

# Quarterly Newsletter

APRIL 2021 EDITION



## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

*Hello everyone,*

So much has happened since our last quarterly newsletter. We have experienced a snap five-day lockdown, the COVID-19 vaccine rollout has commenced, and participants have slowly returned to our Day Support activities and to their Supported Employment roles.

While many restrictions have eased, we are still required to follow the Care Directives set out by DHHS. As a result, we will continue to provide day supports in line with the density requirements to ensure we have a safe number of people visiting our community homes at any one time. We will also continue to comply with, and monitor transport requirements. We are undertaking risk assessments on each of our venues to assess their viability so more of our participants can return to day support activities.

While the rollout of Phase 1a and 1b of the COVID-19 vaccine has commenced, many aged care and disability providers have not received a date for the administration of the vaccine. We are encouraging participants and staff to seek appointments at a vaccine hub as part of the 1b rollout instead.

*Read more in our vaccine rollout update on page 2.*

On another note, we are pleased to announce OC Connections will soon have a presence in the City of Casey, offering disability support across day support, community living and employment services.



**Above:** Caroline Nicholson (left) and Kate Kemp (far right) from The Metropolitan Golf Club presented Therese Desmond, CEO of OC Connections and Alyson, a participant from OC Connections, with a donation cheque from their 2020 fundraising drives.

We are also excited to hold our Charity Golf Day this year. Last year we were forced to cancel the event because of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. It is exciting to be working with The Metropolitan Golf Club again to ensure a fun-filled day for all our supporters who continue to attend this day.

We are hoping that this is just the beginning of returning to normal operations and we can continue to welcome more participants to our premises and have many opportunities to see and talk to our wider community.

Stay safe.

**Therese Desmond**

## VACCINE ROLLOUT UPDATE

As you may be aware, the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine was planned to occur in phases to ensure Australia's most vulnerable receive priority attention.



As part of this plan, people and staff living in disability services accommodation that house more than one person were to receive the vaccine as part of Phase 1a. This was to be administered by the Department of Health on-site at our accommodation. However, as with other aged care and disability providers, OC Connections has not been provided with a date for COVID-19 vaccinations as part of the Phase 1a rollout. As a result, a number of medical centres are making contact with their patients and some people are electing to access the vaccine that way.

Phase 1b of the rollout has also commenced. Phase 1b includes people with a disability or with age-related conditions such as early onset dementia and those attending centre-based services (e.g. day programs, respite care, supported employment). It also covers volunteers and staff working in disability support. People within this category can access the vaccine from one of the many vaccine hubs within Victoria. We are working with our staff to ensure they receive the vaccine in a timely manner.

People with disability and workers eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine in Phase 1a are also able to attend a Phase 1b vaccination site to access the vaccine if they choose to do so.

We are therefore encouraging participants from our Accommodation, Day Support and Employment Services to obtain the free COVID-19 vaccination from one of the vaccine hubs. We recommend you contact your treating medical practitioner to establish if they are able to administer the vaccine, or you can find a hub nearest to you by working through the Eligibility checker here

[www.covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au/eligibility](http://www.covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au/eligibility)

***From our initial investigations, it appears that you can get appointments in May and June if you book now.***

OC Connections will require a copy of your vaccination record. You will receive a copy of this record on your My Gov account, which you can download and send to us after both vaccinations. This can be emailed to the following email addresses:

**Day Support Participants -**

DaySupports@occonnections.org

**Community Living Participants -**

Communityliving@occonnections.org

**Supported Employees -** Info@ocenterprises.org

Alternatively, vaccination records can be photocopied at OC Connections reception at 773 Warrigal Road and 1088 Centre Road.

If you are unable to access your My Gov account, please provide a letter from your GP confirming you have received the COVID-19 vaccine (including whether you have received the first, second or both doses).

We anticipate that proof of vaccination will be required in the near future for those wishing to travel, or to enter certain community buildings such as aged care or hospitals, so we encourage you to keep a copy of your Vaccination Certificate with you at all times.

