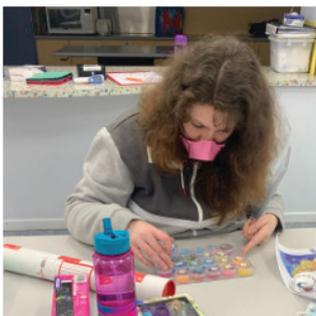


# The Bridge News

December 2020



## The year that was...

What an extraordinary 50th anniversary year we have had!

Certainly like no other, with the impacts of COVID-19 affecting all services, participants and families we support and our staff and volunteers, in a variety of ways.

Over the following pages you will read stories of how participants and staff from The Bridge have adapted and grown.

## Happy holidays!

We thank each and every one of you for your continued support. We wish you happiness and good health over the 2020 festive season and hope for a better 2021 where we will all be connected again!





## Message from our Acting CEO Mary-Jane Stolp

What an extraordinary 50th anniversary year we have had! Our service and business models have continued to evolve during the pandemic and enabled us to continue operating in a safe, effective way.

Due to COVID-19, our planned 50th birthday celebrations were curtailed with our gala dinner postponed to next year. However, we were able to mark the occasion by sharing some of our special memories of the last 50 years through social media and a specific history section in our new website which we hope you will visit soon - [www.thebridgeinc.org.au](http://www.thebridgeinc.org.au). We also conducted a special online event for staff and volunteers to thank them for their ongoing contribution.

In this edition we are pleased to provide an update on the essential services we have continued to provide during the pandemic, much to the relief of the participants, families and communities we support.

Despite the challenges many participants have thrived, and with our support they have continued to achieve their goals by developing skills, independence and confidence and many have found employment. Online servicing has been well received across Employment and Connects and due to its success, will continue with the help of our wonderful team of staff and volunteers. In 2021 we will continue to support the 7News young Achiever Awards as we believe The Bridge Create Change Award is a good fit for our organisation.

We know the work we and our partners do creates change by increasing inclusion for people with disability and those experiencing disadvantage.

We've included an update on our successful NDIS certification audit in August and want to take this opportunity to remind the people we support how much we value your feedback. Thank you to those people involved in the external audit and those recently involved in our surveys across all service areas.

In other news, our partnership with GoodHuman technology entrepreneurs continued to develop an app enabling NDIS participants more choice and control, while giving service providers an effective system for delivering services. Our Noble Park property development project, Park Grove, has progressed with the first stage of 11 townhouses being completed and the majority either sold or in the process of being settled.

In closing, in our 50th year of service, we want to pay tribute to all the participants, carers, staff and volunteers who have helped make The Bridge the vibrant and progressive organisation it is today. With your help and support The Bridge continues to be a thriving organisation with a bright future.

Thank you and we wish you all the very best over the 2020 festive season and hope for a more positive 2021.

## Jack be nimble

Like most other charities, in March The Bridge made the difficult decision to suspend our volunteer program, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, to minimise the risk of infection to participants, volunteers and staff. Reduced numbers, closed activities, and physical distancing restrictions meant our service model had to change, quickly, and it did.

The Bridge Employment led the way, swiftly taking their programs online; job training, 1:1 career counselling, liaison with employers and skill development. Next, Hayley, Service Coordinator, and her staff at Clyde Rd created a Facebook group for participants, giving them a platform to stay connected with their friends. Dandenong Day Service soon followed and both have continued throughout COVID-19.

While maintaining social connection has been the primary goal during COVID-19 isolation, the opportunities for individual learning has been a pleasing by-product of The Bridge's Facebook groups. Participants learnt to communicate with each other in an entirely different way. They shared photos, videos, art, recipes, ideas and feelings. They joined in on exercises, yoga, dancing, karaoke and much more!

Best of all, they laugh together, as we have all needed to do through COVID-19.



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## 7News Young Achiever Awards 2020 Vic

Congratulations to Harriet O'Shea Carre, winner of The Bridge Create Change Award 2020 in the Channel 7News Young Achiever Awards!

Harriet, 15 of Castlemaine co-initiated the #schoolstrikeforclimatechange movement in Australia, which organised protests for action on climate change that saw 300,000 people rally around the country and millions of people from across the globe. In 2019, Harriet won the Bob Brown Foundation Young Environmentalist of the Year Award.

The Bridge finalists 'Hayden's Helping Hands' won the People's Choice Award.

