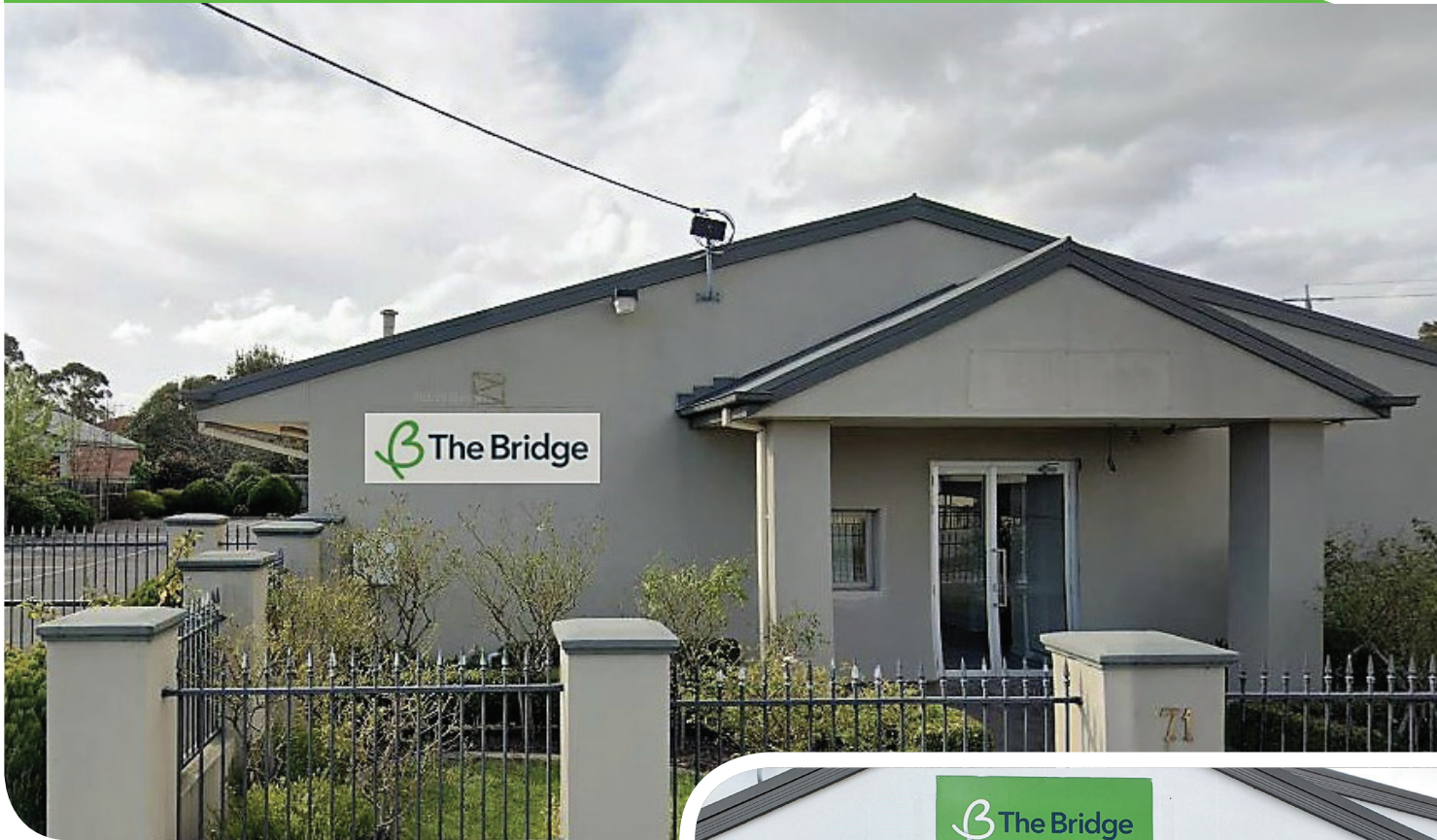


The Bridge News

April 2021



New year, new site!

In January 2021 we closed our Douglas Street, Noble Park site and relocated to a new, better equipped site at 69-71 Athol Road, Springvale South.

Athol Road provides a much larger, more accessible site with plenty of onsite parking. It supports an increased number of activities occurring at the same time and has fully accessible bathroom facilities along with some great outdoor spaces.



We reached out to some amazing community focused companies for assistance with donations and received a fabulous reply from Fytogreen Australia and MDT Products.

