

ANNUAL REPORT  
2021

# Merri Outreach Support Service

moss



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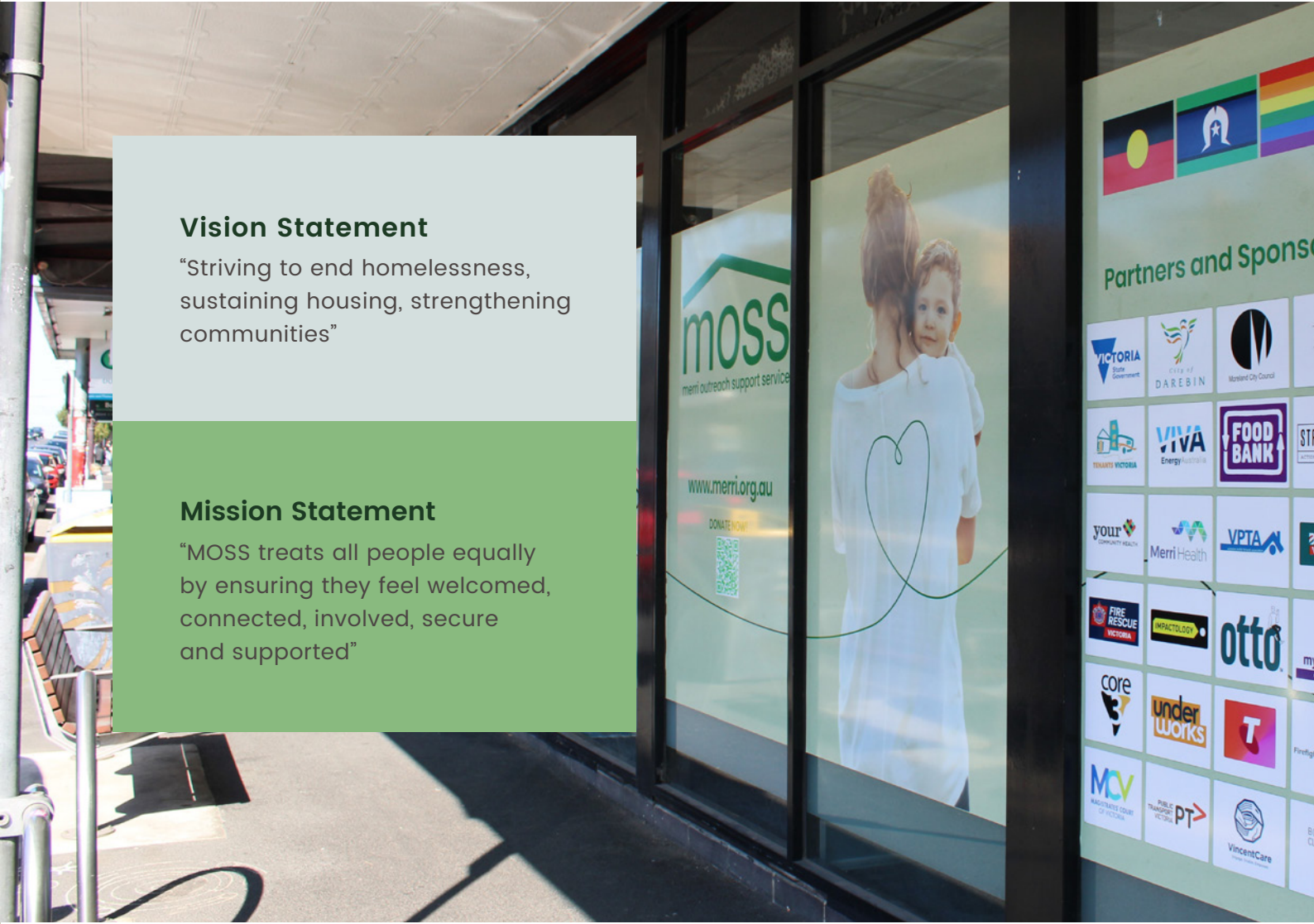
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# About Us



### 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”

Merri Outreach Support Service acknowledges that we are on Kulin land for which traditional owners and their forebears have been custodians for many centuries and one on which Indigenous people have performed age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation, and renewal. We acknowledge their living culture and unique role in the life of this region.

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

### Get in touch

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# Chair's Report Stephen Gagen



The COVID-19 pandemic has dominated our thoughts and actions for almost two years. Yes, we all wish it would just go away and stop bothering us. No doubt a previous generation thought that about the Second World War too.

In those dark days of WW2, Sir Winston Churchill used to say, at the start of each day and at the end of every phone conversation: "We must just KBO."

KBO, he would explain, meant Keep Plodding On. Well, he didn't usually say Plodding, but that's the word he used in polite company!

Churchill was never one to back down or give up – and neither are we at MOSS!

I said in my 2020 Chair's Report that COVID-19 is one of the biggest challenges any of us is likely to face in our professional work. But I also said that I was heartened by the response of the MOSS Management and Staff to this unprecedented public emergency.

We have indeed chosen to KBO, with people working remotely using modern communication technology. And with the aid of this technology we are now working more efficiently and effectively than ever before.

The Board is impressed by the huge effort that staff have clearly made to meet the increased demand for our services during the pandemic. It is not easy working in COVID-19 times, yet everyone has really stepped up to push MOSS to the fore among service providers in our field.

Mark has highlighted in his CEO's report the uncertainty and insecurity felt by many of our communities, particularly those experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. I am so pleased that we at MOSS have risen to this challenge, and that we continue to provide support to these vulnerable clients. It is heartening to see that programs are still being delivered by our staff to these people, and in such a professional and caring manner, despite the difficulties.

We have done much more than just provide moral support. We have partnered with Your Community Health and with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to deliver health services to high-rise tenants. This included working with health professionals to provide COVID-19 vaccinations and testing, as well as supporting tenants with meals and keeping them informed on what they can do to keep themselves safe. We also provided services to those living in Supported Residential Services accommodation, and to rough sleepers.

The partnerships I have mentioned highlight a change in the way that Governments are now tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. A reactive medical approach simply doesn't work. Just as it didn't work with the typhoid, cholera and tuberculosis epidemics of the 19th century. What is needed is a public health approach, addressing all facets of the unhealthy modes of life that have facilitated this current pandemic. You don't beat water-borne diseases like typhoid and cholera by medication, you beat them by building sewers.

And I believe that there is a huge role for MOSS to play in this holistic approach to health and wellbeing. Apart from continuing to partner with health providers, I would like us to work with Government and the community to improve standards of housing for disadvantaged people, especially ventilation standards. It is no accident that the majority of covid cases have occurred in our most disadvantaged suburbs.

In his CEO's report, Mark also mentions how we are continuing to refine and improve our financial and information systems, and how we have continued to seek grants during the year to enhance our work in the community. In this regard it was fantastic to get a state government grant to buy a refrigerated food transport vehicle, and to expand our food storage at MOSS. This has proved invaluable in our work to provide nourishing food to those unable to get out due to the Covid lockdowns.

The Board is continuing to explore partnerships with organisations whose work complements our own – with local councils, health providers, community houses, community educators, government agencies and community support organisations – and we are confident for our future.

There is a new spirit in the land – partly brought about by the COVID-19 epidemic. Selfishness and greed are no longer good (they never were) and I believe that we have an important role to play in building a new, more caring and more cooperative world.

I would like to thank my fellow Directors Richard Agar, Gurhan Araci, Younes Benhim, Simon Daly,

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.

But I would like to especially thank our front-line Staff and Volunteers for their dedication and commitment. You are at the pointy end of the COVID-19 fight. MOSS could not function without your tireless efforts. I know that the almost continuous lockdowns of the past year have made your work a struggle and it has been hard to remain positive when balancing home commitments with workload. But you did it, and I am proud of you all!

Thank you, keep safe – and KBO!



# CEO's Report Mark Goodie



We continue to live in unpredictable times. The last twelve months has brought further uncertainty and insecurity in our communities and in particular, people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness. Despite this disruption, there were stories of hope and positivity across our community – a willingness to adapt and try something new.

The theme for this year's Merri Outreach Support Service (MOSS) Annual Report, "**Resilience – adapting through adversity**", acknowledges the many difficulties faced by many in the homelessness sector, but also the spirit of community that has forged a steely resilience which, we hope, will change the way we all tackle the issue of homelessness. The pandemic has helped raise the importance of longer-term sustainable housing solutions.

In 2020, during the pandemic, a program was initiated by the Victorian Government where over 2,000 homeless people were placed into Victorian hotels. This initiative was aimed at protecting the homeless and the broader community from the spread of COVID-19. The impact of this program, aside from improved safety and certainty for these people, was the ability to provide critical support. Housing our rough sleepers and homeless in one location, with ease of connectivity, has meant that finding permanent accommodation can occur faster. MOSS played a significant role in supporting many of the people who were moved into hotels, providing the specialist support they required.

So, what more can be done? What do we, at MOSS, have direct control over? How can we deliver greater impact?

It starts with being more connected to our community and adopting an open mind on how we tackle this societal issue, as we're "**striving to end homelessness, sustaining housing, strengthening communities.**" At MOSS, we've continued to adapt our approach to work to counter the ambiguous and fast-changing environment, making sure we continue to support our many consumers. Women. Men. Children. Families. The young and the elderly.

On the 10th of August, millions of Australians completed the 2021 Census. MOSS was heavily involved in supporting the specialist count of homeless people. We are looking forward to the insights, which will inform us on the extent and depths of socioeconomic disadvantage across Australia and how we can better advocate and support our community's most vulnerable and extend and evolve our support services to meet their changing needs.

## Resilience, adapting through adversity

In the 2020/21 Financial Year, we saw an increase of funding to \$7.2Mil, or 8% when compared to the 2019/20 funding levels. We saw a significant increase in funding for the High Risk Accommodation Response (HRAR) Program, Darebin Assertive Community Outreach (DACO) Program and increased grant submissions received.