### 2021 Nominations are NOW OPEN!

We would love for you to help recognise a hard-working young person who is driving activities, programs and initiatives that promote or create change, by nominating them into **The Bridge Create Change Award**, part of the 7NEWS Young Achiever Awards!

Please visit the Young Achiever Awards, [www.awardsaustralia.com/young-achiever-awards/vic](http://www.awardsaustralia.com/young-achiever-awards/vic) to find out more. Nominations close **Thursday 14th January 2021.**



## NDIS Certification Audit

A big thank you to everyone involved in our first NDIS Certification in August. Due to COVID-19, the 4-day review by Global-Mark was undertaken via Zoom meetings, virtual tours and phone calls.

The audit team were impressed with staff commitment to ensuring quality services for all participants, with core values aligned to the values of The Bridge. Their report confirms The Bridge meets the requirements of the NDIS Practice Standards in providing person centered, responsive and safe services.

We received very positive feedback from participants/carers, including our response to COVID-19, continuing to provide services to those requiring essential supports, the use of technology to stay engaged with participants and regularly checking in with those not attending services during this time.



There were three areas for follow up and an action plan has been forwarded to the auditors outlining how we will address these over the next 18 months.

The Bridge has been recommended for NDIS Certification with the Quality and Safeguards Commission which is a great result given the challenging circumstances with COVID.

## Feedback and Complaints

The Bridge appreciates feedback about our services. You can give your feedback directly to staff, speak to or email the service Coordinator / Manager or submit via our website form, located on the Contact Us page.

Positive feedback reinforces to us that we're meeting your needs, whilst negative feedback is an opportunity to find out how we can better meet your expectations. If your feedback takes the form of a complaint, we will assist you to follow the Complaint Resolution Procedure. The Bridge organisational culture is one that values and learns from complaints. We know it is not easy to raise concerns with a service provider, but we encourage you to communicate directly with us at the time the issue occurs to see if we can resolve your concerns quickly.

We will listen to you to understand what has happened. You may also choose to contact external agencies who will follow up your concerns with The Bridge, on your behalf. For further details visit [www.thebridgeinc.org.au](http://www.thebridgeinc.org.au).



## Thriving during COVID-19

Participants at Webb Street have remained active and engaged during COVID-19. Gardening is one activity that continues to be a favourite.

Marija's favourite thing about going to Webb Street is helping in the garden by doing some weeding, planting of seedlings, watering and watching them grow.

She also likes some down time playing games on the Wii, like boxing, bowling and hanging out with her friends.



Michelle likes picking fresh vegetables from our raised garden beds. We hand pick, cook and eat fresh veggies in our cooking programs.

She also likes keeping fit and healthy by doing daily exercises in the gym program.



Johnny likes being outdoors and is always eager to help with weeding and planting of new plants in the garden because, "I feel like I'm contributing and doing my part at The Bridge."

One of his favourite tasks at Webb Street is helping sort the recycling items and he always makes sure the bins go out weekly.



## Vicki has continued to achieve her goals

"When Stage 4 restrictions came in, I was still working at Waverley Industries, Hallam. They had to cut down the number of workers and unfortunately my husband and myself were not selected to continue to work, so we'd been asked to take 6 weeks off, until mid-September.

We have been staying home and watching TV and DVDs. We watch the daily COVID press conference, watching case numbers. We go for walks and see how many people do and don't wear a face mask.

I like coming to Webb St, which I attend on Friday, Saturday, Sunday. I enjoy interacting and saying hello to different people and the staff. We do art projects, dance and exercise with Jamie, selecting different music. I've learnt new cooking skills, starting with food hygiene, washing hands and wearing gloves. Then how to measure, peel and cut the ingredients, how to stir and cook something, and place it into the oven safely.

I'm very happy with everything we do at Webb St. Once Getaways can return to normal, I'm looking forward to going on camps and outings, and going to the Disco again - cannot wait!"



## Supporting my independence

"My name is Margaret and I live on my own with support from others.

I started receiving support from The Bridge and although it has taken me a little while to get used to the idea, I am getting better at having people come and spend time with me and teach me new skills.

During the first COVID-19 lockdown, I went to stay with my sister Annette, in Canberra, as the 'unknown' made it difficult for me to stay at home by myself. The Bridge thought of a different way to stay in touch with me during my stay in Canberra and we were able to connect by using Annette's iPad and having 'digital supports' with my new support worker, Jamie.

