

CHIRP

Community Health



ANNUAL REPORT **2020-21**



CHIRP Community Health gratefully acknowledges funding and support from the following:

- Department of Health & Human Services (Victoria)
- Individual donors
- Lions Club
- Mount Alexander Shire Council
- Murray PHN (Commonwealth Department of Health)
- Rotary Club
- Uniting Church

CHIRP Community Health (registered as Castlemaine District Community Health) offers a range of services and programs aimed at promoting health and preventing illness throughout the Mount Alexander Shire.

Acknowledgement of Country

Castlemaine District Community Health Board and staff acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Dja Dja Wurrung, and respect their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and honour their living culture and unique role in the life of this region.





CONTENTS

Our Vision & Values	4
Services Snapshot	5
CEO & Chair Report	6
Family Services	12
Housing Services	14
Social Inclusion	16
Working Together with Community	17
Working for Victoria	18
Move It	19
COVID-19 Testing Clinic	20
Volunteers	22
People Matter	24
Quality & Improvement	26
Community & Client Feedback	28
Feedback & Service Data	29
Board of Directors	30
Treasurer's Report 2020-21	31

OUR VISION & VALUES

Our Vision

Our vision is to facilitate better health in our community with a focus on equity.

Our Values

HEALTH IS ABOUT YOUR LIFE AS A WHOLE

- Healthy lifestyle
- Social, physical, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing
- Includes individuals, family and community

WE VALUE YOU

- We provide compassionate and respectful services
- Your input is important
- We recognise and value the diversity of all people, including, but not limited to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual people; people with a disability; and culturally and linguistically diverse people
- Clients, staff and volunteers

WE ARE RESPONSIVE

- Positive outcomes for better health and wellbeing
- Person-centred care for high-quality service provision
- Targeted service provision to close gaps
- Facilitating positive life choices through consumer engagement

WE ARE ETHICAL

- We work to professional standards and uphold the Code of Conduct
- We provide services with integrity and fairness
- We uphold justice and work with diligence and honesty

SERVICES SNAPSHOT

Physical Health

- Diabetes Education
- Physiotherapy
- Community Health Nursing
- Community Gym
- Exercise Physiology
- Strength Training Programs
- Anaphylaxis Education
- Asthma Education
- QUIT Program
- Sexual & Reproductive Health

Health Promotion

- Heart Health Programs
- Tai Chi Groups
- Walking Groups and Companion Walking
- Community Education
- First Aid and CPR
- L2P Driver Mentor Program
- LGBTQIA+ Engagement
- Smiles for Miles Program
- Gender Equality
- Nordic Pole Walking

Family Services & Housing

- Integrated Family Services Program
- Specialist Homelessness Service
- Youth Homelessness Team

Mental Health & Wellbeing

- Youth Mentoring Program
- Preparation for Puberty
- School Programs
- General, Family and Children's Counselling
- Psychological Services
- Suicide Prevention Counselling
- Mental Health First Aid Training

Alcohol & Other Drugs

- Alcohol and Drug Counselling
- Home-Based Withdrawal
- Alcohol and Drug Care and Recovery Coordination
- Needle and Syringe Program

Co-Located Visiting Services

- Matchworks Employment Services
- ACSO Alcohol and Drug Intake and Assessment
- Justices of the Peace
- Endocrinology Clinic
- Central Victorian Cardiology Clinic

CEO & CHAIR REPORT



CHIRP Chair - Lexi Randall-L'Estrange

It is with both excitement and some sadness that we write our last formal Annual Report for CHIRP Community Health as we take the final steps towards integration with Castlemaine Health. This past year has been a challenging one for all of us as we have continued to operate in the uncertain environment of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our service has again



CHIRP CEO - Di Couch

excelled in its ability to respond to the community while the pandemic is ongoing, as well as continue our work to achieve integration with Castlemaine Health. We are very proud of, and grateful to, our staff and volunteers for their commitment to our clients and the sustained delivery of quality, valued services during the past year.

The overall focus of the work over the past 30-plus years has been on prevention and wellbeing and striving to work within the social model of health.

Integration with Castlemaine Health

CHIRP has been operating in the local community for 38 years, 32 of those years as an independent organisation. CHIRP was born out of the desire of the CEO of the Castlemaine Hospital in the early 1980s to focus on prevention, health and wellbeing rather than just acute care. The hospital committee at the time determined that its role over the next 10 years would be to support a significant move into preventative medicine and community health. The hospital adopted the name CHIRP for the community health services in 1983. It resonated in the community and became a recognised brand. The hospital renovated the Nurses Home at Halford Street to make room for the service and co-located district nursing, family aide services, dietetics, a welfare officer, antenatal classes, the Red Cross Blood Bank and a psychiatric clinic there. In 1983 a voluntary coordinator was appointed, with the role funded from 1984. The first community nurse was also appointed in 1984 along with an advisory committee. Commencing with these two directly funded workers and co-located with the other

community-focused hospital services, CHIRP was able to seize funding opportunities and it became an independent community health service in the latter part of the 1980s.

The overall focus of the work over the past 30-plus years has been on prevention and wellbeing and striving to work within the social model of health. Guided by that model, the organisation has sought to respond to community needs as they arose but has always focused on making itself an accessible, welcoming place, particularly for people who find larger institutions difficult to navigate. If CHIRP could not provide a service, the objective was to ensure people got to the right place.

Operating as a small community service has, over time, become less and less viable and the organisation has struggled in the past 10 years to continue providing the same level of service while operating within its budget. The changing environment, directed to ensuring greater safety for clients and staff, comes at a cost that is difficult for a smaller service to maintain. The compliance and regulatory burdens have increased and changing technology has required new investment, all within a shifting and often unsympathetic funding environment.

The CHIRP Board began to explore options for integration some years ago, including extensive discussions with another Community Health service. Likely entailing the loss of local services, that merger did not go ahead. The organisation, however, continued to face ongoing financial viability issues.

Approximately three years ago, the Boards of Castlemaine Health and CHIRP considered it logical to build on the existing partnership between the two agencies and plan an integration of their community services, ensuring local health services were maintained and the ongoing involvement of the community with such services and programs was prioritised. This process has taken some time to work through. Enabling two different types of entities to undergo voluntary amalgamation, a first for the Department of Health & Human Services, was challenging, let alone the difficulties presented by continuing this work through the pandemic. To successfully integrate is a significant achievement by all parties, and we are excited about the opportunities associated with the combined services.

