

The Bridge News

April 2019



Fun in the city Travel training builds confidence

Connects participants Pedro, Jade, Isabelle, Tim and Vincent enjoyed a train ride for a day out in the city

Many of the participants from Dandenong Day Service love catching the train into the city and making the most of what's on!

Recently they enjoyed The Odyssey of the Turtle movie at IMAX Cinema and then had fun trying a virtual reality experience!

Tuesday's travel training activity at The Bridge Connects, Dandenong, sees this group travelling to many different suburbs in the local and surrounding areas.

Participants are involved in choosing the venues they attend and there have been many

inner-city urban environments.



experiences along the way. From Federation Square, little Chinatown and all around Melbourne city to the library in Bunjil Place at Narre Warren. The group are focusing on building confidence to travel and top up their Myki card and are also learning to pay for things in the community.

They support each other on this journey and have developed good friendships too.

Message from our CEO Phillip Toovey



NDIS Progress

About three quarters of NDIS eligible participants of The Bridge have now converted to the scheme, and most have gained a better funding package, with a wider range of supports which is what the scheme's fundamental benefit was all about.

This outcome has been possible due to our staff helping participants and their families in pre-planning, providing relevant information, as well as attending plan meetings, to help get the best possible outcomes.

The efforts of staff has been substantial and I want to acknowledge the commitment of everyone involved.

Inquiry into disability services

As you would have heard in the media recently, the Australian Government has announced a Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

Public consultation has commenced on the draft terms of reference for the Royal Commission, which will focus on what governments, institutions and the community should do to prevent, and respond to, violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability.

Sadly there is no doubt that this inquiry will bring to light some awful details of how some of society's most vulnerable people have been treated inappropriately and had their rights abused.

The Bridge upholds a 'zero tolerance' approach to abuse and neglect and strives to maintain a high service standard through staff training and awareness of human rights. We would encourage anyone to raise their concerns if their experience has not lived up to these standards.

I remind everyone that in addition to our existing complaints and feedback channels, we have an independent confidential whistleblower hotline service for the receipt of information about serious misconduct or improper behaviour in our services;

STOPLINE is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – Phone 1300 304 550

It is our hope that this Royal Commission will lead to more improvements for people with disabilities and will ensure the new National Disability Insurance Scheme is resourced in the right ways to enable people to be supported to live safe and fulfilling lives.

Seven News Young Achiever Awards

The Bridge is proud to be a sponsor for a category of the 2019 Seven News Young Achiever Awards; **The Bridge Create Change Award**.

Many young Victorians are passionate about creating change. The Bridge Create Change Award will recognise young people that are driving activities, programs and initiatives that promote or create change. The Bridge Create Change Award acknowledges and celebrates the commitment young people make in achieving or participating in positive activities that empower change locally, nationally and/or internationally.

The Finalists have been selected for The Bridge Create Change Award.

The Finalists are:

- Andrew Millhouse, 27 of Melbourne
- James Maskey, 29 of Fitzroy North
- Georgie Stone, 18 of Bentleigh

The Finalists will be presented and Winners announced at an Awards Gala Presentation Dinner to be held at Flemington Racecourse on Friday evening 10th May.

Visit Facebook for more info - <https://www.facebook.com/VICAYAA/photos/a.2198482830234413/2198483003567729/?type=3&theater>



The Young Achiever Awards began in 2012 with the purpose to acknowledge, encourage and most importantly promote the positive achievements of all young people up to and including 29 years of age. The awards showcase the achievements of young Victorians, and pay tribute to their vision, innovation and commitment to contributing to their community

Recognising young people that are driving activities, programs and initiatives that promote or create change



Farewell Sandra

Sandra Vongsykeo is leaving The Bridge after 25 years of service.

Initially employed as a support worker, in 2005 Sandra was appointed as Service Manager with our supported employment service and since then, Sandra has led the high quality service that The Bridge Works has become renowned for.

To anyone who visits this workplace it is obvious that the supported employees and all other personnel involved, enjoy a safe, supportive and positive work environment.

Over 15 consecutive years, external quality auditors have also made highly positive observations and various auditors have commented that The Bridge Works is one of the very best that they have seen.

