

Care

where it's
needed

2022-2023
QUALITY OF CARE REPORT



130,000
phone
calls

Appointments

29,482 General
Practice

12,573 Allied
Health

Welcome to Bendigo Community Health Services

Some of the hardest working staff at Bendigo Community Health Services are our client services team members. They're the smiling faces at the front desks and the reassuring voices on the phone, connecting clients to more than 50 services across our sites in Eaglehawk, Kangaroo Flat, Bendigo and Elmore.

Client feedback

"Two lovely reception staff both helped me on separate occasions when I needed help. I'm very grateful."

"My Family Support Worker was an inspiration. She worked with me so closely to improve our life. She was great at listening and identifying problem areas and was delicate in her communication of these things."

"This I think must be a taxing profession you have, with maybe not always great outcomes or appreciation so just wanting to let you know how much of a difference you really do make."

"The support given to me and the information I've received, in person or over the phone, has not only been helpful, but life changing."

Acknowledgement of Country

Bendigo Community Health Services acknowledges we live, work and enjoy Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung country. We extend our appreciation to the Djaara and Taungurung peoples.

We pay respect to Elders past and present for their continued holding of memories, traditions, culture and community aspirations.

We recognise sovereignty has never been ceded and express our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of colonisation and their lasting impact. May we walk forward together in harmony and the spirit of healing.

It was and always will be Aboriginal land.

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A message from the Board Chair

Bendigo Community Health Service was challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, plus the 2022 flood events and their impacts on our services, activities, staff and the wider community.

Our local and regional communities have continued to rely on the community health sector through challenging times.

We are incredibly proud of the responsiveness of our staff in their crucial roles to keep our community safe and informed. Our teams continue to find 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 astonishing, and we wish to honour their commitment to both direct service

delivery and to keeping the organisation functioning – it's a true team effort.

The ongoing cost of living challenges have highlighted the vast chasms that exist between different parts of our society in socioeconomic status, access to affordable and secure housing and job security, and these disparities have particularly impacted the health of many rural and regional people.

Those living with racism, poverty, mental health challenges, insecure work, domestic and household violence, and homelessness have been among those requiring access to support and care.

The community health sector has led the way in working with others to respond to these challenges, and help communities recover and be resilient. Thriving communities rely on social justice and the commitment to work together and build cohesion.

BCHS is committed to improving those social determinants of health through our services and advocacy.

The departure of several executives and other senior staff to new jobs over 2023 was disruptive. The Board is particularly proud of, and wishes to thank, the other senior staff and executives who pulled together to achieve the leadership, outcomes, services and achievements highlighted in this report.

Alongside these achievements, the Board and Executive have continued planning for the future and have invested significantly in reviewing our buildings, sites and services.

We are seeing progress with the redevelopment at headspace and the new Wellbeing Centre in Holdsworth Road, while the Eaglehawk site rebuild is rapidly arriving. There has been thorough community and staff consultation in planning to ensure we can meet future needs.

Melanie Eddy, Chair

“Thriving communities rely on social justice and the commitment to work together and build cohesion.

Supporting the social determinants of health to underpin our services and advocacy is key to improving outcomes.”

Welcome funding for new initiatives

Children's Local brings services together

BCHS was named as the lead agency for a new Loddon Children's Health and Wellbeing Local in July, 2022. We are delivering this partnership with Bendigo Health, which was funded to deliver mental health, bringing staff from both services together at the BCHS Kangaroo Flat site.

The Children's Local is one of three in Victoria funded by the State and Federal governments. Referrals

will be accepted for children aged 0-11 years to a range of specialist medical and allied health services such as paediatricians, psychologists, parenting support, autism assessments, speech pathologists and family services support.

The 2022/23 year was devoted to designing the service in consultation with local communities, people with lived experience as well as Aboriginal-controlled community

organisations, to ensure services are tailored to local needs and build on existing services and capacity. Through collaborative partnerships, the service will be innovative in the way it is delivered across six local government areas at various spoke sites in the Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mt Alexander, and Greater Bendigo regions.

Addressing gaps in cancer care in Bendigo

A new program developed by Bendigo Community Health Services aims to ensure Karen and Afghan refugees don't miss out on vital cancer screening, treatment and care.

The program was initiated after cultural diversity and settlement staff identified barriers to Karen and Afghan refugees accessing cancer-related care, such as language barriers, limited digital literacy and limited knowledge of cancer symptoms.

The program began with the hiring of bilingual male and female staff with lived refugee experience, and consultation with Loddon Mallee Integrated Cancer Services and Bendigo Cancer Centre to produce culturally safe and authentic cancer resources.

The two-year project has been funded through the State Government's Victorian Cancer Plan.



A new pelvic pain and endometriosis clinic

Bendigo Community Health Services was named as one of Australia's first pelvic pain and endometriosis clinics in 2023 and will receive more than \$700,000 over four years as part of the Federal Government's \$58.3 million package for endometriosis and pelvic pain health care.

The aim is to reduce diagnostic delays and provide early access to multidisciplinary intervention, care and treatment.

The clinic will have significant benefits for women across our region.

The sexual and reproductive health team currently provides a critical health service which includes pregnancy advice, treatment, and counselling; early pregnancy service support (threatened loss and loss); contraception advice (can include intrauterine device, Implanon etc.); sexual identity issues; relationship

More than
\$700,000
over four years for
endometriosis and pelvic
pain health care

advice; advice and treatment of blood-borne viruses and Sexually transmitted infections; sexual and reproductive health and medical termination.

*Pictured: Sexual and Reproductive Health staff
Dr Karishma Kaur, Eliza Thomas, Louise Holland and Mary-Anne McCluskey.*



Advocating for the community

BCHS has taken the lead on several public health issues during 2022/23, including vaping and universal access to reproductive healthcare, providing expert opinion and recommendations to government.

Welcoming vaping reforms

BCHS welcomed government reforms, announced in May, 2022, to tighten regulations on highly dangerous and addictive nicotine vaping products.

Following community concern from schools and parents on the increased use of e-cigarettes among young people, BCBS launched the 'There's no safe vape' campaign.

The campaign saw the Health Promotion team deliver education, online and in person, to schools, parents and young people with the message that there is no safe way to vape.

The team also submitted feedback to the government's proposed reforms to the regulation of nicotine vaping products, and were encouraged that many of their ideas were reflected in the reform's announcement.



BCBS has advocated for:

- A ban on flavours, harmful and unregulated ingredients within vapes.
- Vapes to be packaged in plain packaging to align with other prescription-only medicine.
- Vape packaging to feature pregnancy and age warnings.
- Restrictions on nicotine concentrations and volume levels.
- A ban on all disposable vapes.
- Effective controls on importation.