With all transitions, there are losses and changes along with the need to embrace new directions. Some of the things that get left behind in transitions are identity, attachments and history. As it becomes part of a larger organisation, CHIRP will be letting go of its identity as a stand-alone, community-led service. It is, however, important to recall that there is a shared history with Castlemaine Health, so the integration can be considered a kind of homecoming. The change brings an opportunity to create something bigger and better than what the two stand-alone services can individually offer. With this amalgamation, our staff have the certainty of ongoing local roles and the community has the certainty of ongoing local

services. We also have the opportunity through the leadership at Castlemaine Health of developing and growing community services.

As part of the integration process, the Castlemaine Health and CHIRP Boards have agreed to the following to assist in the development of improved local services, continued community engagement and involvement to grow health-promotion programs:

- Changes to the Castlemaine Health by-laws to accommodate the full suite of services and programs currently offered by CHIRP
- The development of a Board Community Services and Wellbeing Committee
- The establishment of a special purpose fund governed by the Committee, to continue to invest in community health and wellbeing initiatives
- A new Community Health and Wellbeing Services Plan to be developed in 2022.

Castlemaine Health will be embracing and working through the integration with a focus on embedding the social model of health principles:

- Addressing the broader social determinants of health
- Acting to reduce social inequity
- Empowering individuals and communities
- Acting to enable access to healthcare, and
- Ensuring inter-sectoral collaboration.

Quality Service Delivery throughout the Pandemic

We would like to sincerely thank our staff for their ongoing work in delivering a range of valuable community services during the pandemic. We have continued to provide responsive COVID testing as well as our usual array of services throughout the different working conditions of the past two years. This includes pivoting between business-as-usual service provision and COVID lockdown service provision, where we maintain critical face-to-face

clinical resources and ensure other offerings are maintained via telehealth.

Feedback from the community has been extremely positive about these efforts and, although initially difficult, people have generally enjoyed continuing their individual sessions or exercise activities via telehealth.

The community has continued to receive diabetes education services; physiotherapy and exercise physiology services and programs; nursing programs, including prep to puberty and CPR and First Aid training; alcohol and drug services; health promotion programs; family services; youth support;



Board Chair of Castlemaine Health, Peggy Ronnau
and CHIRP Chair, Lexi Randall-L'Estrange

counselling and psychological support and programs in schools; L2P driving support; engagement support for the LGBTQIA+ community; and support for people who feel isolated. We are also promoting and supporting information distribution in relation to COVID vaccination roll out, which Castlemaine Health is providing for our local community.

We would like to acknowledge the sustained and significant effort of the staff operating and supporting the Community COVID-19 Testing Clinic. Bronwyn Grieve as Clinical Lead has managed the operations of the Clinic since initially commencing with pop-up clinics and has been supported on the front line by Kay Pedretti and Ann Moore, as well as staff from Castlemaine Health. The Clinic has been supported behind the scenes by a range of administrative staff such as Anne Parkhill, Val Wens, Elly Osbourne and Yvette Newton, as well as service delivery staff such as Sherene Clow, Lisa Cavallero and managers. We are pleased that in going into another phase of the COVID pandemic this will be an integrated Clinic with greater support from Castlemaine Health.

We would also like to acknowledge the huge ongoing support provided by our many volunteers. They, like our staff, have had to pivot and change depending on our COVID working environment, and their support and flexibility in this difficult environment has been

inspiring. We look forward to maintaining and supporting our volunteers as part of the integration process.

We are pleased to be able to report success in our re-accreditation across both the Community Health and Human Services Standards requirements. Completing and attaining this in our current environment has been an outstanding achievement and puts the service in a good position in terms of a handover to Castlemaine Health as part of integration.

Some long-term employees retired this year ahead of the integration with Castlemaine Health. We would like to thank Janet Lees for her significant contribution to alcohol and drug services at CHIRP and Linley Crum for her long-term commitment to human resources, information management and general administration. Sadly, we would like to acknowledge the passing of Deb McCarthy, our former Manager Allied Health and Wellbeing. Deb finished with us in late April and passed away in September. Deb was a valued member of the CHIRP leadership team and a key support to her staff. She will be sadly missed.

Working for Victoria

CHIRP was fortunate to be successful in a grant application to Working for Victoria for some back-of-house roles to support staff to deliver services, and some community-facing roles. We welcomed eight staff on short-term contracts to support us with IT, communications, administration and accreditation, as well as some much-needed community outreach. This outreach focused on support in housing, working closely with the Council to connect isolated community members and employing an LGBTQIA+ Engagement Officer.

The impact of this grant has been significant given that our workloads have been extremely challenging throughout the pandemic, with business-as-usual work and our integration work. We are very proud of the fact that many of our Working for Victoria workers were able to secure ongoing roles thanks to this initiative, including roles in the integrated entity. We would not have achieved our re-accreditation results without this support and we thank all of those involved. In terms of outreach, we were able to assist more people with housing issues, work closely with the Council and the Community Houses to support more isolated members of the community, and engage and support members of our LGBTQIA+ community.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Integral to our work as a community health service is our work in partnership and our collaborations, which allow us to have a greater impact in what we do. The Mount Alexander Health and Wellbeing Partnership group has continued to meet and work through future infrastructure and community engagement options to support the health and wellbeing of all people in our Shire. A final report on this work will shape the future focus for the Mount Alexander Health and Wellbeing Precinct Working Group.

We continued to work with wider networks such as Loddon Mallee Health Network as well as state-wide community health networks and working groups, particularly those focused on responses to the COVID-19 environment. Our health promotion and wellbeing work is embedded in our ongoing partnerships with Castlemaine and Maldon Community House, Loddon Mallee Women's Health, the Centre for Non-Violence, Mount Alexander Shire Council, our local schools and preschools, and the Central Victorian Primary Care Partnership. Our staff will continue to be engaged in these collaborations as part of an integrated service.

We conclude by thanking everyone involved in the CHIRP journey. It is a history to be proud of and honoured, and taken forward into this new phase of development. We invite our community to continue to engage with us in this new chapter of community health as part of the integrated services of Castlemaine Health.

FAMILY SERVICES

CHIRP Community Health's Family Services Team has continued to provide outstanding support to vulnerable local families despite the unique challenges presented by COVID-19 over the past year.

The Family Services Team provides Mount Alexander families with holistic support, underpinned by a trauma-informed, strengths-based approach. This approach helps us to work with families to identify their challenges. From here we formulate case plans that establish goals and identify pathways to improved family functioning.

