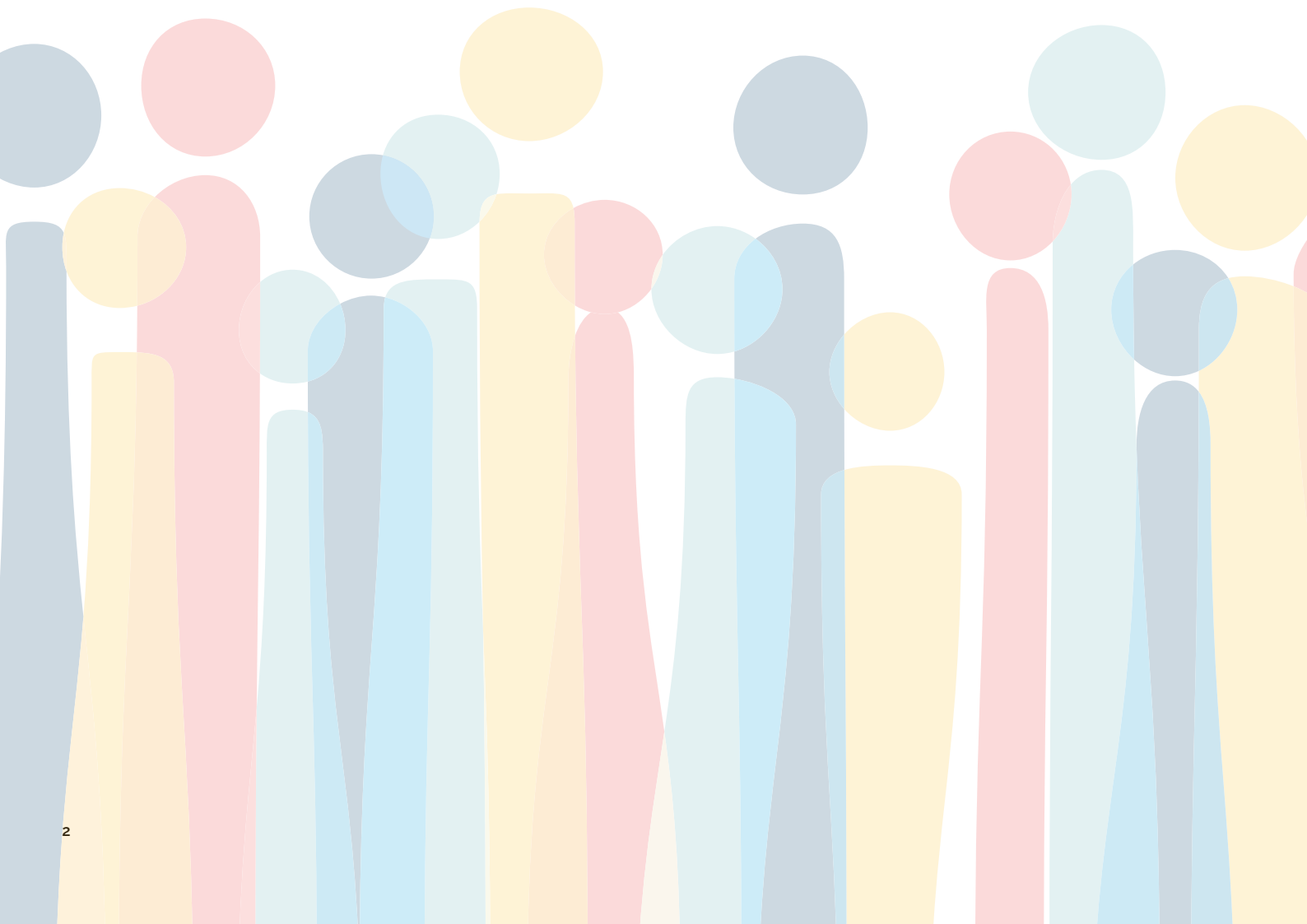


Connecting for a
Healthy Community



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About this report

The Western Victoria Primary Health Network (WVPHN) Annual Report 2022 provides an overview of our activities and performance from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.

This report provides details on our services, how we have performed and information on the people who have worked with us and for us.

This report was presented at the WVPHN Annual General Meeting on 27 October 2022.

We welcome your feedback

Feedback is important to us and contributes to improving future reports for our readers. We welcome your comments about this annual report and ask you to forward them to communications@westvicphn.com.au

The 2022 Annual Report is available online and can be downloaded: <https://www.westvicphn.com.au/about-us/publications/annual-reports>

Email: communications@westvicphn.com.au

Acknowledgement of country

Western Victoria Primary Health Network acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians of the unceded lands and waterways - the Wadda Wurrung, Gulidjan, Gadubanud, Keeray Wurrung, Peek Wurrung, Gunditjmara, Djab Wurrung, Wotjobaluk, Dja Dja Wurrung, Jadawadjarli, Wergaia, Jupagalk and Jaadwa peoples.

We recognise their diversity, resilience, and the ongoing place that First Peoples hold in our communities. We pay our respects to the Elders, both past and present and commit to working together in the spirit of mutual understanding, respect, and reconciliation. We support self-determination for First Nations Peoples and organisations.

Who we are

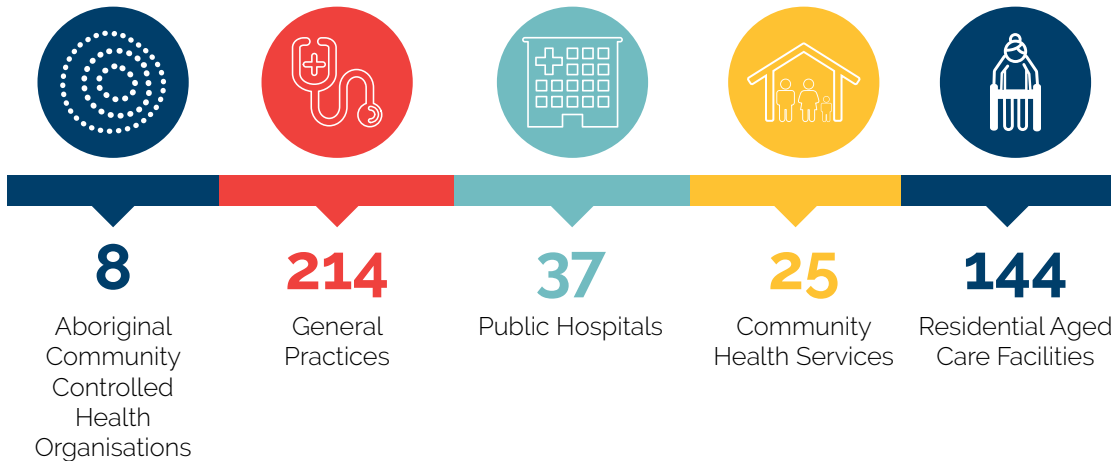
WVPHN is one of 31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) across Australia and one of six in Victoria. We are a not-for-profit organisation, membership based, company limited by guarantee, and were established on 1 July 2015.

The WVPHN region covers an area of 79,843 square kilometers (35% of the area of Victoria) with a total population of 617,931 persons (ABS 2016) residing across 21 local government areas (LGAs).

The WVPHN Board is skills-based and made up of four elected and five appointed Directors.

We have a Clinical Advisory Council and a Community Advisory Council comprised of representatives from across the region. These councils provide advice and insights into key regional health care needs and provide feedback to the Board on key strategic priorities.