Pictured above: The Health Promotion team developed temporary tattoos to encourage young people to 'say goodbye to vaping'.

BCBS Vaping Parent/Carer Information Session

We held an online webinar, with guest speakers, to discuss the harms and impacts of vaping on young people.

"Very informative, great to be able to get this information whilst still at home via online format."

"Coordinated well and informative."

"Thank you for your huge effort."

135 people
registered to attend
51 people
joined the live event

The recording was
downloaded more than
50 times

Highlighting regional sexual healthcare inadequacies

BCHS' submission to the Federal Government's Senate inquiry into universal access to reproductive healthcare highlighted Victoria's postcode lottery for sexual health.

As the region's sexual and reproductive health hub, BCBS has a unique insight into the barriers and challenges people face when accessing contraception and abortion services.

BCBS recommended a host of reforms, which included:

- Provide free access to contraception, including emergency contraception, long acting reversible contraception and contraceptive stock at GP clinics.
- Reduce the cost of early medical abortion medication.
- Require a public hospital per region to provide surgical abortion services.
- Increase rebates to encourage more GPs to bulk bill or make appointments free for repeat contraception scripts.
- Improve Medicare Benefits Schedule rebates for contraceptive consultations and insertions.
- Provide Medicare Benefits Schedule numbers and rebates for nurse practitioners to consult on and insert LARC devices.
- Provide free sexual health training for regional and rural GPs.
- Provide financial support for sexual health hubs to support and train other GPs and nurses to provide sexual health services.



Pictured: Sexual health team members Louise Holland, Mary-Anne McCluskey and Dr Karishma Kaur.

Promoting health autonomy for women

BCBS promoted women's rights to make decisions about their health following the dangerous US decision to overturn Roe V Wade in 2022.

Due to concern about the impact at a local level on women seeking pregnancy terminations, we highlighted our specialist nurse-led care for women seeking terminations until nine weeks gestation.

On average, our Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Hub supports four women a week to medically terminate a pregnancy, however the number of women phoning our service seeking information or referrals for surgical termination is much higher.

We receive phone calls from across the broader Loddon Mallee region, where lack of

access in some rural areas is a significant barrier to women being able to make choices.

While termination is legal in Victoria, BCBS recognises there are still many barriers for women, including costs, and as such advocated for ongoing and sufficient funding for universal reproductive healthcare to be properly embedded in the healthcare system.



A swift and ongoing flood response

BCHS provided immediate assistance to people impacted by the October 2022 central Victorian floods, which inundated homes in Bendigo's northern suburbs, and nearby towns along the Campaspe River, mostly Rochester.

We stationed medical staff at the Bendigo Showgrounds Emergency Relief Centre, which housed up to 280 displaced people, plus their pets, each night during and in the weeks following the floods.

Dr Jo Dennis, nurses Heather Hinton and Michelle Pascoe, mental health clinician Janaya Wiggins and our Executive leader Nicole Ferrie were among those in the centre most days of the crisis, addressing evacuees' immediate health needs.

BCHS also advocated for evacuees, reaching out to the Department of Health and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to request case management teams to work with people staying at the Showgrounds.

Most people residing at the centre came with pre-existing complex needs. Those who had strong social and family networks were able to move on, however others needed greater support.

The flood event continues to impact those communities which suffered most, and in response BCHS set up a team as part of the Flood Recovery Program in February, 2023.

The program has assisted more than 100 people across five different

LGAs who were affected by the October 2022 floods.

Two flood recovery officers, Oscar Malyon and Danielle Hanks, work closely with government agencies, not-for-profits and local communities to refer clients to support services, assist them to apply for and secure disaster relief funds, negotiate with insurance providers, and provide emotional support throughout the recovery journey.

It is critical we continue the post-flood recovery efforts as we continue to offer support, resources and expertise to help communities rebuild and regain their resilience.

Pictured: Nurse Health Hinton and Dr Jo Dennis working from the Bendigo Emergency Relief Centre.

Winning community partnerships

Grassroots consultation in Eaglehawk

BCHS' Strategy, Planning and Analysis team led an extensive community consultation project in the first half of 2023, in the lead-up to the Eaglehawk site refurbishment. The team aimed to better understand what services people access, changes or improvements they'd like to see, and what further resources or activities could improve their health and wellbeing.

Leah Wastell, Natalia Smith and Bronwyn Moore facilitated barbecues and information sessions at Eaglehawk and Long Gully community houses, listening posts at Long Gully IGA and BCBS' Eaglehawk site, distributed hard copy and online surveys and flyers to homes, schools, early learning centres and other community organisations.

Their work resulted in engagement with 138 people, whose responses were collated in a comprehensive report that will help inform improvements at the Eaglehawk site.

Pictured: The SPA team consulted with community at Long Gully's IGA and neighbourhood house.

Responses to the survey included:

"This place is always safe and friendly."

"Be lost without them."

"Wouldn't go anywhere else."

"I encourage others to use your service as I know they will be treated with dignity and respect."



Tackling energy poverty

BCHS joined a campaign to cut the power bills of low-income homeowners in the region.

We partnered with the Bendigo Sustainability Group on a project to put solar panels on the homes of those who otherwise couldn't afford to switch to green energy.

The BSG's GIVING POWER project aimed to provide up to 30 households in the Bendigo and Loddon Mallee region with a 3kw solar system, for free.

BCHS staff worked to identify homeowners who qualified for the program, from sole parents, to older people, to people with a refugee background, and many others.

Pictured: Chris Corr, formerly of Bendigo Sustainability Group, and Martine Street, BCCHS Settlement Services Senior Leader at the GIVING POWER launch in Bendigo.



Day trippers explore the region

BCCHS helped showcase the Loddon Valley to Karen refugees, via a unique day trip that had potential to influence the new arrivals and the places they visited.

The excursion was the idea of Loddon Mallee Community Leadership Program graduate Jan Pagliaro, who was inspired by the remarkable impact of new arrivals on other Victorian rural towns.

Jan received funding for the excursion from Eastweb, which supports projects benefiting refugee communities in Victoria. Then she secured assistance from BCCHS to make the day happen.

Almost 50 new arrivals took part, and visited the Inglewood Eucalyptus Distillery Museum and Salut  Oliva at Boort, sampled Red Dog Chillies from Fernihurst, enjoyed a Lions Club barbecue and toured a Bridgewater farm, then finished the afternoon fishing by the Loddon River.

Jan hoped the day would expose Karen people to the possibilities of the Loddon Valley, which offers more affordable house prices, agricultural employment opportunities, and a peaceful, laid-back lifestyle.



Pictured: Community members enjoy a day out in the Loddon Valley. Photographs by Bwe Ku Say.

