



Annual Report 2023/24

Our year in review

bch Bellarine
Community
Health



With you for life.

Bellarine Community Health Ltd (BCH) is the major provider of primary health services to the Bellarine Peninsula.

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Our CEO & Chair | 4 |
| Our Story & Our Vision | 7 |
| Our Services & Programs | 8 |
| Our Region | 9 |
| Our Reach | 10 |
| Our Clients | 11 |
| Our People | 12 |
| Our Staff & Volunteers | 13 |
| Our Clients Feedback | 16 |
| Our Acknowledgement | 18 |
| Our Vision for Diversity & Sustainability | 19 |
| Our Impact | 20 |
| Our Highlights of the Year | 24 |
| Our Advocacy for Community Health | 31 |
| Our Partners | 33 |

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Victoria and their ongoing connections to the land, and we pay our respects to their culture and their Elders past, present and future.

As an organisation we support the Uluru Statement from the Heart as it aligns with our values and priorities to support the health and wellbeing of all communities.

Statement of Diversity

We are working to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in our communities no matter their age, race, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity or cultural background. Our services are accessible to everyone regardless of social or economic status. We value and respect the diversity of our staff, volunteers, clients and communities.

Respect 2040

We are a proud member of Respect 2040 which is a movement to provide the resources and support for individual organisations and groups to take on and progress meaningful gender equality action, improving our community and our society while meeting the legal requirements of the state-wide Gender Equality Strategy.

Child Safety Commitment

We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Children and young people have the right to give their views and opinions about decisions that affect them and protecting them is the responsibility of everyone at BCH.

Sustainability Statement

We join other health organisations around the world in recognising climate change as a health emergency. Climate change is the single greatest health challenge facing humanity and we are committed to mitigating its impact through strategies to reduce our carbon footprint.

Acknowledgment of funding

We acknowledge financial support from the State and Commonwealth Governments along with private fee-for-service, community grants and donations.



Our CEO & Chair

We are delighted to present the Bellarine Community Health Annual Report for 2023-24 and are pleased to announce the operating result (excluding depreciation, capital income and gains from revaluation) for the financial year being a surplus of \$125k.

As the Bellarine Peninsula's largest healthcare provider, Bellarine Community Health's purpose is to deliver high quality services and programs that improve the health and wellbeing of our community. Our focus remains on innovative, accessible, quality health care that is sustainable and strategically focused on the most vulnerable people in our community.

This report provides a glimpse into the diverse and often complex work of BCH and reflects on the milestones and achievements of the past year including stories from our staff and clients. Highlights for the past year include:

- Co-location of The Orange Door at the BCH Drysdale site
- Inaugural ARRCH conference showcasing the work of Community Health
- Building work begins on the new Health and Wellbeing Hub in Ocean Grove
- Continuing to build our technology and people capability, implementing a new Home Care Package client management system along with a new quality management system
- Official opening of the Sirovilla Eric Tolliday Units
- NDIS and Aged Care compliance audits
- Employee Value Proposition, investment in an industry specific staff leadership program to build a sustainable succession of leaders at BCH

While 75 community health organisations operate across Victoria, BCH is one of 11 rural and regional community health services that work tirelessly to ensure people in regional and remote locations can access healthcare where they are.

Community health services play a crucial role in improving health outcomes. By focusing on early intervention, managing chronic diseases, and promoting healthy lifestyles, community health organisations provide services that prevent illness and manage ongoing health conditions effectively, ultimately improving the quality of life for individuals.

Community health services improve health outcomes by ensuring services like nursing, palliative care, speech pathology, allied health, NDIS support, home care, health promotion and dental services are accessible to people in their regions.

Community health extends beyond medical care. Community health organisations partner with local governments, schools, social services, and various community organisations to build a comprehensive support network. These collaborations address health needs more effectively and create a united front against community specific health challenges and can ultimately prevent hospital presentations. Community Health services provide the support needed to care for and keep people in their communities.

We are extremely proud of the work BCH performs and are grateful to the partner organisations and the government funders who collaborate with us, along with the individuals and communities who trust us with their care, the Board who provide valuable governance and leadership, and most of all our brilliant staff and volunteers. It is without a doubt the people who make the organisation the valued community asset we aspire to be, and we cannot do it without them.

Finally, our sincere thanks to Garry Ellis, former CEO and previous Board member of BCH, for his commitment over 5 years to bring stability to the organisation in the midst of a global pandemic and financial challenges.

Kathy Russell, CEO (left) with Fay Agterhuis, Board Chair (Right).



BCH is the largest healthcare provider on the Bellarine with a physical presence in five locations.



Our Story & Our Vision

The community health model was established over 50 years ago by the Whitlam Government. The vision was to shift the emphasis of healthcare from treatment to prevention and reduce community dependence on hospitals.

By 1976, the national program funded over 700 projects and services, including community health centres in metropolitan and rural areas, women's refuges and health centres, family planning services, Aboriginal community health services, workers health centres, specialist training for general practitioners and foundation chairs of Community Medicine in universities.

The program formally ended by 1981, but community health centres and services continued and developed differently in each state or territory.

Today in Victoria, community health is an integral component of Victoria's public healthcare system and our role in the community is more vital than ever. We remain committed to delivering services where and when people need them.

Community health plays the crucial role of filling gaps left by the broader health system and bridges the gap between acute and primary care sectors. Both placed-based and local, it reduces barriers to accessing services and provides support to community members throughout all stages of life.

We recognise that our communities have unique challenges in accessing healthcare and support services, so we aim to address these needs by delivering services that look at each client and their circumstances individually.

