Play) group. LEAP is a targeted support program for northern Moreland parents and carers of children aged 2-3 years old with additional needs.

Eleven parents participated in the five-week pilot. They were supported to access occasional care for their children during the sessions so they could engage fully with the content and speak openly with facilitators, guest speakers and other participants. An evaluation of the pilot project showed it had several positive outcomes for parents, including connecting participants with other parents and carers in the Fawkner community. In addition, parents reported an increased confidence talking to their friends about their child's development needs or disability and increased knowledge of services and information to support them and their child.

Since the initial pilot, another LEAP program has been delivered (2021), with another two programs planned for 2021 & 2022 in partnership with the Merri Health Child Health Team. In addition, in order to support families ongoing, we have launched a peer support group in partnership with Merri Carer Services.



LEAP program session



The group will be peer-facilitated and will provide a regular opportunity for families who have children with additional needs to meet and gain both peer support and support from local services.

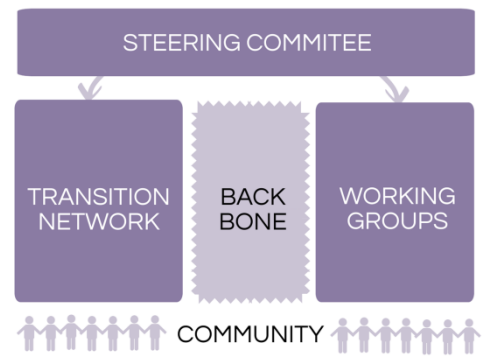
“Friendly environment and gives confidence to every speaker, even though I have not much competent in Speaking English, but they gave me opportunity too. I appreciate this”
LEAP parent

Scaling up (2020-21)

The injection of new funds from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust in 2021 gave us the opportunity to consolidate our effort, scale-up our activities and expand our reach into two additional suburbs; Glenroy and Hadfield. Moving into this new phase, we undertook an extensive consultation and co-design process with community members and key partners to develop a [Theory of Change framework](#). This will guide us in our systems approach to improving early childhood development, wellbeing and life outcomes for children and families in the northern Moreland area.

New governance structure

To enable this systems approach, we redesigned our governance structures, which now includes a municipality-wide Transition Network, a steering committee made up of service providers and community representatives, and working groups with a focus on specific RSP outcomes. A critical component of this phase of Ready, Set, Prep! is our increased focus on community engagement and building community leadership capacity, to enhance the reach of RSP messages and activities and ensure they are community-led and responsive to community needs.

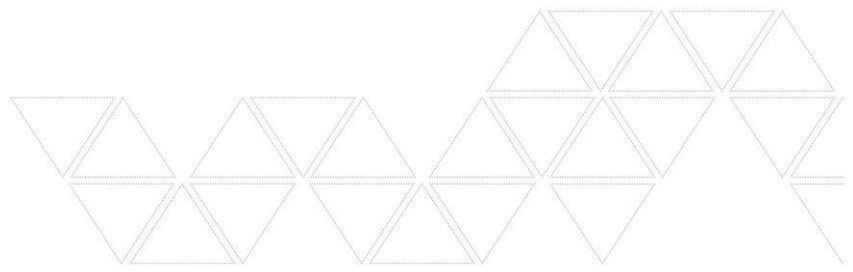


New RSP governance structure

Our Theory of Change

The Ready, Set, Prep! Theory of Change was developed through co-design workshops with the steering committee and community members, facilitated by Clear Horizon Consulting. It outlines seven activity areas for achieving outcomes for children, parents and carers, and at the service level. It also details our key partners and the values that guide the initiative.

- RSP activity areas
(from the Theory of Change)**
1. Convene Transition Network
 2. Support organisational development in schools and kinders
 3. Continue core business of partners
 4. Recruit and train community champions
 5. Develop a communications plan
 6. Launch priority working groups
 7. Initiate partnership projects to support vulnerable families



Strengthening community engagement

Dedicated community engagement officer

In February 2021, we recruited a Community Engagement Officer to promote family involvement in RSP activities. The Community Engagement Officer has played a key role supporting communication, consultation, and community leadership activities including:

- Facilitating community consultation workshops with 36 community members to inform the Theory of Change
- Launching a RSP WhatsApp group to share regular updates about RSP and other services/programs
- Providing support to families participating in the LEAP Program and establishing and supporting a peer support group
- Supporting community members to participate in working groups as part of project governance
- Engaging diverse community members to participate in the RSP Community Champions initiative
- Developing and disseminating information and key messages to communities, including through local community networks and social media
- Connecting families to parent support programs, playgroups, and children’s services/programs



Merri Health staff at a community engagement workshop

Building community leadership capacity

Community inclusive governance

One of the key ways we are building community leadership is through community inclusive governance. We have revised our governance structure to include community representatives on the steering committee, and established working groups that enable community members and service providers to collaborate on specific RSP outcomes. Two working groups have been established to date, with the respective aims of developing key messages and increasing attendance at Maternal and Child Health checks.