Our support programs continue to grow and evolve, delivering critical support to our consumers. We have provided over 2500 support periods to people across the year, which has been consistent year on year, albeit in a more challenging support environment. All MOSS employees have demonstrated amazing resilience and flexibility. Across the board there has been a number of consistent themes in the way each Program responded to the community's needs: Welcoming. Involving. Secure. Connected. Supported – we've seen what a significant difference a warm and sincere welcome achieves with new and existing consumers – that sense of security when they experience that human connection and being supported by someone they know and trust.

When I reflect on the year that was, there are two achievements among many I'd like to share:

The Older Persons High Rise Support Program (OPHRSP) was called upon to respond to the unique needs of tenants who have unmet support requirements and who live in high-rise accommodation. This Program saw many challenges this year. Through a proactive engagement model, the

health concierge program – HRAR was adapted, and focused on a higher engagement with our OPHRSP high-rise tenants to continually assess and link tenants to relevant health services and community care. This included vaccinating, testing, supporting them with meals and keeping them informed on what they can do to keep themselves safe. We partnered with Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), Your Community Health, Merri Community Health to achieve this and to deliver vaccination clinics on site at our supported high-rise towers in Northcote and Brunswick. Additionally, partnering with Foodbank and SecondBite to provide food parcels to residents whilst ensuring residents attended medical appointments safely through the provision of taxi vouchers. This program continues to be an important link for residents in the two high-rise towers MOSS supports in keeping safe and being informed. The program has also been successful in addressing anti-social behaviour which has been especially important during lockdown periods.

The HRAR program also provided additional resources to our Connections team, enabling them to link in with a consortium of support programs auspiced by Your Community Health. This included providing additional support to low-rise communities, rooming houses, and Supported Residential Services in the inner Northern LGAs; ensuring that people received much needed engagement, links to support and information.

Our DACO program aims to get people who are sleeping rough in the City of Darebin off the street and into accommodation. MOSS commenced delivery of a partnership program with Darebin Council 12 months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This program was instrumental in providing support to rough sleepers in Darebin and linking people to accommodation options during the pandemic and it continues to do so. The program has been hugely successful in exceeding targets; its success is a testimony to the DACO workers' ability to link individuals into accommodation and other identified supports such as health, mental health, and material aid. The program was also able to provide a secondment position to a City of Darebin staff member, which enabled a greater scope of delivery during the pandemic and ensured the most vulnerable rough sleepers were provided support. The partnership between Darebin Council and MOSS to address homelessness locally has been hugely successful and demonstrates what can be accomplished when thinking differently in engaging rough sleepers

MOSS prides itself on delivering meaningful programs to the most vulnerable in our community. All MOSS staff have contributed significantly this year in ensuring people they support were not forgotten

during the pandemic and were heard and assisted. I thank all MOSS staff for their contributions, tireless work and ingenuity in providing services during uncertain times. I'm proud to work alongside you.

As a growing agency, there were several projects that we invested in and implemented to further reinforce the support our Programs offer consumers, and ensure we provide a work culture that promotes inclusion and support:

- Implemented a payroll system which enables an online portal for staff to process timesheets and leave applications
- Launched our new website, delivering a new window to MOSS online and creating a fresh brand look and feel.
- Improved Internal Reporting infrastructure, systems and visibility – enabling key staff to be better informed and make better decisions.
- Launched a tailored MOSS employee appreciation and recognition program to recognise excellent work individuals are achieving. This program is designed for peers to nominate colleagues.
- Announced Uncle Jack Charles as our first MOSS Ambassador. Jack has been a long-time supporter of MOSS and last year agreed to be the inaugural MOSS Ambassador. We are extremely honoured by this.

Further support of our growth and direct experiences of the pandemic, has reinforced the need to improve and evolve the systems and processes and the way we work to enable us to best support the community. In the next 12 months, we will be investing time and effort in the following projects:

- Implementation of a new online HR System portal.
- Launch of our Corporate Partnership Program to engage business partners in "striving to end homelessness, sustaining housing, strengthening communities".
- Expand the Ambassador Program to other community supporters.
- Explore our options in the housing provision and health area.
- NDIS – explore further options to provide NDIS support services.

It has been an astonishing year. A big heartfelt thank you to the Merri Outreach Support Service Board of Directors, our amazingly dedicated staff, our community and agency partners, volunteers, funders, and other partners. MOSS could not function without the tireless efforts of our employees and support of the community – what we do is made easier with your partnership, commitment, and involvement. Thank you and keep safe.

# North and West Regional Children’s Resource Program (NWRCRP) Report

The North and West Regional Children’s Resource Program is here to support 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 (SHS), family violence agencies and related networks, building on existing agency and practitioner strengths to address the needs of children. There are nine Statewide Children’s Resource Coordinators (SCRCs) to cover all Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) regions and to respond to area-specific needs. The NWRCRP is a team of two workers based, in normal times, at the Broadmeadows office.

We responded to the changing conditions by taking the opportunity to develop new resources, including online training which is now featured on the Council to Homeless Persons SHS Training Calendar. SCRCs have developed Conversation Cards, an online practitioner toolkit and infographic material, and we continue to work on several other exciting projects set to be launched later this year. COVID-19 may have brought restrictions, but it also presented a unique opportunity to focus on how to support agencies across the region, engage meaningfully with practitioners, develop new training and resources, advocate for children within the sector, and build relationships across intersecting

networks. As agencies begin to resume their post-pandemic work routines, we look forward to commencing face to face support and presenting these newly developed resources.

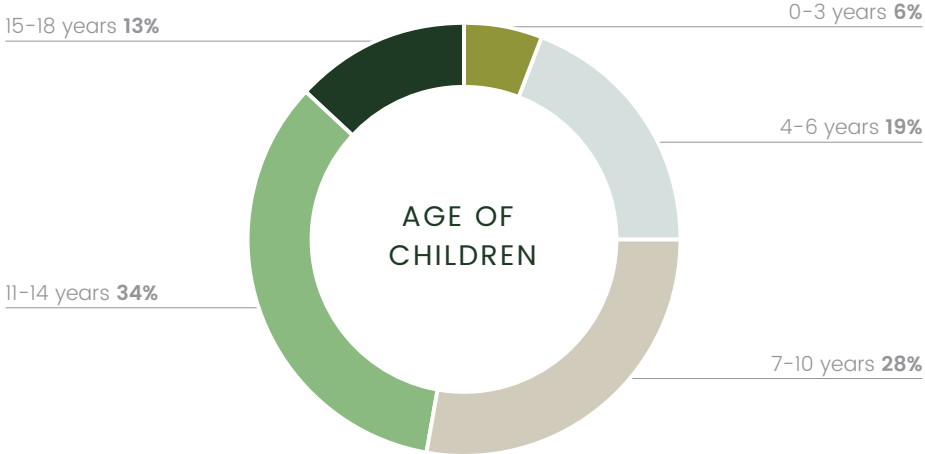
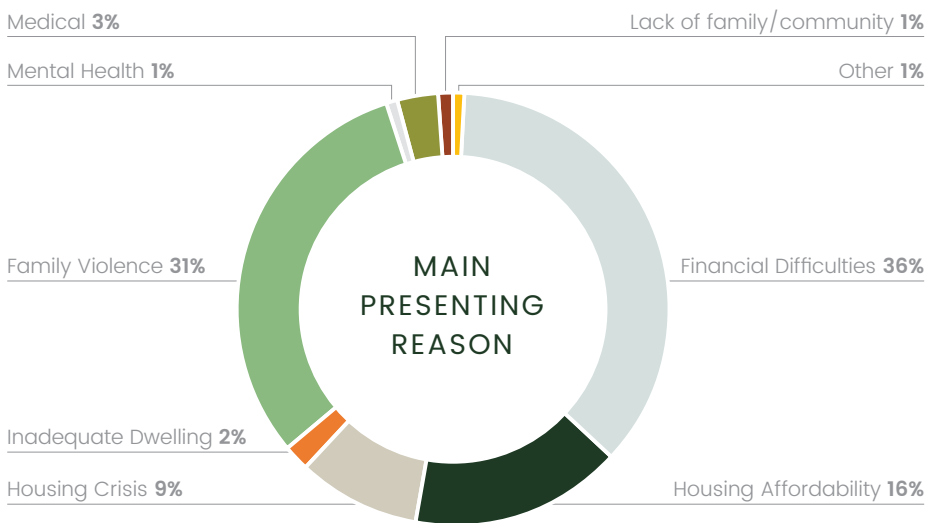
Throughout this financial year in review, the SCRCs have made numerous contributions and submissions on issues impacting children, including the Victorian Government Homelessness Inquiry, Family Violence rolling action plan, Family Safety Victoria course development feedback ‘Course in Contributing to the Prevention of Family Violence and Violence Against Women’, and the Victorian Council of Social Services Bushfire Recovery Report Project.

Data

In 2020-2021 a total of \$48,000 was allocated to the North and West Homeless Children’s Brokerage Program (NWHCBP). The brokerage was fully expended by the end of May 2021 with **47** practitioners across **15** agencies accessing the program. A total of **159** children received brokerage support during the year.

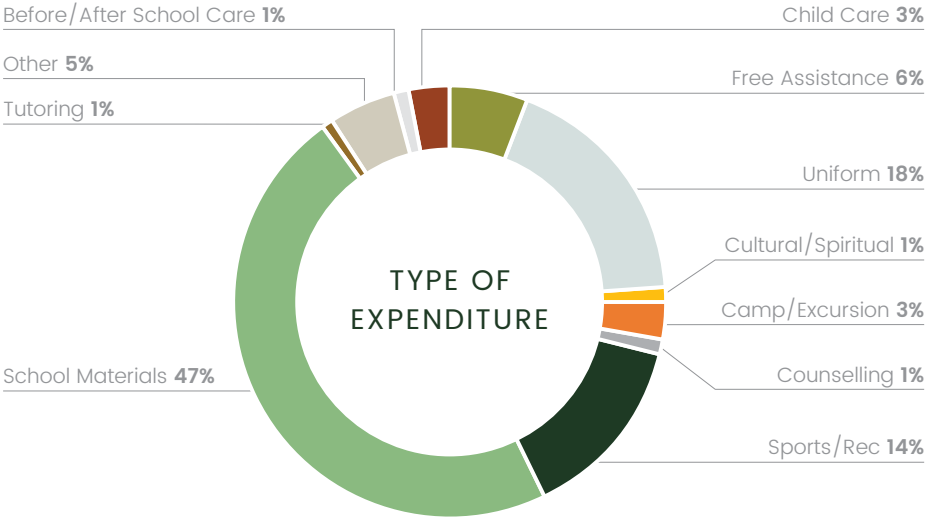
In the North and West regions, the NWHCBP was used to support children to engage in or continue their education, partake in physical and developmental activities, gain access to specialist medical and developmental supports and other supports that they may not have experienced previously.

