

# NEWSLETTER

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## A message from Michelle McDonald, Senior Manager Open Place

I hope this newsletter finds you all enjoying some of the gifts of Spring with flowers in bloom and birds singing.

As we move out of Winter, we hope that the risks of flu and COVID-19 will keep reducing. As we enter Spring, we remind those who suffer from hay fever or other respiratory illnesses to take care of yourselves and make sure you have any medications that you need on hand.

For those of you who like the Australian Football League, it has been a great year for some of us. I confess to being a Collingwood tragic and get plenty of feedback about it from those who come to the Drop-In Centre.

We always welcome your feedback and, from this, we recently learnt that many of you do not answer calls from hidden numbers or private callers due to worries about scam calls. From now on, if anyone from Open Place phones you, the number **8415 9900** will appear on your phone. So, if you are wanting to talk with someone from Open Place you will know it's us 😊

You may be aware that the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) undertook a Life Stories project over the last few years with over 60 Forgotten Australians. More information is available at <https://forgottenaustralians.org.au/resources>.

The project is now complete, with the final story being that of Alex Agius. Alex was a Forgotten Australian 'fellow traveller' and counsellor who passed away in 2021 at the age of 73.

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## 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)**

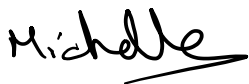
Alex's wife Bridget has given consent for Alex's story to become part of the Life Stories project and available for all to read and be shared on our website, to support the ongoing community education about the experiences of the Forgotten Australian story in the wider community.

Alex's story will be available to read soon at [www.openplace.org.au/news](http://www.openplace.org.au/news)

If you have been involved in the Life Stories project and **if you would also like your story to go on our public website**, please contact Open Place.

We are still awaiting further details about the Victorian Government Redress scheme

Enjoy the warmer Spring months.



Michelle  
Senior Manager Open Place

## Welcome to Open Place

### Sandy Aston – Front Desk, Admin Officer

Hi everyone. My name is Sandy and I've recently joined Open Place as receptionist.

I have previously worked in health care, doing both administration and clinical duties.

I moved from England in 2000 and my passions are animals and nature and I also enjoy most things creative.

I am really enjoying meeting many of you at the Drop-In Centre and talking to others on the phone.



### Keegan Tarrant – Counselling Administration Officer

My name is Keegan and I joined Open Place as the administration officer for the counselling team in May.

I recently finished my undergraduate degree and am eager to experience working in the community sector. In my spare time I enjoy indoor rock-climbing and spending time with my greyhound Goose.

It has been a pleasure meeting some of you at Friday cook-ups and I look forward to the many conversations to come.





# *Open Place Christmas Party*

## *2023*

The Open Place team are excited to announce the annual Christmas Party!

We would love to see you and your partner/friend/carer however places are limited so please let us know if you'd like to come by Wednesday 15th November on (03) 9421 6162 or free call 1800 779 379



**When: Saturday 2nd December 2023**

**Time: 10am – 3pm**



**Where: Malvern Town Hall – Corner Glenferrie Road and High Street, Malvern**

**RSVP's are required!**

**Tickets will only be sent to those who have RSVP'd**

**You must be registered with Open Place**

Unfortunately, no children (under 18yrs) or animals will be permitted entry (\*registered service animals allowed, proof of registration must be provided)

## Financial Support

### What to do if you're having trouble paying your electricity, gas or water bill

If you find you are unable to pay your water, electricity or gas bill by the due date, here are the main steps to take to stay connected to these essential services:

- Contact your retailer before your bill is due to let them know you will have difficulty paying.
- Your retailer is legally required to assist you and offer you a payment plan or hardship policy to help get your debts under control.
- Only agree to a payment plan that is realistic in your circumstances, as your retailer may disconnect you if you don't follow it.
- Speak to a financial counsellor. You can do this through the National Debt Helpline by calling 1800 007 007 or by using its online live chat function.
- See if you're eligible for any government rebates, vouchers or other concessions to help cover the cost of your utilities. A financial counsellor can also assist you in finding and applying for these.
- Get advice on how to reduce your energy and water use. Most states and territories have schemes that help cover the cost of energy-efficient home and appliance upgrades.
- If you can't agree on an affordable payment plan with your provider or if you think you've been wrongfully disconnected, contact the Victorian ombudsmen at [www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/contact-us](http://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/contact-us).

### Payment plans and financial hardship programs

As a minimum, utility retailers are generally obliged to offer you extra time to pay through a payment plan if you've told them you're having difficulty covering your bill.