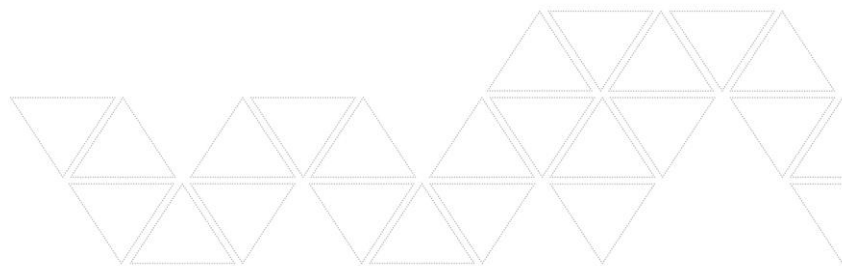
“...the session was great, especially for a person like me who try to stay in their comfort zone and push away opportunities to be a community member... thank you for your effort and I would try to be more involved from now on”

Workshop participant

Community champions

We have established a Community Champions program to build community leadership capacity and community knowledge and understanding about the Ready, Set, Prep! initiative. The role of community champions is to work closely with the RSP team and partners to share key messages through their networks. This aims to enhance information flow between communities and services, and improve access to local early years services.

To date, we have recruited ten local community champions based in Glenroy and Fawkner, who are passionate about the aims and objectives of the RSP initiative and are good at connecting people in their local communities. Community Champions will be provided with training and support to assist them in their roles, and are reimbursed for their time with gift vouchers. They will also be provided with:

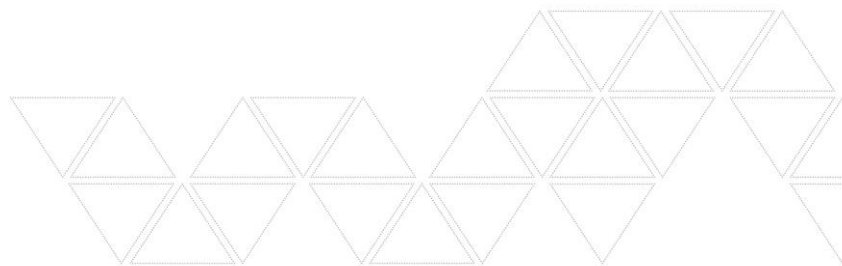


- Access to training and networking opportunities and mentoring from RSP project team members
- Support to seek grant applications if they are interested in starting their own projects that focus on early years education and child development
- Opportunities to expand their social and professional networks
- An opportunity to share their experiences with the program by participating in evaluation activities

Key lessons

We have succeeded in scaling-up and expanding the reach of the Ready, Set, Prep! initiative by developing a clear roadmap for change, establishing more robust governance structures and prioritising effective community consultation and engagement practices. Key lessons from our experience include:

- Having a dedicated community engagement officer role is critical to effective engagement with families, as it allows the time and commitment required to identify key community members and develop relationships with them
- We achieved a high level of engagement with community members in the community conversations (2020). This informed our theory of change, and reinforced the importance of using a range of engagement approaches and mechanisms to ensure diverse voices are captured. This includes offering sessions at various times, using online and face-to-face formats, targeting sessions to specific cohorts (i.e. gender-based). It also requires identifying barriers to people engaging in consultation processes, and finding ways to overcome them to minimise exclusion
- Creating different ‘roles’ and ways for communities to participate in the initiative (e.g. steering committee, community workshops, community champions, opportunity for community-led projects) means more people are able to contribute, and can do so in ways that align with their skills and interests
- Revising the governance structure to include a steering committee and working groups provided opportunities for community members and service providers to work collaboratively to explore issues from various perspectives, as well as increases capacity to develop and implement action plans
- Communication resources such as the ‘journey to primary school’ videos and poster have increased the visibility of Ready, Set, Prep. This prompted us to increase our focus on sharing key messages and service information. These messages have been informed by the community to ensure they are appropriate and effective, and they are disseminated through various channels to ensure maximum reach



Key supporters and partners

The Ready, Set, Prep! initiative was made possible with funding from the William Buckland Foundation and Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (Integrated Health Promotion program) and the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust. We have also worked with other organisations on complementary activities as part of the initiative. Funding for these projects has been provided by:

- Federal Department of Social Services (LEAP)
- Merri Carer Services (Sooner or Later)
- Public Libraries Victoria Network (Word Play)
- State Library Victoria (Word Play)



Transition Network

Other key partners and supporters of Ready, Set, Prep! include:

Primary schools

- Belle Vue Park Primary School
- Corpus Christi Primary School
- Darul Ulum College of Victoria
- Fawkner Primary School
- Glenroy Central Primary School
- Glenroy Private
- Glenroy Specialist School
- Glenroy West Primary School
- Ilim College
- Moomba Park Primary School
- St Mark's Catholic Parish Primary School
- St Matthew's Catholic Primary School
- St Thomas More Primary School

Community services and providers

- Department of Education and Training (DET)
- Early Links- Melbourne City Mission
- Fawkner Neighbourhood House
- Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre
- HIPPY- Uniting Vic. Tas
- Merri Carer Services
- Merri Child Health Team
- MerriKids NDIS
- Moreland City Council
- Moreland City Libraries
- VICSEG

Kindergartens and childcare centres

- Belle Vue Park Kindergarten
- Fawkner Kindergarten
- Gladstone Parade Early Learning & Kinder
- Glenroy Central Kindergarten
- Glenroy Memorial Kindergarten
- Glenroy West Kindergarten
- Goodstart Early Learning Glenroy
- H E Kane Memorial Kindergarten
- Hadfield Early Learning Centre
- Ilim Learning Sanctuary- Glenroy
- Joybelle Child Care Centre and Kindergarten
- Lorne Street Kindergarten
- Matrix Early Learning Centre
- Moomba Park Kindergarten
- Nido Early School Glenroy
- Pearl Street Child Care Centre
- Will Will Rook Pre School
- York Street Kindergarten
- Moreland Family Day Care

Playgroups

- Fawkner Outdoor Playgroup
- Moreland City Council Supported Playgroup
- Ummah Jameelah Islamic Rostered Playgroup

Hello, Fawkner!

