

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 47 | July 2025



OPEN PLACE

Support Service for Forgotten Australians

Relationships
AUSTRALIA • VIC

Welcome to our July newsletter

A note from Liz Hayes, Assistant Manager Open Place

Hello and welcome,

While Michelle is on leave, I've taken on the role of introducing this edition of the Open Place newsletter — and how quickly the months have flown by since our last one!

It feels like we were only just enjoying the unexpected warmth of autumn, and suddenly winter has arrived in full force. I hope you're all managing to stay warm and well during the colder months.

Of course, winter isn't all bad — there's something so comforting about a bowl of hot soup with a toasted sandwich, and the knowledge that spring is just around the corner.

On a positive note, we've recently started seeing some of the Victorian Redress Scheme payments come through, which has been encouraging. In this issue, you'll find an update on the Scheme, along with information about how we can support you if you're considering making an application.

We're also sharing the updated Health Funding Guidelines for the next 12 months. If you have any questions about how the guidelines might apply to you, please don't hesitate to get in touch with our Health team — they're always happy to help.

One upcoming Open Place event to highlight is our Boundaries Workshop on 21 August, led by Liz S and Kate. This session will explore the importance of boundaries, how to recognise healthy and unhealthy ones, and how to set them effectively using assertive communication.

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We're going green

Want to get this newsletter as soon as possible *and* help the environment? We can email you future editions instead of sending them via snail mail. Contact us to opt in to email newsletters:

1800 779 379 | info@openplace.org.au | openplace.org.au

The Open Place suite of services is funded by the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services and the Australian Government Department of Social Services.



I'm also pleased to share that with the arrival of 2 new team members (myself and Biraj, who is introduced below), our Open Place team is now at full strength! If you see us around Open Place, please say hello — we're always happy for a chat.

Lastly, while we understand that not everyone uses the internet to stay in touch, if you do and haven't yet signed up to receive this newsletter by email, we encourage you to get in contact. You can also visit openplace.org.au/news to read previous editions.

We'd love to hear your feedback and suggestions for future editions. Feel free to share your thoughts with us at the Drop-In Centre, during social support groups, via email at info@openplace.org.au or by calling us on 1800 779 379.

Stay warm and take care,
Liz Hayes

Welcome to Open Place

Liz Hayes, Assistant Manager

Hello, I am the new Assistant Manager at Open Place and will have been here for about 3 months by the time this goes to print. I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting those who come to Drop-In at Richmond and am looking forward to getting out to the social support groups to meet more of you.

Here is a little bit about me. My background is in mediation and law, and I've had leadership positions in the community services and legal sectors, including at Relationships Australia Victoria. I am so happy to have joined this wonderful group of people working at Open Place.



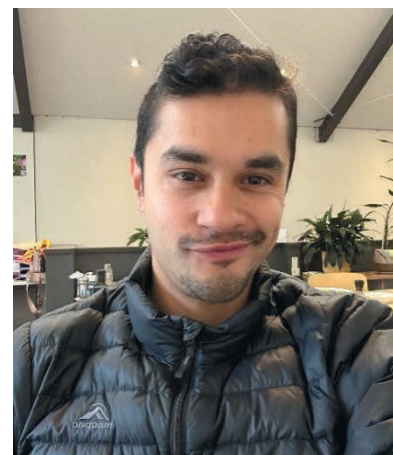
When I am not working, you might find me exploring Victoria, along the various hiking or bicycle trails, or watching an old movie or 2. I have lots of favourites – including High Society, The Court Jester and Casablanca.

Biraj Dhital, Counsellor

I started at Open Place recently I moved to Melbourne from Canberra after 6 wonderful but rather boring years.

I have 5 years of experience as a counsellor including working with children, teenagers and adults often struggling with issues like anxiety, depression, bullying and the impacts of sexual assault/abuse.

I then worked as a family counsellor with separated adults who were experiencing conflict and mandated to attend counselling.





This involved working with many people who were living with complex trauma, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and other mental health challenges.

I also have a private counselling practice on the side. I look forward to the experience at Open Place, helping Forgotten Australians as best as possible in my capacity as a counsellor.

Victorian Redress Scheme

We are continuing to support people to apply for the Victorian Redress for Historical Institutional Abuse and want to thank everyone for their patience during this time.