You may also be considered eligible for a retailer's hardship program.

As long as you agree to and are following a repayment plan or other hardship provisions, **your retailer can't disconnect or restrict your utilities.**

Being on the hardship program may offer other benefits on top of a payment plan, such as the waiving of late payment fees and referrals to government concessions.

All electricity and gas providers have financial hardship policies in place outlining how they'll help customers experiencing financial difficulty and many water retailers also have financial hardship programs.

### Government support payments

There are various state, territory and federal programs providing rebates and other support payments to those on low or fixed incomes who are struggling with their utility bills.

If you're eligible for one or more of these, the government can cover some of the cost of your utilities.

The Australian Government's MoneySmart website provides a list of benefits for energy and water in each state and territory. Visit <http://moneysmart.gov.au> for more information.



## Access Travel Pass Information

You may be eligible for an Access Travel Pass if you:

- have permanent physical disability, cognitive condition or mental illness
- can travel independently
- are unable to consistently physically touch on and off or consistently comprehend the need to touch on and off
- are a permanent Victorian resident.

If you need to travel with a companion/carer, you aren't eligible for this pass. You may be eligible for:

- Companion Card.
- Multi-Purpose Taxi Program. If you use a scooter or wheelchair for mobility outside your home, you may be eligible for a Scooter/Wheelchair Travel Pass.

## How does it work?

The Access Travel Pass is a registered myki card that gives you free travel on public transport in Victoria. It includes your name and photo and comes with a lanyard to make it easier to carry.

The Access Travel Pass gives you free travel on:

- trains, trams and buses in metropolitan Melbourne
- V/Line train and coach services
- regional town bus services
- other services operated by Public Transport Victoria.

Customers should check if their free travel pass is accepted before travelling with an interstate or private operator.

Carry your pass with you when travelling. You don't need to touch on or off, but you'll need to show it to station staff to go through station gates and may be asked to show it to public transport staff.

The Access Travel Pass is free.

## How do I apply?

1. Complete an application form.
2. Attach one colour passport size photo which has been verified
3. Have your health professional complete Section 4

**The Coordinated Support team at Open Place can help you with the application form and give you more information.**

## Home Care Packages

**Many older Australians could use a little help with everyday chores and tasks.**

**A major benefit of Home Care Package allocation is being able to live independently at home without constantly relying on the support of family. Home Care Packages are tailored to cover the costs related to your or your loved one's specific needs.**

There are 4 levels of home care packages that are available depending on needs-based assessment.

**Level 1** Home Care Packages provide support for seniors who could benefit from help at home despite being more mobile and capable.

A basic level of home help, such as cleaning or gardening, depending on the support you need. A Level 1 Home Care Package can accommodate a visit from support staff once or twice a week.

The maximum daily fee payable for basic level 1 package is \$10.88, although income and asset test with Centrelink may increase this payment to \$34.84 per day.

**Level 2** Home Care Packages are suitable for seniors who have a fair to moderate ability to live at home independently with some support.

A low to moderate level of home care assistance with day-to-day tasks such as housework and meal preparation. A Level 2 Home Care Package provides more regular support staff visits and more time for personal care and social activities.

**Level 3** Home Care Packages are suitable for seniors who, based on their care needs, could be eligible for residential aged care, but who choose to keep living at home, with support.

A higher level of assistance with daily tasks, self-care, and nursing support.

At this level, a carer could visit most days of the week. Carers may have nursing qualifications and be able to perform more complex tasks.

**Level 4** Home Care Packages offer a high level of home help and nursing support for seniors with complex needs.

Comprehensive assistance with daily tasks, self-care, nursing care and medical support. At this level, a carer can visit daily to provide an increased level of nursing assistance. The maximum daily fee payable is \$12.14.

### **What can Home Care Package funds be used for?**

Depending on the Home Care Package level you are assigned, services may include any of the following:

- Medical care
- Personal care and grooming
- Home administration
- Chores and housekeeping
- Garden maintenance
- Home maintenance
- Shopping and meal preparation

- Home delivered meals
- Travel support
- Goods, equipment, and assistive technology
- Mobility aids
- Home modifications
- Allied health services
- Dementia care
- Social support and companionship

### **What's not included in a Home Care Package?**

The following items are not covered by Home Care Package funds:

- Groceries
- Day-to-day bills
- Medications
- Fees and charges applicable to other government funded care
- Home modifications or capital items that are not related to the person's ageing-related care needs
- Household appliances
- Electronics
- Entertainment expenses

**The Open Place Coordinated Support team can provide further details should you need them.**

## **Seeking interviews with former residents of the Good Samaritan Training Centre Tempe**

Were you a resident of the Good Samaritan Training Centre at Tempe NSW (1948-1982, formerly known as St Magdalen's Retreat)? Do you have a personal connection to the centre and want to share your story in a radio documentary that is being made by Donna Abela at ABC Radio National?