CELEBRATING FAWKNER

Hello, Fawkner!

Introduction

Hello Fawkner! is a three-year, place-based project that aims to improve social cohesion, connection and respect for diversity in the suburb of Fawkner, located in the north of Melbourne. The project was established in 2018 with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services, and supported with additional funding from the Victorian Government.

Project overview

Hello, Fawkner! has a strong focus on building community leadership and the capacity of local residents to develop, implement and share initiatives that strengthen their community. The project consists of four key initiatives:

1. The Great Idea Program
2. The Harmony Day Party Program
3. The Fawkner Times e-newsletter
4. The Fawkner Times newspaper

This case study provides an overview of these four Hello, Fawkner! initiatives spanning the past three years, including the activities delivered, the people involved, key achievements, and the impact they have had on Fawkner residents.

THE FAWKNER TIMES

OVER
80%
of readers said
the newspaper
and e-newsletter
had increased
their feelings of
connection.

MORE THAN
8500
PEOPLE
REACHED



38

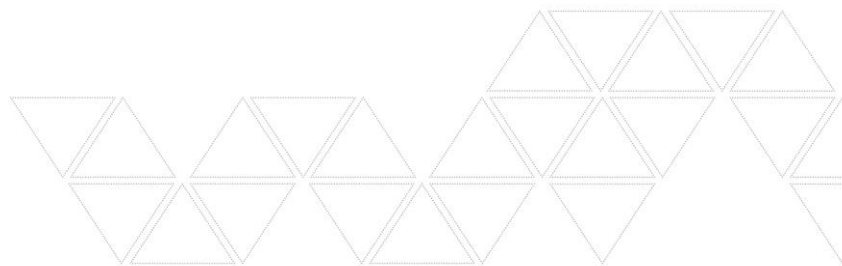
COMMUNITY-LED EVENTS



OVER **2400** PEOPLE
ENGAGED

81%

of participants strongly agreed they *had the skills they needed* to run a project in their community.



The Great Idea Program

The Great Idea Program aims to build community leadership, social connection, cross-cultural connection and respect for diversity in Fawkner. By supporting teams of Fawkner residents to undertake community-led projects, the program increases the agency and capability of participants, as well as their connection, mobility and support within the Fawkner community.

Since its establishment in 2019, the program has supported eight teams of Fawkner residents to develop and implement local projects across three separate implementation rounds.

The program model

The Great Idea Program utilises a participatory, locally-led placemaking model, which was adapted from The Neighbourhood Project by CoDesign Studio. Through this model, project teams are provided with small grants as well as guidance and mentorship from the Merri Health Hello, Fawkner! team to bring their project ideas to life. This model was favoured over a more traditional 'service delivery' model, as we recognised its potential and value to generate more sustainable impacts on the wellbeing of local residents.

Each round of the program involves an application process, a selection process, planning and budgeting support for project teams, training and development support for project teams, and delivery of the projects by Fawkner residents.



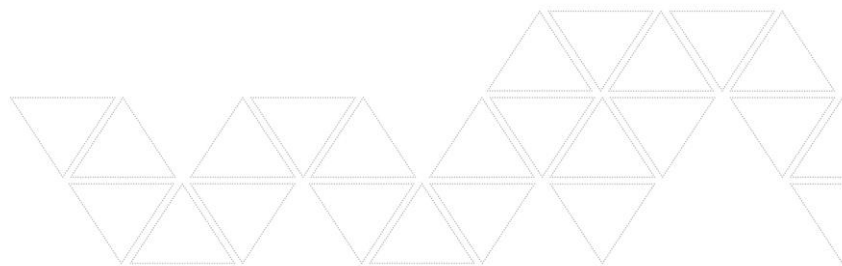
Promotional flyer for the Great Idea Program

Application process

We engaged Fawkner-based providers to develop promotional materials for the program. In round one, we engaged a graphic designer to develop a flyer, which was circulated to the Fawkner community via social media (Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp), The Fawkner Times e-newsletter, and community events such as the Fawkner Festa and the Be Merri Festival. In round two, we engaged a filmmaker to develop a film for use on social media and in The Fawkner Times newsletter, which profiled the 'Cook Dine and Shine' project (from round one). Due to COVID-19 lockdowns, round three of the program was promoted largely via social media, as well as The Fawkner Times newspaper and e-newsletter.

In the first two rounds of the program, teams of two residents were eligible to apply for grants, while in round three we expanded the eligibility to include individuals and groups of two or more.

To apply for the program, applicants were required to write a brief summary of their idea (300 words) and describe why they thought their idea will make Fawkner and even better place to live (300 words).



The selection process

In round one, we established a selection panel comprised of Fawkner residents and Merri Health staff. Each panelist reviewed the applications separately and were asked to outline:

- What they liked about the idea
- How they thought it would make Fawkner an even better place to live
- Anything they did not like about the idea

Panelists were then asked to rank the ideas based on what would most benefit the Fawkner community. The Hello, Fawkner! team then reviewed each panelist's responses and rankings to determine a shortlist of projects. In round one, three projects were shortlisted and followed up with a phone call to confirm they were a 'good fit' for the program. All three teams were offered a place in the program.



A group meeting of The Great Idea Program Round 1

For round two and three of the program, a selection panel involving only Fawkner residents was established, including participants from previous rounds. Panel members represented diverse cultural backgrounds of people living in Fawkner. The intention of this was to increase the level of community control and agency over the program, and ensure projects appealed to culturally diverse members of the Fawkner community.

