Connections
Opportunity & Choice

Quarterly Newsletter

AUTUMN 2022 EDITION

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

To our valued community,

It is hard to believe we are already into our fifth month of the year. Time is flying by even as we run this marathon that is the pandemic.

Despite the change to restrictions in the community (as outlined in this newsletter), restrictions are to remain unchanged in disability settings. This is a wise decision, as we must remain vigilant in safeguarding the most vulnerable members of our community and build an environment in which participants, families and staff can feel safe and heard.

On a positive note, I am pleased to report that our Rockbeare staff and residents successfully relocated to serviced apartments this month, allowing for the refurbishment of this home. They will get to enjoy the luxuries of serviced living through to June, when it is anticipated the works will be completed. We will provide a detailed update and photographs in the next newsletter. Staff, participants and families impacted have been kept updated on all aspects of the relocation and refurbishment.

It has also been pleasing to see the return of more staff and participants returning to community activities and I hope that this can continue as we head into the Autumn and Winter months. We will endeavour to keep you updated as to any changes to our operations before they occur.

Just a reminder that we have a range of disability resources and COVID updates on our website, to assist you. However, should you require assistance with finding the appropriate information on supports, vaccination information, COVIDSafe operations or any other disability related information, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us by calling us on **9569 0603** or emailing us at **administration@occonnections.org.**

Take care
Therese Desmond

FAREWELL DEB WHITE

Deb White worked at OC Connections and was a much respected member of staff. On her retirement, OC Connections day participant Aidan interviewed Deb on her time at OC Connections and what the future holds for her.

This interview is the result of a new program whereby we engage participants as champions of OC Connections. This program matches participant goals with potential opportunities in our Marketing and Communications team.

I interviewed Deb White, Team Leader, on the 24th March, 2022. Deb said the role of Team Leader is to support and assist the staff on the floor and participants when required. She said "Our role is to set a good example for staff".

Deb had been working at OC Connections for 14 years, starting when it was called the Oakleigh Centre. She started in the day service and then worked in accommodation. She also worked with rec-line disco, the holiday program and worked at OCCE. She works permanent part-time, mostly 4 days a week.

Deb had wanted to do this role for quite some time, so she was pleased that she was able to step in as Team Leader. She was able to build rapport with participants and staff and get to know them all.

She said "The biggest joy has been getting to see everyone develop their skills and achieve goals. People who have come in from the start until today – seeing how they have developed. And working with such a friendly group of people. Staff and participants are all like one big family. We work together to get through the tough times like COVID".

Deb is retiring and I interviewed her the day before her last day. I asked Deb why she is leaving and she said "I don't have one specific reason. I think it is time for some young, fresh blood to come in. I'd like to travel and my daughter and grandchildren moved to Queensland, and I miss them terribly. I'd like to spend more time with them".

Deb said she will miss everything about OC Connections. The participants and the staff. "I'm happy in a way, but have mixed emotions. I will miss the bonds that you form with people. We talk about musical theatre and my kids have been performers. You and I have chats about musicals, so I will miss having those talks with you. My favourite musical is also The Sound of Music. The memories will always be there, but I will miss seeing everyone. The staff are very supportive. We all support each other the best we can and work together as a team".

Deb added "I've really enjoyed my time as Team Leader. It's been challenging at times, but I'm very grateful for OC Connections for the opportunity".

Deb finished by saying "I will miss everyone very much, but I will hold the memories with me. I wish OC Connections, you (Aidan), and all the participants all the best in the future".

We wish Deb well in her future endeavours and thank her for her contribution to the OC Connections' community; and thank you to Aidan for his detailed interview. We look forward to more of his work.

FURTHER RESTRICTIONS EASED

The Victorian government announced further easing of restrictions within the community on 20 April, 2022 as a result of the high vaccination rate within the state. However, restrictions are to remain in disability settings, which include:

- **Visitor restrictions will continue in disability residential care settings. Residents can have up to five visitors a day if each show a negative rapid antigen test result, or two visitors daily if no test results are provided.**
- **Face masks will remain in disability residential facilities and non-residential and community settings.**
- **Service providers have been advised to continue using the existing guidance.**

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing has advised that new disability sector fact sheets are being prepared. A number of critical and common-sense settings will be retained, including:

- **7-day isolation following a COVID-19 diagnosis**
- **Existing vaccination mandates for workers.**
- **Visitor restrictions in care facilities will be retained to protect the vulnerable (please see below)**
- **Face coverings will still be required on public transport and at airports and in sensitive health, aged care and justice settings.**
- **All workplaces will still require a COVIDSafe Plan.**

You can read more about the restrictions removed at our COVID Update page at **www.occonnections.org/covid-update.**

We will post a news update and notify participants, staff and families regarding any further changes to disability settings when these are available.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE 4TH COVID DOSE

Some groups of people will be able to receive their fourth — and in some cases, their fifth — dose of a COVID-19 vaccination.