The Family Services Team delivers a diversionary program that reduces families' involvement with the Child Protection system. It also provides an extra level of support to families from a range of backgrounds struggling with issues ranging from disability to low school engagement, financial hardship, social isolation, family violence, mental health and behavioural issues.



CASE STUDY

A family, initially reluctant to engage with CHIRP's Family Services, had significant issues with their living conditions and struggled to access the right services. The Team built trust and rapport with the family, which enabled the Team to support the family with many facets of their lives.

Since engaging with our Team, the family has been able to clean and declutter their living environment, developing their budgeting skills and installing a new hot water system in their home. The parents were supported to improve their communications with the children's school and to negotiate the complex NDIS system. After several unsuccessful attempts one of the children has now been approved for an NDIS plan and granted funding, which will be life-changing for the entire family.

Another child was helped to attend an Outdoor Education Camp, where they gained practical independent living skills, improved self-esteem, and enhanced relationships with peers. The Team also found this child a local mentor (via another CHIRP program), giving the child a supportive relationship that benefits their mental health and wellbeing. Our Family Services worker also advocated on behalf of the grandfather and linked him into Aged Care services, and finally the parents were supported and referred to mental health services for extra assistance.

Over the past 12 months, the Family Services Team has:

- ✔ Had a Team member undertake training to become an accredited Bringing Up Great Kids Program facilitator, which will be trialled in Castlemaine
- ✔ Developed partnerships with the YMCA and Mount Alexander Shire to provide free summer pool passes to the children of participating families
- ✔ Developed a partnership with the Theatre Royal to give the children of participating families free school holiday movie tickets
- ✔ Provided access for two terms to swimming lessons for participating families via the Shire and Castlemaine Fitness Centre
- ✔ Resourced teenagers to attend summer camps at Outdoor Education Centres
- ✔ Developed and strengthened relationships with local schools, kindergartens and early childhood learning centres, and supported playgroups in Castlemaine
- ✔ Sourced grants to enable families to purchase essential items, such as a car for a large family to help get the children to school and to attend therapeutic appointments
- ✔ Helped children to successfully apply for the NDIS (National Disability Support Scheme) and helped families navigate the complex NDIS system
- ✔ Provided emergency relief through COVID-19 lockdowns
- ✔ Completed risk assessments and provided ongoing support and comprehensive referrals for families experiencing violence
- ✔ Linked families with local volunteer programs to provide mentorships to young people
- ✔ Referred families to respite programs to assist with parenting challenges
- ✔ Continued to develop collaborative practice and relationship building with complementary services, such as the Salvation Army, with whom we prepared Xmas hampers for vulnerable families.

HOUSING SERVICES

CHIRP Community Health's Housing Team has continued to provide vital services across Mount Alexander Shire. We provide information, referrals, case-management support, and brokerage. Over the past 12 months we have helped 18 young people and more than 212 people aged 25+ (including 30 families).

The Housing Team supports clients with a range of problems, including housing insecurity, overcrowding, homelessness, financial stress, family violence, mental ill-health, alcohol and other drug dependency, unemployment, disengagement from study, disability and discrimination.

The Team provides comprehensive case-management, referral and financial help. It educates private tenants about their rights, and advocates for those in insecure rental accommodation. It also educates tenants and real estate agents about relevant changes to legislation. A large part of the Team's work involves helping clients navigate the Public Housing system, helping them to apply for safe, secure and affordable housing.

The Team networks with local community groups, schools, the local council, real estate agents, private landlords, rooming house providers, and other health and allied health services. It gets the best possible outcomes for its clients by lobbying for improvements to and reform of the housing market.

COVID-19 caused housing stress for many people for the first time in their life. For others it exacerbated existing problems and barriers, especially for those with a history of homelessness. As part of our

COVID-19 response, the Housing Team provided crisis accommodation for rough sleepers during Victoria's lockdowns. As part of the Homeless 2 A Home initiative, we found permanent housing for our most vulnerable clients, who have complex needs. We successfully housed five rough sleepers and provided wrap-around supports in partnership with Haven; Home, Safe and Mind Australia. We also provided stable, secure and affordable housing to seven families through our Transitional Housing Program.

The Team is progressing its Tiny Homes Sweet Home project. This will provide environmentally sustainable, accessible, purpose-built and short-to-medium-term housing for clients. There is still a long way to go but there is strong local support.

The Team's collaboration with Loddon Campaspe Homelessness Alliance will help us to integrate with the MARAM (Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework) and The Orange Door. Integration will improve local reporting, information sharing, case coordination and referral.

CHIRP's Youth Housing Team supports some of our youngest and most at-risk clients. It helps to stabilise insecure housing by identifying and reporting on family violence and referring clients to transitional housing programs, Kids Under Cover units, and refuges. It helps families to secure private rental, and to source resources and material aid for housing, educational and extra-curricular activities.



The Team also raises local child and youth priorities at the regional, state and federal levels through its partnerships with local youth support groups and networks. The Team works with local schools and CHIRP's Family Services Team to help young people fix problems with their families that put them at risk of homelessness. They receive referrals and provide secondary consultations and case coordination. The Team works with local networks, such as the Bulortj Children & Youth Network, which connects organisations providing services to young people in the Shire. The network develops and applies strategies to meet the needs of young people in the Shire and steers the implementation of the Mount Alexander Middle Years Plan 2020–23.

CASE STUDY

In 2017 a family approached the Housing Team for help. They had four children, were seeking asylum, and had never enjoyed stable housing. The parents were mentally and physically unwell due to past trauma, their visa anxiety, social isolation and financial stress. As asylum seekers, they were not afforded the same benefits and access to services as Australian citizens.

The Housing Team supported the family for four years. They helped them to access and maintain private rental before helping them into Transitional Housing. The Team took a strengths-based, holistic approach and built a strong relationship with the family. It connected the family with other services, including settlement and legal services, maternal and child health services, speech pathologists, psychologists, family services, childcare, kindergartens, community groups and hospitals.

The family was able to address the factors affecting their housing problems. The Housing Team strengthened the family's community and service connections and helped the individual family members meet their needs. The Team's comprehensive case-management approach alleviated the family's housing insecurity and stress. It helped them head towards a positive future.

WORKING TOGETHER WITH COMMUNITY

Health Promotion is a strong focus for CHIRP Community Health, and we partner with a number of organisations to deliver programs to promote health and wellbeing. The focus is on social connection, physical activity, food security and healthy eating, and gender equity.