Donna Abela is a professional writer who worked with the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse in 2016-17 to write narratives which gave a voice to survivors who consented to have their story published.

Please get in touch with Donna if you would like more information or to assist in some way.

Email [abeladonna@iinet.net.au](mailto:abeladonna@iinet.net.au) or call 0400 425 965

## Former residents' reunions

### Melbourne Orphanage Reunion 2023

OzChild humbly requests the pleasure of all past Melbourne Orphanage residents' company at The Melbourne Orphanage Reunion Afternoon Tea.

**When:** Sunday 12 November 2023

**Where:** Brighton Beach Primary School, 19 Windermere Cres, Brighton VIC 3186

**Time:** 12-3pm

Please RSVP to Judi at [Vanderheiden@ozchild.org.au](mailto:Vanderheiden@ozchild.org.au)

Accommodation is available at Quest Brighton on the Bay. Please contact the reservation team on (03) 959 -5000 and mention you are attending the OzChild event on Sunday 12 November for a discount rate. Alternatively, there is accommodation also available at the Sandringham Hotel.

## Listening Leads to Fairer Birth Certificates for Adoptees

### Media Release

The Allan Labor Government has delivered on its commitment to provide adoptees with a legal birth certificate that recognises their full family history.

Victorians who have been adopted deserve the choice in how their birth history is recorded and recognised.

Minister for Government Services Gabrielle Williams today announced that adopted people aged 18 years or older can now access an integrated birth certificate – showing their name at birth and after adoption and listing both their birth and adoptive parents.

Previously, the only legal birth certificate available to them was in their adopted name and listed their adoptive parents only.

For many Victorians subject to historical forced adoption practices, the integrated birth certificate will be an important step toward addressing some of the wrongs they experienced.

The reform delivers a key recommendation of the 2021 *Parliamentary Inquiry into responses to historical forced adoption in Victoria*. Adopted Victorians can now choose a certificate that tells their whole story, with the same legal weight as a standard birth certificate.

Birth certificates are crucial documents, helping Victorians to prove their identity, enrol in education and access essential services.

In 2012, the Victorian Parliament apologised for past adoption practices and over the past year the Labor Government has put in place reforms to adoption services, to ensure children's interests remain central to any decision making.



The Government thanks all Victorians who came forward to tell their story as part of the Inquiry and subsequent work to introduce integrated birth certificates.

**Victorians affected by past and forced adoption can contact VANISH (Victorian Adoption Network for Information and Self Help) for free and confidential support. More information is available at <https://vanish.org.au/>.**

For more information on how to obtain an integrated birth certificate, visit <https://www.bdm.vic.gov.au/>.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Government Services Gabrielle Williams

*“Apologising for past forced-adoption practices isn’t enough – we’re acting to make Victoria a fairer place for adopted people.”*

*“Providing Victorians who are adopted with legal recognition of their natural parents and heritage is the right thing to do and we’re proud to have made it a reality.”*

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

*“We know the immense grief and trauma caused by historical forced adoptions continues to be felt by many people, and we want to help to ease this pain.”*

*“An integrated birth certificate is more than just a piece of paper – it provides a full recognition of a person’s story.”*

**Source:** <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/listening-leads-fairer-birth-certificates-adoptees>

## Historical forced adoption redress scheme

The Victorian Government is developing a historical forced adoption redress scheme for mothers who were forcibly separated from their babies.

Consultation on the redress scheme has commenced, including surveys with mothers and advocacy groups. This feedback will ensure the scheme developed provides meaningful acknowledgement and support to those impacted.

The Inquiry into responses to historical forced adoption in Victoria acknowledged that harm was also caused to adopted people, fathers, subsequent children, and other family members.

The Victorian Government will be considering options to research redress for other cohorts, including people who were forcibly adopted.

### Make an enquiry

If you have any questions on the implementation of the Victorian Government’s response, please email the Forced Adoptions Inquiry Implementation team at: [forcedadoptioninquiry@justice.vic.gov.au](mailto:forcedadoptioninquiry@justice.vic.gov.au).