As of 30 June 2022, the organisation comprised of 103 staff (91 EFT) working across western Victoria.



Our key functions

We work closely with GPs and other health care providers and services to build capacity to deliver high quality patient-centred care and to improve health outcomes.

We understand the primary health needs of our community through population health analysis and engagement. This results in targeted services for consumers and capacity building programs for primary care providers.

We use our knowledge and understanding of local health care needs to:

1. Support General Practice
2. Commission or purchase locally needed services
3. Integrate local services and systems

Our stakeholders include: general practice, primary care partnerships, Aboriginal health services, allied health providers including pharmacies, aged care providers, the people who live and visit western Victoria, the three tiers of government, community organisations, such as community health, aged care and disability services, universities, research alliances, peak bodies, rural workforce agencies and the many private and public rural and regional hospitals across the region.

We share knowledge and work collectively to meet national, local and organisational indicators, as part of the Primary Health Network performance framework.

The key objectives set for Primary Health Networks by the Federal Government are:

- To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of health services for patients, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes
- To improve coordination of care to ensure patients receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time

All Primary Health Networks have seven key national health priority targets. These are:

1. Mental health
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
3. Population health
4. Health workforce
5. Digital health
6. Aged care
7. Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) treatment

Organisation structure

Western Victoria Primary Health Network Limited (the Company) is a company limited by guarantee. The Corporations Act 2001 sets out our key legal obligations as a company. A variety of other legislation and regulations bind the company in relation to workplace relations, occupational health and safety, information management and financial governance.

The Company is governed by a Board of Directors operating under a Constitution (June 2015), which can only be changed through agreement of Members at a general meeting.

Registered Name: Western Victoria Primary Health Network Limited
Registered Address: 131 Myers Street Geelong 3220
ABN: 87 061 300 918
ACN: 061 300 918

Charitable Status

WVPHN is registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission.

Membership

WVPHN membership is available to individuals who are GPs, practice nurses, other primary health care practitioners working in private practice, and representatives of Local Hospital Networks. For further information go to: westvicphn.com.au/about-us/about-us/membership

Message from the Chair

This is the seventh annual report for WVPHN and, on behalf of the Board, I am delighted to present this to our funding bodies, the primary health care providers of western Victoria, our members, staff and other interested stakeholders.



This year's report theme is 'Connecting for a healthy community'. WVPHN is consistently engaging with the health care sector as well as government and community to develop and support many projects that make an impact on the health of communities across western Victoria. My report recognises these intrinsic and important partnerships.

Financial summary

The financial result for 2021/22 delivered a surplus of \$15.8K, which was derived from the completion of two state-based programs. The financial result achieved a utilisation rate of 87.1% of total commissioning in a year where COVID-19 resulted in continued restrictions causing delays in our sector.

The 2021/22 financial year was WVPHN's seventh year of funding with the Commonwealth Government, with the Department of Health further re-contracting the organisation until June 2025. Total revenue for the financial year was \$53.4m, of which 98.2% was from government grants, with Federal Government funds making up 93% of grant funding.

Direct commissioned and programmed services for our communities amounted to \$40.1m

or 77% of the total grant income of \$53.4m. Employee expenses for 2021/22 increased by \$1.3m or 17%, to assist in meeting funding deliverables over this and the following financial years.

WVPHN continues to demonstrate a solid financial position on the balance sheet, with cash reserves of \$5.7m and a current working capital ratio of 1.12 (current assets/current liabilities) for the financial year (2020/21 was 1.16), with total assets of \$48.3m.

Funding was allocated across many areas, but the key programs were:

- Mental Health - \$22m
- AOD (Alcohol and other drugs) - \$3.8m
- Chronic Conditions - \$6.1m
- After Hours - \$1.5m
- Integrated Team Care - \$794K
- Movement Disorders - \$364K
- Community Transport - \$926K

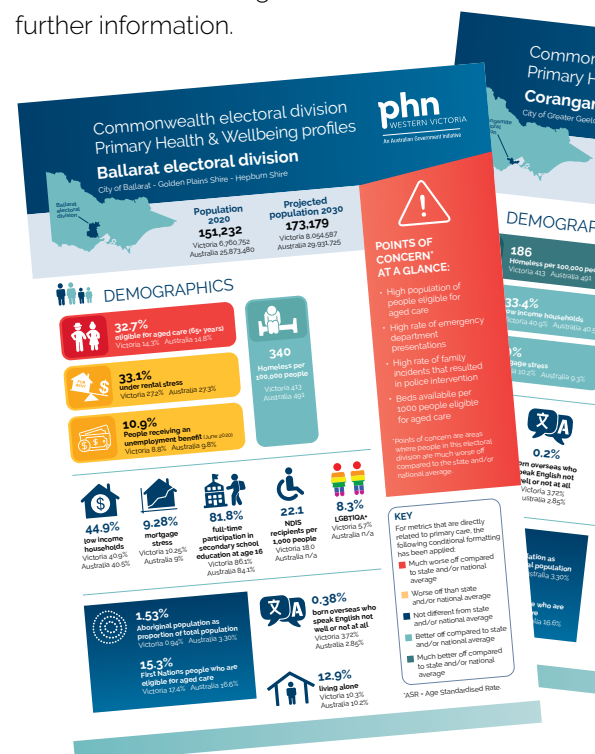
Advocacy for a healthier community

WVPHN regularly conducts a detailed analysis of health needs assessments across the region, and this year, in the lead up to the last federal election, a snapshot of the latest community health and wellbeing data was sent to federal election candidates across western Victoria.

The health data was grouped and filtered by federal government electorates and summarised high-priority health care needs specific to each electorate as well as the needs across the whole western Victorian region.

These assessments are part of the WVPHN's commitment to improving primary health care for all communities in our region and allow us to bring health concerns and information to the attention of government, the primary care sector and community.

The electoral packs (shown below) were very well received with some candidates contacting the office for further information.



COVID-19 and beyond

With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing in 2021-22, there was a shift in focus as we managed emerging issues relating to community health and wellbeing and further assisted the primary care sector to take on COVID-19-related care. The emergence of the Omicron variant created new challenges for the health sector. The delivery of the COVID-19 vaccination program – including third and fourth doses – remained a key component of the pandemic response. However, the increased prevalence of COVID-19

cases also required renewed attention on COVID-19 positive care pathways and the availability of anti-viral medications, particularly for more vulnerable members of the community. WVPHN responded to these new challenges through our ongoing work in HealthPathways and the COVID-19 Project ECHO series as the primary care sector increased its responsibilities in supporting the community through trying times.

Helping manage the health care sector's response to COVID-19 has given our organisation new and valuable knowledge and skills. This experience has informed our response to potential new virus outbreaks with the emergence of Japanese encephalitis and, more recently, MPX (Monkeypox) virus. The early release of vaccination programs for high-risk community members and providing information to general practice will remain essential components of WVPHN's work over the next year.

undertaking a rigorous process that ensures we have the most effective plan possible. As we set this forward course, we have begun by bringing stakeholders, both internal and external, into the conversation to examine current realities and define our future, all the while considering the complexities of health care and anticipating future industry trends.

