

# Quarterly Newsletter

## WINTER 2022 EDITION



To our valued community,

As we are now well into Winter, I hope you are staying safe and well. While we continue this fight against COVID-19, and combined with the flu, our priority continues to be to keep the people we support, our staff and our community safe.

The government have launched a Stay Safe this Winter campaign to remind everyone about the importance of both COVID and flu vaccinations as well as reminding everyone to stay home if they are unwell.

With the latest wave of COVID-19 impacting our community, we have made some additional changes to our covid safe practices. These include the reduction of onsite corporate staff; continuation of N95 masks and face shields for all staff; daily rapid antigen testing prior to entry to all staff and visitors to sites and being careful about our support and access in the community, with preference for low populated venues and areas.

In other news, it was pleasing to be able to reconnect with various friends of OC Connections these past few months. We welcomed the Hon Anthony Carbines and Mr Steve Dimopoulos MP in May; Towards Employment participants returned to work experience at Cheltenham Secondary College; participants had the opportunity to travel and take part in their chosen sports at a competition level; and we were fortunate enough to hold our 26th Annual Charity Golf Day in July.

In addition to the successful fundraising through our Golf Day, we also have our Winter Appeal which raises money for our OC Achieve Fund, providing more opportunities for participants to be supported in reaching their goals. If you can contribute, or know others who might like to, please donate today via the [www.oconnections.org/winter-appeal](http://www.oconnections.org/winter-appeal)

Thank you for your continued support. Take care and stay safe.  
Therese Desmond

# OC CONNECTIONS

## MINISTERIAL VISIT

In May, OC Connections' welcomed the Hon Anthony Carbines, State Member for Ivanhoe, in his role as Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers and for Child Protection and Family Services, and Mr Steve Dimopoulos MLA for Oakleigh and at the time, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier and Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health, for a tour of our Day Support program. Mr Tom Baxter, OC Connections Board Chair was also on site to showcase OC Connections to our guests.

The tour was an opportunity to showcase the NDIS in action, and the support and programs that OC Connections provides people with disability.

"These visits are such an important opportunity for OC Connections participants and the work we do to support them. It is important that when the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers makes a policy decision, he has a personal connection and a picture of who and how they will be impacted by Government decisions," says Therese Desmond.

The visit coincided with our Participant Reference Group meeting, providing a chance for the members of Parliament and their teams to see in action the important engagement and contribution of participants to the operations of OC Connections.

The team spent over an hour at Warrigal Road and provided a positive report on their experience. Minister Carbines later posted on his social media feeds:

**"It's no wonder Oakleigh's Steve Dimopoulos MP was so keen to visit OC Connections - there's a real buzz here - they're a disability support provider where inclusive opportunities for daily activities, work & community visits for people with disability are at the centre of all they do."**

Congratulations also to Mr Steven Dimopoulos who, since his visit, has been appointed as the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events and Minister for Creative Industries.



## JACK TAKES ON THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Jack who works in the Defence Administration Assistance Program (DAAP), recently competed in the Wheelchair Rugby National Championship on the Gold Coast.

Jack represented Box Hill Rugby Union Football Club, The Broncos – one of two Victorian teams taking part in the Championships.

The Broncos made it through to the grand final and won silver! Congratulations Jack and the team, we look forward to hearing about future games!



### ATAGI RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A 4TH COVID VACCINE DOSE

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has recommended an additional COVID-19 booster, or fourth dose, for people over 30 years of age, to be given 3 months after their first booster dose. ATAGI specifically recommended that people aged 50 to 64 years should have their fourth dose, while people aged 30 to 49 years may choose to have a fourth shot.



This additional booster will be a fifth dose for people who are severely immunocompromised, have an underlying medical condition or disability.

You should get a fourth dose if you are:

- 30 years or older
- a resident of an aged care or disability care facility
- severely immunocompromised (this will be a fifth dose)
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and aged 50 years and older
- 16 years or older and with a medical condition that increases the risk of severe COVID-19 illness (see the table below for expanded groups)
- 16 years or older with disability with significant or complex health needs or multiple comorbidities which increase risk of poor outcome.

Vaccines can be booked three months after your last vaccine dose or COVID-19 infection. Given this latest advice, we encourage staff who are over the age of 30 and who received their 3rd vaccine dose more than 3 months ago to book in for this additional booster shot.

If you wish to find out more information please visit: [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)



### SEEKING CARERS AND PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITY TO HELP CO-DESIGN HEALTHCARE SERVICES

The SPEAK Project aims to improve healthcare for people with disability. The project focuses on autistic people, people with intellectual disability, and people with communication support needs.

The project is an initiative of Alfred Health and aims to ensure people with disabilities and their carers feel safe, understood and supported while in hospital.

They are therefore seeking people who have first-hand knowledge of disability and accessing healthcare to co-design their services.