We acknowledge that there are some long waits for support and this can be stressful. Please be assured we are working to support everyone as quickly as possible. We are operating a waitlist for application support requests and are responding in order of when the enquiry was received.

We are also providing callbacks for people who have general enquiries or specific questions related to redress. This is for phone-based support to respond to questions and doesn't involve us assisting with the completion of the application. We are aiming to get back to these **general enquiries** in around 2 weeks.

The scheme will run until mid-2026 and we will continue to respond to enquiries for support for the duration of the scheme. If you would prefer to apply without support, you can contact reception and request an application pack be posted to you.

Thank you, from Renee and Rose.

Thread Together

Thread Together collects unsold, brand-new 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 are partnered with the Thread Together service and all clothing is given at no cost to people. 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 are to be made through Open Place.

You can attend the clothing hub alone or with support from a worker, friend, or family member.

Please visit <http://threadtogether.org> for more information.

Locations: Richmond, Ballarat, or Wangaratta (Vic), Brisbane (Qld), Maylands (WA).

If you are interested in attending a location in Victoria or would like to learn more, please call Open Place on 1800 779 379.





Boundaries Workshop

A free, 3-hour session for Forgotten Australians who are interested in learning about boundaries.

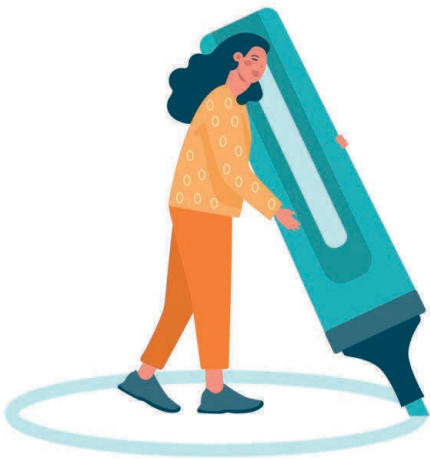


If you're a Forgotten Australian and are registered with Open Place, we welcome you to attend this workshop.

About the workshop

The workshop aims to help you:

- understand why boundaries are important
- identify healthy and unhealthy boundaries in our relationships
- learn how to set strong boundaries and be assertive in our communication



When

Thursday 21 August 2025
10am-1pm

Where

Studio 1 Community Hub
15 Barnet Way
Richmond VIC 3121

Cost

Free of charge.

Express interest

Please call 1800 779 379 or email openplacecounselling@openplace.org.au by Friday 8 August 2025.





Were you at...?

Were you at the Hurlingham Home in Brighton in the 1950s or 1960s?

If so, Christopher would love to hear from you. Please contact Open Place on 1800 779 379.

Former Residents' Reunions



Melbourne Orphanage Reunion 2025

OzChild warmly invites you to the
The Melbourne Orphanage Reunion Afternoon Tea
Join us as we reconnect, remember, and rediscover the
shared stories that bring us together.

When: Sunday, 16 November 2025
Where: Brighton Beach Primary School
19 Windermere Crescent, Brighton, VIC 3186
Time: 12pm – 3pm

We would be honoured by your presence at this special gathering.

Please RSVP to Judi Vanderheiden by **Friday 24 October**
on 03 9695 2200 or email jvanderheiden@ozchild.org.au

We look forward to seeing you there.

You'll also find this information on the Open Place website: openplace.org.au/external-events

Would you like to hear from another Forgotten Australian when you are unwell?

Forgotten Australian Maree Holt is looking to trial a Wellbeing Contact Service for Forgotten Australians who are unwell and who would like to receive some contact from a fellow Forgotten Australian during this time.

Contact could be a card, a phone call, a visit, or a mix of all 3 depending on where you are located.

To access this support, please contact Open Place and ask to be put onto the 'Requesting contact' list. You will need to give us permission to share your contact details with Maree and other Forgotten Australians involved in the Wellbeing Contact Service so that they can contact you.

If you would like to join Maree in offering support to fellow Forgotten Australians, please contact Open Place and provide your contact number for Maree to contact you.

This is a Forgotten Australian-driven initiative



(Maree Holt)



Save the date!

Open Place Christmas Party 2025

Saturday 13 December at the Malvern Town Hall

More details to come.



Newsletter help needed

We're looking for volunteers to help prepare our newsletters for the post by placing them into envelopes.