Currently we have engaged with:

- 20 members of the WVPHN Clinical and Community Advisory Councils
- 82 members of staff, including focus sessions on aged care, place-based commissioning, workforce, digital health, and the Executive Team.
- 22 external stakeholders including:

- General Practitioners
- Local Government
- Health Services, including mental health services
- Community Health
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs)
- Research

Our next steps will be finalising theming from all sessions, one additional session with the Executive Team, and a full day of planning and consultation with the WVPHN Board.



New Strategic Plan being developed

Every three to five years, most organisations plan for the future, and WVPHN is currently refreshing its three-year plan. To ensure our primary strategic planning document drives future success, we are

Reconciliation Action Plan implementation

This year WVPHN has been working on the implementation of its first reconciliation action plan (RAP), with colleagues from across the organisation coming together to identify initiatives that will create real change in how we work towards better health outcomes with First Nations partners, in ways that support self-determination.

During the year, WVPHN has improved engagement with the eight ACCHOs across western Victoria, with a greater emphasis on getting out and visiting them. By creating opportunities for staff to learn about First Nations cultures, the organisation is helping to foster an understanding that First Nations health is everybody's business at WVPHN. Our next priorities are exploring how WVPHN can best include First Nations voices in the governance of the organisation, as well as increasing employment of First Nations people.

Accreditation

This year WVPHN is preparing for its first Accreditation assessment against the QIC Health and Community Services Standards, 7th Edition. An Accreditation Audit will be onsite in October 2022.

Accreditation is the demonstration of the organisation's Quality Management System (QMS) in practice. It is about how the

organisation delivers the most efficient, effective and coordinated health system to our community, particularly for those at risk of poor health outcomes. Strengthening and embedding the QMS across WVPHN embodies each of the organisation's values – that is, listens, values, responds, engages, collaborates, empowers, questions, innovates and pioneers, all with the ultimate aim of providing the organisation with a structure for conducting work properly, efficiently and effectively.

The Board looks forward to reporting on the Accreditation audit in next year's annual report.

Changes to Board

At our 2021 AGM, long-serving Board member Mark Harris ended his term on the Board and we welcomed Dr Bernard Shiu to the Board in October 2021. Mark Harris made a significant contribution to the WVPHN, having been a director of the previous Barwon Medicare Local and providing a valuable perspective from the allied health sector.

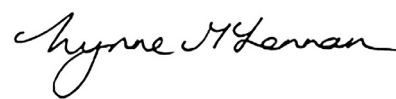
Welcome Bernard

Bernard is the owner and Clinical Director of Banksia Medical Centre in Newcomb. He was awarded the Victorian GP of the Year 2020 by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). Bernard is the Deputy Chair of the RACGP Victoria Faculty and serves as an examiner for the college, as well as a supervisor and medical educator

of almost 10 years. Bernard regularly lectures at Deakin University's School of Medicine and serves as an expert member for numerous official scientific and research organisations. He has been invited to multiple Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) committees as a medical expert and has also been a Director of the Australian GP Alliance since 2019. We welcome Bernard to the Board.

Thank you

In addition to the never-ending pandemic, the increasing number of programs that both Commonwealth and State governments are seeking to commission via PHNs has created ongoing logistical and strategic challenges to which our talented and cohesive team has responded magnificently. I would like to express the Board's deep appreciation to our CEO Rowena Clift, Executive Directors, Senior Managers, Clinical Leads, Clinical and Community Advisory Council Members and all WVPHN staff for their commitment and achievements over the last year.



Lynne McLennan
Chair

Message from the CEO

I reflect back on the last twelve months and the work that WVPHN has undertaken both in response to COVID and other communicable diseases but also the many programs that have been developed to meet the health needs of our western Victorian communities. We have themed this years report as, *Connecting for a Healthy Community*, to highlight the many ways in which this has occurred.



For our primary care providers, the last twelve months has required rapid changes and adaptation. We have seen the remarkable efforts through our incredible vaccination rates in western Victoria and the high rates of GP prescribed antivirals. We have connected and provided education and information in conjunction with our public health units to ensure general practice staff have access to the most current and up to date information. Our HealthPathways teams have worked tirelessly to ensure this information is readily available online.

The WVPHN team, based across the western Victoria region, continue to work from anywhere, as well as utilising our spaces in Horsham, Geelong and Ballarat. Their passion and commitment to our work and the health of our communities has been unwavering, and the pandemic has presented opportunities for us to continue to develop services that meet the needs of our communities.

We have also worked closely with Grampians Public Health Unit and Barwon South West Public Health Unit and health services across our region.

Understanding the health of our community

Health data provides insights into the needs of our communities. No two communities are the same and our work includes understanding which supports and services are most needed and in what areas.

The Census 2021 data, although not yet fully released, is the most current population level data we have had since the 2016 data. The June 2022 release focused on key population data largely focusing on housing and households, but for the first time, long-term health conditions.

What we know from this data is that our population across the region is growing larger and getting older. Other data confirms that people experiencing mental ill-health, heart disease and cancer are on the increase.

Our response to the health challenges of our community is multi-pronged. From developing and supporting mental health services such as Head to Health, which remains a critical non-referral service that commenced during the pandemic, to supporting doctors to work in secondary schools through the Doctors in Secondary Schools program, to partnering

with the Royal Flying Doctors Service to ensure people in remote communities can access transport for their medical appointments.

We are also about to commence work in aged care with the care finder project, a new approach to navigating aged care support. This project has a specific focus on older adults who might otherwise fall through the support gaps.

Our work is broad but always centred on supporting primary care and how it can better support a healthy and vibrant western Victorian community.

Working together for better outcomes

It has been another unprecedented year of collaboration with Primary Health Networks (PHN). Since the start of the pandemic PHNs have worked together to better support health care providers as well as work closely with both the federal and state governments to deliver health care resources across communities especially as part of a COVID response.

PHNs this year worked closely with Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF) to manage the flow of protective equipment as well as critical information on the COVID

response. PHNs also worked together, through a statewide COVID response team, to find solutions to reach vulnerable communities, sharing ideas and resources where possible.

Victorian PHNs organised a number of state-wide COVID information sessions during the year. These included online townhall sessions with presenters from federal and state government, professional bodies and local GPs answering questions on the latest requirements of primary health in response to COVID.

Building better connectivity

Better digital tools and connectivity go hand in hand with the delivery of better health information and, ultimately, better health outcomes. The CSIRO in its *Future of Health Report* (September 2021) acknowledged that digital health technologies would be a key enabler in preventative health solutions.

WVPHN has taken significant steps to provide health care professionals across our region with new digital platforms that offer greater functionality than what was previously available as well as superior ways of sharing information.

A key tool introduced was POLAR software licences for general practice. These licences were free to practices and provide improved patient services and meet data submission requirements for Practice Incentive Payment – Quality Improvement (PIP QI) accreditation.

The POLAR data extraction tool can also help GPs target patients with specific needs of health risk profiles, namely in chronic disease management, cancer screening, immunisations, medication reviews, sexual health, ehealth and preventative health.

WVPHN also launched a new online portal called Practice Connect. This site provides a comprehensive range of materials to improve all aspects of running and managing a general practice.

We are committed to working with suppliers, other PHNs and the primary care sector in adopting digital workplace solutions that will enhance health care outcomes for the community.