In round two, panel members worked individually to shortlist the preferred applicants using the same criteria as round one, from which two teams were invited to participate in the program. For round three, the panelists reviewed the applications online using Survey Monkey, and four teams were offered a place in the program.

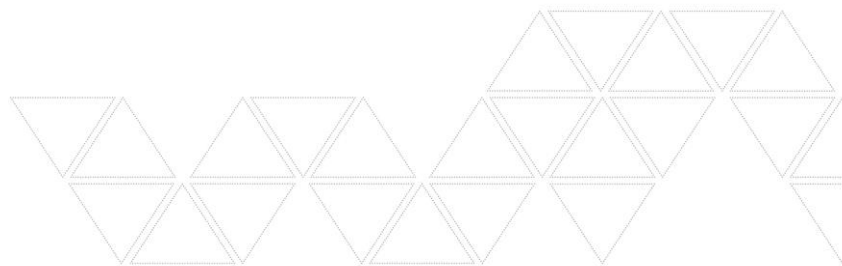
Round	Applications	Projects selected	Project budget per team	Training budget / participant
1	12	3	\$5,000 (plus \$2,000 from Moreland City Council)	Unspecified / as requested
2	8	2	\$5,000	\$1,000
3	13	4 ³	\$2,500 or \$5,000	\$700

Providing project support

As part of the program, each new cohort of teams were allocated a 'support person' from the Merri Health Hello, Fawkner! Team. The support person's role was to support teams with project planning, budgeting, community/stakeholder engagement, and project promotion through The Fawkner Times e-newsletter and printed newspaper.

In the initial round of the program, the three project teams met together to 'trouble-shoot' and provide support to each other. However, during the second round, regular meetings involving the support person were prioritised to ensure teams had more structured support and guidance. A 'Participant Agreement' was also introduced to clarify key roles

³ Due to unforeseen circumstances, one of these teams was not able to participate.



and responsibilities of program participants and Merri Health staff. Due to COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions in 2020, these meetings were conducted using online platforms.

Managing project funds

Project teams were supported to develop a budget outlining how they intended to use their project funds. These budgets had to be presented to and approved by a Merri Health staff member, then project teams were required to sign a brief 'Funding Agreement' before they received their funding. In order to minimise the administration burden on program participants, teams were provided with their allocated funds in the form of pre-loaded credit cards⁴ or through Merri Health invoicing processes where possible. At the end of the program cycle, teams were required to provide a signed Statutory Declaration confirming they had spent their budget in line with the signed Funding Agreement.

"Without the funding provided and the constant willingness to help from our project managers we really don't believe this project would have ran so well. The best part is this project was the first stepping stone for our project to continue, hopefully growing into something larger!"

Participant

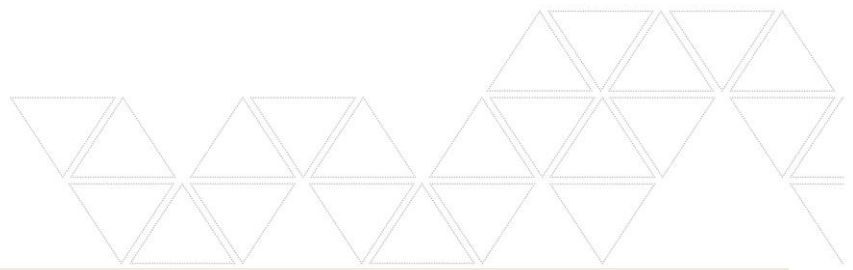
Training and development opportunities

Participants were also provided with an individual training budget to spend on skills training and other development opportunities to support the successful delivery of their projects. Some of the training and development activities undertaken included smartphone photography, book-keeping, food handling, memberships to online learning platforms such as 'Masterclass' and 'The Social Difference', business, IT and towing.

The teams and projects

The Project	The ideas and achievements
Cook Dine & Shine Zavi & Sana	Zavi and Sana aimed to bring women and girls from Fawkner together through food and cooking masterclasses. They believed that by bringing a group of culturally diverse people together to cook, eat and socialise, they would have greater opportunities to appreciate different lifestyles, traditions and a variety of food. It was hoped that these experiences would help to bridge cultural differences. The team have run five events and engaged over 350 women from diverse cultural backgrounds in their cooking classes. They also received a 'High Commendation' from Moreland City Council for the 'Honouring Women in Moreland' award
Fawkner Wholefoods Collective Sam & Katherine	Sam and Katherine's idea was to establish a business that sells local, ethically produced, pesticide-free products, with little to no packaging. Their philosophy was that customers could buy as little or as much as they wanted, using their own containers to avoid unnecessary packaging. The aim was to provide Fawkner with affordable food that is kind to their health and the planet. The team have developed a community-run committee of management, have 55 members, have run several events and stalls, have 20-25 people shopping with them each week and have attracted a large social media following.
Of Fawkner Domenica & Ben	Domenica and Ben aimed to create an online collective that explored the people, food and culture of Fawkner through storytelling. Their first project was a campaign for people in Fawkner to share recipes from different cultures. They have attended a local community festival where they collected over 50 community recipes, and engaged over 250 people in their online recipe sharing and community building platform.
Mums, Dadz and Bubz Claire & Alex	Claire and Alex's idea was to establish fun, affordable exercise and dance classes for new parents and babies in Fawkner. The classes aimed to give parents the chance to workout in ways that involved their little ones, with a focus on simply getting the body moving. During

⁴ Preloaded credit card suppliers included Universal Gift Cards and Australia Post pre-paid Mastercards.



	COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions the dance classes had to be discontinued, so the team instead provided a monthly social event with activities for parents and their children in Fawkner. The team have run two online and in-person events and engaged around 60 people in their community activities for families of Fawkner.
STEM Catalyst Faiza & Thasleem	Faiza and Thasleem set out to provide opportunities for families to learn and explore the wonders of science together in fun, creative and exciting ways. They provide online and face-to-face sessions on a range of science topics that are hands-on, activity-based and suitable for people of all ages. Since inception, the group has held 12 online and in-person events, engaged over 700 people in their science activities and secured additional grants and partnership opportunities to scale up and support their project activities.
Antfarm Sofia & Alana	Sofia and Alana developed an interactive arts piece with a focus on ants. The team launched their artwork at a local community garden, which was attended by 150 community members and incorporated artwork by four other residents, as well as local live music. They have also engaged 130 people through their online platforms.
Promoting Fawkner Paige, Bailey & Monique	Paige, Bailey and Monique are passionate about supporting businesses in Fawkner with their online presence, advertising and promotion following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. The team has supported three businesses in Fawkner by developing videos and promotional activities, including fellow participants in The Great Idea Program, STEM Catalyst.
Fawkner Chess Gathering Stephan	Stephan will be holding an event to bring the Fawkner community together through enjoyment of the game of chess.

Participation and reach

Since its inception in early 2019, The Great Idea Program has had significant reach into the Fawkner community, which has included direct participation in the program participants, involvement of residents on the selection panel, and engagement of residents in the funded project activities. It is anticipated that many more residents will benefit from the program in future years, given several the projects have been scaled up and are continuing with the support of other funding sources and structures.

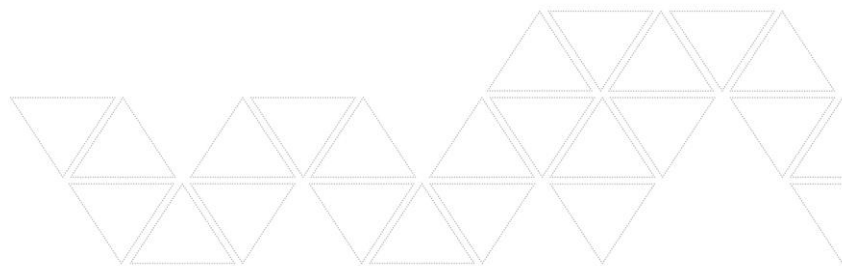
Participation type	# Participants
Program participant	16
Selection panelist (residents)	20
Participant in project activities (residents)	2,400+

“The thing I love about the Great Idea Program is how it really supports Fawkner and helps bring the community together from all social and cultural groups.”

Participant



STEM Catalyst Team Members



Impact

To determine the effectiveness of The Great Idea Program, regular evaluation activities were undertaken, including a survey of the participants (grant recipients) in each round of the program. The survey was administered at the start and end of the program to explore its impact across its three objectives:

1. community leadership
2. social connection
3. cross cultural connection and respect for diversity

The table below outlines the proportion of participants who strongly agreed with a particular statement at the start of the program compared to the end, indicating that the program had a positive impact across all key areas.

Obj.	Statement	Start (%)	End (%)
i	I know of people / organisations / groups in my area that can help me deliver a project in Fawkner	19	50
i	I have all the resources I need to do a project in my community	6	31
i	I know how to get people involved in community projects	13	38
i	I am often involved in community projects	19	44
i	I feel confident I can start a project in my community	69	88
i	I have the skills I need to do a project in my community	69	81
i	There are ways I can contribute to community issues that are important to me	69	75
i	I feel community leadership is important for Fawkner	94	94
i	I know people at council I can talk to about implementing a project in my community	19	25
ii	I know a lot of people in Fawkner	25	31
iii	I find it easy to meet people in Fawkner who are from a different social or cultural group to mine	31	50

“Some of them were scared as they never had the experience of speaking to a big group. We enabled them to become confident and outspoken as we believed they were already very talented people. They just needed a bit of push to rise and shine which Cook Dine & Shine provided them.”

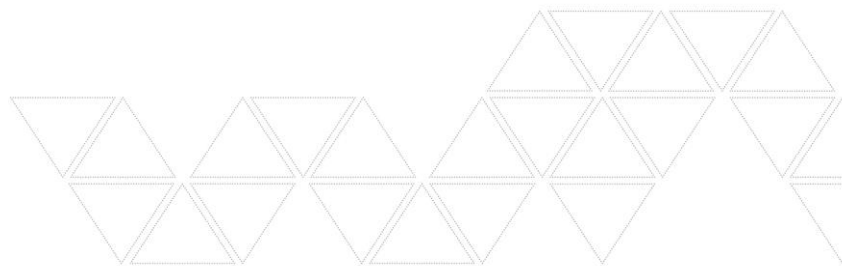
Participant



Zavi and Sana from Cook Dine & Shine at initial planning meeting

“We are trying to be there for each other to support emotionally, ethically, few times financially, physically, sometimes giving advice, sharing experiences, sharing joys and sorrows.”

Participant



The Harmony Day Party Program

The Harmony Day Party Program was developed as a way of empowering residents to celebrate Fawkner’s cultural diversity with their friends and neighbours. Instead of organising one central Merri Health party, we developed a microgrants program to enable Fawkner residents to host their own parties in their local neighbourhood, recognising this would reach a larger number of residents, create more sustainable outcomes, and provide leadership opportunities for interested community members.