Board of Directors 2022 Service Excellence Awards

Once again BCHS recognised outstanding staff and teams who demonstrate our values in their daily work.



Excellence in Integrity

Individual award: AOD Specialist Family Violence Advisor **Meg Bagnall** - for her embodiment of accountability, support, authenticity and collaboration with colleagues and those experiencing family violence.

Team award: **headspace** – for the delivery of 1,394 episodes of service, making it the most productive headspace centre in Australia, also recognised as a state leader in delivering inclusive services to LGBTIQ+ young people. Despite unprecedented demand, staff remain committed to delivering the best service possible as they recognise mental health support is a basic right for our community.



Excellence in Respect

Individual award: Settlement Services case worker **Nay Chee Aung** - for raising injustice and system issues that impact the community and for supporting communication for BCHS patients during the pandemic.

Team award: **AOD Clinical Services** – for being an amazingly diverse group that bring different skills, lived experiences and qualifications to their workplace. Client feedback is overwhelmingly positive, with feelings of being respected and supported on their journeys all the while knowing if their lives get messy, they are welcomed back without judgement.



Excellence in Inclusion

Team award: **Family Services** – For assisting children and parents to identify goals and respond to their unique needs and concerns. They take the time to understand the strengths and challenges for children and young people and work together with children, parents and carers to make plans to best support them, embodying the values of inclusion.



Excellence in Innovation

Individual award: Senior GP **Dr Jaskarandip Singh** - who saw the long wait times of patients for endocrinology services at Bendigo Health and with his extensive knowledge of chronic disease and management of complex patients, expanded his knowledge to allow him to take on patients from the Bendigo Health waitlist for a specialist appointment. Dr Jas, alongside the diabetes educators, has created the Community Diabetes Clinic, reviewing, assessing and providing recommendations for management until they see the specialist.



Excellence in Togetherness

Individual award: Registered nurse **Debra Mayes** - for supporting GPs with patient care, health care assessments, vaccinations, supporting minor procedures and going above and beyond to support and assist the Eaglehawk team. She always shows up with a positive attitude and a smile, no matter what challenges and has unofficially become the social organiser, bringing everyone together to celebrate birthdays and acknowledge each other's wins.

Team award: Needle Syringe Program - the staff are respected and trusted by those using the service and through conversation with the clients are the conduit between hazards presenting in the community and BCHS being able to alert other services of substance use dangers and trends in the area. Two Syringe Dispensing Units have been installed at the Kangaroo Flat and Eaglehawk sites. The team worked tirelessly throughout the COVID pandemic to keep access to safe injecting equipment available.



The Kim Sykes Service Excellence Award

Team award: Client Services - for their patient and polite dealings in the often-difficult circumstances they have had to work with during the COVID pandemic. With ever evolving changes and at times uncooperative clients, they have worked above and beyond providing services for clients and staff members, relying heavily on problem solving and communication skills.

Pictured: Mary Russell and Brooke Reid are part of Client Services, which won the Kim Sykes Service Excellence Award.



Towards reconciliation

BCHS has taken important steps in our journey to partner respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as we walk towards reconciliation. We did this through the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan, to be launched late 2023.

The RAP provides a framework to build strong and respectful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities.

As part of the RAP design, we commissioned artist Paige Charles-Morgan (right), a proud Yorta Yorta/

Dja Dja Wurrung/Palawa woman, to create a painting for BCHS.

The painting, titled *Healing a Community* (below), will remain a feature of our sites. The people around the campfire in the centre are the workers coming together, providing health support services to our local community while working towards closing the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health. Each colour represents a different program.

The painting captures the story of Dja Dja Wurrung Dreamtime where the people regarded the Eagle

(Bunjil) as the Lord of the Forest and Mountains, the Crow as the Lord of the Plains, and the Bat as a friendly spirit who watched over the weary traveller, warning them of dangers and guiding them to safety.



Partners in education

We're committed to providing quality placement experience for students, to aid in their education and foster the future of regional health careers. We know, when students experience a regional placement, they're much more likely to choose to work and live in the area.

In 2022-23 we partnered with:

- Access Australia Group
- Australian College of Applied Professions
- Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association
- Bendigo TAFE
- Deakin University
- Eastern College Australia
- Flinders University
- La Trobe University
- Monash University
- Partners in Training
- Swinburne University

A total of 36 students spent time with our teams:

- 2 Art Therapy
- 11 Community Services
- 6 Counselling
- 1 Diabetes Education
- 3 Exercise Physiology
- 4 Medical
- 1 Mental Health
- 1 Nurse Practitioner
- 2 Occupational Therapy
- 1 Public Health and Health Promotion
- 3 Social Work
- 1 Psychology

Students harness the healing power of art

La Trobe Master of Art Therapy students Elise Lidgett and Genevieve Thornton were the first to undertake an art therapy placement at BCHS, facilitating a host of sessions for all ages, focusing on themes such as emotional regulation and anxiety.

Genevieve said art therapy was a means of using creativity to express trauma and emotions, as opposed to traditional talking therapies.

"So many people find it difficult to verbalise trauma, and art therapy is a way to start doing that," she said. "It's a privilege to be here, to be listening to people's stories, and providing a space for them to take part."

Elise said it was wonderful to have the opportunity to introduce the therapy to clients.

"It's fabulous to spend this much time here and develop these sessions for BCHS," Elise said. "It's also fabulous that we're making it accessible for people to attend art therapy, because it's an important mode for people who talk therapy is not a good fit for."

Both students hoped BCHS would continue to offer art therapy into the future. "It's just fabulous that we are having the opportunity to try this out here," Elise said.



Pictured: Elise Lidgett and Genevieve Thornton began an extended Art Therapy placement in 2023.

Health Promotion reaches thousands

BCHS' Health Promotion staff are leaders in prevention who continue to create a healthier community for all. The team plays a key role in planning, implementing, and evaluating initiatives in partnerships, and across multiple settings.

Increasing healthy eating

Vic Kids Eat Well

BCHS partnered with the Healthy Kids Advisor, delivered by Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation, to implement this new state-wide initiative. The program aims to create healthier food environments where kids, live, learn and play. Together, they have worked with **52 registered settings** across outside schools hours care, schools and sports clubs, **reaching 8,130 children and young people.**

Smiles4Miles

BCHS supported **30 early childhood services** to improve the oral health of children and their families, **reaching 3,573 children.** Nine services completed the program, with six services reviewing their healthy eating and oral health policies. Three training sessions were held with 27 educators. The registered settings are supported to promote the three key messages: Drink Well, Eat Well and Clean Well.