If you can lend a hand, please call us on **1800 779 379** to let us know.



Open Place health funding guidelines

This document outlines guidelines in relation to the funding you may choose to access during the 2025-26 financial year (1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026).

Please note, the funding provided by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) to support the needs of Forgotten Australians is limited. Open Place currently has over 5,000 registered Forgotten Australians able to access its suite of services, including funding. Health funding is not allocated based on funding per person. It is a block of funding that we apply guidelines to, to share the funding for those in need as equitably as possible.

In the 2025 - 2026 financial year, based on your needs you may be able to access up to:

- \$1,250 for Health
- \$250 for Medical transport and accommodation (regional and rural service users only).

If required, you may also be able to access \$1,000 for dental treatments (eligibility criteria apply). Please contact the Health funding team for eligibility criteria information.

Before you access a service, please contact the Health funding team to confirm that your funding request is approved. Payments will not be made for services that have not been pre-approved.

| Funding Type | Standard Health Funding |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Who may access | Forgotten Australians |
| Maximum limit in financial year | \$1,250 |
| Eligible expenses | <p>Medical expenses. For tests <u>not covered by Medicare</u> (for example, an MRI scan and pathology) payment may be made direct to the medical provider by Open Place. For other services that require Medicare gap assistance (for example, GP visits, medical specialist consultations and medical procedures) you will need to pay full costs on the day and Open Place can reimburse you for out-of-pocket expenses.</p> <p>Please note: Private health insurance excess fees for hospital /day procedures, and private hospital Emergency Department fees are not covered.</p> <p>Optical expenses. Prescription glasses including prescription sunglasses. \$600 limit.</p> <p>Hearing aids, mobility aids and equipment expenses. Open Place will continue to seek other available subsidies and assistance to compliment health brokerage funding.</p> <p>Allied health expenses. for dietician, podiatry, physiotherapy, osteopathy, myotherapy, remedial massage and chiropractic treatment. Efforts will be made to ensure that a primary health care plan is initiated by a GP, which provides five free sessions per year.</p> <p>Homecare expenses. Meals on wheels, home cleaning, district nursing and My Aged Care package payments. We do not fund garden maintenance. This support is designed for short term medical conditions that require immediate support at home. For long term or permanent medical conditions, we would link with Councils, NDIS or an Aged Care Package.</p> <p>Pharmaceutical expenses. <u>One pharmacy account at a time per person.</u> Pharmacy accounts to be established by Open Place for medical prescriptions and webster packs only. We do not fund over the counter items.</p> <p>Please note: Reimbursements <u>will not</u> be provided for pharmaceutical expenses except when dispensed via a hospital stay/visit.</p> <p>Dental. Dental care has two steps: the first appointment and, if needed, follow up treatment. Before the first visit, Open Place must be contacted to confirm funding. If more dental treatment is needed, the dental practice must send an itemised plan to</p> |



| | |
|------------|--|
| | Open Place for further funding approval. Open Place will make every effort to link Forgotten Australians to local community dental services and arrange for them to be placed on a priority list. |
| Conditions | Health funding can go towards any number of the eligible expenses listed above. Reimbursements will only be made for amounts over \$20. You may submit multiple receipts that add up to \$20, <u>except</u> for pharmaceutical expenses. Health funding is not transferable – i.e. a person's unused counselling sessions or Health funds cannot be transferred to another Forgotten Australian or family member. |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Funding Type | Additional Dental Funding |
| Who may access | Forgotten Australians |
| Limit | \$1,000 |
| Eligible expenses | Dental expenses from a private dental clinic that exceed the funds you have available for Standard Health expenses (i.e. \$1,250/financial year). |
| Conditions | Available to Forgotten Australians who have received less than \$5,000 dental funding through Open Place since January 2010. This additional \$1,000 is for dental treatment only. If eligible, this \$1,000 can be combined with the 2025/26 health funding of \$1,250 |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Funding Type | Medical Accommodation and Transport |
| Who may access | Forgotten Australians and/or carers supporting them |
| Limit each financial year | \$250 |
| Eligible expenses | Up to \$250 is available to Forgotten Australians who live in regional and rural areas (or their partner/family member or carer if they are supporting the service user during treatment) who are required to attend medical appointments, including hospital visits or to see a specialist, in Melbourne metropolitan area or their nearest regional centre. In the first instance, the Coordinated Support team will explore government funding options such as the Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS) which is designed to help Victorians who must travel a long way for specialist medical treatment by subsidising their travel and accommodation costs. |
| Conditions | Funding is for people who live in regional and rural Victoria. Funding must be discussed with and <u>approved</u> by Open Place before the first appointment with the health provider is attended. Open Place will be unable to reimburse Forgotten Australians if there has been no prior approval. A copy of the appointment documentation will be required prior to approving requests for medical transport or accommodation funding. Invoices and/or receipts will be required to process any reimbursements for medical transport and accommodation expenses. Once a reservation for accommodation has been paid, changes cannot be made to the booking. |