In particular, they are seeking carers of people with intellectual disabilities, those with communication support needs and carers of autistic/neuro-diverse person to join their co-design group.

If you are interested, or know someone who is, you can find out more about The Speak project at the following link: [www.alfredhealth.org.au/about/patients-come-first/speak](http://www.alfredhealth.org.au/about/patients-come-first/speak)

## MY NDIS APP

The My NDIS app gives participants a more accessible and user-friendly way to:

- **make and manage claims**
- **view their budget**
- **view plan information and personal details.**



NDIS participants, carers and supporters are encouraged to try out the app and provide feedback via the feedback option in the app.

The app will work alongside the myplace participant portal to help participants quickly, easily and flexibly manage their NDIS plans.

## OC CONNECTIONS' 26TH ANNUAL CHARITY GOLF DAY

We would like to thank all who attended and supported our 26th annual Charity Golf Day on Monday 11 July. Over 160 people registered to play at The Metropolitan Golf Club.

It was a pleasure to welcome sponsors and players, with fabulous weather, a magnificent course, great prizes and even better company. Congratulations to our best teams on the day:

Morning Session Winners:

**Nic Brian, Dean Nelson, Simon Olive and Mark Rise**

Afternoon Session Winners:

**Rick Charlton, Ryan McIntyre, Tony Nasrallah, and Jesse Toby King**



Thank you to the Members of The Metropolitan Golf Club for the continued long term support.

## NOT ALL SUPERHERO'S WEAR CAPES, THEY ALSO CROCHET BLANKETS.

OC Connections' long term Supported Independent Living resident, Alyson has a passion for crocheting and helping others.

With the help of her support worker, Alyson has been able to combine both passions and help a charity organisation in the process.

Alyson will be donating her handmade woollen wonders to the organisation of her choice and has advised us that the organisation will change on a monthly basis.

We thank Alyson for being so caring and willing to help others. We know those woollen blankets will definitely come in handy during the cold months of Melbourne.



## FREE RAPID ANTIGEN TESTS (RATS) FOR VICTORIANS WITH DISABILITY – EXTENDED TO 30 SEPTEMBER, 2022

The free rapid antigen tests program for eligible Victorians with disability has been extended to 30 September 2022.

Until 30 September, Victorian NDIS participants, disability support pensioners or people with disability who receive a TAC benefit can access up to 20 free rapid antigen tests by visiting their local state-run testing site. Carers can also pick up tests on behalf of someone with disability.

Only state-run testing sites are providing free rapid antigen tests to people with disability. To find your local site that has rapid antigen tests, visit:

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/get-pcr-test-covid-19>

If you are unable to attend a site, contact a Disability Liaison Officer for assistance.

[www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccination-information-people-disability#you-can-get-help-from-a-disability-liaison-officer](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccination-information-people-disability#you-can-get-help-from-a-disability-liaison-officer)

If you have any questions about rapid antigen testing, please call the 24/7 Coronavirus hotline on **1800 675 398**.

## IT STARTED AS A HOBBY

OC Connections would like to congratulate Darren, Craig and Damien, Day Support participants at OC Connections, on their selection to represent the Victorian Bocce team at the Special Olympics in Launceston, Tasmania later this year.

The three men started with the Bocce team back in 2019 for some fun, to improve their hand-eye coordination, develop new skills, and to build a connection with team members.



After playing the sport for a number of years, Bocce Cub organiser, Maree noticed that they all had a real knack for the sport and introduced the idea of playing on a professional level. Never did they think that one day they would represent Victoria at the Special Olympics.

Having to travel to Tasmania for the competition was initially daunting for the team, however, after lots of conversations with the families, support coordinators, the Special Olympics Committee, and the Bocce team organisers, the jitters were overcome and a plan was put in place. This is a great example of how OC Connections works with participants and their closest supporters to understand how we can support participants to reach their goals, do new things and celebrate all that is important to them, all of which forms the foundation of our Co-Achieve model.

Darren, Craig, and Damien see this opportunity as a great honour and a chance to reach some of their goals. We wish them all the best.

## MEET ROB EASY, SHORT TERM ACCOMMODATION TEAM LEADER

Participant and OC Connections' champion, Aidan, interviewed Short Term Accommodation Team Leader, Rob Easy, early in May as part of our getting to know our staff series.

This is a new series, where Aidan interviews OC Connections staff each month for our Community Hub newsletter. The aim is two-fold: Aidan provides a participant perspective to share with the families and friends of OCC, while developing his communication skills. He is supported during the interview by his speech therapist, Elizabeth and works with Marketing and Communications to refine his article before it is published.

"I interviewed Rob Easy, Team Leader of Short-Term Accommodation (STA) on the 18th of May 2022".

As Team Leader of Short-Term Accommodation Rob supports participants to access respite. He has been working for 3-and-a-half years at OC Connections, so a long time.

