



merri outreach support service

ANNUAL REPORT

2022



Striving to end homelessness, sustaining housing, strengthening communities.

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Families,
Fairness
and Housing



myagedcare

VISION STATEMENT

"Striving to end homelessness, sustaining housing, strengthening communities."

MISSION STATEMENT

"MOSS treats all people equally by ensuring they feel welcomed, connected, involved, secure and supported."

Get in touch online...

Email: merri@merri.org.au or visit our website: www.merri.org.au

MOSS is a place where people of diverse genders and sexual orientations are welcomed and supported



DONATE TO MOSS!

Donations enhance the capacity of MOSS to meet the needs of homeless people in flexible and creative ways.

It's because of our compassionate donors that we've been able to help thousands of Victorians make positive transitions and achieve long term stability in their lives. We're eternally grateful for people like you who are committed to ending homelessness.

To understand how your donation can positively impact our organisation's service delivery, please visit our donations page on our website or scan the QR code below.



Our long-time supporter Uncle Jack



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Merri Outreach Support Service acknowledges the Wurundjeri people, the traditional owners of the Kulin Nations and custodians of the lands on which we work and pay our respects to Indigenous Elders past, present and emerging.



Chairperson's Report

Stephen Gagen

The French writer and journalist Jean-Baptiste Karr is mostly known outside France for only one thing: his aphorism “The more things change, the more they stay the same.”

Sometimes we might feel a bit bewildered by change. It has certainly been yet another year of change and adaptation at MOSS. However, change can be a positive thing if it is managed properly, and – as any gardener knows – you need to compost and recycle to nurture the new season's growth.

During the year we gave up our Northcote office to consolidate operations at Lakeside Drive in Broadmeadows. This was done not purely to save on the considerable rent we paid for Northcote: the building also had several issues, including poor ventilation and no natural lighting. Another contributing factor is that we have learnt how to work in a more mobile manner, and there are now fewer requirements for office space. I understand the staff who have moved to Broadmeadows are pleased that they have fresh air and pleasant views from their new desks!

Financial constraints have been demanding for the organisation as arrears payments have been introduced for some funding contracts. This has affected cash flow within the organisation and as a not-for-profit that had previously been paid upfront and now must be reimbursed for costs including staff wages, it has been a challenge.

We have also seen more competitiveness in various funding tenders with services competing against each other, which has resulted in less money to provide the same high-quality service. So far, we have prevailed and have been able to fend off this pernicious strategy to save money at the expense of community organisations such as ours.

Our commitment to the staff has meant we have refused to compromise on the quality of the work and as such, we remunerate staff accordingly for the excellent work that they achieve in striving to end homelessness.

My Chair's Report last year was dominated by Covid-19 and our response to the challenges it brought. The pandemic is still not over – though some people might like to think it is – and we continue to have a responsibility to protect our clients, many of whom are not in the best of health.



The community's – and our – response to Covid-19 was one of the positive effects of an agent of change that at first seemed to have no positive side. Of value were the strong and enduring bonds that we developed with local Councils and with Health providers, particularly with Your Community Health.

The Board's job in an organisation such as ours is not to engage in the day-to-day management of the company, but rather to identify new strategies and set new strategic directions. To be looking always at better and more innovative ways of doing things. The Key questions we must keep in mind to achieve this include:

- How can we improve the consumer experience at MOSS?
- How can we best engage every employee in the next chapter of MOSS' growth and development?
- How do we secure the future viability of MOSS?

To this end, MOSS has applied to the Housing Registrar to become a Registered Housing Provider. We have two properties already, but we are now making the necessary changes to our Constitution to meet the Housing Regulator's requirements and hope soon to acquire further properties.

We have the necessary skills and knowledge on the Board and amongst our staff to make a success of this new venture. This will allow us to meet the needs of our clients in addition to supplying a welcome income stream.

Mark and the Board have also worked with the City of Darebin, other local community organisations, and the State Government to develop two further proposals.

The first is to set up a one-stop hub in Reservoir. People scarcely ever come to us with isolated problems: housing issues are usually compounded by health difficulties, substance abuse problems, an inability to budget, and poor educational attainment. So, it makes sense to collaborate with local community groups to provide a one-stop shop to meet these diverse needs.

We are partnering with the City of Darebin, Your Community Health, Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education, and Darebin Information Volunteer and Resource Service to seek funding to convert an existing building in Reservoir to provide a joint facility where the full range of client needs can be addressed.

The second is a proposal being developed with the City of Hume and the state government to set up a Youth Refuge in the City of Hume. Most of the resources to deal with homelessness are currently concentrated in the inner suburbs, and there is an urgent need for facilities in the outer suburbs.

If this proposal succeeds, we would be looking at working with other local councils to develop similar refuges elsewhere.

One change that we did not welcome was the death of our beloved Ambassador Uncle Jack Charles on 13 September 2022. Jack was a decent age and appeared to be in good health. We were both saddened and shocked to hear that he had collapsed one morning where he lived in Northcote.

Mark, MOSS support staff, and I attended the State Funeral that was held on 18 October in Hamer Hall, along with a group of

residents from the Northcote flats. It was preceded by a smoking ceremony outside – I think it might have set off the fire alarms if it had been held inside!

Sad though the occasion was, Uncle Jack's family wanted mourners to remember what a bright, cheerful, and positive man he was by wearing bright clothes, not funeral black.

The funeral was a joyous occasion, truly celebrating Uncle Jack's life, with singing and dancing from the LGBTIQ community and tributes from people from all walks of life.

In September two of our senior managers, Tony Littman, and Rita Lawrence, retired. Tony had been with us for 14 years, while Rita had only been with us for three, but they were both truly part of the furniture at MOSS, and they will be missed.

We have taken the opportunity to consolidate Tony and Rita's roles and we welcome our new General Manager of Operations Dr Nataliya Shkuratova, who joined us from Melbourne City Mission.

To return to my opening words, being a French intellectual, Jean-Baptiste Karr meant his famous saying about change in a perhaps more revolutionary and fundamental way than we in Australia might be comfortable with. What I meant was that, though we may now be doing things differently, the fundamentals of our job remain the same. Our purpose remains unchanged and is laid down in our constitution:

The Principal Purpose for which the Company is established is to assist persons experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Other things may change, and we may do things a little differently, but this statement remains at the core of what we do.

I would like to thank my fellow Directors Richard Agar, Gurhan Araci, Phillip Bain, Younes Benhim, Lisa Calderone, Oscar Ramos, Prameend Singh and Heather Yasamee, and our CEO Mark Goodie, our Management Team and our Administration Team for their hard work, support, and commitment over the past year.

I would like to especially thank our front-line Staff and Volunteers for their dedication and commitment. MOSS could not function without your dedicated support and care.

CEO's Report

Mark Goodie

The last twelve months continued to be uncertain and challenging for many within the communities that we support. These challenges were felt far and wide across the country, but for MOSS workers, we were very conscious of the impact felt on the vulnerable communities and people whom we work with. Service provision across each of the programs within MOSS has gone through a transition since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the work undertaken within the last 12 months, now considered the new normal.

At MOSS we were able to modify service delivery and support the homeless community to remain safe during the pandemic. We are extremely grateful to see that the State Government provided additional resources to house those who were homeless in hotel accommodations during the last couple of years. This allowed many of those who had fallen through the gaps in the past, the opportunity to be housed. As an organisation MOSS continued to adapt our service delivery to meet the expectations of our consumers in striving to end homelessness.

The various programs at MOSS continued to provide essential support to meet the needs of those we assist, such as food and other necessities. In particular, the older people whom MOSS supports required additional support. Thankfully, MOSS was fortunate enough to have the funding for the High-Risk Accommodation Response (HRAR). This allowed us to provide additional responses to many of the older people supported by MOSS.

Through a tender submission, MOSS received additional funding for the Targeted Case Management Response (TCMR). This Program addressed vaccination hesitancy within the Homelessness sector, providing information sessions and supporting people to be vaccinated. Both The HRAR and the TCMR programs gave us an opportunity to employ new staff members and expertise into the MOSS family, thus strengthening service provision.



We now find ourselves in a new place in time where limited additional funding that was there during the covid pandemic, is no longer available. As a result, we are now seeing many people returning to rough sleeping or other inappropriate housing options. It is disappointing to see this occur, as the last few years had shown that additional resources of funding and accommodation options, resulted in many of the most entrenched and vulnerable people being housed. MOSS is committed to advocating for the homeless community as we pride ourselves on being an organisation that is dedicated to consumer service excellence in achieving positive housing outcomes, being innovative, and being an advocate for the vulnerable people in our communities.

This year we saw our partnership with Darebin Council further strengthened with the Darebin Assertive Community Outreach (DACO) program funded for a further 3 years based on a positive tender process. This further evidenced Darebin City Council's commitment to address and reduce rough sleepers at a Local Government level. The impact has been overwhelmingly positive, with the program exceeding targets each year, through the DACO workers linking individuals into accommodation and other identified supports such as health, mental health, and material aid provision. The DACO program achieved some remarkable success during the initial pilot, and we are incredibly grateful to the City of Darebin for being so supportive and progressive.

Banyule City Council has further committed its dedication to reducing homelessness by waiving the MOSS desk rental fee for two outreach workers stationed at the Banyule-managed Harmony Centre. Banyule City Council has addressed homelessness by funding an Outreach worker for over 20 years. We thank Banyule for the ongoing support in reducing homelessness.

Working from Home or WFH, as we now know the vernacular, has increased in many sectors. MOSS has committed to allowing workers to continue to balance work in the office with working from home where able. This has allowed for a reduction in office rental space allowing for staff at the Northcote High Street office to relocate to other sites across the Agency. It was so wonderful to see how well the rest of the Agency welcomed their colleagues into other office spaces, with a flexible working life being one of the positive outcomes of the new working normal. MOSS still maintains a presence in Northcote at our Holmes St site. Staff wellbeing continues to be a primary concern for MOSS, ensuring that the work culture is continually buoyant and understanding the needs of staff in a rapidly changing service delivery landscape. This has been challenging during the last two years; however MOSS staff have adapted well. MOSS staff are its most important asset.

This year we said goodbye to two highly skilled and dedicated staff members who retired, after serving the Homelessness sector for well over 60 years combined. Both Tony Littman and Rita Lawrence were instrumental in shaping the sector and introducing reforms that strengthened and improved services for consumers. Their contribution to the homeless sector and MOSS has been profound and we thank them for the impact they have both made. MOSS welcomed Nataliya Shkuratova to the MOSS team as the new General Manager of Operations. Nataliya comes to MOSS with a vast array of experience in the NDIS, and Family Violence sectors, and more recently delivering the innovative Homelessness to Home program.

