

# NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 39 | OCTOBER 2022

## As Spring has sprung and restrictions eased, we are looking forward to some greater predictability for all.

Unfortunately 2022 didn't get off to the start we had all hoped for, with COVID-19 restrictions and work from home recommendations still in place.

We have heard how hard these restrictions (especially in metropolitan Melbourne) have been for many of you. We thank you for your patience and support as we have continued to provide as many face-to-face services as possible, while following government guidelines and managing staff shortages when staff have contracted COVID-19.

After publishing less regular newsletters over the last few years while we focused on providing remote services, I'm pleased to announce that we're returning to more regular newsletters which will come out approximately every 3 months.

Please provide any feedback you have about our newsletters by emailing [info@openplace.org.au](mailto:info@openplace.org.au) or phone 1800 779 379 and ask to speak to the Drop In Coordinator. If you attend social support groups, you can also give your feedback there.

Best wishes for the season of Spring and I look forward to seeing many of you at our Christmas party in December!

Michelle McDonald  
Senior Manager Open Place



## In this edition

A message from Michelle McDonald	1
Open Place staff retirement	2
Welcome to Open Place	3
Staff farewells and movements	3
Open Place website	4
More Than Our Childhoods	5
Elder Rights Advocacy	6
Reunions	6
Open Place Christmas party	7
Friday cook up	8
2022-2023 Health Guidelines	9
Health Team update	11
Records Team update	11
Coordinated Support Team update	12
Redress Team update	13
Counselling Team update	13
Were you at...?	13
Men's walking group	14
Social support group updates	15
Recipe	23
Contact us	24

## 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)**

## Open Place staff retirement

### Caroline Carroll OAM

At the end of March 2022, Open Place farewelled Caroline Carroll as the Coordinator of Community Education.

Caroline began her strong advocacy and support work with Forgotten Australians in the early 2000s, having sat on the VANISH committee and worked with VANISH as a Search and Support Worker.

At this point in time, VANISH was providing a service for both people impacted by adoption and Forgotten Australians.

Caroline played a key role in the development of Open Place, working first with an interim service at the Centre for Excellence before supporting the development of the Open Place service.

The following extract is taken from the first Open Place Newsletter, published in February 2010.

‘Caroline—Senior Support Worker:

My name is Caroline and many of you will know me from the Vanish/Interim Service. I hope to get to know many more of you in the future. I spent my first 15 years “in care” and was subjected to many abuses and deprivations that many Forgotten Australians suffered. I cannot believe that something that bad has led me to OPEN PLACE and the privilege of working with and for Forgotten Australians. The new service is not the end of the road, I think of it as an achievement for all the hard work that has gone before. I would like to acknowledge every Forgotten Australian who has ever written a letter or rung a politician, told their story to the Senate Inquiry and / or the Media, stood on the steps of parliament, or who came regularly and loyally to support groups. It is each one of you who has made a difference for all Forgotten Australians. It is your courage and commitment and your “never give up” attitude that has seen the National Apology and now this new service happen to help improve the lives of Forgotten Australians. And in the words of our Prime Minister “there is much more work to be done!”



The service hit the ground running. Caroline was instrumental in organising the first ever cook up on Friday 26 March 2010 and they’ve been operating at varying intervals ever since.

Caroline left Open Place proud of the support service that she had played a lead role in developing for Forgotten Australians and she will continue to advocate for the recognition and needs of Forgotten Australians through her ongoing role with the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA). There remains much more work to be done!

For Caroline it is now time to stop and smell the flowers a little more often, enjoy her family, fur babies and friends and do some more travelling, reading, quilting, cheering the Hawks, enjoying the ballet and all the other delights that go with retirement (or part retirement).

I want to thank Caroline for sharing her knowledge and wisdom, her constant correcting of what she saw as incorrect (I learnt a lot most of the time...), her good humour, banter with the 'teeny boppers', participation in the daily quiz, love of her family and the list goes on.

From everyone at Open Place, I wish Caroline much peace and happiness in the years ahead and a big thank you!

Michelle McDonald,  
Senior Manager Open Place



## Welcome to Open Place

### Kate, Counsellor

Hi everyone, my name is Kate and I joined Open Place in May 2021 as a counsellor.

I have previously worked with Aboriginal Australians and young people in residential care.

I moved to Melbourne from the West of Ireland in 2008.

I'm really enjoying working in the Counselling Team and meeting many of you in the Drop In Centre.