INFANT

BCHS co-delivered the INFANT program with City of Greater Bendigo Maternal Child Health nurses. The program promotes healthy eating and physical activity habits for families in their baby's first year of life. **There have been 64 sessions delivered to 426 parents.**

Participant feedback:

"I didn't realise how anxious I've been about the transition to food from boob. I had a lot of issues with supply and feeding in the beginning and when we finally got into a rhythm it was time to introduce food. I've felt sad and annoyed at mealtimes given all the work it took to breast feed and then here's food making all that effort seem worthless. But after today's session and listening to all the other parents, I feel more confident that it's time for solids. And I think I'll enjoy meals time better letting go of that stress."

Increasing physical activity

This Girl Can Week

In partnership with City of Greater Bendigo and Sports Focus, we delivered a two-week event with **24 free physical activity and sport opportunities** for people including walking groups, yoga, stand-up paddleboarding, golf and more. **175 people who identified as women and girls took part.** Two walking groups and two strength classes were facilitated by BCBS at Ewing Park. Ninety per cent of participants reported they would participate in the activity again.

Pictured: Health Promotion officers Steph Paddon and Siobhan Sullivan take up and promote the This Girl Can challenge.





Events galore

The Health Promotion team facilitated or attended over **50 community education sessions**, events, sessions, or tours of BCCHS in 2022/23, **reaching 3,371 people**. A key event attended for the first time was music festival, Groovin the Moo. Alongside BCCHS Mobile Drug Workers, we provided festival goers with condom packs, temporary tattoos, reusable drink bottles and health information regarding safe sex, vaping and harm minimisation.

Pictured: Health Promotion Officers Ella Westblade and Siobhan Sullivan model the merch at Groovin the Moo.

Reducing tobacco and e-cigarette related harm

Vaping and smoking in Greater Bendigo – community consultation

The City of Greater Bendigo and BCCHS co-facilitated eight sessions at Eaglehawk Primary School, Eaglehawk Secondary School, Specimen Hill Primary School and Girton Grammar to hear from young people about the places they want to see as smoke free. We **reached 197 students** and asked them to think about places, spaces or areas that they spend time in with friends or family, and list those that they would like to become smoke and vape free.

The top five responses were:

- Anywhere, alleyways, Bendigo, public places, bush, near people walking down the street.
- Bus, bus stops, public transport, train or tram.
- Parks, gardens, Lake Weeroona, Lake Neangar.
- Markets e.g. Sunday market.
- Places where children gather e.g. playgrounds, not near kids.

BCCHS committed to support the COGB's Reducing Tobacco and E-Cigarette related harm strategy to implement smoke and vape free zones in the places in Bendigo.

Healthy Workplaces Gala

This inaugural event engaged employees from Bendigo workplaces to learn strategies to promote health and wellbeing at work. Alannah from Suicide Prevention Awareness Network - Central Victoria, Maree from headspace Bendigo and Siobhan from BCHS spoke on mental health, diversity and vaping/smoking management.

Participant feedback

"Such an amazing event. Great opportunity to network."

"I feel so honoured I could attend and listen to the speakers - as a queer person and a survivor of sexual assault and suicide I felt seen and supported and more hopeful for the future."

"I had a great time at the gala and Ella did a great job at organising the whole evening from the venue to the food and drinks."

Sexual Health Night

The Sexual Health Night was proposed by headspace Bendigo's Youth Ambassadors, who identified a need for sexual health information to be delivered in a safe and inclusive setting outside of school. The Youth Ambassadors worked with BCHS Health Promotion team to plan the event and called it "Let's Talk About Sex". Approximately 20 people attended, including young people, parents and school nurses. Anne-Marie from CERSH presented about current sexual health statistics in Central Victoria, Maree from headspace presented about LGBTIQ+ diversity, and Steph and Ella from BCHS presented a variety of sexual health topics including pleasure, consent, safer sex and self-care. Finally, Mary-Anne and Louise from BCHS facilitated a Q & A in which many young people asked questions, including what does a typical sexual health check-up look like?

Participant feedback

"I loved the format, how engaging the speakers were, the Q&A and the wide range of topics!"

"Variety of topics/ speakers, knowledge, engagement, inclusiveness. Well done."

Some of the community events across Bendigo the team attended were:

- Bendigo Pride Festival
- Heathcote Community Smiles Day
- Bendigo La Trobe University O-Week
- Lansell Square Community Days
- Suicide Prevention Awareness Network Annual Walk
- Eaglehawk Dahlia and Arts Festival
- BDAC Deadly Day Out Expo
- NAIDOC Week Family Fun Day
- Bendigo TAFE Orientation Day
- Kangaroo Flat Family Fun Day

Protected sex is fire

BCHS marked National Condom Day on February 14, 2023 by launching new condom packets designed by local young people.

The Health Promotion project aimed to bust some common condom-related myths, give an insight into sexual health screening appointments and increase young people's access to condoms.

The launch came as new data showed sexually transmitted diseases were rising among young people in Greater Bendigo.

Pictured: Sexual Health Nurse Mary-Anne McCluskey, condom pack designer Jay Moore and HP officer Ella Westblade.



Cheers to an achievement

The school drop off turned into a coffee date for Quarry Hill Primary School parents in March, and the treat was on us.

The school is part of our Achievement Program to boost the health and wellbeing of the community. To reward everyone for meeting the program's mental health and wellbeing benchmark, we awarded some funds to use as they pleased. Inviting Bendigo coffee van Pogo Espresso to hand out some hot brews on a cool morning was the ideal mood booster for all.

Schools and workplaces are welcome to join the Achievement Program at any time.



In the IDAHOBIT spirit

BCHS staff rose to the Health Promotion team's challenge to 'Go Rainbow' in celebration of International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia on May 17. Wearing rainbow signals to the community that we respect LGBTIQ+ identities.



Nurturing new arrivals

The Humanitarian Settlement Program welcomed 176 new arrivals in the last financial year. There have been many family reunions. Most arrivals have come from refugee camps on the Thai Myanmar border.

The challenges in this program have been securing private rental properties, the exorbitant rise in rent, and the juggle to leave enough income to live, eat and pay bills. To the credit of case managers, they have developed and nurtured relationships with some real estate agencies who have made rental accommodation available for our clients.

It has been an interesting time with many arrivals coming as a single young adult with some educational background and a level of English proficiency. Many of these people want to pursue further study to gain

secure employment in a field other than low skill or labouring. We have seen some new arrivals employed within a fortnight as family and friends organise employment for them.

Support and education groups continue to be a big focus for the team. In 2022/23 they included two youth groups, sessions covering the nine areas of the National Settlement Framework, road safety, emergency preparedness, swimming lessons, driving lessons, citizenship classes and applications.

Information is covered as themes emerge such as scams, digital literacy, assistance to apply for rebates, assistance with energy education, utility companies and applying for concession cards.

