



2021-2022

QUALITY OF CARE REPORT

Did you know?

In 2021-22, we had:

243 staff members

41 students:

- 5** (Diploma of) Community Services
- 3** Counselling
- 4** Exercise Physiology
- 14** Medicine
- 1** Nurse Practitioner
- 4** Nurse (Registered)
- 6** Occupational Therapy
- 4** Social Work

Education providers we partnered with:

- Australian College of Applied Professions
- Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors
- Bendigo TAFE
- Deakin University
- Eastern College Australia
- Flinders University
- La Trobe University
- Monash University and
- Partners in Training.

Feedback from our students:

"Learnt a lot from the supervisor's professionalism and expertise"

"Gained experience in assessment as well as exercise prescription and delivery"

"This experience also enabled my confidence as a student to grow, through receiving positive and constructive feedback"

"Detailed and thorough induction"

"Being exposed to so many diverse clients allowed me to expand my communication skills and teaching techniques. This placement has improved my confidence. I loved it!"

Client Services

Our Client Services Team members are the first people you see or hear when you contact Bendigo Community Health Services.

They have been on the front line during the Covid-19 pandemic.

While many staff could work from home, our team were on the ground day after day to ensure they could best respond to the needs of clients and our staff.

During the past year, the team responded to more than

130,000 phone calls

and coordinated bookings for:

4452

covid-19 vaccination appointments



15,844

allied health appointments



51,583

GP appointments



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Acknowledgement of Country

Bendigo Community Health Services acknowledges that we work and live on the country of the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung peoples.

We pay our respect to the Traditional Owners of the land and waterways that we enjoy.

We acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions and aspirations for the future.

We celebrate the rich heritage and the continuing culture of the First Peoples of this nation.

Bendigo Community Health Services acknowledges our clients, partners, members and donors who provide valuable support and allow us to continue delivering quality services and programs to the community. We look forward to continuing our association.

A message from the board chair and ceo



Our current Strategic Plan has at its core the health and wellbeing of all people, with a focus on the most marginalised.

Bendigo Community Health Service has been challenged by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and the continuing surge in variants and its impacts on our services, activities, staff and the wider community. Never has our local community to our global community relied more heavily on the community health sector than during 2021–22.

We are incredibly proud of the responsiveness of our staff to provide crucial roles in keeping our community safe, vaccinated and informed. Our teams found creative ways to engage with and support many households, as well as keep up the day-to-day provision of services.

The Community Health sector has been critical in responding to the very real and pressing social health

challenges being experienced. Our teams have been absolutely astonishing, and we wish to honour their amazing work in both service delivery and all the teams and staff who kept the organisation functioning – a true team effort. Our Board and Executive also recognise the overwhelming fatigue these conditions can produce, resulting in ongoing illness, carer requirements, anxiety and stress.

Sadly, the pandemic has highlighted the vast chasms that exist between different parts of our society. Unfortunately, health outcomes are affected by factors like socioeconomic status and job security, but these disparities have been particularly evident in the COVID era. Those living with racism, poverty, mental health, insecure work, domestic and household violence, and homelessness have been amongst those damaged by the pandemic.

However, the pandemic has also showed the capacity of agencies and government to work in partnership to respond and help communities recover and be resilient. Thriving communities rely on social justice and the commitment to work together and build cohesion.

Although we continue to work in a mix of face-to-face and online to provide services and activities, we are incredibly proud of the leadership, outcomes, services and achievements highlighted in this annual report and thank Board Directors, Executive and staff for all their remarkable efforts.

Amongst these disruptions, the Board and Executive have continued planning for the future and have invested significantly in reviewing our buildings, sites and services. The future will see redevelopments at Eaglehawk, headspace, Holdsworth Road and planning for future locations to meet future needs.

“Although we continue to work in a mix of face-to-face and online to provide services and activities, we are incredibly proud of the leadership, outcomes, services and achievements highlighted in this annual report”

Vicki Pearce
Chair

Gerard José
Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors - 2021/2022

Vicki Pearce, Board Chair	Danielle Couch
Josh Pell, Deputy Chair	Melanie Eddy
Abhishek Awasthi	Katie Johnson
Lauren Bean	Mark Morley
Michael Carney	Dean McKay

Meet our latest Life Member

David Kennedy

David Kennedy was actively involved in the creation of the then Eaglehawk and Long Gully Community Health Centre in 1973/1974, which would later become Bendigo Community Health Services.

David's knowledge and insight through his role as the Member for Bendigo regarding the Federal Labor Party's policy was prominent in the community securing the support and funding needed to establish the centre.

David featured in our BCHS 30th anniversary video, which showcased his effort and commitment, particularly regarding his one-on-one meeting with Gough Whitlam in Canberra where they agreed community health was essential to any community.

Beyond this work, David led the foundation committee to establish the centre. His experience, leadership and decision making through those formative years created the



LIFE MEMBER: David Kennedy has a long association with Bendigo Community Health Services.

foundation for the organisation we are today and has led to the care and support of thousands of people through community health in the years since.

We asked Life Member and our first community health nurse Denise Main who was there from the beginning about David, and her response was 'I believe David Kennedy provided the inspiration and influence that energised the development of community health for Eaglehawk and Long Gully, he

was a luminary in that sense. The Community Health Centre would not have gone from strength to strength without David Kennedy. His leadership was a vital contribution to community health'.

We would like to acknowledge the significant work David Kennedy has undertaken in the early years of Bendigo Community Health Services and congratulate him on Life Membership.

Executive Team

Callum Wright,
Executive Leader
Resources and
Enterprise Development

Emma Millard,
Executive Leader Risk
and Quality

Dale Hardy,
Executive Leader
Wellbeing, Inclusion and
Independence

Graem Kelly,
Executive Leader
Better Health

Nicole Birks,
Executive Leader
People and Culture

Peter Richardson,
Executive Leader
Community Services

Rod Case,
Executive Leader
Communications
and Community
Engagement

We remember

Vale Kim Sykes

Former Bendigo Community Health Services Chief Executive Officer



Our Board of Directors, management and staff were deeply saddened in September, 2021, by the passing of former Bendigo Community Health Services CEO, Kim Sykes.

Kim was caring, loyal and passionate about community health and helping those most in need. And she was so proud of BCHS and the staff who represented its values.

Kim singled out 'the staff' as her proudest moment on her final day as CEO.

"We have such a dedicated team at Bendigo Community Health Services who are passionate about supporting the people they work with and making their lives better," she reflected.

"It's been a privilege for me to be part of their work and the achievements made through their expertise and dedication. They are the strength of BCHS."

Our staff will never forget Kim's love of celebrating a milestone and unashamed passion for Christmas which saw sites and meetings take on a distinct festive flavour every December.

In eight and a half years as our CEO, Kim worked tirelessly to improve health services for Greater Bendigo and beyond. Kim made many friends along the way both in the health sector and general community.

Kim enjoyed a diverse career in health and human services through the public, private and not for profit sectors - with roles in service provision, state-wide policy development, governance and executive leadership.

Our thoughts are with Kim's children Aaron and Jess, family and friends. Aaron and Jess provided the following message to BCHS and community:

"We are emailing you with the sad news that our mother, Kim Sykes, passed away peacefully on the morning of the 18th. We were lucky enough to both be with her at the time, and incredibly grateful to those at the Epworth who made her final days as comfortable as possible.

"We feel very fortunate not only to have had such a witty, loving, unique and impressive mother, but also that she gathered so many like minds around her who have supported all of us so much during this period.

We have greatly appreciated all well-wishes and thoughts during this time."

Vale Elaine McNamara

Bendigo Community Health Services Life Member.



A strong advocate and community-minded leader, Cr McNamara (then known as Cr Knight) was instrumental in the establishment of the community health centre for Kangaroo Flat and Golden Square.

In 1974, a steering committee conducted a survey which indicated that Kangaroo Flat and Golden Square were significantly disadvantaged in terms of health services.

A submission was successfully put to the then Minister for Health, and temporary premises opened in March, 1975.

Elaine became the centre's first chairperson.

A new permanent building was officially opened by Gough Whitlam in November, 1976.

This centre later came under the umbrella of Bendigo Community Health Services.

We pay tribute to the life of Elaine McNamara and extend condolences to Elaine's family.

Vale Maree Dixon

Bendigo Community Health Services Life Member



Bendigo Community Health Services recognised Maree with a life membership for her significant loyalty as a client, which spanned more than 45 years.

"(Bendigo Community Health Services) are important because they offer all the services that I need," Maree said when she received her Life Membership.

Maree passed away peacefully at home on July 6, 2021. Aged 73 years.

Vale Elaine Ingram

Volunteer

Elaine was a long-time volunteer for the Elmore Social Support Group and BCHS and received a recognition of service in 2015 for 24 years of voluntary service.



After many years of volunteering, Elaine took a step back from volunteering after some health issues but continued with the group as a member.

Elaine will be sadly missed by all.

Recognition and awards

The Bendigo Community Health Services Health Promotion team won the Outstanding Health Promotion category at the 2021 Victorian Health Promotion Awards.

The statewide awards recognise organisations and individuals who are making their communities happier and healthier.

Bendigo Community Health Services was recognised for the 5 Ways to Wellbeing program.

The 5 Ways to Wellbeing project works with key community leaders to deliver mental health promotion in a wide range of settings - including schools, early learning centres, community organisations and workplaces.

The project improves the mental wellbeing of the Bendigo community through the 5 key action areas; Connect, Take Notice, Be Active, Keep Learning and Give.

BCHS Senior Health Promotion and Community Engagement Officer, Siobhan Sullivan, says it's an 'amazing achievement' to be recognised for the project, which has had significant impact.

"The 5 Ways to Wellbeing Program is a collective effort from the health promotion team at BCBS over the past 4 years," she said.

"It has been adapted and strengthened from building great partnerships with other local organisations, schools, and community groups - resulting in a great impact on our community.

"These actions are communicated and shared across multiple initiatives and campaigns to boost mental wellbeing."

BCBS acknowledges this work would not be as rewarding or impactful without our community partners, and the 5 ways network members.

Those partners include: YMCA Bendigo, Women's Health Loddon Mallee, Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre, Kalianna School, Bendigo Loddon Primary Care Partnership, Heathcote Health, City of Greater Bendigo and Loddon Shire Council.



ACHIEVEMENT: Our Health Promotion team was recognised for the 5 Ways to Wellbeing program.



RECOGNITION: Ma Aye Paw is pictured above with Deputy Chair of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Bwe Thay, and Ku Htee, who also works within our Cultural Diversity and Settlement Team.



Victorian Multicultural Commission Victorian Refugee Awards

Congratulations to our Cultural Diversity and Settlement team member Ma Aye Paw, who was named the Young Leader 2022 at the annual Victorian Multicultural Commission Victorian Refugee Awards.

The awards recognise refugee people who have excelled through their study, work, entrepreneurship or volunteering.