Application and selection

We delivered the Party Program over three rounds between 2019 and 2021. Community members were invited to apply via an expression of interest process, initially by phone or email (round 1) and subsequently via Survey Monkey (rounds 2 and 3). We selected party hosts on a ‘first-come, first-served’ basis, and as positions filled quickly, we created a waiting list of interested hosts for each round.



Flyer for Harmony Day Party Program

Microgrants

Party hosts were provided with \$100 in the first and second round, and \$200 in the third round. The funds were distributed to hosts in the form of pre-loaded credit cards, which they used to purchase event supplies such as decorations, food/catering, and activity materials, as well as to cover the costs of promoting the event, such as printing of flyers and invitations.

The events and parties

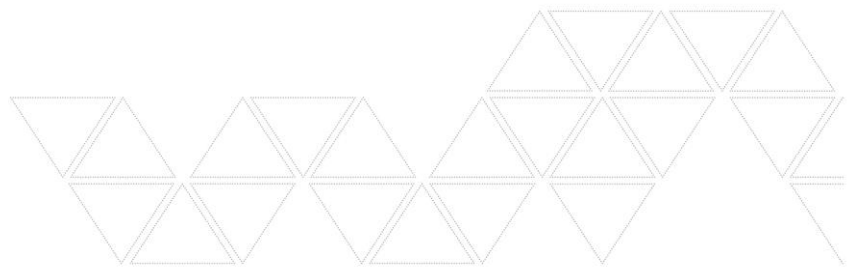
A total of 63 Harmony Day events were hosted by Fawkner residents in the month of March across the three years. Events included barbeques, picnics, school activities, passata-making, Ramadan celebrations, movie nights and more, which were held at neighbourhood houses, parks, community gardens, schools, front yards and other locations across Fawkner. Some events were large, involving a whole street or community group, while others were small and involved only a few friends and family members. A total of 2,006 people attended Harmony Day parties across the three rounds.

Round	Time period	Amount	# of grants	# of parties
1	March 2019	\$100	17	17
2	March 2020	\$100	50	17
3	March 2021	\$200	25	29*

“I learned that having a friend from different country and different culture that gave you a chance to learn new things in your life”

Participant

* Number of grants differs to the number of parties in round 2 and 3, due to COVID-19 restrictions. Four parties which were funded for Round 2 took place in March 2021.



Our approach to evaluation

We utilised the following methods to evaluate the implementation and impact of the Harmony Day Party Program:

- Participants shared a photo and story about their event
- Participants recorded the number of participants at their event
- The Hello, Fawkner! team conducted 17 interviews with event organisers from round one
- The Hello, Fawkner! Team conducted three group interviews with 18 participants from round one and two
- 25 participants from round three completed a survey

Impact

- ✓ 52% said it was the first time they had organised a party with their community
- ✓ 92% said they learnt new skills through planning and hosting their party
- ✓ 96% said they learned about new cultures and traditions

**HARMONY DAY
PARTY PROGRAM**



63 **COMMUNITY-LED
EVENTS**



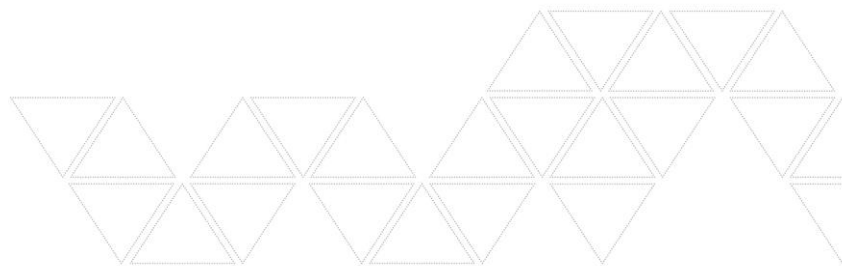
The Fawkner Times

The Fawkner Times is a community publication comprised of two formats: a monthly e-newsletter and a printed newspaper. The purpose of the publications was to provide a mechanism for communicating with Fawkner residents about programs and opportunities, and promote messages relating to Merri Health’s health promotion priorities. It also aimed to provide a mechanism for Fawkner community members to share their stories and experiences with each other, opportunities for community leadership and build community provide and social cohesion. Both forms of the publication included articles, interviews and information about Fawkner residents, community groups, events and activities.

“As an immigrant in Australia, I’ve gained confidence and improved my writing skills in English a lot. I always loved to write and dreamed to write to a newspaper and The Fawkner Times was a wonderful opportunity for me!

I also gained a strong sense of community through the e-newsletter, I’ve connected with my neighbours who read my articles and I’m now much more involved in my community”

Participant



Distribution and reach

The e-newsletter

The e-newsletter, which at the time was named 'Hello, Fawkner!', was distributed monthly to a subscriber list of 109 people whose details were gathered at various Merri Health community engagement activities such as The Community Grocer, the Fawkner Festa, and a survey of Fawkner residents. A total of 43 editions were distributed monthly between November 2017 and June 2021. This included a total of 310 articles written by both community members and members of the Hello, Fawkner! team at Merri Health.

Since its inception, the subscriber list of the e-newsletter has grown by almost 600 per cent, and currently includes close to 600 people. The e-newsletter has 32% opens on average, which is very good according to industry average.



First edition of Fawkner Times newspaper

The newspaper

Media consultant Papermill Media was engaged to facilitate the development of three editions of the newspaper - including interviewing residents, writing articles, taking photos, coordinating translations into community languages, organising layout, printing and distribution. The three editions were distributed directly to Fawkner households and community pick-up points in May 2019, November 2019 and August 2020.

