

# NEWSLETTER

**VOLUME 43 | January 2024**

## Happy New Year from Fiona Paraman, Acting Senior Manager Open Place

We at Open Place hope you had a peaceful holiday season and wish you the very best for New Year. Some of our team were able to ease in 2024 by spending time at the beach relaxing, and watching the tennis or cricket. We hope you have been able to enjoy some peace and relaxation during this period too.

I was lucky to attend my first Open Place Christmas party at the Malvern Town Hall in December, where I got to meet many of you as well as have a dance! It was a great way to end my first year at Open Place. While Michelle McDonald, Open Place Senior Manager, is on leave over the holidays, it's my pleasure as Acting Senior Manager to give you a brief update on what's happening at Open Place at the moment.

The 2024 year will include some significant events for the community, with Open Place continuing to offer counselling and support services to assist you to navigate these times.

As many of you are already aware, the Victorian Government rescheduled its Parliamentary Apology to Victorians who experienced historical abuse and neglect as children in institutional care. The formal Apology will now take place on Thursday 8 February 2024, at 11:30am. Open Place acknowledges the varied responses we have received from you to this event. We hear the voices of Forgotten Australians and Pre-1990 Care Leavers, stand with you in this moment and are here to support you.

## In this edition

A message from Fiona Paraman	1
Victorian Government Apology	2
Joint Shepparton & Wangaratta/Wodonga Social Support Group	4
Victorian redress hardship payment	4
Contact details update	5
Christmas party photos	5
Reunions	10
Counselling Team update	10
Redress Team update	11
Changes to the National Redress Scheme CPC Service Victoria	12
Drop-in Centre	13
Social Support Group updates	16
Recipe	24
Contact us	25

## We're going green

As you know, this newsletter is sent by snail mail to reach all our valued service users, stakeholders, funding bodies and members of the public. We're continuing to print and send the newsletter by post, but we'd like to send it by email to anyone who is happy to receive it.

If you'd like to help the environment and get the newsletter as quickly as possible by email, contact us on:

**1800 779 379 | [info@openplace.org.au](mailto:info@openplace.org.au) | [openplace.org.au](http://openplace.org.au)**

The Apology will be livestreamed, and Open Place will host a space to watch this with the team at the Richmond Drop-in Centre on that day. We will also be providing a space in Wangaratta to watch the livestream with Open Place support staff at a location I to be confirmed. Please contact Open Place to find out more if you are interested in attending, as RSVPs will be necessary for catering purposes. We will also have a representative from Open Place at the Sale and Ballarat events being run by the Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. Further details about the Apology events are provided below.

The Victorian Government has also announced the delivery of hardship payments for eligible Forgotten Australians/Pre-1990 Care Leavers in exceptional circumstances. These payments are available until the Victorian Historical Care Leavers Redress Scheme starts. The commencement date of the Redress Scheme is still unknown. Open Place is assisting people to understand the eligibility of the hardship payments and how to apply, and will be welcoming new staff members on board to provide extra support for this very soon. Information on the hardship payment is provided in the Newsletter below, and at <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/victorian-historical-care-leaver-redress-hardship-payments>

You can also contact Open Place for more information.

Feedback from you about events and services is vital, and we will be looking for new ways to hear your voices in the coming year. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to call us on 1800 779 379. We're focused on making sure we're available to take your call, but we know that sometimes it can be hard to get through to us immediately. On those occasions, if possible, please leave us a message rather than calling multiple times and we will get back to you as soon as we can. You can also send us a message or leave feedback on our website at <https://www.openplace.org.au/contact-us/>

On behalf of the entire Open Place team, I wish you an enjoyable and safe summer!

*Fiona*

## Victorian Government Apology

The Allan Labor Government will make a historic formal Apology in Parliament to Victorians who experienced historical abuse and neglect as children in institutional care before 1990 on Thursday 8 February 2024, at 11.30am.

Information about the ways impacted Victorians, their families, carers, and support people can view the Apology is detailed below.

### Parliament House

A limited number of places for Forgotten Australians to attend the Apology at Parliament House were available through Open Place. Open Place held a ballot for those who were interested and those people who were successful have now been contacted.