Client Annie at the BCH gym in Point Lonsdale.



Our Services & Programs

We offer a broad range of health services and wellbeing programs that support all age groups from children to older people. Our services include:



Allied health including podiatry, physiotherapy, dietetics and nutrition, occupational therapy, speech therapy, mental health professionals and exercise physiologists



Community nursing and palliative care



Health promotion



Meals on Wheels



Community transport programs



Home Care Packages



Public and private dental



Cardiac rehabilitation



Group exercise programs



headspace services



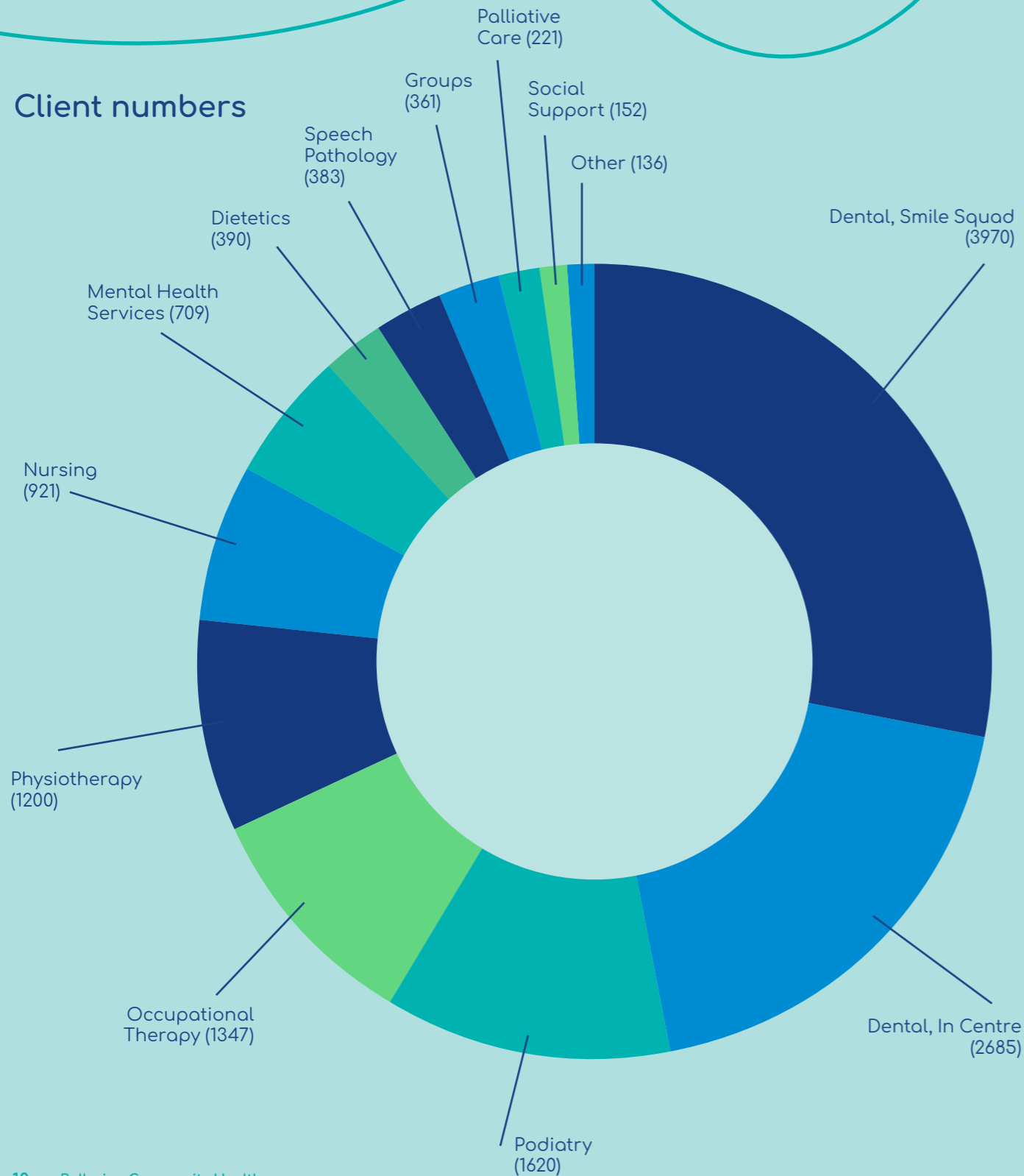
Social support programs

Our Region

We operate from five locations delivering preventative health and wellbeing services to communities across the Bellarine. A sixth location in the Kingston Estate in Ocean Grove is under construction.