 The Bridge



Message from our Acting CEO Mary-Jane Stolp

After a challenging 2020 due to the impacts of Covid-19, this year started very positively with the opening of our newest location, Athol Road, Springvale South, enabling The Bridge to provide more services with greater variety.

Like other organisations, we have been keenly awaiting the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine and staff and participants have started receiving it now, which is great. With the vaccine and further easing of restrictions we are confident of continuing to expand all services in response to demand.

In March, we saw an abundance of energy and enthusiasm in revitalising our Getaways and Youth Jobs Now! services. Feedback on these improvements from participants has been very positive. In January we celebrated receiving an Australia Day Sustainability Award for our work during Covid, to stay in touch with all participants and their families and continuing to provide services. This was a great acknowledgement of our wonderful team of staff who continue to go above and beyond to keep our services running.

In this edition we provide details on the Royal Commission into Disability, noting that The Bridge is closely monitoring these proceedings to take on board feedback that can further improve the services and support we provide. The impact of the pandemic on people with a disability was investigated and the Covid-19 report made 22 wide-ranging recommendations after receiving evidence from people with disability, advocates, experts, and government representatives.

Findings will be discussed at our Community Voice Committee meeting in April 2021.

This year, The Bridge is again sponsoring the 7News Young Achiever Awards. We are very proud to be sponsoring these awards which acknowledge, encourage and promote the positive achievements of young people, up to 29 years of age, and showcase their achievements whilst paying tribute to their vision, innovation and commitment to their community.

In other news, we included some pictures from one of the community safety activities we conduct at our day services with Ambulance Victoria, which is always popular with participants.

Ahmad, our new Jobs Victoria Jobs Advocate has just commenced as a result of an initiative from the State Government to support and engage Victorians to access the right employment supports they need. The program is in response to the impacts of Covid where a large number of people are now newly unemployed. Ahmad has extensive experience of supporting people from a CALD background, including past work with The Brotherhood of St Lawrence and The Islamic Council of Victoria.

Ahmad - Jobs Victoria Advocate



Another great initiative has been the external review of our safety systems completed in late 2020. This has led to Board approval for additional resources in work health and safety which is quite timely given our Covid experience. We are in the process of appointing a Safety Coordinator who will work closely with our Quality and Risk team to ensure safe systems and environments for all workers, participants, carers and visitors to The Bridge.

In closing we want to mention the commencement of the second stage of our Noble Park property development project and the recent decision of the Board to include some specialist disability accommodation in Stage 3, something which we are very committed to and this aligned with our mission and vision at The Bridge.

We look forward to welcoming Phillip Toovey, CEO back in April, after his extended leave.

Update on the Disability Royal Commission



Royal Commission
into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation
of People with Disability

Disability Royal Commission

You can share your experiences of violence, neglect, abuse or exploitation with the Royal Commission (RC). This helps the RC learn more about any such issues and how we can all work together to help prevent it in the future.

You can share your experiences by making a submission or applying for a private session with a Commissioner. Please tell them about any support you need to do this.

Hearing from people with disability, families, support people, organisations and the broader community, helps the RC understand the extent and the impact of violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation against people with disability.

You can share your experience:

- in writing, over the phone, in a video or audio recording by making a submission
- in a private session with a Commissioner
- in your preferred language - including Indigenous languages and Auslan. The RC will provide interpreters and translators.

To contact the Disability Royal Commission, you can email (DRCenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au) or telephone 1800 517 199.

The Disability Royal Commission has published a report outlining the experiences of people with disability during the Covid-19 Pandemic. For more information on the Covid-19 report, please visit the Disability Royal Commission website. An Easy English version of the Covid-19 report can also be viewed [here](#).

Athol Road

As part of our move to Athol Road, we had visions of a beautiful outdoor area for all our participants to enjoy and further develop a range of skills. We had the foundations but we needed some assistance to get it to a user-friendly state.

We reached out to some amazing community focused companies for assistance with donations and received a fabulous reply from **Fytogreen Australia**.

Fytogreen Australia has become the industry leader and innovator in horticultural technologies. They supply, install and maintain both commercial and residential projects and is the largest supplier to the roof garden industry in Australia. Geoff, the Managing Director at Fytogreen Australia, heard our plea and responded with a fantastic donation of soil and planting systems for our planter beds, complete with fertiliser, water retention and drainage.

We sincerely thank them for their generous donation. We hope to plant our garden beds out and share our garden and produce with you all.

Our friends at **MDT Products** have helped us again by donating over \$2,000 worth of state-of-the-art Rover gardening equipment for us all to use at Athol Road. MDT is a leader in the design and manufacture of outdoor power equipment such as lawnmowers and snow blowers. They offer a range of lawn and garden products to inspire people all over the world to care for and enjoy the outdoors.