To keep up to date with OC Connections vaccine rollout news please visit our website at [www.occonnections.org/covid-19](http://www.occonnections.org/covid-19)

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**For more information contact OC Connections on 9569 0603.**

## CONGRATULATIONS KATHLEEN AND RODNEY!

**We are so excited to congratulate Kathleen and Rodney on their recent Commitment Ceremony.**

Originally planned to be held in February 2020, their special event had to be postponed three times due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, on 28 February 2021, family and friends, including some fellow residents, participants and staff from OCC, gathered at the Old Cheese Factory in Berwick to witness the celebration. Rodney's father, brother and sister and Kathleen's brothers, sister-in-law, nieces and nephews also attended the celebrations.

In a beautiful ceremony Kathleen and Rodney committed to a lifetime of friendship and exchanged rings with each other and then celebrated until late in the day with food, drinks and gift-giving.

Their event could not have happened without the support of Kathleen's family including her brother Paul and his wife and Rodney's father Richard, who all played a big part in organising a wonderful day.

With our supporters' generosity, the OC Achieve Fund funded many aspects of the ceremony, including the catering, Kathleen's dress, Rodney's suit, wedding rings and hairstyling on the day.

The couple topped off their special day with a "honeymoon" at Phillip Island. Taylor Hunter, OC Connections Senior Support Coordinator, worked closely with Kathleen and Rodney to plan their getaway to the last detail. The itinerary included their must-see places such as the Penguin Parade, San Remo Pelican Feeding, a trip to the Maru Koala and Animal Park, Phillip Island Grand Prix Circuit, Churchill Island, and of course dinner and cocktails!

**"It was so much fun to sit down with Kathleen and Rodney to organise their honeymoon. Kathleen wanted to go away for a month! "**

**Taylor Hunter, OC Connections Former Senior Support Coordinator**



The pair stayed in accessible accommodation close to Cowes and were delighted that the house manager sent flowers to them on their arrival. Using their NDIS core funding (support worker portion), they were able to have OCC Disability Support Worker, Jo travel with them.

Taylor said, **"It was such a shame that we had to keep postponing the celebrations, but we got there in the end. It was great that Kathleen and Rodney could choose where and how to spend their time away."**

Both Kathleen and Rodney were residents of Allen Street and moved to their new home in 2017. Their home features an apartment with two bedrooms, ensuite and a living area separate from the main living areas. This design has allowed them to live together as a couple, with support from our staff.

Kathleen and Rodney's commitment ceremony is an important step in their relationship. It is also a perfect example of how with the right support, people with intellectual disability can achieve their personal goals and live the life they choose.



## NEW OCC HUB IN THE CITY OF CASEY

Did you know that the City of Casey is in a growth corridor where the NDIA has predicted by June 2023 there will be 14,400 people in the Southern Melbourne Region with an NDIS Plan?

The significant increase in people requiring NDIS plans in the City of Casey will mean a rise in demand for quality disability services in the area.

OC Connections is passionate about supporting the community and providing its knowledge, experience and advocacy to support people in the City of Casey. To meet the demand, OC Connections will provide individualised support so people can choose what they do and how, when and where they do it.

***Stay tuned for more information on our Casey Hub soon.***

## BUILDING DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

**OC Connections (OCC) has embarked on a very exciting project to review and improve the quality of our homes and make them more comfortable for residents.**

All homes where OC Connections provides Supported Independent Living (SIL) will be inspected in the coming weeks and months, and a plan will be developed to upgrade any homes where improvement is required.

Under NDIS, newer homes may even require some upgrades to bring them in line with the Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) guidelines.

In the coming weeks, specialist tradespeople will be visiting our homes with the OC Connections Facilities Manager to check each home.

Once this initial work has been completed OC Connections will develop a plan and will commence discussion and consultation with residents and families living in each home about any changes that may need to be made to the home. It is expected that the improvement project will take a number of years to complete.

Our Housing Project is in its earliest days, however, we will continue to keep staff, families and residents updated as further developments arise.

This is an exciting time for our Community Living area and is another step towards providing quality accommodation for people with disability in the community.

## ROYAL COMMISSION

As the Disability Royal Commission continues, we would like to remind participants and families that support services are available to help by way of counselling, advocacy and legal services. You can find out more about these services on our website:

**[www.oconnections.org/royal-commission](http://www.oconnections.org/royal-commission)**

Disability  
Royal Commission





## OCCE CAR WASH SERVICE GROWS

**OCCE Car Wash Services has grown significantly since it started. There are now 16 sites located across Melbourne from Sunshine to Mordialloc.**

The current OCCE car wash sites include Victoria Police (9 stations from South Melbourne to Chelsea), Mordialloc Freeway Project, Baptistcare (Sunshine), Melbourne's Cheapest Cars, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education, City of Casey and the City of Kingston.