The overwhelming two main reasons that children use our brokerage are **financial issues** and **family/domestic violence**. This is consistent with brokerage reports from previous years. In cases where family violence was listed as the main presenting reason, financial issues were often listed as an additional reason for seeking support and vice versa.



The children receiving brokerage were most likely to be **aged between 11-14 years** whilst children aged 0-3 were the least serviced group this financial year. This is consistent with previous years.

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that the vast **majority of brokerage spending was used for school supplies**. This included devices and tablets to support learning from home. The pandemic also meant that opportunities for sport and recreation were very limited in comparison to previous years.





# 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 aged 0–18 years old who are accompanying their primary carer/s through the homelessness and/or family violence sectors in the North and West metropolitan regions of Melbourne. We are a team of four workers, normally based on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country at the Broadmeadows office. The pandemic challenged us to adapt, and we continued to provide quality assessment and case management support through a mixture of phone and video calls, offering in-person visits when restrictions allowed. For some families, phone appointments made support more accessible and allowed for a smoother assessment process.

Bright Futures provided individual support sessions to children via Zoom, creating a safe space for them to express and explore their feelings and experiences. The team created online activities to engage children and sent out art packs so that they could still be creatively participate during online sessions. When it was identified that many children did not have access to a laptop or tablet device with which to engage in education and learning, therapeutic support and recreational activities, Bright Futures, in partnership with the Hume Program, applied successfully for a grant through the Australian Communities Foundation to fund devices.

The Bright Futures Group Work stream has continued to be adaptable, despite the challenges of COVID-19. After running a range of groups online throughout 2020, in-person groups resumed at schools

in late 2020. To minimise the sharing of materials in group and adhere to COVID-safe practices, children were provided with individual art packs to use in these groups.

In January 2021 Bright Futures ran its first in-person holiday program in almost a year, with a trip to the Collingwood Children's Farm. Many families had not been on an outing for a long time and some were anxious about going out in the COVID-19 environment. Staff supported them by providing taxis where needed and family lunch packs. With the success of the outing, another trip to the farm was held in the June school holidays. Families again embraced the opportunity to get out of the house and do a fun activity with the support of the team. One parent commented "it was lovely to be able to spend time with other parents who have had similar experiences to my own".

Despite the challenge of the pandemic, we found people very appreciative of our adapted support and services continued with minimal disruption despite lockdowns and constantly changing COVID-19 restrictions. Families valued Bright Futures' extension of case management support to complete case plan tasks such as connecting to recreational activities possible only once lockdown restrictions eased. They were also glad to have the Zoom sessions, art and activity packs, and even a brief hello at the front door. Other families also welcomed us providing Personal Protective Equipment supplies when these became mandatory and checking in to make sure families had everything they needed when public housing estates went into hard lockdown.



## Case Scenario

In July 2020 Bright Futures began working with a family of four children aged 17, 12, 7 and 5 years old, who were in the care of their maternal grandmother. The children had all experienced family violence, with the 7-year-old having also experienced other traumas.

Working alongside the grandmother, Bright Futures developed extensive case plans for the children which included:

- Applying for NDIS for the 7-year-old and connecting them with occupational therapy to work on the impacts of the trauma they had experienced.
- Connecting the 12- and 7-year-olds with a literacy support program as they were significantly behind at school.
- Enrolment in swimming lessons, accessing NWRCRP brokerage and family violence flexible support packages, maintaining relationships.

- Support with primary school, including assisting with prep enrolment for the 5-year-old and high school enrolment for the 12-year-old.

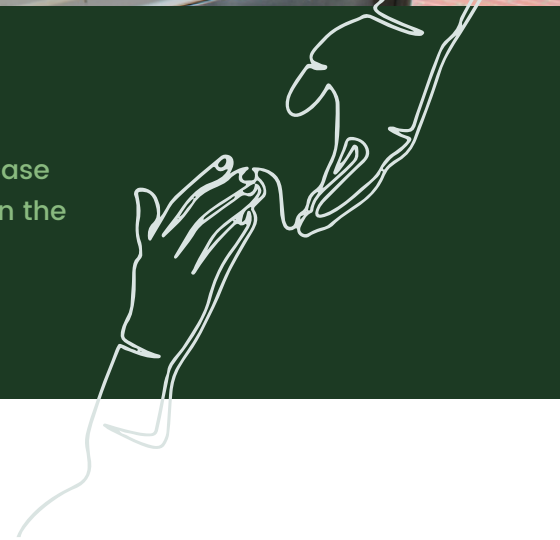
The children participated in online Bright Futures groups and the family attended the Bright Futures holiday outing in June 2021. The now 13-year-old is currently also attending the term three Bright Futures Therapeutic Creative Arts group at the Broadmeadows office. The grandmother, school staff, literacy support worker and occupational therapist have all reflected on the incredible growth and progress each child has made; academically, socially, and emotionally. The grandmother has said that Bright Futures were crucial in aiding the children's progress, and without them, all that has achieved wouldn't have been possible.



# Connections Program Report



The Connections Program provides short-term case management and linkages to clients aged 26+ in the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne.



We are a team of seven workers normally based at the Broadmeadows office. The pandemic brought some changes, but we maintained delivery of high-quality services, never allowing the challenges to interfere with our commitment to providing the best possible support to our consumers who welcomed our continuing help.

Working together in lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic has provided the Connections team with many opportunities for learning. We partnered with several agencies during the year, including Your Community Health (High Risk Accommodation Response) and Tenants Victoria to deliver food to residents of rooming houses and to improve the pathways into the Connections Program.

We continued to support consumers to attend critical appointments for health

and housing and were able to refer consumers for long-term housing and support through the From Homelessness to a Home (H2H) initiative. Early in the pandemic we identified those who were socially isolated and really struggling with lockdowns and contacted them regularly.

It has been a tough year for consumers and colleagues alike, both personally and professionally. It may be some time before we can reflect fully on the past year and truly value the efforts and commitments produced during this incredibly destabilising time. Some things are very clear today: Connections team members have affirmed their absolute professional commitment to each other and to supporting the most vulnerable members of our community, and we are ready and able to continue doing so.

## Case Scenario

The Connections Program received the referral for Angie (name changed) from the Aged Housing and Support Officer at Darebin Council (Darebin Sponsorship Program). Suffering from a complex health condition, Angie had been homeless for over 12 months and her mental health had deteriorated rapidly over that time.

Recently, she had been staying temporarily at the home of a friend who was travelling long-term within Australia. Although this property offered some safety and comfort, her friend's adult son would visit regularly, arriving unannounced and staying for several weeks. He neglected to do any cleaning and when he left, Angie would feel obligated to clean the mess that he had left behind.

At initial assessment it was very clear that Angie held little hope for an improvement in her life. She was exhausted by the demands of her housing situation and held little hope for a home of her own. Her physical health had been steadily declining, and a recent fall had resulted in a broken knee. She had also been diagnosed with an overactive thyroid, after losing 34kgs.

Our focus of support was to assist with private rental searches and to update Angie's housing application to a homeless with support application. As Angie had been referred through the Darebin Sponsorship Program, there was also a focus on advocating for a priority allocation of housing through this program. Despite the challenges she was experiencing, Angie became actively involved in searching for a suitable private rental and with support from the Connections Program, she was enthusiastic about the possibility of finally finding a home.

Several months later Angie was offered a property through the Darebin Sponsorship Program. After inspecting the property Angie was delighted to accept the offer and the Connections Program team supported her to transition to the new property, including using brokerage funds for removals, a rent-in-advance payment, and a new fridge.

Angie was very happy with her new accommodation arrangements, which also included on-site support.





# Older Person's High Rise Support Program (OPHRSP) Report

**The Older Person's High Rise Support Program provides social engagement, community development, referrals and housing support to people aged 55+ years old living in the older persons high rise public housing estates at Holmes Street, Northcote and Barkly Street, Brunswick. We are a team of three workers, usually based at either high rise which have 120 units each.**

The OPHRSP team was determined to rise to the challenges of the pandemic, but it wasn't always easy. On March 16, 2020, the OPHRSP abruptly packed up and took home what was needed to be able to close the office and deliver services from home. Only by supporting and checking in with each other regularly were we able to build our resilience and create a stronger team in the constantly changing face of the pandemic. In turn, by ensuring our own wellbeing, we were able to provide a strong foundation to support the people we worked with. We quickly created a COVID compliant service delivery model, and this has enabled the OPHRSP to remain connected and responsive.

OPHRSP immediately stopped running the Wednesday morning tea group. Panic buying hit supermarkets leaving shelves empty. Residents of Holmes and Barkly Streets couldn't access the community shopping hour (held three times a week when stores opened at 7am). OPHRSP reallocated the morning tea funds to purchasing food parcel items. In the beginning, we only had

about 10 people interested but Darebin City Council and SecondBite supported us with providing fresh produce and Food Share offering frozen meals. At the busiest point, OPHRSP was bagging up weekly food parcels to supply over half of the tenants at Holmes Street.

Not being onsite made it difficult to check in on the tenants and the hard lockdown, immediate cessation of community engagement and resulting isolation significantly affected everyone's mental health. OPHRSP were able to support the tenants with their anxieties after the Flemington towers were forced into two weeks of hard lockdown, fearing the same would happen to the Holmes and Barkly Street towers.