### Live stream at Open Place

We invite you to join fellow service users and the Open Place team in watching the live stream from 10am on Thursday 8 February at Open Place Drop-in Centre, 1/8 Bromham Place, Richmond. Light refreshments will be served.

For catering purposes, please RSVP to Open Place reception on 1800 779 379 (free call) or (03) 9421 6162 if you will be attending either event.

## Live streaming the Apology (online)

The apology will be live streamed on the Parliamentary website so people can watch it from their computer or mobile device wherever they are.

The live stream will be available on Thursday 8 February 2024 at <http://new.parliament.vic.gov.au/>. A link to the live stream will be found on the front page of the Parliamentary website and will go live at 11.30am.

## Regional gatherings to watch the Apology

The Victorian Government is inviting people to watch the Apology at venues in Geelong, Ballarat and Sale. The Apology will be followed by refreshments. The Victorian Government will be providing external counsellor support staff on site if anyone needs this support on the day.

To register to attend, please email [dffhevents@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:dffhevents@dffh.vic.gov.au) or call 0487 353 831 Monday to Friday, between 9am and 4pm.

- The Geelong live stream at the Geelong Events Centre
  - Address: Rydges Hotel Geelong, corner Gheringhap & Little Myers Street, Geelong VIC
  - Room: Kardinia
  - Time: Arrive at 11am for an 11.30am start
- The Ballarat live stream will be at the Mercure Hotel and Convention Centre
  - Address: 613 Main Road, Ballarat VIC
  - Room: The Conservatory Room
  - Time: Arrive at 11am for an 11.30am start
  - An Open Place representative will be attending.
- The Sale live stream will be at the Port of Sale
  - Address: 70 Foster St, Sale VIC
  - Room: Wellington Room
  - Time: Arrive at 11am for an 11.30am start
  - An Open Place representative will be attending.

Please note: each location has a maximum capacity, so please register your attendance, noting any accessibility requirements and if a support person will be attending with you to reserve your place.

## More information

- If you have questions about the regional gatherings to watch the Apology or cannot register online, please email [dffhevents@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:dffhevents@dffh.vic.gov.au) or call 0487 353 831.
- If you have any questions about the Apology at Parliament House, please email [StateEvents@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:StateEvents@dpc.vic.gov.au) or call 0427 498 750.

## Joint Shepparton & Wangaratta/Wodonga Social Support Group

### Parliamentary Apology Livestream

The apology will be livestreamed on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February at the Oaks Conference & Function Centre in Wangaratta.

Address: 20/32 Racecourse Rd, Wangaratta VIC 3677

10.30am Arrival and Morning Tea

11.30am Apology Livestream

12.15pm Lunch

1.30pm Close

If you would like to attend, please call Open Place on 1800 779 379. **RSVP by Friday 26<sup>th</sup> January**

Please let us know:

- Do you require transport?
- Do you have any accessibility requirements?
- Are you bringing a carer or guest?
- Are you attending the Apology or just joining for lunch?
- Do you have any dietary requirements?

*This event will replace the usual group dates for Shepparton & Wangaratta/Wodonga in February.*

## Victorian redress hardship payments

The Victorian Government is investing \$7.5 million to create a redress scheme for people who experienced child abuse and neglect while in institutional care prior to 1990 (the Scheme). This includes a one-off hardship payment of \$10,000 for people who were physically, psychologically, or emotionally abused or neglected as children in institutional care in Victoria before 1990 and are terminally or critically ill.

Hardship payments are now available until the Victorian Historical Care Leavers Redress Scheme starts.

**To be eligible for a hardship payment, a person abused or neglected as a child in Victorian institutional care will need to:**

- **have been placed in Victorian institutional care for 6 months or more before 1990**
- **have a terminal or critical illness.**

To apply for a hardship payment, you or your nominated support person (or organisation) will need to fill in an application form and have your doctor complete the medical statement form. Identity documents will also need to be provided.

For more information and access to the application forms, visit <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/victorian-historical-care-leaver-redress-hardship-payments> or email [VictorianGovernmentRedressScheme@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:VictorianGovernmentRedressScheme@dffh.vic.gov.au)

Open Place can also assist with any queries you may have. Please call us on 1800 779 379.

Information will be provided soon about the consultation and co-design process which will inform the establishment of the Redress Scheme.