Through our partnership with Maldon Hospital, with whom we jointly fund a Health Promotion Officer (HPO), we deliver several health promotion programs and activities in Maldon. These include the Maldon Walking Group (in partnership with Maldon Neighbourhood Centre) and health education sessions at the Maldon Men's Shed. The HPO represents CHIRP and Maldon Hospital at meetings of the Seniors Festival, the Positive Ageing Advocacy Group, the Bulortj Children & Youth Network, and the Mamunya network, which represents Indigenous groups and allies.

We work closely with Mount Alexander Shire Council, which has been the case all through the COVID-19 pandemic. Several networks were

established in Mount Alexander Shire in response to the pandemic, including food and information support groups. To ensure ongoing coordination, communications staff from CHIRP, the Council, Castlemaine Health, neighbourhood houses and local advocacy groups meet regularly to coordinate information in local media. This has been particularly important as COVID testing and vaccination information continues to evolve.

The HPO also attends the monthly Healthy Heart of Victoria Control Group and meetings of the Healthy Mount Alexander Partnership. The Healthy Heart of Victoria project provided funding to launch a walking group in Newstead (in partnership with Newstead 2021) and to expand the Maldon Walking Group. The latter partnership helped to integrate health-promotion planning and reporting across the Shire.

Our work with Castlemaine Community House has also continued, including the delivery of the popular Nordic Pole Walking program and LGBTQIA+ education sessions for parents.



SOCIAL INCLUSION

Young People

Social inclusion is a key part of good health. Strong social connections and decreased isolation improve our overall health and wellbeing.

In 2020, the Victorian Government recognised social inclusion's importance in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. It funded CHIRP Community Health and Mount Alexander Shire Council to help young people experiencing loneliness and social isolation via a range of targeted services.

MONDO LOUNGE

Our Community Nurse attended the Shire's youth space, the Mondo Lounge, for two school terms to help young people with physical and mental health issues, providing resources and referrals when necessary. The Lounge is a Council initiative that provides a safe and inclusive space for people aged 12–25 during the school term. As COVID-19 put the local Doctors in Schools program on hold, CHIRP's attendance at the Mondo Lounge played a vital role in filling this gap.

SWIMMING LESSONS

Not every family can afford extra-curricular activities for their children. A lack of financial resources can limit the children's potential and compound social isolation. To address this, CHIRP provided swimming lessons for five local children for two school terms at Castlemaine Fitness Centre. Not only did the children benefit from the physical activity, they learned essential lifesaving skills and built stronger social connections. The skills learned will also help reduce the potential stigma experienced by some children as they start their Swimming in Schools program in Grade 3.



Small-Group Yoga

There are many ways to stay physically active. But not every activity or space is suitable for everybody. Large classes can be intimidating for some people. To address this, CHIRP provided a small-group yoga program to two groups of four people for six weeks. The classes were delivered by an experienced yoga instructor in a small, intimate and safe environment. The instructor was skilled at working with older people, people with disabilities, those with special needs and people new to yoga. The program helped participants feel safe and nurtured.

Each session included 60 minutes of gentle, simple, breath-centred yoga. At the end of each session, participants enjoyed a 15-minute, facilitated cuppa that encouraged them to create social connections, build trust and foster friendships.

WORKING FOR VICTORIA

The Working for Victoria initiative was part of the Victorian Government's \$1.7 billion Economic Survival Package, designed to connect workers with new opportunities in the community and to contribute to Victoria's ability to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under this initiative, CHIRP Community Health applied for a grant to assist during the pandemic and received funding to employ eight workers for three months. Some workers were able to find employment after only a short time in their roles, which enabled the organisation to extend the length of the remaining positions. The roles initially employed included:

- an IT and Data Officer
- three Community Outreach workers
- a Quality Project Officer
- two Administrative Officers, and
- a Communications Officer.

Each position has had a significant and positive impact on CHIRP's operations throughout the pandemic as well as our reach into the community.

CHIRP's IT and Data Officer provided much-needed IT specialist support skills, particularly in supporting telehealth and remote office work. The role has also provided day-to-day IT support to staff, liaised with IT providers, problem-solved issues, provided reporting and data-entry support for program areas across the organisation, and ensured that our website, Facebook and Twitter communications are up-to-date. Given the continued need to pivot services in response to COVID restrictions, this level of support has been invaluable. In a very short period of time, the role and the incumbent have become an essential part of the service for CHIRP.

CHIRP's LGBTQIA+ Engagement outreach worker



strengthens social engagement, builds wellbeing, and enhances access to community and health services for our LGBTQIA+ community. The Engagement Officer has worked with community partners and the LGBTQIA+ community to:

- Build connections with, and help establish a safe place for, young people who identify as LGBTQIA+ at Castlemaine Secondary College
- Work with CHIRP's Community Health Nurse and key teachers to develop resources around safe sexual practices, consent, health and mental wellbeing
- Establish interest groups to engage the LGBTQIA+ community, including painting classes, meditation groups, walking groups and facilitated access to health services
- Create a media platform for the community on local radio
- Create resources for staff and parents around inclusive language and supports for young

people in transition

- Support Mount Alexander Shire's Suicide Response Group, and
- Follow up on activities related to CHIRP's accreditation through the Rainbow Tick program.

CHIRP's Quality Project Worker supported the organisation through its recent successful accreditation against the Human Services Standards and the QIC Health and Community Services Standards (QIC Standards). This included drafting policies and procedures and conducting internal audits. The Quality Project Worker also supported CHIRP's promotion of COVID-19 vaccination uptake within the Shire.

CHIRP's Community Generalist Outreach Worker and Development Project Officer partnered with CHIRP staff and local organisations to build links with isolated community members across the Shire, and the Housing Outreach Worker assisted with the surge in referrals for housing support.



MOVE IT

Hula Hoops

Regular activity helps us to maintain physical and mental health into older age. It also helps us to build and maintain strong social connections. For many older Australians, finding age-appropriate activities is a key to good health.

The Loddon Mallee Region's Move It program, funded by the Australian Government, helped people aged 65+ stay active by providing suitable fitness opportunities. Many of the participants were not engaged with other local sporting or activity groups, and the program was designed to introduce people to activities and create sustainable connections.

CHIRP Community Health delivered a range of activity options for older Mount Alexander Shire residents as part of the project, ensuring that people were linked into ongoing community-based programs, including strength and aerobic classes, Pilates classes and hula-hoop classes.