Key projects and partnerships underway

A key project this year was the WVPHN Service Redesign Co-design conducted to guide the organisation on how it designs, funds and coordinates services for health care across western Victoria. The service co-design focused on mental health, chronic conditions management, and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) support services. Over the course of the year, WVPHN met with health service professionals, people with lived experience and other interested members of our community as part of a far-reaching co-design process. (Read more pg 28)

WVPHN undertook a comprehensive consultation and redesign process during 2021 and 2022 to ensure the commissioning of Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) and Chronic Conditions services are shaped by consumer needs and are distributed equitably across the region. In partnership with health services, local health professionals and interested members of local communities, WVPHN worked on designing and developing improved and refocused primary care health service models.

During the year WVPHN developed the Wound Management Training Pilot Project with a focus on building the capacity and skills of the local primary healthcare workforce to improve wound management patient outcomes. The ability to access care through local general practice or nurse-led wound management clinics reduces the cost of care for chronic wounds by decreasing wait times, travel expenses and potentially preventable hospital admissions. (Read more pg 21)



It is estimated that each full-time general practitioner will see up to five women per week with underlying intimate partner violence, however, the GP may be unaware that violence is occurring within these families. This was the impetus to commence WVPHN's Pathways to Safety – The Readiness Program (Family Violence Practice Centred Learning). GPs were invited to participate in this program that took place in May and June 2022. It is recognised that not only are GPs often the first people a victim of domestic violence will speak to, but that they play a crucial role in helping women and children on a pathway to safety and good health.

Another initiative - 'The First 180: Preventing and Responding to Family Violence' pilot (\$1.43 million over three years) also commenced during the year, with the aim to strengthen primary care's capacity to identify and support all members of 'at risk' separating families, with a particular focus on the first 180 days after a couple separate as a preventative approach to family violence based on identified needs in the region. This was delivered in partnership with Wimmera Health Care Group, Maryborough District Health Service, South West Healthcare and Emma House Domestic Violence Service.

WVPHN and Fight Parkinson's delivered a pilot project aiming to give specialised care for people living with movement disorders in the Great South Coast and Wimmera Grampians regions.

WVPHN and [Fight Parkinson's](#) applied for the funding for projects that deliver better health outcomes for the community in partnership with [South West Healthcare](#), [Wimmera Health Care Group](#), [Rural Northwest Health](#) and [Grampians Community Health](#). Communities across western Victoria have different needs, so delivering localised primary health care that addresses these varying requirements is the best way forward. The four-year pilot will aim to deliver accessible specialised care for people living with movement disorders including Parkinson's disease in rural and remote western Victoria where a prevalence cluster has been identified.

WVPHN announced a new partnership with the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) Victoria to expand its successful Community Transport service across Victoria. This was in response to addressing needs in rural and remote communities where it was recognised that the time and cost associated with travel is a significant barrier for many people to attend vital healthcare appointments. In partnership with Murray PHN and Gippsland PHN, the Flying Doctor Community Transport service has been commissioned to reach rural Victorian communities where health services are not readily available or are some distance away. From 2022, eight new RFDS sites will be established in Victoria with Warracknabeal the first in western Victoria.

Thank you

My appreciation and thanks to the Board of Directors for their support during the year.

To our Councils, contracted service providers and our primary care community thank you for the important work that you continue to do especially in these challenging times.

Thank you to my Executive Leadership Team for their dedication and continued hard work.

I am profoundly thankful to all the WVPHN management and staff. Every day I am grateful that we have such committed and passionate staff who deliver outstanding work. Despite growing and changing demands, our people continue to work on projects that support the primary care sector in numerous ways. I thank their families and partners who support them.



Rowena Clift
CEO

Financial Summary

Western Victoria Primary Health Network Limited

ABN 87 061 300 918

Statement of Comprehensive Income

For the year ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2022 \$	2021 \$
Revenue and other income	2	53,447,432	43,778,798
Employee benefits expense		(9,250,409)	(7,901,883)
Depreciation and amortisation expense		(892,171)	(1,128,784)
Other expense	3	(43,289,016)	(34,663,614)
Total Revenue		15,837	84,517
Net Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		15,837	84,517
Total Comprehensive income for the year		15,837	84,517

Financial Statements to be read in conjunction with notes and significant accounting policies

Statement of Financial Position

For the year ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2022 \$	2021 \$
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	46,714,376	33,868,692
Trade and other receivables	5	267,094	7,034
Accrued income		258,952	325,179
Prepayments		309,603	467,337
Total Current Assets		47,550,025	34,668,242
Non-Current Assets			
Property plant and equipment	6	191,503	240,708
Right of Use Asset	10	500,041	1,102,150
Intangible Assets	6	26,775	106,113
Security deposit	7	101,505	100,000
Total Non-Current Assets		819,824	1,548,971
Total Assets		48,369,849	36,217,213
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	8	16,915,731	9,620,724
Deferred grants		24,094,857	18,730,098
Provisions	9	897,792	787,221
Lease liabilities	10	502,796	675,016
Total Current Liabilities		42,411,176	29,813,059
Non-Current Liabilities			
Provisions	9	179,100	198,657
Lease liabilities	10	25,869	467,631
Total Non-Current Liabilities		204,970	666,288
Total Liabilities		42,616,146	30,479,347
TOTAL NET ASSETS		5,753,703	5,737,866
Equity			
Retained earnings		5,753,703	5,737,866
TOTAL EQUITY		5,753,703	5,737,866

Our COVID-19 response

A COVID-19 report was presented to the Board of Directors on external and internal work in response to the pandemic, and the learnings and reflections that resulted from this work.

A key sentiment repeated in the document is 'new relationships, collaborations and connections', and this is despite many ongoing challenges created by the pandemic. The report emphasised a strong sense of enhanced engagement with the acute and primary health care sectors, further illustrating this report's theme of 'connecting for a healthy community'.

The report also reflected on the resilience and proactive approach of general practices, PHNs and primary health care providers.

Key highlights from the report:

Major outcome

- High rates of vaccination achieved in WVPHN's catchment, which meant the burden of disease was reduced for individuals, placing less stress on the health system.

Relationships

- There were new opportunities for WVPHN to engage and collaborate with a wider range of external partners and agencies.

- Strong relationships were forged with Public Health Units, private Residential Aged Care Facilities and Disability Liaison Offices.
- There was enhanced WVPHN internal engagement and collaboration across teams.
- Opportunity for PHNs to cement their place in the health sector.
- Relationships with GP clinics were further strengthened
- Almost all services and stakeholders embraced digital programs and technology as required such as e-scripts, telehealth, etc.

Communication and Education

- Project Echo was extremely beneficial and useful for information sharing.
- Town halls were very well received and strongly attended.
- Weekly ECHO sessions were also well received
- Our dedicated COVID-19 newsletter was highly subscribed to.



157

general practices supported to provide COVID-19 vaccines



91

pharmacies supported to provide COVID-19 vaccines



18

non-Medicare card holders supported to access vaccinations



1,594,166

total number of vaccine doses ordered since the commencement of the vaccine rollout as of June 30 2022 for the WVPHN region

In-home vaccinations helping vulnerable populations

Hundreds of people across western Victoria overcame difficulties accessing a COVID-19 vaccination thanks to an In-Home Vaccination Program by WVPHN.

Recognising the limitations of vulnerable populations in accessing a COVID-19 vaccine, WVPHN allocated Commonwealth funding to establish the In-Home COVID-19 Vaccinations for Vulnerable Populations Grant. General practices and Commonwealth Vaccination Clinics across western Victoria were invited to participate in the program, with 13 immunisation providers awarded grants to deliver in-home COVID-19 vaccination services to their local community.