If you are interested in receiving updated information or would like to take part in the consultation, email [VictorianGovernmentRedressScheme@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:VictorianGovernmentRedressScheme@dffh.vic.gov.au)

## Do we have correct contact details for you????

It is important to ensure we have your correct contact information, address, email, telephone numbers.

From time to time, we need to do mass mailouts or text messaging. An example of this was the recent short timelines to advise you all of the pending State Government Apology to allow an opportunity to go into a ballot to attend the event at Parliament House. To ensure you receive this correspondence we rely on contact details we have for you.

If you are needing to update your details or would like to check the details we currently have please call us on 1800 779 329 or email us at [info@openplace.org.au](mailto:info@openplace.org.au).

## Open Place Christmas Party 2023

Photos of the wonderful event held at Malvern Town Hall are available on the following pages.











## Former residents annual reunions

### Hillside Boys Home

Former resident, Michael Parisio (1959 – 1967ish), is looking to make contact with Michael Carey. Please contact Emma at Open Place if you have any information. Phone 1800 779 379

### St Vincent de Paul Boys' Home

If you lived at St Vincent de Paul Boys' Home in South Melbourne between 1975 and 1985, and would like to register your interest in attending a reunion, please contact Jasmine at MacKillop Family Services at [jasmine.murphy@mackillop.org.au](mailto:jasmine.murphy@mackillop.org.au)

### Tally Ho gathering, March 2024

A lunch is being organised by the Uniting Heritage Service team for those (and their families) who lived at Tally Ho's original site in Burwood until 1986. Past residents of Tally Ho are helping to plan the event to ensure it's a respectful and meaningful occasion.

- Date: 16 March 2024
- Location: Level 4, 130 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

Photos and other records documenting Tally Ho over time will be available to view on the day. During the gathering, past residents and their families will have the opportunity to share their memories, and learn more about Tally Ho.

Uniting have already received interest from people who lived at Tally Ho from the late 1940s through to the mid-1980s. They hope former residents from across those decades will join them at the March gathering along with their families and support people.

If you have already expressed your interest in attending to Uniting, there is no need to contact them again. They have said they will be organising official invites at the end of March.

If you lived at Tally Ho at its original site in Burwood and are interested in attending, please contact:

- **Chris Wade:** 0481 469 899
- **Catriona Milne:** 0402 969 621

Uniting can help locate your friends from Tally Ho, and they can also support your travel and accommodation costs.

## Team Updates

### Counselling team

Open Place continues to provide and fund counselling support for Forgotten Australians and family members. People most commonly think of counselling as 'talk therapy' with a psychologist, social worker or psychotherapist, and many people find this helpful. However, this might not always suit everyone, and there are other forms of therapy, such as art and music therapy, animal-assisted therapy and many forms of body-based therapies.

The first step in arranging counselling through Open Place is usually to speak with one of our counsellors. They will talk with you about your situation, discuss your hopes for counselling, and any specific requirements (such as the gender of the counsellor, or a particular approach to counselling/therapy you are interested in).

We can arrange for you to see an external counsellor in private practice (someone that does not work directly for Open Place, but we make an agreement for Open Place to pay for your sessions with them). We always make sure that any counsellors we refer to are suitably qualified and registered with a professional association, regardless of the form of therapy they offer.

Around 350 people currently access counselling with qualified practitioners across Australia through our program. We can help you find a suitable counsellor in most regions of Australia and even overseas, or you might already have found a counsellor you want to work with. It usually takes us between 1-3 weeks to find and organise a counsellor. Please be aware that our funding is limited, and Open Place will be able to cover a fixed number of sessions per year on an ongoing basis. We will discuss this with you when we are organising the counselling.

We also have a small team of Open Place counsellors based in our offices at Richmond who can offer medium-term counselling (up to 12 months) via face-to-face and/or telehealth sessions. If this is the best option for you, the counsellor will arrange an initial intake appointment to meet with you and discuss your situation in more detail, and whether we will be able to help. Please note that there may be waiting times to see an Open Place counsellor.

If you would like to arrange counselling or find out more, please get in contact with us.