Hula-hoop taster sessions were held in December 2020 and then weekly follow-up sessions were offered to participants in early 2021. The classes were soon fully booked, with 12 regular participants. The sessions ran until late April and were delivered by a qualified circus performer and instructor.

The weekly sessions have strengthened informal support networks in the community, with participants maintaining regular contact with each other outside class times, and organising informal practice sessions at each other's homes, often followed by a coffee.

The sessions' success prompted Castlemaine Circus to seek Victorian Government funding to extend the program to vulnerable women. The Circus is now subsidising the program until late 2021.

COVID-19 TESTING CLINIC

CHIRP Community Health and Castlemaine Health established a COVID-19 Testing Clinic in August 2020. This allowed Mount Alexander Shire residents to get tested locally, which helped contain the spread of COVID-19. The Clinic operated every Tuesday and Thursday, with additional days as demand required. Core staffing was bolstered through the recruitment of four new staff, who provided swabbing and administrative support.

Between August 2020 and June 2021, the Clinic tested 2186 people. Our close partnership with Castlemaine Health and the Mount Alexander Shire Council ensured an adequate supply of personal protective equipment, backup nurses and proper traffic management. Daily testing numbers peaked during lockdowns – on one day alone, 101 drivers and passengers lined up for testing.

The Clinic Team took a positive and reassuring approach to dealing with people:

‘Easing people’s worries in these stressful times is an essential aspect of the COVID Clinic; the swabbing is only part of the whole process, as anyone who has been on the other side of the swab knows.’

As well as taking swabs and providing relevant information, the COVID-19 Team provided material support to those with limited access to food, masks and so on. On one occasion, the Team shopped for a family that had had to return to Castlemaine from New South Wales and undertake 14 days’ isolation

over the Christmas/New Year period. We shopped and home-delivered groceries, sanitary products and food for animals to a further eight households.

The Clinic also supported two people who had tested positive to COVID-19 and were confined to hotel quarantine. We called them frequently, organised transport home from Melbourne for one of them, and checked in with the elderly parents of the other as they were their parents’ carer.

Community feedback has been very positive. One person who had been watching the Team set up, swab, then pack up each day was so appreciative she brought the Team chocolates. Although she did not need a COVID swab herself, she waited in the screening line just to deliver her Thank You. Another person (with an office overlooking the testing area) emailed the following:

'Each Tuesday and Thursday... I can hear you all testing. In summer I watched you wrap yourselves in plastic on 40-degree days and maintain your professionalism. Today it is pouring rain and cold. I can hear you welcoming everyone and speaking to them with respect, humour and authenticity. I just wanted to let you know that I think you are all amazing, and in the ever-changing and sometimes stressful COVID world, I really admire and appreciate the job you do.'

Victoria's COVID-19 Response Team also expressed its appreciation:

'We would like to thank you and your Team for being self-sufficient and extending your operating hours while there is a demand for testing and serving the community. We hugely appreciate your hard work and efforts to ensure testing capacity is available to those who require it.'

Viqas Chaudhry,
Senior Support Officer,
Department of Health & Human Services, Victoria



VOLUNTEERS

CHIRP Community Health has over 80 registered volunteers. They support walking groups, Tai Chi groups, the L2P Driver Mentor Program, Youth Mentoring, Nordic Pole Walking, the Housing Program, and Companion Walking. They also provide administrative support.

Nordic Pole Walking Volunteers

CHIRP's Nordic Pole Walking groups are delivered (in partnership with Castlemaine Community House) by a team of passionate volunteers. The groups provide clear benefits for participants.

Abbie, who is nearly 80 years old, participated in the classes earlier this year:

'My health has improved enormously, and it may have been due to the Nordic Pole Walking. I am very thankful for the classes, which were led by a very good instructor. I was pretty impaired for a year; I could hardly walk. As soon as I got the poles I could walk as fast as I could when I was healthy.'

Peter, another participant, found the volunteer instructors to be:

'informative, enthusiastic, and happy souls. I felt out of my depth at first, but they provided a good environment to learn. At first, I could only do one lap of the Botanical Gardens, but now I can do two laps.'



Maldon Walking Group Volunteers

The Maldon Walking Group is another volunteer-run CHIRP program, and it has continued to grow since commencing in 2013. There are now three large groups that walk on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays each week. Social connections are a major benefit. One participant described it thus:

'The group gets me out of the house and interacting with some wonderful people. I'm able to socialise during and after the walk. One of the great things about the Maldon Walking Group is the cup of coffee at the end, where we sit around the table and we chat about what is going on in our lives; we are just there for each other.'

L2P Driver Mentor Program Volunteers

Volunteering also provides benefits for volunteers. Andrew has been a L2P Program volunteer for two years. He believes 'it generates positive energy and purpose'. He has mentored four learner drivers since 2019:

'Volunteering was suggested to me as part of a mental health plan. It has helped me get out of my head and give energy to others.'

Andrew's genuine interest in the welfare of young people in the community attracted him to the program:

'I find it rewarding to see a young person gain their freedom by getting their probationary licence. I'm also redirecting my career into the youth mental health space, so connecting with youngsters has reaffirmed that this is the correct career path for me.'



PEOPLE MATTER



People are at the heart of CHIRP Community Health's values. The health and wellbeing we aspire to for our community starts with the health and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers.

The ongoing pandemic has created an uncertain and changing environment for everyone. CHIRP recognises that our staff members have been navigating major disruptions to their home and personal lives whilst adapting to new ways of delivering services to support the community.

In response, CHIRP has expanded and promoted its Employee Assistance Program, which provides staff with free access to counselling and support. Our usual supervision meetings between individual staff members and their manager have continued (online when required).

People Matter Survey

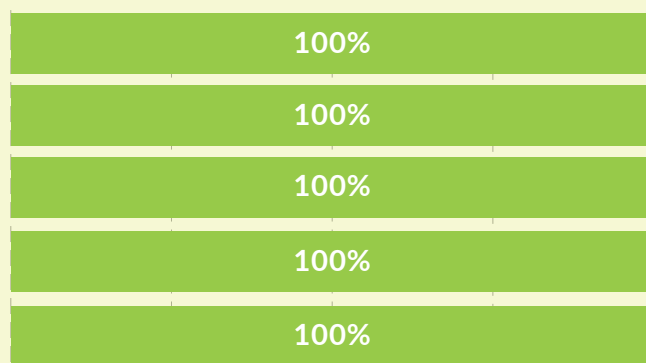
Each year, the Victorian Public Sector Commission surveys health staff to give services like CHIRP insight into how staff feel about their engagement and wellbeing. It also provides general indicators; for example, in relation to workplace gender equality status.