## Staff farewells

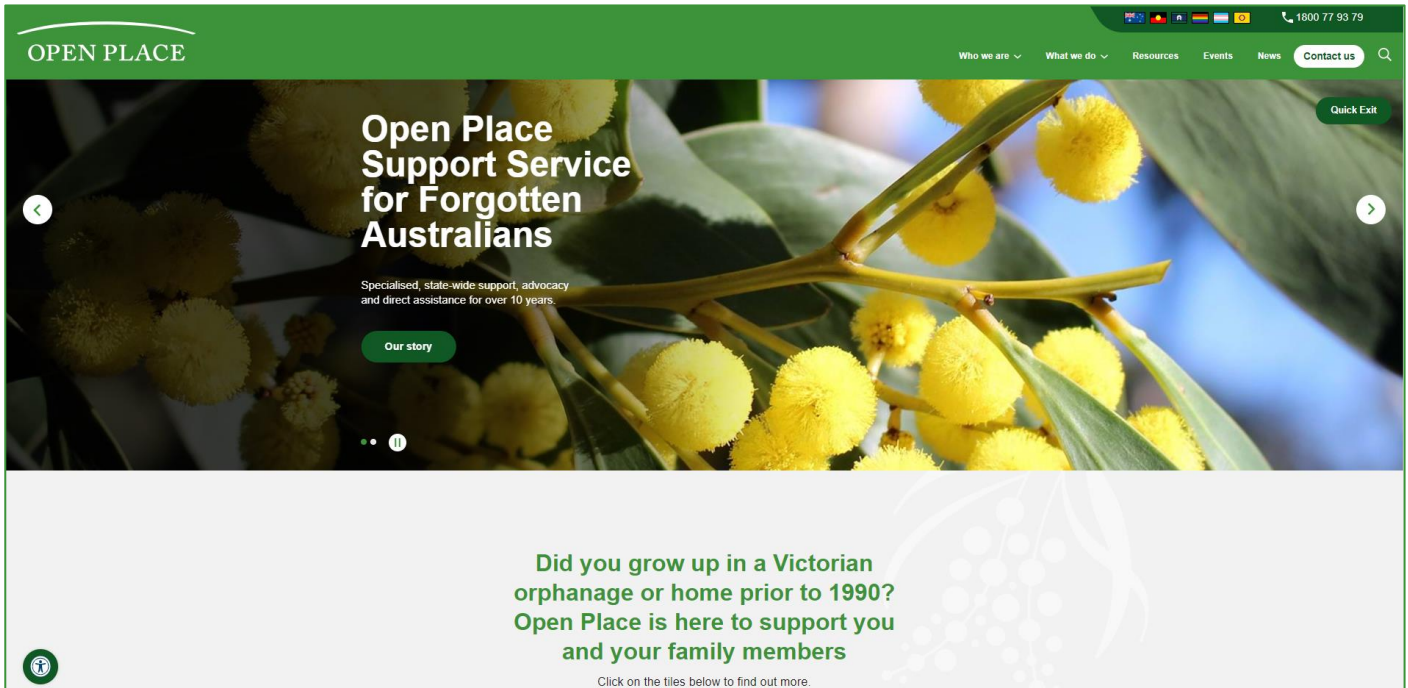
It was with sadness that we said our farewells to Allie who left Open Place after 2 years of working with the Health Team. Allie accepted a wonderful opportunity to work closer to her home as an Office Manager. We wish her well in her new journey and thank her for the work she did as the Health Brokerage Worker, assisting Forgotten Australians in accessing health services.

## Staff movements

Siobhan is on maternity leave until December 2022. Emma will be working in the Records Team during Siobhan's absence and Shaye in the Drop In Worker position.

## Open Place website

We're proud to have formally launch our new website!



The aim of the site is to provide up-to-date information and resources that will enhance accessibility for you and be one of the mechanisms that ensure our services remain responsive, relevant and open to your needs and ideas.

The new design was informed by a scoping and development project that identified the need for the website to:

- be more user friendly
- be welcoming
- be mobile-responsive
- contain updated information which is clear and relevant to you

The launch in July 2022 coincided with the 2-year anniversary of Relationships Australia Victoria's (RAV's) operation of Open Place. It followed the launch of RAV's new website in late 2021, which also includes information about Open Place and a link to this website. Together, the 2 websites are designed to enable Open Place users to find out about and access the Open Place service more easily.

We encourage you to explore the new website.

Visit [www.openplace.org.au](http://www.openplace.org.au)

If you have any questions or feedback about the new website, we invite you to contact us by emailing [info@openplace.org.au](mailto:info@openplace.org.au) or calling 1800 779 379.