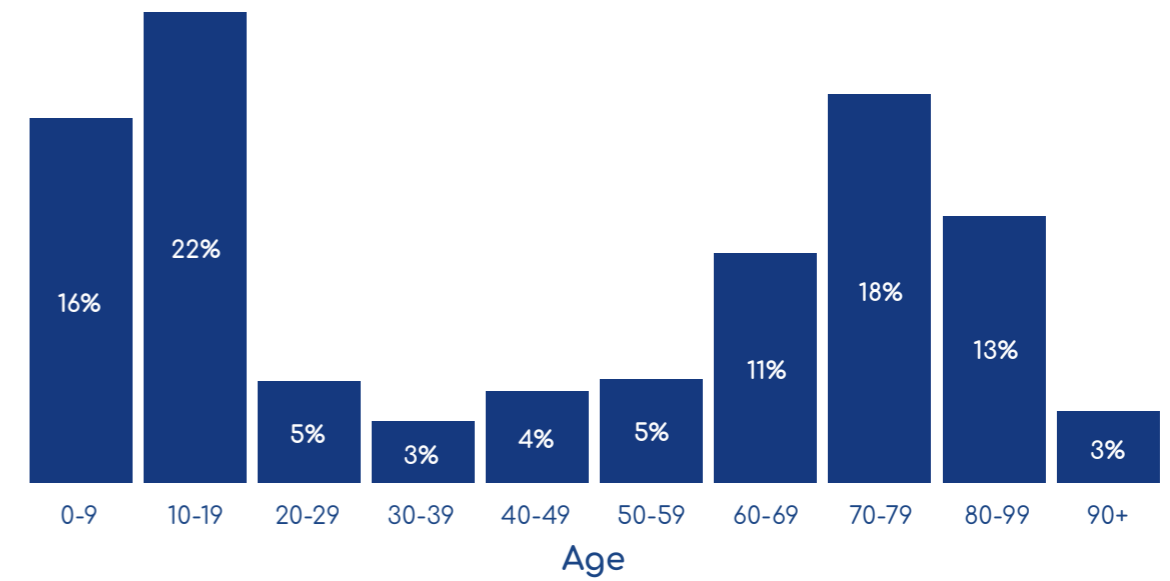


Our Reach

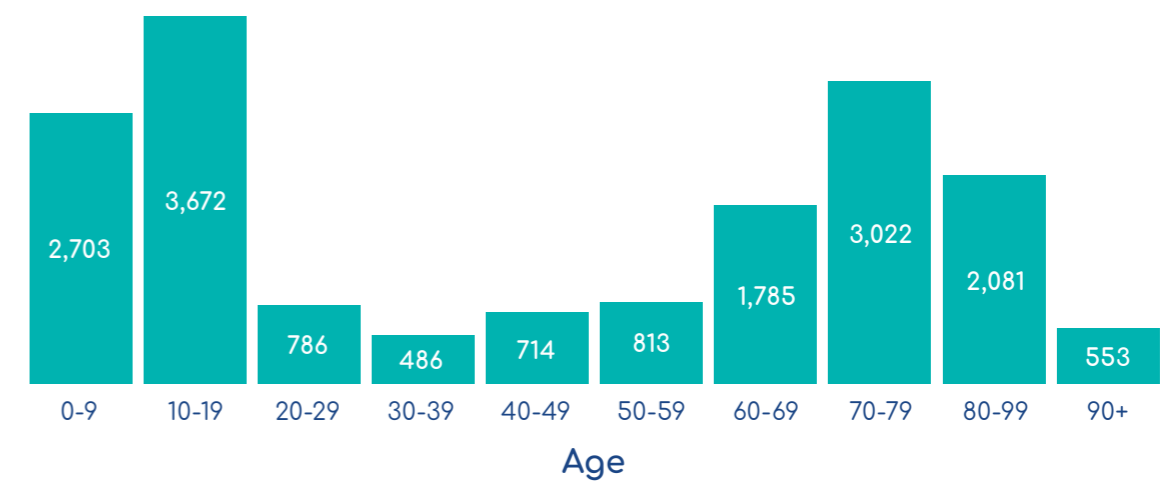


Our Clients

Age distribution of community health clients



Unique BCH client numbers by age group



Our People

Board Directors



Fay Agterhuis
Chair



Lucy Simons
Deputy Chair



Rod Slattery
Treasurer



Robert James
Board Director



Mark Harris
Board Director



Kristina Diuasi
Board Director



Jean Paul
Board Director



John Lesser
Board Director



Tim Walsh
Board Director

Company Secretary

Garry Ellis held the position of Company Secretary until 14 March 2024. The Board appointed Kathy Russell (Acting CEO) to the position of Company Secretary on 28 March 2024.

Full Board Meetings are held monthly, February through December. Board Sub-Committee meetings held monthly February through December, are:

- Governance Committee (comprising 5 Board Directors and the Executive Assistant to the CEO and Board as secretariat)
- Quality, Safety & Risk Committee (comprising 4 Board Directors; Board Chair as ex-officio member; CEO; Quality & Compliance Manager; Executive Director Child, Youth & Families; Executive Director Adult & Aged Services; Executive Assistant to the CEO and Board as secretariat)
- Finance & Audit Committee (comprising 4 Board Directors; CEO; CFO; Senior Accountant; Executive Assistant to the CEO and Board as secretariat)

Our Staff & Volunteers



150

staff employed in 106 positions (FTE)



89%

of staff are women



99

volunteers contributed almost 7900 hours of work

Kay's story

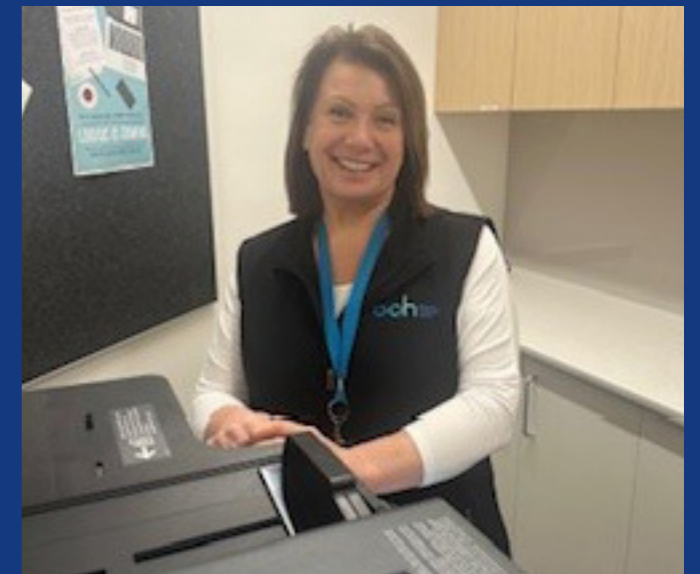
Intake/customer service

"I started working for Bellarine Community Health at the end of March 2013 as a Casual Finance Officer/Customer Service Officer but moved to the Intake team in 2015.