Ma Paw is actively involved in representing the Karen community and participating in community events and has been particularly critical in keeping local Karen people informed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ma Paw works across a suite of health and wellbeing projects that support the local Bendigo Karen community.

She is pictured above with Deputy Chair of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Bwe Thay, and Ku Htee, who also works within our Cultural Diversity and Settlement Team.

Ku Htee was the recipient of the 2021 Young Leader award but was not able to attend a ceremony because of Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions.

“When we learn to celebrate and appreciate our differences, we are all given space to thrive.”

“My hope is that as we continue to educate, provide positive visibility and show the world that transition and transgender people are valuable parts of the diversity that exists between all humans, then we can reduce those fears and provide safe places and people to come out to. No-one should have to live in fear.”

Zara Jones' first 40 years were spent being perceived as a man, but in 2017 she came out as transgender – and is now committed to building connections, opportunities and empowerment for the trans and gender diverse community.

As Bendigo celebrated inclusivity and equality during the Bendigo Pride Festival, Zara spoke of how important it is for all people to be seen as individuals, with their own unique qualities and equally deserving of love and respect.

“When trans people are ready to be out in public and start presenting themselves to the world as a gender that differs from that assigned at birth, it can be frightening, not knowing how people will respond,” she said.

“It can be challenging, having to explain to each and every person who questions the change in identity. It can be confronting having to change identification documents, email addresses and anything else with name and gender listed.

“There is a lot of fear surrounding coming out, some of it is real and some of it is perceived fear. Some trans people live with this fear and hide their true identity for many debilitating years.”

Zara says friends, families and workplaces have an important role to play in creating safe spaces for trans people to make their social transition.



COMMITTED: Zara Jones is building connections, opportunities and empowerment for the trans and gender diverse community.

Soon after coming out as transgender, Zara shared her story with her Bendigo Community Health Services colleagues through a workplace presentation, ‘So what if she is trans!’, - a decision she says gave her strength and empowered her to advocate within the broader community.

“My transition had already begun and people in the workplace were noticing small changes and differences. They seemed curious but not confrontational,” she said.

“My immediate colleagues and managers were already providing wonderful support and encouragement so, although somewhat anxious, I made the decision to come out to the organisation by means of sharing my story as part of trans awareness week.

“The attendance to the presentation I made was extremely encouraging. Questions were appropriate and conducive to learning. I felt safe,

supported and encouraged by the responses of colleagues. The emails and acknowledgements I received following the presentation boosted my confidence and I was grateful to be invited to change my email signature, log in details and all the BCHS identity documents.”

Being invited to work on projects such as the anti-stigma campaign provided Zara with “the confidence that BCHS were allies and advocates in the work to create positive attitudes towards difference”.

“Change can be difficult, but when there are very few role models, transition information and community available to guide that change, it becomes so important for friends, family and colleagues to create a safe place to explore that change,” she said.

“There have been times when my transition has been exhausting. Constant misgendering, identity erasure and obvious looking me up and down with disgust were daily confrontations to my mental health.

“To balance the debilitating weight of negative attitudes and experiences, I soaked up the love, support and encouragement of all the positive people in my life. Friends, family, colleagues and even strangers who had positive words of affirmation outweighed the negative experiences and gave me the strength to respond to negativity with measured grace and gentle education which has been instrumental in changing attitudes.”

Changing attitudes means helping others learn to celebrate and appreciate each other’s differences,

Zara says – because even within our own tribes, there is diversity.

“I have lived 40 years perceived as male and now I am experiencing life as a female. I am experiencing the gendered expectations, presumptions and prejudice from two ends of the spectrum. It is important to find your tribe to feel connected and see others like you, but even within the tribe, there are a diverse range of humans,” she said.

“I have some overlapping experiences with other trans women, but I am not like all trans women. I also have

similar experiences to cis women, but I am not like all cis women. Every person within a group of people, is still a person. An individual with their own life experiences, behaviours, skills and dreams.

“Judgements, prejudice and gender stereotypes are all minimising actions that keep us from expressing our individual selves. When we learn to celebrate and appreciate our differences, we are all given space to thrive.”

“Change can be difficult, but when there are very few role models, transition information and community available to guide that change, it becomes so important for friends, family and colleagues to create a safe place to explore that change.”

Being an LGBTIQ+ ally

Maree Dixon works with LGBTIQ+ young people and their families, and says ‘we need to be a more accepting world and accept people for who they are, free of judgement and ridicule’.

“We live in a very diverse time, we are all unique in our own way so we should all be able to live as our authentic selves without being judged. Sometimes people fear what they don’t understand, I feel if everyone took the time to learn, met and spoke to people in the community and learnt about their experiences the world would be more positive for the LGBTIQ+ community,” she said.

“This affected me personally with my daughter, wondering how I can help make her world a

safe and more accepting place. As the HEY Diversity Worker at headspace Bendigo, I work with LGBTIQ+ young people and their families, I understand their struggles and challenges that they face daily and this needs to change.

“We know the mental health issues these young people face due to discrimination, internalised/ external transphobia, homophobia and biphobia, the high rates of death by suicide. It’s up to us as a society to create a more safe and inclusive place so our young people can thrive and be accepted to have a positive and fulfilling life.”

Maree says being a good ally means listening without judgement, advocating for the



community, promoting awareness through educating the wider community, being supportive of LGBTIQ+ rights and defending them against discrimination.

She says allies offer a strong and supportive voice, and know to speak with the community and not over them.

“For me it’s also spending/ volunteering time at events, getting to know your local LGBTIQ+ community. I have met some wonderful people, made many new friends who I actually see as family,” she said.

Our BCHS GLOBE stars

Zara and Maree were both acknowledged at the 2022 GLOBE awards, which recognise and celebrate achievement in Victoria's LGBTIQ+ community each year.

Zara received the award for Transgender Inclusion on behalf of Trans and Gender Diverse Bendigo and Beyond, and was an LGBTIQ Regional and Rural Champion finalist.

Maree was recognised as a finalist in the LGBTIQ Ally of the Year.

Zara says the awards "shine a light on the work being done around the state and allow community members, some of which are isolated and feeling like the world is against them, to see there are people out there passionate about their wellbeing and striving to create a safe place for them to thrive".

"In 2019, I attended the awards as a fresh new trans person finding

my way in the community. I had just started an online group called TGD Bendigo, to try and meet other trans and gender diverse people in my area," she said.

"As I walked into the Globe Awards I was overwhelmed by the energy and passion of the attendees. I felt very small and insignificant in comparison to those in the room achieving so much for the community. As I heard the stories of the finalists and watched the award recipients take the stage, I was filled with encouragement, strength and passion to be visible and proud of the person that was hidden away from the world. I became an empowered activist, determined to change attitudes.

"To stand on that stage and receive the award for Transgender Inclusion on behalf of Trans and Gender Diverse Bendigo and Beyond, two

years after attending the Globe awards, shows the incredible power to thrive, that exists in each of us, when we are encouraged, supported and nurtured to grow. I can only hope that somewhere in the audience, was a human with great potential, who's passion has been ignited as mine was two years ago."

Maree says the GLOBE awards are important to acknowledge the hard and challenging work being done in the community by people such as Zara.

"They are a celebration for the community to come together and celebrate. Additionally, the GLOBE awards show the LGBTIQ+ community that their need for support is recognised and prioritised by so many others evident in the time and resource that are put towards these initiatives."

"My hope is that as we continue to educate, provide positive visibility and show the world that transition and transgender people are valuable parts of the diversity that exist between all humans, then we can reduce those fears and provide safe places for people to come out to. No one should have to live in fear."

Zara Jones

Anti-Stigma campaign

Every day, people are being excluded, shamed and victimised because we haven't taken the time to hear their story.

The BCHS Anti Stigma campaign, launched in December 2021, aims to raise awareness of the impact of stigma.

It highlights the importance of acting without judgement and taking the time to listen and support each other.

Stigma involves assigning certain beliefs, values and judgments at a certain group of people based on assumptions involving a range of myths, prejudices and stereotypes (Sane Australia, 2018).

We encourage you to help change this story and work towards breaking down the barriers of stigma.

The impact of stigma:

- Discrimination
- Reduced life opportunities and increased social inequalities resulting in:
 - social isolation
 - poorer quality housing
 - reduced employment and education
 - poorer mental wellbeing
 - make it harder for people to ask for help

What is stigma?

Stigma happens when social norms endorse negative stereotypes and prejudices, resulting in discrimination against people due to their race, gender, sexual orientation, occupation, social economic status, health condition or disability among others.

What are the 3 types of stigma?

Social Stigma - is the devaluing of an individual or group based on certain characteristics as less than others (Corrigan, 1998; Link & Phelan, 2001, 2006; Hatzenbuehler, Phelan, & Link, 2013)

Self-Stigma - self-stigma happens when a person internalises public stigma and discrimination (Corrigan, 1998; Link & Phelan, 2001, 2006; Hatzenbuehler, Phelan, & Link, 2013)

Structural Stigma - is societal-level conditions and norms that are negatively impact stigmatised individuals or groups. These can be enacted in public policy (national and local laws and policies), reduce public funding allocations to certain programs and services, and result in lower wages being paid for certain occupations. (Stang & al, 2019)(Heijnders M, 2006; 11 (3): 353-63).

Everyone has a role to play when it comes to creating a healthy community environment.

We encourage you to help change this story and work towards breaking down the barriers of stigma.

Here are some tips on how our community can help change the story and reduce stigma:

- If you hear negative stereotypes or misinformation, speak up and defend it. Set the record straight.
- Treat all people with respect and dignity. Don't judge, label or discriminate.
- Be mindful of the words you use, avoid using insensitive and hurtful words.
- And if you feel comfortable, tell your story. You can choose what and how much you reveal, but the more people who know someone experiencing stigma the greater chance of reducing the stigma.
(Victoria State Government, 2020; Healthdirect 2021)
- Unite together with the hashtag #iamlistening and contribute to the reduction in negative stereotypes and harmful impact of stigma.

Together, we can improve health and wellbeing and reduce stigma in our community.

We extend our thanks to those who have participated and invested their time into the making of the Anti-Stigma campaign:

Ideas Agency - We would like to thank Ideas Agency for bringing our vision to life.

Community led working group - The Anti Stigma Campaign would not have been possible without our community led working group. We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to those involved. The working group steered the concept and content of the Anti Stigma Campaign and their involvement has led to the development of a powerful campaign to raise awareness and spread kindness within our community.

If any of this information has caused you distress please reach out to Lifeline on 13 11 14 for immediate counselling assistance.

You can watch the campaign video here:



Forensic Mental Health

The FMHiCH program was introduced in 2018 following an incident in the Bourke Street Mall in Melbourne.

Bendigo was one of a number of selected areas chosen to participate in the four-year trial. While the trial is now over, the program is ongoing.

The aim was for adults leaving the prison system or on community correction orders (CCOs) with a mental health assessment and /or treatment condition to be able to access mental health services in a timelier and more affordable manner.

It was a way to improve communications between mental health services and the justice system regarding health and safety of the client and the community.