A total of 7,000 copies were delivered to Fawkner households, including 24 community pick-up points such as the Fawkner library, Leisure Centre, and local businesses. The printed publication was an important medium for directly reaching those Fawkner residents that were not able to engage with our online communications, such as older residents. All editions were also published in a digital format and available on the Merri Health website and social media pages.



The newspaper at the Community Grocer in Fawkner

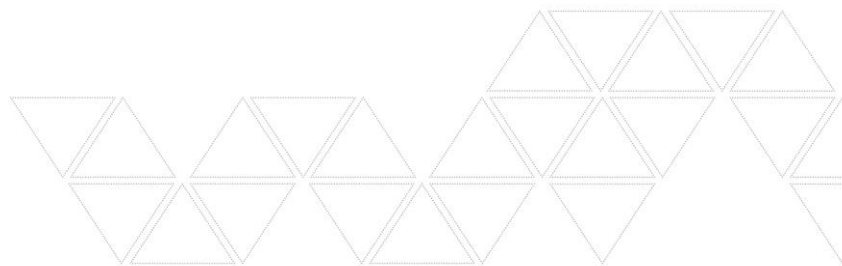
Community voice and contributions

A key component of both publications was contributions by community members from diverse cultural backgrounds to the content, which included recipes, poems, and articles about issues they were passionate about, as well as a one-off 'Kids edition' during the COVID-19 lockdowns. The publications also provided an opportunity to promote and encourage residents to get involved in other aspects of Hello, Fawkner!, such as The Great Idea Program and The Harmony Day Party Program.

We engaged community voices in the printed form of the publication by running a 'newspaper naming' competition at 'The Fawkner Festa' community festival in November 2018. In total, 90 Fawkner residents submitted their ideas for a name of the newspaper, and then community members voted to name the paper 'The Fawkner Times' via a poll promoted in the e-newsletter.

Community participation and readership

A total of 126 community contributions were made to the e-newsletter, many of whom were people who had never previously written an article. There were 119 community projects profiled, and 21 community member profiles/stories were shared.



In addition, a total of 71 community members contributed to the development of three editions of The Fawkner Times newspaper, including articles and profiles on community-led events. Our community news survey, which was conducted in 2021 and completed by 94 Fawkner residents showed:

E-newsletter	Newspaper
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 73 people were readers – 74% were aged 25-44 – 26% only spoke English, 48% spoke Urdu, 9% spoke Italian and 9% spoke Arabic – Readers also spoke Greek, Bengali, Turkish, French, Tamil, Mandarin, Russian, Punjabi and AUSLAN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 55 people were readers – 73% were aged 25-44 – 25% only spoke English, 49% spoke Urdu, 11% spoke Arabic and 9% spoke Italian – Readers also spoke Greek, Bengali, Turkish, French, Tamil, Mandarin, Russian, Punjabi and AUSLAN

Impact

The community news survey also showed that The Fawkner Times had positive impacts on both contributors and readers of the two publications, including an increased social connection and understanding of diverse cultures in Fawkner. For contributors, it also increased opportunities for community leadership.

Publication	Community leadership	Social connection	Respect for diversity
	N = 28	N = 100	N = 100
E-Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 78% they felt they had contributed to the community – 63% reported increased connection and pride to their community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 78% reported increased feelings of connection to community – 86% reported increased knowledge of Fawkner activities, events, and businesses – 60% said it increased their ability to communicate with other Fawkner residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 78% reported increased understanding of the diverse cultures of people who live in Fawkner
	N = 19	N = 93	N = 93
Newspaper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 78% said they felt they had contributed to the community – 63% reported increased connection and pride to their community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 85% reported increased feelings of connection to the Fawkner community – 89% said it increased their knowledge of Fawkner activities and events, businesses – 55% said it increased their ability to communicate with other Fawkner residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 72% reported increased understanding of the diverse cultures of people who live in Fawkner

Video and media

Please find below video and media links to information about health promotion initiatives implemented by Merri Health in the last four years.

Hello, Fawkner!

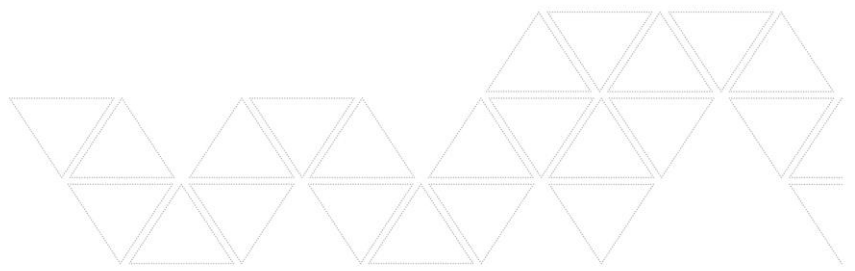
- All components of the initiative
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWDn5bJ598I>
- The Great Idea Program
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbiyHB0I7DU>
- Harmony Day Party Program
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqtxRPBB22A>
- The Fawkner Times film
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbFqUh84CY4>
- The Fawkner Times: [edition 1](#), [edition 2](#), [edition 3](#)
- What does harmony mean to you?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HK-meXTMqRA>
- What is the best thing about cultural diversity?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNnDO-BPOFw>

Ready, Set, Prep!