The ABC News website, has written a great article that covers all you need to know about the 4th COVID Dose. You can read it online from our COVID Update page:

www.occonnections.org/covid-update

OCC ENTERPRISES: HELPING TO SUPPORT KINDER KIDS

In an Australian first, the Victorian Government is funding three-year-old kindergarten across the state and to celebrate is giving all children enrolled in a funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program in 2022 a Kinder Kit – carry cases filled with books, toys and activities made especially for three-year-olds to enjoy at home.

OCCE's packing team have been working with Tinta Crayons, packaging their environmentally and child safe crayons for distribution. The crayons have been included in the Kinder Kit as a child friendly and safe option.

This project is another example of connecting with our community to provide opportunities for people with disability to reach their personal and employment goals.

PHILLIP IS MAKING AN IMPACT

Phillip is a representative on the OC Connections' Staff Consultative Committee. He currently works in the packing section of OCC Enterprises as a supported employee.

Phillip joined the Staff Consultative Committee as a representative of the supported employee cohort with the aim of making information accessible for supported employees.

"**I want to improve the way information is delivered and received while having a say in the decisions made**" says Phillip.

Every team member and team's contribution has an impact felt throughout the whole organisation. Our aim is to facilitate the contribution made by OC Connections' employees to ensure that they feel safe and heard.

JOSHUA IS LIVING HIS BEST LIFE

Our Casey Hub is helping us bring our supports to the City of Casey and surrounding suburbs.

Joshua needed supports on the weekends as well as finding social activities with people in his age group.
Joshua had also expressed he wanted to develop his independent skills while been able to work during the week.

Together with the Casey Disability Support Hub Coordinator Lyndall, Joshua was able to establish a regular support program with an OC Connections' disability support worker. Every Sunday Joshua gets to go out into the community and live his life the way he wants to. You can find out more at our Casey Disability Hub web page: **www.occonnections.org/occ-casey-hub**

DISTANCE IS NO MATCH FOR TRUE FRIENDSHIP

Jane and Fred are long-term friends who live in separate OC Connections' supported accommodation. During lockdown they had to rely on phone calls and zooms to say connected. Fred also sent cards to Jane and a video performance of him playing the didgeridoo.

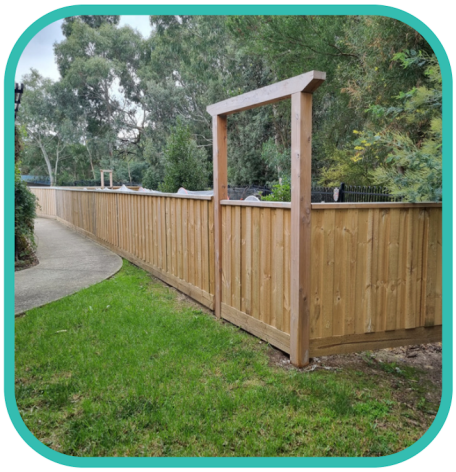
Community Living Team Leader, Whitney Kendall, says that it has been important for staff to facilitate these connections for not only Jane and Fred, but all OC Connections' community living residents.

As restrictions lifted, the two have been able to spend some more time together – sharing meals or even a coffee in the backyard of Jane's house. This photo is truly worth a thousand words.

TIME FOR A FENCE LIFT

The vegetable garden at 773 Warrigal Road has been a space for OC Connections participants to tend to and reap the harvest of their hard work, encouraging participants to hone their green thumbs, and learn about sustainable living. Crop gathering, and food preparation have been activities enjoyed by participants in our day program.

The garden has undertaken a facelift, with a new boundary fence, to separate it from the rest of the garden space, and a netting to prevent possums from helping themselves to some snacks. Geoff Lester and his team from Southeast Gardening were responsible for the fence upgrade, creating a more aesthetically pleasing area for participants and staff to enjoy.



CATHY ACHIEVES HER GOALS AND CELEBRATES IN STYLE

Long term Community Living resident, Cathy, set out two goals earlier this year: to celebrate her birthday with her sister and fellow residents, and to attend her niece's wedding.

With the help of her Disability Support Worker Zeel, her family, and behavioural specialist, Cathy was supported in picking out two dresses for two different occasions, in the set up of her residential home for her birthday celebrations, and the travel and attendance of a wedding.

This is a great example of how OC Connections works with participants and their closest supporters to understand how we can support participants in reaching their goals.

