

Message from CEO

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2020. This year we replace the irregular member newsletters with two formal newsletters every year. We have got off to a bad start because the first newsletter is late. This is due to the disruption that COVID-19 has inflicted on our service.

Our first COVID-19 responses were to care for everyone coming through our service. However, we soon recognized that we were not able to care for people safely without massive disruption. To keep staff safe we quickly introduced screening for appointments. We also carefully used our personal protective equipment (PPE) which was in limited supply. Our aim is to maintain services wherever we can, but in a safe way. This has seen a rapid adoption of telehealth and web delivery. Direct face to face services have been limited to those absolutely necessary. The scale of the transformation has been huge and continues. Fortunately, we were well placed for this with a strong IT team and IT system. In this newsletter there is not an update of service status as this changes frequently and is best seen on our website here: <https://accesshc.org.au/services/covid-19/>.

Much of what we intended to do this year is replaced with a Community Support Plan. In Stage 1 of the plan we use telehealth options for all of our services where possible. Staff have been set the date of April 15th for that phase to be complete. That is a huge task made easier by the energy of staff getting it all up and running. The later stages of the plan is to work out how to support community members who are adversely impacted by COVID-19 and then develop a plan to be part of the community recovery process.

It will be interesting to see how we come out of the COVID-19 event and how many of the new experiences will endure. Already for AccessHC which has about 18 different sites across Melbourne's Inner East, our company cars are sitting in the carpark. Most haven't been used in weeks. No petrol bills. Staff meet using online programs without the travel time. Most staff in fact are not even in one of our buildings. This questions whether work from home may be the new way of working. In service delivery, though, calls for our mental health service are at an all time high. So not all things are rosy.

Access Health and Community will look different in the years to come and maybe more different than we could have imagined 12 months ago. The purpose of Building Healthier Lives together is however the enduring mission.

Best wishes



Harry Majewski

CEO Access Health and Community





“ I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all of you for your compassion, diligence and care. The strength of the organisation is on active display. ”

Message from the Chair

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the first newsletter of 2020. There is no doubt that 2020 has brought one of the most challenging set of events in our time with Coronavirus (COVID-19.) Access Health and Community is not immune to the health and economic fallout of COVID-19 but we have worked hard to successfully maintain services whilst keeping staff and clients safe. On behalf of myself and the Board, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all of you for your compassion, diligence and care. The strength of the organisation is on active display.

Last year, Access Health and Community's 150 year anniversary, we rejoiced in acknowledging Australia's oldest continuing community health service and in our own Annual Report of 1919, there are some relevant extracts of the previous Spanish Flu pandemic;

“The prevailing influenza epidemic is responsible for the increased number of cases, and your committee gratefully recognize the demands made on the good services of Dr. Rosenberg, who never spared himself in his attention to the welfare of the Institutions patients. The Richmond Nurse had very trying times owing to Influenza patients for the last four or five months, besides ordinary patients belonging to the institution.”

By the end of the 1919 pandemic approximately 3500 Victorians died. One hundred and one years later we have our own piece of history to live through and our staff are again working hard in support of community.

The Board has supported management and staff to respond and transform ways of working (e.g telehealth) and understands that there will be a financial implication for the year. We are however, well placed to deal with the impact.

There have been changes in Board membership and positions since the last member communication. Peter Turner retired as Board Chair after 5 years. Peter successfully steered Access Health and Community through a phase of active growth and was the first Chair of the renamed entity. Peter will remain on the Board. Diana Brown stepped down as Board member in February 2020. Diana started with Access Health and Community December 2015 and was Chair of the Quality and Risk Committee. We thank her for her dedicated service.

I took on the position of the Chair of the Board in April 2020 after having been the Deputy Chair for the last two years. I have big shoes to fill and am humbled by the privilege to act as Chair. I would like to thank Peter Turner for his stewardship as Chair over the last five years. The new Deputy Chair is Gayle Austen, who has been on the Board since the Camcare merger, having been the Chair of Camcare. I look forward to working with Gayle, the Board, management and our members in the next phase of Access Health and Community development.

Please stay safe and I wish you all well during this difficult time.

John Michailidis
Board Chair



COVID-19 Update

AccessHC is open during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Our goals are to:

- Provide essential primary care services to the community
- Prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital
- Helping our whole community remain informed and connected to health services
- Supporting the most vulnerable people in our community.

Most of our services are essential, but where possible we are using telephone or video.

We are still seeing patients face-to-face where necessary, to stop them going to hospital.

Some other examples include:

- medical examinations by our doctors
- treating wounds in podiatry
- checking if patients can swallow in speech pathology
- falls prevention by our occupational therapists
- suicide risk management and prevention by our mental health as well as alcohol and other drugs (AOD) staff.

Most our teams are working from home, providing essential service delivery using telehealth. All other staff follow physical distancing rules when caring for our clients.

Our main clinical sites are open.

If you want to find out more about what AccessHC is doing to address COVID-19, visit: accesshc.org.au/services/covid-19/

Joe's Story

Joe is 21 months old. He has hydrocephalus and a moderate developmental delay. Hearing is also a concern and he is currently trialling a hearing aid (the black head band). Joe now receives remote service delivery from our Child & Family team. He works with his physio/key worker and a speech pathologist via video conference, each fortnight.

Joe's family takes videos of him crawling, pulling to stand and cruising along furniture. The physio analyses the video and then, during the session, talks to the parents about ways to help him develop standing, balance and skills to progress to walking. The physio provides the family with a sheet of activities to practice between sessions.