Items no longer covered under health brokerage:

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| White goods | Kitchen ware / Appliances |
| Gym equipment / memberships | Mattresses / Bedding |
| Car repairs | Cleaning equipment (vacuums etc) |

Find and Connect:

If your time in 'care' was less than 6 months in Victoria, or took place interstate, you may access up to \$1,000 health brokerage (lifetime total) in certain circumstances. Please contact Open Place if you are unsure whether this condition applies to you.

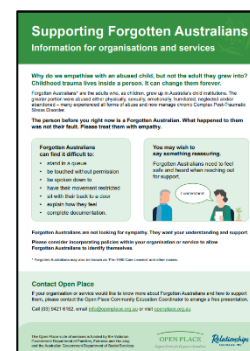


Team updates

Community Education team

The FARE (Forgotten Australian Resource Education) Program is currently being rolled out. Richard (Coordinator - Community Education) will be attending all social support groups once more and talking about what has been developed since the initial consultations and discussing the next steps.

Richard will provide group attendees with a pack of flyers which have been developed to support them to identify as Forgotten Australians when attending a service or organisation. These flyers can also be downloaded from the 'Resources' section of our website: openplace.org.au/resources



Flyer link: openplace.org.au/media/2axfljcm/supporting-forgotten-australians-flyer.pdf

The flyer is designed to be used by Forgotten Australians if they want to let an organisation or service know that they are a Forgotten Australian, and what this means. It is hoped that this will:

1. prevent Forgotten Australians from having to explain what it means to be a Forgotten Australian
2. encourage the service/organisation to implement policies to allow Forgotten Australians to identify themselves
3. encourage the service/organisation to contact Open Place if they would like to arrange a presentation.

Historical Records team

The records team has undertaken 471 records-related actions this year. This figure is consistent with the same time period in 2024, however the complexity of requests and waiting times have increased significantly.

Activities included:

- 177 confirmation of time in care
- 222 historical record requests
- 37 births, deaths and marriages certificates
- 2 DNA searches
- 22 family searches
- 7 supplementary records requests
- 5 other activities.

We have also responded to 281 Find and Connect queries, an increase of 25 percent compared with same time period last year.

The records team chairs the Record Holders Community of Practice which involves quarterly meetings of record holder agencies who come together for dynamic discussions about best practice for record holding and handover. Meetings this year have been at Abbotsford Convent, Uniting Heritage Service and MacKillop Family Services. Later this year the Community of Practice will hold a Record Holders Forum.



Health team

The new financial year has started, running from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026. This means our health funding has been renewed. Please see pages 7-8 of this newsletter or visit openplace.org.au/health-support to view the latest health guidelines.

Pharmacy

We will be busy contacting pharmacies to confirm ongoing pharmacy accounts for the new financial year. If you don't have a pharmacy account and would like to have one, please contact the health team. For those who do have a pharmacy account, please consider asking your pharmacy to track your scripted medication spending to ensure that if you reach the PBS threshold, they take this into account. This will reduce the cost of your scripted medication.

A friendly reminder that we do not cover over-the-counter items, unless scripted by a doctor.

While we fund eligible reimbursements for amounts over \$20, we do not reimburse for pharmaceutical expenses. It is our preference to establish a pharmacy account, with monthly statements sent to Open Place for payment.

Counselling team

We are very pleased to welcome Biraj Dhital to the counselling team. Please see Biraj's introduction earlier in the newsletter to learn more about his background and experience. Biraj is settling into Open Place and will be available to offer counselling by the time you read this newsletter.

The counselling team at Open Place provides and funds counselling support for Forgotten Australians and family members.