For several years I ran the BCH Pilot Program 'My Aged Care Support Service' which assisted hundreds of clients link into My Aged Care and BCH services.

I'm now the Manager of the Intake and Customer Service team and over the past 9 years I have seen a lot of changes. We've combined the Intake and Allied Health Assistant Roles in processing referrals, educating clients on funding options and how to access that funding. We've introduced Private Health Insurance, My Aged Care and NDIS, had two changes to the BCH Client Management System, along with an increase in services, number of referrals, and the number of Intake Officers we employ.

Intake is the engine room of our organisation navigating the complexity of each service's intricate procedure, priority structure and funding availability.



The Customer Service Officer Role has also changed over the years providing more support with data integrity, completing extra tasks when they can.

The Intake and Customer Service Teams are integral parts of our organisation providing invaluable support to every part of BCH, and I am very proud to be their manager and to be a part of the organisation. I have found my tribe!"



Liz's story

Allied Health

"I was lucky enough to start my journey at BCH within the exercise group delivery program. I did 1-2 groups a week in a casual role that then became permanent. I loved working in the exercise groups, the connection to community, assisting clients achieve goals and continuing to always talk about my passion of falls prevention education.

During my years at BCH I have worked within the intake team, assisting to process referrals for many of the clinical teams at BCH. My current role is as an Occupational Therapy Allied Health Assistant (AHA). AHA means I work under the direction of the Occupational Therapists. I love

this teamwork approach to service delivery. This ensures my days are varied, a mix of clinical and administrative work. I spent a short time with the child OT team, which was a wonderful learning opportunity for me. My current days can involve assisting with pressure care, booking appointments, talking, and assisting clients over the telephone, delivering a presentation or cleaning equipment.

I'm also a Health and safety representative, which I love, advocating and being part of solutions for all staff. I love working at BCH. The teamwork and friendly nature of all staff is what keeps me here, year after year."

Liz's story

Volunteer

"Volunteering started over 4 years ago for me, together with my husband Paul, we signed up and were looking forward to 'Going Places' and engaging with clients in the Social Support Programme at Point Lonsdale. Then COVID-19 struck a week later, and everything came to a screeching halt; but together we rode the wave of COVID and with our masks, face shields and our eye protection glasses, we found ourselves in frontline volunteering, taking the patients temperatures on their arrival and helping with office duties. I loved the interaction. 10 months of volunteering at the clinic, knowing we were keeping patients safe and comforting those in a difficult time who were not coping well. Towards the end we also helped staff when the COVID Immunisations were being rolled out and administered. It was such a rewarding experience.



Seeing the faces of the clients in the Friday Social Support Group, knowing that I'm doing everything in my volunteering role to keep them safe, keep them entertained and listening to them, as they all have their own stories to tell and then waving them goodbye at the end of the day, with huge smiles on their faces, 'It Does Light Me Up'"

Victoria's story

Palliative Care

Palliative care is collaboration. It requires regular discussions with a wide range of professionals, including GP's, generalist community nurses, allied health workers, pharmacists, after-hours-medical services, ambulance services, hospital staff, DVA providers, NDIS providers, aged care package providers, interpreters, and many others.

"The rewards of palliative care nursing are substantial, encompassing the deep human connection with patients and their families, building trust-based relationships, maintaining realistic hope, respecting patient choices, alleviating or improving symptoms, and providing the privilege of being present with someone in their final moments. We offer a listening ear, emotional support during times of loneliness or fear, and support for families through their grief."



Palliative Care Nurse Victoria with an end of life care pack.