The 2021 People Matter Survey was conducted in June. It provided many insights into staff experience and areas that need improvement. Most of the lowest-scoring areas relate to career opportunities and development, which reflects our relatively small workforce. One of the immediate opportunities arising from integration with Castlemaine Health will be access to improved career pathways and training.

Staff rated CHIRP very highly across gender-equality indicators.

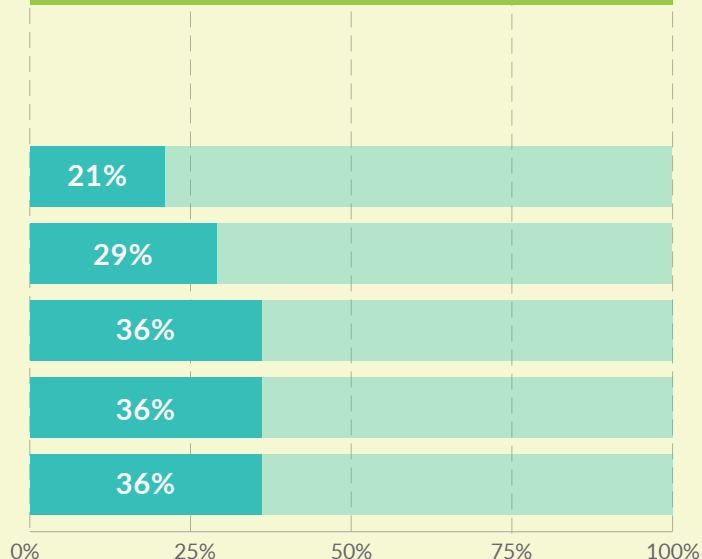
TOP 10 SCORING QUESTIONS

- In my workgroup work is allocated fairly, regardless of gender
- My organisation supports employees with family or other caring responsibilities, regardless of gender
- My manager models my organisation's values
- I am able to work effectively with others outside my immediate workgroup
- I am able to work effectively with others in my workgroup



BOTTOM 10 SCORING QUESTIONS

- I am satisfied with the availability of opportunities to take up roles in other organisations
- I feel I have an equal chance at promotion in my organisation
- How satisfied are you with your career development within your current organisation?
- I am satisfied with the availability of opportunities to move between roles within my organisation
- All levels of my organisation are involved in the prevention of stress



QUALITY & IMPROVEMENT

CHIRP Community Health undergoes a rigorous accreditation process every three years. This ensures that the organisation continues to maintain high-quality, effective community health services in line with state and national standards.

Despite COVID-19's impact on our community, workplace and families, CHIRP passed its accreditation with flying colours. (At one point, as part of our 'on-site' assessment, COVID-19 forced us to take our auditors on a tour of the building via Microsoft Teams and a trusty mobile phone!)

CHIRP's Quality Manager, Michael McMahon, guided CHIRP staff around how best to demonstrate to external accreditors the hard work and continuous quality improvement undertaken by the organisation over the past three years.

CHIRP is assessed against two standards:

1. Human Services Standards
2. QIC Health and Community Services Standards (QIC Standards)

The Human Services Standards is a set of service quality standards for organisations delivering services to clients. The Standards ensure:

- Empowerment: People's rights are promoted and upheld
- Access and Engagement: People's right to access transparent, equitable and integrated services is promoted and upheld
- Wellbeing: People's right to wellbeing and safety is promoted and upheld
- Participation: People's right to choice, decision making and to actively participate as a valued member of their chosen community is promoted and upheld.

The QIC Standards reflect continuous quality improvement principles and assess organisations against five standards:

1. Governance
2. Management systems
3. Consumer and community engagement
4. Diversity and cultural appropriateness
5. Service delivery

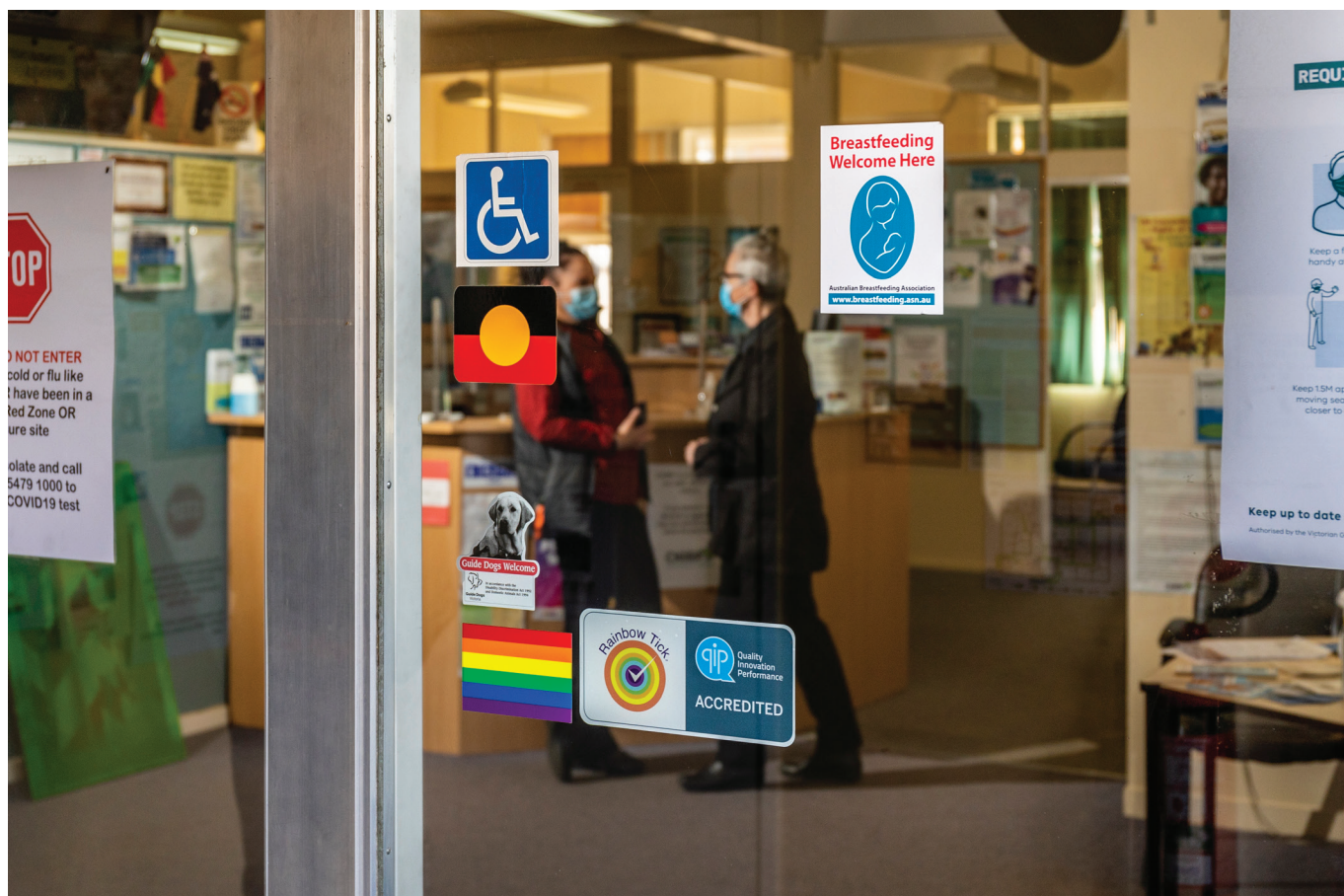
CHIRP is committed to ensuring that all residents of Mount Alexander Shire have access to quality healthcare and social support. By passing our accreditation, we can continue with our work and with pursuing our Strategic Directions:

- Design and deliver targeted, accessible services and programs that address identified community and client needs within the social model of health
- Support and empower people to become and stay healthy in the community
- Lead a sustainable Community Health presence in the Shire
- Operate within a positive and consumer-centred culture.

All staff can be congratulated for managing and coordinating the accreditation process, which reflected months of hard work and dedication in collating the required documentation:

'... a fantastic outcome and reflection of our work over the past three years, despite being an organisation in transition. The outcome reflects the staff's commitment to being client-focused and delivering responsive programs in the community.'

Thanks especially to Michael McMahon, who successfully led the process, supported by Clare Shamier, Janice Page Appleby, Linley Crum, Deb McCarthy, Kathy Whiteman, and the CHIRP Teams who demonstrated and validated the organisation's work – a true team effort!



COMMUNITY & CLIENT FEEDBACK

CHIRP Community Health welcomes feedback from clients and the community. Feedback helps us to improve the quality of our service and respond to our community.

Most of the feedback for the past year has been complimentary. Many clients have expressed their thanks for our services and staff, notably our First Aid Training Courses (delivered by our Community Nurse, Bron Grieve) and our COVID-19 Testing Clinic:

'Bron made everyone feel good about whatever question they asked and made sure everyone really understood the answer before moving on.'

'Professional. Excellent communication. Well-considered COVID requirements. 10/10. Brilliant.'

'Massive thumbs up for CHIRP COVID Testing for stepping up to this work. Efficient, welcoming, professional and informative. Clever practical women going about their work ... It's a big thanks from me!'

'Thank you to the [COVID] nurses for a fantastic job, especially in the rain.'

'I feel more confident and I have learnt some strategies I can use in my life. The practitioner connected me to other services and supports and considered different aspects of my wellbeing. This was very effective. It was not always easy, but I already knew it might be hard.'

One of the three complaints CHIRP received in 2020–21 regarded a delayed call-back for a COVID Clinic appointment. This was addressed by improving the administrative procedures for making appointments.