## Research project: 'More Than Our Childhoods'



Keenan Mundine

Jim Luthy

Flo Hickson

Elizabeth MacCarthy

Researchers from the University of Adelaide and Australian Catholic University are seeking volunteers from all parts of Australia to be part of a national study. They are gathering stories of those who have been in Out-of-Home Care – living away from birth family in foster care, kinship care or some sort of residential care arrangement – to form part of an historical record on their website. The More Than Our Childhoods website is <https://www.morethanourchildhoods.org/>

Short stories, or biographies, will be posted online and accessible to people all over the world. You can send them your story in written, audio or video form, or a member of the research team can interview and create a short story from that interview.

They welcome all Care Leaver stories, including those from Care Leaver activists who have been involved advocating for change or calling for state and federal government inquiries and redress.

If you would like to be involved, or for more information, please contact Dr Dee Michell from the Department of Sociology, Criminology & Gender Studies at the University of Adelaide via email at [dee.michell@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:dee.michell@adelaide.edu.au)

## Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA)

### Pamella Vernon, Vice President

AFA Vice President Pamella Vernon, had the honour of receiving the Order of Australia medal (OAM) on Australia Day 2022 for 'Service to Social Welfare'. Pamella has been a long-time passionate advocate for Forgotten Australians. Congratulations to Pamella for a well-deserved recognition for her services.



## Elder Rights Advocacy

### Free information session for you

Elder Rights Advocacy is a non-profit, **free service who are independent** of government. They help by providing advocacy for you to engage with your aged care organisation.

Their peer educators - who are also Forgotten Australians - provided several information sessions through Open Place social support groups in the first half of 2022.

The sessions were well received with individuals learning about their rights when accessing aged care services. This included how to access information and support, who to contact if you are struggling to understand the aged care system, or if you are feeling lonely and need someone to chat to. To learn more about Elder Rights Advocacy, visit their website <http://era.asn.au/> or phone 1800 700 600.

If you're interested in attending a future information session, please let the facilitators know at your next social support group or call Open Place 1800 779 379.

## Reunions

### Melbourne Orphanage reunion, November 2022

# Melbourne Orphanage Reunion 2022

OzChild humbly requests the pleasure of your company at  
**The Melbourne Orphanage Reunion Afternoon Tea.**

**When:** Sunday 13 November 2022

**Where:** Royal Brighton Yacht Club, 253 Esplanade, Brighton VIC 3186

**Time:** 12pm – 3pm

**Please RSVP to Judi Vanderheiden by Monday 24 October on 03 9695 2200 or email [JVanderheiden@ozchild.org.au](mailto:JVanderheiden@ozchild.org.au).**

Accommodation is available opposite the venue at Quest Brighton on the Bay. Please contact the reservation team on 03 9591 5000 and mention you are attending the OzChild event on Sunday 13 November for a discount rate. Alternatively, there is accommodation also available at the Sandringham Hotel.



### Shirley Steans expressions of interest for a reunion

**Shirley Steans** (ex-resident of Catherine Booth Homes, Kew) will be hosting a 3-day weekend reunion on the Gold Coast in mid-February 2023.

Any ex-residents who would like to join this reunion are invited to email [ssteans@gmail.com](mailto:ssteans@gmail.com) with their name and contact details.

## Open Place Christmas Party



**We're excited to announce the return of our annual Christmas party!**

**When: Saturday 17 December 2022**

**Time: 10am - 3pm**

**Where: Malvern Town Hall** (corner of Glenferrie Road and High Street)

We would love to see you and your partner/friend/carer.

**Places are limited** so please let us know if you'd like to come by Monday 21 November. Phone (03) 9421 6162 or free call 1800 779 379.

**RSVPs are required! Tickets will only be sent to those who have RSVP'd.**

**You must be registered with Open Place.**

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

## Changed any personal details? Please let us know!

### Address changes

If you change your address, it's important to let us know so we can update your details and ensure you don't miss out on any important communications or social support group activities and events.

Don't forget to **call us on 1800 779 379** if you have changed your address or want to check we have your correct address recorded.

### Banking details changes

For those of you who access any financial support through Open Place and claim reimbursements, please ensure that your nominated bank details are up to date when making a claim, to ensure a prompt reimbursement.

If an account is closed and you haven't provided your new details, payments will "bounce back" resulting in delays for you. **Call Open Place on 1800 779 379.**

## Friday cook up

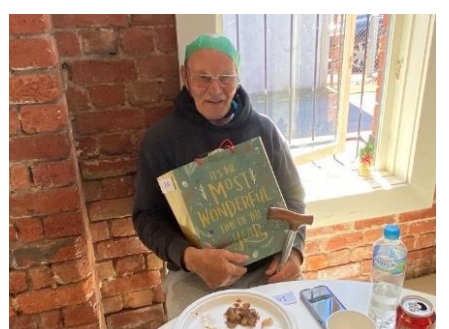
Following Melbourne's lockdowns, in December 2021 the Open Place Drop In Centre re-commenced the Friday cook up with a sausage sizzle and Christmas raffle. There were lots of laughs and great prizes – what a great way to end 2021!