A reminder that the Open Place counselling service is not a crisis service; we are appointment based and operate during business hours. Unfortunately, there is not always an Open Place counsellor available to provide an immediate crisis response. The two main crisis services for 24/7 mental health support are Lifeline (call 13 11 14), and Beyond Blue (call 1300 224 636). If you need immediate support, you can find an extensive list of telephone and online support services at <https://www.relationshipsvictoria.org.au/resources/mental-health-services/>

## National Redress Support Service

Our Redress Support Team assists Forgotten Australians to apply for the National Redress Scheme for people who experienced childhood sexual abuse in institutional 'care'. Any Forgotten Australian considering making an application to the National Redress Scheme is strongly encouraged to get support, to ensure you get the best outcome. Redress support workers can visit regional areas of Victoria to meet people who would like in-person support with their Redress application.

Interest in the National Redress Scheme continues to grow and our team at Open Place are taking new calls every week. We are currently supporting around 70 people at various stages of the application process, and over 20 new people contacted us in the last 2 months alone wanting to start on their application. We always try and get back to people with enquiries within a couple of days, however, please be aware that there is a wait list before you will be linked to a Redress support worker. We can try to link you with other Redress Support Services in Victoria with shorter wait times if you'd prefer, and we'll discuss this with you when you call.

Our team is highly skilled at supporting people with their applications and we are aware that it can be a difficult and challenging process, as it involves sharing details about childhood sexual abuse. We work with people at their own pace with a 'safety first' approach that puts your wellbeing first.

This means that once you are linked with a Redress support worker and the application process has started, the time it takes to complete an application can vary from person to person. Our team will work with you at the pace that best suits you and your circumstances.

Once an application has been completed and sent to the Scheme, it takes on average about 12 months to get an outcome. Outcomes can include a direct financial payment, access to counselling, and a Direct Personal Response (an apology) from a representative of the responsible institutions.

If you would like to discuss the National Redress Scheme, who is eligible to apply and what support we can offer, please get in touch with us at Open Place. You can also visit the Scheme's own website for information: <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/>

For workers and organisations in regional Victoria who would like to learn more about the National Redress Scheme, there are 2 information forums planned for the first part of 2024. The first is planned for Warrnambool on Wednesday 21 February 2024, between 1 and 4:30pm (location to be confirmed). There are plans to hold a forum in Traralgon in April, with the date and location to be confirmed. Any workers or organisations in these regions that would like to be kept up to date about these forums are welcome to contact the Open Place Redress Support Team.

Please note, the National Redress Scheme is separate from the Victorian State Government Scheme. More details about the Victorian State Government Scheme will be announced shortly.

## Changes to the National Redress Scheme Counselling and Psychological Care (CPC) Service Victoria

**Please note that this information does not affect any counselling that you already access through Open Place; it is a separate scheme.**

### What is changing with the CPC service?

Until now, the CPC service was provided through a group of funded organisations and providers called Restore Counselling. It was only available to people who accepted a National Redress Scheme (NRS) offer that included counselling and psychological care, and it was capped at 20 sessions.

From 1 November 2023, the following changes were made:

- The service is now administered by the Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). 'CPC Service Navigators' support people to access services of their choice.
- The service is now available to all people who have accepted a NRS offer in Victoria, whether or not counselling and psychological care was included as part of the offer.
- The previous cap of 20 sessions was removed. People can access up to 20 CPC sessions a year. Practitioners can request additional sessions if necessary. Family members and other people close to the person can access up to 20 CPC sessions in total.
- Service offerings include counselling as well as additional alternative therapies such as equine therapy, case management and creative therapies (for example, art, music, dance).

## How will the changes affect eligible people?

Staff at DFFH called 'CPC Service Navigators' will help you to set up CPC sessions with a practitioner. You can request to stay with the practitioner you are already seeing, or you can work with a CPC Service Navigator to find a practitioner who best suits your needs.

The National Redress Scheme CPC Service is available to all people who:

- applied for and accepted an offer of redress (whether or not they ticked CPC in their redress application) while living in Victoria
- accepted an offer of redress in another state but now reside in Victoria
- are family members, including family of choice, of people in the above 2 categories.

For more information about this service, please contact DFFH directly on 1800 716 869 or email [cpc@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:cpc@dffh.vic.gov.au)

## Drop-in Centre

Our first year of no lockdowns brought a full year of Tuesday and Friday opening hours. It has been great to see everyone walking back through the Open Place doors to enjoy a cuppa and a meal, as well as our drop-in activities.