First Aid



COMPLIMENTS

COMPLAINTS

Covid Clinic



COMPLIMENTS



COMPLAINTS

Other

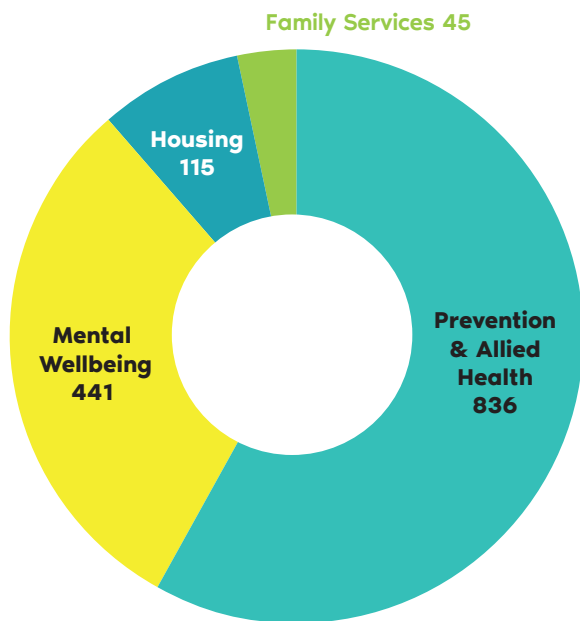


COMPLIMENTS

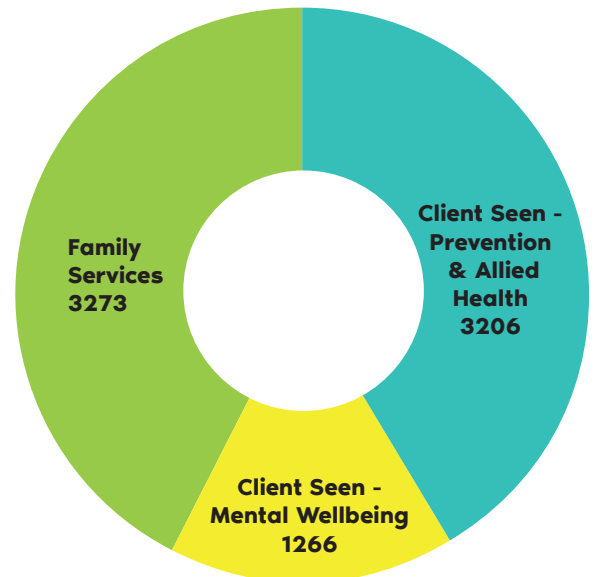


COMPLAINTS

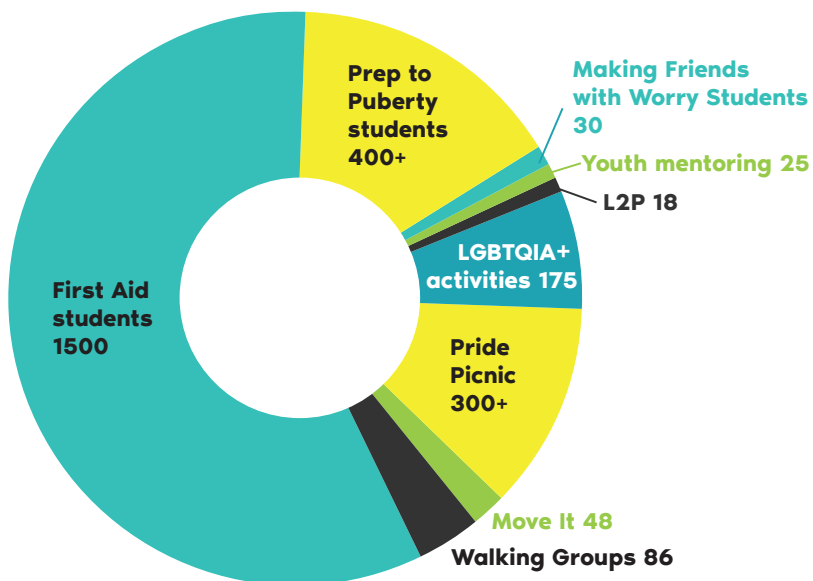
FEEDBACK & SERVICE DATA



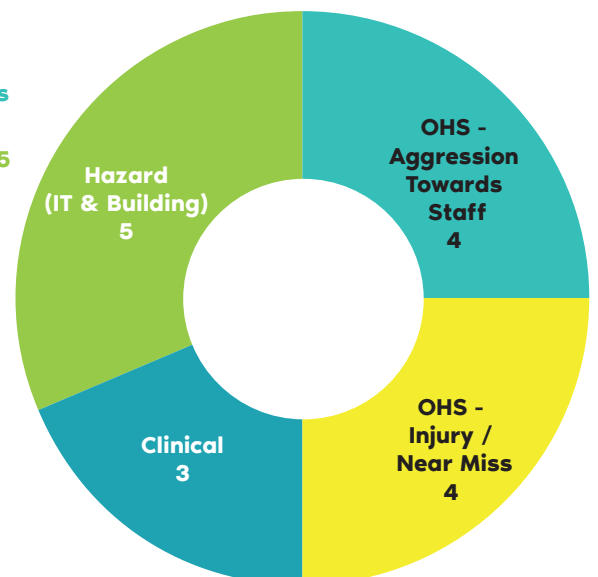
CLIENTS



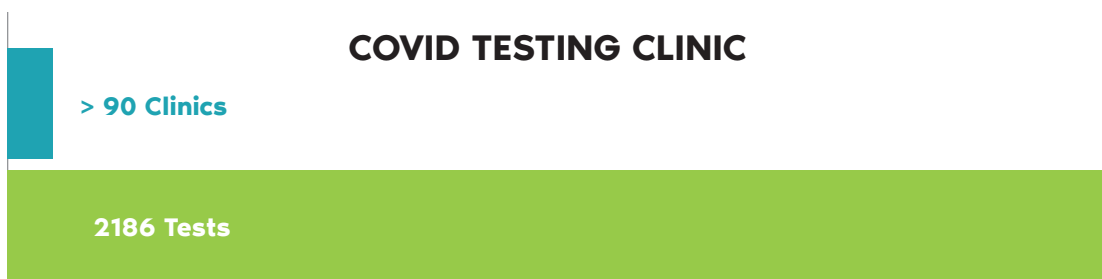
OCCASIONS OF CARE



ACTIVITIES & EDUCATION PARTICIPANTS



INCIDENTS



BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Lexi Randall-L'Estrange



Rebecca Edwards



Jon Anstey



Ian Patrick



Sharon Fraser



Margaret Bainbridge

Our Board of Directors have continued to work in the best interests of the local community towards integration of services with Castlemaine Health. They are looking forward to the maintenance of local services and the growth of engagement with Castlemaine Health and the community. We thank them all for their ongoing voluntary time and commitment. We would also like to particularly thank our Chair and Deputy throughout this period: Lexi Randall-L'Estrange and Rebecca Edwards. Initially lead by Rebecca as Chair, CHIRP Community

Health has been ably steered in the past 12 months by Lexi through some significantly challenging and uncharted legal territory. Lexi has continued to maintain contact with our valued community members throughout the integration process and is now a Board member with Castlemaine Health, ensuring continuity of governance of community services.

TREASURER'S REPORT 2020-21

CHIRP Community Health has reported an overall surplus of \$289,282 for the 2020-21 financial year, compared with a \$103,667 deficit for the previous financial year.

The major items contributing to the overall result include:

- New revenue streams, such as the Working for Victoria grant and increased service provision for alcohol and drug initiatives (funded via Bendigo Community Health Services and the Murray Primary Health Network)
- An increase in Department of Health & Human Services funding to assist with the COVID-19 Testing Clinic
- An insurance payout relating to a 2020 cyber-attack
- Federal government COVID-19 stimulus measures, such as an ATO (Australian Taxation Office) cash-flow boost and JobKeeper recoveries for partially funded employees received under Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission regulations
- Other ATO stimulus measures, which assisted with continued reductions experienced in community health fees and charges, room rental and interest on investments
- Increased expenses included integration costs, including legal fees and a provision for making good in relation to the rental lease agreement

The most significant balance sheet movements for the year were as follows:

- Cash and investments increased by \$461,129 as a result of the improved operating results
- The provision for annual leave increased, with staff less likely to take leave due to the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 restrictions
- There was a decreased long-service leave provision due to changed probability and future staff calculation factors, especially relating to staff who have not met their years-of-service vesting period. A major probability factor is the projected wage inflation rate, issued by the Department of Treasury and Finance Victoria, which has gone down from 4.25% to 2.95%

Several integration costs will be incurred during the first quarter of 2021-22 that relate to staffing, legal services, information technology, human resources and change management. Residual cash reserves belonging to CHIRP after accounting for all outstanding liabilities and wind-up costs will contribute to a special-purpose fund within Castlemaine Health that will further CHIRP's legacy and purpose.

Jon Anstey

CHIRP Community Health, Treasurer

The audited results for CHIRP Community Health for the year ended 30 June 2021 can be found at www.chirp.org.au/publications



13 Mostyn Street
Castlemaine VIC 3450

(03) 5479 1000

email@cdch.com.au

www.chirp.org.au