The return of our cook up has been a blast this year. Thankfully, there have been no more lockdowns and we have been able to hold a Friday cook up every week. We have been feasting on chicken casseroles, lasagna, spaghetti bolognese, chicken roast, roast potatoes with mince and many more delicious meals, as well as footy-themed meat pie luncheons. We never forget sweets on a Friday and have treated ourselves to chocolate cheesecake, ice-cream sundaes, apple pies and pavlova.

We have also been lucky to have Oz Harvest provide lots of different fruits, vegetables, frozen meals and treats for all to take.

**Enjoy a meal and a laugh every Friday between 10am - 3pm.**

**All Forgotten Australians are welcome!**





## 2022-2023 Health Guidelines

This document outlines guidelines in relation to the funding you may choose to access during the 2022-23 financial year (1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023).

Please note that the funding provided by the Victorian Government 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 2022 - 2023 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.

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 <b>are 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. State-wide Equipment Program 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 5 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</b> expenses 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>
Funding type	<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 <b>dental</b> 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 2022/23 health brokerage of \$1,250</p>
Funding type	<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 <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.</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	Kitchenware / 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.

## Health Team

**Thank you for your patience throughout the year while we have managed the staffing impacts of COVID-19 as well as an increased volume of support requests.** We know there have been times when you have experienced frustration trying to get through on the phone.

**If we aren't able to answer your call straight away, please leave a detailed voicemail about your health request,** rather than re-dialling and trying to call us again, and **we will get back to you as soon as possible.** Alternatively, you can email [info@openplace.org.au](mailto:info@openplace.org.au) or send us an online enquiry at [www.openplace.org.au/contact-us](http://www.openplace.org.au/contact-us) with the details of your request.

During busy periods, we will keep you informed of the estimated wait times for a call back, via our website. Please visit [www.openplace.org.au/contact-us](http://www.openplace.org.au/contact-us) for more information.

As you can see on the previous page, this financial year's health funding guidelines have been published. The funding has remained the same as last financial year, however, there are some minor changes which we would like to highlight:

- All prescription glasses. \$600 limit – **this now includes sunglasses.**
- Private hospital – emergency department fees are **not covered**

**Before you access a service, please contact Open Place to confirm that your funding request is approved.** The reason we ask you to do this, is to ensure that you have adequate funding to cover the amount of your treatment/service.

Please be aware that we receive many health requests each day, so the more notice you can provide us before your scheduled appointments, the better.

**Emergency appointments or treatments are given priority** over other requests as we don't want people to be left in pain.

**Please note that we approve each health request individually. If you are seeking payment or reimbursement, no treatments should be accessed without prior approval of this payment.**

If you have pre-approved funding for the treatment/appointment, we will reimburse you if you choose to pay for the appointment yourself. Please send your receipts to [info@openplace.org.au](mailto:info@openplace.org.au) as proof of payment.

Thank you again for your patience and hope you are all looking after yourselves.

## Records Team

The Records Team have been super busy and have a back log of records requests with different agencies. The wait time to receive records from services varies from one or two months to almost 7 months (and sometimes longer). We have been very lucky to have Emma Kitson join the team to help.

## Coordinated Support Team

**We can provide direct support and advocacy, referral and information for you. If we don't have an immediate answer, we will try our best to find out for you.**

### Housing

Housing remains difficult to access due to national shortage of available and affordable long-term rentals. Earlier this year, the Victorian Government committed to a \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build project to build more than 12,000 new homes throughout metro and regional Victoria.

However, in March this year, the number of households on Victoria's social housing waitlist grew to 54,945, up from 50,839 in 2021. Of that list, more than half (30,508 applicants) are on the priority access list, meaning their housing needs are urgent.

Although Open Place has limited capacity to assist with housing applications and we can provide support letters, please be aware that long waitlists remain for housing.

**To increase your chances, we recommend:**

- adding as many preferences as possible to the areas you select, and
- getting any supporting documentation from other services, medical and NDIS if applicable.

### Emergency Relief and vouchers

Open Place does not currently provide food or fuel vouchers. We can refer you to the Emergency Relief service in your local area. Many of these services provide food parcels, vouchers, clothing vouchers, housing assistance, pharmacy assistance, utility bills, No Interest Loan Scheme, meals, financial counselling, toiletries and laundry facilities. Contact Open Place to find your nearest service.

