

Community Wellbeing COVID-19 project team Update on activities to 25 May 2020

The Community Wellbeing COVID-19 project team was established on 7 April 2020.

This is the third update on key activities undertaken by the team. These updates will be shared regularly.

If you have any queries about this email, please don't hesitate to contact us using the details below.

Community engagement

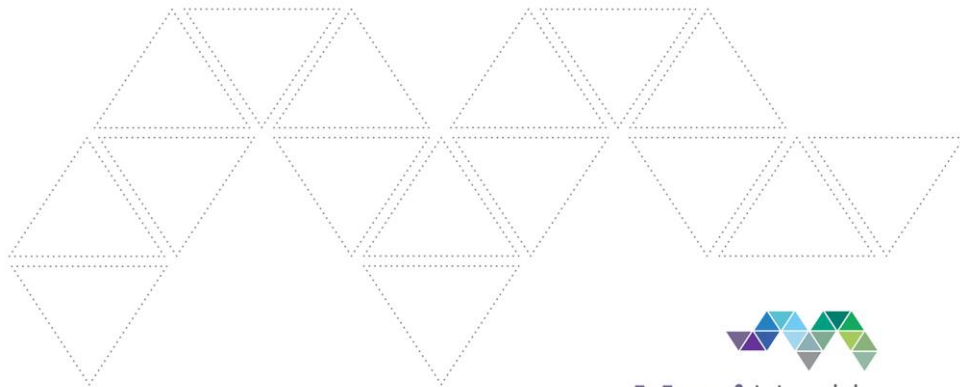
As of 25 May 2020, 35 consultations have occurred with community members. The majority of these were held as one-on-one conversations, with one focus group held with participants of an ongoing Merri Health program.

Questions asked include the following topics:

- key current concerns
- health and wellbeing
- access to food
- employment
- supporting pre-school and school-aged children
- access to information

The table below outlines key demographic information* for community members engaged so far.

Demographic information	Responses
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person	2, with one person acknowledging they are a descendant of the Stolen Generations
People who speak a language other than English	25
Cultural backgrounds	6 – Pakistani (18) – Indian (4) – Australian (5) – Indian Muslim (1) – Lebanese (1) – Russian (1) – Italian (1)
Languages spoken	15 – English – Urdu – Punjabi – Gujrati – Saraiki – Balochi – Pashto – Arabic



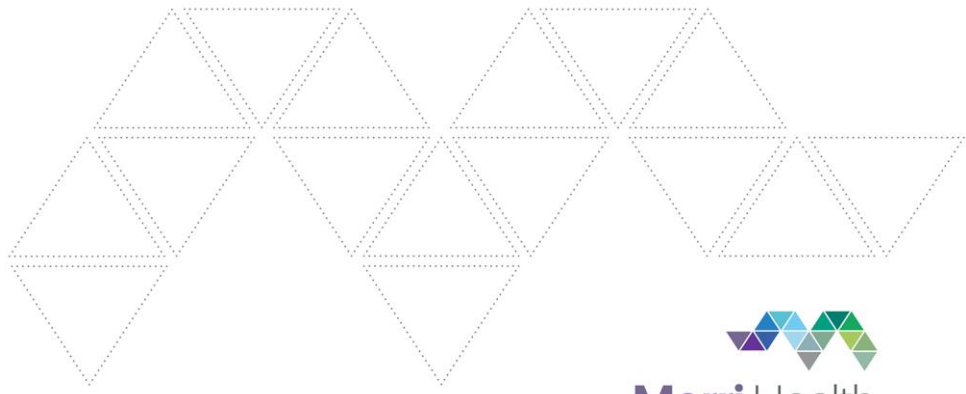
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Demographic information	Responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turkish - Russian - Chinese - Tamil - Hindi - Hindko - Auslan
Age groups	1 young person aged 6-12 8 young people aged 12-25 22 people aged 25-65 years
Household includes people aged	0-5 years – 19 6-12 years – 14 12-25 years – 11 25-65 years – 30 65+ years – 3
Lives in	Moreland – 91% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fawkner – 26 - Glenroy – 1 - Brunswick – 1 - Other: Mernda, Reservoir, Broadmeadows, Strathmore, Viewbank
Gender identity	1 non-binary / agender 1 lesbian / non-binary 26 female 3 male
Household size	2 people – 2 3 people – 7 4 people – 8 5 people – 12 6 people – 2

**Please note, providing demographic data is optional (some figures will not reflect the full range of participants).*

Key impressions/reflections from these conversations:

- All community members have indicated they have no troubles **accessing food or essentials**. However, we understand some of the community members we have spoken to have accessed food relief, but may feel uncomfortable sharing this information.
- Many community members report increased **financial stress**, due to:
 - loss of job
 - loss of income as a small business owner
 - inability to work or run their small business due to caring responsibilities – this seems to be particularly affecting mothers
 - working hours or shifts have been cut
- Some community members also expressed a reluctance to **access support through Centrelink**, with some reporting they felt their need for financial assistance was not as great as others.