More information can be found on this website: <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/your-rights/adoption/implementation-of-the-vic-gov-response-to-historical-forced-adoption>

**Please note: This scheme is not currently available as it is still being developed. We will update our website and include it in the newsletter when we have more information.**

## Records Team Update

Open Place continues to provide records and family search support for Forgotten Australians. Our team consists of Diane Jacobson, Emma Kitson, Lydia Wasilenko, Siobhan McGuinness and Sharon Guy.

The team is currently experiencing an increase in requests and asks that you allow for up to a week before receiving a return call for any records enquiries.

For those waiting on records from the Care Leaver Records Service (Department of Families, Fairness and Housing), wait times remain at around 6 months for the first lot of records which can be up to 500 pages at a time. For more information, have a chat to someone from our Records Team.

## Health Team Update

Thank you again for your patience over the last few months. We know it has been frustrating trying to get through to us. However, please leave a detailed voicemail about your health request and we will return your call as soon as we can.

In staff news, we said farewell to Megan and wished her well in her new journey, welcomed Sandy our new Front Desk / Receptionist to the team and moved Lucy upstairs to help us with the health requests. We continue to receive a high volume of requests.

As you'll see on the next page, this health funding guidelines for the 2023-24 financial year have now been published, and funding has remained the same as last financial year.

Pain management is given priority over other requests as we want people to be treated quickly and not to be left in pain.

**Currently, due to long waitlists, we're not able to arrange payments prior to appointments unless we receive the details at least 3-4 weeks beforehand.**

However, if your appointment is for an approved eligible expense, has been approved by us in the past and you have available funding, you are welcome to pay upfront yourself, and we will reimburse you after the appointment. To help us with processing receipts, please send them to [info@openplace.org.au](mailto:info@openplace.org.au) as proof of payment, as soon as you receive them.

Please **do not** save your receipts until the end of the financial year.

**Please note: Reimbursements will not be provided for pharmaceutical expenses** except when dispensed via a hospital stay/visit or unless approval has been provided by a health team staff member within the current financial year.

Please make sure we have your correct bank details at our end. If you have paid for a health service and are seeking reimbursement, we want to ensure we can deposit your money quickly and into the correct bank account. The same applies if you change your contact numbers.

Please see the 2023-2024 Financial Year Funding Guidelines below. We are happy to answer any questions about how these work.

Thank you again for your patience and we hope is all well on your side of the world.  
Tracey and Brigitte.



## Open Place health funding guidelines

This document outlines guidelines in relation to the funding you may choose to access during the 2023-24 financial year (1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024).

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 4,000 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 2023 - 2024 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 Open Place to confirm that your funding request is approved. Payments will not be made for services that have not been pre-approved.

Funding Type	Health
Who may access	Forgotten Australians
Maximum limit in financial year	\$1,250
Eligible expenses	<p><b>Medicare out-of-pocket expenses</b> for GP visits and tests not covered by Medicare (for example, an MRI scan), as well as other areas that require Medicare gap assistance (for example, out-of-pocket expenses for medical specialist consultations and medical procedures).</p> <p><b>Please note:</b> Private health insurance excess fees for hospital /day procedures, and private hospital Emergency Department fees are <b>not covered</b>.</p> <p><b>Optical expenses.</b> All prescription glasses. \$600 limit.</p> <p><b>Hearing aids, mobility aids and equipment expenses.</b> Open Place will continue to seek other available subsidies and assistance, e.g. SWEP or the Victorian Hearing Aid Bank as a priority prior to funding from brokerage.</p> <p><b>Allied health expenses</b> for dietician, podiatry, physiotherapy, osteopathy, myotherapy 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><b>Homecare expenses.</b> Meals on wheels, home cleaning, District nursing.</p> <p><b>Pharmaceutical expenses</b> for <u>medical</u> prescriptions (only) that are provided by a GP. Assistance is only available by <u>prior arrangement</u> with a pharmacy who can accept payment by direct deposit.</p> <p><b>Please note: Reimbursements will not be provided</b> for pharmaceutical expenses except when dispensed via a hospital stay/visit.</p> <p><b>Dental expenses</b> from a private dental clinic. As treatments can involve multiple visits <u>a treatment plan will need to be provided to Open Place after the initial consult for funding approval prior to the first appointment.</u> Alternatively, 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.</p>

Conditions	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
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<b>Funding Type</b>	<b>Dental</b>
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 Health expenses (i.e. \$1,250/financial year).
Conditions	<p>Available to Forgotten Australians who have received less than \$5,000 dental funding through Open Place since January 2010.</p> <p>This additional \$1,000 is for dental treatment only.</p> <p>If eligible, this \$1,000 can be combined with the 2023/24 health funding of \$1,250</p>