Counselling can be accessed:

- in your local area
- at our Richmond offices
- over the phone via telehealth
- online via video services such as Zoom.

How it works

If you are interested in counselling, call or email Open Place and a member of the counselling team will contact you to discuss your situation so that we can find the right counsellor for you.

We have a small team of Open Place counsellors based in our offices at Richmond that may be able to support you directly. Open Place can also fund a range of suitably qualified external providers (counsellors who do not work for us directly but agree to charge Open Place for your sessions).

This includes practitioners such as:

- counsellors
- psychologists
- equine therapists
- social workers (including mental health social workers)
- art therapists.



It is important to know that we generally cannot reimburse you for sessions with a counsellor that you have already paid for. We first need to approve and set up an agreement with them to bill us directly.

For more information get in touch by calling 1800 779 379 and ask to speak with a member of the counselling team. We will usually get back to you within 1-2 working days.

Feedback

We recently sent a survey to Forgotten Australians about their counselling experience, and these were some of the responses:

| | |
|--|---|
| ‘The counsellor listens to me and we work on the issues that are important to me.’ | 100% Strongly Agree or Agree |
| ‘The counsellor knows about the issues faced by Forgotten Australians, and/or has been willing to learn more.’ | 70% Strongly Agree or Agree, 30% Neutral |
| ‘The counsellor treats me with respect and dignity.’ | 100% Strongly Agree or Agree |

Comments about counsellors and counselling:

- ‘Kind-hearted counsellor.’
- ‘My counsellor is very good at helping me to deal and remember the traumatic past of my life, an amazing counsellor.’
- ‘Good with neurodiverse clients.’
- ‘Thank you so much for the best counsellor as she really does understand complex trauma.’
- ‘She is very good and understands what I am talking about.’

**Additional counselling support –
Counselling and Psychological Care Scheme**

If you have accepted an offer from the National Redress Scheme or the newly begun Victorian Redress Scheme, you and your family members* can access funding for counselling through the Counselling and Psychological Care (CPC) Scheme. For more information you can speak to a member of the Open Place counselling team or call the CPC Scheme directly on 1800 716 869.

*At this time family members of National Redress Scheme recipients can access the CPC counselling program. We are waiting for confirmation if this will apply for the Victorian Redress Scheme, and we will keep you up to date as soon as we know.

Groups

The team will be offering 2 half-day workshops in the second half of 2025, in August and October. This is in response to feedback from some people who are interested in learning more about particular topics in a group setting but can’t commit to attending a long-term group. Please see the flyer in this newsletter for more information (page 4).

If you’re interested in attending a group, call reception on 1800 770 379 and ask to speak with a member of the counselling team, or email us at openplacecounselling@openplace.org.au



External counselling forums

We run quarterly online forums with the external counsellors Open Place works with across the country. These forums have been a great space for counsellors to learn more about supporting Forgotten Australians and their family members. Any private practitioner working with Forgotten Australians with an Open Place counselling agreement can attend.

Contact openplacecounselling@openplace.org.au to learn more.

Mental health crisis support

Open Place is not a crisis service, and we are unable to provide immediate crisis response. 24/7 mental health support is available through Lifeline 13 11 14, and Beyond Blue 1300 224 636.

Full Stop Australia offers free, 24/7, confidential, trauma specialist counselling to people of all genders who have been subject to sexual, domestic and family violence, as well as their friends, colleagues and family members. Phone 1800 385 578 or visit fullstop.org.au

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 000.

Additional services that offer immediate support can be found at rav.org.au/resources/mental-health-services

Redress Support team

Redress Support Service

Our redress support team assists Forgotten Australians to apply for the National Redress Scheme (NRS), for people who experienced childhood sexual abuse in institutional 'care'.

Any Forgotten Australian considering making an application to the NRS is strongly encouraged to get support, to ensure you get the best outcome. Redress support workers can visit regional areas in Victoria to meet people who would like in-person support with their redress application.

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 is 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.

Outcomes from the NRS can include a financial payment, access to counselling, and a Direct Personal Response (an apology) from a representative of the responsible institutions.