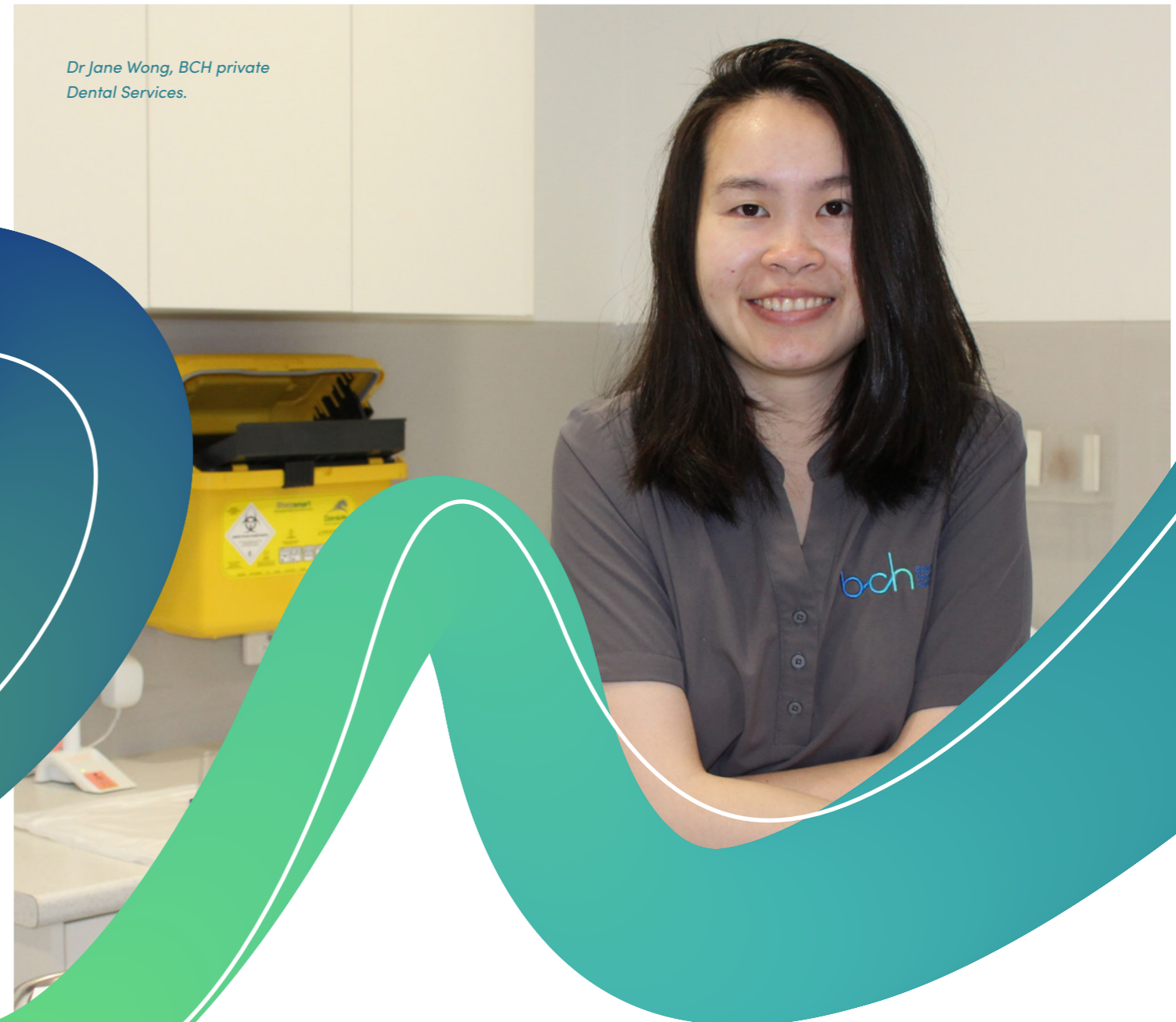
Our Clients Feedback

“The Going Places shopping bus and the bus drivers are so important to me because it provides an opportunity to visit shops which are not available to me. I can plan my shopping list and get help managing bags. I also look forward to the social contact with other shoppers.”

“I don't usually give feedback to organisations however in this instance I feel that I must inform the organisation of the excellence that I encountered today. It was my first time visiting the podiatrist at this facility. I would really like to point out to Bellarine Community Health that your podiatrist Carmen is like no other health professional I have ever met! She was so friendly, approachable, and made me feel very welcome and comfortable. I would happily recommend Bellarine Community Health services. The facility is set up to provide for the whole community making it very easy to access any of BCH services. Please make sure that all staff know how impressive they make this place 10/10.”

“How humbling it is to be so well looked after as we age and need medical and physical support. Bellarine Community Health workers are so highly trained and every person from my aged care, medical practitioners through to the receptionists in each area have been amazing. Growing older is not always easy, we become forgetful and vague in our thinking and dithery. Thank you for your patience.”

Dr Jane Wong, BCH private Dental Services.



Liaua's story

The best of dental care

“I first became aware of the BCH dental service when I moved to the region over 20 years ago.

There was, and is, a waiting list for treatment for dental work. But as told to me, in the case of an emergency, I could ring to be seen. I have had to do this on occasion and there has never been an issue with being seen.

Starting with the first port of call, reception, I have always found the staff to be caring, helpful and generous with their time and advice. Then the dental staff / nurses who have directed me through to the clinic. They are very pleasant and kind, which in turn, puts the patient at ease.

I have only ever experienced kindness, care and understanding from the dentists who have practiced at the clinic.

I want to take the opportunity to stress that Dr Jane is a wonderful dentist, who shows great care and empathy toward me and other people who are friends of mine and been in her care, including my 93-year-old Mother.

The services provided by this remarkable clinic, are at a very high standard and I am very grateful to be able to be a patient.”

Our Acknowledgment

We acknowledge the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters and skies of the Bellarine Peninsula. We acknowledge and respect Wadawurrung Elders, past present and emerging leaders and pay gratitude for their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, who are part of today's Bellarine community.

We are strongly committed to closing the health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and non-indigenous people.

Cultural appreciation training helps us understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and we are continuing to work towards establishing a cultural action plan. Some staff have been able to take part in Wadawurrung Cultural Experience sessions run through the Borough of Queenscliffe.

"It was a brilliant learning opportunity to gain a stronger appreciation of the connection that the traditional owners of the land have with the country upon which BCH operates and serves our community.

Led by an indigenous man who is currently connecting with local elders to learn more about the history of the region, it was emphasised that traditionally the indigenous communities who call Wadawurrung country home, would interact with the land and modify their own lifestyles to work with the land and the native flora and fauna. This contrasts with more contemporary methods that modify the land to suit the needs of the people, which has meant displacement of certain wildlife such as possums and changes to soil conditions that has changed the vegetation that can grow in the region.



BCH staff member attending a Welcome to Country ceremony.

This walk highlighted the value of working collaboratively with the traditional landowners while operating on the Bellarine. As much of the knowledge that has been accumulated over tens of thousands of years has never been written down and has instead been passed down through stories it is encouraged that everyone feels welcome to reach out to the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to learn more."

A reflection from Sam.