The In-Home Vaccination Program helped vulnerable community members in western Victoria boost their protection against COVID-19, while simultaneously improving workforce efficiency during a challenging period for primary healthcare. With the added pressures placed on GPs during the COVID-19 pandemic, in-home vaccination services have enabled qualified immunisation nurses to administer vaccines in residential aged care facilities (RACFs), residential disability facilities or at a patient's place of residence. This has significantly improved vaccine access for vulnerable communities while also enabling general practitioners to remain available to attend to routine patient care.

Between the inception of the program in November 2021 and June 2022, WVPHN helped to deliver 1,178 in-home vaccinations in the western Victoria region. In the Ballarat-Goldfields region 629 homebound vaccinations were delivered, 257 in the Geelong-Otway sub-region, and 182 and 110 in the Wimmera-Grampians and Great South Coast sub-regions respectively.

Vaccinations were provided to a diverse range of people, from the elderly or those living with a disability, as well as individuals experiencing homelessness or who were culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse, or living in remote and rural communities.



A total of **1,178** in-home vaccinations were administered by various GP clinics throughout WVPHN from November 2021 – July 14, 2022



A total of **18,171** COVID-19 Vaccinations were provided as reported by grant recipients listed below.

- Diversitat Multicultural Community Services
- Geelong (MCSG)
- Surfcoast Medical Centre (Torquay)
- Beaufort & Skipton Health Service
- Geelong City Medical Clinic
- Wheatfields Family Medical (Warracknabeal)
- Robinson Street Medical Centre – Camperdown
- Western Regional Alcohol & Drug Centre (WRAD)
- Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative
- Springs Medical (Daylesford)
- Wathaurong
- Gunditjmarra Aboriginal Cooperative
- Ballarat & District Aboriginal Cooperative (BADAC)
- Budja Budja Aboriginal Cooperative.

Post COVID-19 physical therapy for aged care residents enhances quality of life

During 2020, residential aged care facilities (RACFs) were greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, managing outbreaks that led to restrictions to protect residents from the virus. Normal exercise routines and access to the outdoors were often not possible under infection prevention protocols, leading to physical deconditioning among some residents.

WVPHN was allocated \$166,040 to commission allied health service providers to deliver small group physical therapy to residents of RACFs in the region that had been impacted by multiple cases of COVID-19 as of October 2020.

The program has significantly enhanced the quality of life of aged care residents after what was a

challenging two years. To have allied health service providers visiting aged care residents for individualised therapy significantly improves health outcomes for patients, especially when recovering from the effects of the pandemic. Residents are supported to restore their physical strength while also building a sense of social connectedness through group sessions after many months of social distancing requirements.

Two RACFs in the western Victoria region were eligible to take part in the program – Highton Gardens Care Community in Geelong and Bill Crawford Lodge in Ballarat.

Service delivery commenced in September 2021 and ended in April 2022 with Healthcare Australia providing services to Highton Gardens Care Community and Vivir Healthcare the selected provider in Ballarat.



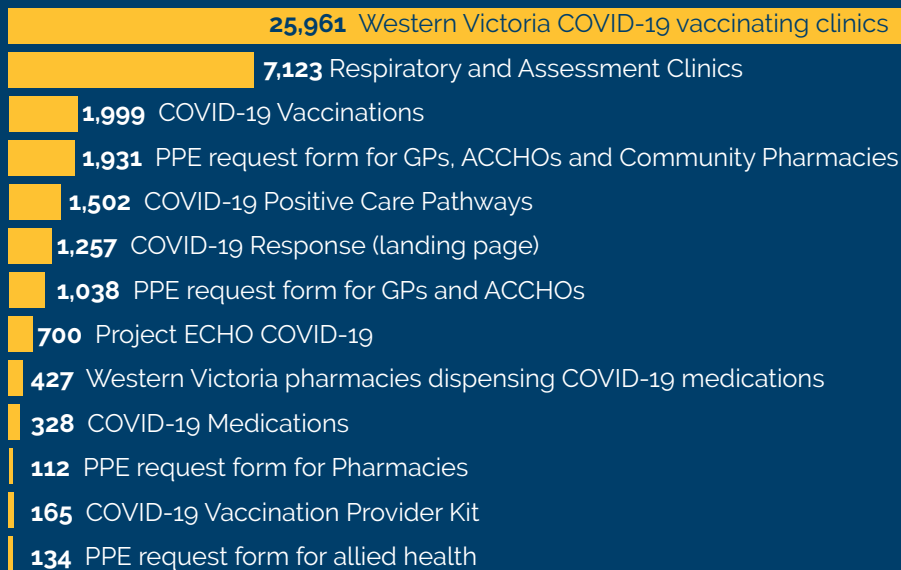
Email Updates

50 Weekly COVID-19 updates

32 COVID-19 GP Vaccinating Clinics Circulars



Unique views of COVID-19 related web pages



Anti-viral prescribing information session well received

Renowned infectious diseases specialist and Deputy Chief Health Officer, Associate Professor Dan O'Brien, was the key speaker at WVPHN's COVID-19 Anti-viral Prescribing information session on 24 May 2022.

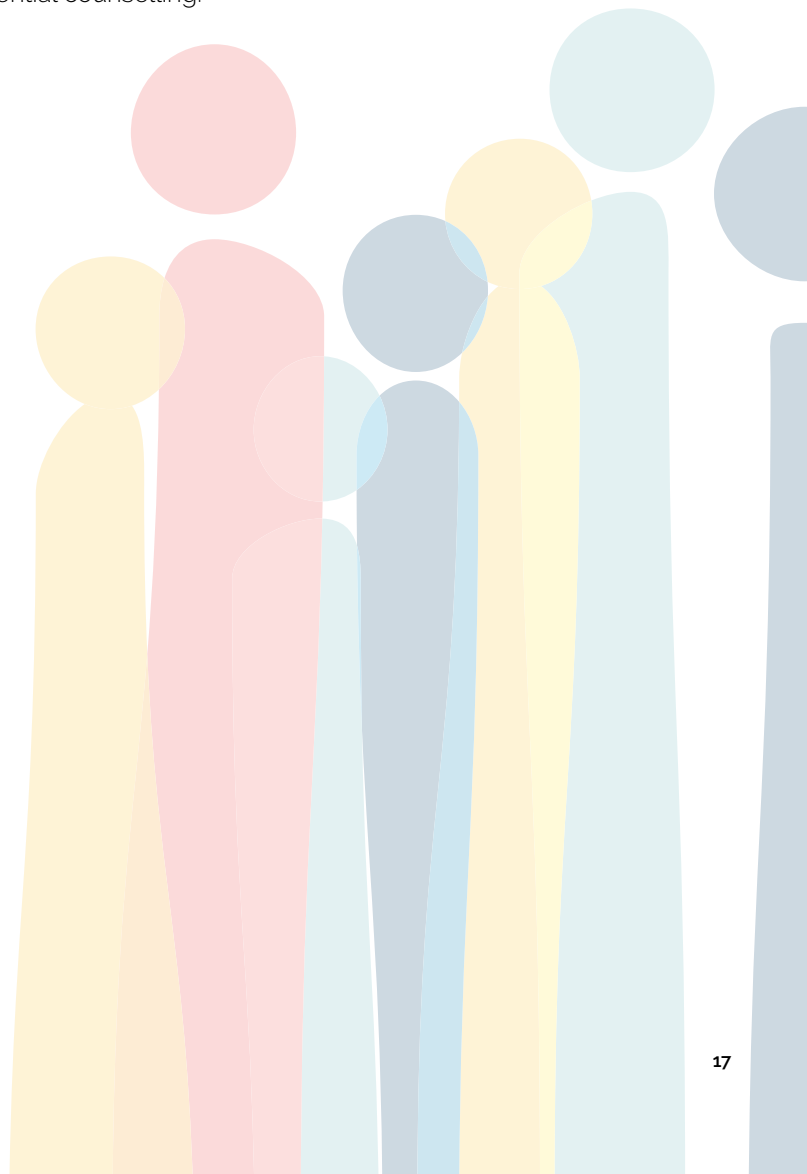
Dr O'Brien presented at the online session alongside WVPHN's Clinical Lead, Dr Kate Graham, providing GPs and other primary health care staff with essential information on prescribing COVID-19 anti-viral medications. The session was held in conjunction with the Barwon South-West and Grampians Public Health Units (PHUs). It included a panel discussion with representatives from both PHUs and a UFS pharmacist.