There have been lots of fun events, too. Such as an excursion to the

Melbourne Zoo, via public transport, and a tour of the Loddon Valley, to expose new arrivals to the opportunities just outside of Bendigo.

Settlement Engagement and Transition Support findings:

- We had **324** registered clients.
- **223** clients have primary or secondary education. A high number of clients are studying full time, and some are preparing for further education.
- **96.9%** of our current client cohort are Karen.
- Our partners have included Victoria Police, Department of Transport, Women Can, L2P, Department of Home Affairs, Bendigo Kangan TAFE and a number of community and faith leaders.



Pictured: All ages appreciated a visit to the zoo and a chance to experience the public transport system.

From deepest jungle to Quarry Hill, seven months in

First published on bchs.com.au and in the Bendigo Magazine.



We are at the home of new arrivals Day Wah, Hsar Nay Htoo and their children, seven-months post settlement. The youngest, four-year-old Ywa Hay Blue Moo, is here, her three brothers are at Quarry Hill Primary; they are the first Karen students to attend the 166-year-old school.

This modest brick veneer home has views of the primary school playground, and the suburb's historic Victorian cottages. A neat row of shoes lines the entrance hall, ascending from smallest to largest. In the living room, two grey sofas and a four-piece dining setting are pushed against the walls and the space between filled with a big, brightly coloured floor rug.

The couple, plus BCHS Settlement Services staff Sue Ghalayini and Nay Chee Aung, are sitting cross legged on the rug, with a thermos, jug of tea, mugs and coffee sachets at the centre of their circle. Hsar Nay Htoo places warm, sweet drinks into everyone's hands.

It's been just six months since the family moved into this rental home in Bendigo, having spent their first month in Australia living with their relatives and sponsors. Having waited eight years between their humanitarian Visas being accepted

and leaving a Thai refugee camp. Day Wah says they almost lost hope.

Day Wah had lived in the Mae Surin refugee camp for 22 years, due to sustained and systemic violence towards Karen people in their homeland of Burma (Myanmar). Mae Surin is the remotest of all of Thailand's camps and home to approximately 2000 people. Conditions are primitive. There are few opportunities for work and education. There is one small medical centre, no bigger than this Bendigo living room, where landmine injuries are treated and babies are born. As Sue says, it's deep in the jungle "out of sight, out of mind".

In the camp, Day Wah worked in education, religious and legal roles. He is hoping to use his diverse skills in Bendigo, but first must learn English.

"I have so many things to learn," he says. "I want to be independent."

Day Wah says overwhelmingly the biggest challenge as a new arrival is the language barrier. (Today, Nay Chee is translating.) Six months into English lessons at Bendigo TAFE, he is learning. As are Hsar Nay Htoo and the children. The three boys are coming home speaking the words of the playground and classroom.

Sue asks how they're settling in, how are the neighbours, how are they going maintaining the garden? Day Wah nods and smiles that all is well, they have been welcomed into this street. Someone gifted them a second-hand mower.

Today Sue has explained the pilot light in the gas heater and checked the light globes in the lounge. She laughs she's also good with plumbing. She helped the family secure this home, thanks to her strong connections with several local real estate agencies.

"Many landlords now seek Karen tenants," Sue says. "They're clean, they're tidy, they pay the rent on time ... until they save a deposit and buy their own home."

It's also more common for new arrivals to stay with family rather than require private accommodation. Those families also sponsor and pay for their loved ones to come. In this case, almost \$10,000 was saved for expenses and airfares.

New arrivals to Australia receive 12 months grace before the government requires them to either work or pursue further study. In that time, in Bendigo, they take part in a many BCHS programs, covering such things as road safety, laws and culture, emergency services, public transport and more.

Sue says considering the hardships and trauma new arrivals have endured, and the challenges they start with, their journeys to make a life here are phenomenal.

"A couple of people who arrived last week had never held a pen," she says. "And they need to sign so many documents when they come. We have to explain to them, that x or circle is now your mark."

New training module for podiatrists

The podiatry team continually strive to ensure the safe and effective use of podiatry equipment. As such, two podiatrists, Jodie and Nicole, collated a list of the 23 pieces of equipment available to use in their podiatry practice. For each item of equipment, the team developed a guide for safe use and risks associated with the use of each piece. The team then created a Podiatry Equipment Training Module for current podiatrists, podiatry students and new podiatrists to undertake.

All team members then completed the module, which is now a valued asset to current and future staff, accessible at any time. As new equipment is purchased, a guide for safe use and risks associated with that equipment will be added to the module and staff informed of the update.

Pictured: Nicole uses the orthotic grinder, which features in the new equipment guide.



Cultural training day rewards

Podiatrists Nicole and Caitlyn and Social Support Group Coordinator Judy attended the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander: A Cultural Journey Together for Greater Cultural Awareness training at the Quality Lakeside Hotel in May 2023.

Mulana Kaalinya CEO Robynne Nelson, and Torres Strait Islander Elder Uncle Gavin Kum Sing facilitated the training. Regional Aboriginal Development Officer Sector Development Team for Loddon Mallee and Hume Regions, Vicki Walker, organised and coordinated the event for CHSP providers in the Loddon Mallee and Hume regions.

Pictured: Caitlyn and Nicole welcomed the opportunity to undertake cultural awareness training.



Bilingual staff educate on diabetes and healthy eating

BCHS' Refugee and Cultural Diversity team have been providing the Karen community with the opportunity to learn about their bodies, healthy eating principles, the pathophysiology of type 2 diabetes, and how to reduce risk of chronic disease through adoption of a healthy lifestyle.

Diabetes Victoria have provided training to BCHS bilingual staff in how to use the Diabetes Victorian as a visual learning tool. The Feltman® is a life-sized interactive educational tool that assists with in-language experiential learning.

Bilingual staff also use the Diabetes Victoria Karen Healthy Eating Pictorial Guide to promote learning and understanding of diabetes and healthy eating. This booklet was previously developed in partnership with BCHS and the Bendigo Karen community and is now available online with Karen audio.

Eight Healthy Eating and Feltman® sessions were delivered in the last financial year.

This work is funded by the Victorian State Government Strategic Partnerships Project.

Pictured right: Ma Paw delivering the Feltman sessions.

Below: Diabetes Victoria Karen Healthy Eating Pictorial Guide, previously developed with BCHS and the Bendigo Karen community.



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ကညိ Karen

diabetes victoria

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Improving health care onsite and in community

New staff join the team

The medical practice welcomed three new GPs in 2022/23.



Nusrat Tumpa

Dr Nusrat Jahan Tumpa graduated from Dhaka Medical College (Bangladesh) in 2006. She came to Australia in 2010 and shortly after arrival was registered by the Australian Medical Council.