Our Vision

for Diversity, Inclusion & Environmental Sustainability

We continue to work towards cultivating a workplace culture defined by inclusivity, respect and safety for staff and our clients irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic background, social status, age, disability or religious beliefs.

A Diversity and Inclusion Working Group is now working on developing an action plan to make improvements across the organisation. We are committed to ensuring our staff, volunteers, clients and community feel safe, valued and respected.

We belong to Respect2040, a region wide partnership focussing on initiatives that address the drivers of violence and prevention of violence against women and we co-locate with the Orange Door Barwon at our Drysdale site.

A monthly Bellarine Rainbow Space is now operating at the BCH run headspace Ocean Grove site which provides an opportunity for LGBTQIA+ young people to come together for social connection and support in a fun and welcoming environment.

We continue to look for opportunities to mitigate the impact of climate change as we embark on the second year of our Environmental Sustainability Action Plan.

BCH has been recognised for its commitment to climate health action in the Healthy Workplaces Achievement Program for the many changes we have made across our worksites.



The team at headspace creating a welcoming space for LGBTQIA+ and young people.

We've made some great energy savings by installing timers to heating systems, trialled and rolled out new environmentally friendly, medically certified gloves across our services, and switched to using recycled toilet paper. BCH signed up as a charity partner for the Container Deposit Scheme. It's been a chance to engage with staff to support our efforts towards reducing our carbon footprint.

Our staff eagerly engaged in the 10,000 steps month long walking challenge to promote physical activity, alternative ways to get to work and health and wellbeing. A total of 13 staff teams walked an incredible 29,917,876 steps. Many staff used their work breaks to get outside and walk some of the beautiful locations on the Bellarine.

Our Impact

Social support

Margaret's story

The importance of social connection



It's like the long slow goodbye – that's how Margaret O'Meara describes caring for her 73-year-old husband Mike who lives with Alzheimer's.

Being a primary carer for a family member is a full-time job and Margaret admits, sometimes the job is a bit

overwhelming, and she feels tied down. However, she is grateful that Mike's illness isn't progressing rapidly.

Mike has recently joined Bellarine Community Health's Social Support Program in a group designed specifically for people with memory loss.



Every day he wakes up and says what's on today, and I'll say you've got your social group and he'll say, what social group," says Margaret. "He always comes home and says what a great group they are and how he enjoyed it."



Active our way

Promoting active living – students give it the thumbs up

A unique BCH program called 'Active Our Way' gives school students the opportunity to design their own physical activity programs. During energy-filled workshops, more than 430 students from across the three primary schools on the Northern Bellarine design their own fun, active living activities and programs.

Learning to snorkel and skate board are just some of the fun things the students are trying, with most students saying they've never tried those activities before. After the sessions the students say they feel more confident to try snorkelling and skating again.



I enjoyed snorkelling a lot, I saw lots of different sea creatures and it was a great experience for me." "It was my first time, and it was amazing, getting to breathe while my head was underwater and seeing a banjo shark."

Palliative care support

Cynthia's story

Support in a time of need

"My husband Bryan's diagnosis with inoperable metastasised oesophageal cancer in late November 2023 came as a huge shock.

After 3 rounds of the scheduled 6 of chemotherapy, the decision was made to stop treatment as his body was not coping well. A 15 day stay in hospital over Christmas 2023 due to toxicity cemented Bryan's and the whole family's decision that he would not be re-admitted to hospital, and we would do everything possible to honour his wish to remain at home.

The Bellarine Community Health Palliative Care team was engaged early on. Their visits initially were fortnightly but ramped up to almost daily as Bryan's health declined.



Cynthia and husband Bryan.

Bryan passed away peacefully at home on 13 May, surrounded by four generations of the family.

On behalf of the whole family, I would like to thank the BCH Palliative Care and Nursing teams for their incredible, dignified care of Bryan in his final weeks. Their compassion, expertise and understanding were second to none. We could not have granted his wish to remain at home right until the end without their remarkable assistance.

We are so very fortunate to have this service available in our community."

Bringing generations together

Gladys' story

You've got a friend in me

As Woody from Toy Story says to his fellow toys, 'you've got a friend in me', and that's what young people and older clients with Bellarine Community Health are now saying to each other following the launch of our intergenerational program for Social Support clients.

The program connects children from two primary schools with older adults with lots of fun and engaging activities that bring smiles all round.

92-year-old Gladys who lives by herself in Drysdale loves being part of the program.

"I've been with the Social Support program for a couple of years and I think it's just wonderful the way the young children have integrated with us oldies is brilliant. They just talk to you as though you're one of them.

I've got a lovely little girl called Lucy. I feel really comfortable with Lucy, and I think she feels comfortable with me because when I walk into the room, and she sees me her face lights up and we have a hug. We talk about holidays, we talk about what she's been doing and her friends and sleepovers, whatever comes to mind."



Gladys and Lucy love their time together.

"I think the kids get a lot out of it too. They join in and have a laugh and a chat, and they tell us they look forward to coming to see us."

Mental health

Derek's story

Pushing-Up to support youth

Across the Bellarine people are pushing up for youth mental health as part of 'The Push-Up Challenge' - Australia's largest mental health and fitness event. The challenge sees participants complete a push-up target, raising awareness of mental health and funds for organisations like headspace Ocean Grove.

One local group throwing its support behind the Bellarine based headspace service is the Peninsula Blitz Basketball Club, with more than 65 members of the club including children, teenagers and young adults taking part.



Derek (far right) took part in the push up challenge to raise awareness for mental health.

