



Mission

Transforming lives through empowerment, choice, support, advocacy and connections to work and community.

Vision

A connected society where all people with disabilities achieve their full potential.

Values

Integrity

We are genuine. Our approach with everyone is honest, open, transparent and professional.

Connectedness

We work collaboratively. We connect people to opportunities and achieve real outcomes. We are holistic, cohesive, well networked and inclusive.

Individuality

We respect individual choices and diversity.

We believe everyone is entitled to a fulfilling life.

We are compassionate, supportive and empowering.

Courage

We have a “can do” attitude and focus on achieving results.

We are determined, passionate, enterprising and dependable.

We are forward thinkers who are flexible, adaptable and innovative.

Getting to know The Bridge Connects

The Bridge has been helping people with disabilities develop life skills for over 40 years. We are a not-for-profit disability service provider located in the south east of Melbourne, offering a wide range of services including respite, social and leisure activities, work skills, employment and supported employment opportunities.

*This booklet explains all the choices that we can offer at **The Bridge Connects**.*

The Bridge Connects services include:

- **Connects** - Day services
- **Your Supports** - Individual support
- **Getaways** - Respite and Recreation
- **Next Step** - Transition to Work.

The Bridge Connects has sites in:

- Berwick
- Cranbourne
- Dandenong
- Narre Warren
- Noble Park.

For more information about **The Bridge**, as well as the other services we offer, visit our website at www.thebridgeinc.org.au





Choosing the services that are right for you

The Bridge Connects can:

- assess your eligibility for services
- give you information on what we can provide
- talk with you about your needs and interests
- support you with some of your decision making.

Together with **Connects**, you can visit our locations to help you decide where you might like to go.

You may also be interested in coming to one of our services for a couple of days to try it out. Our friendly staff can tell you more about this.

Choosing what you want to do

You can use your funding by choosing different types of support:

- sharing your support (groups)
- individual support.

Connects will work with you to develop a package of supports to suit your needs. We will help you identify your goals and how we can work together to achieve them.

If you don't receive funding, we can also provide support through Fee for Service. This allows you to use your own money to take part in any of our services.

Sharing support with other people

Some of our services are offered in groups. These services are usually arranged for small groups in various places - either at a **Connects** facility or in the local community.

Some activities may have an additional cost. **Connects** will provide you with a list of the necessary fees and we can work out an affordable plan with you so that you can take part in the activities you are interested in.

When you call us, we will discuss the options available based on your circumstances.

Planning together

Connects has different ways of supporting your needs and enabling you to do what you want, so you can achieve a range of goals and interests, including:

- learning new skills
- preparing for work
- completing courses
- personal development
- social and leisure activities.

Your Supports

The Bridge Connects provides one-on-one assistance to help you do what you want to do, when you like.

Your Supports can assist you with:

- making sure you have maximum choice and control over your support
- making sure your plan reflects your goals
- planning how to best use your supports and funding to achieve these goals
- assisting you to self-manage your funding if that's right for you.

It's all about doing things your way!

Choosing your direction

Gaining the skills and confidence to enter the workforce

The Bridge also offers specific work based training with **Next Step** at **The Bridge Works**.

Here you can learn skills to help you enter the workforce. **Next Step** can help you identify your work goals and what training you may need to find a job that is right for you.

If you want to get a job, but don't yet have the skills or confidence, **Next Step** can help you to:

- identify your job interests
- learn new work related skills
- find voluntary work opportunities
- undertake accredited pre-vocational courses
- apply theory into a real workplace setting
- make informed decisions about your employment options
- link into The Bridge Employment job placement service.

Jade's story

On my very first day at **The Bridge Connects**, I was very nervous, now two years in I'm very comfortable to express myself with others here at The Bridge. I wasn't sure whether I would be able to make good friends but now I have.

I feel comfortable that this is the place for me. The services here are flexible and I am happy that the staff will listen to what I want to do. Some activities I enjoy at **Connects** are art, music, and the relaxation program where I am learning relaxation techniques. We do Yoga poses which are really cool too!

I am very proud of myself as I can now go to the Plaza independently on Fridays, and I have recently joined the Drama group, Dramatts, run by Fusion Theatre. I really enjoy acting, people tell me I'm a natural!

Last year I started to access **Connects** respite service **Getaways** and love going away on weekends with my peers. I also enjoy the movie day activities. I am really happy that I am able to get out of the house on weekends sometimes too.

I am feeling very happy and confident after joining **Connects**.



Jade

Michael's story



Michael



Michael readily shares his smile with those around him. His expressions and gestures are full of feeling his words can't express.

An all-rounder, Michael loves books on dinosaurs, whales, dolphins and ancient Egypt. He makes time for music and dance, sailing, cricket, drama, basketball and riding for the disabled.