Another big event has been the unfortunate passing of Uncle Jack. Uncle Jack was a survivor of the stolen generation, who suffered terrible atrocities in his life, to rise and become a voice for First Nations peoples. Uncle Jack was a self-confessed thespian, cat burglar, musician, heroin addict, potterer, and activist whilst being a remarkable storyteller. I came to know Uncle Jack over the last 4 years in my role at MOSS and was proud when Uncle Jack was asked and honoured to become our first Ambassador. His advocacy work for various communities was tireless in his later years. His communication was engaging and addictive at times with his booming voice and beguiling stature being the centre of attention as he kept an eye on the community he loved. He is missed by all at MOSS. Vale Uncle Jack.

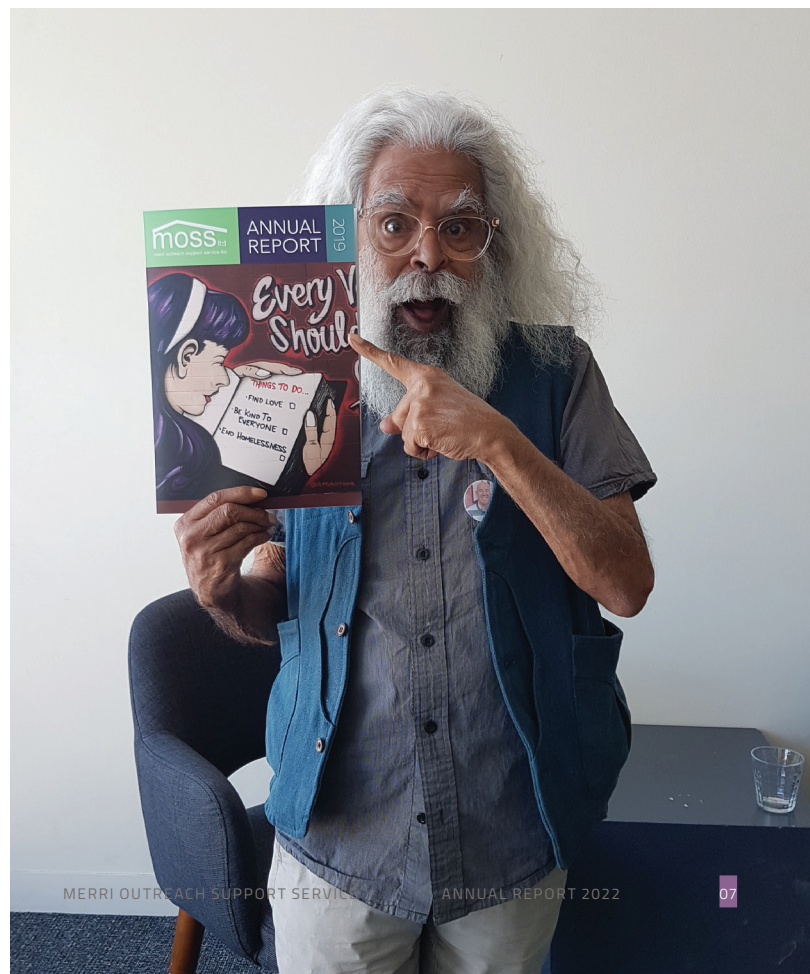
"It was with a heavy heart that the community lost Uncle Jack."

MOSS continues to strive to provide quality service, however funding has not kept pace with CPI, which has resulted in expenses having risen considerably. This has caused financial angst for the organisation over the last financial year. However, we are exploring new funding streams.

The year ahead:

MOSS will complete Housing Provider Registration in the coming year and will also begin to explore further provision of NDIS services, Care Finder services within the Primary Health networks. Additionally, MOSS continues to expand contractual case management and assertive outreach provision work with Local and State Governments where able. Importantly MOSS continues to increase our branding via social media to ensure that the communities that we work in understand the impact and work we perform to increase our visibility, voluntarism, corporate partners and donation platforms. This will allow MOSS to continue to expand our homeless service delivery models.

Most importantly I would like to thank the Merri Outreach Support Service Board of Directors, our amazingly dedicated staff, our community and agency partners, volunteers, funders, and partners. MOSS could not function without the tireless efforts of our employees and the support of the community – what impact MOSS creates in the lives of the most vulnerable in our community is made easier with your partnership, commitment, and involvement.



North and West Regional Children's Resource Program [NWRCRP] Report

The North and West Regional Children's Resource Program (NWRCRP) is primarily to encourage capacity building and develop best practice in responses to children. The role of the NWRCRP Coordinators is to engage and collaborate with Specialist Homelessness Services, family violence agencies and related networks to build on existing agency and practitioner strengths to address the needs of children. NWRCRP is a team of two workers normally based at the Broadmeadows office. The COVID-19 pandemic meant we spent our time working from home and the Broadmeadows office during the 2021/2022 financial year.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19 this year, the NWRCRP has remained busy and productive, including the release of many new tools to support the sector to engage and place children at the centre of our practice. The Hear My Voice Conversation Cards were released earlier this year and have been well received by the sector, with many agencies taking up copies of the cards and utilising them in everyday practice. The Conversation Cards aim to ensure children's voices are heard so they can meaningfully participate in matters affecting them and the Statewide Children's Resource Program (SCRP) was recently nominated for the Victorian Protecting Children Awards in the Child and Youth Empowerment category, recognising the impact of the Conversation Cards. The Conversation Cards also offer guidance to practitioners to have supportive conversation with infants, children and young people about their experience of family violence and homelessness to ensure children receive the supports they deserve. The cards compliment MARAM, the Information Sharing Schemes and prioritise the child's safety and wellbeing.

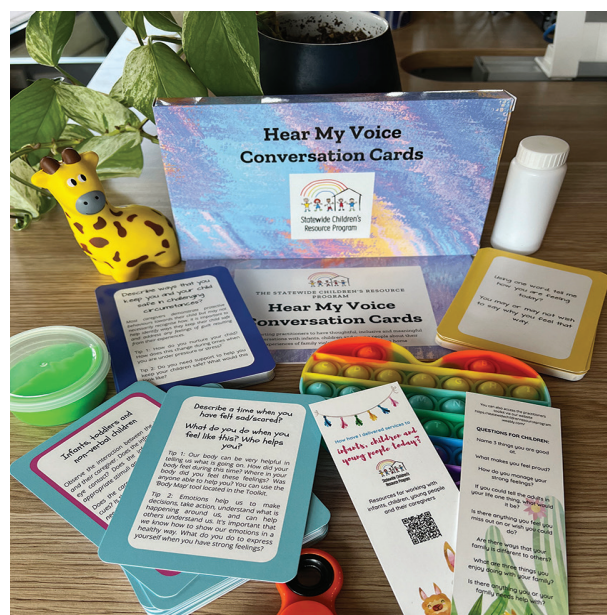
"The Hear My Voice Conversation Cards were released this year."

The other tools SCRCP have developed this year include: Children's Wellbeing Case Management Reflection Tool, Discussions with Children and Young People Accessing Services document, Homeless Children's Brokerage training video, Children Accessing Specialist Homelessness Services: An Induction for new practitioners' guide.

The NWRCRP maintained continuity of service delivery, in terms of providing training this year, through partnering with Council to Homeless Persons (CHP), Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (CFECFW) and Emerging Minds to develop a suite of e-learning modules. The first module is currently featured on the CHP learning platform, whilst the latter three are currently undergoing final touches. These modules are aimed at developing an understanding of the SCRCP and Brokerage Program, the impacts on child development of trauma, family violence and living without a home. The modules also support practitioner learning on how to meaningfully support children in case management.

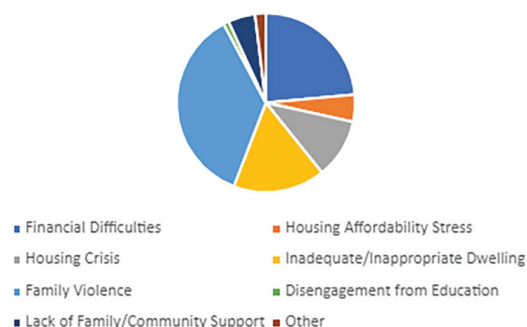
The graphs below provide an overview of the North and West Homeless Children's Brokerage Program (HCBP). It shows what the funds have been used towards and demographics of recipients.

In 2021-2022 a total of \$48,260 was allocated to HCBP managed by the NWRCRP. The HCBP was fully expended by the end of June 2022 with practitioners across 21 agencies accessing the HCBP.

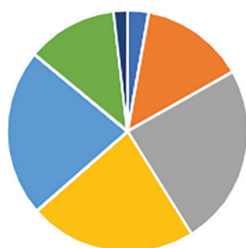


Main presenting reason

Consistent with previous years the overwhelming majority of 'main presenting reasons' that were listed were financial difficulties and family violence. Nearly 40% of applications had family violence listed as the main presenting reason, whilst financial difficulties followed with nearly 25% of applications including it as the main presenting reason.



Age of children



The largest age group supported by the HCBP in 2021-2022 were the 6-8-year-old age group making up 24.3% of all referrals closely followed by the 12-14-year-old group making up 22.5% of all referrals. This is consistent with the largest type of expenditure being allocated to school materials, fees and associated costs as demonstrated by the next graph.

Type of expenditure

The ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and health and safety restrictions continue to influence the way that the HCBP has been spent. The majority of funds have been spent on school related items such as uniforms, supplies, fees and devices to assist with at home learning during periods of lockdowns in Melbourne. Requests for funding for sports and other recreational activities have been significantly less since the start of the pandemic.



Case study:

We supported a young person to access two terms of basketball lessons including uniform and fees using brokerage from the Homelessness Children's Brokerage Program. The young person had experienced family violence and homelessness and we hoped to connect him to a sport so that he could have some fun away from home, where he was often feeling worried. The young person really wanted to play basketball, so we connected him up with a local club. The young person enjoyed playing, and the coach reported that the young person was happy to be able to play and settled well into the team.

Bright Futures Program Report

The Bright Futures Program provides assessment and case planning, case management and therapeutic group work programs to infants, children and young people 0-18 years who are accompanying their primary carer/s through the homelessness and/or family violence service system. The Program covers the DFFH North and West Metropolitan regions. We are a team of four workers normally based at the MOSS Broadmeadows office on the land of the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19 the Bright Futures was able to maintain uninterrupted service delivery throughout the year, both with case management support and group work support. Bright Futures utilised phone and zoom appointments to undertake our Stream 1 assessments, as well as for our Stream 2 case management appointments. When safe to do so, Bright Futures also met with parents/carers and children/young people in person, which included home visits (meeting inside and outside homes), taking a walk in a park with young people or meeting in the community such as at a café. Bright Futures remained flexible throughout so that we could meet clients where they were at, both figuratively and literally. Workers were similarly flexible with running groups, seamlessly moving between in person and online group sessions as needed due to COVID restrictions and lockdowns and running an outdoor holiday program – a family outing to Collingwood Children's Farm.