The Coordinated Support Team can assist with overdue or large utility bills and can refer you to Utility Relief grant of up to \$650 for gas and electricity bills. We can advocate and negotiate some reduction if possible. We recommend getting on a bill smoothing cycle to manage payments. Call us for more information.

### Power Saving Energy Compare Rebate

The Victorian Government is offering every Victorian household a \$250 rebate to compare your energy costs. Everyone is eligible even if you are in credit with your bill. The scheme will run until 2023 and can be easily accessed via <https://compare.energy.vic.gov.au>. Some community houses and neighbourhood centres have been set up with direct access to make the process quick and easy if you do not have the internet or want some help applying. Contact us to find out if there is a centre near you.

### Funerals

Funerals can be very costly. There are some options for payment assistance for funerals that the Coordinated Support Team can provide for you. We cannot assist with pre-paid funerals but can provide information for services that do. Call us for more information.

**For information and support with any of the areas above, please call us on 1800 779 379.**

## Redress Team

Our Redress Support Team is in full swing, supporting Forgotten Australians with their applications for the National Redress Scheme. Anyone considering making an application is strongly encouraged to get support, to ensure you get the best outcome.

The scheme has made some recent changes, including an option for advance payments for people aged 70 and over, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 55 and over, and people with a terminal illness. There is now also an option to have payments made by instalments rather than a lump sum.

Redress Support Workers can visit regional areas in Victoria to meet people who would like in-person support with their Redress application. 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.

## Counselling Team

Open Place continues to provide and fund counselling support for Forgotten Australians and family members. 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 (we just ask counsellors to register with Open Place and ensure that they are registered with their professional association).

We also have a small team of Open Place counsellors based in our Richmond offices. If you would like to arrange counselling or find out more, please get in touch with us.

Please note that our counselling service operates during business hours only and we cannot always provide an immediate crisis response.

The 2 main crisis services for 24/7 mental health support are Lifeline 13 11 14, and Beyond Blue 1300 224 636. You can find an extensive list of telephone and online support services at [rav.org.au/resources/mental-health-services](http://rav.org.au/resources/mental-health-services) if you need immediate support.

If you are in immediate danger, please call emergency services on 000.

## Were you at...?

### Nazareth House

**Dianna** was at Mill Street Nazareth House and is looking for Jenny who was there between 1950-1969. Please contact Erika at Open Place on 1800 779 379 who will put you in touch.

## Men's walking group

### Bi-annual mini golf tournament

Slowly but surely the men's walking group has been plugging along.

In these challenging times, it was great to catch up in early November 2021 for our bi-annual mini golf tournament. It was a chance for Cameron, the new Coordinator of the Counselling and Redress Team to try and impress the usual crew with his mini golf skills. Sadly he failed, although he did purchase a very stylish golf hat.

With the sun shining and not a breath of wind, the competition was fierce! Off to an early lead were past winners Frank and Jeff, however, the pressure soon caught up with them. Anthony was the next to crack under the pressure and a tussle soon emerged between Ernie and David.



By now everyone could see that Cameron was having trouble counting his strokes so was ruled out of the competition.

In the end, after a count back and triple checking of the scores, Ernie was declared the winner.

The next game was held in March 2022, this time with Open Place team members Emma and Raymond trying to keep the crew focused. Frank won the best dressed golfer, but his game let him down at critical times.

There was another close tussle this time between Paul and David and after a re-count (Emma admits that arithmetic is not one of her strengths) David was declared the winner.

### MCG Sports Museum

In late June, we visited the Sports Museum at the MCG. The high mark competition was a highlight, with Anthony the outright winner.

## Social support groups (SSGs)

### Gippsland/Sale SSG

Liz and Shaye would like to thank the Gippsland SSG for their warm welcome as new facilitators of the group. The group's kindness has been so greatly appreciated.

As well as new facilitators, the group also has a new meeting place which everyone is very happy with and we have settled in well. We now meet every second month at the Sale City Band Hall, in the centre of town which has lots of natural light and accommodates our needs beautifully. The group are enjoying trying some new venues for lunch while also re-visiting our trusted and reliable venues for a warm hearty meal during winter.

In October we will venture to Heyfield for lunch.



### Bacchus Marsh SSG

Facilitators Mary and Megan have been enjoying getting to know the Bacchus Marsh group since earlier this year. Due to the unpredictable weather, we have been taking the opportunity to do some indoor catch ups. We have been to see Elvis, Top Gun and enjoyed some lunches at a local Bacchus Marsh café.

In September the group attended the Dolly Parton '9 to 5' musical at the State Theatre. It was a hit on the West End and inspired the feature film. The musical outing was a great day of singing and throw backs to the 80s including songs by Dolly Parton herself. Thanks to all who came along and joined in the event.