<b>Funding Type</b>	<b>Medical Accommodation and Transport</b>
Who may access	Forgotten Australians and/or carers supporting them
Limit each financial year	\$250
Eligible expenses	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Conditions	<p>Funding is for people who live in regional and rural Victoria.</p> <p>Funding must be discussed with and <i>approved</i> 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.</p> <p>A copy of the appointment documentation will be required prior to approving requests for medical transport or accommodation funding.</p> <p>Invoices and/or receipts will be required to process any reimbursements for medical transport and accommodation expenses.</p> <p>Once a reservation for accommodation has been paid, changes cannot be made to the booking.</p>

**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.



## Counselling and Redress Support 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 or social worker, and lots of people find this helpful. However, this might not always suit everyone, and there are other forms of therapy like art therapy and music therapy. We always make sure that any counsellors we refer you to are suitably qualified and registered with a professional association, whatever form of therapy they offer.

A person attending counselling always has the right to decide whether or not they find a particular approach or counsellor helpful, and sometimes it might take a few attempts to find the right fit. If you have stopped attending counselling but think you might like to give it another try, feel free to contact our team for a chat about the options.

Around 350 people currently access counselling with qualified practitioners across Australia through our program. Open Place can help you find a suitable counsellor in most regions of Australia or 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.

On that note, we’d like to welcome Keegan Tarrant to the team as the Counselling Administration officer. Keegan is already doing an outstanding job with the essential ‘behind the scenes’ work, making sure people can start seeing their counsellors quickly and with as little stress as possible.

We have a small team of Open Place counsellors based in the offices at Richmond who can offer face-to-face and telehealth sessions. If you would like to arrange counselling or find out more, please get in touch with us.

**Please also be aware that the Open Place counselling service is appointment-based and operates 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 free, 24/7 mental health support are Lifeline 13 11 14, and Beyond Blue 1300 224 636. You can also find an extensive list of telephone and online support services at [www.rav.org.au/resources/mental-health-services](http://www.rav.org.au/resources/mental-health-services) if you need immediate support.

### Redress Team

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 in Victoria to meet people who would like in-person support with their Redress application.

Five years into the Scheme (which started in July 2018 and will run until June 2027), there is no sign of interest slowing down. The number of people applying continues to grow and our team at Open Place are taking new calls every week. We are currently supporting around 60 people at various stages of the Redress Scheme application process, and 25 new people contacted us in the last 2 months wanting to start on their application.



We will always respond to enquiries within a couple of days. There is currently a waitlist to be linked to an Open Place redress support worker, but we can try to link you with other Redress Support Services in Victoria with shorter wait times if you'd prefer.

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 Open Place. You can also visit the Scheme's own website for information: <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au>

We are waiting for more news about the Victorian Government's Redress Scheme, announced last year. This will be separate from the National Redress Scheme. The Victorian Scheme has is still being developed so is not taking any applications for now. It is expected to start in 2024. You can keep up to date on the Open Place website, or read more directly on the DFFH website here: <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/pre-1990-care-leavers>

## Activities at the Drop-In Centre

**We regularly post details of new and ongoing events and activities, including those below, on our website at [openplace.org.au/events](https://openplace.org.au/events) and encourage you to visit the website regularly for updates.**

**If you are interested in any of our activities or would like to know more, please call Open Place and ask to speak with Shaye.**

**We are also open to suggestions of other activities or classes that you would like to see at the Drop-In Centre. Please feel free to let us know.**

### Free Haircuts

Every 6 weeks at the Drop-In centre there will be a barber on site offering free haircuts to anyone registered with Open Place.

**Availability:** Between 11am-1pm on a Tuesday.

### Ladies' Art Group

The ladies' art group takes place on the third Thursday of the month from 1-4pm at the Drop-In Centre. Our art therapist Susan can guide you along the way as you express yourself and create something unique and personal to you. From painting to sculpture work, collages and bead work, let your imagination run wild.

**Availability:** Places are available.

### Quilting Group

**Availability:** Our current quilting group is full. However, please let us know if you would be interested in attending a beginner quilting class.

## New to the Drop-In Centre

### Open Mic Mondays

Whether you're a singer, poet, comedian, instrument player, or put words to the page but never performed, this event is for you. All skill levels are welcome and encouraged!

Join us every third Monday of the month, from 1-3pm.