The Bendigo team consists of four clinicians - one mental health nurse and three social workers. Referrals are only made by corrections or psychiatric services. They can also present with significant social issues which include homelessness,

estranged from family, and loved ones, trauma background, alcohol or drug misuse, poverty, limited employment opportunities and no license.

They are often geographically isolated due to cheaper rent in more remote rural settings.

Issues arise with clients who are mandated to have therapeutic treatment, as research indicates that therapy works best when a client wants to change and chooses to seek treatment. Therefore, we have around 40% of our clients that disengage.

Since commencing service in February 2019, we have been referred 653 clients, with 122 in 2019, 205 in 2020, 229 in 2021 and so far, 97 for 2022. They vary between 18 and 80 years of age, with the two greatest age groups being 18-25 (140), and 31-35 (119).

The client group remains the same - they present with depression, anxiety, ADHD, ASD, a history of

trauma, AOD issues and comorbidity. There are a small number of clients who have schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, and many with personality traits and learning disorders or acquired brain injury. Grief and loss is common amongst this cohort, along with PTSD and childhood trauma by abuse or neglect. They lack pro social peers, meaningful daily activities and often have physical health issues, poor dental health, family violence or AOD issues.

We work collaboratively with CCS, child protection, Centre for Non-Violence, BDAC, GPs, public mental health, Haven, Anglicare, and psychiatrists in support of the client.

Our clients are often discriminated against due to having a criminal record. Because the clients are mandated to have mental health treatment, they are often ambivalent to engage with services.

Since COVID and lockdown periods, we have had more success with the clients on the telephone instead of face to face.

Did you know?

More than 60% of BCHS clients reside in less affluent postcodes

BCHS has **strongest engagement** with 20-40 year olds





3210

 pre-loved coats

 and other items

Bendigo Community Coat Drive

Bendigo was AMAZING! Again.

In four weeks, people across Greater Bendigo donated more coats than ever to our annual Community Coat Drive.

Before Covid put a pause on donations of pre-loved coats and other items, our 2020 tally was 2700. This year, it's 3210!

That's 3210 items that helped keep others warm this winter.

Coats were available at our Central Bendigo (Hargreaves Street), Kangaroo Flat and Eaglehawk sites - and at many local neighbourhood houses.

We saw a huge demand for coats, blankets and other items of clothing - meaning there are many in our community finding things difficult this year.

A huge thank you to the awesome team at Pristine Drycleaners for cleaning every one of the 3210 items donated. That is an incredible effort.



Supporting Karen Families to Access Family Support

The Family Services team at BCHS offers services to children and families – including from the Karen community. Family Services works with families to achieve the goals that are important to them, and that support the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Family Services also supports families to access other services, build community connections and provides parenting education and resources.

Through our work with Karen families, we identified an opportunity for improvement. We recognised that the language and cultural barriers were impacting on how effectively

our team was communicating with Karen families about the services on offer and supporting families to really understand the important issues of privacy, informed consent to collect, store and share their personal information and family member's rights and responsibilities as service recipients.

The Family Services team connected with our colleagues in the Refugee and Cultural Diversity team at BCHS to brainstorm some ideas and develop together a resource that could support effective communication. Building on what we know has worked, and on

feedback from Karen community members, we decided that a short video in Karen language would be the most helpful tool to develop.

Together we developed a script for the video that was reviewed and edited by Karen staff members to ensure that the concepts and information was clear and culturally appropriate. We then welcomed staff members into the cast and crew roles for the video, and are proud to be near ready to launch the resource.

Staff involved: Jodie Beevers, Megan Staley, Ku Htee, Ta Mue, Ta Hay, Kaye Graves, Abbie Lockwood, Julie Cairns.

Karen Youth Sports Inclusion Project

Encouraging young people to engage in sport has been a focus of our Settlement Services Team during the past year.

The Bendigo Community Health Services Karen Youth Sports Inclusion Project has drawn on the insights of a group of young Karen people who formed an advisory group, to explore ways to bring people together.

A number of events were held, including bowling and badminton 'Come and Try' sessions, and several young people registered to play soccer with local clubs.

It was decided a volleyball competition would bring community together through friendly competition and encourage young people to participate more in local sporting clubs and competitions.

More than 200 people participated in this event, including Karen community members, local residents in the area where the event was held, local schoolteachers - as well as the owner of a local company who employs many Karen staff.

Bendigo Community Health Services livestreamed the competition to attract more community members,

and local community organisations such as Karen Organisation of Bendigo and Karen Bendigo Youth Network also promoted the event during the day by posting the event activities on their social media platforms.

Karen Youth Sports Inclusion Project worker, Nido, says there are many positives to participating in team sports.

"Sport, like music and food, speaks every language - and like thousands of migrants before them, the Karen love sport too," he said.

A sports inclusion plan was developed to:

Encourage more girls to get involved in sports

Organise an inclusive sport event where boys and girls can play together

Work together with sports clubs to organise small clinics during school holidays

Assist young people who want to register to play sports in the clubs

Help apply for the \$200 sporting participation voucher for those families who are eligible



BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER: More than 200 young people participated in the volleyball competition.



CONNECTING: Karen Youth Sports Inclusion Project worker, Nido, says there are many positives to participating in team sports.

“If you played sport as a young person, you would know how positive it can be. The friends you make, the values you learn and the camaraderie of being in a team.

“These are features that make participating in sports a protective factor for so many.”

Nido says this is one of the critical aims of the project.

“The project is connecting people to sporting clubs through recreation, competition, umpiring or volunteering,” he said.

“Being physical, being there for teammates, and having fun; that is the name of our game.”

The project also provided cultural awareness opportunities to local sporting clubs, to increase their knowledge and understanding about our region’s growing Karen population.

In the pre-survey, 50 per cent of Karen working group attendees reported they felt connected to their community

In the post-survey all of the Karen working group attendees reported feelings of increased connection to their community.

They reported this was because they were engaged in the co-design workshops and had

opportunities to work with other members. They then were able to help young people to engage in the experiences of being part of a sports club.

They also were able to discuss the benefits of the social aspects of sport and competitions.



Feedback from our advisory group:

“Playing sport is good for health, physically and mentally”.

“Sport is an international language, and it makes community stronger. It enhances teamwork and skills development”.

“Protective factor = stop people from using unbeneficial stuff like drugs, alcohol or online internet. Development during youth is very important”.

“I like to see more girls participate in sports”.

“I would like to see older people get involved too, as well as people with disability if it’s possible”.

Health Promotion

Our Health Promotion team is passionate about improving health and wellbeing in the community.

The team offers community education sessions for schools, workplaces, community groups and sporting clubs on a range of topics, including Sexual and Reproductive Health, Physical Activity, Positive Mental Wellbeing, Healthy Eating and Oral Health, Women's Health, Alcohol and Tobacco and COVID-19 safe practices

Some of the projects focused on during 2021-22, include:

Healthy Eating

Increasing healthy eating is a key priority for the Health Promotion Team. We target healthy eating across the lifespan, from early years to adulthood. The key programs and initiatives implemented to improve access to healthier food and drinks and promote healthy eating and oral health include:

Early Years

- The **INFANT (Infant Feeding, Active Play and Nutrition) Program** was established in partnership with City of Greater Bendigo Maternal Child Health to provide interactive sessions on healthy eating and active play at key ages of 3, 6, 9 & 12 months; 18 sessions to 151 parents were provided.
- 29 early childhood services were supported through the Dental Health Services Victoria, **Smiles 4 Miles program**. 10 Centres were Healthy Eating/Active Play/Oral Health policy endorsed, and four early childhood services (who provide food) had their menus assessed and approved by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service. 27 educators across early childhood services were provided with training.
- Three key messages: eat well, clean well and drink well are promoted.
- Four Early Childhood Services completed the Healthy Eating and Oral Health Benchmark in the **Achievement Program**, while a further four early childhood services completed the overall Achievement Program achieving all six Health Priority Areas: Healthy Eating & Oral Health, Physical Activity & Movement, Tobacco, Alcohol & Other Drugs, Sun Protection, Safe Environments and Mental Health & Wellbeing.

Youth & Schools

- In collaboration with the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation – Healthy Kids Advisor, the Health Promotion team has started implementing the new state-wide initiative **Vic Kids Eat Well**, with two key health promoters trained and committed to support schools, Outside of School Hours Clubs and sporting clubs. Seven schools, seven Outside of School Hours Clubs and three sporting clubs have registered with the program across Greater Bendigo.

Adults & Workplaces

- BCHS partnered with the City of Greater Bendigo, to develop the **Bendigo Healthy Catering Guide** as a strategy to support workplaces in achieving the healthy eating benchmark for the Achievement Program. Five caterers have successfully been assessed and approved by Healthy Eating Advisory Service.
- BCHS reviewed and endorsed our **Healthy Eating Policy**, approved by Healthy Eating Advisory Service, bringing their internal processes in line with the Healthy choices policy directive for public hospitals and health services.
- One workplace was supported to achieve the **Health Eating benchmark in the Achievement Program**. AFS and Associates implemented a Healthy Eating policy which formalised their practices of prioritising green choices for food and drink over red choices.
- **Jamie Ministry of Food program**: Five weekly sessions at Fork in the Road with six participants. The project was funded by Healthy Heart of Victoria and aimed to help participants learn basic, healthy cooking skills in a friendly, supportive and fun environment. The hands-on cooking classes demonstrated how easy and affordable it can be to make simple and nutritious meals from scratch using simple ingredients which people may already have in their pantry.

Other programs and initiatives that were implemented across 2021-2022 include:

- **LOVE BiTES** – respectful relationship program delivered to Bendigo Flexible Learning Options
- **Walk to School Month Initiative** in partnership with City of Greater Bendigo – 4134 walks were completed by students across four schools during November, 2021.
- **Dogs Connect** – continued to support funding for local schools to implement Dogs Connect. Currently 13 schools implement Dogs Connect across Bendigo.
- **FRIENDS Resilience Program** – delivered FRIENDS Adult Resilience to Kalianna Year 11 VCAL cohort and My FRIENDS Youth to Year 7 & 8 cohort at Rochester Secondary College. 14 teachers and staff were trained to facilitate FRIENDS program.
- **Internal Tobacco Intervention Project** – internal policy review and capacity building for primary care services.
- **Sponsored the Unheard Film Festival** by Deaf Hub Bendigo.
- **5 Ways to Wellbeing** – continued to expand and coordinate 5 Ways to Wellbeing Campaign across Greater Bendigo. Workshops delivered to local schools, Women’s Art Project implemented in partnership with Women’s Health Loddon Mallee, 5 Ways October Action Calendar aligning with Mental Health Month with various social media and initiatives such as hosting a Smiling Mind Resilience Workshop. The 5 Ways to Wellbeing Network continues to enable strong collaborations and connections for members to implement the 5 Ways to Wellbeing. The program had reach of over 20,000 including both online and face to face campaign and initiatives.
- **Supply Monitoring** – 30 alcohol retailers were audited, 63 per cent of those audited asked for ID before selling alcohol to a person perceived to be under 25 whilst 40 per cent sold alcohol without asking for ID.
- **Suicide Prevention Awareness Network** – supported SPAN with their annual Suicide Awareness Walk



HEALTH PROMOTION: Our team is passionate about improving health and wellbeing in the community.