The NRS will accept applications up until June 2027. If you would like to discuss the NRS, who is eligible to apply and what support we can offer, please get in touch with Open Place. You can also visit the NRS website for information: nationalredress.gov.au



Redress Support Services – Victorian Community Organisation Forums

Open Place has been part of a group of Redress Support Services holding events in communities across Victoria for workers and other organisations to learn more about the National Redress Scheme. Recently we have been to Albury/Wodonga, Docklands in Melbourne, and Dandenong and met with dozens of people to promote the NRS and the work of Open Place. The NRS has just 2 years to run, and we know that there are lots of people who still may not be aware they might be eligible.

If you work for a community support service or organisation that works with people who spent time in institutional 'care' systems, we would love to hear from you. We'd be happy to arrange a visit to your service to share more information about the NRS and how Open Place can help.

Drop-In Centre

Friday cook-up

Every Friday, enjoy a delicious, hearty meal with dessert, for anyone who is a registered service user to enjoy. It is an enjoyable day, filled with delicious food and all are welcome.

Join us between 10am and 3pm every Friday.

Oz Harvest

We receive an Oz Harvest food delivery each week, and often receive lots of different fruits, vegetables, frozen meals, frozen meat and treats for all to take. This is available on a Friday after lunch at the Drop-in Centre.

Ongoing activities

- **Women's Art Group:** Join us every third Thursday of the month from 1pm to 4pm.
- **Haircuts:** Available every 6 weeks on a Tuesday between 11am and 1pm.
- **Podiatry (Foot Care):** Offered every third Wednesday of the month from 1pm to 3pm – Bookings required.
- **Tuesday Fun Walk:** Every Tuesday from 1pm.
- **Movie Thursday:** First Thursday of the month from 1pm.



New activities

The Open Place Art Zone

Drop In. Get Creative. Have Fun!

Every Tuesday and Thursday at the Drop-In Centre

We're bringing out the paint, pencils, markers and more – all you have to do is show up and create.

Explore your creativity – no rules, no experience needed.

What you can do:

- Paint
- Draw
- Colour



Victorian Public Tenants Association (VPTA) at Open Place

A member of the VPTA will attend Open Place on the first Thursday of every month to provide support and advice to those living in public housing.

Where: 1/8 Bromham Place, Richmond

When: First Thursday of every month

Time: 11am–12:30pm

No appointment needed – just drop in!

The VPTA is the peak body for public housing in Victoria. They represent:

- people living in public housing
- people on the Victorian Housing Register (waiting list).

They offer free, confidential:

- counselling and advice
- referrals and information
- representation and advocacy

To find out more, visit the VPTA website: <https://vpta.org.au> or call Open Place on 1800 779 379.

For activity updates between newsletters, visit openplace.org.au/events



Social support groups (SSGs)

Gippsland SSG

We meet on the second Thursday of each month and have recently enjoyed visiting some favourite local lunch spots, including Sporting Legends and the Rosedale Pub. We've also been back at our usual base, the Sale City Band Hall, where we've shared chicken sandwiches, pizza—and of course, birthday cake to celebrate our birthday stars!

A big thank you to Michael for generously bringing in his home-grown fruit and veggies, especially the delightful bonsai watermelons (pictured below)!

If you'd like to join the mailing list, please contact Liz or Shaye.



Donald and District SSG

Donald and District SSG meets on the fourth Thursday of every second month. Our group members come from a very large area across the Wimmera. Members travel quite long distances to get to the group (up to 2 hours).

As a group we spread the outings across the region. In the last few months, the members enjoyed an outing to the St Arnaud Sporting Club, a barbeque at the Beulah Recreation Reserve, and in May we attended the Vic Hotel in Horsham. Our July outing will be in Donald. Venue to be advised.

Contact Sharon for more information 0417 067 910.



Ballarat SSG

Ballarat SSG meets on the second Tuesday of each month from February to December. In the last 3 months we have had our usual catch up at the RSL hall in April, then an outing to dance the morning away at Morning Melodies at the Golden Point Hotel. Richard Dove from the Community Education team attended our meeting in June to let us know what he has been up to. In July we're planning to go to the pictures at Delacombe Town Centre and to have lunch.



Bendigo SSG

Bendigo SSG meets monthly. We get together at the Long Gully Community Centre bi-monthly on the third Thursday of the month, and on the other month we go on an outing.

If you live in the Bendigo area and have been thinking of coming along, please call or text Annie on 0427 695 600 or Sharon on 0417 067 910 (Monday to Thursday).