In late 2017 we obtained a contract with Sonic Healthcare, assembling Bowel Cancer Screening kits, and this has helped put Works in the strongest position it has ever been in.

Sandra was instrumental in leading the work of her team to make this Sonic contract operationally as effective and financially positive as possible and she put an enormous effort into successfully achieving this goal.

We now have a stronger business, incorporating a highly productive mixed workforce of people with and without disabilities and the beginnings of a flow through model of disability employment.

Sandra can be very proud of the state that she is leaving Works in and we sincerely thank her for everything she has done, and wish her all the very best for the future in her new home over the other side of the country, in Perth.

Thank you Sandra and farewell!

After 25 years, Sandra is leaving The Bridge

External Audit

We have had a very successful recent few months with Global Mark (external) quality reviews being undertaken across each of our services, involving participant/carer feedback, staff interviews and review of head office and service records/systems.

In November 2018 the audit team visited **The Bridge Connects** Dandenong Day Service, Getaways and Your Supports programs as well as **The Bridge Employment's** Youth Jobs Now! (transition to work) program to undertake a maintenance review of our service delivery to confirm that high quality services continue to be provided since their last visit in 2017.

In February the audit team returned to visit **The Bridge Works** and The Bridge Employment DES program for a full re-certification review of their programs under the National Standards for Disability Services. Moving forward, this certification is only applicable to our DES program as Works will now fall in scope of the NDIS Practice Standards, along with all services delivered by Connects and Youth Jobs Now!

We greatly appreciate the participation of service users in the external audit process who consent to phone call and face to face interviews with the audit team, and review of their records.

There were no findings or recommendations for improvement resulting from either audit however, during 2019 we continue with the proactive work we already do in regards to quality management, our systems, data collection, feedback and complaints tracking, incident monitoring and the capturing of continuous improvement initiatives within our services.

We welcome feedback and suggestions for improvement from all our stakeholders at any time to ensure that our services are meeting your needs.

Continuous Improvement: Emergency Preparedness & Response and Business Continuity

In recent months our Emergency Response Plans (EMP) which are kept at each of our sites, has been revised for updated content. These Plans outline our response to emergencies, the responsibilities of Occupational Health and Safety Committees, Managers, Staff and Wardens in an emergency and they include the documentation we complete in regard to Emergency Evacuation Drills which are conducted throughout the year.

In the revised version of the EMP we have included information about general preparedness to respond to alerts about emergencies within the community that may impact services such as nearby fires, flood, smoke and traffic events and we have also included our organisational decision making responsibility and authority in the event of an emergency.

Our new Business Continuity Plan will be housed on site with the EMP so that all Emergency and Business Continuity documents are in the one place for easy reference by staff. During March and April the Quality Manager will be attending team meetings to go through both Plans with service staff to ensure familiarisation with contents and confirm what the role of staff members is during and following a serious incident.

Customer Service

In the second half of 2018 a Customer Service Working Party was formed to develop general customer service principles and minimum requirements for effective customer service by our staff with our stakeholders and potential new customers. There has been staff representation from across all of our business units on the Working Party and as a result of our workshops a Customer Service Handbook has been developed for staff reference.

Following the release of this Handbook to staff, we will convene Stakeholder Engagement sessions where participants, carers and our business customers will be consulted to provide their suggestions on how The Bridge can ensure effective, person-centered customer service when engaging with our service users and business customers. Please let us know if you would like to be included in these sessions or to contribute feedback /suggestions to the working party. Contact The Bridge on 87108555.

Valuable volunteers

Recently, a staff member was sick and the cry went out; 'can a volunteer possibly help staff out tomorrow?'

Coordinator of our volunteer program, Margaret, was not confident as it was such short notice but, Cranbourne volunteer Craig, quickly answered the call and added an extra afternoon with the Dandenong basketball group to his already large volunteering commitment at Stawell Street, Cranbourne. This small act of kindness made a huge difference to the smooth running of the basketball afternoon. A three pointer for Craig and for The Bridge. Thank you!

With The Bridge's ever-growing popularity and reputation, Getaways runs an increasing range of day trips on weekends for The Bridge participants to choose from and enjoy.