If you just want to come to support and enjoy the performances, please feel free to attend.

Afternoon tea will be provided.

### Free Podiatry

We have recently linked up with a podiatrist, Jo. Jo has been a podiatrist for over 20 years and loves meeting people and helping them with their foot issues. Jo will be providing free podiatry care at the Drop-In Centre, every third Wednesday of the month. She will be available between the hours of 1-3pm for anyone registered with Open Place.

Jo can provide treatment from nail care, calluses to complex needs such as pain, wounds and diabetic care. There will be times where Jo will recommend further treatment and may refer you to see your GP or attend a podiatry clinic as we are limited on what we can provide at the Drop-In Centre.

Please note that, if Jo advises you buy new shoes, go to a clinic or see your GP, it is up to you to follow through with her recommendations. However, the health team may be able to help with the payment if your funding allows.

**This service is by booking only.** Please call Open Place, 1800 779 379 to enquire.

### 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 have recently partnered with the Thread Together service in Richmond to be able to provide clothing and outfits to those who may need. All clothing is given at no cost to people and each person has access to the service once every three months.

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

You are able to 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 their website for more information: <https://threadtogether.org>.

## Social support groups (SSGs)

### Gippsland/Sale SSG

The Gippsland SSG have welcomed quite a few new members which has been lovely to see.

In June we came together at Jack Ryan's pub in Sale. Jack Ryan's is the type of place where you know you are going to walk out with a tummy full of good food and it sure did deliver for us again.

July saw us back at our home base in Sale where we enjoyed pizza and chicken rolls, thanks to Vicki for helping in the kitchen.

In August we travelled back to a fan-favourite lunch spot at the local pub in Heyfield. With some new faces and laughter by all, it was a great day out.

Shaye and Liz always appreciate being kept up to date on the local Gippsland news by regulars.

The Gippsland/Sale group meets every second Thursday of the month. For anyone who wishes to join the group, please call Open Place on 1800 778 379 to receive the monthly flyers by mail.



### Frankston SSG

In August, Frankston SSG members visited the Melbourne Zoo.

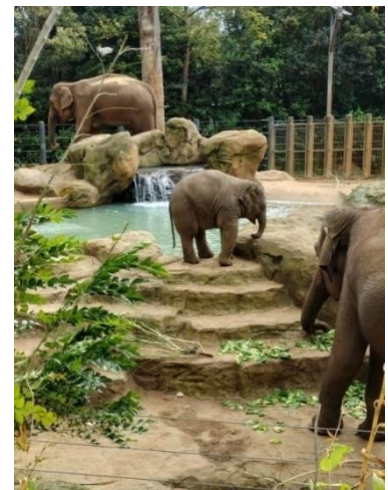
#### Here are some of their reflections about the day:

'We all had a lovely day, very interesting seeing all the animals. I loved the gorillas and elephants, the giraffes were beautiful and so peaceful. I would like to go again.' – Jenny Tiffen

'We all had an awesome day walking around the zoo. We saw many animals' lions, tigers, monkeys ranging from mammals, butterflies so many different varieties of everything, we all enjoyed lunch together in the restaurant and overall it was an amazing day.' – Sandy Murray

'We really enjoyed our day at the zoo. The meerkats were very funny and entertaining. Loved watching the baby elephants walking closely to their mothers. Enjoyed our lunch with everyone. Thank you for organizing it all.' – Judy Swift

'I really enjoyed the day. The bus ride there and back. The beautiful gardens and especially the elephants, giraffes and meerkats. I was wheeled around by Gary and the Open Place staff. Thank you very much.' – Lyn McKay



## Donald and District SSG

Donald and District SSG meets bi-monthly, on the fourth Thursday of the month. In the last few months, the group have enjoyed a BBQ at Beulah, and a lunch at the Donald Hotel. Contact Sharon for more information 0417 067 910.



## Bacchus Marsh SSG

BMSSG have been meeting each month at the Country Club for lunch. They have been doing some planning for the next couple of months and are looking forward to visiting the Bacchus Marsh seedling farm in October and doing a tour of the Old Melbourne Gaol in November.

Everyone is looking forward to celebrating Christmas with a lunch at the Country Club at Melton.

Janelle and MC

## Shepparton SSG

The year is flying by so quickly – it's September already. The last time we wrote our update we were chatting about our first get-together for the year in February.