In March, Munni from the redress team drove from Richmond to meet us in Morong at Malone Park for a barbecue lunch. It rarely rains in Bendigo but on this day, it came down in buckets. We still had a good turn out on the day and luckily, we had good shelter.

In April, we returned to Long Gully Community Centre where we had a good catch up and shared some lunch together.

In May, Emma from the records team drove from Richmond to Bendigo to meet up with Sharon and the group for lunch at Red Energy Sports Stadium.



Preston SSG

The Preston SSG group continues to meet on the third Friday of every month.

In February, the group met at the Malahang Reserve for a barbeque in the park. We were very lucky to land a beautiful weather day and enjoyed catching up over some snags and burgers (thank you to the group members who graciously took over barbeque duties when we started to panic!).

In March we attended Morning Melodies at the Darebin RSL. We enjoyed a 2-course lunch while Elvis serenaded us with some of his golden oldies! In May we met for a pub lunch at the Junction Hotel. We visited Scienceworks in June, which was very exciting!

If you're interested in joining the Preston SSG, please contact Brigitte or Lydia to receive flyers.





Warrnambool SSG

Our group comes together on the first Wednesday of every month. We have a lovely space at the Archie Graham Centre in Warrnambool where we catch up, share some lunch together and sometimes have a guest speaker or do an activity. On the alternate month, we go out for lunch or do an activity that's been chosen by the group. If you live in the Warrnambool area and have been thinking about coming along, please give Annie a call or text on 0427 695 600 (Monday-Thursday). New members are most welcome or if you've been to the group in the past and want to come back, the door is always open.

In March, Rose from the Victorian Redress Team at Open Place drove from Richmond to meet Annie and the group for a barbeque lunch at Tower Hill Wildlife Reserve (not far from Warrnambool) where we enjoyed the great outdoors on a beautiful sunny day. We saw many koalas and emus in nature, and all agreed to return later in the year.

We returned to Archie Graham in April where Anthony from the Records team drove from Richmond to meet the group. Before lunch a few of us picked up a pool cue to play doubles – we were all as bad as each other but the fun we had was the main thing!

In May, Richard Dove came down to give everyone an update on what he has been up to with community education.



Frankston SSG

The Frankston SSG kicked off 2025 with a barbeque at the Fred Smith Reserve in Hastings. It was lovely to enjoy the last of that hot summer weather by the beach.

More recently we shared a delicious meal at the Laughing Lark Café. As the air has continued to chill the group has been meeting at our 'home base', the Frankston Library.

We're very much looking forward to planning the next few outings to take us through this decidedly chilly winter!

The Frankston group runs on the first Friday of each month. If you would like to attend, please call Open Place on 1800 779 379.



Shepparton SSG

The Shepparton SSG had a relaxed start to the year, with catch-ups at the North Shepparton Community and Learning Centre in February and March. It was great to see everyone again and have a chat over lunch.

In April, we had a lovely lunch at a firm favourite, King City Chinese in Shepparton, where so many came together in great spirits.

In May we were back to the Community Centre to plan for the coming months. Thank you everyone for sharing some great ideas for experiences and to see some of the local attractions.

Thanks to these suggestions, the group went wild in June! We met at the Kyabram Fauna Wildlife Park, on a beautiful winter's day. The sun shone after a few days of rain, making it a perfect day to explore the park, see the wildlife, and sit inside to have lunch together and watch the meercats bob up and down from the window.

We are looking forward to hitting the road again in July, when we will meet at the Cricketers Arms in Mooroopna for lunch.

Thank you everyone for the fun and friendships you bring to the group. We look forward to the next few months together.





Geelong SSG

The Geelong SSG catches up on the second Wednesday of the month. We meet bi-monthly at The Grovedale Neighbourhood House and on the other month we go on an outing. 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 March we gathered at our favourite spot for a barbeque – Eastern Park! It's a great spot on top of the hill with beautiful avenues around the park and a view overlooking the Geelong waterfront. The weather was perfect, and a good day had by all.

April took us back to the Grovedale Neighbourhood House and in May we 'did lunch' at another favourite, The Gateway Hotel.

In June, we returned to the Grovedale Neighbourhood House for our monthly catch up and shared some lunch together.



Dandenong SSG

At Dandenong SSG it's been a whole 'lotta lunching over the past few months. From Club Noble to Noble Park RSL to the buffet at Lynbrook Hotel, the group have enjoyed some great fare.