Michael has been going to **The Bridge Connects** since 2010 where he's been able to meet a wide variety of people.

He joined the Men's Shed and works on a range of projects with younger and older men from the community. As well as developing good friendships, Michael has learnt a range of skills such as using a hand saw, sanding, nailing, gluing and painting.

After moving to a new suburb with his family, Michael enjoyed exploring his neighbourhood and working out how to catch the train to his drama group and computer course with friends. As well as these activities, Michael is involved in a local Parks & Gardens program. Through this initiative he plants seedlings and helps to maintain open public spaces in his community.

Connects Community Facilitator, Freddy said, "It's so great to have Michael in our activities. He has a wonderful sense of humour and loves to have a chuckle when one of his colleagues says or does something funny."

Staying healthy

The activities we offer include opportunities to maintain your physical health and wellbeing.

We can help you to access specialist disability support, such as physiotherapy or speech pathology. Or, we can support you to access general wellness activities, such as massage, music, relaxation and exercise.

Having fun

We offer a range of activities that include everything from swimming to mini-golf, drama to bush walking or going out to lunch with friends. If there is an activity that you're interested in, we can try to make it happen!

Through our recreation activities, you can:

- make new friends
- express yourself through arts, crafts and music
- develop and maintain your interests in the community
- have fun
- and much more !

It's your future.

**We can help you find the services
that are right for you.**

Daniel's story



Hi, my name is Daniel and I use **The Bridge Connects** two days per week.

I go to the local pool on a weekly basis, to continue my physio program with my support worker, Gary.

This is really important to me so I can continue to be fit and strong and stay out of my wheelchair for as long as possible.

My support worker Gary is very important too and we have a great time together.

It has always been a dream of mine to go to the ballet and this year I realised that dream when I attended a Melbourne Ballet Company production of *On Air*, which I loved.

I also joined a small group on an outing to Gumbuya Park where I enjoyed a BBQ, as well as meeting new people.

In the future I plan to use my funding for other fun activities and I look forward to enjoying many new experiences.



Daniel



Taking a break

Getaways

Your plan could include taking a break, social outings and holidays by accessing **Getaways**. Activities are available for groups or individuals and are always lots of fun!

Individual in-home or tailored community-based support can also be provided. Many of these services have certain criteria that need to be met, which may include:

- living in a particular Local Government Area
- having a carer over the age of 60.

Getaways can send you regular information so that you'll always know what exciting trips are coming up next.

Michelle's story

I was a bit worried when my Mum and my family started talking about me going away overnight with **Connects**, as I had only ever been away with my sisters and parents. Mum was also worried about how I would cope being away from the family, as well as the people supporting me on these trips.

Once I went away for the first time I enjoyed myself so much that I was looking forward to the next time. People that know me well say that my confidence has improved remarkably and I have become more outgoing. I always come home and have lots of stories to tell the family about my time away.

It has also benefited my family because it has given them the confidence that I will be OK and cope when the time comes that my parents can no longer look after me and also giving them time to do their own things knowing that I am having a great time.

I have enjoyed every activity I have been on; I don't know which my favourite is. The weekends away are so much fun and the support workers are fantastic and it pleases my family to see me so happy and relaxed.

I wonder where my next weekend away will be to?



Michelle

Getting out and about

Getaways also provides outings, for example;

- going to the movies
- going to dinner dances and live shows
- trips to the city
- going fishing on the bay
- AFL football games.

This is a great way to have a fun day out with others. We are always looking for new things to do, so please let us know your ideas!

Having a weekend away

If you feel like a little more relaxation and excitement... our very popular weekends away take you on adventures far and wide, giving you amazing experiences and fun times.

In the past we've gone to:

- Ballarat
- The Great Ocean Road
- Ocean Grove
- Venus Bay
- Wilson's Prom
- Bendigo.

And we're adding new destinations all the time.

Let us know where you would like to go!

How much does it cost?

Our fees and charges differ depending on which service you use. Contact Pathways and Communications on **1800 274 343** for a complete list of our current fees and charges.

Supporting our work

Volunteering

Volunteering is one of the most rewarding activities anyone can do.

All of **The Bridge** volunteers dedicate their valuable time and enjoy joining in on activities supporting participants in the local community, building new friendships and learning new skills. We highly value our volunteer support base and rejoice in their contribution regularly.

If you know someone who may be interested in volunteering with us at **The Bridge** please visit our website for more information:

www.thebridgeconnects.org.au

Getting in touch

If you are interested in any of our services, would like more information or to discuss your situation, please call the Pathways and Communications team on:

1800 BRIDGE

1800 274 343

or email: info@thebridgeconnects.org.au

For more information on all of our services please visit our website:

www.thebridgeinc.org.au



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