In a similar way Joe's speech pathologist conducts a video session. Mum and Joe sit on the floor and play with a range of toys. The speech pathologist guides mum in strategies for using natural gestures, simple sign language and encouraging the use of functional words.

The team is also helping Joe to develop play skills by modelling pretend play. They have encouraged the family to add pretend play into their daily routines. In this photo, dad has set up a friend to join them for breakfast. Dad is modelling pretend feeding.

These are just some of the ways our Child & Family Team is able to continue to support Joe and his family through this challenging time.



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Community Support

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Community Support

The Health Promotion Team with Owen Pietsch leading has almost completed a community analysis and will develop two projects. The first is to lead an advocacy program for people who are slipping through the cracks of community support and facing additional pressures of COVID. The second is to develop a resource called a Community Support Pack targeted at those with a Disability and Elderly members of the community who are finding it difficult in the COVID world. The pack will assemble resources to make daily living easy by identifying how people can get things done in the current situation.

The packs will also guide people to engage with new forms of socializing and communication including help in learning to use technology. The packs will be physical as well as available on the internet on various channels and it is intended that they will be widely distributed across our community. Owen will connect with managers to ensure that our collective knowledge of our community, and its issues and solutions are harnessed.



AOD

Bec (Alcohol and Other Drugs clinician) has got to be the most professional and supportive worker I have seen for AOD and mental health... following things (up) for both my medical and legal wellbeing. She also contacts me outside of appointment times for check ups. I think someone needs to be told about her passionate approach and she very well may be the reason I am still alive.

Mental Health

The current social distancing and restrictions have impacted clients with mental health concerns in ways that are only just coming to light for me as a clinician. While leaving the house is what many of us are keen to do - the perceived threat is just too overwhelming for many of our mental health clients. This week I worked to help a client go out of her front door and sit for 5 minutes on her front verandah. The anxiety this caused was evident in her shaky voice and requests to do

something else. Together, through the telephone we sat and discussed what she could hear, see, smell, taste and touch. We noticed the change in breathing from the start of going out to how it had slowed down after watching the birds. Then by telephone we went back inside to make a cup of tea and celebrate the first steps outside in many weeks. Small steps back.

Carer Support

During COVID-19 we have been supporting a client that has been feeling particularly anxious. She hasn't been diagnosed with anxiety but she has been feeling quite vulnerable during COVID-19. She doesn't have regular contact from family, she lives alone and doesn't seem to have a close network of friends. We usually provide her with fortnightly assistance with shopping as she is unable to drive and help her to lift shopping up a set of stairs leading to her apartment.

During this time our Program Coordinator has had regular phone contact with her to just to check on her wellbeing. Normally we only have phone contact with her on an as needs basis as she is very independent. Regular phone contact and deep breathing with this client has helped reduce her anxiety about what is happening. In addition we have increased home visits to her, as she is isolated.

Recently the client told us how thrilled she was with her support worker as she feels that he connects so well with her on a spiritual level and is a special person. She also commented that the Program Coordinator has been a huge support and when she hears her voice she knows that everything is going to be ok.

Last week we trialed the use of Microsoft Teams to re-engage with a client and his wife (the client normally attends our centre). Staff and clients in the centre were able to chat with the client and his wife, including the Manager and Program Coordinator. The client also remained on Microsoft Teams for longer during an activity in centre and it gave his wife an hour to go and do things that she needed to around the house. This will now be a weekly catch up to support our client to interact with his friends in centre and to provide his wife with an hour to herself.



“Regular phone contact and deep breathing with this client has helped reduce her anxiety about what is happening.”

Carer Support

"A wonderful organisation. So flexible and responsive. So easy to re-activate their services. Three phone calls. All done in 30 minutes. I got the feeling they are very caring."

A client who didn't accept respite initially recently made contact with us directly to request in-home support. The client and her husband have been isolating themselves during COVID-19 and needed someone to visit the post office and purchase groceries for them. The client has been very happy with the support she has been provided as outlined below:

I am writing to thank you for your care of Mary. She is thrilled with your service and especially to have regular shopping assistance.

Mary has sent me an email describing her experience dealing with you stating:

"a wonderful organisation. So flexible and responsive. So easy to re-activate their services. Three phone calls. All done in 30 minutes. I got the feeling they are very caring."

This is a lovely acknowledgement, as Mary hasn't always found services easy to navigate.





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Ashburton VIC 3147
T: (03) 9885 6822
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Hawthorn

378 Burwood Road
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T: (03) 9818 6703
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accesshc.org.au

The AccessHC Family of Services Includes:



headspace Hawthorn

1/360 Burwood Road
Hawthorn VIC 3122
T: (03) 9006 6500

Hawthorn Community House -

Occasional Care
33-39 William Street
Hawthorn VIC 3122
T: (03) 9819 2629

Camcare Camberwell

51 St Johns Avenue
Camberwell VIC 3124
T: (03) 9831 1900

Hawthorn Community House -

Glenferrie Road
584-586 Glenferrie Road
Hawthorn VIC 3122
T: (03) 9819 5758

Manningham Men's Shed

41 Wetherby Road
Doncaster East VIC 3109
T: (03) 9840 168

Camcare Ashburton

4 Y Street
Ashburton VIC 3147
T: (03) 9831 1900

Hawthorn Community House -

Henry Street
32 Henry Street
Hawthorn VIC 3122
T: (03) 9819 2629

Greythorn Community Hub

2 Centre Way
Balwyn North VIC 3104
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