"Many of the leaders in our club are men who have firsthand experience with mental health struggles including myself. We recognise that this is an issue that affects both men and women, however, statistics show a higher rate of suicide among men, and we are committed to understanding why this is the case, raising awareness, and encouraging men to connect with available services."

Physical support

Bob's story

The importance of staying active in both body and mind

BCH runs several group exercise programs for people at various stages of physical ability. These groups are supported by the Physical Wellness program team.

"There's an old saying move it or lose it and as you get older your muscles just start to wither away and if you don't compensate for that then you need to start using a stick or a cane and I want to push that back as fast and as far as I can. I'm 80 years of age and I'm still managing to lift some reasonably heavy weights. I challenge myself to ensure the rate of repetition and lifts I do doesn't decline, my aim in life is to not digress and to hang on to the level I'm at.

I think an important ingredient when you age is social interaction with people your own age and I think isolation



80 year old Bob is a regular at the gym.

is a real killer so the ability to be able to come to gym and in an environment with people in similar age group and with similar problems to yourself does foster a community spirit. We have a bit of fun here and a bit of banter amongst ourselves in the spirit of being here and there's an element of positivity that we get from that that we don't fully recognise. I come here to lift some weights and exercise, but we are also exercising our minds and using our mind and having fun with like-minded people."

Navigating the aged care system

Our client's story

The Port Hub

Have you ever tried to navigate the aged care system or access My Aged Care? If you have, you'll know that it can be a very challenging system for people to understand. Making a phone call to My Aged Care, trying to access services online or even knowing what options are available to you can be daunting.

BCH has started a volunteer-run service to try to help demystify My Aged Care for people over 65 and their carers and families. Our volunteers staff a community hub at our Portarlington site twice a week to answer questions and to support people to contact My Aged Care online or by phone.

Here's some of the feedback from those people we have helped.

"I would never have had the confidence to make that phone call by myself." "Thanks, it's the first time I've actually talked to people about my situation and I'm very grateful."



Volunteers at the Portarlington Hub.

"I would never have gotten this far without your help."

Our Highlights of the year

July '23

BCH joins all 24 registered community health services in launching the Community Health First Position Paper at Parliament House. The paper presented to Victorian Health Minister Mary-Anne Thomas and Department Secretary Euan Wallace outlines five key priority areas in addressing challenges in our health system. It calls for the health system to be reimagined to deliver cost effective solutions that focus on improving outcomes for everyone. BCH is a proud member of both Community Health First and the Alliance of Rural and Regional Community Health.



Our team take part in one of many community events throughout the year to showcase the breadth of supports and services their local community health service offers. BCH often attends community-based events at schools, social clubs and other associations to support the community's understanding of local health service offerings.

August '23

The Orange Door (TOD) Drysdale site officially opens. TOD provides free help for people experiencing family violence and is co-located at the BCH Drysdale site. This co-location means people experiencing family violence, elder abuse, family breakdown which increases the risk of homelessness or people who need assistance with the care and wellbeing of children and young people can get support close to where they live.

BCH achieves full accreditation under the new National Safety and Quality Primary and Community Healthcare Standards. The accreditation audit covers almost all of BCH services. The auditors highlight the partnership BCH has with the community, stating the commitment of BCH to effectively partner with their consumers is obvious, and that the organisation has a progressive approach for inclusive service provision and community platforms.



September '23

We celebrate the 12-month anniversary of the launch of BCH Environmental Sustainability Action Plan. BCH continues to work towards actions outlined in its plan including trialling sustainable medical supplies with clinical staff, changing to more environmentally friendly cleaning products, increasing opportunities for recycling and seeking funding to install solar panels at other BCH sites.



October '23

BCH achieves recognition for its commitment to Climate and Health Action through the Workplace Achievement Program. BCH continues work towards actions outlined in its Environmental Sustainability Action Plan including big and small improvements to recycling, energy efficiency, using sustainable products and giving out more than 150 trees to staff to plant for the second year in a row.

The children's team celebrate Childrens Week at the Drysdale library with story time using books about feelings and information on strategies to help children with their emotional health and wellbeing through creative play and targeted activities.



BCH unveils the location of the new Health and Wellbeing Hub in the Kingston Estate in Ocean Grove. The Corless Family who own the Kingston Estate development gift the land to BCH in honour of family patriarch Ed Corless who had a vision of contributing to public health outcomes.



BCH delivers a presentation on its Inclusive Dental Program at the inaugural conference run by the Alliance of Rural and Regional Community Health (ARRCH). Speakers include the Minister for Health and the Secretary of the Department of Health, both of whom express a recognition of the contribution of community health to the overall health system. The conference is a wonderful showcase of the incredible work and outcomes achieved by ARRCH member organisations across the state.

November '23

After months of testing, a new client management system is introduced for the Home Care Package team. This new system streamlines how we support our clients to live safe and well at home.

'You've got a friend in me' is what we're calling our new Intergenerational program. It brings together our Social Support clients with grade 5-6 students from a local primary school in a fun and meaningful way. The program gives the clients and students the opportunity to share experiences, knowledge and lots of love and laughs.



The Healthy and Connected Communities team celebrate the 12-month anniversary of a unique BCH program for children in primary schools called 'Active Our Way' which is student designed and lead.

The BCH senior leadership team participate in a cultural appreciation workshop as part of the work towards establishing a cultural action plan for the organisation.

December '23



Staff celebrate the end of the year with a 'talent show'. Lots of laughs and a great showcase of the many 'hidden' talents of our BCH team.

January '24

Building works get underway on the new Health and Wellbeing Hub in Ocean Grove. This new development for BCH will deliver a purpose built, accessible and inclusive hub that will provide the Bellarine community equitable access to quality health services and supports and enhance our capacity to engage with children, young people and their families.