Through the assertive phone calling, OPHRSP were able to engage with tenants that historically had not engaged with MOSS. OPHRSP also saw the need for after-hours phone support and the Concierge Health Response Program (CHiRP) was born. This evolved to become High Risk Accommodation Response (HRAR) program, specialising in supporting tenants with accurate and timely COVID information. HRAR also ensured personal protective equipment was readily available to tenants. We were able to deliver services to relieved clients who welcomed the emotional support, phone check-ins and the continued MOSS presence during Stage 4 hard lockdown.



## Group Work Success

OPHRSP's regular contact with tenants led us to identify the need to vaccinate the people of Holmes and Barkly Streets. A large majority of people had health issues limiting mobility and making simply standing in line at a vaccination centre an unrealistic ask. Through HRAR, OPHRSP were able to liaise with Merri Health for the Moreland LGA, Your Community Health for the Darebin LGA and DPV Health for a vaccination pop-up clinic for the people living at Holmes and Barkly Streets. Through strong and collaborative work with local community health centres, Holmes and Barkly Streets vaccination rates are the highest in Melbourne. Tenants provided positive feedback to OPHRSP for organising the pop-up vaccination clinic.

## The Newsletter Initiative

To keep the people of Holmes and Barkly Streets connected and informed of MOSS news, Cate: Volunteer Coordinator created a monthly newsletter to distribute to both sites. Cate liaised with the office of local member for Northcote Kat Theophanous to print the newsletter in full colour. The newsletter was a great way to connect people in a time of enforced isolation. Several games and puzzles were included to keep tenants entertained, as well as a feature interview column to ensure tenants were familiar with Staff and Volunteers. A highlight of the newsletter was the raffle draw, where tenants were able to win prizes.



# Housing Support for the Aged Program (HSAP) Report



The Housing Support for the Aged Program provides long term case management support to people aged over 50 who live alone in public housing, are isolated and have a history of homelessness and unmet complex health needs. HSAP case managers support clients to maintain their housing through advocacy and support and provide supported referrals to appropriate health services. HSAP also works with the clients to achieve connection to their community and access to social supports. We adapted service delivery to meet the restrictions with each change throughout the pandemic.

The HSAP chose to pivot service delivery models to provide consumer supports via phone only. Using telephone assessments, service delivery became more task and goal focused. We identified an increase in mental health

issues due to the restrictive conditions. The HSAP consumers were unable to meet at monthly groups as all planned groups were cancelled.

The pandemic has been challenging for everyone but the consumers we supported really enjoyed it when case managers researched topics of interest and provided information and resources e.g., gardening projects and Bunnings vouchers. We also supported clients to access IT equipment, electronic notepads, laptops, desk computers, internet services and mobile phones for them to maintain social connection. Work tasks were shared more frequently amongst team members where a consumer was needing intensive supports such as emergency relief (food), taxi vouchers and IT supports. This approach lowered stress levels all round and facilitated a better journey for the consumer.

## Case Scenario:

Individuals receiving long-term support in the Housing Support for the Aged Program have faced various levels of adversity in their lives and have already shown great resilience, a quality they brought to the frustrations of the Coronavirus pandemic. These included physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, and financial adversity. An example of physical adversity has been depicted in the case scenario below.

Ben (name changed) is a long-time client of HSAP who had been experiencing a decline in his mobility and general wellbeing because of the long-term effects of his chronic/complex health conditions, in particular diabetes. Ben was informed by specialists at his local hospital that he was at risk of losing a limb in the foreseeable future and that he needed to stop smoking immediately to reduce the risk of further infections which could lead to amputation.

Ben's level of support from HSAP had increased, with help to co-ordinate medical and allied

health appointments between hospital specialists, allied health practitioners and council home care support services for domestic support. For example, pre-COVID HSAP was able to physically support Ben by attending his appointments. As a result of COVID, taxi vouchers have been provided through HSAP flexi funds to ensure Ben can access his appointments.

Furthermore, HSAP assisted Ben with a housing transfer application as his property was no longer sustainable for him as long-term independent living because of his deteriorating health. In addition, HSAP negotiated for a My Aged Care assessment to be conducted for a home care package with case management and support based on his level of vulnerability.

Having a positive mindset for the future, with resilience and refusal to give up, has been the main strength observed in HSAP clients, despite the adverse effects of the coronavirus pandemic.





# MOSS Planned Activity Groups (Social Support Groups) Program Report

The Social Support Groups Program provides planned activity groups to the following individuals across Moreland, Banyule and Darebin:

- Clients aged over 55 years
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants aged over 50 years
- My Aged Care clients over 65 years
- NDIS clients

We are a team of 10 workers with additional casual staff, offering groups at three locations: 351 Barkly Street, Brunswick, 1 Holmes Street, Northcote and 221 Southern Road, Heidelberg. We have continued to run our services from the various community rooms on

the estates, making some necessary adjustments to the model of service delivery.

The Social Support Group Program provided support to 119 regular clients and casual clients throughout this past year, adapting to maintain the service while complying with the requirements of the pandemic. As we were unable to deliver our services from home, we altered our service model by providing one-on-one support and small group activities. These changes enabled us to provide continuous support throughout this time. By adapting our roles and services, we offered assistance that reduced the impacts of social isolation, providing meals and community connections to our clients.

A recent Client Survey revealed that many clients reported our program was their only connection to others throughout the pandemic, especially during the long periods of lockdown. We were very concerned for many of our already vulnerable clients, as social isolation is known to be one of the main contributors to poor mental health and decline in wellbeing. It was therefore important that we were able to remain connected with them through social activities during the long periods of isolation.

Pleasingly, MOSS Social Support Groups were successful in securing two HACC-PYP COVID grants during the year in review. These grants focused on 'the impact of social distancing'. The projects covered almost the entire year and moving forward, are helping to address the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable people in the communities we support. We provided a continued program to younger peoples until May 2021, redirecting some of our funding to provide free meals and ensure food security. The latest grant has enabled the program to employ two staff 5 days per week from June to December 2021, providing much needed one-on-one support capacity. These grants have been crucial in enabling our program to continue meaningful service provision.

Additional staff had the time to focus on a more intense, client directed and personal role, to ensure clients remained engaged and supported during times of group closures and when density limits reduced the number of clients we could accommodate in the community rooms.

The project allows for flexibility in a one-on-one environment and small group work, including outings which could run concurrently when the program was operating our usual service. The funding provided many wonderful opportunities for the clients to enjoy meaningful activities, outings, and alternative ways of socialising, outside the usual program structure.

Overall, the most significant positive outcome for the program has been the ability to keep delivering a consistent and meaningful program throughout the past 12 months, despite still being impacted by this pandemic. We have also been fortunate enough to celebrate many special occasions throughout the year, including



Christmas Parties, Mother's Day, Anzac Day and other special occasions. We have been finding creative ways to reach our clients, when not able to be physically together. For example, we continue to provide activity packs for clients to do at home. The program and clients have realised the value of being socially connected more than ever throughout this journey we've undertaken together.

It has been extremely rewarding for the entire team to know how highly our clients value the work we do to ensure they remain safe, engaged, and connected to their local communities. We continue to achieve positive outcomes every day with our clients, have increased our support numbers by 26 and successfully supported the clients to reach their desired outcomes through these challenging times.

The feedback from the clients has been tremendous and speaks volumes about the importance of our role working with elderly, disabled and vulnerable people in our program. The MOSS Social Support Groups Program has been extremely fortunate to continue operating throughout this time. Many other local social support groups have had to either temporarily halt and some permanently close, having been unable to alter their service delivery to meet clients' needs.

The formal registration of our Social Support Group as an NDIS Service Provider opens many possibilities for the future and the opportunity to expand and enhance the program. It is a validation and reflection of MOSS and Social Support Groups' commitment to achieving the expected standards to provide support and care for those with disabilities in our community.





# Hume Program Report

The Hume Program provides Transitional Outreach Support to individuals and families experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness in the Hume and Moreland local government areas. We are a team of eight workers normally based at the Broadmeadows office.

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The Hume Program was determined to continue providing high quality support and connections to our consumer group, rising to the challenges while maintaining appropriate COVID safe measures. The past year has been

difficult for both our consumer group and for the team but the Program has provided support to our consumers, while also ensuring that team members supported each other. We have adapted to work beyond the constraints of 'normal' program service delivery. As a team, we were able to work collaboratively to create positive outcomes for consumers who had been struggling during the pandemic due to increased financial strain, mental health issues and ongoing homelessness.

The Hume team conducted regular outreach visits to check in on our most vulnerable consumers, ensuring that they were provided consistent support. We also engaged with them via alternative forms of communication, such as Zoom conferencing and WhatsApp messages when home visits were unable to go ahead. As a team we were constantly discussing and reviewing how we could adapt service delivery to our consumers in a way that was meaningful as well as COVID safe.

Despite the challenges of service delivery in a pandemic, we found people very open to, and appreciative of, the regular contact and the team's willingness to listen and connect with them during a difficult time. This ongoing support and regular contact from the team came via phone calls, socially distanced meet ups in local parks, deliveries of food parcels and care packs. The consumers really welcomed the consistency of support from the Hume team.

Consumers also appreciated our support in ensuring access to fresh and non-perishable food. This was in conjunction with our partnerships with Unison, Food Bank, Second Bite, Fare Share and Barkly Street foodbank. The team was able to allocate food for 25-40 families or individuals each week, always making sure that it was done in a COVID safe manner.

Consumers have reported that they felt supported and, despite the pandemic, knew that the team would continue to be there to support them.

## Case Scenario:

The HEART (Homeless Emergency Accommodation Response Team) Program is a Victorian State Government response to those experiencing primary homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lucas had been referred to Merri Outreach Support Service as a part of the HEART program after presenting at local Access Point VincentCare. He was seeking support and assistance with obtaining accommodation.

Recent family breakdown and other contributing factors had led to Lucas's homelessness. He returned to Melbourne from the Northern Territory (NT) to care for his elderly mother, however after arriving in Melbourne this relationship broke down, resulting in Lucas having to resort to sleeping in his vehicle for shelter.