### Drop-in activities:

Art Group: Meets every 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month, between 1 and 4pm

Free Podiatry (feet care): Every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month, between 1 and 3pm

Free Haircuts: Every 6 weeks on a Tuesday between 11am and 1pm.

The dates for this year are - 6/2/24, 26/3/24, 14/5/24, 9/7/24, 27/8/24, 15/10/24 & 3/12/24.

We will update our website if these dates change.

Music Afternoons: Every 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month between 1 and 3pm. We invite anyone who loves to sing or play an instrument to join us in our Monday music sing along.

Men's Walking Group: Restarting in 2024. Dates to be confirmed.

We will be introducing more activities to our Drop-in Centre throughout the year, and will keep everyone up to date via our newsletter and website.

## Thread Together

Thread Together collects brand-new, unsold clothing from fashion retailers around the country. With the support of volunteers, the clothes are sorted in readiness to be distributed to people in need through their national network of charities and social service agencies.

We have partnered with the Thread Together service in Richmond to provide access to this clothing to Open Place service users. All clothing is given at no cost to people and each person has access to the service once every 3 months.



**The service runs via appointments only and all appointments are 45 minutes long. Referrals and bookings can be made through Open Place.**

You can attend the clothing hub alone or with support from a worker, friend, or family member. Only people registered with Open Place will be able to shop.

Please see the Thread Together website for more information: <http://threadtogether.org>



‘The staff are bright and cheerful, and they are caring and patient with each person that they give the clothing and accessories too. I received some beautiful dresses which made me laugh and made me happy. Heather gave me a wonderful hat which I have worn on a couple of occasions. There will be lots of memories with that hat. Thanks to Heather and all the companies that provided the precious things to those that really need them.’ – Pearl

**Left:** Pearl in her new dress and hat from Thread Together

## Friday Cook Up

Every Friday, Emma and her co-chefs cook a delicious hearty meal and dessert for anyone who is registered to enjoy. The 2023 year brought many favourites including chicken schnitzel, roast, lasagna, BBQ, lamb orzo, spaghetti bolognese, corn fritters, and as well as our final Christmas meal of ham, roast chicken and salads, plus the classic (and favourite!!) Christmas desserts of pavlova and plum pudding. We enjoyed a Christmas raffle where lolly jars and goodie bags were won by a lucky few. Cornettos were also a classic dessert option in 2023.

Each week, we also receive an Oz Harvest food delivery, and we often receive lots of different fruits, vegetables, frozen meals and treats for all to take.

**Below:** Photos from the Open Place Friday Cook Up



## Drop-in Centre opening times

From February, our Drop-in Centre will be open at the following times.

Monday: Closed  
Tuesday: 10am- 4pm  
Wednesday: Closed  
Thursday: 10am-4pm  
Friday: 10am-3pm

As always, if you need to attend Open Place for any reason outside of Drop In hours, we are open 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday, please know that you can. You will just need to call reception and ask to speak to the staff member you want to see to arrange a time. Phone 1800 779 379

## Social Support Groups (SSGs)

### Gippsland/Sale SSG

The Gippsland group is continuing to grow in numbers and over the last couple of months the group has given a warm welcome to new members.

In November, we met at our home base in Sale and December we celebrated Christmas at The Star Hotel. The group arrived in the festive spirit, and let's just say the theme this year was gingerbread people salt and pepper shakers!

Liz and Shaye hope our group members had a relaxing and peaceful time throughout the festive period. We wish everyone a very happy and safe new year, and we look forward to catching up with you all in February for a barbecue. Please keep an eye on the post for the flyer with the details of the February barbecue.



### Frankston SSG

The Frankston SSG enjoyed 2 lovely outings in the latter months of the year.

In November, we came together at the Frankston Arts Centre for lunch and a mix of comedy, opera and cabaret. We watched a delightful performance by Pot Pourri, a group of Australian performers who blend a range of theatre classics into 1 unique show.

Christmas celebrations capped the year off with a fantastic lunch at the Lynbrook Hotel. Everyone enjoyed some delicious food topped off with holiday cheer, as presents were exchanged, laughs were had, and extra helpings of dessert were merrily shared. It was a great way to end a fantastic year for the Frankston SSG.