Several regular week-day volunteers have put their hands up to go along and support these extra days on weekends when they can. The zoo, Caribbean Gardens, Melbourne Aquarium, Lysterfield Lake, Luna Park, to name just a few. One star volunteer is recent Webb Street recruit, Stuart. His most recent assistance was at our Frankston Festival day. Stuart embodies the spirit of having fun with the gang, while providing some extra company and observation for optimum safety.

A big thank you Stuart, Annie, Gayle, Ayana, Frances, Nikki, Gurleen, Bernie, Sonia, and all event and outing volunteers. You really do make a difference!

Wilson's Promontory adventures with Getaways

Wilson's Promontory is one of the favourite weekend away destinations for participants in Getaways.

Happening four times a year, it's always a sell out with visits to Squeaky Beach, Tidal River, Coal Creek and the lighthouse with plenty of wildlife spotting.



L to R - James, Nicole, Jason, Sophie, Erin, Anthony, Paul, Time, Amanda and Richard



Tim celebrating his birthday



L to R - Anthony, Richard and Jason enjoying the pool

End of an era

After 10 years for Ray and almost two years for Sarah, 20th December 2018 was their final day of being part of 'Drive time with Ray, Cindy and Sarah' on Yarra Valley FM 99.1.

Their bubbly voices and selection of songs will be missed among the Yarra Valley Community.

Both Ray and Sarah should be proud of their efforts during this time and we are sure both will find new and exciting opportunities in their futures.



L to R - Ray, Sarah and Cindy



L to R - sailing club volunteer supporting Ryan

Enjoying the outdoors

One of our most popular activities in summer is sailing.

Participants from Dandenong Day Service go sailing around Lysterfield and Albert Park Lakes, accompanied by a volunteer.

Individuals are supported to develop sailing skills, independence and confidence.

Sailing is one of the key activities for participants with goals to develop their social skills, independence and enhancing their communication - and its great fun!

NDIS Support Coordination

The role of a Support Coordinator is to connect participants who have an NDIS Plan, to supports and services in the community.

As Support Coordinators we try to compliment your life and help put your NDIS plan into action by assisting you to find the right providers and coordinate a range of supports. Working with you and your support network, we can assist you to explore your options and build on informal supports. Currently, The Bridge provides support coordination services to 78 participants and their carers and our numbers are growing quickly.

Through this service The Bridge can improve your ability to coordinate and implement supports and participate in the community.



Support Coordinators Kata, Alex and Sharon

Update from The Bridge Employment

The first quarter of the year is almost through - time sure is flying! 2019 has been an exciting time for all at The Bridge Employment with several new opportunities as well as some challenges.

We have been working hard to support our participants into new jobs and supporting our employers to create great employment pathways that support their business needs.

The roll out of the NDIS is producing some challenges for people wanting to look for work with some very conflicting results with their NDIS plans. Supporting more people who want to work is a key platform for the NDIS, so we are continuing to work with participants and their families to navigate the NDIS planning stages. Despite these challenges the team at Youth Jobs Now! is continuing to deliver great employment outcomes.

If you're not sure about how to best use your NDIS plan, give us a call and we'll work with you to develop an individual support plan to help you achieve your employment goals.

In this quarter we have expanded some of our programs and locations in partnership with Jobs Victoria which we are very excited about. This is keeping us all busy!

While we usually focus on the participants journey in our newsletter, this month I thought we'd change it up a bit - because, well why not! Let's put some faces to the names behind the programs we run. Following are some stories of our dedicated and valued team members who are the driving force in what we do.

Ausra Wells
General Manager Employment

Youth2You and more!

We have been running two projects as a Jobs Victoria partner - **Youth2You** and **JobsBank**. Now we offer 3!

We are happy to also be part of the **African-Pasifika Heritage** project in partnership with the Centre for Multicultural Youth.

Our projects predominately support youth aged 15-24 who face barriers getting into employment, with the exception of JobsBank where there is no age limit. Youth2You's success and growth in working with youth participants in the South Eastern Region has now expanded to the Northern Suburbs.

The team consists of 4 staff members - Youth Employment Coaches Stacey, Terry and Johnee and their manager Polly who all work to deliver successful outcomes.