Despite the challenges, we were able to achieve numerous positive outcomes throughout the year. When COVID-19 cases flared up, Bright Futures put together 'Isolation packs' for children who had to isolate, due to testing positive for COVID-19 or being a household contact. These packs included age-appropriate art and craft activities such as play dough, colouring books, crayons and craft packs. This support also offered Zoom catch up sessions to children and were also an opportunity to check in with how the children were going as well as lift spirits by playing some virtual games. Feedback from families highlighted the importance of these sessions, particularly in providing children and carers with some respite during long isolation periods.

Even though our supports were at times altered due to the impacts of COVID-19 and lockdowns, Bright Futures maintained strong links with other services and referring workers, often utilising these relationships to enhance support for consumers. For example, when families were in isolation, Bright Futures worked with referring workers to provide food relief and other supports. Bright Futures also want to make special mention of our great relationship with Launch Housing worker, Fleur, from the Supporting Families at Risk – North program who was, and continues to be, a fierce advocate for children and strong ally and co-case manager for the families we jointly support.

Bright Futures have also had the opportunity to continue our great work through hosting the Family Violence Therapeutic Children's Worker Network for 6 months and partnering with schools and community organisations to run group work programs. In late 2021, Talia was also invited to co-facilitate two training sessions for the 'PARKAS' groupwork program alongside family violence sector gurus Wendy Bunston and Tara Pavlidis.



Team members have maintained strong connections with one another, despite working remotely for long periods of time. This has not only ensured that the Bright Futures program could continue relatively uninterrupted but has also supported the individual wellbeing of each of the team members.

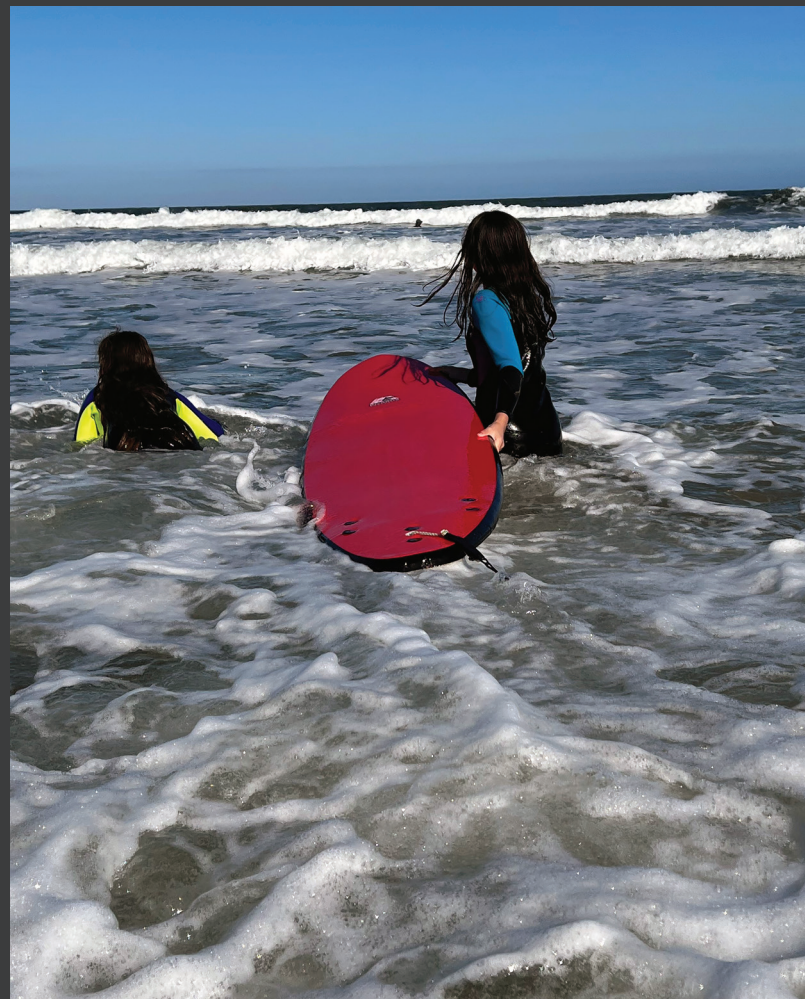
Our consumers shared that they felt the ways in which Bright Futures adapted support modes was very effective, particularly in relation to utilising phone and Zoom appointments which helped keep everyone safe whilst also increasing accessibility of appointments for several carers. Group participants were also thrilled when groups could return in person and in particular, our annual camp at Anglesea was able to proceed this year. Bright Futures Camp 2022: After being unable to run a camp in 2021 and having to postpone our January 2022 camp due to the pandemic, the Bright Futures team was delighted to finally be able to offer its Camp at Anglesea in April this year.

Nine children attended camp, after a last-minute withdrawal of two. They participated in off-site activities: surf/body boarding lesson; horse trail ride and; kayaking, as well as activities at the camp site: low ropes course; indoor and outdoor games; short bush walk; art activities; making photobooks; Easter egg hunt and movie nights. They reported enjoying all activities, although staff noticed that the horse-riding, a new addition this camp, was the favourite for most children.

Running camp is always a massive undertaking, particularly this year as we were running camp with minimal staff, one of the team testing COVID positive the week prior. Nevertheless, camp ran smoothly and was an overwhelming success with attendees thoroughly enjoying themselves!

Workers observed children being brave and trying new activities, such as surfing and horse riding. We saw the children navigate and develop new friendships and witnessed the children having so much fun! It was so refreshing and affirming to facilitate and be part of these experiences and to see the way Bright Futures Camp can so positively impact children. The children reported having a great time at camp and a few children we are still case managing have continued to ask when the next camp will happen. Families also shared with us that they were delighted and grateful their children were able to attend the camp; to have some time away from home and to have fun experiences after the challenges of the last two years.

We are already excited for our next camp in January 2023!



Connections Program Report

The Connections Program provides short-term case management and linkages supports to clients over the age of 26 years in the local government areas of Hume, Moreland, Darebin, Banyule, Whittlesea and Nillumbik. We are a team of 6 workers normally based at the Broadmeadows office, however we conduct our work from various locations such as community facilities, clients homes, streets and parks, work vehicles and our home offices.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19 the Connections Program has achieved consistent and valuable levels of service delivery through maintaining our collaborative approach to our work, by ensuring that we were available for our clients and by continuing to work diligently to support our clients to achieve their goals.

Despite the challenges, we have been able to continue providing our service in full, including partnering with Your Community Health around the High Risk Accommodation Response program, partnering with Foodbank to deliver several Farmers Markets at our Broadmeadows site and undertaking our own assertive outreach visits to housing estates.

Case Study

Following a police report made to the local council highlighting concerns for the welfare of a 72 years old male, the Connections Program was contacted with a request to check on the man.

The concerns raised by the police were that this person did not have any power or gas connected to his home, that he had no money or income and that he appeared to be very thin, frail and dishevelled and was living in hoarding conditions.

Workers made an impromptu visit to Andrew's (pseudonym) home. At this visit they were able to confirm the concerns raised in the referral were accurate and after several visits, the challenges of outstanding legal matters, fines and lack of identification documents were also added to this list.

Andrew invited the workers into his home where each room was filled with an assortment of neatly organised plastic and glass containers. Each of these containers had either been discarded in public spaces or placed in the wrong bins by others. He had travelled far and wide to collect these containers and had been sorting them over the years, with the view to disposing of them in the correct and socially responsible way.

Andrew had not had power connected to the home for many years. To bathe he improvised by leaving a small bucket of water in the sunshine, until it warmed to a temperature that would allow him to take a sponge bath. With no income he survived on food scavenged from bins outside the local shopping strip.

Understanding Andrew's past was akin to reconstructing a long-discarded jigsaw puzzle, with many misplaced pieces. Through their ongoing connection with Andrew, workers came to understand that there was a significant event in Andrew's life, approximately 10 years prior. It was after this event that Andrew withdrew from mainstream society; he stopped paying his utilities bills, his council rates and disengaged from services and any human connections he had.

Over time Andrew allowed workers into his world and they gained an insight into the incredible resilience of this man and how he had managed for a long period time, despite his disengagement with systems in society. Andrew was a genuinely warm and welcoming individual, with a witty sense of humour and workers found him easy to engage.

Andrew now visits his GP regularly and with support has engaged State Trustees to manage his finances. His power has been connected and he stores the food delivered by meals-on-wheels in his new fridge. The shower has hot water, he has new I.D. documents and his bank account is no longer frozen. He now receives a regular income; the legal matter has been dealt with and he is very close to completing his goal of recycling the containers in his home.

Older Persons High Rise Support Programs [OPHRSP] Report

The Older Persons High Rise Support Program (OPHRSP) provides social engagement, community development, referrals and housing support to people aged 55 years and older living in the older persons high rises at Holmes Street, Northcote and Barkly Street, Brunswick. We are a team of 3 workers, usually based at either estate, which have approximately 120 units each. As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, we spent a great deal of our time working remotely from home, but were frequently required to attend both sites during the 2021/2022 financial year.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19, the OPHRSP maintained the highest levels of service delivery by continuing to offer individual support via telephone where necessary, or face-to-face where possible, working closely with tenants to ensure that they were able to maintain their independent living.

Despite the challenges, our team has been and continues to successfully work in the "new normal" and has provided program groups where possible, such as morning tea groups, community barbecues and has provided a mentoring Information Technology program, as well as supporting the High Risk Accommodation Response Program to run vaccination clinic days, at both estates in partnership with Merri Community Health and Your Community Health. We also participated in a Community Safety Awareness day together with Brunswick Police and the Department of Families, Fairness & Housing (DFFH).

Team members met with Cultivating Communities to advocate to increase the garden beds in our programs. This program allowed tenants to grow their own produce, share the produce amongst the tenants and create community connectedness.

Moana also advocated strongly to have a Foodbank in place for the Holmes Street resident working closely with DFFH and Darebin Rotary and Darebin Council. We identified that there is a greater need for a foodbank at Holmes Street, in particular with the increase of the cost of living.



Case study:

After 15 years of living on Melbourne's streets, Dave was not only homeless but also had a heroin addiction. At the onset of the COVID pandemic Dave's public housing application was approved. He moved into the housing estate for people aged over 55 year old with support from the Office of Housing and the OPHRSP.

This proved quite difficult for Dave, who was unsure how to live independently within four walls. He struggled with the concept of sleeping in a bed, having a fridge, cooking utensils or even house-keeping. Dave did not unpack his new furniture, but rather he just slept on the floor and soon enough, his home became squalor. Dave identified that he needed help to learn how to live in a home and sought regular case management support from MOSS OPHRSP.

Having made adjustments to having secure housing, Dave sought drug and alcohol counselling and worked closely with those specialist services as well as OPHRSP. He has now managed to refrain from using heroin for nearly 14 months. In his new accommodation, Dave linked into our IT mentoring digital program and has learnt how to use his lap top, which he saved for and purchased. He learnt and understood how to use the internet and an android phone as well as living in a healthier home. Whilst some life skills are still a struggle, Dave is learning how to take better care of himself and how to live within his community, accessing supports when needed. Dave will often pop into the office for a chat just to say he is doing really well and has thanked our teams for, as he says, "sticking in there with him". Dave advised that he appreciated all the help during a really difficult time. We wish Dave all the best in his journey moving forward.