### Bacchus Marsh SSG

Janelle and Mary-Cath have had a great year at Bacchus Marsh. The group have spent many lunches together over the year, and in October we were at the Bacchus Marsh seedling farm where we had a lovely lunch and tour of the farm, and even won a \$100 door prize!





We celebrated Christmas at the Royal hotel in Bacchus Marsh with a lovely 2-course meal. We look forward to the new year, when we'll head to Williamstown on the ferry for our first group of the year in February.



## Preston SSG

The Preston group have continued to meet each month. It has been lovely for the group to gather, catching up with regular group members and meeting new faces. The group has come together for afternoon tea at the library, barbecues at the park and movie outings.

For our last gathering in November, the group enjoyed lunch and a ride through the Dandenong Ranges on the Puffing Billy steam train. We rode through quaint towns, forests and scenic hills of the Ranges. Lydia and Erika would like to extend a huge thank you to the group members who attended for their patience, kindness and understanding, as it was a huge day with some significant transport challenges. Some of the group members were also able to come together for the Open Place Christmas Party at the Malvern Town Hall in December.



A big thank you also to Rose for attending the groups while Erika was on leave!

The Preston group meets every third Friday of the month, commencing again in February 2024. We continue to welcome anyone in the local area who is interested in attending a group. Feel free to contact Open Place if you have any questions.



## Ballarat SSG

The Ballarat SSG gathered in November for a barbecue at Lake Wendouree and managed to get everyone in for a group picture, even if we're not all looking in the same direction! ...And who can spot Gary the pug!?



At our end of year Christmas get-together, we had a lovely roast lunch at the Robin Hood Hotel in Ballarat, followed by pav and sticky date pudding for dessert. We had a great time doing Kris Kringle and some beautiful gifts were exchanged. Here are just a few snaps from the day! Sharon and Emma would like to thank the members of Ballarat SSG for the lovely speech that Chris gave on behalf of the group and for the beautiful flowers. We absolutely love catching up with you all each month and look forward to seeing you all in the new year.

The Ballarat SSG meets every second Tuesday of the month. Please contact Open Place if you are interested in joining.



## Bendigo SSG

We come together at the Long Gully Community Centre bi-monthly on the third Thursday of every month (except January). On alternate months, we go on an outing. If you live in the Bendigo area and have been thinking of coming along, please call or send a text message to Annie on 0427 695 600 or Sharon on 0417 067 910 (Monday to Thursday).

In September, we went out for lunch at The Foundry Hotel in Golden Square – a favourite of the Bendigo SSG. Unfortunately, both Sharon and Annie couldn't attend the group that month, but fortunately, Rose and Mary-Cath from the Open Place Redress Support Team stepped in. By all reports, they did a great job and we (Sharon & Annie) were ever so happy they could fill in for us.



In October, we returned to The Long Gully Community Centre for a lovely lunch and catch up with one another and to enjoy Dolly's delicious delights.

In November, we ventured up the highway to Echuca where we met up with a couple of locals who attend our SSG for a day out in their beautiful town. To start the day, we met up with everyone in the park close to the Murray River to have a cuppa and morning tea before boarding The Canberra paddle steamer. The Canberra is a historic 110-year-old paddle steamer that took us on a 1-hour cruise along the mighty Murray River. It was a wonderful experience for all to enjoy. After the cruise, we had another bite to eat and a cuppa back at the park before we all parted ways.

Christmas lunch was shared at the Kangaroo Flat Sports Club. A lovely, happy day was enjoyed by all in attendance. Several group members stepped in on the day and helped Annie with Kris Kringle, door prizes and packing up Christmas decorations which was much appreciated.

The SSG will come together on from 12 noon on 22 February in the Leggo Room at the Long Gully Community Centre.



## Geelong SSG

The Geelong SSG comes together on the second Wednesday of the month (except in January). We meet bi-monthly at The Grovedale Neighbourhood House and in alternate months we go on an outing. We usually meet at 12 noon, unless otherwise advised. If you live in the Geelong area and wish to join our group, please give Annie a call on 0427 695 600 (Monday to Thursday).



In 2024, Rose will join Annie as a new co-facilitator. Some of you may have met Rose, who works in the Open Place Redress Support Team, when she came along to one of the events this year, and in 2024 she will be a regular co-facilitator with Annie.