Dr O'Brien is currently Deputy Director of the Department of Infectious Diseases at University Hospital, Geelong, and a Clinical Associate Professor in the Victorian Infectious Diseases Service and Department of Medicine (University of Melbourne) at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Melbourne. His attendance at the information session offered primary health care clinicians with valuable insights into assessing patients when prescribing the oral anti-viral therapies, Lagevrio and Paxlovid. The session also provided guidance on pathways for accessing anti-viral medications and what clinical support is available to general practices within western Victoria. The online session was part of WVPHN's ongoing training and support program for assisting health care professionals in our region respond to COVID-19.

WVPHN offers health and wellbeing services to general practice staff

In August 2021, WVPHN announced it was making its Employee Assistance Program (EAP) support services available to staff working in GP clinics across the western Victoria region. The decision was made to extend the service to GP clinics due to the stress the COVID-19 pandemic was having on the primary health care sector.

WVPHN arranged for Converge International's EAP health and wellbeing services to be available to all general practice and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation staff, in particular practice managers, receptionists and other non-clinical staff who may require confidential counselling.



Strategic Directions 2020 – 2023

Our Strategic Directions 2020 – 2023 is based around our key aim:

“To improve the health outcomes and health care experience of the people of western Victoria.”

This is underpinned by our values of:

- Lead
- Respect
- Connect

We will achieve our strategic Directions through:

- Evidence based practice – data, research, evidence
- Workforce planning and workforce development – data and research to identify needs
- Diverse communities - accessible, appropriate and safe services
- Diverse workforces - support and development
- Technology – support digital health and other technologies
- Governance, systems, staff and continuous improvement – robust systems and high performing organisation

The following articles illustrate some of the work that has been done as part of our strategic direction which is also underpinned by our values.

Supporting the health of First Nations people

Colleagues across WVPHN, supported by the First Nations Health Team, have been working on how we will support the health of First Nations western Victorians and support the primary health care sector in this work.

We have listened to the eight Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) on the unceded lands on which we work and hear the strong call for bold change we see in the recently released National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031. Easing reporting burden, respecting data sovereignty, and honoring self-determination principles have been part of this effort.

We have developed a First Nations Health Sub-strategy to clearly articulate the place of First Nations health within the WVPHN Strategic Directions. We have also developed a principles statement for all WVPHN work regarding First Nations people and organisations.

In February 2022, Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative hosted us for a cultural immersion day at Wurdi Youang, an important natural and

cultural heritage site. Wathaurong has also begun hosting us for staff cultural awareness training.

Over the past year a number of the ACCHOs have worked with WVPHN to develop a series of cultural awareness training days for primary health care workers. Although the continuing pandemic has slowed progress, we hope to launch these opportunities in early 2023.

NEXT STEPS: Although the continuing pandemic has slowed progress, we hope to launch these opportunities in early 2023.

New Colac headspace operator announced

In early October 2021, WVPHN announced that Barwon Health will be the lead agency for the new Commonwealth Government funded headspace Colac. The contract to operate headspace Colac to Barwon Health was part of a consortium bringing together some of south-west Victoria's foremost health and mental health support agencies.

Barwon Health will work with Colac Area Health and Brophy Family and Youth Services to deliver specialised youth mental health services in the Colac and Otway area. Barwon Health will also engage with the Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative as part of a collaborative approach to supporting young people from all backgrounds.

headspace Colac will be an important asset for the local community. The new centre will provide increased access to professional mental health information, services and support for the area's young people along with their families and friends.

The new headspace Colac will be the fifth headspace centre in western Victoria. Other headspace centres funded and supported by WVPHN are in Geelong, Warrnambool, Ballarat and Horsham. Satellite centres are also operating in Ocean Grove and Portland.

NEXT STEPS: Complete construction/refurbishment of headspace Colac and commence service before the end of 2022.

Share these Stories – sharing lived-experience stories

Published in April 2022, **Share these Stories** is a jointly funded and developed publication from headspace Ballarat and WVPHN.

An anthology of lived-experience stories from Central Highlands locals, *Share these Stories* celebrates the value of storytelling in recovering from mental health challenges and the importance of real voices and connection in the recovery journey. The book is designed to promote seeking support and to help individuals respond to a person who might be at risk of suicide.

Sharing stories can be healing – and this was the impetus for the collaboration. The book offers an opportunity to shed light on how lived experience can help others. It allows family, friends, workmates, health professionals and others to recognise, acknowledge, validate and respond in constructive ways to help those in distress.

The 2021 Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System findings provided an opportunity to elevate the voice of those with lived experience of mental health challenges and use it to re-shape the way support and services are designed and delivered. As such, WVPHN in partnership with the Victorian Government, funded the Suicide Prevention Place Based Trial in the Ballarat region. These initiatives are supporting communities to reduce the incidence of suicide through a coordinated place-based approach to suicide prevention.

NEXT STEPS: Continued promotion and distribution of these booklets.

Launch of the headspace Ballarat publication 'Share these Stories'. WVPHN assisted in the development and printing of this important publication. Picture at bottom – the young people who shared their stories.





Official announcement of the new Head to Health site in Norlane, Geelong. With Bev McArthur MP, Rowena Clift, Senator Sarah Henderson and the former federal Minister for Health Greg Hunt.

Geelong Head to Health announced by Minister

In early March 2022 WVPHN welcomed the announcement by Greg Hunt, the Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, that the future site of the new Geelong Head to Health service will be in Station Place in North Geelong.

Commissioned by WVPHN, the new site at Station Place (8 Station Street) will become the heart of mental health and well-being support for people in Geelong's northern suburbs. Currently under construction, the Station Place will be a fit-for-purpose location providing a warm and welcoming space where people can find mental health support from professional counsellors alongside people who have had lived experience with mental health issues. Geelong Head to Health is planning to move into Station Place later this year.

Geelong Head to Health is one of eight adult mental health centres being opened across Australia as part of a \$114.5 million funding commitment from the

Commonwealth Government. The Geelong service is being delivered by Neami National in partnership with Drummond Street.

Geelong Head to Health commenced outreach mental health support services in December 2021 and is available to anyone seeking mental health and wellbeing support, without the need for a GP referral.