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, his poor physical health and lack of financial means, Lucas could not return to the NT. With support from the Hume Program, Lucas was referred and accepted into an 8-week live in/respite program in Melbourne's North. During this stay he worked on improving his physical health and his relationship with his family, and advised the Hume team that his goal was to return to the NT.

With financial support from VincentCare, Lucas was able to access sufficient financial assistance to get a flight back to Alice Springs. And with the support of the Hume team and other programs, he was able to have his medication transferred to the NT. Lucas was very happy to successfully return to the NT a short time after COVID-19 lockdown ended. He now resides in the NT in a private rental, continues to engage with numerous support services and has been able to exit homelessness.



# Transitional Outreach Support Team (TOST) Program Report

The Transitional Outreach Support Team Program provides case management to clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the local government areas of Whittlesea, Darebin, Banyule and Nillumbik. The team consists of three full-time staff, including the Program Manager, and one part-time worker based at the Northcote office. Three additional staff from Banyule Housing Support and ICMI also come under the TOST banner. We deliver the program 5 days a week.

Firstly, we would like to acknowledge the great legacy of our previous staff member Esme Tyson from the Banyule Program, who retired earlier this year. Esme was a valued member of the TOST with over 30 years of experience in the sector. We wish her well in her retirement. We have welcomed our new worker Adam Hill to the Program as her replacement.

TOST would also like to acknowledge and pay tribute to Jodie Deathe, who sadly passed away earlier this year. Jodie was the HEART (Hotel Emergency Accommodation Response Team) Worker, under the Working for Victoria initiative. She was a valued member of the TOST team, supporting our most vulnerable clients. Jodie was a great asset to MOSS and is sadly missed. TOST participated in the HEART program and managed to pick up a total of 23 referrals across our 3 teams, 7 of which were successful with H2H (Homeless to Housing) accommodation packages with support. Other housing exits for our HEART clients were private rental, SRS, long term rooming houses and shared housing.

Our current partnership with the Exodus Community, Haven; Home, Safe and our Crisis Program, to provide support at Southern Road, Heidelberg has resulted in a total of nine housing exits for single males from this property since Victoria's first lockdown. We currently have a full house and anticipate this partnership will be ongoing, with the hope that the model may be replicated in the future. Despite the stresses of operating in the pandemic, TOST has managed to secure some great housing outcomes for our homeless clients.

## Case Scenario:

TOST supported a single male client with significant mental health and behavioural issues which impacted on his ability to engage with services and consequently the ability to access appropriate long-term accommodation. Police involvement was often the only way to deal with his aggressive and abusive behaviours. TOST advocated for mental health supports to re-engage with the client and on his behalf submitted a referral to Community Housing Limited (CHL) for a property in the North. TOST also advocated for the client to be allocated the correct NDIS package which accurately reflected the client's current needs.

TOST was able to close the client's file after the successful nomination to CHL for his own long-term property and re-established mental health and NDIS support, which will support the client to sustain his tenancy. This is one of the many great outcomes that TOST has achieved in the 2020-2021 financial year.

# Intensive Case Management Initiative (ICMI) Program Report

The Intensive Case Management Initiative Program delivers case management to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness in the local government areas of Whittlesea, Darebin, Banyule and Nillumbik. ICMI is part of the TOST Program, is based at the Northcote office and has a sole worker delivering services 4 days a week.

The Program has always required determination and the ability to adapt in the face of adversity. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, we continued to deliver services, to advocate for appropriate housing exits and support, and to build and strengthen relationships with housing providers. One of many great outcomes for ICMI was the successful nomination of two chronic homeless clients to long term housing with Community Housing Limited in Mernda.

The people we supported really appreciated the continued support during the various lockdowns, welcoming ongoing access to the ICMI worker for support and direction to obtain essential services, including emergency accommodation, food, and clothing.

Our partnership with WT Onus Hostel continues to be a positive collaboration in providing support and secondary consults on how to access and manage sustainable tenancies. The reciprocal partnership has ensured the needs of clients are always taken into consideration when planning exits or extending stays until a suitable housing option becomes available.

## Case Scenario:

The ICMI program received a referral last year in early July from St Kilda Crisis Centre for an Aboriginal woman in her 30s named Sam (not her real name) who was being funded to stay at WT Onus Hostel. It was apparent from first contact that there were significant mental health issues contributing to Sam's homelessness. Sam's untreated mental health issues and subsequent anti-social and volatile behaviors made it incredibly difficult for her to sustain any accommodation or receive enduring support from either her community or services in the community sector. As such, she was a very vulnerable person who required an intensive, often daily, support response. Over a period of months, ICMI worked collaboratively with several access point services, numerous emergency accommodation providers (15 different motels in total), several mental health services and hospital psychiatric units before Sam finally received an effective mental health response.

After months of advocacy, Sam was placed on a community treatment order and linked into ongoing support. Launch Housing came on board and were able to assist Sam in accessing suitable shared housing in the southern suburbs of Melbourne.

During our final contact with Sam, she was so pleased to share that not only was she feeling very happy and supported where she was living, but that she was also enrolled and due to commence a course of study. She was incredibly appreciative of the support provided by ICMI. This was an amazing outcome for Sam and our program made it possible, through perseverance to keep pushing for an appropriate mental health response and collaboration with other professionals and a supportive team.



# Banyule Housing Support (BHS) Program Report

Despite the name, the Banyule Housing Support team provides case management to clients facing current or potential homelessness in the Whittlesea, Darebin, Banyule and Nillumbik local government areas. BHS is a team of two workers delivering the program 5 days per week from our Shop 48 office in West Heidelberg.

The BHS team adapted rapidly throughout the lockdowns to keep providing direct service for clients in transitional housing, as well as accepting new referrals from Banyule Council services and the Hotel Emergency Accommodation Response Team (HEART). Our commitment to supporting our clients during this pandemic helped ensure lockdowns did not hinder offers of affordable and sustainable housing, with staff taking on components of tenancy roles to ensure safe and smooth transitions to secure accommodation.

Despite the year's unusual challenges, we remained focussed on positive outcomes for clients, and this was very much appreciated. Support included access to funds for child related expenses via our Regional Resource Children's Program and the increase in brokerage funding from Banyule Council. These critical resources ensured our program was able to direct funds to vulnerable families, alleviating financial pressures and helping to sustain tenancies.

## Case Scenario:

Jane (not her real name) is a 31-year-old female who was living with her 62-year-old mother in a private rental property. The family received a Notice to Vacate due to the owner wanting to sell the property. Jane was referred by Banyule Community Health Centre for housing support. It subsequently unfolded that the relationship between Jane and her mother was strained, and both had complex health issues. After several home visits, Jane disclosed that she did not want to continue living with her mother due to ongoing conflict and verbal abuse/family violence. She also wanted to be independent.

Given this disclosure, Banyule continued to work with Jane and the mother was referred to the MOSS Connections Program which specialises in working with the older age group. A Homeless with Support Application was submitted for Jane. Through ongoing advocacy with Haven; Home, Safe, Jane was finally considered for the 'A Place to Call Home' (APTCH) initiative.

Jane is now living in her head-lease property through APTCH, which is flagged to become her permanent housing in one year. She is very happy in her new place and is also being supported by the NDIS.

This was an incredible outcome for our program and was only possible with the great support of every member of the TOST team and ongoing relationship with the local Access Point, Haven; Home, Safe. This case study is also a demonstration of MOSS's effective internal referral process between specialist services.

# Crisis Response Program (CRP) Report

The Crisis Response Program provides outreach case management to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the Northeast Metropolitan Area of Melbourne (Darebin, Banyule, Nillumbik and Whittlesea).

We are a team of four workers, including the Crisis Program Manager, who are normally based at the Northcote office. Continuing to deliver robust and effective support to our clients took some flexibility through the pandemic and we are proud of how we rose to the challenge to meet the needs of those we were working with. The referrals we received during this time came from multiple access points.

Due to undertaking outreach in high-risk areas during the pandemic, team members often had to be tested for COVID-19 and self-isolate whilst awaiting results. During this time, others in the team would ensure that any outreach needed was still undertaken by another team member, thus ensuring a continuity of support to consumers.

We repeatedly found the people we supported very welcoming of our assistance and our commitment to finding solutions that met their needs. One way this occurred was by the team placing regular food orders with 'The Bridge' and then transporting this food to people accommodated in hotels.

In addition, the team were tenacious in our attempts to ensure everyone we were supporting was offered all possible housing and support options. This resulted in many going into long term housing and support at the end of their time with us. Throughout the year we received a lot of positive feedback from consumers and stakeholders stating that they believe the CRP team at Northcote goes above and beyond what is expected to support our consumers.

## Case Scenario:

47-year-old Andy was referred to CRP through the HEART program. He had been rough sleeping or staying in temporary housing for the past three years and was accommodated in hotel accommodation as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Andy had little contact with services in the past and was extremely skeptical and mistrusting of them. He had a long history of heroin use and was on the methadone program that he topped up with heroin on occasions. Andy also had a diagnosis of clinical depression with suicidal ideation. His goal was to have his own place and to get a job but thought this highly unlikely, having been incarcerated 13 times.

CRP commenced case planning and built a respectful and trusting relationship. Andy was able to follow his case plan with the result that he engaged with a psychologist, stopped topping up with heroin and was linked back in with his employment agency. He was accepted into community accommodation with case management, which resulted in CRP closing with him. Unfortunately, this did not work out and CRP recommenced working with him. At this stage he was rough sleeping again where he met someone who scammed him out of \$700. This left him very despondent, but he said, "since you have hope for me, I have to have hope for myself".

Now for the good news. The CRP worker who was supporting him put in a Homeless to Home referral and he was accepted into the program. Although initially there were some issues that were disheartening to Andy, he was determined to stay with the program. Andy keeps in touch to update worker on his situation, and he is now the proud tenant of a beautiful one-bedroom apartment in Melbourne CBD and hopes to find employment again soon. He advised he will never forget our support and is grateful for the service provided.