MERRI OUTREACH
Support Services

COMMUNITY FREE COFFEE CART

Join us for a **FREE** hot beverage of your choice
Tea, Coffee, Hot Chocolate & Chai

WHERE?
Barkly Street Tower - Ground Floor

WHEN?
Tuesday 24th May 2022 - 10.30am

moSS your COMMUNITY HEALTH Merri Health



A tenants comment:

Michael spoke about what living in the new COVID normal means for tenants at Barkly Street, Brunswick. Michael said that:

"It is good to know that the staff are available to inform us about what goes on in the place, is excellent actually. In regards to the fact that I don't participate in programs and probably at a later stage I may, but it is noticed, for instance the pool comp commencing a couple of months ago, I was chatting with one of the blokes who participates in the pool comp and he was disappointed that the pool comp had to be put on hold because of COVID, but I was looking forward to this starting up again".

He shared that most of the residents miss the library as during this pandemic it had to be closed, but they understand that MOSS had been doing their best to create a nicer place, but it has been difficult not having access. Over the pandemic MOSS together with DFFH, Brunswick Police have created a stronger community and offered congratulations as it has been noticed in the place and it is making a difference.

Housing Support for the Aged Program [HSAP] Report

The Housing Support for the Aged Program (HSAP) provides long-term case management support to individuals with a history of homelessness, who are over the age of 50 years and reside in public housing in the localities of Darebin, Moreland, Banyule, Whittlesea and Nillumbik. The Program is a team of two part-time outreach case managers and a team leader. The program is normally based in Brunswick.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19 HSAP maintained a co-ordinated approach to service delivery. During periods of COVID isolation and working restrictions, this was accomplished through regular reviews of our COVID safe practices; weekly monitoring and contact with clients via phone calls and other COVID safe practices when support was required.

Knowing the importance of social connection and inclusion to the client's general health, longevity and overall well-being, program flexi funds were used in an unprecedented manner to ensure connectivity and easy access to service delivery. Mobile phones were purchased for those who did not have a working phone to ensure they were contactable by services to maintain continuity of care, minimise their levels of social isolation, maintain a sense of safety, reduce fear and anxiety from the unknown and to ensure their mental health is monitored.

Case study

Adrian aged 77 years old, has been a client of HSAP since late 2019. Adrian resides in a single dwelling in an older persons' estate and was referred to the program for long-term case management support. Adrian was identified as being at risk of homelessness due to underlying post-traumatic stress as a result of his service in the Australian Army during the Vietnam War; he had hoarding traits, limited mobility due to a history of strokes, heart and lung issues, obesity; he had other complex medical, cognitive, and mental health issues; and he had experienced long term loss and grief over the death of his wife 15 years earlier; social isolation and limited skills in managing his finances.

Adrian's involvement in the programme allowed him to address periods of social isolation by participating in HSAP social activities and engaging well with other programme clients during social settings. Adrian was assisted in maintaining his connections with existing support and medical services; however, this became increasingly difficult as his complex medical conditions, particularly his underlying cognitive impairments, deteriorated during and after his COVID isolation periods.

Adrian suffered a number of strokes, falls, and hospitalisations as well as a decline in memory and cognitive capacity. It was difficult to provide seamless service delivery and service coordination because Adrian would initially agree to support provided by and coordinated by HSAP case managers but would cancel the services provided or about to be provided just before their execution. An example of this would be the cancellation of case management support and sign up by a home care package provider without the knowledge of HSAP case managers just prior to the COVID isolation period.

As a result of regular monitoring and reviews of Adrian's case plan, it was identified that a more co-ordinated approach and increased level of monitoring of Adrian's identified support needs was required. This was established between HSAP case managers, and significant external services to ensure 'Adrian's support needs are adequately met. As a result of the co-ordinated efforts by stakeholders, Adrian successfully maintained the supports put in place.

Volunteer & Community Development Program Report

The 'Decrease the Digital Divide' Program provides one-to-one tutoring in basic technology skills to residents living in High Rise Estates of Barkly Street, Brunswick, and Holmes Street, Northcote.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19, the need for older residents to gain basic technology skills increased significantly. Pre-pandemic, many residents were already disadvantaged and were suffering from loneliness and being isolated and disengaged. During COVID most found themselves additionally disadvantaged by their lack of access to basic communication options, particularly IT access that most people take for granted. This compounded their isolation, particularly during extended periods when they were required to isolate, alone in their units, without technology to communicate with the outside world, family, friends, and support agencies. Consequently, many became even more disengaged, isolated, and withdrawn.

The 'Decrease the Digital Divide' Program was introduced in late 2021, to try and overcome some of these challenges. The program recruited community volunteers, and trains and supports them to work, one-to-one with older residents in the MOSS High Rise Estate. The Program enables residents to gain skills to navigate the ever-growing number of portals, to manage everyday life not

only to gain basic technology but even more important to also gain confidence and independence and connect with the wider community.

Program success lies in the fact that it offers individuals a 'needs and place-based,' self-paced learning in a familiar and supportive environment. This removes the barriers to learning that are often present when disadvantaged people learn in large groups and in unfamiliar surroundings.

Despite the challenges of the interruptions by COVID lockdowns and the scarcity of funding, for what is a resource-intensive program, through 'one-to-one' tutoring, we have been able to successfully implement the pilot program and look to additional funding sources that will enable us to continue to grow. We are grateful to the following organisations who have been able to support us in initiating, managing, and maintaining this program:

- Darebin Councils Community Grants
- Moreland Council – Community Grants,
- Stronger Communities Grant (Federal Government) – via Peter Khalil's office,
- Good Things Australia.

Case study

A Holmes Street resident who has been involved in the 'Decrease the Digital Divide' Program run by MOSS said:

"I have been in the Program since March 2022. I was a little unsure about joining, but once I was matched with a volunteer, I was surprised at how comfortable I felt. He helped me to learn some modern technology and he also made me realise I was able to learn new things. Having a tutor all to myself suited me. I was able to work on what I wanted to learn. Sometimes I learnt quickly and other times I was a bit slow, but it did not matter, I could work at my own pace. I felt comfortable asking my volunteer for help and did not feel stupid or dumb and I did not have to keep up with a large group. It is so important that it is held on my premises, and I do not have to travel – I have no transport.

It is great that I can borrow a laptop to work on my folio and practice new skills, in between sessions with the Tutor. It has really made a significant difference to me, I have something to look forward to, I am back learning and I really enjoy catching up with my tutor. I have also got back some independence, as I am learning how to do online tasks. The program also helped me with some personal issues. After COVID lockdowns I had lost my routine and confidence and I hardly left my unit. The fact that I could catalogue images from my past into a folio (and transfer them to a USB) really aided my counselling about my past. Not only have I noticed a big difference in myself, but my therapist has also noticed a positive difference in my attitude.

I hope that it can continue as I know there are other residents who are wanting to be part of the program."

High Risk Accommodation Response Program Report

The High-Risk Accommodation Response (HRAR) Program provided COVID safe response for the residents in two older persons high rise towers in the Darebin and Moreland. This one worker program was normally based at our Holmes Street, Northcote & Barkly Street Brunswick offices.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19, the HRAR Program maintained an extremely high-level of service delivery through having a robust COVID safe plan for both towers. Consequently, there were no outbreaks in the tower over two years of the role.

Despite the challenges, we were able to allow the residents to have numerous access points to PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) for the whole duration of the program. HRAR was also able to conduct numerous events to encourage the residents to talk to the workers about vaccination. As a direct result, we were able to support 95% of our residents to become fully vaccinated with a large uptake of booster vaccinations as well.

We also provided two years of a 24/7 on-call service to allow our residents to access support any time, day or night. HRAR was also successful engaged with residents who were expressing vaccination hesitancy to provide evidence-based information and education to help ease vaccination concerns.

The Program distributed over 1000 boxes of masks and sanitiser, hundreds of RATs, as well as in-reach vaccination clinics at the towers.

Case study

We had amazing success with what we referred to as the 'last hurrah' of the HRAR program. This occurred over a period of four days at two towers where the HRAR team was able to get over 50 COVID vaccinations and 35 Flu vaccinations as well as engaging with almost every resident over a complimentary coffee. This allowed the HRAR role to wrap up on 30th June, while ensuring that every resident had access to a vaccine and other PPE measures maximising safety over a very chilly winter.



Social Support Groups Program Report

The Social Support Groups Program offers three Planned Activity Groups 3 different local government areas to people aged 55 years and older (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders 50 years), My Aged Care clients (65 years and older) and NDIS participants. We are a team of 10 workers plus casuals, variously based each week at Brunswick 351 Barkly Street (5 days), Northcote 1 Holmes Street (2 days) and Heidelberg 221 Southern Road (2 days).

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19, Social Support Groups Program maintained high levels of service delivery through continuous provision of services, following an altered service model. Throughout the year, the team has demonstrated their resilience and the ability to adapt in the face of adversity, by altering our service model, providing one-to-one support and small group activities when unable to remain open running full groups. Having periodically to resort to the altered service model impacted service provision in terms of absolute numbers but individual consumers really enjoyed having more personal interactions with staff members as the Program tilted in response to pandemic restrictions.

Despite the challenges, we achieved many positive outcomes for program participants in supporting them to remain connected to community, learn new skills and have a place where they felt safe and welcome. A dedicated team ensured our most vulnerable citizens had the social support and connection needed to sustain them to live independently. Working from home is not an option, consequently the team has worked onsite throughout the year from respective SSG Community Centres. For some Social Support Group attendees, we have been their only support during COVID-19 and the SSG workers have often extended their role to support participants' needs. Feedback has been extremely positive and highlights the value of our work in supporting aged, disabled and vulnerable people.



SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUPS PROGRAM *Report continued...*

Case study

Diagnosed with dementia early in 2021, 77-year-old Stan and his wife Cheryl, both clients of our Heidi Group, have been navigating all the uncertainties and struggles of the diagnosis. The team supported them on this journey, providing respite for Cheryl, whilst supporting Stan to attend group, and providing activities to keep Stan's brain active.

Lockdown in August 2021 was incredibly challenging for Cheryl, Stan's sole carer. They had no supports in place, such as My Aged Care or in-Home Support, both were stressed and anxious. With groups closed, both felt incredibly isolated, alone without any respite were exhausted. Living in a small unit with limited time apart, really impacted their mental health and general wellbeing.

Being onsite two days a week at Heidi, we managed to work out a plan to provide Stan with activities to keep him occupied and incorporated time out for Cheryl with providing one on one support outside of the home.

The couple acknowledged that without Social Support Group support, their journey through a dementia diagnosis and the impacts of the pandemic would have been impossible. Both Stan and Cheryl are doing extremely well now, and Stan is even attending an extra day a week at the Brunswick group, providing additional respite for Cheryl.



"Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19, Social Support Groups Program maintained high levels of service delivery"

Hume Program Report

The Hume Program provides Transitional Outreach Support through team case management to homeless individuals and families in the Hume and Moreland LGAs. We are a team of 8 workers normally based at the Broadmeadows office, however we have been working both from the Broadmeadows Office and from home during the past year in accordance with COVID safe working policies.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19, Hume Program maintained high quality levels of service delivery by being flexible and adaptive to changing environmental landscape. This has been achieved whilst being up to date with both the current health advice and working within accordance of MOSS policies regarding COVID safe working practices.

Despite the challenges, we have continued to provide ongoing homelessness outreach support to all our consumers. We have adapted our service delivery to meet consumers' needs, and the safety and wellbeing of the team. Food security and cost of living have been an ongoing concern for many. The Hume Program team continues to supply food parcels to people in need each week. We had success in securing a grant from the Hume Charitable Fund, to

support our food bank over the next twelve months. For the fifth consecutive year, the Team held its popular coat drive, making warm coats accessible to people over winter.

The Hume team continues to receive regular donations of sanitary items from 'Share the Dignity'. The Team is also grateful for the support provided by 'Big Group Hug' who provided clothing and goods for children and their families. Team members continue to provide a day per week outreach at Unison Housing's Community Housing complex in Broadmeadows. This partnership now spans six years and has provided accommodation options for many Hume consumers. In December 2021 we received a North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network grant to assist consumers with access to transport to be vaccinated against COVID-19. We were able to facilitate transport for 80 people to access their vaccinations.

The Hume Program works collaboratively to create positive outcomes for consumers who had been struggling during the pandemic, whether that be financial strain, mental health issues, ongoing homelessness, and related issues. We work together to support each other work together utilising individual strengths to maintain a positive and supportive work environment, and this shows through in the support that individuals and families are provided by the team.



HUME PROGRAM Report continued...



In recent feedback to the Hume Program about the support we provide, a consumer wrote:

"MOSS are always ready to assist me and my children, no matter how big or small the request is. The workers never make me feel bad for asking for help. Without the Hume team, I don't know where I would be now. My life has changed in so many ways, but with Hume team I feel like it is getting better all the time."

Case Study

In March 2022, the Hume Program received a phone call from a long-standing consumer Ali who reported that her 26-year-old daughter, Anita who was 4 months pregnant with fourth child and three daughters aged 6, 5 and 2 years old, had become homeless after her son-in-law abandoned the family. Anita was left in a social housing property with the lease in her husband's name only. Consequently, the property manager told Anita that without her name on the tenancy agreement she would need to vacate.

Anita and her children moved out of her social housing into Ali's now overcrowded home. They were understandably terribly upset, stressed, and confused. Anita decided to move their belongings out into storage with the family forced to couch surf and technically homeless. At least Anita and the girls had temporary beds at her parents' home.

The Hume Team strongly advocated with Anita's Social Housing provider to change the existing lease into Anita's name. Subsequently, it was agreed that Anita could return to the property with a new lease. Following a minor renovation, the young family was able to move back into their home and reconnect with established strong community and school links.

We were also able to secure funding via a Family Violence Flexible Support Package to assist the family with removalist cost and essential items for the new baby. Anita was so grateful to MOSS for this intervention and support to herself and her children.

This situation highlighted the creative and adapted ways in which the Hume Program has been working for the past year. Much of the work was done via phone, emails and zoom meetings, achieving good engagement and ongoing support to achieve a wonderful outcome for these consumers.

Transitional Outreach Support Team Program Report

The Transitional Outreach Support Team (TOST) Program provides case management to individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the Banyule, Nillumbik, Darebin and Whittlesea LGAs. We are a team of 3 full-time workers including Program Manager and a part-time worker, normally based at the Northcote office however a hybrid model of working from home during the year in response to pandemic restrictions.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19, TOST Program maintained high levels of service delivery by continuing to provide case management support and tailor our service delivery to vulnerable consumers who tested positive to COVID-19 as an addition to existing complex support needs. Despite the challenges, we ensured that individuals and families had access to basic needs such as food as well as advocating and applying for funding to meet other needs such as children, education and technology, which was critical in facilitating remote learning, as well as sustaining current accommodation and access to their health providers.

TOST staff have adapted well to the flexible working arrangements between the office and home and continued to provide quality service delivery to our consumers. We worked collaboratively with consumers on their housing exit plans and took full advantage of accessing opportunities in the private rental market. Pleasingly, we were able to exit 22 households into secure long-term housing through Office of Housing, Community Housing and private rental. Of these 22 households, 13 families successfully submitted their applications and exited into their own private rental lease and their preferred location.

With the long, extended wait list Office of Housing public housing properties, TOST strongly encourage consumers to explore all other housing options.

Case study

Darebin Council referred a single woman aged in her 70's who was facing eviction after 20 years in her private rental property, with the owner was wanting to sell the property. TOST picked up referral as a "brief task-based response" (BTBR) response.

The woman expressed her wish to remain in the private rental market, aware that securing private rental accommodation was quicker than being placed on a waiting list for social housing.

This referral provided opportunities to work collaboratively with other MOSS teams, Darebin Council as well as navigating viable options through real estate agents. The benefits of secondary consults with our MOSS Connections Program led to pathways for TOST to explore Housing for the Aged Advisory Group options, which led to the exploration of Independent Living Units in the North. TOST successfully advocated for the consumer in her application for a new private rental lease.

The setting of this property is ideal for this consumer, as there are several rental properties in this development which specifically targets people aged over 55 years old and it reportedly had a nice community feel about it. The consumer was very pleased with the outcome and was supported to establish her new home.



Banyule Housing Support Report

The Banyule Housing Support Program provides case management to singles and families who are homeless or experiencing at risk tenancies in the LGA's of Whittlesea, Darebin, Banyule and Nillumbik. We are a team of 2 workers normally based at the Shop 48 office, however we are managing a balance between the office and working remotely as the new normal.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19 the Banyule Program maintained high levels of service delivery by utilising a flexible approach to engage and support consumers to address case plans whilst ensuring social distance was adhered to, to keep everyone safe.

Despite the challenges of guaranteeing everyone's safety while supporting some of our vaccine hesitant consumers, we continued to provide service delivery to our cohort and ensured every referral was responded to in a timely manner. Banyule were able to meet and exceed the funded targets.

The Banyule program was active in exploring all housing exits for consumers and managed make referrals to the Homes for Families(H4F) programs, with some of our consumers being successful with their applications to access secure housing. The team was also successful with supporting some of the consumers to access private rental properties.

One of the many successful outcomes for the program was a single mother and her adult son, who had been in transitional housing, who decided to move into their own private rental property. Transitional housing had been successful to allow this family a safe place to reside while the son completed his education and went on to do an apprenticeship however, when the family income increased, private rental became a possibility. As a result, the family decided to move out of their THM and into a private rental, allowing them to pick a house that was suitable to their needs and their preferred location. We hope to encourage other households to consider the private rental option as a real possibility as opposed to waiting for their long-term social housing offer, which has no set timeframes.

Intensive Case Management Initiative Report

The Intensive Case Management Initiative (ICMI) Program provides case management to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the LGAs of Darebin, Banyule, Nillumbik and Whittlesea. This is a sole worker position operating 4 days a week. ICMI is normally based at the Northcote office however, due to relocation this program will begin operating from our Broadmeadows office until we can source a new building.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19, the ICMI Program maintained its usual levels of service delivery by continuing to receive referrals, provide support, advocate for housing outcomes and networking in the sector for greater access to resources to benefit and enhance support to our consumers and their families.

Despite the challenges, ICMI was successful with some great housing outcomes for 2021-2022 financial year. There were also some great partnerships formed during the support of mutual consumers with Banyule Community Health Services as well as great advocacy work with Aboriginal Hostels Australia. In particular, the work to waiver an historical debt from over ten years ago, which had been a barrier for a consumer to access accommodation through one of Aboriginal Hostels Australia's hostels.

One of the many great outcomes for ICMI was a referral from Banyule Community Health Services for an Aboriginal male looking for stable accommodation to allow for the reunification process to start. A referral was put through for a Homes for Families (H4F) property, which took over 12 months to process, but eventually it came to fruition. The consumer was able to stay actively engaged with ICMI and managed to co-contribute to the cost of his hotel for the 12 months until a property and long-term support became available. This case really highlighted the benefits of staying engaged and connected with ICMI. It allowed time to address his case plan, while waiting for the housing option to materialise. The consumer has just completed a sign up and ICMI will do a handover to the new support service to ensure continuity of service. The consumer will have 2 years of subsidised rent with support and expects he will be able to go back into paid employment and can now start the reunification process with his children.

Targeted Case Management Program Report

The Targeted Case Management Program (TCM) provides information and assistance to eligible individuals to get their COVID-19 vaccinations in the LGA's of Whittlesea, Darebin, Banyule, Nillumbik and Hume. It's a team of 2 workers normally based at the Northcote office, however we can assist any eligible people to access hubs, pop up clinics, health centres and local GPs for their vaccinations. We can also organise and provide information sessions about COVID-19 vaccinations to those who require updated health information to alleviate any concerns about the need to be vaccinated.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19, the Targeted Case Management Program maintained high levels of service delivery by continuing to target and engage highly vulnerable members in the homeless sector and the elderly who are in the high-risk category for contracting COVID-19 and its life-threatening side effects. TCM were able to do this through spruiking and advertising the health benefits of getting all COVID-19 vaccinations in the community and partnered with the health care providers such as DPV Health and Your Community Health to administer the correct vaccine.

Despite the challenges of trying to reach out to this cohort and respectfully providing the correct information to vaccine hesitant individuals, the uptake for vaccinations has been positive. TCM have been flexible with its approach to maximise the level of exposure and reach into the community. We were able to collaborate with the Health Centres and organise pop up clinics in specific areas that were identified to have the most foot traffic for high-risk consumers with complex health needs such as high-rise housing estates and community hub centres. TCM also had the flexibility to provide a one-on-one response to vaccine hesitant individuals who were open to the idea of vaccination but needed some encouragement and reassurance to attend an appointment. We were able to provide transport to and from appointments and followed up with a phone call the next day to check if any medical follow up from the vaccine was needed and to generally make sure consumers were okay. This was always well received and appreciated by the consumers.

In addition to COVID-19 vaccines, many consumers were also able to access the fluvax during some pop-up clinics, when it was made available. This was an added benefit to TCM organising pop up clinics and providing access to these vital services for our consumer group in the sector.

Case study

Susan was referred to TCM for support in receiving her third (booster) vaccination. Susan was struggling to access the vaccine herself due to high anxiety and limited family support to assist her.