NEXT STEPS: Complete construction/refurbishment of Station St facility and launch by the end of 2022.

headspace Ocean Grove officially opened by Minister

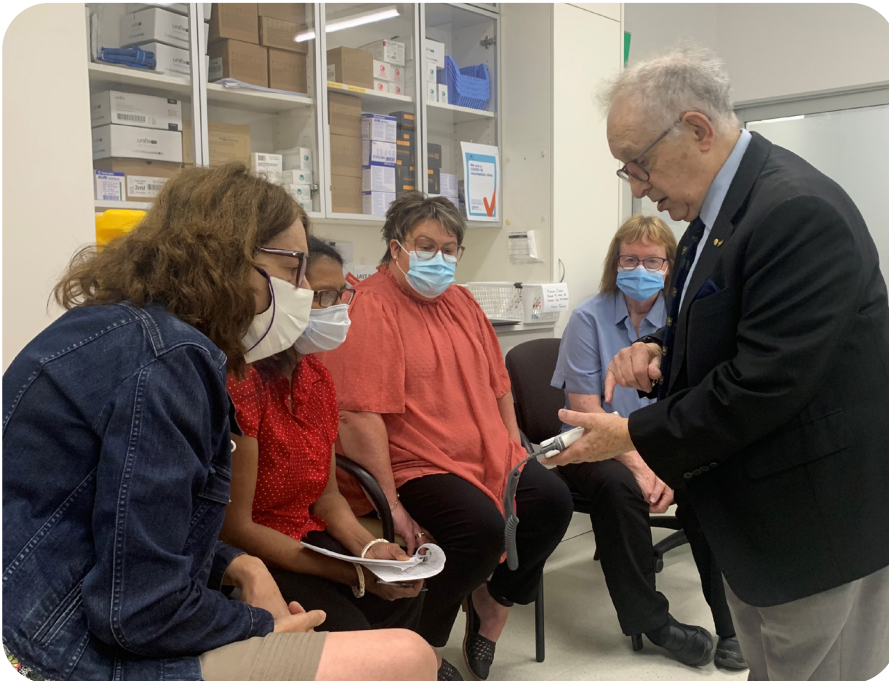
On 4 March 2022, the official opening of headspace Ocean Grove brought young people, community health organisations, healthcare providers and members of both State and Federal Governments together.

The event was marked with a Welcome to Country from Wadawurrung Elder, Corrina Eccles, stories from young people in the headspace Youth Futures Crew about what it means to have a headspace in the community, and a special visit from The Honorable Greg Hunt MP, Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care.

In a true community collaboration to ensure the service is safe and appropriate for local young people and their families and friends, headspace Ocean Grove comes together with the support of Barwon Child, Youth & Family (BCYF), Bellarine Community Health (BCH), transitioning provider of its parent centre headspace Geelong, Stride Mental Health Limited and commissioning body, WVPHN.



Former Health Minister Greg Hunt and CEO Rowena Clift with the Young Futures Crew at the launch of headspace Ocean Grove.



Professor Sussman providing wound management training to practice staff.

Since headspace Ocean Grove opened its doors in August 2021 it has received a steady stream of referrals with close to 1,300 appointments already made for young people, their families and their friends.

The official opening of headspace Ocean Grove meant that more young people across the Bellarine Peninsula were able to access services to support mental health, physical health (including sexual health) and alcohol and other drugs.

Wound management skills enhanced

Recent data has shown that chronic wounds can mean pain, mood disorders, sleep and mental health issues and sometimes anxiety or depression. During the year WVPHN developed the Wound Management Training Pilot Project, with a focus on building the capacity and skills

of the local primary healthcare workforce to improve wound-management patient outcomes. The ability to access care through local general practice or nurse-led wound management clinics reduces the cost of care for chronic wounds by decreasing wait times, travel expenses and potentially preventable hospital admissions.

The pilot project, hosted by WVPHN and supported by experts in the field. A component of the project was upskilling staff across multiple professions and was delivered by internationally esteemed wound management expert, Professor Geoffrey Sussman. Professor Sussman has been involved in wound management for almost 60 years, in clinical research, clinical practice and teaching. He is also an advisor to the Commonwealth Government on wound issues.



Wound management pilot project over the past 12 months - started in June 2021 during that time we have

- **Worked closely with 4 practices in the Wimmera Grampians region on Quality improvement activities and upskilling of practice's clinical staff in treatment of wounds** (1 practice established a nurse-lead wound clinic) This included education from Professor Geoffrey Sussman and a suite of health literacy resources. We included all allied health, pharmacy and district nurses in our training to adapt a cohesive approach to treatment and dressings.
- **65 Patients within the Wimmera Grampians accessed pilot services** – It was mentioned that the patients did not need to travel great distances now the rural practices were skilled to treat such wounds.
- **14 Latrobe University Scholarships and 19 William Light scholarships** to upskill nurses are being undertaken
- **224 Attended online webinar** Three covering Diabetic foot ulcers and Venous leg ulcers topics
- **Further 227 attended wound education** across Hamilton, Warrnambool, Colac, Geelong and two sessions in Ballarat.

More support for people with mild mental health issues

In June 2021, WVPHN announced additional mental health support across the western Victoria region with new funding to help those living with or at risk of mild mental illness.

WVPHN allocated \$485,000 of Commonwealth funding to disability, ageing and community service organisation genU, to deliver this program across all western Victoria until 30 June 2022. This included the Ballarat, Geelong, Horsham and Warrnambool regional centres.

The aim of the funding was to design a low-intensity support service that would be an easy-to-access option for those in the community who are at risk of mental ill-health and do not require more intensive support. Low intensity services include face-to-face sessions, group work, telephone and digital interventions, such as video conferencing and other resources.

The low-intensity support was designed to catch those individuals who perhaps are only just starting to struggle or have been dealing with persistent mental illness such as mild depression. The benefit of the service was that it could be accessed quickly without the need for a formal referral. It was also designed to provide relief for the existing mental health workforce, helping to curb the progression of mild mental illnesses and prevent the need for more intensive care.

Increased capacity for headspace centres

The Ballarat and Warrnambool headspace centres received a welcomed boost in funding to further enhance mental health support and reduce wait times for young Australians.

Over \$2.28 million of Commonwealth funding grants were allocated by WVPHN to the headspace centres in Ballarat (\$493,000) and

Warrnambool (\$1.79 million). The grant allowed the Ballarat site to increase its capacity through a redesign of the current headspace Ballarat premises while also reducing wait times for both centres.

In total, \$26 million is being provided under this grant opportunity in 2021-22, with funds to be provided to 17 PHNs across Australia and headspace National. Such improvements combined with improved awareness and education of our communities will also provide greater peace of mind to the families of those with suffering from mental illness. Continually improving the community's education about mental illness will only serve to reduce the stigma around mental illness and those who struggle with it, both individuals and their families.

headspace is available to young people aged 12 to 25 years along with their families and friends to provide face-to-face mental health information, support and



Mental Health services delivered

Active Clients: To be counted, a client must have had one or more Service Contacts in the reporting period. Clients are counted uniquely regardless of number of episodes

Service Contacts: All Service Contacts in the period are reported except those that are flagged as 'No Show'



services. Young people can call to make an appointment themselves. Alternatively, GPs can refer patients by directly contacting their local headspace centre, or a family member or friend can refer them to headspace. These services are generally free of charge.