# Catchment Youth Refuge (CYR) Program Report

Catchment Youth Refuge provides short term case management and accommodation to young people aged 16–25 years of age and their children. The refuge is based in the inner suburbs of Northern Melbourne, and is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The team is made up of a Coordinator, seven part-time staff members and a pool of casual staff. Although many programs worked predominately from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, this was not an option at the refuge. Staff continued to work on site as we needed to keep supporting our young residents throughout this time.

The CYR Program continued to provide a high-quality accommodation service through lockdowns, raising standards within the facility to comply with COVID-19 requirements and minimise risk. As the times made it more difficult to secure long term housing outcomes for younger people living in the refuge, the team became more flexible about the length of time a young person could be accommodated while we secured a suitable ongoing housing option.

We also tried to ensure that young people could still access specialist care within the

refuge, coming up with creative solutions such as telehealth appointments with the Homeless Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative (HYDDI) program and setting up outdoor settings for the nurse who attends the refuge to meet with the young people. Despite the challenging pandemic times, the young people we supported demonstrated resilience, compassion for their fellow housemates and stated they were grateful for the support they were provided in such extraordinary times. Several support mechanisms were developed, and able to be continued during the restrictions including:

- Food donations – Fair Share
- HoMie clothing donations
- Securing THM, community and private rental housing
- Brokerage for appointments, activities, celebrations e.g., birthdays
- CIRFs – COVID Isolations and Recovery Facilities

It is a testament to funding bodies, management, community, and the Catchment team having, often at short notice, to adjust the way they work and continue to provide support to the young people and children residing at the Refuge and in outreach.



## Case Scenario:

Prior to being referred to Catchment Youth Refuge, Mary and her daughter Sarah (names altered), were living with Mary's father and suffering long-term family violence. This culminated in an altercation in which police, child protection and VACCA (Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency) became involved. It was quickly apparent that Mary's family home was a highly unsafe environment and she and her daughter subsequently accessed crisis accommodation at CYR.

Along with their existing supports, the family was referred to a specialist homelessness mental health service, local Enhanced Maternal Health Nurse, and general health support via GP consult referrals. Mary was further supported to access a Family Violence Brokerage Package (FVSP), address debt issues, and successfully abstain from historic and significant alcohol and other drug use whilst accommodated at the refuge.

Having been able to minimise some of these barriers, Mary was referred to a social enterprise where she successfully secured employment. This was particularly significant for Mary as she became the first person in her family to obtain employment. Consequently, her sense of

empowerment, independence and confidence improved.

The global pandemic and state-wide lockdown in Victoria posed further obstacles for the family. Restrictions on movement, businesses and hospitality meant that Mary's traineeship at the social enterprise was effectively placed on hold. An intensive case management and advocacy response was required of refuge staff to ensure that the effects of the pandemic would not include recurrent homelessness.

Fortunately, Mary and Sarah were offered public housing in Fitzroy shortly after. This was a great outcome for the family, given the proximity to Mary's work and close access to public transport and amenities. Through brokerage from her FVSP, Mary was able to set up her new home with her daughter. She remains determined to realise her aspirations and return to employment when possible. Mary's history of family violence, mental health challenges, and parenting responsibilities – all within the context of a pandemic and lockdowns – have not prevented her showing great resilience and moving past her family circumstances to provide a safe and stable environment for herself and her daughter.



# Youth and Family Team Program Report

The Youth and Family Program provides case management to 16–25-year-olds in the Northern East Melbourne Area. We are a team of 2 workers filling one full time position normally based at the Northcote office. Over an unusual year, we continued to provide creative, client-centred case management and support to young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness at this time.

The pandemic certainly added some stress, but we found young people keen to engage, and very happy with our prompt responses to their needs. This included clear explanations, determined advocacy, and support to navigate service systems. The ease of referral pathways into the program and support, particularly through outpost placement at Darebin Youth Hub in Northland and Catchment Youth Refuge, was beneficial to them. The flexibility of support – through technology and media that young people are often very comfortable with – allowed them to engage with case management via text, phone, and e-mail, rather than face-to-face appointments.

Isolation arising from the pandemic has impacted young people greatly, especially in mental health and emotional wellbeing, connection to networks and links to chosen family. Supporting them through this time has also impacted the program and its work. The pandemic placed limits on in-person support to build relationships and rapport and help our young clients develop skills, confidence, and knowledge. We have responded by being flexible and creative in facilitating COVID safe connections with young people and their families and supporting them to do the same with their own networks.



## Case Scenario:

A vulnerable 18-year-old was referred to the Youth and Family team by the local Access Point. This young person had been placed in emergency accommodation by mental health services for two days and needed immediate alternative accommodation once this ended.

This young person had the clothes they were wearing and access to their birth certificate. They had no social or family supports, no phone, bank account, Centrelink or tax file number. They had no experience navigating service systems or even interacting with the modern world.

We built trust and respect in assessment and followed up with intensive team case management support, strong advocacy and use of networks. The young person's situation was able to be greatly improved within three weeks. The team worked with them to obtain life changing Identification Documentation – emotional eyes glistened as their first bank account was opened. When a youth refuge placement was secured, the young person was able to begin their next chapter with a wallet full of ID, a bank account with Centrelink payments and to take control of their situation and build independence.

# Darebin Assertive Community Outreach (DACO) Program Report

The Darebin Assertive Community Outreach Program is a 2-year pilot project funded by the City of Darebin, providing assertive outreach case management to people sleeping rough in the Darebin area. The team usually consists of two full-time outreach workers based at the Northcote office. However, for most of the financial year we were fortunate enough to have an additional worker for 3 days per week in a redeployment program funded by the City of Darebin.

The DACO Program delivers a direct outreach response to those in need in our community, and we continued to provide this through the challenges of the pandemic. We adapted to deliver support which met COVID safety requirements while still responding effectively to need and bringing outreach and support to a large cohort of consumers in unprecedented times. During most of the lockdowns, our normal intake meeting places were continually changing in nature and location. The program adjusted meetings with clients to carry out intake and assessment processes that protected client privacy without compromising COVID safety measures.

Delivering our service through a pandemic was certainly a challenge but we are proud to have risen to it and to have continued to provide meaningful assistance to exceptionally vulnerable people who welcomed our help and support. Rough sleepers were particularly at-risk of course and were relieved to see DACO still working in the community to support them. Many services went online but we found that most rough sleepers did not have consistent access to a phone. A significant amount of our work, therefore, was ensuring that consumers could access suitable devices and keep them charged.

Darebin Council has been very supportive and always open to suggestion and feedback around the DACO program. We have worked closely together, including collaborating to open a community shower access program at two of the swim centres within the community, providing clients with access to showers and facilities. The feedback from this program has been great and the support from Darebin Council, the Northcote Aquatic Centre and Reservoir Leisure Centre has been very welcome.

During the pandemic, we were able to achieve several great outcomes for our clients, some of whom had experienced recurring homelessness for over 10 years. We feel the work delivered and the outcomes achieved within the last year to be monumental within the Darebin community.

## Case Scenario:

'Charlie' is a young man we met sleeping in Bundoora Park. He was a chronic rough sleeper who had been transient for 10+ years. He was disengaged from most services except for his job network provider, MatchWorks, whose appointments were the only ones he continued to attend so he could receive his income. He was unsure where to start or how to access support, but he continued to attend MatchWorks appointments and slowly built rapport with the staff. He used the office as a 'drop in', presenting to the office more than was required from him. Having a place he could physically attend when very isolated was essential to Charlie's recovery.

MatchWorks referred Charlie to DACO. He was in a very vulnerable state at referral (in crisis, expressing suicide ideation) but during engagement with us, he was supported into a motel, and referred on for mental and physical health support via the Bolton Clarke outreach nurse.

After Charlie's immediate issue of accommodation had been addressed, he worked hard on deeper issues around his support needs. With Charlie's hope for change, DACO and other supports worked with him, utilising his strengths to identify steps together and create an achievable case plan.

Through his engagement, self-advocacy and hard work, Charlie was accepted into a new program, Homeless to Home, with long-term housing and case management support. Through coordination and strong communication between service providers, as well as Charlie's never-ending hope; he was able to secure long-term accommodation. Charlie is now working towards reunification with his family.



# Specialist Homelessness Services Data



MOSS Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) supported 1,718 people during 2020/2021. This was a significant (400) increase on the number in the previous year, albeit the total does include the 157 children supported through brokerage administered by the Northwest Children's Resource Program. The increase in numbers probably reflects altered support models in response to the pandemic and a refocus on homeless people through the HEART (Hotel Emergency Accommodation Response Team). Exits out of transitional housing remained a challenge with long waiting lists for public and social housing.

The annual figures show us that just under half (48%) of the people we supported were from single parent households. Single adult households accounting for one third (33%) of consumers and for SHS programs they were overwhelmingly represented in the HEART Response.

Approximately 3 out of 5 (58%) of our clients were children or young people 25 years old 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 and Catchment Youth Refuge. Our children's programs play an important role in supporting our most vulnerable consumers and working in collaboration with generalist programs to support children and young people through the difficult experience of homelessness and support their wellbeing.

Family violence continues to be a significant factor in people's homelessness. Our clients across SHS programs are culturally diverse with a significant CALD cohort (31%) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community (13%).

2020/2021 TOTAL SHS PROGRAMS	Number
TOTAL CLIENTS	1,718
Adult females	397 (23%)
Adult males	333 (19%)
Children/young people < 26yo	988 (58%)

FAMILY TYPE	Number
Single parent families	830 (48%)
Singles	563 (33%)
Other families	315 (19%)

ACCOMMODATION TYPE AT PRESENTATION:	Number
Primary homeless:	141 (8%)
Crisis accommodation	250 (15%)
THM	613 (36%)
Public/Social Housing	162 (9%)
Private rental:	299 (17%)
Other including no tenure, couch surfer, missing	253 (15%)

CULTURAL IDENTITY	Number
Anglo/Australian	957 (56%)
CALD	528 (31%)
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	233 (13%)





# Older Persons Programs Data

Merri Outreach Support Service continued to support many (632), mostly older people through its HACC PYP, Aged Care, Commonwealth Home Support Program and NDIS funded programs throughout the 2020/2021 year. This represents a 4% increase on numbers in the previous year. Consistent with last year, more men (65%) than women were supported. This is probably reflective of the population profile of the public housing estates on which we offer programs. Most (84%) of our service users live alone.