We are looking forward to some other outings as the weather improves.

Please let us know if you would like to be taken off or added to our monthly flyer invites as we review the mail out list regularly.



### Donald and District SSG

Donald and District social support group meet on the fourth Thursday of each month. They have enjoyed lunches at the Donald Hotel, and a visit to the 'Kooka's Country Cookies' factory. They also enjoyed a lunch at the Horsham Sports and Community club and the Palace Hotel in Warracknabeal.

## Preston SSG

The Preston group is back up and running after missing quite a few groups due to COVID-19 earlier in the year. In May, we enjoyed a lovely day on the Melbourne Tramboat, before hopping off at Williamstown and enjoying a historical tour of the small beach town (including a sneak peek at the filming locations for the TV show – Blue Heelers!). It was lovely to have such a large group together again enjoying themselves.



We also welcomed Erika, our new Group Co-facilitator, who is thoroughly enjoying meeting the group members and is fitting in very nicely.



The group has enjoyed some lunches, the cinema and Morning Melodies over the last couple of months and we are now in the midst of planning some new activities for the second half of the year. We welcome anyone who would like to attend the coming groups.

Please call Open Place on 1800 779 379 to receive the monthly flyers by mail.

Sadly, over the past month, 2 of our group members have passed away.

Heather and Kim will both be fondly remembered and greatly missed by the group. Our condolences to Heather and Kim's family and friends.



## Frankston SSG

The Frankston group enjoyed seeing the Elvis film at a Gold Class cinema in July, which was a lovely way to farewell Liz as a group facilitator and welcome Kate as her replacement. Since then we have met in August to discuss plans for the rest of the year.

## Horsham SSG

In July the Horsham SSG enjoyed a Christmas in July at the White Hart Hotel in Horsham. Michelle, Senior Manager Open Place attended the group, and a lovely time was had by all.

Horsham is always looking for new members.





## Wangaratta/Wodonga SSG

The Wangaratta/Wodonga SSG has been going from strength to strength in 2022, with a consistently strong turn-out.

The highlight for many of us was the trip to Bendigo for the Elvis exhibition in April. The Elvis theme returned in July when we went to the cinema to see the Elvis movie in Gold Class. The group is divided on whether there has been 'too much Elvis'!

Other activities have included a flying visit to Bendigo Pottery, and lunch at several local pubs and restaurants.

Everyone is looking forward to the warmer weather when we can book in some outdoor activities. The best thing about this group is the willingness to support others and lend a helping hand when someone is in need.



## Richmond SSG

Richmond group meetings have been a bit haphazard for the last few months, especially when COVID-19 restrictions seemed to be changing on a regular basis and it was hard to make plans and much less able to keep them.

The November 2021 meeting at the Royal Oak Hotel on Bridge Road drew quite a good turnout but restrictions saw the December group cancelled which was particularly disappointing as there wasn't the usual Malvern Town Hall party.

The gathering in March 2022 was good but sad as we said goodbye to Caroline after her many, many years of running and cooking for the Richmond group on a Saturday. The end of an era. Thank you, Caroline. It was also the wind down to the phasing out of the Saturday group and after discussion and voting at the May group it was decided by vote (of those present) that Thursday was the preferred day. Our last Saturday group was actually in June, and we had a small but good group catch up enjoying a fish and chips lunch. Congratulations to Brian, Wref and Jane who were the winners of the raffle.

In July, we had a delicious lunch at the Royal Oak Hotel. In August, we braved the chilly weather at a new venue – The Stables in Richmond. Di and Lesley bid farewell to the group. Many thanks to Lesley for stepping in to assist Di with the transition from Saturdays to Thursdays. Sue made her debut as the new facilitator.



## Bendigo SSG

The Bendigo SSG comes together on the third Thursday of every month. We have a social outing bi-monthly and come together at the Long Gully Community Centre on Havilah Road, Long Gully on the alternate month.

In September 2021, we had a booking for lunch at the Schweppes Centre in Bendigo but had to cancel due to COVID-19. We rescheduled for December.

October and November's outings were lunch at Beechworth Bakery and afternoon tea at Donut King, respectively, where a good catch up was had by all who attended.

In December, we enjoyed a big day out together at the Schweppes Centre with lunch and to welcome Cameron Boyd (Counselling and Redress Teams Coordinator).

Our February catch up was planned on the third Thursday of February at the Long Gully Community Centre but again we had to cancel due to COVID-19.

In March, we had a large gathering for lunch at the Schweppes Centre in Bendigo. In April we returned to the Long Gully Community Centre.

May brought a big outing to the Elvis exhibition at the Bendigo Art Gallery. The group was not disappointed.