This month we opened our new location in Heidelberg West and our team were all there to commence the program.



L to R - Johnee, Terry and Stacey settling into our new Heidelberg West office



L to R - Polly, Terry, Stacey and Johnee outside our Springvale office

Disability Employment Services

Teamwork is the key at Frankston! Working hard to achieve positive employment outcomes for their participants, the journey starts as soon as someone walks in the door.

Marie is the friendly face of the Frankston office, greeting each participant as they arrive. She is the backbone of the team and ensures that everything runs like clockwork – not an easy task considering just how busy this team is!

Lydia, our Occupational Therapist, makes a point to meet each one of the participants and support them to start their journey to work. Often travelling to multiple locations, she completes pre-employment assessments which directly assist the Employment Consultants to get to know participants. Lydia is also meeting with all potential clients that would like to work with the team to achieve their employment goals. In many cases, meeting with Lydia can be the first step someone takes towards a brighter, more independent future.

Employment Consultants, Anna and Vince are a dynamic duo! Working closely with employers in the local community they pride themselves on matching the right person to the right job. Sounds easy I hear you say, well let me tell you a little bit about what they do. The world of Disability Employment is a competitive one. For every employer you meet they will have met five other Providers. Not easily deterred, Anna and Vince spend many hours each day on the road or hitting the phones to establish relationships and show employers just what The Bridge Employment can



L to R – Anna, Soula, Lydia, Marie and Vince

do! Whilst doing this they are working closely with their participants getting them ready for work. From mock interviews to getting kitted out for an interview, Anna and Vince are there. Often up early in the morning taking someone to work, they work hard to support people with a disability on their journey to independence.

Soula, the DES Manager, is there to guide, drive and support the team. She too will get to know each participant and is always there to offer her congratulations when someone gets a job! Often referred to as the 'ring master', Soula keeps the team fed and watered (like only a Greek woman could) and is passionate about seeing her participants and her team succeed.

Casey CALD Youth Employment Project

Meet Fili, who is the driving force behind our Casey project aiming to support youth from a CALD background into work. In addition, Fili supports local employers in the Casey region to increase new staff from diverse backgrounds.

Fili is always going above and beyond to create new employment opportunities for people. While she always has a million things on the go, she is constantly willing to do what it takes, with a bright smile!



Youth Jobs Now!

And of course, we had to include a great participant success story! While there have been inconsistencies with individual's NDIS Plans, it's not slowing us down to help you achieve your goals.

Anthony has started 2019 with paid employment in customer service; his dream job. For as long as he can remember, Anthony has worked towards a goal of working in a retail setting. He applied himself and worked on the skills required for a role in this industry.

Employment coach Joanna met with Donna (Manager) at Amcal Chemist in Rowville, to discuss

Anthony's strengths in customer service and the possibility of a part time position. Donna agreed Anthony would be an asset to the business and hired him. His duties began with unpacking stock onto shelves and general tidying of the store. It wasn't long until Donna saw Anthony's potential and love for customer interaction and a month later Anthony was serving customers and processing transactions at the register.

Anthony is a testament to his hard work and dedication.





Cassie (on behalf of Sandra), Thomas, David, Giuseppe and Anthony

Raising funds for Make-A-Wish Australia

Last year a group of Supported Employees at The Bridge Works completed training with IQ Man.

The training supported them to focus on eight employability skills including communication and social skills development, team work, initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, self-management, learning and technology.

As part of this training, they did a community engagement project. The group decided to raise money for very sick children and chose Make-A-Wish Australia. Thomas, Tony, Giuseppe and David created their own cookbook -

The Bridge Works Sometime Foods. All the recipes were chosen and tested by the team. The funds raised supported a young girl, Abigail, with cystic fibrosis, granting her wish to fly to Unicorn Land. Abigail, who is from the Central Coast in NSW, flew to Melbourne and the people from Make-A-Wish transformed Collingwood Children's Farm into a magical world of colour, glitter and unicorns.

Because of their kind donation earlier this year the group's trainer, Mary, presented each member of the group with certificates for supporting the Make-A-Wish Australia and their efforts in making Abigail's dream come true.

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