Currently, team leader Rishi is leading a team of ten supported employees across the sites. With the addition of new commercial customers, there are opportunities to welcome more people to the car wash team in both supported and open employment roles.

If you are interested in these roles please visit our website here [www.occonnections.org/get-involved/work-with-us](http://www.occonnections.org/get-involved/work-with-us)

## NON-FACE-TO-FACE BILLING

From 1 July 2019 the NDIS made a change to allow service providers such as OC Connections to claim or bill against a person's plan for key activities conducted that did not involve direct face-to-face support with the individual participant.

OC Connections held off making those changes in 2019, however from 1 July 2021 we will be claiming or billing for non-face-to-face activities that are conducted to support a person's face to face support. All activities that will be claimed by OC Connections will be allowable under NDIS guidelines. You can view these guidelines at [www.ndis.gov.au/providers/price-guides-and-pricing/annual-price-review/2019-20-annual-price-review](http://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/price-guides-and-pricing/annual-price-review/2019-20-annual-price-review)

The NDIS has advised providers that non-face-to-face activities are billable if:

- the activities are part of delivering a disability support item to a participant such as writing a report about the client's progress (rather than a general activity such as staff rostering)

- the provider explains the activities to be billed to the participant
- the proposed charges for the activities comply with the conditions set out in the NDIS Price Guide.
- billable non-face-to-face activities must relate specifically to the non-face-to-face services delivered to a particular participant, and do not include general administrative tasks. The amount charged can only relate to the time taken to deliver the non-face-to-face support each time.

It is important to note that NDIS specify what a provider cannot claim or bill for and providers cannot simply adopt and apply a standard non-face-to-face fee to all support items and/or a participant's ongoing appointments. The charge needs to be reflective of what is delivered each time a support is provided. These charges and related times will be recorded for NDIS auditing purposes.

More information including an Easy Read explanation will be sent to participants and families shortly.

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**If you have any questions regarding this change please call OC Connections on 9569 0603.**



### **PARTICIPANTS HIT THE GROUND RUNNING IN 2021!**

**After such a challenging 2020, it is lovely to see participants and staff so excited and engaged with the extensive range of activities that form the Day Support program at OC Connections (OCC).**

We recently chatted with Jazzy Howlett, a Support Worker at OCC who is passionate about engaging participants in new and challenging activities. Jazzy was excited to fill us in on what has been happening in her regular Tuesday program called Learning for Life.

Participants Jack, Cassie and Haris are in the Tuesday group organised and run by Jazzy each week. The Learning for Life program is for participants who want to visit new and exciting places and enjoy educational experiences. In 2021 the group has already ticked off some of Melbourne's favourite locations, including Melbourne Museum, State Library Victoria, NGV, ACMI, Myuna Farm and The Ian Potter Centre.

Each week, after the group collectively plan their day, they head out to their chosen venue. The group decided that their first excursion in 2021 was to be to the Melbourne Museum. Cassie loves animals and is especially interested in dinosaurs, so visiting the dinosaur exhibit in January sounded like an excellent choice.

Jack, Cassie and Haris and two support workers spent much of the day at the Museum visiting the dinosaur walk, getting up and close with the skeletons, posing for pictures and looking at the animals.

The participants especially loved the dinosaurs, trains and the forest gallery. Some did not enjoy the mind and body exhibit as it was a bit dark and scary in some parts!

We stopped for lunch and enjoyed a walk in Carlton Gardens afterwards. On the train trip back to OCC, a few of the participants roared like dinosaurs, and Jack even did some actions!

**Jazzy Howlett,**  
Support Worker, OC Connections

The goal of this program is for participants to learn more in an area of interest. Jazzy told us that Cassie loves animals and wants to learn more about all aspects of animal keeping. On the trip to the Museum, they learned a lot about ancient species and many other animals.

The initial trip was so popular that the group recently returned to the Museum, tying in a movie at IMAX Melbourne where they saw the film 'A beautiful Planet' in 3D.

**Jazzy Howlett**

The format of the Learning for Life program usually involves travelling to the destination in the morning and immersing themselves in the new experience.