Both our May and June meetings saw us at the South Shepparton Community Centre as our regular room at the North Shepparton Community Hub had experienced significant rain damage. We settled into our new abode quite quickly, with spectacular turnouts to each month. In May we enjoyed delicious pies, pasties, and slices from Baking Dough.

Our June meeting was catered by members of the Shepparton Group, Jo Smith and Lynda Bettle who made two delicious soups for us to share – potato/leek and vegetable with lentils followed by a lovely dessert – tiramisu. There wasn't much cleaning up to do after this meeting, only empty bowls left. Thank you, Jo and Lynda, for all your hard work in providing the group with such a wonderful, enjoyable lunch.

We decided it was time to spread our wings a little and enjoyed a lovely lunch at one of our favourites, the GV Hotel. We had a great turnout as we always do at these events, with close to 40 people including their plus ones/carers, and friends.

Our August meeting saw us back at the North Shepparton Hub where again we continue to see our members attendance grow. It's great to see everyone come together, socialise, laugh and



enjoy each other's company. We ordered pies, pasties and slices again from the Baking Dough (because we enjoyed them so much last time).

With the weather getting warmer I'm sure there will be a few BBQs on our agenda in the future.

We welcome anyone who is registered with Open Place and lives within the Goulburn Valley area to contact us if they are interested in attending the Shepparton SSG. Please ring 1800 779 379 and ask to speak to either Siobhan or Tracey.



## Bendigo SSG

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

In May we had lunch at the Bendigo RSL. It was a great day out with much conversation and laughter enjoyed by all.

In June we came together at the Long Gully Community Centre where we enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared by everyone and treated with some home-made cream cakes made by our group's very own cake maker, Dolly.

In July we had lunch again at the Kangaroo Flat Sports Club! Everyone enjoyed the food and atmosphere so much that we booked again for our Christmas get-together.

August took us back to the Long Gully Community Centre where we welcomed a couple of new members to the group, had a good catch up, enjoyed a feast for lunch and yes, again we were treated to Dolly's delicious delights.





## Wangaratta/Wodonga SSG

The group has had a change of scene over recent months. We've tried out some new meeting places in Wangaratta (Victory Hall Community Centre) and Wodonga (Birrale Community House). Both places have worked out well, making us all feel welcomed and comfortable.

Munni from Open Place has been back on board at the groups in recent months, with everyone pleased to see her back after a long absence.

In the September group we tried something different and had a session with an art teacher. Despite several people claiming at the beginning that they 'can't draw or paint', most of the group got involved and had a go and proved that everyone has got a bit creative talent if they are given the chance!

We'll be in Wangaratta for the October group and planning for the rest of this year, including planning for the end-of-year Christmas lunch.

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



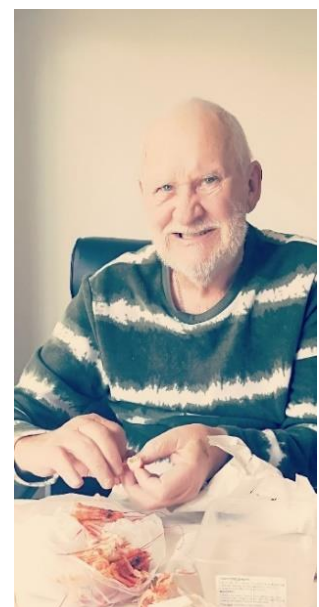
## Horsham SSG

The Horsham SSG has had some ups and downs so far in 2023.

The group has welcomed new members this year and continued to meet monthly enjoying lunch together, including Christmas in July at the White Hart Hotel and lunch at Victoria On the Park in August and plans are underway for some new activities next year.

However, it was with great sadness that we learned that one of the long-term members of the Horsham and Donald SSGs, John Kirk, had a tragic fall in June and passed away from his injuries not long after. John's passing was a shock to all who knew him as he was such a strong and vital character. John's family gave permission for Open Place to honour him with some photos.

Thank you to Mary for supplying a picture and to Vida for her lovely knits that we were all wearing at our last catch up with John in June.



Horsham SSG welcomes any people registered with Open Place who are interested in joining the group, to contact Open Place on 1800 779 379.



## Warrnambool SSG

The Warrnambool SSG meets monthly on the first Wednesday of the month (except January). We meet at the Archie Graham Centre (the Archie) bi-monthly around twelve noon, and on the other month, 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 text on 0427 695 600 (Monday-Thursday).

In June we met at the Archie where the group enjoyed a mosaic workshop. The group worked on creating colourful and artistic pavers and pots for their gardens and Lazy Susans for their kitchen. This is the second workshop for the group, and they have picked up the skills and techniques like 'ducks to water'.