To support the October Action Calendar a workshop by Smiling Mind was organised by BCHS.

Approximately 70 participants joined the virtual workshop with Smiling Mind, representing a range of different organisations in Greater Bendigo and wider Victoria. Feedback was highly positive as indicated in community feedback, including:

“This was an excellent workshop - presenter was knowledgeable and a very good communicator. Thank you for the opportunity.”

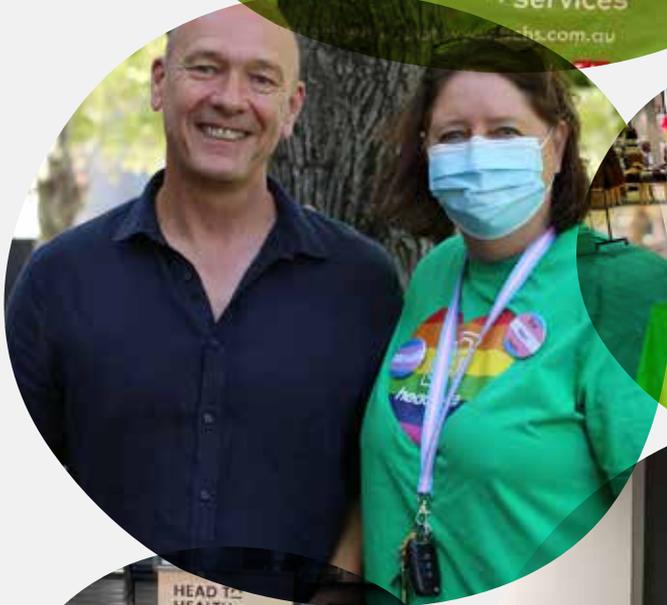
“Thank you for the opportunity to share in this experience. Personal growth is important and too often we don’t consider our own inner needs.”

The BCHS Health Promotion Team also attended (online or in person):

- Bendigo Pride Festival
- Heathcote Community Smiles Day
- Bendigo La Trobe University O-Week
- Lansell Square Community Days
- Bunnings – Women’s Health Day
- Kangaroo Flat Family Day
- Weeroona College – Year 7 Spectacular
- Catherine McAuley College – Career Expo
- Eaglehawk Dahlia and Arts Festival
- Victoria Scout Quest
- The Good Guys Bendigo – Wellbeing talk with headspace
- Marist College – Year 9 Wellbeing Day
- Covid-19 Vaccine and BCHS services talks at Bendigo Library and Long Gully Neighbourhood Centre
- Online Puberty Session – Camp Hill Primary School
- Vision Australia – Women’s Health Talk
- Mental Health and Resilience – Catherine McAuley College
- Consent Education – Rochester Secondary College
- Sexual and reproductive health talk – Lockington Neighbourhood Centre
- Puberty Education – Quarry Hill Primary School



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: You will often find our Health Promotion team at community events across Bendigo.





WOMEN'S RESILIENCE: *Beyond Her Lens* captured how women have drawn on their strengths during the pandemic.

Beyond Her Lens: Stories of Resilience

A photographic exhibition exploring women's resilience through the pandemic, *Beyond Her Lens* presented an insightful and resonant picture of women in Bendigo and their response to an unprecedented global crisis.

Fifteen women turned the camera on themselves, their families, and their neighbourhoods, sharing intimate moments of their lives in Bendigo during a pandemic.

This photographic exhibition explored how local women have drawn on their strength and resilience, as the impact of COVID unfolds.

Photographers in the series come from various levels of skill and experience behind the lens, with most images captured on smartphones. The exhibition was part of a series of community projects across the Loddon Mallee to address women's wellbeing and connectedness throughout the pandemic.

Women in the Pandemic:

The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women has been a common theme through COVID-related commentary. The pandemic has both magnified and exacerbated deep pre-existing, structural gendered inequalities. The impacts for women will be long-lasting, potentially resulting in long-term disadvantage and economic insecurity.

Women have been more likely to be affected by job losses and to suffer severe financial impacts, resulting in significant consequences for their pay and economic security.

Women have also shouldered the burden of increased household demands, including caring for children because of school closures, caring for unwell family members and managing increased levels of anxiety in young people.

The heightened risk of family violence during the pandemic has been well documented. Globally, evidence suggests that family violence, perpetrated by men against women, is exacerbated during emergency situations. Family violence data from 2020 and 2021 in Victoria confirms this, as does data across other regions.

Personal stories can be incredibly powerful in communicating ideas, shifting attitudes, and changing systems. By sharing these local perspectives, BCHS and Women's Health Loddon Mallee hoped to keep the conversation going so we can work together to advance gender equity and ensure women's expertise, knowledge and experiences are valued in emergency planning and response.

About the Project:

The project was a collaboration between Bendigo Community Health Services and Women's Health Loddon Mallee, made possible with support from the Victorian State Government.

"Thank you for including me, greatly appreciated"

"It was a lovely way to meet new people and an opportunity learn a new hobby"

The Five Ways to Wellbeing

Each photo series explored one or more of the 5 principles for personal wellbeing.

Five Ways to Wellbeing is a framework that sets out simple actions to improve personal wellbeing, backed by extensive international research. The principles of wellbeing include connect, give, keep learning, be active, and take notice.

Connect – Having friends and family to connect with is important for maintaining mental health and wellbeing. You could go for a walk with a friend, meet new people at a community event or spend time at home with your family. Call or message someone you have not spoken to in a while to reconnect.

Keep Learning – Keeping your brain active and learning new things can help to boost your self-confidence, provide you with new coping skills and knowledge and even help to give more meaning and purpose in your

life. You could try learning a new skill or exploring a new hobby, listen to a podcast about a topic of interest or read a book you have been meaning to get on to.

Take Notice – Slowing down can help you to learn self-awareness, reduce negative thoughts and maintain a level of calmness. Take the time to slow down, be aware of your surroundings and pay attention to your thoughts and feelings. Some pathways that may be helpful for you to connect with yourself and the present moment can be yoga or meditation, taking a stroll outdoors, or just going outside and feeling the sun or the breeze on your skin.

Be Active – When you exercise, your body releases chemicals called endorphins. These endorphins interact with the receptors in your brain and trigger a positive feeling.

There are many ways you can stay active. Go for a walk or run, do yoga, jump on your skateboard or bicycle, get out in the garden. Do what feels right for you.

Give – Giving to others can have an overwhelmingly positive effect on your personal wellbeing. You do not have to spend money to give. Generosity can be as simple as taking the time to check in with a friend or offering your seat to someone on public transport. If you take some time to practice empathy and identify ways you can improve the lives of those around you, everyone will reap the benefits. If you have spare time you can volunteer in your community. Try contacting a local organisation that you support and see if your skills can be utilised there. This might be a local support service, your local community radio station, an opportunity shop.



5 WAYS TO WELLBEING: The exhibition encouraged women to focus on the five principles for wellbeing.

Medical Practice, GPs in Schools and Sexual & Reproductive Health Services

During the past financial year, our Medical Practice, Sexual and Reproductive Health Services and GPs in Schools have delivered a range of programs to better respond to the needs of our community.

They include:



COVID positive virtual home monitoring and face-to-face home assessment and monitoring care pathways – In collaboration with local health services, Murray Primary Health Network developed a low risk COVID-19 monitoring support service. BCHS delivered this service in partnership with the PHN for in home monitoring via face-to-face or telehealth support.



COVID-19 vaccination clinics – BCHS medical practice delivered approximately 8900 AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccinations throughout the pandemic. Our Eaglehawk site held vaccination clinics and all staff involved worked hard in delivering this service while ensuring they were up to date with the changing guidelines and regulations associated with the COVID-19 vaccination program.



Influenza vaccination program – BCHS medical practice participated in the Victorian Government initiative for free influenza vaccinations from June 1 – July 10, 2022. BCHS conducted 14+ clinics over this period to offer free influenza vaccinations to the Bendigo community.



Targeted case management activities for COVID-19 vaccination initiative – BCHS medical practice delivered a comprehensive project to improve vaccination rates amongst vaccine hesitant families with young children and people engaged in the justice system.



Skin cancer recall project – BCHS doctors participated in two training sessions on skin cancer screening, treatment and use of optimal care pathways. This is part of a pilot project managed by the BCHS Health Promotion Team.



Tobacco Intervention Project – GPs completing QUIT smoking cessation advice training and tobacco intervention sessions: We will see an increase in discussions about smoking and intervention within GP consultations, along with appropriate referrals to the QUIT program.

“My doctor Dr Singh was so caring and concerned for me. I cannot express my thoughts and feelings. He saved my life and rang me several times to see how I was progressing. The staff that work at this clinic are so caring - Kim & Maree have been amazing to me and I cannot thank them enough.”



Continuing professional development in association with family planning Victoria, with training courses offered for doctors and nurses.



Initiated a new evening community diabetes clinic through the assistance of Dr Jaskarandip Singh and diabetic educator Debra butcher.



Extended GP consultation hours on Tuesday evenings at our Eaglehawk clinic to allow better access for BCHS clients after hours.



The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners medical registrar program continues with an extended skills in sexual and reproductive health post based in central Bendigo and general registrar post based at Eaglehawk.



Extended outreach services to now include access for primary school children at both St Arnaud and Wedderburn sites (Wedderburn P-12) has been highlighted in PHN national promotional materials on doctors in schools program.

Thank you, Bendigo

In March, 2022, BCHS launched our first television advertisement - Thank you, Bendigo!

We wanted to say thank you to everyone across Bendigo who rolled up a sleeve for their COVID-19 vaccination – while encouraging the remainder of the community to book their vaccination and join #jabdome

A special thank you to our staff involved in the filming and to The Viz for producing our ad.



You can watch the ad here:



Alcohol and Other Drug Services Team

The Alcohol and Other Drug Services Team supports clients requiring a range of treatment, support and education related to their use of alcohol and other drugs (AOD).

The team supports clients along the continuum of AOD use from active using to seeking access to stop their use. The focus of the team is to provide seamless treatment and support pathways, coordinated service and a range of information and education interventions relating to harm reduction

The team used Covid-19 restrictions and the pandemic to re-think the way we support clients on a daily basis.

Having seen positive outcomes, the team has decided to retain some of those changes.

Our practitioners, including counsellors and care recovery co-ordination staff were able to make the quick change to providing telehealth to their clients. This meant that we were able to assist other agencies throughout Victoria who were having staff issues, by taking clients from outside our catchment area.

We started offering appointments outside of normal working hours to support those that required this option.

We found this is a barrier to treatment that we have broken down - and will retain this option for those clients who work or have childcare restrictions, for example.

We are now back to providing face-to-face service or via telehealth, giving clients the option of their contact method.