Susan had a negative prior experience with the vaccine, which resulted in a hospital visit due to trouble breathing. The doctor reported an irregular heartbeat, which was likely a result of Susan's anxiety. This experience, coupled with anecdotal evidence from Susan's friends, who stated the booster had given severe side effects, contributed to Susan's vaccine hesitancy. During phone calls with staff, Susan would waver between wanting to attend an appointment and wanting to wait. Upon consultation, an appointment was booked for two days later at Susan's local GP, with the assurance that a doctor would be present so that Susan could explain about her previous experience. Susan requested that staff accompany her to the appointment.

A day later, Susan phoned to cancel the appointment, citing her anxiety was too great and that she wanted to postpone for a week so she could mentally prepare. Staff explored Susan's concerns around the expected side effects and highlighted that the side effects of COVID-19 were likely to be greater than that of the vaccine itself and the waning immunity of the previous two doses. With this reassurance, Susan agreed to keep the original appointment.

On the day of the appointment, two staff members drove Susan to the doctor and observed that she was experiencing physical symptoms of anxiety, such as shaking. The team members continued to reassure Susan and informed the nurse about how Susan was feeling. The nurse took additional time to explain the process and was transparent about what she was about to do. After much discussion, Susan was able to have the vaccine. The team sat with Susan for 15 minutes following then drove her home. Susan reported her appreciation of having the team spend additional time with her.

The success of the program has been the time allocated to offer personalised support for each person and the flexibility to amend appointments where necessary.



Crisis Response Program Report

The Crisis Response Program (CRP) provides short-term case management to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Darebin, Banyule, Nillumbik and Whittlesea. We are a team of 3 workers and a manager normally based at our Northcote office. Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19 the Crisis Response Program maintained consistent levels of service delivery by continuing to provide a daily outreach response to the vulnerable consumers we support, even during significant period of working from home during the year.

The Crisis Response Program prides itself on its ability to provide a flexible service response. Prime examples of this have been the numerous times when we have reopened support to former clients who have needed some additional support. We understand that sometimes it takes a few attempts to engage with someone or for them to achieve their goals. A strong team culture of supporting one another, persistence and commitment to people in crisis as well as a willingness to try creative approaches help meet client's needs. Despite the changing COVID-19 landscape, we witnessed some truly amazing outcomes for the people we support. The consumer quotes below attest to this:

- "I went through being homeless and domestic violence. My CRP worker helped me and made me a stronger woman - they told me what's acceptable."
- "I received first rate service from CRP at a time in my life where everything seemed hopeless and too difficult to manage. MOSS allowed me to get back on track (mentally), so I could focus on the next chapter of my journey. Thank you."

Program workers were tickled to receive the following accolade for our work from partner agency VincentCare with whom CRP shared a mutual client:

"I have to say, genuinely, on behalf of VincentCare we are so extremely impressed and awe of how above and beyond CRP has gone to support this extremely vulnerable, chronically homeless person. It has been such a pleasure working with the MOSS Northcote office since the start of HEART (Hotel Emergency Accommodation Response Team). I can see the strength of the team's work ethic from a mile away and hope we'll continue to work together closely".

This was extended when CRP re-opened support, months later to help facilitate the client's engagement with the H2H (Homeless to Housing) program, when there was the possibility that the client might miss out on the opportunity entirely.

"We can completely give credit for these clients' successful intake into the H2H program to CRP, who didn't even need to be involved, but saw the importance of taking initiative and stepping outside the box, despite being busy with their current case load".

CRISIS RESPONSE PROGRAM *Report continued...*

Case study

CRP received a referral for a woman, Jane who was housed at a local motel. She had become homeless after living the past 10 years at a Buddhist temple, now closed.

Jane had worked as a technical assistant in a laboratory. Unfortunately, she became too unwell to continue working. Contributing factors included significant losses. Her therapy pet for anxiety had died and she could no longer access support from her regular psychologist.

Initially Jane was very anxious, only being able to meet if she had access to an exit and for a maximum 10-minute period. She had some family support, but there was no-one that she was able to stay with. Shortly after commencement of support, Jane was housed in a THM crisis property. CRP continued to support Jane whilst she was in this property around her housing and support needs. This support included advocating with various housing and support services for ongoing housing options.

A few months later, Jane was accepted into a transitional housing property. This property provided Jane with the stability and opportunity to engage in consistent therapeutic interventions and return to one of her previous loves - gardening. Her health and relationships improved dramatically whilst being supported by our program. She acquired another pet for companionship and was referred to Pets for the homeless for assistance with veterinary costs.

In June 2022, Jane was offered her permanent public housing. Initially she was anxious about leaving her familiar environment, her new neighbours and friends, as well as the support from MOSS. However, Jane accepted the offer and were supported by the Crisis Response Program in her to move and set up of her new property. Within weeks of being housed, Jane has transformed the garden, welcomed four budgerigars and made new friends with her neighbours, who have felt inspired and been complimentary of her handy work.



Youth and Family Program Report

The Youth and Family (Y&F) program provides short term case management and family mediation to young people aged 16-25 years old in northern suburbs of Melbourne. The Program is funded for one FTE and shared between 2 workers. The Y&F team normally works out of the Northcote office, however due to the pandemic, the team adapted, working from various locations including home and outposts and other office locations.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19, the Y&F program achieved great outcomes for young people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness by providing service delivery in partnership with some key youth services. The Y&F program continues to provide weekly access and support from the Darebin Council youth hub outpost located in Northlands shopping centre.

This year the program also went into partnership with Birribi part of Youth Support and Advocacy Service. Birribi is a structured, supportive rehabilitative program that gives young people the opportunity to manage their drug and/or alcohol issues. The Y&F workers supported young people coming to the end of their program who needed housing, working closely with the young person and Birribi staff to secure a housing exit plan.

There have been beneficial learnings in service delivery under the new normal and living with COVID-19. Having to be flexible, has led to more creative engagement and outcomes for young people. Working towards goals via phone calls, text messages, emails, e-resources and networking, has been both rewarding and effective. Face-to-face engagement is always going to be important, however being forced pivot to maintain high quality case management support during times of restriction, has resulted in new ways to build rapport and achieve outcomes.

Case study

Early 2022 the Youth and Family program received a joint referral from Reservoir High School wellbeing team and the Darebin Council's Youth and Family team. They sought support for a 17-year-old student experiencing complex family conflict and extreme social isolation. Through the assessment, the young person shared they were experiencing discomfort from a parent who presented with controlling and concerning behaviours. With a culturally sensitive approach, and utilising translation services, the care team identified risks and provided the young person with education and support to understand their rights.

Strong advocacy to Centrelink accessed independent payments to broaden which built self-control in the young person's life. They were supported to gain employment which has enhanced the young person's self-worth and dramatically increased their social capital and support systems outside the service system. Support closed with the young person much happier living at home, identifying their current support needs met, but highlighting their desire to utilise the Darebin Youth Hub drop in space in the future as needed.



Darebin Assertive Community Outreach Program [DACO] Report

The Darebin Assertive Community Outreach (DACO) Program offers short-term, assertive outreach and case management to homeless people sleeping rough within the City of Darebin. The team of 2 workers and a coordinator is normally based at the Northcote office, however we have been flexible throughout the pandemic by working from a range of locations.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19, DACO maintained high levels of service by undertaking regular assertive outreach to more likely places for rough sleepers. We prioritised quick responses to community referrals and key stakeholders including Darebin Council.

Program responses differed for every situation and each person. Program success and positive outcomes for rough sleepers cannot be achieved without partnering with other services. For DACO, a critical partnership is Bolton Clarke homeless persons' nurse, who can ensure a medical response as needed.

The generosity of material aid providers makes an enormous difference in our work with the homeless and rough sleepers. The Bridge contributes weekly meals to those in need, Pinchapoo offers toiletries, Street Smart have provided funds for the purchase of swags and Darebin Council have contributed sleeping bags to support our work.

When working in a community with many people with varying needs, the biggest challenge has been approaching and engaging with people who have not sought help. DACO workers have learned to be unassuming and curious when making introductions and promoting the program.

Assertive outreach and allowing time to connect, is an essential component of the program in engaging with this vulnerable community. Flexibility to work where consumers felt comfortable (in community areas) is crucial and has produced good outcomes. The expectations of individuals who have been disenfranchised by the housing system, to attend appointments at an office setting and self-advocate, sets them up to fail. Bringing outreach support to where they are comfortable, creates space for understanding and flexibility allowing people to engage and flourish.

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"Street Smart have provided funds for the purchase of swags"

DACO TEAM MEMBERS HAVE REFLECTED:

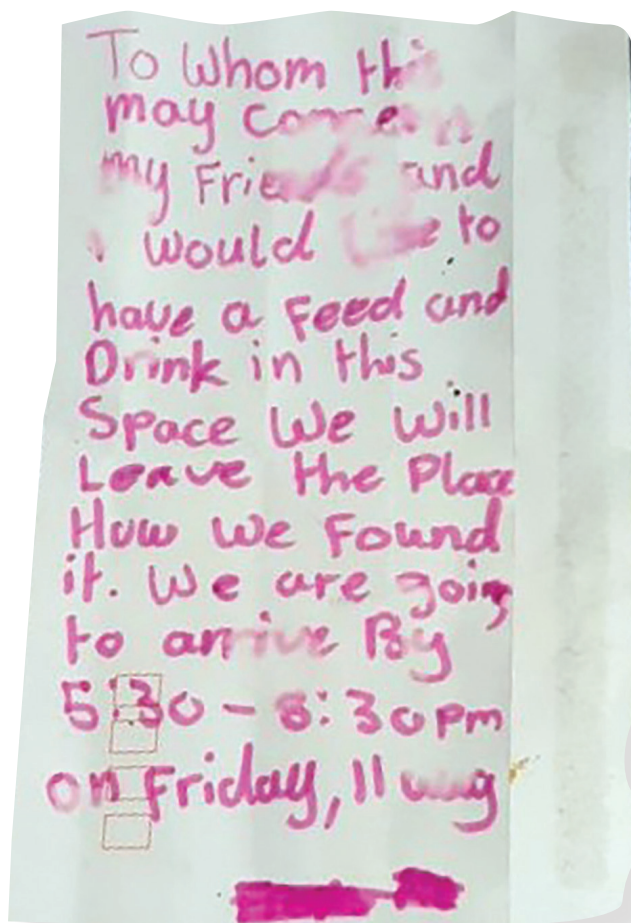
"DACO program is unique to Darebin and much needed service for those people disengaged from services. It reaches the most vulnerable people, by being flexible in its case management approach and having the capacity to undertake assertive outreach work with people. During the height of the pandemic, DACO were able to almost seamlessly, within the realms of COVID Safe plans continue their work. During most of the lockdowns, our normal intake meeting places were continually changing, meaning our program adapted to meet with people where they were, to provide the support they needed."

A COUPLE OF SERVICE USERS FED BACK:

"Everything they said they would do, they did, they honoured their promises."

and:

"I am really, really satisfied with the program and totally helped me changing my life."