- School readiness film resources
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmjGVbe-v8WDwyef60yNjl8yome6y-LyS>
- DH Prevention blog
<https://prevention.health.vic.gov.au/blog/posts/ready-set-prep-adapts-engagement-strategies-during-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic>
- DET Victoria, case studies on using AEDC data
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/research/Pages/case-studies.aspx>
- Child voice film resource on starting school
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0NIUaAmO30>
- Child voice film resource on wellbeing
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfT1AnVuDig>
- Presentation to AEDC National Conference
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTI3O_2C8E
- Word Play
<https://youtu.be/Qg2dcy9lpEw>

Count Me In and Count Me In Too

- Count Me In
<https://vimeo.com/246892521>
- Tennis Victoria, successful partnerships case study
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZyrfciIMJY>
- SBS News story
<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/a-melbourne-bowling-club-is-hosting-women-only-days-for-migrants>



- ‘Give sport a go’ promotional film resource <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7heHITj7sxU>
- Engaging culturally diverse women and girls in sport- visual Tool
[Engaging culturally diverse women and girls in sport- visual Tool.pdf](#)

The Community Grocer

- Come to the Fawkner Community Grocer <https://youtu.be/8DxoRdUgalA>

Public arts for LGBTIQ+ inclusion

- The Domino Effect (IDAHOBIT 2019)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXaSiqWG6Q0>
- The Peace Patrol (IDAHOBIT 2018): Students graffiti police station to show allyship
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHHj5iybluA>
- The Magic of a Rainbow (IDAHOBIT 2017)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C085SiqHnhI>

YGLAM Queer Youth Theatre Ensemble

- What is YGLAM promo film
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCx4mNb7It8>
- You’re Not Alone
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueUw-o1XzJw>

Reconciliation Action Plan

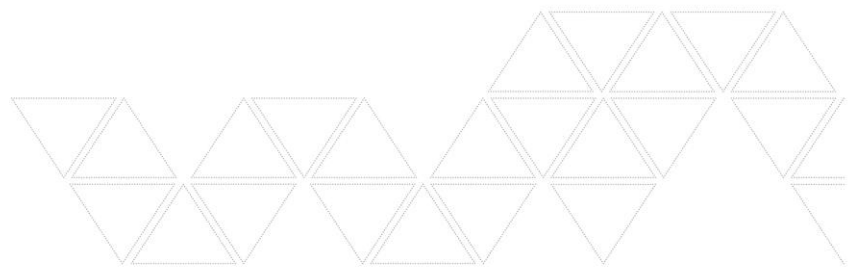
- Our journey to Reconciliation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVY_zSpi6bk
- The Little Long Walk
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCHcmPKDLcs>
- Speak Up, Speak Out
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMzhi6ytiQ8>
- Speak Up, Speak Out Evaluation https://youtu.be/N_3ea24kNvc

COVID-19 community engagement

- Community perspectives on getting tested for COVID-19: 9 languages
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LY2yggWFg-I&list=PLmjGVbe-v8WDCLIQv4IUr3iwJJIV84qvH>

Healthy schools initiative

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OB4oHn-kC_I&t=7s



Awards and presentations

Please find below a list of awards and commendations that Merri Health have received for IHP initiatives, and a list of presentations the Merri Health staff have delivered.

Count Me In

Awards

- 2019 Victorian Public Healthcare Awards: Chief Health Officer's Award for supporting healthy populations – highly commended
- 2017 VicHealth Awards: Building health through sport – winner

Count Me In Too

Awards

- 2020 Moreland Awards: Contribution to sport – winner
- 2021 LGPro Awards for Excellence: Community Partnerships – winner
- 2019 Moreland Awards: Contribution to sport – Northern Badminton Club (Count Me In Too participants) – joint-winner

Presentations

- 2021: Presentation at LGPro online award ceremony
- 2020: Pivots in Practice Forum, hosted by the Inner North West Primary Care Partnership
- 2019: Panel speaker at the Moreland female retention workshop for sports clubs
- 2019: Panel speaker at Tennis Victoria's Association Meeting

Hello, Fawkner!

Awards

- 2020 Moreland Awards: Honouring women in Moreland – Zavi and Sana, Cook Dine and Shine (Hello, Fawkner participants) – high commendation
- 2020 Moreland Awards: Environmental Sustainability Achievement Award – Sam and Katherine, Fawkner Wholefoods Collective (Hello, Fawkner! participants) – shortlisted

Presentations

- 2021: Fawkner Service Provider Network
- 2020: Moreland Democracy Lab
- 2020: Victoria University
- 2020: Pivot in Practice Forum, hosted by Inner North West Primary Care Partnership
- 2018: Australian Health Promotion Association (AHPA) conference

Ready, Set, Prep!

Awards

- 2020 Moreland Awards: Collaborative Partnerships – high commendation
- 2020 Victorian Early Years Award: Creating Collaborative Community Partnerships – finalist
- 2020 Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence: Education – Early Childhood) – winner
- 2019 Victorian Early Years Awards: Improving Access and Participation in Early Learning – winner (Word Play)
- 2019 Victorian Public Healthcare Awards: Award for Excellence in culturally diverse health – highly commended (Word Play)

Presentations

- 2021 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) National Conference
- 2021 AEDC Victorian Forum – panel member

Reconciliation Action Plan

Awards

- 2018 Reconciliation Victoria HART Awards: Changing the Way We Work – Inner North West Primary Care Partnership Working in Two Worlds initiative (Merri Health a project partner) – winner
- 2017 Moreland Awards: Lisa Belleair Award for Reconciliation – Coburg Primary School (participant of The Little Long Walk) – joint winner

Rainbow Procession

Awards

- 2018 Moreland Awards: Community Event of the Year – winner

Speak Up, Speak Out

Awards

- 2020 Moreland Awards: Lisa Belleair Award for Reconciliation – winner

YGLAM

Awards

- 2017 Victorian Young Person of the Year: Groups – semi-finalist