The afternoon is spent back on-site at OC Connections. The group consolidates the morning's learnings with practical exercises and activities based on what the group learned during the day.

During the term, participants build a portfolio of their work that illustrates their achievements. This term, participants have been busy creating posters, completing scavenger hunts, and making booklets about their day.

Jazzy says she is looking forward to seeing some wonderful portfolio creations at the end of the semester!

## 24 YEARS' SERVICE

**OCC Enterprises' Learning and Assessment Manager, Athena Kontonis, celebrates 24 years with OC Connections this year. We caught up with her to find out what she's been up to all these years!**

### Where did you start your journey with OCC?

I started with what was then Oakleigh Centre Industries when it was located at 773 Warrigal Road, as a third-year university placement student, working alongside the Employment Supports Manager. I was then offered some casual work for six months before I headed off on an overseas holiday to celebrate the end of Uni. On my return, I commenced work as a production supervisor, a position I held for 6-7 years.

When audits became mandatory within the sector, I took on the role of Quality Coordinator with some additional work in RecLine (recreation activities) and Community Living. For the last ten or so years, I have been working as a Learning and Assessment Manager. However, that role has changed significantly over the years too.

### What are the biggest changes you have seen in the disability sector since you have been working?

The biggest change in employment for people with disability is the move away from the "Sheltered Workshop" idea without any career development into real employment where employees and their goals are valued and we work with them to achieve their employment goals, whatever that may be. It's exciting!



### What have been the challenges you've faced in this sector?

It can be very demanding as you are dealing with people's lives, self-worth and confidence and have to deal with both their fears and their families plus the constraints of funding before you can take the step into meaningful employment. There are not enough hours in the day, but I wouldn't have it any other way. It's a fun place to work and I love it.

### And your favourite part about working here?

The people. I know it's cliché but seeing them give something a go even though it is out of their comfort zone and simply because of the trust they have in us makes my day.

## IT'S FOOTY SEASON - COME AND TRY SESSIONS!

The Mazenod Panthers All Abilities AFL Club is welcoming people to their Come and Try Sessions. The sessions are free so prospective footballers can try the club before taking the next step and registering.

The Panther's participate in several levels of the All-Abilities football competition to accommodate all skill levels. The club strives to offer the best environment for AFL All Abilities players.



**MAZENOD PANTHERS  
COME AND TRY!**

Starting February 10, 4:30-5:30pm @ Mazenod College, Mulgrave  
The Panthers is an all abilities football club located in Melbourne's south-east

**Dates:** Every Wednesday

**Time:** 4.30pm to 5.30pm

**Location:** Central Reserve, Glen Waverley  
(from first Wednesday in April)

**For full details visit their website**  
[www.mazenodfc.com.au/panthers-info/come-try](http://www.mazenodfc.com.au/panthers-info/come-try)

# OC CONNECTIONS 25th CHARITY GOLF DAY

SUNDAY 27TH JUNE, 2021 AT THE METROPOLITAN GOLF CLUB



18 HOLE PAR | PRIZES | LUNCH

[www.occonnections.org/oc-golf-day](http://www.occonnections.org/oc-golf-day)



## 2021 OC CONNECTIONS CHARITY GOLF DAY

We're excited that the OC Connections Charity Golf Day will be held this year. An important event in our fundraising calendar and supported by The Metropolitan Golf Club, all proceeds go towards providing unfunded supports for people we support.

### TO PLAY

Visit [www.occonnections.org/oc-golf-day](http://www.occonnections.org/oc-golf-day) to book your ticket.

Individual tickets \$200

Book a team of 4 for \$760.

### TO VOLUNTEER

This event relies on the assistance of volunteers to help it run smoothly. If you are interested in helping for a couple of hours on an activity, please contact [volunteers@occonnections.org](mailto:volunteers@occonnections.org)

## WE'RE HIRING!

We are currently recruiting several new positions including Disability Support Workers and Car Wash team members.

If you know of anyone, or if you think you fit the bill, then please visit our website [www.occonnections.org/get-involved/work-with-us](http://www.occonnections.org/get-involved/work-with-us) to read the position description and find out how to apply.

## VISIT THE OCC WEBSITE AND STAY UP TO DATE

Please visit our website [www.occonnections.org](http://www.occonnections.org) to get the latest OC Connections announcements including COVID-19 updates, participant stories and useful support resources.