This meant that I got to see, talk to and get to know Jamie online. Together we had some fun by baking cakes together, going for virtual walks around each other's gardens, talking about footy and having a laugh. Although it took me a little while to get used to this type of support, in the end I enjoyed our weekly catch ups.

Upon returning home, I am pleased to say my weekly sessions with Jamie continue, and I enjoy receiving supports from her and my other support workers, on a weekly basis.

This support allows me to stay living by myself and I am very happy about that."



## Determination is the Key

Veronica has proven that determination is the key when looking for work. Despite the impacts of COVID-19 on the employment market, she was able to secure her dream role as a receptionist for real estate agents LJ Hooker in June this year.

Since starting in her new role she has worked hard to prove that she has what it takes to make real estate her career. Her enthusiasm, determination and willingness to learn has seen her role develop and she is now completing open home inspections and assisting during the auditing process.

No longer just a job but a career, Veronica is now studying to obtain her Real Estate Licence and looking forward to a bright future.

Stacey (Youth Employment Coach) says "I am extremely proud of everything Veronica has achieved. Times are tough, but it goes to show that hard work pays off."

Congratulations Veronica!



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## Building confidence

The first day the Youth Jobs Now! coaches met with Shannon, in May 2019, they knew instantly that she would benefit with skills to build her confidence and self-esteem. They were presented with an extremely shy and anxious young lady who avoided eye contact.

Fast forward to November 2020 and even with a global pandemic thrown in, we hardly remember the shy and uncomfortable Shannon who was so

reserved. Through both face-to-face and transitioning to online servicing, Shannon has been working towards reaching her goals of increasing her confidence, social skills and to participate in supported work experience.

When we asked Shannon her thoughts on her progress to date, she said "I still feel all kinds of nervous but not to the point where I want to run away".



## Studies on hold to support the family

When the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in Victoria, Changkuoth had to return home to Melbourne and support his family. This however, meant putting his Law Degree on hold and looking for work at a time when jobs were scarce and competition high.

Despite applying for many jobs, Changkuoth was not even offered an interview. He heard about the Casey Project through a friend and reached out to Fili, Youth Projects Manager, for support.

Cambria Pallets, a loyal, long-term employer, contacted Fili looking for a reliable new member for their team and she immediately thought of Changkuoth. An interview was organised and Changkuoth impressed them with not only his skill set, but his enthusiasm, and he was offered a job on the spot.

Today, Changkuoth is enjoying his role and can support his family during these challenging times and has even been able to resume his studies online.



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### The Bridge Inc.

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1800 274 343  
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The Bridge Inc. is a  
registered NDIS provider



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03 8710 8555  
info@thebridgeconnects.org.au

Getaways  
03 8710 8588

Your Supports  
03 8710 8555

NDIS Support Coordination  
03 8710 8555

#### Day Services:

Clyde Road  
Berwick Vic 3806  
1800 274 343

Douglas Street  
Noble Park Vic 3174  
1800 274 343

Officer Community Hub  
Officer Vic 3809  
1800 274 343

Stawell Street  
Cranbourne Vic 3977  
1800 274 343

The Hub  
Dandenong Vic 3175  
1800 274 343

Webb Street  
Narre Warren Vic 3805  
1800 274 343

### The Bridge Employment

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Suite 3, Level 4  
26 McCrae Street  
Dandenong Vic 3175

03 8710 8555  
info@thebridgeemployment.com.au

#### Youth2You

Jobs Victoria Employment Network  
Casey CALD Youth Employment project  
Support for Jobseekers of African & Pasifika  
Heritage Program (SJAPH)  
03 8710 8555

Shop 48 The Mall  
Heidelberg West Vic 3081  
info@thebridgeemployment.com.au

Disability Employment Services (DES)  
Suite 8  
108-120 Young Street  
Frankston Vic 3199  
03 9784 3888

#### Youth Jobs Now!

Transition to Work / School Leaver  
Employment Support (SLES)  
Supported Employment / Social Enterprise  
Suite 2  
387-389 Springvale Road  
Springvale Vic 3171  
03 9546 2892

95A Cheltenham Road  
Dandenong Vic 3175  
03 9792 2662  
wbroomhall@thebridgeinc.org.au

## Yes! I would like to HELP BUILD THE BRIDGE

Please make your donation by:

- completing the donation coupon
- calling us on 03 8710 8555
- visiting our website [www.thebridgeinc.org.au](http://www.thebridgeinc.org.au)

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