'You saved my life'

'I feel that I am understood and not being judged'

CONNECT

bendigo
Community Health
services

**“
We want people to know
there is support, and you
will be in a very safe space.**

**SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND FRIENDS
OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING ADDICTION**

We were very lucky to employ an AOD Karen CRC Practitioner who provided support, treatment options and assessment for our Karen Community in Bendigo.

We were also lucky to be chosen to be part of the Telstra – Remaining Connected Program, which meant we received some phones and tablets we could give to clients to keep them connected during lockdown. Telstra paid for all data use during an 18-month period.

Family Drug Support continues to be offered as a phone service. Whilst face-to-face was not an option, the families and carers found this a supportive way of keeping contact with their practitioners.

The 'Connect Group' for friends and families of people with experiencing substance abuse or addiction was on hold during the 'lockdown' phase of the pandemic. As soon as restrictions were eased, we were again able to offer the group from Fork in the Road at our Central site, on a weekly basis. We also had members joining online due to travel issues.

This has been a very positive program for those involved with feedback such as 'you saved my life', 'I feel that I am understood and not being judged', being received from the family members.

The group is known as a safe space for the families, where they are able to discuss issues they feel they are not able to discuss with others due to the shame and guilt attached to having a loved one with AOD issues.

Our Needle Syringe Program has been ongoing during restrictions with policies and procedures put in place to provide safety to the outreach team.

The NSP team provides sterile injecting equipment and disposal services within a harm minimisation and health promotion framework to people across the City of Greater Bendigo.

The program delivers information and education covering a range of public health and harm reduction issues including safer using practices, identifying and responding to high risk injecting practices, appropriate disposal of injecting equipment, safe sex practice and prevention of blood borne virus (BBV) and sexually transmitted infections (STI).

We were funded to deliver two Syringe Dispensing Units to support clients to have access to safe equipment on a 24hr basis. The machines have been widely used and offer clients an autonomous method of collection.

Pharmacotherapy Program

The Pharmacotherapy Program is a specialist clinical service that supports clients to access Pharmacotherapy treatment (Buprenorphine and Methadone). The program provides assessment, support, information and coordinated care for people requiring alternate pharmacotherapy for the treatment of opiate dependence.

Opioid dependence is a complex health condition that can cause significant harms that impact people from all walks of life – not only injecting drug users but also people who become addicted to pain relievers through a range of different circumstances.

Opiate use can include substances as heroin, morphine, codeine, endone and oxycodone. Opioid dependence can occur when the use of the substances increases, and the

tolerance of the substance occurs that then results in withdrawal symptoms if use ceases.

A significant breakthrough in Pharmacotherapy is the introduction of LAIB as a treatment. LAIB are long-acting Buprenorphine depot preparations that are injected subcutaneously and provide patients with a sustained release of Buprenorphine for the duration of the depot preparation.

Currently, two LAIB products are available for the Australian market. They differ in their formulations, administration and pharmacology. The two products available are Buvidal and Sublocade. Buvidal formulations allow for weekly or monthly dosing frequency. Sublocade formulations allow for monthly dosing only.

Potential benefits of LAIB treatment include:

- Greater convenience for patients in that they will not have to attend dosing sites (pharmacies, clinics) on a frequent basis for supervised dosing
- Reduced treatment costs
- Greater medication adherence, retention in treatment, and enhanced treatment outcomes for some patients who struggle to attend regularly for dosing
- Less risk of diversion and non-medical use of the medication, enhancing community safety.

175 patients on the Pharmacotherapy Program (38 more than last year)

87 patients - Methadone

35 patients - Suboxone

53 patients - Long Acting Injectable Buprenorphine (LAIB)

At the end of June, 2022

headspace Bendigo

headspace Bendigo is operated by Bendigo Community Health Services and funded by the Australian Government Department of Health (administered by Murray Primary Health Network).

The Bendigo centre is actively engaged in the local community, including the following key projects:

R U OK Day

R U OK Day 2021 was celebrated a little different this year due to COVID-19 restrictions. In previous years we would acknowledge the day with a combined information stall with BCHS at Bendigo Market Place to reach out to as many community members as possible. To ensure we were still engaging with our community it was the perfect opportunity to launch the SPAN (Suicide Prevention Awareness Network-Central Victoria) Crisis Card resource which was funded by the SPAN Network.

The Crisis Card is a pocket card and poster resource that outlines the names and numbers of Bendigo and National services that can assist a young person, their friends, or family during a crisis.

We know the uncertainty around whom to seek support from can be confusing during a crisis, so this resource aims to provide immediate support and guidance, with current, up-to-date services that will help in a time of need.

The resource enables you to scan the QR code at the bottom of the resource and save the digital version of the poster onto your phone by screenshotting the image, enabling you to have your own digital copy that you can easily access and utilise if you ever find yourself, or a friend experiencing a crisis.

The Crisis Card was developed collaboratively by headspace Bendigo, Anglicare Victoria, Bendigo Community Health Services, Catherine McAuley College and Bendigo Foodshare.

Haymes Paint Helping Hand Competition

headspace Bendigo submitted an entry into the Haymes Paint Helping Hand Competition to help us give our centre a makeover and create a more inviting and inspiring space for our team members, young people in our community and their family and friends to enjoy.

We chose the office spaces at the rear of our centre, to receive a helping hand to transform the space from bland to beautiful. Our courtyard area was also part of the plan to provide a relaxing and peaceful space for our team to enjoy the outdoors while taking a break.

We were very lucky to be shortlisted as one of three finalists for the Haymes Paint Shop Bendigo Helping Hand Project. The community were asked to vote for headspace Bendigo – and, we won!

We would like to thank Haymes Paint Shop Bendigo and Haymes Paint Australia for providing such a wonderful community initiative to support headspace Bendigo, and everyone who supported headspace Bendigo and voted for us.

We worked with our Youth Ambassadors and team members to plan and design an engaging and positive space for everyone to enjoy.

Comments from social media.

This is amazing!!! So happy that an organisation that gives so much back to the community is receiving a well deserved fresh look!! So excited to see the final product

Such a wonderful, supportive, positive organisation. You deserve all the accolades you get

ENGAGED: headspace Bendigo is actively involved in the local community.



headspace Day 2021

headspace day 2021 was also a little different this year due to COVID-19 restrictions.

This year, while some schools were closed due to COVID-19 restrictions we were able to attend six country schools across our region and celebrate headspace Day with information stalls, activities, resources and facts sheets.

The theme for the day was "Small Steps Start Big Things" with each school receiving "headspace Day Packs" filled with resources and information. Each school participated in creating positive messages on a large canvas to showcase at their school.

We didn't want schools in Bendigo to miss out on the wonderful resources so we teamed up with Anglicare "Keep In Touch Van" and distributed care packs to 15 schools throughout Bendigo.

The SPAN crisis resources were also distributed to make sure critical information was available to students during some very uncertain times.

GRATEFUL: headspace Bendigo enjoys significant support from across our region.

The Push Up Challenge 2021

headspace Bendigo participated in the national 'Push-Up Challenge 2021' in collaboration with headspace National. headspace Bendigo team members and Youth Ambassadors came together to complete the challenge of completing 3318 push ups over three weeks to highlight the number of people who died by suicide in Australia in 2019.

We were overwhelmed with the support of our community, jumping on board to create their own individual teams to raise funds for our centre to support us to provide more workshops and programs to support the young people in our community with their mental health and wellbeing.

The challenge encouraged people to get fit, have fun, learn about mental health and fundraise for the cause all at the same time.

Our Youth Ambassador Jed Zimmer was instrumental in creating awareness during the challenge. He raised funds for headspace Bendigo while setting himself a challenge to walk the O'Keefe Rail Trail in one day and complete 3318 push-ups along the way.

Community Support and acknowledgement.

We are overwhelmed with the generous support of our community with ongoing donations and offers of assistance to our centre.

headspace Bendigo was the winner of the "Your Local Matters Jar" with Grilled Bendigo nominated by community members.

To celebrate international Doughnut Day, Walkers Doughnuts continued the tradition of Chicago's Salvation Army to help those in need during the great depression and WW1 by supporting workplaces that have assisted our community in their time of need.

We were very touched by the beautiful words of a young person who nominated headspace Bendigo to win in the Bendigo region.

They wrote:

"headspace Bendigo, they deserve to win the doughnuts. They are helping the youth of Bendigo and surrounding areas control their mental health. I should know but they have saved me from the darkest places. Truly deserve this"

50 delicious doughnuts were delivered to our very appreciative team.

Over the past 12 months we have been continuously supported by the team at Epsom Bunnings. They have supported us to provide furnishings, plants and materials for our courtyard space along with providing vouchers to help beautify our car park area with plants to help celebrate World Social worker day.

The Commonwealth Bank donated \$500 to our centre and Bronte Spicer donated \$120 from the sale of her book.





CONNECTION: You will often see our headspace Bendigo team at sporting events, schools or local businesses.

Events and presentations

We have continued to connect with our community by attending events and presenting to schools, sporting clubs, local services and businesses.

We have attended a number of events on behalf of and in collaboration with BCHS, including:

- NAIDOC Week BDAC Family fun day,
- Heathcote Family Day,
- Kangaroo Flat Family Fun Day,
- Lansell square Community Connection information stalls, and
- Bendigo Tafe Careers Expo.

headspace Bendigo Youth Ambassadors

We are very fortunate to have a group of young people who volunteer their time and are passionate about advocating for youth mental health. They are wanting to create change in our community while engaging in youth and community events.

They are interested in youth leadership, project planning and being a voice for the young people in our community.

Our Youth Ambassadors have completed annual building interior-exterior audit reports and made recommendations to make sure our centre is more youth friendly, inviting and engaging.

They have been included in the process for the purchase of new

furniture, artwork and plants for our clinical rooms and have been part of the interview panels when interviewing new staff for our centre.

They volunteer their time to attend our fortnightly meetings receiving the opportunity to chair and scribe for the meetings.

A Youth Ambassador presents their report at our consortia meetings to give the consortia partners a chance to hear of the work they have been doing to support our centre.

The consortia partners are Bendigo Community Health Services, Bendigo Health, Haven; Home Safe, Bendigo District Aboriginal Cooperative, Access Australia Group, Anglicare Victoria, YSAS and Youth Law.

Zac Gittins, Youth ambassador

“Hi, my name is Zac Gittins. I joined the Youth Reference Group as a way to help the youth demographic here in The City of Greater Bendigo. I wanted to make a change, and if not make a change, then I wanted to at least be a voice or helping hand in the making of changes. Raising mental health awareness and advocating for bettering your mental health is a must for me, because I know that poor mental health effects your entire life, and a large portion of people have unresolved trauma that affects them, whether they know it or not. Through my advocacy and raising awareness, I hope that others might resonate with what I say, or perhaps become aware of their own traumas through hearing me speak, so they then can make the necessary changes - like seeking help from mental health professionals, which will in turn, slowly better their lifestyles. This will start their journey in becoming happier, healthier, increasing the overall quality of their life, having healthier relationships with their peers and breaking the cycle through their lineage down. Becoming healthy minded is more than just seeing a counsellor, it is changing your entire life, your children’s lives and their children after them.”