Before COVID, Rob was a Team Leader for one of OC Connections' houses. He said, "For almost 3 years I was Team Leader at a house with 5 participants and managed a team of almost 10 people." Rob said that he was able to transfer his skills from Community Living and use them in Short-Term Accommodation.

When talking about his job in STA, Rob said he enjoys that every day is different. He has regular participants that come 1-2 times a week. "Different people are staying every night. They get to do different activities. It's about engaging people in activities and independent living skills".

Rob starts his shift in the afternoon. He said, "I check to see who is staying. Most go to work or to the day program. I can provide transport for them. We have activities like going to the movies, walks, dinner, and we support them to make their own dinner. Everyone has different levels of skills, so we provide active support and encourage people to be as independent as possible. The afternoons are very chilled. We have two TV areas, and we have an outdoors area."

When Rob isn't working he said that his great passion is travelling. He spent most of his 20's travelling. Rob said that he has travelled a lot and that he thinks that his favourite place that he has ever been to is India. He travelled there in 2015. Rob said he has roots in India as his grandfather was from India. He said, "It was great to see where he was raised. It is completely different to any place I've ever been. The people are amazing. The food is amazing. I really enjoyed my time there."

Rob's proudest achievement is when he relocated to Australia from London in the UK. He came here travelling six years ago, and he never left. He bought a house and settled down.

Rob's hobbies are socialising with friends and eating out at nice restaurants. He likes checking out new bars in Melbourne. He also enjoys watching movies, reading, and going out.

I really enjoyed interviewing Rob on-line, and I hope that I will stay at the Short-Term Accommodation house soon and meet him in person.



## GUESS WHO'S BACK?

The Towards Employment group were more than excited to be back at Cheltenham Secondary College for work experience. The team at the school always makes them feel welcome and supported.

By working together with Cheltenham Secondary College, OC Connections opens up opportunities for people living with disabilities and supports them in reaching their goals through engaging in daily occupation; accommodation and home services; and employment training and support that is aligned with their goals and ambitions.

With support from Hannah, the OC Connections Towards Employment facilitator, Harry, Tika, David F and David G undertake a variety of administrative tasks at Cheltenham Secondary College. Thank you to Cheltenham Secondary School and, in particular, Jan Kuzmicky, for making this opportunity possible.



## SANDRA'S INSIGHT INTO THE PARTICIPANT REFERENCE GROUP

By valuing the ways people living with disability engage in our communities, we can help to create a more inclusive, respectful and celebratory culture for people of all abilities.

Sandra joined the OC Connections' Participant Reference Group (PRG) as a committee member in 2019, when it was first established. During her time, she has become more aware of the processes in place at OC Connections to support people with disability and is confident in being part of the decision making process. When asked what it means for her to be a part of the committee, Sandra replied:



**"It is important for the committees to connect with each other and to understand what each area of the business is doing. I find it interesting to see how the other side of the business works, how the board operates and provides a further outlook on OC Connections as a whole. We also learn about new jobs that are coming in and how they are going to work, it's very interesting".**

We thank each participant for engaging with all OC Connections committees and providing valuable feedback and input for OC Connections to better support you, your needs and goals.

# OC CONNECTIONS

## OUR HOUSING PROJECT IS PROGRESSING

The OC Connections Housing Project, which will see the refurbishment of four existing homes and four new homes built in the City of Monash and the City of Casey across a 5 year period, is now well underway, despite initial delays due to COVID.

The Rockbeare refurbishment was successfully completed and residents moved back into their updated home on 15 June 2022, reporting that they love the floors and the changes make the home look bigger and brighter.

On the same day Rockbeare residents moved back into their home, residents of Lonsdale Street moved into the Quest Apartments, with refurbishments in that home completed on 11 July. Residents report that they are happy with the changes.

At the same time, OC Connections has purchased a block of land in Madeleine Road, Clayton which will be the site for a new supported independent living home. With property prices increasing significantly, the right property for the right price has been hard to find. We were fortunate to locate this block, which is close to both our Rockbeare and View Street homes.

Participants, families and staff who have been impacted by these moves have been kept up-to-date throughout and we will continue to update all staff as the project reaches its milestones.



“*The plaque and tree is so we can have a little space in the garden to remember our friend by.*”  
OC Connections’ residents

Our supported accommodation helps people find a home, live well in their home, live with people they like, achieve goals, enjoy different activities and spend time with new people and old friends.

Participants are supported to build a community in which they belong and feel safe and respected.

Participants and staff become like family and so losing a housemate is like losing family – for both staff and residents.

This year, the OC Achieve fund helped residents purchase items to build a mosaic memorial plaque for a deceased resident, as well as purchase a plant for the home’s garden.

You can donate to our OC Achieve fund via our Winter Appeal at [www.oconnections.org/winter-appeal](http://www.oconnections.org/winter-appeal)