OC CONNECTIONS' PARTICIPANT REFERENCE GROUP (PRG)

The OC Connections' Participant Reference Group (PRG) is an established committee comprised of OC Connections' participants with a focus on empowering and advocating for all participants at OC Connections. Established in 2019 the PRG consists of 6-8 participants, an independent chairperson – disability advocate Tricia Malowney OAM, deputy chairperson – Board Member Sara, and a secretariat OCC Administration Officer, Jules Rogers.

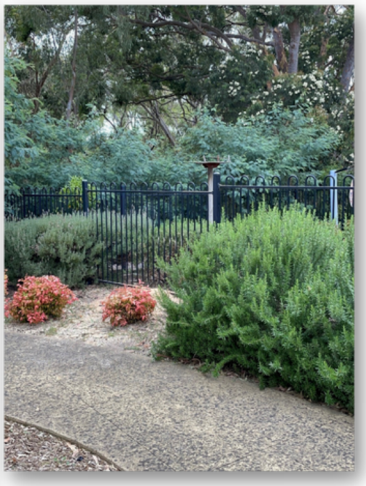
The PRG is an important channel through which participants can develop a sense of belonging, independence and contribute to the operations and support they receive at OC Connections. It also provides a sense of connection to the organisation and the board, through the attendance of a Board representative.

The PRG feeds into a variety of subcommittees, delivering decisions, suggestions, and action plans to these committees via its members. The subcommittees consist of the Day Support Committee, OCCE Committee and the Supported Accommodation Committee. These committees are also attended and run by participants of OC Connections with the assistance of support workers.

The PRG is just one of the ways we work with participants to ensure that our services and programs are co-designed with an ongoing, open feedback process so that we can adapt support to participants' ever-evolving lives.

TREE-MENDOUS SUPPORT

We would like to thank Melbourne Treeworks for their tree-mendous effort on the safe removal of an old gum tree at our Warrigal Road property. Below are some photo's of the before, during and after process.



Support from Australian IT Group

On the 21st of March, 80 players attended an inaugural golf day hosted by the Australian IT Group. OC Connections was generously nominated as their charity of choice.

Players were given the opportunity to support OC Connections through donations and an auction, whereby the winning bidder received a round of golf for two players to be accompanied by pro-golfer Daniel Beckman.

We would like to thank Australian IT Group's General Manager Sales and Marketing, Diego Deka for his continued support of OC Connections and CEO's Michael Miloseki and Jackey Li for donating to our organisation.

If you wish to support OC Connections, you can donate at **occonnections.org/donate** or call **9569 0603**.

CELEBRATING OVER 100 YEARS OF COMBINED SERVICE

"Ian and Gary are both highly valued team members who come to work each day with a positive attitude to work and learning, and support their teams in any way they can."

Athena Kontonis, Learning and Assessment Manager

It's not everyday that a workplace celebrates an employee's 50 years of service, let alone 50+ years for two employees! But that's exactly what OCC Enterprises (OCCE) supported employees, and brothers, Gary and Ian have achieved – over 50 years of employment at OCCE, making them our longest standing supported employees.

Both Ian and Greg have learned many skills at their time with OCCE, made life long friends and have truly become assets at this workplace.

Ian and Gary are a testament that a friendly and safe environment teamed with the opportunity to continue to learn new skills make for engaged and happy long-term employment. The team at OCCE recognised Ian and Gary by presenting them with milestone service awards – and what a milestone it is.

Congratulations to them both!

OC CONNECTIONS

WINTER APPEAL - LAUNCHING JUNE 2022

Help us make a difference to the people we support!

Each year our Winter Appeal raises further funds for items, services and activities not funded by the NDIS, so we can further enhance the quality of life for people with a disability.

Families, friends and our community are called on to contribute to the OC-Achieve Fund to help participants learn new skills, improve their independence and build confidence in their daily lives.

Thanks to the amazing support of people just like you, the Winter Appeal has previously funded the purchase of:

- Sporting equipment so that participants learn new skills, increase their health and fitness, and build the confidence to join a local club
- iPads to improve participants education and communication
- Purchase of art supplies and equipment
- Equipment for participants personal use
- Updating of furniture in our houses
- Support for people to access new activities and events

Over the Winter months you will read stories on how the OC-Achive fund has impacted specific participants. If you wish to get a head start, you can donate today at **occonnections.org/donate**

OC CONNECTIONS
26th CHARITY GOLF DAY
MONDAY 11 JULY, 2022
AT THE METROPOLITAN GOLF CLUB

MORNING & AFTERNOON SESSIONS
18 HOLE AMBROSE
COMPETITIONS & PRIZES
LUNCH & REFRESHMENTS

ALL PROCEEDS TOWARDS SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

We look forward to hosting our annual charity golf day this year. Tickets are on sale from **Monday 16 May** and can be purchased online at **occonnections.org/oc-golf-day** or by calling 9569 0603.

We are currently seeking sponsors and volunteers to help support this event.

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