One of the squats DACO visit when supporting clients

Case study

During the year, DACO frequently undertook assertive outreach to Reservoir library and surrounding shops, which had become a popular hangout or 'hot spot' for homeless rough sleepers. There was always a large group of people sitting together, drinking alcohol and listening to music. DACO slowly began introducing themselves, and passively offering support. It was soon evident that most of the group did not have trust in services and were consequently standoffish to offers of support and advocacy.

After regular visits from DACO, one member of the group started to engage. He began listening to what DACO could offer and agreed to meet. While working with him for a couple of months, DACO workers became familiar to the rest of the group. Some people became curious, some saw the positive changes their friend was making. Eventually, other members of the group started asking for support by self-referring, often starting with a small goal. Allowing for trust and rapport to build and then work towards their bigger goals.

It took a lot of consistent outreach visits, developing familiarity and holding space for until some of the members of the group were up for a chat. Over the 12 months of assertive outreach, DACO has now worked with quite a few of the group to support them to improve their circumstances and address their homelessness.

Catchment Youth Refuge Report

Catchment Youth Refuge provides accommodation and case management to young people and accompanying children in the Inner Northern Suburbs of Melbourne. We are a team of 9 workers, normally based at the Refuge. During the last few years, whilst many programs had staff working from home, the refuge continued to operate with staff on site.

Under the 'new normal' of living with COVID-19 the Catchment Youth Refuge Program maintained modified levels of service delivery by having to limit how many young people we could have in the refuge at any one time, due to having shared facilities and the building structure.

Despite the challenges, we were still able to provide a holistic and homelike environment for many young people over the last year. We were able to provide a wrap-around response in collaboration with our partner services, to ensure that the young people at the refuge could obtain support and great outcomes.

One of our partner services provided the following feedback:

"Just wanted to say thank you and acknowledge the amazing work done by your team. We have been lucky enough to work with your staff and you in supporting many of our clients and the feedback from my team has always been glowing. You all truly understand the complexities of supporting and nurturing complex young people and your team is a joy to work with. We appreciate your capacity to always work collaboratively and to put the young person at the centre of everything you do! Just wanted to send our thanks and appreciation!"

Some of the CYR team members provided the following reflections:

- During COVID lockdowns, I was able to continue providing services to refuge consumers due to the steps MOSS has put in place to support staff to be able to work from home and onsite in a COVID safe way which included providing the technology required.
- During the last year at CYR, I have been able to deliver support to our clients because of the MOSS COVID 19 Policy and Procedures which have been agile, allowing us to adapt services when needed. Community safety has been top priority and as such MOSS has implemented several measures to keep staff and clients safe.

Case study

Sarah and her daughter Jess were referred to the Catchment Youth Refuge after becoming homeless due to family violence. Sarah's parents had separated when she was only 2 months old and as a result Sarah had lived with her father overseas until the age of 9. It was at this time that Sarah's father passed away and Sarah went to live with her maternal grandparents.

In 2020 Sarah, who was pregnant, came to Australia in hope of reconnecting with her mother and developing a relationship. Unfortunately, this did not happen, and the relationship deteriorated further once Sarah's baby, Jess, was born. Sarah's mother became very violent toward both Sarah and Jess, which resulted in them fleeing the property. Unfortunately, Sarah's mother continued to look for them and found them in the shared accommodation where they were living. This led to both Sarah and Jess being assaulted.

It was at this time that Sarah and Jess came to live at CYR and were provided with a lot of support to address the trauma they had endured. Sarah and Jess were also provided with support around family violence, parenting, housing and Sarah returned to study. As a result of this support, both Sarah and Jess began to thrive.

This year staff at the Refuge supported Sarah and Jess move into their own long-term housing. The CYR team successfully applied for funding that supported Sarah to have some security cameras installed at the property and her own personal safety alarm. This support has resulted in Sarah and Jess feeling safe within their own home and within their community.

MOSS agency data 2021-2022

Specialist Homelessness Services Data

MOSS Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) supported 1703 people during 2021/2022. This is a similar amount of people who had been supported the previous year (1,718). Service delivery changed throughout the later part of the year with more people exiting hotel accommodations, who had previously been housed there in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The annual figures show us that the number of single adults, was lower this year as we received fewer referrals for this group (21%) as there were greater referrals for families (79%) with just under half (46%) of all those supported being from single-parent households.

Approximately half (54%) of our clients during the year were children or young people 25 years or younger. This is consistent with a high percentage of single-parent families; child/young

person-specific programs such as Bright Futures, the NW Children's Resource Program, the Youth and Family program, and the Catchment Youth Refuge. Our children and youth programs play a critical role in ensuring support for our most vulnerable consumers, through collaboration with generalist programs to support children and young people through the difficult experience of homelessness, whilst supporting their wellbeing.

Family Violence continues to be a concern with 31% of the people supported, disclosing that it was a significant factor in their homelessness.

Our clients across the SHS programs are culturally diverse with a significant CALD cohort (30%) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community (9%).

2021/2022 TOTAL SPECIALIST HOMELESSNESS SECTOR PROGRAMS	Number
Total Clients	1703
Adult females	411 (24%)
Adult males	376 (22%)
Non-binary	2 (0.1%)
Children and young people under 26 years	914 (54%)

FAMILY VIOLENCE AS ONE OF THE REPORTING FACTORS	534 (31%)
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FAMILY TYPE	Number
Single parent families	627 (46%)
Singles	282 (21%)
Other families	(33%)

CULTURAL IDENTITY	Number
Anglo/Australian	481 (37%)
CALD	420 (32%)
ATSI	126 (10%)

ACCOMMODATION	Number
Primary homeless	61 (6%)
Crisis accommodation	161 (15%)
THM	163 (15%)
Public/Social Housing	166 (15%)
Private rental	142 (13%)
Other	383 (36%)

MOSS agency data 2021-2022

Older Persons Programs Data

Merri Outreach Support Service continued to support many (930), mostly older people through its HACC PYP, Aged Care, Commonwealth Home Support Program, and NDIS funded Programs through the 2021/2022 year. This represents (47%) of the numbers in the previous year. Consistent with last year, more men (68%) than women were supported. This is reflective of the population profile of the public housing estates on which we offer programs. Most (86%) of our service users live alone.

Residents of Barkly Street and Holmes Street high-rise estates were well connected to the suite of MOSS programs on offer, Older Persons High Rise Support Program, the High-Risk Accommodation Response program, Volunteer Program, and Social Support Groups.

MOSS's presence on these estates enhanced the opportunity for people to participate in a vibrant supportive community and remain active. This has meant many could be supported to sustain their tenancies and address issues that might otherwise have seen them prematurely admitted into residential aged care or hospital. This good work also occurred on broad-acre estates through the Connections Program, with housing vulnerability and health responses as their focus. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the HRAR partnership between Your Community Health and MOSS worked to reduce the Covid19 transmission rates throughout high-risk tenancies within the Darebin LGA. This program responded by providing support and resources to individuals when outbreaks occurred.

Most service users live in public housing, although it is worth noting the Community Connections Program does support significant outreach support to people living in rooming houses, low-cost accommodation, private rentals, and people who may be sleeping rough. The wide age range of service users is supported with 88% being 56 years or older. Chronic health issues, psychiatric illness, and physical disability are the highest reported issues although these are a few of the spread of health issues identified. As a registered NDIS provider MOSS supports a few NDIS participants in the Social Support Groups.

Just under a third (32%) of the consumers supported through these programs are from a CALD background.

2021/2022 TOTAL CLIENTS	930
Adult females	300 (32%)
Adult males	630 (68%)

LIVING SITUATION	Number
Lives alone	801 (86%)
Lives with family	83 (8%)
Lives with others	55 (6%)

AGE RANGE	Number
Under 45	52 (6%)
45-55	52 (6%)
56-65	266 (29%)
66-85	460 (50%)
85+	78 (9%)

ACCOMMODATION TYPE	Number
Primary homeless	20 (2%)
Public/Social Housing	757 (82%)
Private rental	88 (9%)
SRS or retirement village	8 (1%)
Other	57 (6%)

HEALTH	Number
ABI	17
Chronic health issues	288
Dementia	14
Drug and Alcohol	30
Epilepsy	4
Intellectual disability	30
No disability	98
Physical	111
Psychiatric	83
Not stated	31
Other: 4, 2, 2, 0, 2, 4	14

CULTURAL IDENTITY	Number
Anglo/Australian	240 (26%)
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse	297 (32%)
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	21 (2%)

MOSS and the Child Safe Standards Report

The new Child Safe Standards came into effect in July 2022. The MOSS Child Safety Officers – Talia and Halime, along with General Manager – Tony, have been working toward aligning MOSS with the updated standards. Thankfully due to the extensive work done in previous years, aligning with the new standards has been relatively straight forward. This has included updating our Child Safe Policy, Child Safe Standards induction documentation and ensuring information is up to date on the MOSS website.

The MOSS Child Safety Officers continue to provide Child Safe Standards inductions to new staff members as well as providing up to date information and resources to the whole agency.

The new 11 Child Safe Standards:

1. Promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children.

2. Organisational leadership, governance and culture.

3. Empowering children and young people.

4. Families are informed and involved.

5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

6. Human resources practices.

7. Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.

8. Ongoing education and training.

9. Promoting safety and reducing risk in physical and online environments.

10. Implementation is regularly reviewed and improved.

11. Policies and procedures document safety.

Finance Statements

MERRI OUTREACH SUPPORT SERVICE LTD
ABN: 42 318 912 323

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
30 JUNE 2022

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
INCOME		
Government funding	\$6,587,645	\$6,403,425
Donations and philanthropic income	\$2,405	\$7,560
Interest received	\$1,653	\$2,856
Other Income	\$1,109,132	\$876,028
	\$7,700,835	\$7,289,869
EXPENDITURE		
Employment benefit and expense	\$6,420,343	\$5,721,326
Occupancy	\$391,496	\$396,521
Computer	\$124,641	\$126,170
Telephone	\$49,298	\$45,205
Depreciation	\$52,711	\$48,722
Motor vehicle	\$270,109	\$253,903
Client expense	\$519,164	\$465,944
Other expense	\$97,858	\$120,940
	\$7,925,620	\$7,178,731
Surplus / (deficit)	(\$224,785)	\$111,138

A full set of our audited accounts are available on our website

MERRI OUTREACH SUPPORT SERVICE LTD
ABN: 42 318 912 323

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 30 JUNE 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	\$1,116,649	\$1,362,513
Trade and other receivables	\$294,707	\$119,220
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$1,411,356	\$1,481,733
NON- CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	\$1,252,297	\$1,278,627
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	\$1,252,297	\$1,278,627
TOTAL ASSETS	\$2,663,653	\$2,760,360
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	\$539,691	\$436,073
Provisions	\$710,541	\$658,605
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$1,250,232	\$1,094,678
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Provisions	\$41,667	\$69,416
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$41,667	\$69,416
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$1,291,899	\$1,164,094
NET ASSETS	\$1,371,754	\$1,596,266
MEMBERS' FUNDS		
Retained surplus	\$1,371,754	\$1,596,266
TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS	\$1,371,754	\$1,596,266

A full set of our audited accounts are available on our website

FINANCIAL SNAP SHOT 2021-22

Financial Summary

The 2021-2022 financial year was particularly difficult for many organisations with the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Merri Outreach was no exception. At year end there was a \$224k loss compared to a \$111k surplus the previous year. With minimal indexation on funding and ceasing of the cashflow benefits received from the Australian Government it was the agencies retained earnings that covered committed contractual expenses.