Residents of Barkly Street and Holmes Street high rise estates are well connected to the suite of MOSS programs on offer, Older Persons High Rise Support Program, Volunteer Program and Social Support Groups. The pandemic has meant altered service models, nevertheless connection to services has been maintained even if social connection and groups have been severely restricted.

MOSS's presence on these estates enhances the opportunity for people to participate in a vibrant supportive

community and remain active. This means many can be supported to sustain their tenancies and address issue which might otherwise see them prematurely be admitted into residential aged care or hospital. This good work is also happening on broad-acre estates through the Connections Program, with housing vulnerability and health response their focus.

Most service users live in public housing, although it is worth noting the Community Connections Program does support to a significant outreach support to people living in rooming houses or sleeping rough. A wide age range of service users is supported with three quarters being 56 years or older. Chronic health issues, psychiatric illness and physical disability are the highest reported health issues although these are but a few of a spread of health issues. As a registered NDIS provider, MOSS supports a few NDIS participants in the Social Support Groups. CALD consumers (42%) are strongly represented in the data as recipients of MOSS services.

TOTAL SUPPORT EPISODES Older Persons Programs open during 2020/2021	Number
Total Clients	632
Adult females:	219 (35%)
Adult males	413 (65%)
LIVING SITUATION	Number
Lives alone:	533 (84%)
Lives with family:	45 (7%)
Lives with others:	54 (9%)
AGE RANGE:	Number
< 45yo	46 (7%)
45 > 55yo	55 (9%)
56 > 65yo	200 (35%)
66 > 75yo	288 (42%)
> 75yo	43 (7%)
ACCOMMODATION TYPE:	Number
Primary homeless:	47 (7%)
Public/Social Housing:	471 (75%)
Private rental:	46 (7%)
SRS:	9 (1%)
Other:	267 (42%)

TOTAL SUPPORT EPISODES Older Persons Programs open during 2020/2021	Number
CULTURAL IDENTITY: list different cultures and how many clients:	Number
Anglo/Australian:	346 (55%)
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander:	19 (3%)
CALD:	267 (42%)
HEALTH:	Number
ABI	15
Asthma	8
Chronic health issues	136
Dementia	5
Diabetes	33
Drug and Alcohol	19
Intellectual Disability	22
No disability	86
Physical	86
Psychiatric	109
Not stated	75
Other	23



# MOSS and Child Safe Standards Report



The MOSS Child Safety Officers along with General Manager (Tony), have continued to work through the MOSS Child Safe Standards Implementation plan throughout this year. This has included conducting a SWOT analysis of Catchment Youth Refuge, in the context of the Child Safe Standards, and updating the MOSS Child Safe Policy to better reflect the Reportable Conduct Scheme. The Child Safety Officers provide Child Safe Inductions to new employees, updates at staff meetings around the standards and the implementation plan, policies, and procedures.

Looking forward, the Child Safe Standards working group will begin working toward updating our policies, procedures, and key documents to reflect the upcoming changes being made to the Child Safe Standards. To align with national child safety principles, the Victorian Standards will be expanded from the current 7 standards to a more thorough 11 standards from 1 July 2022. Key changes include a greater focus on safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, additional requirements to involve families and communities in organisations' efforts to keep children and young people safe and new requirements around managing risk to children and young people safety in online spaces.

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CBA Staff Social & Charity Club  
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Commonwealth Bank Social Club  
Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)  
Core 3  
Council to Homeless Persons (CHP)  
Darebin City Council  
Darebin Information Volunteer & Resource Centre (DIVRC)  
Darebin Youth Services  
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing  
East Reservoir Neighbours for Change (ERNfC)  
Family Safety Victoria  
FareShare  
Firefighters Charity Fund  
Fire Rescue Victoria  
Foodbank Victoria  
Friendly Moving Men  
Ged Kearney MP  
Haven; Home, Safe  
Hearing Australia  
Himilo Community Connect  
Homeless Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative  
HoMie  
Hume City Council  
Impactology  
Inner North Community Foundation  
James Greer  
Jim Konidaris  
Kat Theophanous MP
- Kidz Prints  
Lorraine Walker  
Magistrates Court of Victoria  
Melbourne City Mission  
Melbourne Youth Support Service  
Milan Industries  
Moreland City Council  
Natalie Pascale  
National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)  
Northcote Aquatic Centre  
Northern Care Works  
Office of Housing - Broadmeadows  
Otto IT  
Paul Harrison  
Peter Khalil (MP)  
Pinchapoo  
Presentation Sisters Balnarring  
Preston Rotary  
Public Transport Victoria  
Queens Fund  
Ray Underwood  
Reservoir Leisure Centre  
Reservoir Neighbourhood House  
The Salvation Army (Preston)  
Second Bite  
Second Chance Animal Rescue  
St Kilda Mums  
St Martin of Tours Primary School  
StreetSmart Australia  
Telstra  
Tenants Victoria  
The Bridge  
The Walter and Eliza Hall Trust  
Tobin Brothers  
Unison Housing  
Victoria Police  
Victorian Public Tenants Association  
VincentCare Victoria Housing Services  
West Heidelberg Legal Service  
Yarra Valley Water  
YMCA  
Your Community Health  
Zib Digital

## 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](#) or scan the QR code below.





# Finance Statements

Merri Outreach Support Service LTD

ABN: 42 318 912 323

STATEMENT OF PROFIT AND LOSS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
<b>INCOME</b>		
Government funding	\$6,403,425	\$6,006,226
Donations and philanthropic income	\$7,560	\$8,810
Interest received	\$2,856	\$11,162
Other Income	\$876,028	\$664,852
	\$7,289,869	\$6,691,050
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Employment benefit and expense	\$5,721,326	\$5,333,757
Occupancy	\$396,521	\$404,127
Computer	\$126,170	\$92,733
Telephone	\$45,205	\$45,052
Depreciation	\$48,722	\$58,502
Motor vehicle	\$253,903	\$242,289
Client expense	\$465,944	\$511,765
Other expense	\$120,940	\$111,010
	\$7,178,731	\$6,799,235
<b>Surplus / (deficit)</b>	<b>\$111,138.00</b>	<b>(\$108,185)</b>

\*A full set of our audited accounts are available on the ACNC website



# Finance Report

Merri Outreach Support Service LTD

ABN: 42 318 912 323

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2021

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash	\$1,362,513	\$1,255,163
Trade and other receivables	\$119,220	\$105,002
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$1,481,733	\$1,360,165
<b>NON- CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Property, plant and equipment	\$1,278,627	\$1,250,741
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	\$1,278,627	\$1,250,741
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$2,760,360</b>	<b>\$2,610,906</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Trade and other payables	\$436,073	\$447,833
Provisions	\$658,605	\$604,265
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$1,094,678	\$1,052,098
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Provisions	\$69,416	\$73,680
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$69,416	\$73,680
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$1,164,094</b>	<b>\$1,125,778</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$1,596,266</b>	<b>\$1,485,128</b>
<b>MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>		
Retained surplus	\$1,596,266	\$1,485,128
TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS	\$1,596,266	\$1,485,128

\*A full set of our audited accounts are available on the ACNC website



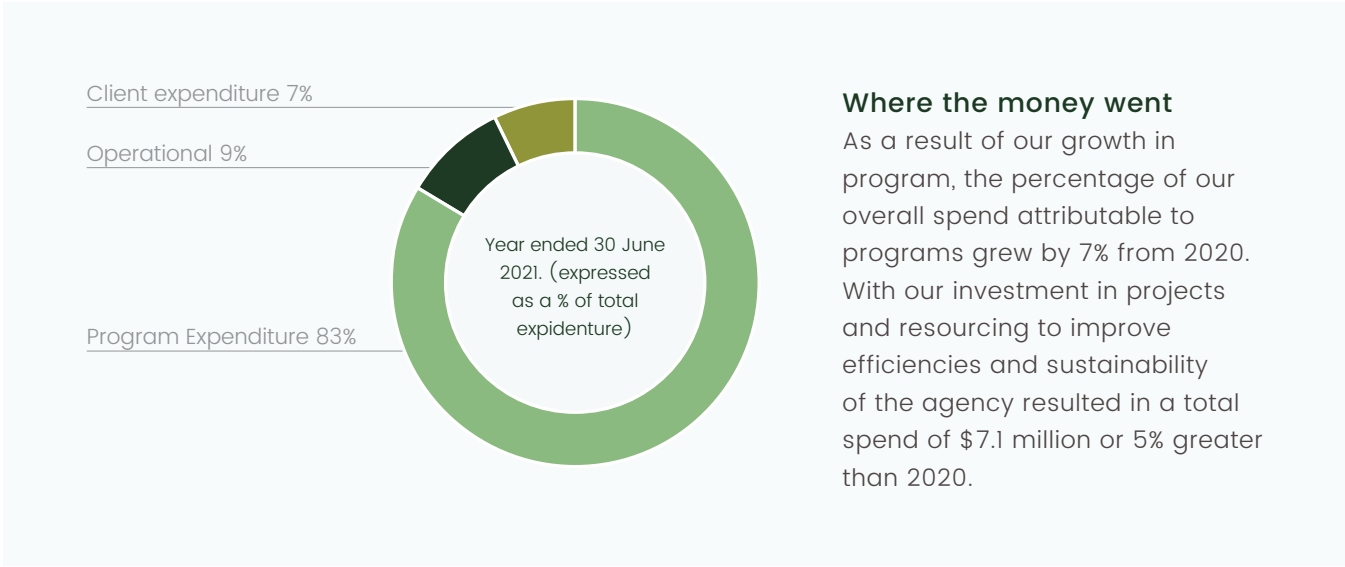
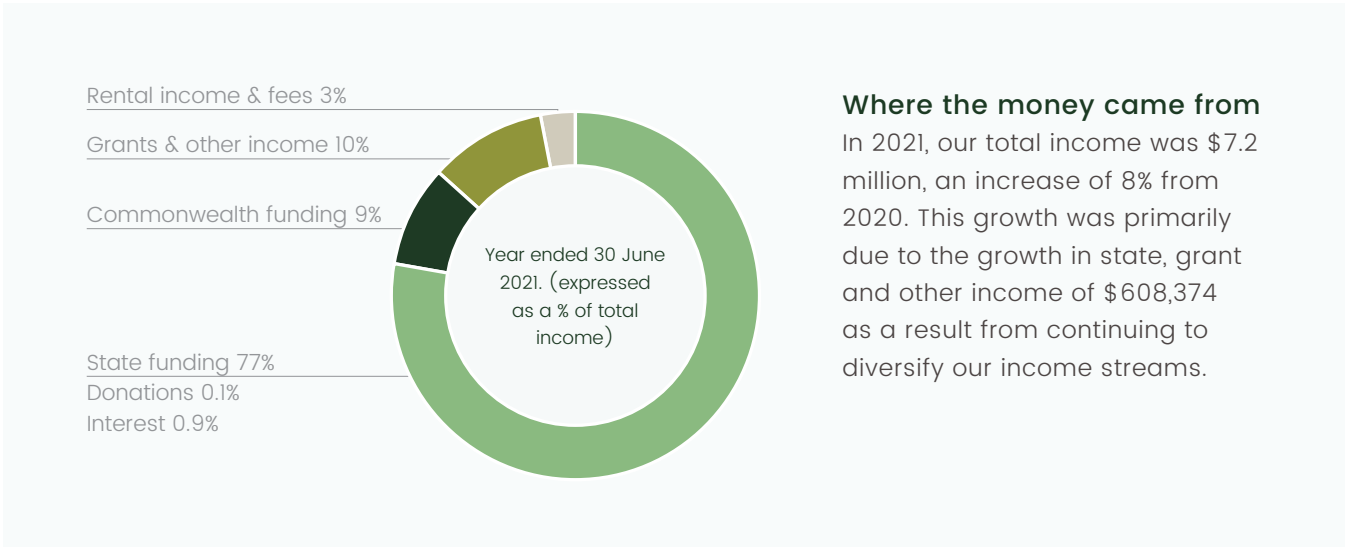