In June, we returned to the Long Gully Community Centre where we enjoyed a nice lunch and a good catch up with one another. Our July catch up was an outing to Jin Yang Chinese restaurant where we enjoyed the whole restaurant to ourselves. In August we returned to Long Gully for the usual shared lunch and catch up.



## Ballarat SSG

The Ballarat Group have enjoyed some wonderful outings over the past few months, including the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka (MADE), the Creswick Woollen Mills and the Elvis movie!

As much the group love getting out and about, we have also enjoyed spending time together over lunch at our home base in Sebastopol. We've had some lovely catering, home-made soups and tasty treats made by group members. We were also joined by Hearing Australia who provided free hearing tests!

The Ballarat group meets on the second Tuesday of every month. Please call Open Place if you would like to receive the group's monthly flyers!

## Dandenong SSG

Since our last newsletter, there have been few opportunities to meet as a group during the COVID-19 pandemic and we are limited in venues due to the size of the group and restrictions at Paddy O'Donoghue Centre. Club Noble have accommodated us on several occasions, and we had a lovely Christmas gathering there in late November 2021. Twenty-two people enjoyed lunch and Christmas gift bags, as well as acknowledging a couple of birthdays too.

January and February 2022 were still under the influence of COVID-19 but were back on track by March at one of our favourite places – a smorgasbord at Lynbrook Hotel.

The April gathering was a great day with lunch and a tour of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Cranbourne.



In May, we enjoyed a private room, planning, lunch and lucky door prizes were enjoyed at Sandown Park, while in June we had a great scenic drive to the Yarra Valley for lunch at the lovely old Grand Hotel. July saw us back at our 'standby' venue, Club Noble.

By the time you get this newsletter we will have, hopefully, secured a new 'home base' at Hampton Park which should be nice and central to the majority of our group. We look forward to seeing you whenever you can make it to the group.

Vale Peter O'Dea and Di (Dianna) Kilpatrick aka 'the egg lady'.

Our condolences to their families and friends as well as to Brian Cherrie for his recent loss.



## Shepparton SSG

The Shepparton SSG has been thriving and has seen many people come together for various activities during the past few months.

It is with sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Frank Londrigan, a long-time member of the Shepparton SSG and service user of Open Place. Our thoughts are with Frank's family, particularly his daughter Linda who accompanied him to the Shepparton SSG. Frank was a true gentleman who will be missed by all those who knew him.

The group had a lovely Christmas lunch at the GV Hotel, with a wonderful turnout of people in attendance. Cameron was introduced and welcomed to the group as the co-facilitator and we bid Siobhan farewell as it was her last group for the next 12 months as she started her maternity leave. We all enjoyed a lovely, festive 2-course meal.

In March we enjoyed a BBQ at Victoria Park with beautiful weather although it was a bit windy – the sauce and soft drink bottles came in handy to be used as weights to keep everything anchored. Everyone pitched in with the cooking of sausages, chicken ribs and hamburgers and a variety of salads. The chicken ribs were particularly popular and didn't last very long – we will probably order double the quantity next time. Thank you to everyone that helped on the day.

A couple of times we have met at the Community Hub, and on one of these occasions, we had a presentation by Maureen Cuskelly, a representative from Elder Rights Advocacy (ERA) who spoke about the group's rights when accessing aged care services. The presentation was well received by the group.

We also had a couple of meetings to plan activities for the year ahead. Many suggestions were put forward and the group has decided (for the most part) an agenda until the end of 2022. We will continue to discuss future activities for 2023.

In May, the group were a bit more adventurous and tried a new pub for lunch - the Overlander Hotel. The food was lovely, and the feedback received was positive so it looks like this venue may get put on the list for another visit in the future.

July saw the group get 'all shook up' and visit Bendigo to see the Elvis exhibition at the Art Gallery.

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 Cameron or Tracey.



Frank Londrigan

## Geelong SSG

The Geelong SSG meets on the second Wednesday of the month. We meet bi-monthly at the Grovedale Neighbourhood House in Heyers Road, Grovedale.

Our September 2021 meeting at the Grovedale Neighbourhood House was cancelled due to COVID-19.

In October, however, we gathered at the Geelong Boat House which sits on a secured 100-year-old barge on Corio Bay. We enjoyed 'top notch fish and chips' and a good catch up with one another.

Eastern Park is a popular choice for our Geelong gang to meet for a BBQ lunch, as it was in November! We were lucky with the weather and a good turn-out of group members who enjoyed a sausage sizzle and a cuppa together.