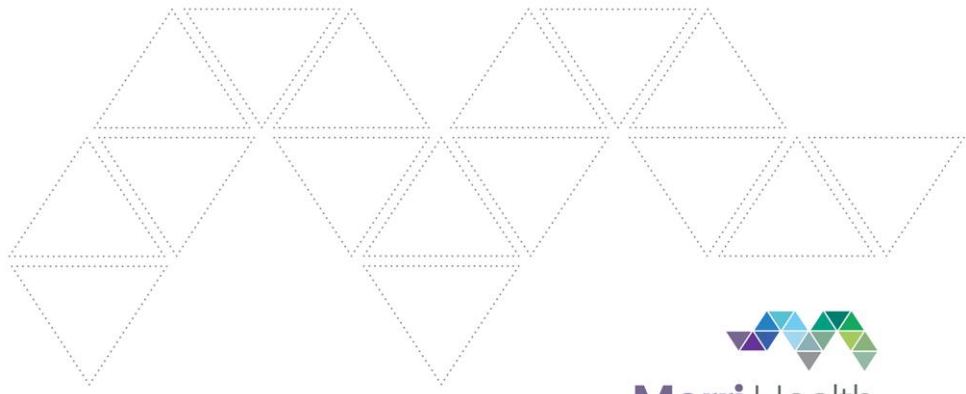


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- So far, **9 young people** aged between 6-25 years have been engaged in conversations.

A focus group was held with young people aged 13-18 who identify as **LGBTIAQ+**. Key impressions/reflections include:

- they had differing perspectives on self-isolation: some found it claustrophobic, where others were not bothered by being at home for extended periods
 - they had a range of anxieties about going outside the home
 - they did not feel hopeful about the easing of restrictions, and expressed concern about another spike in infections in the community
 - while they expressed a need for mental health supports at this time to help manage their experiences of anxiety and depression, not everyone felt they had the privacy at home to use telehealth with family or flatmates being present
 - one person noted that telehealth worked better for them
 - significant concern was expressed for their friends who were living in unsafe home environments
- Parents and carers of school-aged children report significant challenges supporting their **children's learning**:
 - Children are completing their school learning packs very quickly.
 - They are running out of options and ideas to keep their children engaged.
 - Community members continue to highlight the increased toll and workload **experienced by mothers** in households where there are children.
 - Some mothers report that fathers are working more hours than before COVID-19, either at home or at the workplace.
 - Mothers also report taking on most (or all) of the responsibility for their children's learning and care, leaving them with very little time for self-care.
 - Community members continue to report concerns in relation to **mental health**.
 - Some people report feeling a little better than they have in previous weeks, due to the changes in restrictions.
 - However, many people express concern and anxiety about leaving the house.
 - People still frequently speak about social isolation, and the inability to spend time with family and friends as a concern.
 - Many community members express concern for family who live overseas.
 - Some community members are choosing not to see **health professionals** in person due to concerns of going into the practice/site.
 - This has resulted in some health concerns not being addressed, including issues experienced by children.
 - Some community members have also expressed dissatisfaction with telehealth, and have indicated that sometimes the inability to see someone in person has caused increased stress.
 - A small number of community members have been unable to access telehealth due to a lack of privacy at home.
 - Most people reported having adequate **access to a computer/device and internet**
 - Individuals reported using the following platforms to **access information**:
 - News (17 people)



- Social media (16) – eg. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, “Premier’s page” (2)
- Internet (13)
- TV (7)
- WhatsApp / Viber (5)
- Partner/family member (5)
- COVID-19 app / app on phone (5)
- Youtube (2)
- Other: friends (1), word of mouth (1), radio (1), press release (1), school emails (1), international news (1), government website (1)

One person highlighted they refuse to watch TV news, with a few community members also highlighting that too much news/information has caused them anxiety.

Depending on the conversation, the Merri Health team has provided additional information to community members about relevant services.

Communications

Since 7 April, 14 options for social media posts were provided to the Merri Health communications team, with 7 posts shared during this time.

Information about Merri Health’s service changes was included in two of Moreland Council’s hard-copy newsletters, which were mailed to suburbs where residents are less likely to have access to the internet. Moreland Council has also shared information in its fortnightly service provider newsletter.

Updates from Moreland Council are also shared with Merri Health’s management team for broader distribution.

Merri Health also sits on Moreland Council’s sub-group for the Be Kind campaign.

More information

Please don’t hesitate to contact the team if you have any queries about the above information.

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Previous updates

[Update from 27 April 2020](#)

[Update from 11 May 2020](#)