Physical Activity Program

In mid-March 2020, all group-based exercise sessions ceased due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, group-based participants were offered individualised home exercise programs and received regular phone calls to check-in and offer support. Active Living Program newsletters and video-based exercise sessions were also incorporated to support participants and keep them motivated and active during the pandemic.

The Active Living Program returned to face-to-face strength and conditioning group sessions at the end of March, 2021. As part of the program's evaluation and continuous improvement processes, an annual client satisfaction survey was provided to participants in June, 2021.

Once the program returned to face-to-face group-based exercise sessions, participants reported in the survey that the most positive aspects of the program included motivation, social interaction and support from

exercise physiologists, Ashleigh and Joel. Additionally, being able to exercise at a physical location meant the participants had support from the exercise physiologists for correct exercise technique, access to more equipment, and consistency.

The Active Living Program overall has reported very positive client experience and satisfaction. The program demonstrated a beneficial impact on participants mental health and wellbeing, particularly staying connected with others in the community.

Active Living in Bendigo, Victoria - A Case Study

Staying fit and healthy as we age is made easier and more fun by participating in the "Active Living" program operated by Bendigo Community Health Services, for people in the 60+ age group who may suffer chronic conditions like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, arthritis, osteoporosis, depression or cancer. Their strategies use physical activity and behaviour change to help prevent and manage injuries and limit the impact of age on strength, co-ordination, flexibility, balance, mobility, independence and overall wellbeing.

I have been attending the Active Living program twice a week for nearly 6 years. My wife has also been attending for 9 years. We are both extremely happy with enormous improvements in our fitness levels and general wellbeing as a result.

Small exercise groups of up to 12 people, focusing on strength and conditioning, are conducted by accredited Exercise Physiologists Ashleigh and Joel, who interview and assess each participant's medical history, current and pre-existing injuries and goals and then write individual exercise programs to achieve these goals safely. Formal reviews are carried out approximately every 12 weeks, when new programs are written, as well as constant monitoring of progress during classes, where exercises can be changed or modified according to need.

We have a variety of exercise equipment and weights to work with, in a variety of different ways. Some examples are Cross Trainer/Elliptical Trainer, Wall Squat with Ball, Knee Extension/Knee Curl (both with ankle weights), Planking, Bridge on Fitball, Single Arm

Row with Weight, Double Biceps Curl with Weights and Squats on the Bosu.

During Covid lockdowns over the last 2 years (numerous in Victoria!), Ashleigh and Joel stayed in touch with all Active Living participants by contacting us regularly to talk through our exercising at home, writing programs to follow at home, sending out regular newsletters with encouraging ideas and tips, and making some easy exercise videos we could join in using our computers. While this was really useful and helped keep our momentum up, returning to our formal class groups was greeted with enthusiasm and relief!

I have always been a fairly active person, carrying out home maintenance and gardening/landscaping around the house and walking my dog several times a day but these activities don't fully cater for overall physical wellbeing that a focussed program such as this is doing. My core strength, balance and general strength have certainly improved.

In addition to the benefits outlined above, there is also the informal socialisation that takes place, with quite a lot of banter, teasing and support within the groups. After class, there are also informal coffee meetings that further promote friendship between some participants.

If you're interested in improving your health and wellbeing in this way, check out your local community health services to see if they run similar programs, I highly recommend them for everyone dealing with the ageing process.

Podiatry

In April, 2022, the Senior Leader of Allied Health and Physical Activity reviewed the previous 14 months of nail surgeries that had been completed by the podiatry team to assess success rates and impact on service demand.

Data was collected from January, 2021, to March, 2022, with 19 individual nail surgeries completed. All nail surgeries were undertaken by two AHPRA registered podiatrists at either Kangaroo Flat or Eaglehawk sites.

Collation of data indicated our podiatrists successfully implemented a surgical technique that was consistent with national standards. As a result, there was very low post-operative infection.

Recommendations were made based on the findings. During the data collection period, the team discussed developing a client dressing information post-surgery handout, a Plan Do Study Act initiative.

The team wanted to ensure clients were provided with the best practice after-care information following a nail surgery procedure and the content was for all levels of health literacy.

A podiatrist completed a literature review regarding after care for nail surgeries and collated the information. In consultation with the podiatry team the content of the handout was developed.

Clients were provided with pre and post-operative handouts. This enabled clients to be more confident and knowledgeable in their after-care management.

Cultural event opportunity

One of our podiatrists, Caitlyn, had the opportunity to attend the Ya Yapaneyepuk Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Forum & Expo which was held in April, 2022, at the Rich River Golf Club, Moama.

This was an initiative of Vicki Walker, Regional Aboriginal Development Officer Sector Development Team for Loddon Mallee and Hume, and saw 112 participants from 65 providers come together.

The forum was targeted to CHSP providers in Loddon Mallee and Hume regions, including presenters/ Aboriginal Elders who stayed to share in the experience.

Caitlyn said the two-day experience gave her a valuable insight into the challenges that Aboriginal people may face in accessing health care services such as ours.

“The cultural safety training component and the cultural tour on country were highlights and gave me ideas of ways we can make our service more appealing and culturally safe for aboriginal people,” she said.



FOCUSED ON CLIENT CARE: Our Podiatry team is always seeking ways to improve our services.

Paediatrics

Our Paediatric team provides important services that improve lifetime outcomes for children and disadvantaged families who are not able to access private paediatricians and allied health.

We are a unique service, being the primary bulk-billing paediatric neurodevelopmental specialist clinic in Bendigo. We provide services to children 0-18 years including

vulnerable and disadvantaged children and their families.

The Paediatric service at BCHS has undergone positive changes and growth over the past 24 months, creating a collaborative model of care for our children and their families. In addition to our highly skilled paediatricians, physiotherapists and administrative support, we have introduced a nurse, a paediatric

specialised GP, and soon the reintroduction of a Paediatric registrar.

Recently receiving a generous donation from the William Buckland Foundation, we have been provided an opportunity to continue to operate and grow a leading Paediatric service.

Head to Health

The Head to Health program, formerly known as Head to Help, had a name change in January 2022 and is now a nationally recognised program.

The Head to Health program provides support to clients within an 100 kilometer radius of Bendigo within all age groups and from all cultural backgrounds.

The program assists clients to navigate the mental health system. We provide intake, assessment, therapeutic interventions and supports including referrals for clients experiencing mental health issues and distress.

The Bendigo Head to Health staff conducted 4129 sessions with clients throughout the 2021/2022 financial year.

The program received and responded to 719 referrals and inquiries during the 2021/2022 financial year.

We have a great team of dedicated staff who provide high quality services to our clients.



4129
sessions with
clients

719
referrals and
inquiries

What our clients tell us:

"Very, very helpful service".

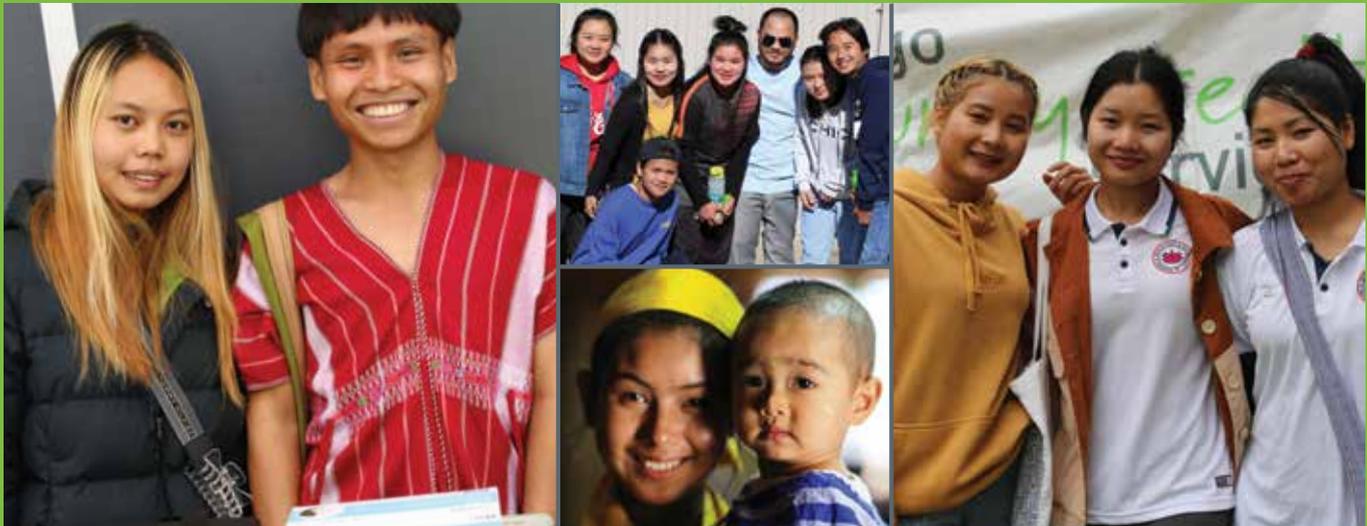
"I probably needed this talk more than anything in my whole life."

"I feel like I can open up to you. You've been a fantastic help. I like talking to you, you make me feel relaxed and comfortable."

"Feeling so much better now and can manage my thoughts better. I would not have been able to do it without you"

"I am very thankful for the prompt and efficient service I received at the hub ...I felt well supported and heard."

Refugee Health System Navigator Project



505+
clients
assisted in
12 months

Pre and post arrival experiences can have profound impacts on the health outcomes of people from refugee backgrounds.

Prolonged periods in refugee camps, experiences of war, effects of torture and trauma, deprivation, and lack of access to food, safe drinking water, basic health care and shelter are highly traumatic experiences that differentiate refugees from most other Australian migrants.

The Health System Navigator Project provides support, health literacy assistance, referral facilitation and advocacy for people with complex and chronic health conditions.

Bendigo Community Health Services works with organisations to support clients to navigate the 'system'.

OUR IMPACT:

Assisted 500+ clients of refugee background to **access health care**

580+ direct contact hours and 760 indirect contact hours on **improving health service pathways** for people of refugee background

Facilitated 24 **education sessions with healthcare providers** with a total of 220 participants

Worked with peak health bodies to **build health promotion programs targeted to meet the cultural needs** of the diverse populations including Life program, Breast Screen and QUIT

Developed more than 15 **in-language resources to support service engagement**

Participated in the development of multilingual audio-visual resources to **build health literacy and service system understanding**

Partnered with local agencies to build service capacity and engagement including **development of translated materials, signage and in-language information**

Helped **local health organisations to develop communication strategies** so clients receive correspondence in a timely and effective manner

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?