In March we met for the second time at our home base, Noble Park Community Centre, where we played Bingo and enjoyed some home-made treats.

Our May get-together turned out unexpectedly with an unexpected change to planned Morning Melodies visit. After hearing from the venue on the day that our booking had been lost, we quickly devised a new plan and were thankfully accommodated at Noble Park RSL.

We've welcomed a few newcomers to the group these past few months and seen several old faces return.



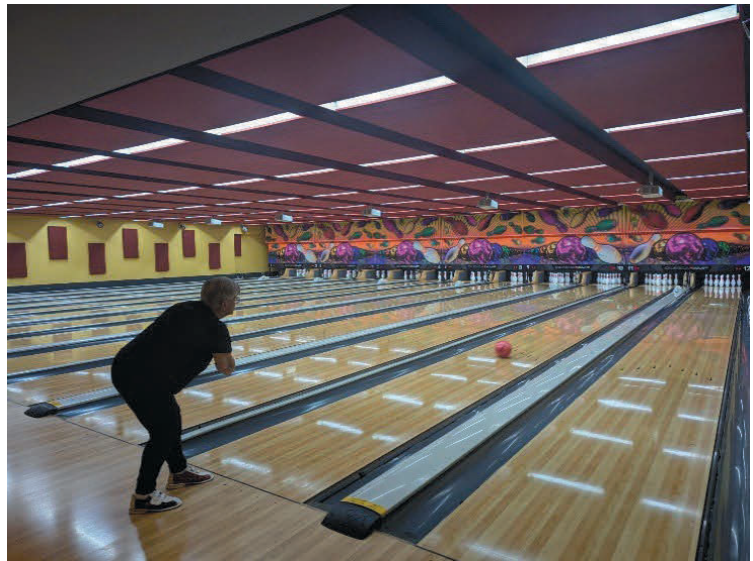


Wodonga/Wangaratta SSG

The Wodonga and Wangaratta SSG started the year off with their planning meeting in January.

The group came up with some interactive and fun new places they wanted to explore.

In March, they came together to play Ten Pin Bowling in Wangaratta. I think we have some professionals in the house!



The summer months in the Wodonga and Wangaratta region have been spectacular.

In April, the group enjoyed a beautiful day out in Beechworth, where we enjoyed the Ned Kelly walking tour and had a delicious lunch at Beechworth Bakery.

In May, the group came together for a barbeque lunch and a game of Bingo at one of our home bases in Wangaratta.

In June, as the cooler months have approached, the group sat down in the warm and inviting Gurus Café in Wodonga and enjoyed a lovely lunch.





Bacchus Marsh SSG

This month Bacchus Marsh SSG went to Darley Neighbourhood House, and everyone loved the space and agreed that we will continue to use it when needed.

We had a planning day to go over what we will do each month for the rest of the year.

This got everyone quite excited for the future groups ahead and during the group everyone was quite cheerful and positive throughout. Next month we will be going back there for a game day.





Sausages and Mash with Red Onion Gravy

Serves 4.

Ingredients

- 800g cream delight potatoes, peeled, chopped
- ½ cup milk, warmed
- 30g butter, melted
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 8 thick pork sausages
- 1 large red onion, cut into thick wedges
- ¼ cup salt-reduced traditional gravy powder
- 1 cup salt-reduced beef stock
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley



Method

1. Place potato in a saucepan. Cover with cold water. Bring to the boil over high heat. Boil for 15 minutes or until tender. Drain. Return to pan over low heat. Toss for 1 minute or until excess liquid has evaporated. Add milk and butter. Mash until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large heavy-based frying pan over medium heat. Add sausages. Cook, turning, for 10 minutes or until cooked through. Transfer to a plate. Cover to keep warm.
3. Return pan to medium heat. Add onion. Cook, stirring, for 8 minutes or until softened. Add gravy powder. Cook, stirring, for 1 minute or until combined. Remove from heat. Gradually stir in combined wine and stock. Return to heat. Cook, stirring, for 5 minutes or until mixture boils and thickens slightly.
4. Divide mash among plates. Top with sausages, gravy and parsley. Serve.



Suggestions

We welcome any suggestions from you on how we can improve our services 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
- Email 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.