These products are used on a regular basis on our large Webb St, Narre Warren garden and have been of huge benefit to participants and staff. Thank you again MTD for your awesome donation!



GoodHuman

The Bridge is continuing to roll out GoodHuman across our Your Supports services. GoodHuman is a technology platform designed to help everyone easily access, provide and celebrate great NDIS funded support.

GoodHuman empowers employees and customers to work from one truly connected system that includes service management software with a built-in NDIS billing engine, a business app for frontline support workers and a customer app. The automated workflows

drastically reduces time spent on administration and enables our staff to spend more time actually delivering services and support. Most importantly, customers have more transparency and control of their bookings.

For more information go to goodhuman.me and for those participants and carers in Your Supports, Belinda will be in touch soon to let you know how you can download the app and start using the system for your bookings and communication with The Bridge.



GoodHuman empowers employees and customers to work from one truly connected system that includes service management software with a built-in NDIS billing engine.

Bridging the gap

By Danielle Kutchel

When Covid-19 hit in March 2020, disability support organisation The Bridge was forced to suspend its face-to-face operations and find a new way of working.

But when your model revolves around face-to-face support, that pivot is not an easy task.

Fortunately, The Bridge's community coordinator for Dandenong and Noble Park, Karina James, stepped up to the challenge as staff sought new ways to support their potentially vulnerable client group and their families.

Ms James and her Dandenong and Noble Park teams adapted their services to a combination of online support and reduced numbers in group activities.

Her leadership and 'we can do it' approach led her staff team - Phil, Krystina, Fahria, Adrienne, Maryse and others - and her client base to switch to new ways of doing things almost overnight.

These actions acted as a lifeline for The Bridge and its clients - connecting people, reducing isolation and building new skills and confidence in program participants.

And for her remarkable efforts, Ms James was presented with the Sustainability Award in the City of Greater Dandenong's 2021 Australia Day Awards.

The Bridge acting CEO Mary-Jane Stolp had supported the nomination and congratulated Karina on her well-deserved award.

"All The Bridge staff across our eight locations have adapted our programs to best sustain hundreds of our clients with disabilities," she said.

"Communication and connection have been terribly important through Covid. Karina has done a terrific job and The Bridge is thrilled with her Australia Day Award from the City of Greater Dandenong."

On the day, Ms James humbly thanked her



Karina accepts her award from Mayor Angela Long and Deputy Mayor Sophie Tan.

Picture: HAS MEDIA

team of 30 helpers, all her program participants, their families, and Dandenong council for her Sustainability Award.

The success of The Bridge in sustaining participants with disabilities through the challenges of Covid lockdowns, PPE, distancing and other measures through 2020 and beyond has been a big team effort, and very rewarding for the team involved.



Karina and Councillor Rhonda Garad.

Picture: SUPPLIED

Australia Day honour for Karina James

Dandenong Day Services Service Coordinator, Karina James, was presented with the Sustainability Award in the City of Greater Dandenong's 2021 Australia Day Awards.

This was in recognition of the great work that Karina and her team were able to achieve during Covid-19 in 2020, around adapting programs to ensure the continued support of hundreds of participants, both online and face-to-face.

Congratulations to Karina and her team and thank you to all the staff at The Bridge for their continued dedication to the people we support.

7News Young Achiever Awards – The Bridge Finalists Announced

The Finalists have been selected for **The Bridge Create Change Award** in the 2021 7NEWS Young Achiever Awards. The Awards aim to encourage, acknowledge and reward the achievements and valuable contribution young individuals make in their local communities.

The Finalists are:

- Fiona McDonald, 29 of Fyansford
- Jerusha Mather, 26 of Epping
- Victor Lin, 25 of Hillside

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 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. Winners will be announced at an Awards Gala Presentation Dinner to be held at Sofitel Melbourne On Collins on Friday 16th April 2021.



Fun and Adventures with Getaways

Following the extraordinary times of 2020, we are happy to say that Getaways is back in full swing with exciting new activities and weekends away.

While still offering a selection of everyone's favourite events, Getaways are now providing people with the opportunity to experience activities such as Le Mans Go-Karts, Bounce Trampoline Centre, The Funky Farm, and new destinations for weekends away, such as Axe Creek near Bendigo.