Dr Nusrat gained more than six years of experience in Australian hospitals. She has extensive experience in emergency medicine, paediatrics, women's health, orthopaedics, mental health, minor skin lesions and wound management.



Mehwish Riaz, registrar

Dr Riaz has worked in hospitals overseas and in Western Australia across various specialities in medicine, surgical and emergency care.

She has a special interest in child and adolescent health and whilst working in the paediatrics department at the hospital, concurrently completed postgraduate training in paediatrics through Sydney Child Health Program.



Michael Barclay, refugee health

Dr Barclay graduated from Monash University and has completed postgraduate research in preventive medicine, public health and bioethics. He has worked in a wide variety of medical specialties before general practice, particularly emergency medicine, paediatrics, psychiatry, rehabilitation and palliative care. Outside of work he enjoys soccer, music, nature and learning other languages.



Workplace Health flu vaccinations

2877 Workplace Health - throughout City of Greater Bendigo, Loddon Shire, Mount Alexander Shire, Campaspe Shire

43 Medical Practice - fee paying.

80 BCHS staff

Medical Practice free flu vaccinations

450 (Vaxigrip /Afluria Quad)

470 Fuad (over 65+yrs)

Spirometry testing resumes

Spirometry testing, which measures lung function, was stopped during the COVID-19 outbreak due to its risk of infection.

In July 2022 nurses and some GPs from the medical practice attended spirometry training, then commenced testing patients again in December. Over the following seven months approximately

50 tests were performed in the medical practice, and more in workplaces.

This has resulted in improved patient care as it was taking six-12 months for spirometry to be completed when patients were referred externally. The quicker diagnosis and subsequent treatment has meant improved outcomes for our patients.

GPs in Secondary Schools

We're helping ensure students at five regional schools can access free, safe, quality health services from a GP and nurse one day every week in term time, thanks to the Victorian Government's GPs in Secondary Schools program.

Our staff are based at Wedderburn College, St Arnaud, Eaglehawk Secondary School, Crusoe College and Weeroona College.

The program is especially important in places like Wedderburn, where there's only one other doctor practicing in the town.

In 2022/23 there were 756 GP consultations across participating schools, which included:

- A higher percentage of physical health consultations at Crusoe College and Wedderburn College compared to state-wide proportions.
- A higher percentage of mental health consultations at Eaglehawk Secondary College and Weeroona College Bendigo compared to state-wide proportions.



Pictured: We're working hard to increase access to contraception services in regional Victoria. In May we welcomed The Royal Women's Hospital Clinical Champions program practitioners Cath Hannon and Dr Belle Huguenin, to assist with our service capabilities. They were here to support our clinical team in best practice IUD insertion. Pictured here are Cath (in white at back) and Belle (in green at front) with our Bendigo site doctors and nurses.



Nurses Heather and Kate had a great time at the National Municipal Works and Engineering Conference in March, which ended with a brush with fame.

The pair assessed the cholesterol levels and blood pressure of 42 conference attendees, advising 22 of those to make follow-up appointments with their GP.

Conference guest and ex-Collingwood coach Nathan Buckley stopped by to meet two of the most popular people at the conference... Heather and Kate get invited back each year to provide all-important health assessments, nutrition and Quit smoking advice.

headspace makes room for care and connections



Car safety workshops equip women

headspace Bendigo collaborated with Yo Bendigo, Bendigo TAFE, Trades Women Australia and Mandalay Resources to host two car safety workshops for 30 young women and people who identify as women at Bendigo TAFE in June, 2023.

The Bendigo Youth Ambassador initiative covered how to maintain a vehicle and outlined pathways for women in trade industries. Bendigo TAFE apprentice Sharni and Mandalay systems officer Danielle spoke about their journey into a trade.



Youth Ambassadors represent

Youth Ambassadors Meg, Zac and Ella were selected to attend the State of the Future Youth Forum at the Parliament of Victoria in May.

Zac addressed the forum, including members of parliament, speaking about youth mental health.

Ella, also a Health Promotion Officer for Bendigo Community Health Services, said the forum was an awesome opportunity to learn more about how the Victorian Government and Parliament worked, and to advocate for greater recognition of the role young people should have in shaping the state's present and future.



Work and Study Program fosters opportunities

headspace Bendigo's Work and Study Program assists young people who are accessing mental health support through headspace and is funded by the Department of Social Services.

During Work and Study Month in March the team promoted its services to schools, employers, young people, and the wider community. We visited Charlton College, Indie College, Bendigo Senior Secondary College and the Bendigo Marketplace to talk about preparing for work and study, and to promote vocational pathways and headspace services.

In May, the team attended Bendigo TAFE's Tomorrow Bound Career Expo at Red Energy Arena, to talk to young people about career and education pathways.

Pictured: The Work and Study team at Charlton College.



The Agnico Eagle Australia Community Partnership Program awarded funds for us to purchase items for young people to ensure they are well equipped going into work or further study.

"Thanks to the immense support and funding provided by Agnico Eagle, I've been able to obtain my proper identification, as well as the subsidiary tools, services and certifications that I need to make a proper start on my life and career goals, as well as focus on my dream career path in the future," said one young person accessing Work and Study support.

In the last 12 months:



67.6% of young people accessing support from the team had a positive work or study related outcome.

54.1% obtained employment.

77% were engaged in work and/or study within six months of being in the program.

Community digs deep

Once again headspace received some wonderful donations from community groups and events, helping to support young people in the region. The team even had a visit from the Mystery Machine ahead of the Australian Van Nationals, which generously donated its gate takings to the service.



Dean and Coll paid a visit to Hofmann Engineering to learn about the company. Throughout the year headspace has visited many employers to better understand the work opportunities for young people in the region.

HEY Diversity at headspace



Pictured: HEY Diversity Queer Camp attendees.

The HEY Diversity program ran its first Queer Camp in early September 2022, but it certainly won't be the last, thanks to the great feedback from a host of happy campers. Camp Getaway in Axedale donated its facilities and food, enabling 16 young people to experience a weekend of fun and connection. Volunteers from Thorne Harbour Country, Trans and Gender Diverse Bendigo and Beyond, plus the HEY Diversity worker attended.

The weekend featured a Friday night dinner with special guest Dr Todd Fernando, Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities, a singalong, yarn session and smores making around the campfire, sword craft demonstrations, art therapy, a hair and makeup session and a dance party/ Karaoke.

"The Queer Camp was amazing. I'm so glad I got to go."

"I would recommend this camp to any LGBTIQIA+ youth, as it's a fun getaway with friends and others like you, and you are not pressured to do anything you don't want to do, everyone is encouraging and supportive, it's the most fun I've had in ages."