However, through this MOSS's balance sheet has remained strong and in a relatively healthy position with a current ratio of 1.13 and a total debt to asset ratio of 49%.

Looking ahead, all major funding agreements have renewed with new agreements and variations being put in place. Cost reduction strategies have been implemented, with the closure of the High St office and relocation of staff to our Head office coupled with fleet, technology and organisational changes taking place a significant cost reduction is anticipated in 2023.

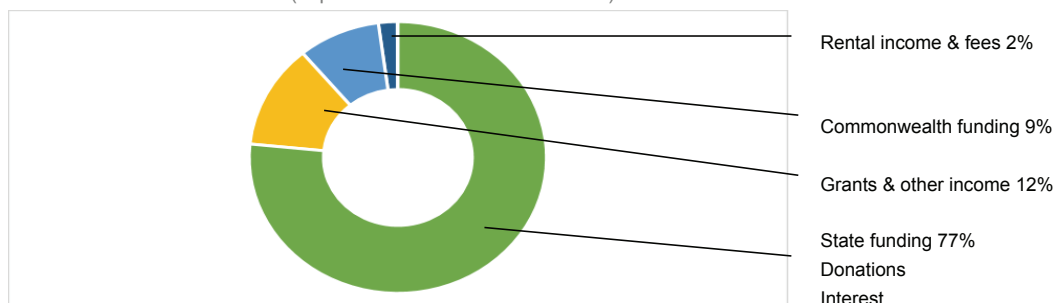
Where the money came from

In 2022, our total income was \$7.7 million, an increase of 5% from 2021.

This growth was primarily due to the slight indexation on state funding, and increased growth in grant and other income as a result from continuing to diversify our income streams.

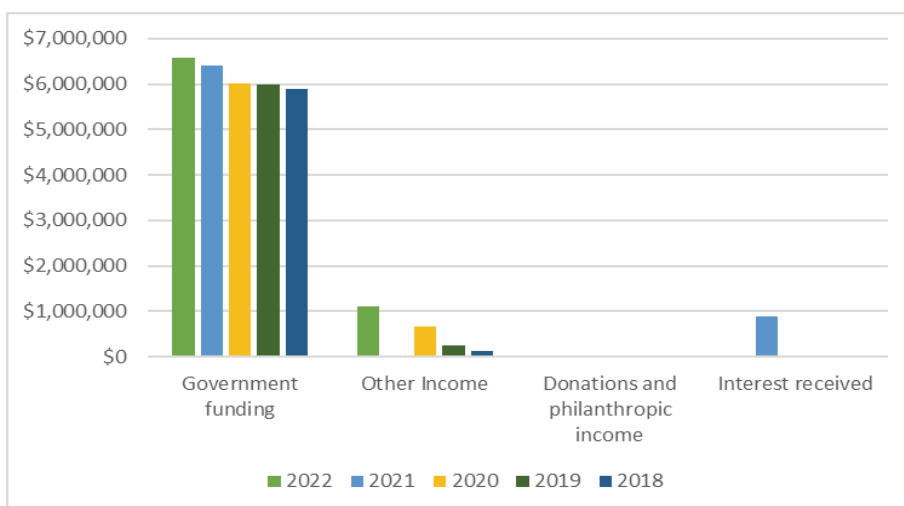
Where the money came from

Year ended 30 June 2022. (expressed as a % of total income)



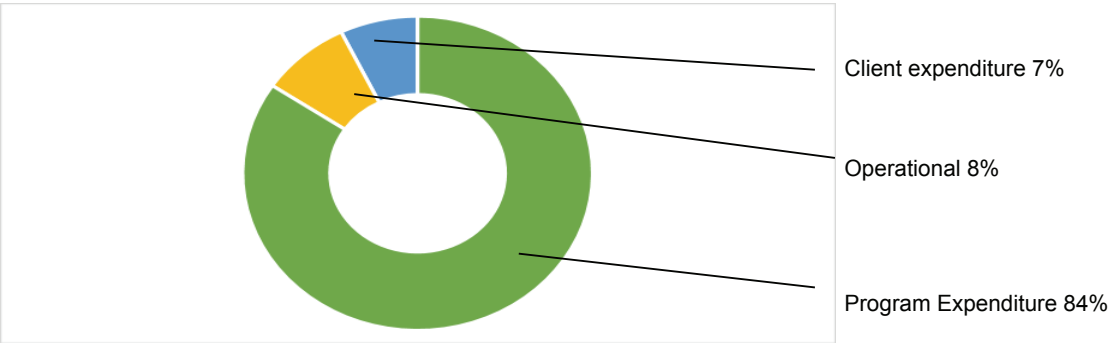
Where the money came from

five year trend

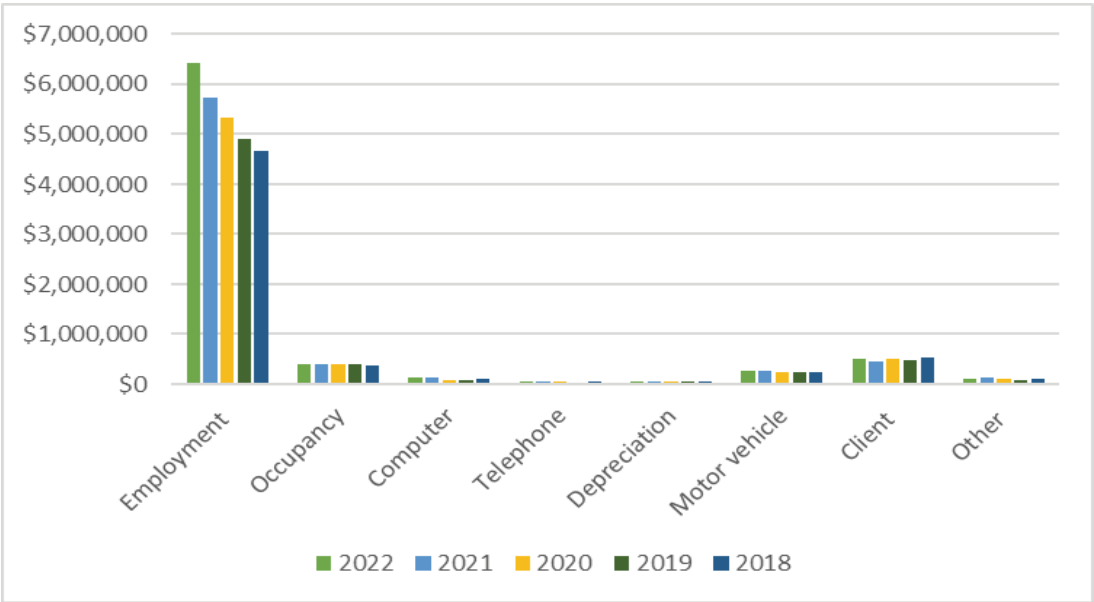


Where the money went
As a result of our growth in program, the percentage of our over all spend attributable to programs grew by 2% from 2021. With our investment in projects and resourcing to improve efficiencies and work towards sustainability of the agency a total spend of \$7.9 million or 9% greater than 2021.

Where the money went
Year ended 30 June 2022. (expressed as a % of total expenditure)



Where the money went
five year trend



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the supporters of Merri Outreach Support Service Ltd

300 Blankets	East Reservoir Neighbours for Change (ERNfC)	Pooja Kanojia
All Saints Greensborough	"Emerging Minds	Presentation Sisters Balnarring
Australian Communities Foundation"	Family Safety Victoria"	Preston Rotary
Banyule & Nillumbik Youth Executive Committee	FareShare	Public Transport Victoria
Banyule City Council	"Fire Rescue Victoria	Queens Fund
Banyule Community Health Service	Foodbank Victoria	Ray Underwood
Banyule Support & Information Centre (BANSIC)	Friendly Moving Men	Reservoir Leisure Centre
Big Group Hug	Haven; Home, Safe	Reservoir Neighbourhood House
Bolton Clarke	Hearing Australia	Reynard Neighbourhood House
Bon-Dent Dental Laboratory Pty Ltd	Himilo Community Connect	Richard Reilly
"Br Harry and Olympic Village Exodus Community	Homeless Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative	Rosanna Fire Community House
Bridge Darebin"	HoMie	Ruslan Kogan
"Bunnings Fairfield	Hume City Council	Salvation Army Moreland
Cassandra Burmester"	Impactology	Salvation Army Preston
CBA Staff Social & Charity Club	Inner North Community Foundation	Second Bite
"Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare	James Greer	Second Chance Animal Rescue
Citylife Church - Whittlesea	Jim Konidaris	St Kilda Mums
College of Optometry"	Jindi Family and Community Centre	St Martin of Tours Primary School
Collingwood Children's Farm	Joan Stanton	StreetSmart Australia
Commonwealth Bank Social Club	Julie O'Brien	Sunbury Square Shopping Centre
Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)	Kat Theophanous MP"	Telstra
"Core 3	"Magistrates Court of Victoria	Tenants Victoria
Corpus Christi Community"	Melbourne City Mission	The Bridge
Council to Homeless Persons (CHP)	Melbourne Youth Support Service	The Walter and Eliza Hall Trust
Darebin City Council	Melissa Crisara	Thread Together
Darebin Information Volunteer & Resource Centre DIVRC	Milan Industries	Tobin Brothers
Darebin youth Services	Moreland City Council	Unison Housing
"Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	Natalie Pascale	Victoria Police
Diamond Valley Community Support	National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)	Victorian Public Tenants Association
DPV Health"	Northcote Aquatic Centre	VincentCare Victoria Housing Services
	Northern Care Works	West Heidelberg Legal Service
	Office of Housing - Broadmeadows	Yarra Plenty Regional Library
	Otto IT	Yarra Valley Water
	Paul Harrison	YMCA
	Pinchapoo	Your Community Health
		Zib Digital



merri outreach support service

Merri Outreach Support Service

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DONATE TO MOSS!

Donations enhance the capacity of MOSS to meet the needs of homeless people in flexible and creative ways.

It's because of our compassionate donors that we've been able to help thousands of Victorians make positive transitions and achieve long term stability in their lives. We're eternally grateful for people like you who are committed to ending homelessness.

To understand how your donation can positively impact our organisation's service delivery, please visit our donations page on our website or scan the QR code below.