In September, the group returned to a favourite restaurant called Man Bo for a lunch of Chinese food and a great catch-up together.

In October, the group welcomed Fiona Paraman (Open Place Assistant Manager) at The Grovedale Neighbourhood House. We had some fun and laughter with a quiz all about Geelong's history and a light lunch together.

November saw a big day out at the Melbourne Zoo. A picnic lunch and a cuppa were enjoyed in the zoo grounds before everyone made their way around looking at all creatures, great and small.

Christmas was enjoyed by all at Leopold Sportsman's Club. We've had many Christmases at this venue over the years and enjoy having our own private room to share a traditional Christmas lunch and the fun of Kris Kringle gift giving. Mary-Cath from the Redress Support Team saved the day by helping Annie put on a super day. A new member of the group, Christine sang some lovely Christmas carols for everyone to enjoy.

We return to The Grovedale Neighbourhood House on Wednesday 14 February 2024, meeting in the Banksia Room.



## South West/Warrnambool SSG

We meet at the Archie Graham Centre bi-monthly (every second month), on the first Wednesday of the month (except in January). We have previously met at 12 noon but in 2024, the start time will change to 11am. On alternate months, we go on an outing. If you live in the Warrnambool area and have been thinking about coming along, please give Annie a call or send a text message to 0427 695 600 (Monday to Thursday).

In September, we returned to a favourite of ours, The Cudjee Wildlife Park, where we again enjoyed a wander around the park enjoying being up close to many cute and cuddly furry friends. We also enjoyed a picnic lunch together with perfect weather.

In October, we were back at Archie Graham Centre for a catch-up and lunch together.

In November, we went on a road trip to Camperdown where we caught up with a few of our group members who live in the area for a barbecue lunch at the Botanic Gardens. The views from the Botanic Gardens looking over Lake Bullen Merri and Lake Gnotuk were magnificent. Driving through the town, we saw a beautiful avenue of elm trees that were planted in 1876.



Christmas lunch was held at Simons on the Waterfront; a lovely venue with a view of the sea for us to enjoy. Food was enjoyed and a great end to the year was had.

As usual, there will be no group in January, but we will return to Archie Graham on 7 February from 11am for a catch up. A light lunch will be provided.



## Horsham SSG

The Horsham SSG has had a big year in 2023. There was much sadness at the passing of our long-time member, John Kirk. The group also welcomed some new members and it has been great getting to know each other. In the last months of 2023, we met for lunch at Natimuk, Warracknabeal and Halls Gap, and both Fiona and Michelle from Open Place attended groups this year. Catch-ups involved discussions about Open Place updates as well as conversations around gardening and family and sharing of each other's stories.

The group chose to have a Christmas in July celebration involving Christmas lunch and dessert at the White Hart Hotel - complete with Open Place goody bags.

In November, we met at the beautiful Halls Gap Hotel. We enjoyed our time so much, including the views of the mountains and the great food that we forgot to take photos!

The group is looking forward to more adventurous outings in the coming year and will be planning talks, workshops and new places to visit at the upcoming January meeting in Horsham. Horsham SSG welcomes any people registered with Open Place who are interested in joining the group to contact Open Place on 1800 779 379.



## Dandenong SSG

Where did 2023 go? To finish off the group events for the year, we had a small but enthusiastic group at the Edinburgh Community Hall in Springvale for lunch and bingo. We had a fun time and some people won more prizes than others!

The International Buffet at the Lynbrook Hotel always draws a good crowd and our October outing there was no exception, with 30 of us enjoying the lovely and varied array of dishes.

As the Open Place Christmas Party at the Malvern Town Hall was so close to our November group, the consensus was to cancel that group as we had quite a number going to this event. To assist with transport arrangements, we arranged for a small bus which left Malvern full of Christmas joy, including balloons from the table and a big hamper won by Christine in the raffle. Anna and Garry also both won raffle draws and Anna very generously donated her prize to a friend; early Christmas spirit 'in action'.

Our group will meet next on Wednesday 31 January. Keep an eye out for the flyer.