Communities of refugee background face multiple barriers in accessing and successfully navigating healthcare services including:

- lower levels of education and literacy
- cultural and linguistic differences
- sociocultural differences among patients, health care providers, and the health care system

These factors do not just relate to language barriers but include variations in patient recognition of:

- symptoms
- thresholds for seeking care
- the ability to communicate symptoms to a provider who understands their meaning
- the ability to understand the prescribed treatment strategy
- expectations of care and adherence to preventative measures and medications.

In rural and regional areas, these barriers are amplified due to reduced access and availability of specialist health services, limited transport options, reduced understanding of and options for culturally sensitive practice and reduced access to language support services.

WHAT WE'RE DOING:

The Health System Navigator Project was developed to provide direct support and health advocacy for people of refugee background with complex and chronic health conditions.

We work in partnership with organisations to support clients to navigate the 'system' and build successful outcomes for all.

Our work includes:

- Support for health appointments including advocacy and service navigation
- Increasing health literacy through building understanding of health conditions and treatment options
- Facilitating the development of service system referral pathways that are easily navigated by clients of refugee and migrant background
- Development of in-language resources
- Building health services' cultural competency and culturally sensitive practice.

The engagement of both health professionals and bicultural workers to support the refugee health navigator program has been key to developing a service that builds knowledge, increases health system utilisation and simplifies referral pathways leading to improved outcomes for all.

This program is funded by Murray PHN through the Australian Government's PHN Program.

Want to learn more or access the service?

Call Health System Navigator Project co-ordinator
Megan O'Keefe on 0438 441 631 or meganokeefe@bchs.com.au

Helping more families fight climate change

Ensuring more families can contribute to the fight against climate change has been the focus of a partnership between the Community Power Hub Loddon Mallee and Bendigo Community Health Services.

Supported by Sustainability Victoria and the Victorian Government, the Community Power Hub Loddon Mallee's Solar on Low Income Homes Project helped with the technical expertise and crowdfunding of the installation of 3kW solar systems on a number of homes throughout Bendigo.

They are now crowdfunding further to extend their reach and increase the number of homes provided with renewable energy.

Community Power Hub Loddon Mallee project manager Tony O'Loughlin said with many families unable to invest in solar energy systems, the goal was "to bring equity to the energy market."

"We want to help families take action on climate change, while also reducing their cost of living," he said.

BCHS settlement engagement and transition support case worker Thalay said "this project will see 15 families have a solar system installed - families who are low-income earners challenged by the cost of today's utility expenses".

"Some families involved have spent up to 25 years in a Thai refugee camp, where climate change and environmental issues were not spoken about," she said.

Mother of two young children, Moe Moe Aung, is excited about using the sun for energy, and wanted to express her gratitude to those behind the project.

Another family who recently bought their own home, thanked BCHS and the Community Power Hub Loddon Mallee "for being here to help our family and care about our environment".

BCHS settlement team member Thalay said she was "so happy for the families involved, it means everything".

"They did not know how to organise a solar installation and are grateful to the Power Hub for their work. Yes, it will change their life, and it is not just about money but the environment and all the young families who need a healthy environment to thrive," she said.

Nay Chee Aung said the project was "awesome; not just for reducing energy bills and the cost of living but for the environment, and a step to being and living green."

Bendigo Sustainability Group president Colin Lambie said it was "great to have another crowdfunded solar project in Bendigo".

"We've been able to use our position and support the project with our expertise, which is what Community Power is all about," he said

"Awesome; not just for reducing energy bills and the cost of living but for the environment, and a step to being and living green."

Dementia awareness in refugee communities

Bendigo Community Health Services has launched new resources to raise dementia awareness in refugee communities.

Our Cultural Diversity Team held several consultation sessions within refugee communities to ensure the dementia resources delivered the right messaging.

The community consultations identified knowledge gaps around dementia and tested the cultural relevance and appropriateness of information. Resources were translated in language and information sessions ran in collaboration with community and BCHS bilingual staff.

The project was developed using Dementia Australia resources and funding from the State Government.

COVID-19 messages in language

It is estimated Bendigo has welcomed 4000 Karen, 300 Afghan and an increasing number of South Sudanese community members, with many living in multigenerational households.

These communities are more vulnerable to impacts of COVID due to pre-settlement experiences, such as limited access to education, health, public health messages, prevention messages and health screenings. Some community members have lower literacy rates in their own language with little to no digital and service literacy.

COVID-19

Key bilingual staff of lived experience were employed by BCHS to consult with communities to identify unmet needs, authentically codesign COVID safe messaging in three main local languages (Dinka, Dari, and Karen) and enable access to vaccinations, testing and isolation support.

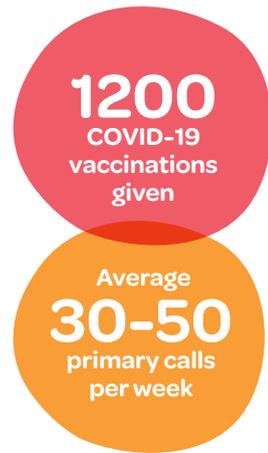
BCHS successfully applied for eight state government COVID grants focusing on multicultural and refugee communities.

For newly arrived refugee communities the need to build

trust in the COVID information was essential, and to provide support in accessing ever changing information in an accessible format.

A Karen COVID hotline was established, staffed by Karen staff and supported by BCHS health professionals. This hotline operated from July, 2020 until June 30, 2022.

BCHS averaged 30-50 primary calls per week to the hotline, with an estimated secondary reach (household members listening) of 120 – 200 per week during peak risk.



Seventeen pop up COVID vaccination clinics were co-facilitated with Bendigo Health and the Karen Cultural and Social Support Foundation in a local Karen monastery.

BCHS bicultural staff and foundation volunteers provided cultural and language support from consent through to post vaccination follow up. All bookings were managed by the BCHS Karen Hotline, with more than 1200 COVID-19 vaccinations given.



Carers

This has been a unique partnership with Bendigo Health Carer Support Services, identifying carers within the community of refugee background.

Our western concept of being a carer is new for these community groups, so therefore this project was to raise awareness of the role of a carer, understanding disability, the role of Carer Support Services and access to identified culturally appropriate supports and respite.

The project also builds Bendigo Health Carer Support Services capacity to support these communities.

The project is lead by bicultural staff who are currently working with 51 carers from the Afghan and Karen community to:

- Codesign respite and appropriate supports
- Provide advocacy and connection with key support services
- Support understanding of NDIS and MyAged care plans
- Provide warm referrals to sustainable supports
- Create opportunities for social connections

Strategic Partnership Project

A collaborative project with City of Greater Bendigo and Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, which focuses on building health literacy and service knowledge along with access for the prevention and management of emerging health topics and chronic conditions, including:

- Sexual and reproductive health
- Healthy eating and chronic disease (diabetes, heart health, high blood pressure, cholesterol)
- HepB
- Mental health
- Dementia
- Screenable cancers

We work with peak bodies and content experts to co-design simple, easy to understand resources in multiple languages, and to run face-to-face health education sessions.

Some of the partners we've worked with throughout the last financial year include:

- Water Well Project
- Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
- Women's Health Loddon Mallee
- Dementia Australia
- Diabetes Australia
- BreastScreen



High-Risk Accommodation Response Program

The High-Risk Accommodation Response program (HRAR) aimed to build capacity of residents to understand and implement COVID safe plans, enable isolation, access to vaccinations, and provide information on how to access services and programs (health and wellbeing).

Through this program we have been able to reach people in ways that weren't previously being met before the pandemic.

By going into communities, BCHS staff members have been able to provide a range of supports for those experiencing social and health challenges.

With our partners Sunbury Cobaw Community Health, Maryborough District Health and Echuca Regional Health, we have supported people within 'high-risk' residential settings across the Loddon region. This has included:






Save the Date

COVID-19 VACCINATION CLINIC

Coffee(free)Van available – 11am-1pm

WHERE: Kangaroo Flat Community House - 21 Woolcock Avenue, KANGAROO FLAT

WHEN: Saturday 7th May - 5-11 years old & 12-year-old and over-Adults

TIME: 11am - 3pm – Walk ins only - no appointment necessary

Bendigo Community Health Services and Bendigo Health are back at Kangaroo Flat Community House for Vaccination Clinic for anyone who wants a 1st, 2nd or 3rd/booster dose, and is 5 years old and over. We will also be offering 4th dose/winter boosters for people who are eligible.

Please bring your Medicare Card and any Personal Identification (I.D) such as, Licence, Health Care Card, or Concession Card with you if having a vaccination. Our friendly nursing staff are available to chat about any concerns you might have about COVID-19 or the Vaccination

ACN: 136 467 715

Our impact:

- Many people have reported they 'never go into town' and because they had seen us consistently in their area, they 'finally came over' to be vaccinated.
- One woman attended for vaccinations for herself and her children while her partner wasn't home, as he didn't believe in the vaccination but she knew not having the children vaccinated would prevent the kids getting day care. She was too scared to tell him.
- A single man living in a rooming house with no family was so scared he thought he was going to die. He didn't have anyone to talk to at the time, so he looked forward to the twice daily phone calls.
- Providing supports to homeless families housed in motels while COVID positive showed how precarious their existence was and how they were living from day to day

Bendigo:

BCHS facilitated COVID pop up clinics (with Bendigo Health) in high-risk public housing areas at Eaglehawk, Long Gully and Kangaroo Flat.

This involved expensive engagement. It is estimated 5000 postcards (notification of clinics) were hand delivered to 5000 public housing addresses along with 5000 packs of information about services and programs and COVID safe messaging. In addition, texts were sent from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, school newsletters were used as were neighborhood houses, Facebook pages and newsletters. Information packs and one-to-one conversations were held with residents from all settings.

BCHS supported 108 people to isolate at home, providing medications, food, assisting with connection to Services Australia and financial assistance.

BCHS also facilitated the Bendigo Loddon HRAR governance group.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, community health

services saw many positives as a result of the HRAR program.

While we have seen an increase in vaccinations by taking services directly to people within their own communities, we have also seen a gradual build in trust as our teams have become familiar faces in the neighbourhood either going door-to-door or holding events at neighbourhood venues.

During the past two years, BCHS staff have asked community what they want, what works for them, and changed our approaches and ways of communicating to accommodate those needs.

We heard that many people, for many reasons, do not travel far from their home and find it a barrier to travel to large community hubs, so services and programs need to go to them.

By proactively going into communities, services are broadening their engagement processes and developing a no wrong door entry into programs.

There is a high reliance of digital and social media by government

departments to impart important messages. The communities supported by HRAR struggle with these forms of communication. These community members appreciate someone who will take time to explain things to them and not rush them through or redirect them to websites, Facebook, etc. They appreciate friendly, genuine supports that steer them through often complex processes and health pathways.

Many community members are living very isolated lives with few social supports. By taking services into their space we are building opportunities to further social engagement and connections.

The positive outcomes and experiences we have observed extend beyond a response to COVID and tell us much more about how we truly engage people in services and in building up an understanding of their care needs.

It is easy to see the benefits that can be gained by shifting focus to the flu season, other essential health needs, or even emergency safety messaging."