In July we had a good turnout for lunch at a Thai Restaurant in Warrnambool. This popular local restaurant has been on the 'wish list' for our group for a long time and we can now say, 'I've been there and it was delicious.'

In August we were back at the Archie Graham Centre where we welcomed special guest, local Indigenous artist and educator, Brett Clarke to talk to our group about his culture and music. Brett has visited our group twice now and we hope he will come back in 2024 to share more stories with us.





## Geelong SSG

The Geelong social support group comes together on the second Wednesday of the month (except January). We meet bi-monthly at The Grovedale Neighbourhood House and the other month 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 May and July we had good turn outs at one of our favourite venues, The Gateway Hotel. It's our group's 'go to' and always pleases us with their service and all you can eat smorgasbord.

Sadly, in July, it was to be the last time we would see Keith Broadbent, a regular attendee to our group for many years. Keith sadly passed away unexpectedly on 14 July and will be missed by those who knew him. Our condolences to his wife Mona.

In June we met up at the Grovedale Neighbourhood House for a catch up and enjoyed a nice lunch prepared by the group to share. We are very spoilt by Judy who never fails to bring along a home-made cake or slice to share with everyone. We also celebrated some birthdays!

In August we were back at Grovedale Neighbourhood House where we came together to remember Keith. It was a special day with a special cake for Keith. We enjoyed some food together and had a good catch up.



## Preston SSG

The Preston Group enjoyed an afternoon tea and planning day at the Preston Library in June, followed by a trip to the movies to see the new Indiana Jones film in July. August saw us back at the Darebin RSL for Morning Melodies - the group had fun singing along to some golden oldies performed by Retro Jo and enjoyed a yummy two-course meal.

We are planning to include some outdoor activities in the upcoming warmer months when they can properly be enjoyed! Big thank you to Rose, who has been helping out while Erika is away.

The Preston Group meets on the third Friday of every month. Please give Open Place a call if you would like to receive flyers for future groups.

## Dandenong SSG

During the last four months our group has enjoyed a variety of outings.

For our May group we had a visit to one of our favourite places – a smorgasbord at Lynbrook Hotel. This was well attended including a couple of members whom we hadn't seen for a very long time however we were disappointed that a few had to pull out at the last minute.

After a lot of negotiating, we were able to get a consensus from the group to change from our usual Wednesday meeting to a Tuesday for our June outing, in order to enjoy Morning Melodies at Club Noble. We were all looking forward to the 'Hits of Motown' which unfortunately didn't eventuate, but we did enjoy a 'Fleetwood Mac' tribute with an excellent, and well costumed, 'Stevie Nicks'. Morning Melodies is always very popular and always booked out well in advance, but we were happy to be 'squashed in and enjoy the day. Special thanks to Lesley for all the negotiating with Club Noble.



Our July and August groups were held at our new home base at the Edinburgh Community Hall in Springvale. This is a big and light-filled hall with a great kitchen. Di was disappointed to miss the first group at the new hall, due to COVID-19, but Lesley was more than ably supported, at the last minute, by Brigitte from the Health Team. This was Brigitte's first Social Support Group and she really enjoyed meeting everyone. Thanks Brigitte for stepping in at the last minute !

August's group was mainly made up of planning for the coming financial year. Those present put their ideas forward. There was a great mix of suggestions for both outings and 'in house' activities. Lesley and Di will assess accessibility and costings and present the collated ideas to the group to determine the preferred activities.



If you would like to join the Dandenong group, please contact Open Place and ask to have your name added to the mailing list. We send out a flyer each month with the chosen activity and you can choose if you would like to attend by letting us know by the date on the flyer.

We send our thoughts and best wishes to those of our group who have been unwell. We wish you a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing you soon.

## Ballarat SSG

The Ballarat SSG had a good laugh in May when we watched 'Book Club: The Next Chapter' at the Showbiz Cinema.

In June we gathered at our 'home base' the Sebastapol RSL for a casual lunch and chat.

July saw us bootscootin' along to Sandie Dodd and her Queens of Country performance at Golden Point Hotel Morning Melodies.

August was another catch up at the RSL and in September we headed to the Werribee Park Open Range Zoo!

The Ballarat Social Group meets on the second Tuesday of the Month at the Sebastapol RSL. Please contact Open Place if you would like to receive the monthly flyers.



Sharon, Sandie 'Dolly Parton' Dodd, and Emma



'The gang' at Ballarat SSG



## 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.