Our Social Support team host a lunchtime sausage sizzle to connect staff and our clients. This terrific opportunity sees clients chat with staff they don't normally interact with and sparks some interesting conversations and is enjoyed by everyone.

February '24

Work begins on building and implementing a new Governance, Risk and Compliance system for BCH which will provide the organisation with an integrated reporting system for quality management.

CEO Garry Ellis announces his decision to transition to retirement and end his time with BCH. Mr Ellis took over as CEO in 2020 and played a key role in delivering a turnaround strategy in his time with the organisation. Chief Financial Officer Kathy Russell steps in as Acting CEO while recruitment gets underway.



March '24

Sirovilla celebrate the official opening of the Sirovilla Eric Tolliday Units on the BCH Point Lonsdale site. More than 60 people, including Neil Tolliday, son of Eric Tolliday, current residents and their families, Board Directors of both BCH and Sirovilla, Local Member Alison Marchant and Borough of Queenscliffe Mayor Isabelle Tolhurst gather to mark the occasion.



The innovative Farm My School initiative which has seen a disused soccer pitch at Bellarine Secondary College transformed into a working regenerative farm is named as a finalist in the prestigious Banksia Sustainability Awards. These prestigious awards recognise and celebrate excellence in sustainability practices. The Healthy Planet, Healthy People category specifically highlights contributions that support the health of the planet to improve human health and wellbeing. The team also highlighted the amazing work they're doing during a live ABC radio interview.

April '24

BCH undergoes a NDIS compliance audit. As a registered NDIS service provider, BCH undergoes an independent assessment every 18 months. As well as being a requirement for registration, the independent assessment process is an important quality activity as it provides us with further opportunities to continually improve our services.

Our Social Support clients are busy in their new outdoor garden space planting herbs and vegetables. The clients are loving being able to get hands on in the garden and watching their new plants grow.



May '24

A new Diversity and Inclusion working group is established to look at ways BCH can evaluate and become more accessible, respectful of diversity and culturally safe and inclusive.

BCH celebrates Volunteer Week with an afternoon tea for BCH volunteers and other volunteers from various community groups.

The BCH led Bellarine Wellbeing Connect (BWC) alliance is officially launched with a showcase to help communities on the Bellarine learn about the breadth of services available to them. BWC is an alliance of diverse, community-based organisations working to support the health and wellbeing of our communities.



June '24

Staff training sessions being held across the month to support staff with the implementation of the new quality management system.

The headspace Ocean Grove team launch a new Rainbow Space for LGBTQIA+ people aged 12 – 25 to come together in a safe and welcoming space and wrap up participating in The Push-Up challenge which raises funds and awareness about youth mental health services.



Our innovative Little Growers – story time in the garden project, in partnership with Geelong Regional libraries wraps up. The program supports children’s understanding of nutrition and healthy eating by teaching them how vegetables and herbs grow and the importance of including them in their diet. It helps develop fine motor skills and coordination through activities like planting seeds and watering plants.



Our Advocacy for community health

We joined with many of the State’s independent Community Health organisations to celebrate 50 years since the Community Health Program was established at an event hosted by the Governor of Victoria, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, at Government House.

The Governor counted the introduction of the Community Health Program in 1973 as transformative for Victoria’s healthcare system but also for the millions of Victorians who now rely on it.





As active members of both Community Health First (CHF) and The Alliance of Rural and Regional Community Health (ARRCH) we are working to build and elevate the profile of the Community Health sector by developing relationships with key ministerial and government decision makers.

We are working to increase investment into the community health sector and expand community health's role within the health system through advocacy work and developing budget submissions to Government.

The development of the CHF position paper, called 'Strengthening Victoria's Healthcare system through Community Health' is another critical outcome of the collaboration of Community Health organisations.

An inaugural conference is a key activity for the ARRCH group to showcase the work of Community Health. More than 240 delegates attend the conference held in Creswick with keynote speakers including the Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas and Secretary for the Department of

Health Euan Wallace, along with several other senior Department representatives and key stakeholders in the health sector.

Each of the 11 ARRCH member organisations present on some of the unique programs they provide in the community, along with a poster presentation which highlights several research projects and health service delivery models. Our own unique Inclusive Dental Program is among the many innovative programs showcased at the event.

Guest speaker Australian Journalist Professor Stan Grant delivers a very moving address about the connection between health and history, including personal details of his life.

The conference is also a platform to officially launch the ARRCH alliance, an initiative which has been warmly welcomed by the Department of Health as a powerful tool to lobby as one voice rather than individual voices.

Our Partners

Alliance Rural and Regional Community Health

Barwon Health

Bendigo Bank Bellarine

Bellarine Secondary College

Bellarine Wellbeing Connect

Bellarine Training and Community Hub

Blitz Basketball Club

Borough of Queenscliffe

Community Health First

Compassionate Hearts on the Bellarine

Corless Family Trust

Costa Foundation

Deakin University

Dental Health Services Victoria

Department of Family Fairness and Housing

Department of Health

Department of Health and Aged Care

Farm My School

Geelong Community Foundation

Geelong Regional Libraries

Geelong City Council

Give Where You Live

headspace

Primary Healthcare Network (PHN)

Respect2040

Sirovilla

Stride Mental Health

The Orange Door Bellarine

Vichealth





Bellarine Community Health

Point Lonsdale, Ocean Grove, Drysdale,
Drysdale Schools Precinct, Portarlington.

1800 007 224

info@bch.org.au

www.bch.org.au

ABN: 96 536 879 169