# Financial Snapshot 2020-2021

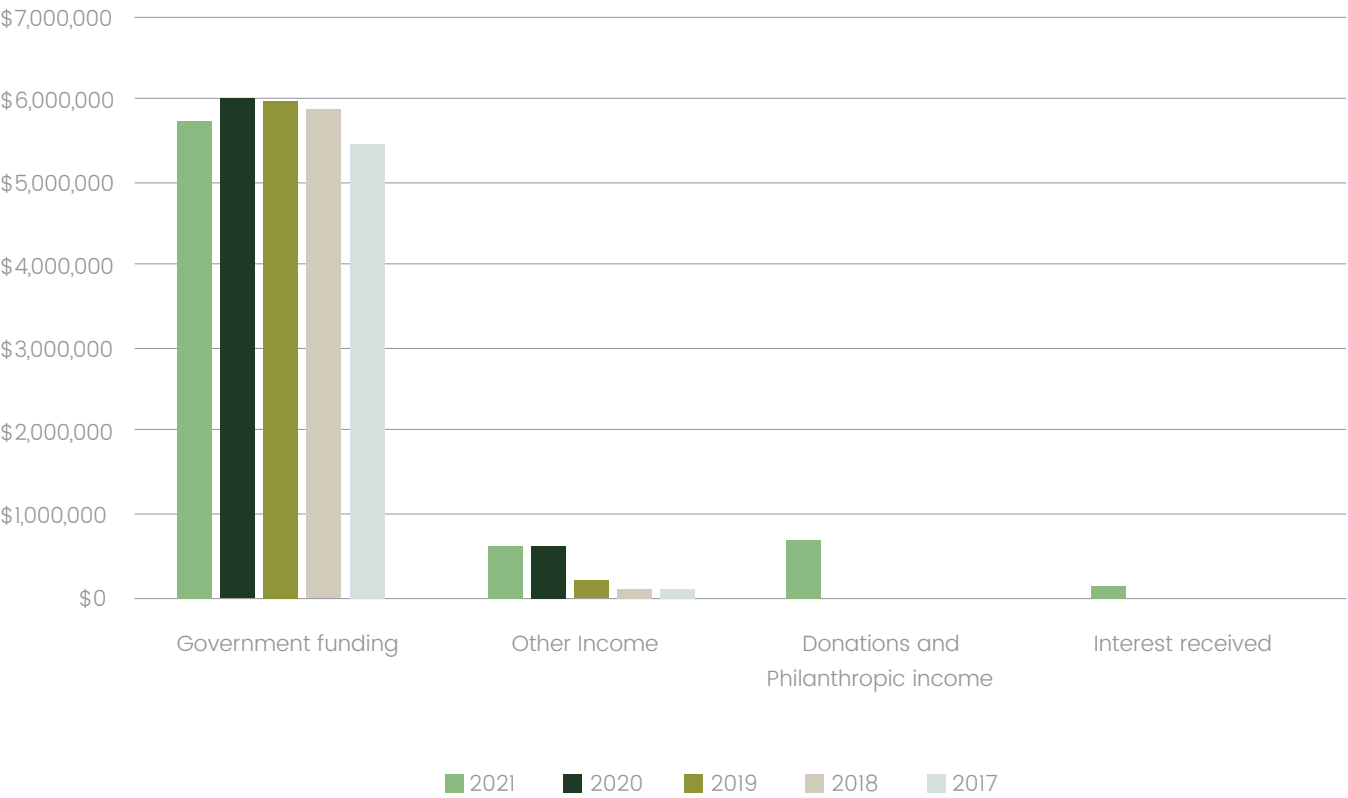
Financial Summary:

MOSS delivered a strong result in the year ended 2021. Pleasingly we saw income grow during the year as a result of successful grant opportunities with new and existing funding bodies. At year end there was a \$111k surplus compared to \$108k loss the previous year. MOSS's balance sheet remains strong and in a healthy position with a current ratio of 1.35 and a total debt to asset ratio of 42%.

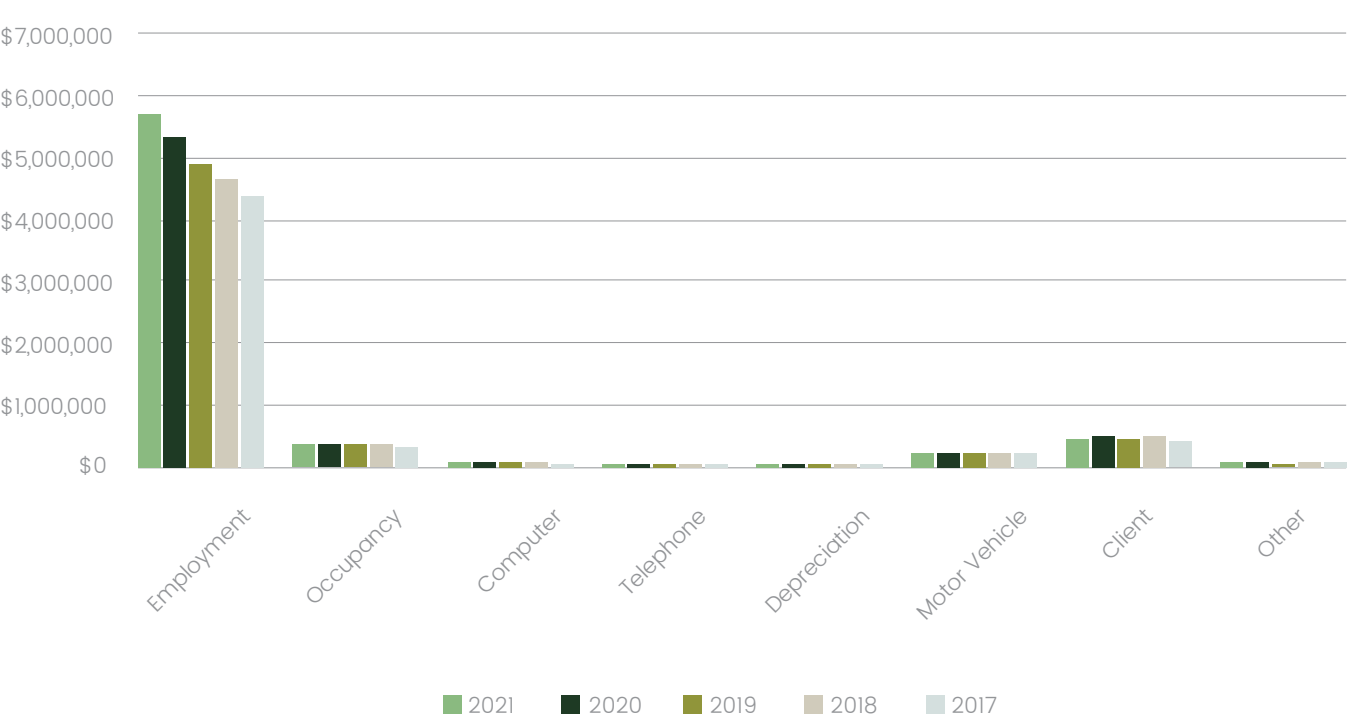
Looking ahead, all major funding agreements have renewed with new agreements and variations being put in place. MOSS has a strong financial base to ensure it is well placed to fulfil all obligations in the coming year.



Where the money came from (Five year trend)



Where the money went (Five year trend)







#### Broadmeadows Office

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 E: merri@merri.org.au

#### Brunswick Office

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 F: (03) 9381 1435  
 E: merri@merri.org.au

#### Northcote Office (1)

A: 279 High Street, Northcote 3070  
 T: (03) 9482 3488  
 F: (03) 9482 3119  
 E: merri@merri.org.au

#### Northcote Office (2)

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