In December, we had lunch at the Leopold Sportsmans Club. It was a fun day of catching up with one another (although one person was a little fixated on the cricket - not that I would name Raymond directly) and was another opportunity for Michelle McDonald (Senior Manager Open Place) to come along and see everyone again.

In February 2022, we were meant to have a catch-up planning day at the Grovedale Neighbourhood Centre, but sadly we cancelled due to COVID-19.

In March, the group had a picnic at Eastern Park and wandered around the Botanic Gardens.

In April, everyone who came along enjoyed fun and games at our first ever Trivia Competition. Prizes were won and much laughter was had.

In May, we returned to a good old favourite eatery – the Gateway Hotel where a feast was had and a great catch up for everyone. June saw us back at Grovedale Neighbourhood House for lunch and a meeting.

In July, the group enjoyed a delicious lunch at Man Bo, a Chinese restaurant in Geelong. It was a great day out.

We were back at Grovedale Neighbourhood House in August for a catch up and lunch together.



## Warrnambool/South West SSG

The Warrnambool/South West SSG has been meeting on the first Tuesday of the month (except on Melbourne Cup Day and during Warrnambool Cup week). **From February 2023 the group meet up day will change to the first Wednesday of the month.** We alternate with outings and informal meetings at the Archie Graham Centre in Timor Street, Warrnambool at 12 noon.

In September 2021, we gathered at the Warrnambool Cinema to watch 'Respect' – a movie about the life story of Aretha Franklin. To make the event even more special, we had individual picnic lunches delivered to enjoy while watching the movie. We were the envy of the other movie goers!

Our October and November groups was cancelled due to COVID-19.

December's outing was lunch at Proudfoots by the River (a historic boathouse on the banks of the Hopkins River). We enjoyed sitting outside on a beautiful sunny day eating delicious food and catching up with one another.

February was meant to involve a catch up at our bi-monthly meeting place, the Archie Graham Centre on Timor Street, but sadly we had to cancel due to COVID-19.

In March, we had a good turnout for lunch at the Flying Horse in Warrnambool. We also welcomed a couple of new group members.

In April, we met at Archie Graham where we had a mosaic workshop and each group member learnt how to design their art, cut tiles and glue their work. Our May meet-up was cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. In June, we met again at Archie Graham where group members finished off their mosaics ready for grouting.

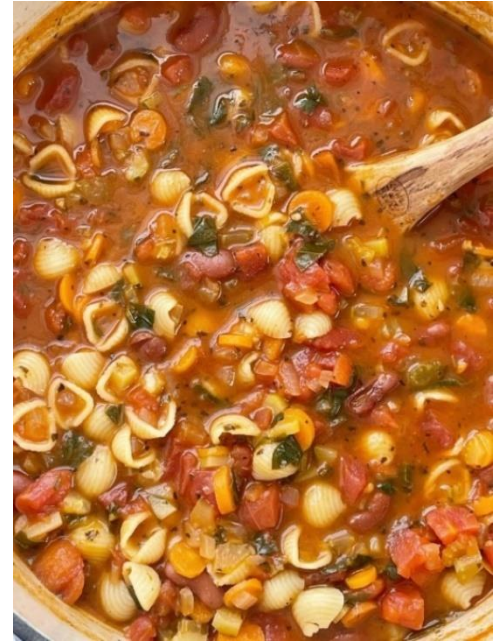
In July, again we had a good turnout for lunch at Pippies by the Bay and all artists were handed their finished mosaic art pieces. In August, we met at Archie Graham where we enjoyed takeaway lunch and a meeting.



## Lesley's delicious minestrone soup recipe

### Ingredients

- 1x yellow onion, chopped
- 4x cloves garlic
- 2x carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2x celery sticks, chopped
- 2x cup cabbage, shredded
- 2x zucchini, diced
- 1x 800g can diced tomatoes
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 1L vegetable or chicken stock
- 1x cup water
- ¼ packet of Italian mixed herbs (season to taste)
- Salt and pepper (season to taste)
- 1x 400g cannellini beans
- 1x cup macaroni
- Freshly grated parmesan, for garnishing (optional)



### Method

1. Warm oil in a pot over medium heat. Once the oil is simmering, add the chopped onion, carrot, celery, tomato paste and salt. Cook, stirring often, until the vegetables have softened.
2. Add the cabbage, garlic, mixed herbs. Cook until fragrant while stirring frequently.
3. Pour in the diced tomatoes, stock, water. Season generously. Bring the mixture to boil, then simmer for 20 minutes.
4. Add the pasta, zucchini and beans. Continue simmering, for 15 minutes or until the pasta is cooked.
5. Remove the pot from the heat, taste and season with more salt and pepper. Garnish bowl of soup with grated parmesan, if you'd like.

## Suggestions

We would 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.