"I feel that my mental health has improved, because I was around many people in the same boat as me. I didn't feel bad for having mental health issues and felt comfortable expressing myself around everyone else."

Diversity groups

Diversity groups, the FROGS and TADPOLES, found a new homebase at the Bendigo Library two afternoons each week, which has also encouraged members to explore and use the library resources.

Over the year, the diversity worker facilitated 99 groups, including fortnightly YPARC sessions and a monthly Rainbow Mushrooms online group with other HEY partners and young people around the state.

Wear It Purple Day 2022

Local LGBTIQIA+ young people shared their knowledge and experiences on two public panels during Wear it Purple Day. Later, the Bendigo Library hosted Thorne Harbour Country, YO Bendigo, headspace Bendigo and Trans and Gender Diverse Bendigo and Beyond, a mini clothing swap, a fashion parade and dance party.

Event and education session highlights

The HEY Diversity worker has been busy with events over the last 12 months, especially Pride events, connecting with the community, providing resources, raising awareness and supporting young people and their families.

Support group for parents/ carers of trans and gender diverse young people

This monthly support group is an opportunity for parents and carers to gather in a safe and confidential space to learn and hear from guest speakers.

We also deliver the LGBTIQ Carers Project, a partnership with Carer Gateway Services. The project funds respite for parents/carers, such as a monthly dinner, care packs and massage vouchers.

Physical activity program has holistic impact



The Active Living Program saw significant growth in the number of exercise group sessions held and attendance at group sessions over 2022/23. The team promoted the program through flyers, social media, newsletters, emails and formal meetings with organisations, medical practices and participants.

The team also took part in health promotional activities such as Heart Health Matters and Call, Push, Shock Sessions, in collaboration with the Heart Foundation and Ambulance Victoria. In February they hosted a Falls Prevention educational talk at Bendigo Domain Retirement Village which was well received and attended by over 100 residents.

Ninety clients completed the annual consumer experience survey with 86 per cent stating the Active Living Program had made a difference to their mental health and wellbeing. Eighty per cent reported the program had enabled them to stay connected with others in the community, 70 per cent reported attending the program had helped reduce feelings of social isolation.

5509 visits to the Active Living Program.

Staff delivered **852** sessions.

86% of participants said the program made a difference to their lives.

Building stronger families

The Family Services team connected with more than 250 families in 2022/23 through a range of programs, including Family Services, the Loddon Care Hub and our newest initiative, smalltalk Supported Playgroups. Through these programs, children, parents and carers have been supported to reach for their goals.

Of the 16 families who responded to our feedback survey:

- 88% reported a positive improvement for their child/children as a result of Family Services involvement.
- 88% felt stronger and/or more positive as a parent.
- 94% felt positive about their time with Family Services.

“Their assistance with supporting the NDIS planning process was invaluable.”

“My children’s behaviour has improved and the family unit is stronger.”

“My worker helped me stay strong and safe.”

An opportunity for improvement was identified relating to the type of information and support provided to parents when leaving hospital with a newborn baby.

Another priority for the team was to build our cultural safety awareness. We spent a day with Baydon Widdicombe, of Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative. We learnt about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders’ history, the impact of government policy and practices on First Nations people and explored our work with children and families. It was a significant time of reflection for the team.

One of the challenges facing families in our community is the cost of living. While we connect families with services to access support, the team also created meal kits that could be given at short notice. We consulted with parents about what to include in the boxes, which featured a family dinner, breakfast and some lunchbox snacks.



New therapies and services for mental health

The Counselling and Mental Health team added to the trauma treatments available to clients in 2022/23. Five staff became trained in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing; a psychotherapy treatment designed to alleviate the distress associated with traumatic memories.

We also piloted a project to engage refugee youth, with a clinician placed one day a week at Crusoe College.

Overall, the team received **1,074** enquires for service for children, adolescents, and adults.



We provided **six weekly groups**, including four art therapy groups, a parenting group, and a self-care and wellbeing group.

Our clinicians delivered **services to families** engaged in out of home care through the Loddon Care Hub. Our **Culturally Sensitive Counselling program**, through Foundation House, delivered successful group programs to the Karen and Afghan communities.

Our 12 Counselling and Mental Health staff hosted **11 placement students**, from Counselling, Social Work, Psychology, and Art Therapy programs.

Upskilling the wider region in AOD response

The role of the Specialist Family Violence Advisor (SFVA) in Alcohol and Other Drugs has focussed on professional development in clinical guidance and practice. We have been responding to the interconnected nature of gendered violence experiences, compounded by the stigmatisation of substance use.

One key activity during 2022/23 was to implement integrated strategies across state-funded AOD programs, mental health services and family violence support systems. This approach aimed to embed

substance use considerations within family violence and mental health reforms, empowering organisations and practitioners to provide more informed and effective clinical guidance and practice

There has been a focus on training, including creating content for, and taking part in, local, regional, statewide, and national training programs. These workshops and stand-alone sessions equipped professionals across a range of disciplines with the literacy required to address the complexities of family violence and substance use.

The SFVA role has averaged 20 clinical consultations per week, providing valuable support and expertise to practitioners seeking guidance in their work with individuals affected by family violence.

By enhancing the skills and competencies of practitioners, the AOD sector has contributed significantly to a more informed and compassionate approach, ultimately leading to more effective outcomes for the community seeking support within sanctioned systems of oppression.

Clients continue to Head to Health

The Head to Health Program was funded to 5.0EFT, with staff including mental health nurses, a psychologist, social workers, an occupational therapist, and peer workers.

The free counselling program provided **4266** service contacts to **581** clients.

One La Trobe University Social Work student completed placement with the team in the spring semester of 2022.



Pharmacotherapy program sees a shift in treatment choice

There have been some significant changes in the choices of treatment of our Pharmacotherapy Program clients over the past year.

There are now almost the same number of clients opting for Long Acting Injectable Buprenorphine (LAIB) as there are receiving methadone, with the LAIB clients reporting some incredible results.

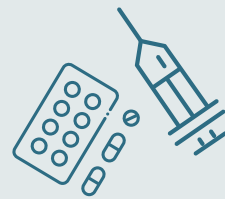
LAIB is less expensive than other treatments and offers greater convenience as patients don't need to attend dosing sites as frequently.

One client, who had been receiving opioid replacement therapy for ten years, said switching to LAIB had

changed his life. He said the fact he didn't need to present for daily doses meant his mental health improved and he was no longer reacting to situations with anger. He was doing more around the house, could travel and take a holiday and had stopped thinking about using all the time.

Many patients on LAIB transitioned off the program and did not return, which staff described as a "game changer".

These excellent outcomes align with the aims of our Pharmacotherapy Program, which is a specialist service that incorporates assessment, support and care for people requiring opioid dependence treatment.