We recently sent out an Expression of Interest communication to registered Getaways participants offering a wide variety of events and activities, with a fantastic response so far. Some of these future opportunities include Peninsula Hot Springs, visiting the snow for a day trip, train trips to destinations such as Geelong, high tea, pamper weekends away to Daylesford, paint ball and live Theatre shows to name a few.

We are also working on getting the famous Bridge Hallam Disco back up and running as more Covid restrictions ease. We understand that the disco is very important and greatly missed by many people. Please stay tuned for further details and commencement dates. In the meantime, remember, we do have a fortnightly Online Disco. For anyone interested please get in contact with us on 8710 8588.

Thank you for the continued support Getaways has received from all participants, families, community venues, and staff. It is certainly very much appreciated by everyone in the Getaways team.

We are super excited to offer some awesome new activities and we can't wait for you all to be a part of it!



Community Awareness Education with Ambulance Victoria

Participants at Stawell Street recently had an education session run by David, a paramedic from Ambulance Victoria.

He showed participants how to call 000 and helped them to understand when it's really required. They had the opportunity to ask questions about David's job and they really

enjoyed the discussions around what to do if we are bitten by a snake.

Participants also had the opportunity to look at a range of equipment the ambulance service use, such as stethoscopes, and of course they loved listening to the sirens!



Getting Ready for Work with Youth Jobs Now!

Youth Jobs Now! have started their new program focused on gaining an insight into sectors and industries that relate to participant's employment goals. The program involves small groups (some online - some face to face) and provides the opportunity for participants to get out and about to meet employers.

First cab off the rank for these field visits is The Bridge Works, including a tour of the factory and the chance to be involved in a mini production line. The YJN! team will support participants to develop their travel training skills and independence as part of a dynamic employment focused program that will enable those involved to develop more confidence and optimism about gaining employment in the future.

Aaron, our new Employment Coach, has just commenced with YJN! and gained a passion for working with young people with a disability whilst volunteering in a special development school. He has worked in the not-for-profit sector organising events which have raised funds for a variety of charities, whilst studying to obtain a degree in psychology. Part-owner of a thriving café, Aaron is looking forward to bringing an employer's perspective to support Youth Jobs Now! participants.



Jobs Victoria Employment Network Update

Our Jobs Victoria Employment Network program is going from strength to strength for the start of 2021. We have been successful in receiving additional funding to support Victoria's Covid recovery.

The team are busy successfully supporting all eligible jobseekers to find employment, while working with local businesses as they reopen in the Covid-normal environment.

Our original program was aimed at supporting youth, but due to positive relationships within the local communities we are now able to assist any jobseeker who is experiencing disadvantage or difficulties in finding employment.

If you or someone you know would like assistance, please contact us on: enquiries@thebridgeinc.org.au

Disability Employment Services

Our DES team have returned to the office after 12 months of working remotely. It's been an exciting time to see everyone. We are extremely happy to be able to see our participants again!

We would like to welcome our new DES Consultant, Rebecca, who recently joined our hard working team in Frankston.

We recently had our external quality audit, which we are pleased to say we have passed after what has been a challenging year.



Our Jobs Victoria Employment Network program is going from strength to strength for the start of 2021. We have been successful in receiving additional funding to support Victoria's Covid recovery.

The Bridge Inc.

Registered Office
Suite 3, Level 4
26 McCrae Street
Dandenong Vic 3175

03 8710 8555
info@thebridgeinc.org.au
www.thebridgeinc.org.au

Postal Address
PO Box 7030
Dandenong Vic 3175

Service Enquiries
1800 BRIDGE
1800 274 343
enquiries@thebridgeinc.org.au

The Bridge Inc. is a
registered NDIS provider



The Bridge Connects

Main Office
Suite 3, Level 4
26 McCrae Street
Dandenong Vic 3175

03 8710 8555
info@thebridgeconnects.org.au

Getaways
03 8710 8588

Your Supports
03 8710 8555

NDIS Support Coordination
03 8710 8555

Day Services:

Athol Road
Springvale South Vic 3172
1800 274 343

Clyde Road
Berwick Vic 3806
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

Main Office
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

Yes, I want to help by making a donation of:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$150 My choice \$

My cheque/money order
(made payable to The Bridge Inc.) is enclosed or

Please debit my credit card

☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa

Card No.

□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□

Expiry Date

□□□□

Name on Card

Signature

Title First Name

Last Name

Address

Postcode

Email

Date of birth / /

Return your donation to:

PO Box 7030, Dandenong VIC 3175
Telephone 03 8710 8555
Email info@thebridgeinc.org.au
www.thebridgeinc.org.au

Thank you!

Your gift of \$2 or more is tax deductible.