## Wangaratta/Wodonga SSG

The group finished the year on a high with a lovely Christmas lunch at the Vine Hotel in Wangaratta. Despite the heat (and a few nervous moments due to the snake lurking around the back of the hotel!), it was a well-attended day, and everyone enjoyed the chance for a final catch up before the end of the year.

Special mention to Noel who won the lucky Christmas bingo prize!

The group continues to play an important role for our group members. As one person said, 'we enjoy this group, as we feel like it's part of our family'; a nice reminder of why the group matters so much.

In November, we tried our hand at some arts and crafts, with the wonderful Trisha volunteering to help us make some decorations for Christmas. Some of the group use their creative skills (see the photos over the page), while others preferred to sit back and catch up with friends over a cuppa.



If you are in the Wodonga/Wangaratta area and want to get involved, please call Munni or Cameron at Open Place.



## Shepparton SSG

The Shepparton SSG wrapped up 2023 with some fantastic get-togethers in October, November and December.

In October, we met for a barbecue at Victoria Park Lake. It was a beautiful sunny day and a lovely spot to sit, relax, chat, and watch all the activity on and around the lake.

The November catch-up brought competitive spirits and sense of humour together for a fun game of bingo over lunch. We had lots of winners and lots of laughs!

In December, the group had a very festive Christmas lunch at the GV Hotel; what a great turn out! It was so great to see so many people coming out to enjoy a fabulous lunch together.

Tracey and Siobhan would like to thank you all for coming along to the group whenever you can and making each catch up so enjoyable for each other. We look forward to seeing you throughout 2024.



## Donald and District

Donald and District SSG meet bi-monthly on the fourth Thursday of the month. In the last few months, the group have enjoyed a lunch in Horsham and a Christmas lunch in Donald. Our next meeting is planned for 1 February. Contact Sharon for more information 0417 067 910.

## Extra Crispy Corn Fritters Recipe

**Prep:** 10 mins **Cook:** 20 mins **Serves:** 8-9 fritters

### Ingredients

¼ cup flour, *plain / all purpose*  
¼ cup cornflour, cornstarch  
¼ tsp baking soda (*or ¾ tsp baking powder*)  
1 egg  
2 tbsp milk (any type)  
2 cups fresh corn kernels, *raw (2 cobs)*  
(*canned or frozen also fine, make sure they are very dry*)  
½ cup parmesan, *finely grated*  
¾ cup green onions, *sliced*  
½ cup coriander, *roughly chopped*



### For cooking

½ cup vegetable oil  
Oil spray

### Serving – Choose

Avocado  
Sour cream  
Ketchup

### Method

1. Place flour, cornflour, and baking soda in a bowl, mix to combine.
2. Add egg and milk, mix until batter is lumpy and thick.
3. Add corn, parmesan, green onions, and coriander. Mix until all the corn is evenly coated in batter.
4. Add enough oil into the pan so it just covers the base. Heat over medium high heat.
5. Spray the underside of a spatula with oil (so batter won't stick when you flatten).
6. Place ¼ cup batter into pan then flatten to 1cm thick. Repeat with 2 or 3 more, but don't crowd the pan.
7. Cook for 2 minutes until deep golden and crisp, then flip and cook the other side for 2-3 minutes.
8. Transfer to plate/rack. Repeat with remaining fritters, using more oil as necessary.
9. Serve with sauce of choice for dunking.



## Suggestions

We welcome any suggestions from you on how we can improve our service to better suit your needs.

Maybe you have some ideas for our social support groups, newsletter, Richmond Drop-in Centre or our workshops/activities? Contact us and let us know.

We would love to hear from you!

## Contact us

If you would like **information** about your current services or want to share your **suggestions**, find out how Open Place can **support** you, or **subscribe** to receive this newsletter by email, please contact us.

- Free call **1800 779 379**
- Visit [openplace.org.au/contact-us](https://openplace.org.au/contact-us)
- Email [info@openplace.org.au](mailto:info@openplace.org.au)
- Write to us at:  
**Open Place**  
**Suite 1/8 Bromham Place**  
**Richmond VIC 3121**



We acknowledge the pain and loss of childhood experienced by Forgotten Australians and we recognise the lifelong impacts of childhood trauma.



We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways of Australia. We support Aboriginal people's right to self-determination and culturally safe services.



Open Place is committed to providing safe, inclusive and accessible services for all people.