180 Pharmacotherapy Program patients

72 on Methadone

37 on Suboxone

71 on LAIB

11 patients who transitioned off the LAIB and did not return to the program.

"I'm a new patient to the clinic. A heroin user for five years. My quality of life has improved – I have not used since starting on LAIB. I have more confidence with the support and encouragement I'm receiving. Thinking clearer. Feeling more like me. The clinic, the nurses, the therapy have been an incredible support to me already and our community appreciates and needs their excellent care and service daily."

Nova House satisfies

It's been an eventful year for our five-bed detox unit Nova House, which spent the first two months without a roof. While repairs took place, the staff spent the time training and upskilling.

Senior Leader AOD Clinical Services Sheenah Van Eck said the reopening of the building was followed by a series of flood events throughout the year. "Nothing builds teamwork like being part of a human chain with buckets, mops and towels," she said. "One of our clients at the time said it was one of the best gym workouts he had in ages." Not that it put a dampener on their stay.

"We collected 96 client satisfaction surveys in the last year, as well as an assortment of thank you cards and letters from both clients and family," Sheenah said. "The comments have been overwhelmingly positive."

"We also ask our clients for suggestions on how we can improve our service. Most said 'nothing. Just keep on doing a great job'. Some made us laugh. Last year's winner was the gentleman who

presented an argument for a pet therapy goat. This year's is a toss-up for the request for a lap pool and the one for fishing rods."



Pictured: Nova House staff Agatha Doyle, Nomusa Napier and Sheenah Van Eck.

Monitoring client and community experience

Client feedback

Feedback about client and community experience with BCHS is always welcome and supports us to further improve our services and programs.

The following options are available for clients and community to provide feedback in relation to their experience with BCHS:

- By completing a 'Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints' form available from reception at any BCHS site
- By providing feedback through BCHS' website - <https://www.bchs.com.au/about/resources/feedback>
- By emailing bchs@bchs.com.au

Where requested or required, a BCHS staff member responds to feedback either in person or by phone, e-mail, or letter within 30 days.

"I would like to express my gratitude for the service provided to me by BCHS yesterday."

"I just wanted to acknowledge the wonderful work of [BCHS staff member]. Their commitment to make a difference to the wellbeing of this young child is exemplary."

"I had an appointment with [BCHS staff member] today. I found them to be extremely personable and very thorough."

Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey

Bendigo Community Health Services participated in the 2023 Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey (VHES). The department invited 139 of our clients to participate in the survey, and 34 took the opportunity, providing a response rate of 24 per cent.

The results were received by BCHS in June 2023, and are currently being reviewed and actioned. This feedback represents only a very small proportion of clients accessing BCHS services and programs, however will support us in further improving our services and programs. A summary of the 2023 results include:



100% for 'Overall, how would you rate the care you received from the service?'



60.6% for 'Were you able to get an appointment when you needed one?'. (This is similar to the overall Victorian score of 63.3%).



88.2% for 'Do you think using this Community Health Service has been helpful to your health and wellbeing?'. (This is similar to the overall Victorian score of 83.4%).



71.9% for 'Do you think using this Community Health Service has assisted you in being able to do the things that are important to you?'. (This is similar to the overall Victorian score of 78.3%).



100% for 'If you had any questions or concerns, were you able to discuss these with staff?'



93.5% for 'Did staff work as a team to care for you?'

Consistently improving quality and safety

Incident and hazard reporting

BCHS uses a custom-built system for reporting and managing incidents and hazards. When a staff member lodges an incident or hazard, a notification is triggered to our Risk, Quality and Compliance Team where it is processed and then sent to the appropriate Executive or Senior Leader/s to review, action and record details of the incident or hazard review and end result. Our Risk, Quality and Compliance Team oversees incident and hazard investigations and regularly consults and provides reports to BCBS' Health and Safety Representatives and Board of Directors. Our Health and Safety Representatives are active in reporting incidents, identifying hazards, and providing recommendations for controls.

We recorded 164 incidents in the 2022-2023 financial year. Incident reports rose by 43% compared to the previous financial year. This was again due to two key factors:

1. Strategies were maintained to educate and empower staff members to speak up about health and safety in the workplace, in particular the reporting of incidents and hazards.
2. Infection Control incidents were the most reported incident type. These reports primarily included cases of COVID-19 in the workplace. A new Pandemic/Epidemic incident type was introduced through 2022-23 to more accurately capture these reports. Tracking cases through our incident reporting system has allowed us to continue to monitor the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace and adapt our response accordingly.

Incident Type	2021-22	2022-23
Behaviour	13	23
Clinical/Medical	4	5
Death	0	0
Electrical	1	0
Environmental*	0	2
Exposure*	0	0
Fall, Slip or Trip	9	16
Hazard	13	21
Infection Control	54	26
Intruder	1	0
IT Issue*	0	2
Manual Handling*	0	0
Medication*	0	3
Near Miss	4	11
Needle Stick	0	1
Operational	3	11
Pandemic/Epidemic*	0	21
Personal Injury/Trauma	4	8
Privacy	5	1
Property/Vehicle	3	10
Security*	0	0
Service/Program Access*	0	0
Service/Program Delivery*	0	1
Other	1	2
Total	115	164

*Represents new incident type introduced through 2022-23.

A new system for staff safety

BCHS is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all staff, clients and visitors.

Over the 2022-23 financial year, BCHS implemented a new MePACS remote duress device across service and program areas completing home and outreach visits, and alone work.

The MePACS duress device is a compact and discreet wearable device that can be used to quickly send a signal for help in an emergency. It is monitored 24/7 by the MePACS Response Team, where trained operators are ready to assess an incident, provide support and take appropriate actions in a timely manner.

The MePACS duress device can be activated by BCHS staff if they are concerned about the health and safety of themselves or others or if assistance with a medical emergency is required.

Accreditations strengthen commitment to safety

Our quality and safety systems are integrated into service and program delivery and are supported by our commitment to maintaining accreditation under the following quality and safety standards:

- QIC Health and Community Services Standards
- ACE&CQA National Quality Standards (Family Day Care)
- Aged Care Quality Standards (Podiatry, Physical Activity Programs, Social Support Group)
- headspace Model Integrity Framework (headspace Bendigo)
- Human Services Standards (Family Services)
- NDIS Practice Standards (Early Years, Podiatry, Physical Activity Programs)
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Standards (Medical Practice)

Vision, mission, values

We want (Vision):

Better health and wellbeing across generations.

We exist (Mission):

To work hand in hand with our community to achieve healthier lives.



We strive for (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 sense of connectedness, pride and support through enjoying our work and being passionate about making a difference.



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