Emergency Preparedness Project

Bendigo Community Health Services is a Humanitarian Settlement Provider.

Bendigo is already home to some 4000 Karen and 300 Afghan Hazaras and increasing numbers of South Sudanese.

The summer of 2019/2020 was an extremely severe fire season.

In recognition of the increased vulnerabilities of local refugee community members in the event of bushfire, flood, and heat, BCHS in partnership with the City of Greater Bendigo, the Victoria State Emergency Services and the local Country Fire Authority developed and delivered a bushfire, flood and heat health awareness program.

This comprised of a review of available translated literature including, co-design of culturally safe easily understood resources addressing gaps as per review of literature, provision of community education, training of community champions and further delivery of key messages through these champions.



BE PREPARED: A bushfire, flood and heat health awareness program was developed for our refugee community members.

It was also to engage and create a culturally safe and welcome space for people to learn. This included building capacity of service providers to better understand these communities.

This project reached 925 people through community education and community champions in the 2021/2022 bushfire season.

"I've never seen people got killed and properties destroyed by the bushfire back in my home country. In converse, after attending the bushfire information session, I've found that the Australian bushfire is more dangerous than I could think of.

"But now I know what I have to do to prepare for the bushfire and know where to ask for help when I need it".

A Bendigo Bushfire and Summer Safety Refugee Resource Hub was also set up on the BCHS website as a central location to host all the developed resources. The hub has links to information in each language - Karen, Dari, and Dinka.

This project was funded by Lord Mayor Charitable Foundation.

Staying connected

During COVID lockdowns, we realised immediately that some people we worked with would be isolated and at risk of being left behind as everything went online.

The majority of clients in the Settlement Services programs were challenged by digital literacy.

Staff engaged as best they could, when face-to-face contact was restricted.

The telephone and a lot of skill and patience was required to talk clients through things like using

online apps such as MyGov or taking a picture of a letter and sending it to a case worker.

Children were also at home for their schooling, which meant some families found the experience of online learning a challenge.

We knew digital literacy was going to be some of our core work now and into the future.

We soon received a grant to purchase devices and the staff were off and running.



This work proved to be important in citizenship classes, and clients enjoyed learning to use them. Much energy and laughter were generated.

Participants said it was hard to know what to do at first, but they're learning a bit at a time.

Elmore Social Support Group

The Elmore BCHS Social Support Group meets regularly, enjoying outings such as a visit to the White Hills Botanic Gardens of the Future.

Members enjoyed the day walking around the gardens and talking to the garden staff about various plants and garden designs.



FRIENDSHIP: The Elmore Social Support Group brings people together.

Incident Reporting

Bendigo Community Health Services uses a custom-built system for reporting, investigating, and managing incidents. When a staff member lodges an incident, a notification is triggered to our Risk, Quality and Compliance team where it is processed and then sent to the appropriate Senior Leader to monitor and record details of the investigation and end result.

Our Risk, Quality and Compliance team oversees incident investigations and regularly consults and provides reports to our BCHS Health and Safety Representatives. Our Health and Safety Representatives are active in incident reporting, identifying hazards, and recommendations for controls.

Bendigo Community Health Services recorded 115 incidents in the 2021-2022 financial year. Incident reports rose by 113% compared to the previous financial year. This was due to two key factors.

1. Strategies were implemented to educate and empower staff members to speak up about health and safety.
2. Infection Control incidents were the most reported incident type. These reports included cases of COVID-19 in the workplace. Tracking cases through our incident reporting system has allowed us to effectively monitor, document and control the spread in the workplace.

Incident Type	20/21	21/22
Clinical / Medical	7	4
Electrical	0	1
Fall	9	9
Hazard	3	13
Inappropriate behaviour	18	13
Infection Control	0	54
Intruder	0	1
Near Miss	5	4
Needle Stick	1	0
Operational	6	3
Other	0	1
Personal Injury	4	4
Privacy	0	5
Property Damage	0	1
Vehicle	1	2
Total	54	115

Planning for the future

Bendigo Community Health Services is planning for the future and investing significantly in reviewing our buildings, sites and services. The future will see redevelopments at Eaglehawk, headspace, Holdsworth Road and planning for future locations to meet future needs.

Some of the works currently underway, include:

Eaglehawk:

Funded through the Victorian Health Building Authority's Regional Health Infrastructure program (\$7.3m), the objectives of this project are to:

- Create a facility that meets contemporary design standards for community healthcare
- Utilise to best effect the elements of the existing building that are structurally sound
- Create a building layout and install monitoring (CCTV) and alert (Duress) systems that properly control client movements and reduce current risks to staff and patient safety
- Provide separation into isolated compartments (within the building) to assist with infection control
- Improve capacity to manage challenging presentations (such as infectious or aggressive clients) while maintaining safety of staff and other clients
- Ensure the continued provision of quality services that are safe for both staff and clients
- Upgrade mechanical and electrical services that have reached the end of their functional life and enhance fire protection services within the facility
- Improve energy efficiency and reduce ongoing environmental impact and operational (utility) expenditure
- Replace building services that have been identified by mechanical engineering consultants as being at the end of their useful life
- Provide acoustic separation between rooms to provide patient privacy and confidentiality conducive with a health service setting.

- Create an organised and flexible facility to optimise the management of resources and match the needs of changing populations and demographics on an ongoing basis
- Deliver an advanced level of building services with capacity to deliver enhanced models of care that optimise place-based services including digital and telehealth
- Centralise administrative functions to capitalise on the benefits of an effective, collaborative work culture.

The Principal Consultant/Architect (EBD Architects), Quantity Surveyor (PlanCost) and Building Surveyor (BSA Building Surveyors) have all been appointed, and the engagement process with staff has begun. We aim to go to tender for a builder early in 2023.



MOVING FORWARD: BCHS is working with EBD Architects to create a new contemporary facility.

“I can’t wait to see what the architects come up with in terms of the design of the new building – it will be more space, it will be better technology, it will mean we can attract GPs to this part of world and means that the people of Eaglehawk and the community will have access to a world-class service in a world-class building.”

Maree Edwards, Member for Bendigo West

“The great thing about this project is not just to look at this building but to look at the network of community health facilities across the Bendigo area, where they become an intrinsic and very significant part of each community and connect communities together.”

Maree Edwards, Member for Bendigo West

Capital Masterplan

EBD Architects is also working with BCHS to develop a masterplan that will position our organisation to meet the needs of the future.

The overall masterplan project includes a review of all five of the current BCHS sites and explores where the service may need to expand or have a presence in the future.

EBD Architects director Dr Darragh O'Brien says the evidence-based design company aims to capture a broad picture of what is wanted and needed across Bendigo.

“We see the Eaglehawk site as a much more open facility - and the other facilities as well, they will become a more integrated part of every community,” he said.

“The great thing about this project is not just to look at this (the Eaglehawk) building, but to look at the network of community health facilities across the Bendigo area, where they become an intrinsic

and very significant part of each community and connect communities together.

“These sorts of buildings have a much larger role to play in the future than they have in the past.

“Previously they were specifically places you went to when you were unwell, and they're becoming more and more important as centres of education, for health and wellbeing before you become ill.”

At a press conference in early 2022, Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards said BCHS played an important role in the community, which was highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“BCHS services have been more important throughout the last couple of years throughout Covid, assisting with immunisations, assisting people with home care and being an outreach service for other communities,” she said.

“I can't wait to see what the architects come up with in terms of the design of the new building - it

will be more space, it will be better technology, it will mean we can attract GPs to this part of world and means that the people of Eaglehawk and the community will have access to a world-class service in a world-class building.

“Importantly, the masterplan is about looking across the whole of Bendigo and looking at what is required in terms of community health services - we know there's a need there, what is the extent of that need and what do services need to look like, what do the buildings need to look like to accommodate that need?

“We want to make sure people have access to a service such as Bendigo Community Health Services that are so vital not just to ongoing health but also around prevention.”

BCHS Board Chair Vicki Pearce says the pandemic has taught us people want and need access to health and wellbeing services where they live and move about.

“We're excited about what we can offer the community moving forward,” she said.



Hargreaves Street, Bendigo



Helm Street, Kangaroo Flat



Seymoure Street, Eaglehawk

Holdsworth Road Project:

Funded through the Victorian Health Building Authority's Regional Health Infrastructure program (\$3.4m), this work will see the demolition of the existing building and replace it with a Therapeutic Activity Centre and Office space that will:

- Enhance access to evidence-informed effective and affordable treatment
- Increase participation by clients and their families
- Deliver a range of treatment options and services
- Provide treatment services and care that is integrated and tailored to individual needs
- Provide innovative approaches to drug and alcohol rehabilitation and provide the help that people need sooner

- Develop stronger pathways between treatment services and other health services / providers
- Approach alcohol and drug treatment within a social model of health
- Provide low cost, effective support in the post treatment period to reinforce recovery

The facility will accommodate:

- AoD Counselling
- Group based therapeutic programs
- Office space for Care Recovery Coordinators, Non-residential Withdrawal Nursing, Assessment & Care Planners, Mobile Drug Safety & Needle Syringe Program Staff, Family Drug Support Staff, AoD Counsellors.



WELLNESS CENTRE: A design image courtesy of EBD Architects.

Service planning

During the past year, Central Victorians were asked to have their say on how Bendigo Community Health Services can offer the best services where they're needed, when they're needed.

BCHS has been working with Impact Co. to find out from the community how we can best respond to need during the next decade.

Those who have accessed BCHS services were asked for input, to ensure their voices were heard as the service plans its strategic direction.

Our organisation has a long history of delivering programs informed by community need.

We work closely with our clients and local organisations to ensure we are meeting current

needs, particularly for those in disadvantaged communities.

This process will help us plan and shape our organisation to become the health service our community needs in the years ahead, while also helping us understand how many skilled staff we need, and where we need to place our services to meet the changing needs of the Bendigo and Central Victorian communities.

Bendigo Community Health Services delivers more than 50 programs across the region, which help people live healthier and more connected lives.

This includes access to GPs, along with services covering families and children, mental health and counselling, alcohol and other drugs, sexual health, men's and women's health clinics, supporting the LGBTIQ community and refugee settlement.

BCHS also helps people manage specific health and wellbeing needs, such as managing their mental health or living with chronic conditions such as diabetes, respiratory issues or heart disease.

We are a community-owned, not-for-profit organisation with sites in central Bendigo, Kangaroo Flat, Eaglehawk, North Bendigo and Elmore.

We exist to keep you healthy and connected.

Vision and Values

VISION

We want better health and wellbeing across generations

MISSION

We exist working hand in hand with our community to achieve healthier lives.

VALUES

Integrity – We are authentic and accountable, and we honour our obligations.

Respect – We build respectful relationships through trust, empathy and collaboration.

Inclusion – We recognise and promote accessible, safe and holistic supports and services as basic rights.

Innovation – Through continuous learning, we ensure an agile, responsive and sustainable service.

Togetherness – We create a connectedness, pride and support through enjoying our work and being passionate about making a difference.



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