NEXT STEPS: Opening of the refurbished facility at headspace Ballarat before the end of 2022.

headspace Ocean Grove – guerrilla garden helping youth

headspace Ocean Grove recently celebrated its one-year anniversary. One of the highpoints of the first year was the establishment of the Youth Guerrilla Garden on a small patch of land behind the Bellarine Library car park.

While the catalyst for the development of the garden was the climate anxiety of young people, there have been multiple

advantages stemming from its construction: the opportunity for young people to engage in a shared passion, the creation of a different setting for headspace activities and, of course, fresh produce.

The garden was the brainchild of Fiona Cadorel from Bellarine Community Health’s Healthy and Connected Communities team, who was inspired by US ‘gangsta gardener’ Ron Finlay, who has inspired a movement to plant gardens in abandoned or vacant public spaces.

Climate change and anxiety about the future is a big issue for many young people, and building the garden helped many teenagers deal with their climate change anxiety by creating a space where they can grow food and use it as a vehicle to talk about bigger issues.

Some young people find sitting in a room facing a clinician a difficult space to talk about their feelings, however, tilling soil side by side can provide a less confronting space and being active while talking can assist in the communication process.




headspace
 services delivered

4,381
 young people accessed
 headspace services
 (2,191 new & 1,806 returning)

16,778
 headspace occasions
 of service



61.3%
 (1,024) of young people showed
 significant improvement in either
 k10, SOFAS or MyLifeTracker
 outcomes



2022 Primary Care Refresher: sharing the knowledge

General practitioners and other health care professionals came together over the weekend of 4-5 June 2022, for WVPHN's annual primary care refresher to listen to medical and primary health presenters and keynote speakers on a range of topics on the conference theme 'primary care through the pandemic'. Nearly two hundred health care professionals attended the event and listened to more than 20 doctors and health care professions speak on their areas of expertise.

WVPHN CEO Rowena Clift, gave the opening address, while the day one keynote address was given by Professor Michael Kidd, the Deputy Chief Medical Officer and Principal Medical Advisor from the Australian Government's Department of Health. On day two, the National Rural Health Commissioner, Adjunct Professor Ruth Stewart, from the Australian Government's Department of Health, gave the keynote address.

Attendees in the GP stream attended sessions that covered a range of topics including assessment and management of eating disorders during the pandemic; palliative care engagement during COVID-19; innovative ways practices are managing patients in primary care during COVID-19; long COVID-19 and First Nations health – the role of primary care.

It was the first time the keynote event had been held as a hybrid event, with day one featuring in-person and online attendees and



Presenters and participants at the 2022 Primary Care Refresher.

Workforce Development statistics

FY21-22

Event type	No. of series	No. of sessions	No. of attendances	Average no. of attendees per session
ECHOs				
COVID-19 ECHO	4	34	1643	48
Domestic & Family Violence ECHO	1	8	128	16
Movement Disorders ECHO	1	4	39	10
Intellectual Disabilities ECHO	1	4	37	9
Project ECHO - all	7	50	1847	37

the day two being online only. After 2021's entirely virtual conference, it was a pleasure to again have some face-to-face engagement.

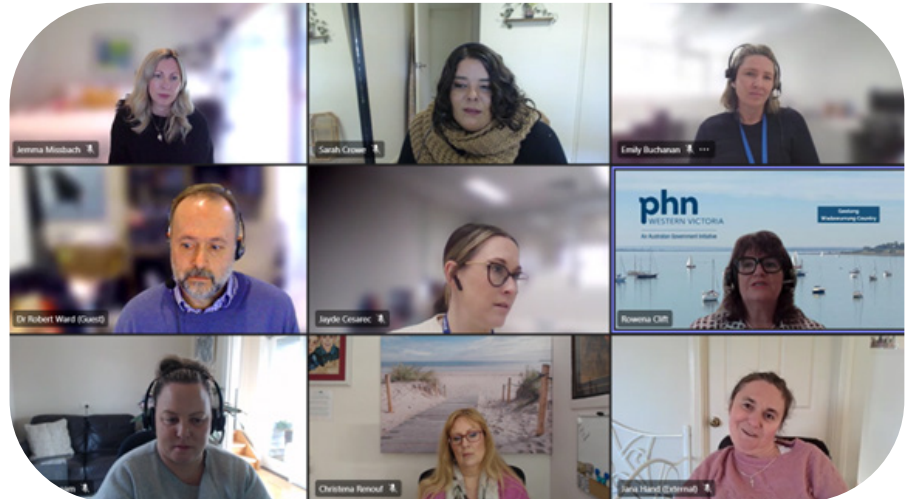
NEXT STEPS: Planning for the 2023 Primary Care Refresher has commenced, incorporating feedback from delegates who attended this year's event.

Supporting People with an Intellectual Disability to Access Health

Following discussions with the Department of Health and those advocating for better health care access for people with an intellectual disability, the [National Roadmap to Improve the Health of People with Intellectual Disability](#) (National Roadmap) was developed. The National Roadmap includes the Primary Care Enhancement Program (PCEP), which aims to increase the accessibility of primary health care services, build capacity and GPs and other primary health care professionals to provide more effective and high-quality health care to people with intellectual disability.

The PCEP Supporting People with an Intellectual Disability to Access Health (SPIDAH) project team WVPHN form a passionate group of people, including people with lived experience of an intellectual disability, their family members and supporters, WVPHN staff, health professionals, and other community professionals.

This collaboration has weaved the identified themes obtained during the community co-design phase in 2021 into the [SPIDAH Foundational Project Report](#) to support improving access to primary



SPIDAH Project ECHO session presenters and participants.

health care services for people with an intellectual disability. The next steps have been set down into three areas being resources, training and development, and trial activities, and these actions align with the guiding principles of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (UNCRPD).

Primary health care professionals have the opportunity to engage with a range of intellectual disability-themed webinars and participate in the Project ECHO community of practice sessions. The Project ECHO sessions in particular, allows health care professionals to come together with other likeminded professionals to discuss potential solutions to real patient cases in the region.

People with an intellectual disability and their supporters will have opportunities to participate in various trial activities, such as learning about food, nutrition and healthy eating, and learning from a Peer Support Worker about how to access digital technologies such as telehealth consultations and podcasts about health and wellbeing topics.

178+ community members and health professionals participated in co-design learning surveys and workshops to improve primary health care for people with an intellectual disability contributing to the development of the information presented in the PCEP SPIDAH Foundational Project Report.

11 workforce training and development sessions to improve the health of people with an intellectual disability were delivered to upskill and build capacity of WVPHN and primary health care professionals in western Victoria.

Foundational Report guides improvements and accessibility

In May 2022 WVPHN proudly delivered the Supporting People with Intellectual Disability to Access Health (SPIDAH) Project Foundational Report to help guide improvements to the accessibility of primary care for people with an intellectual disability in western Victoria. The report provides an overview of the key themes and insights gained in 2021 during the co-design learn phase of the SPIDAH Project.

Between July and December 2021, WVPHN delivered a series of online surveys and workshops to develop a comprehensive understanding about what is working well, what could be improved and ideas to enhance accessibility to the primary health care system for people with an intellectual disability. We heard from people with lived experience of an intellectual disability, family, carers, community members, disability service providers and health professionals about their thoughts and experiences.

Insights gained from this co-design learn phase were vast and diverse, with many people sharing very positive experiences of the primary health care system and many others who could easily identify challenges and gaps that perpetuate health inequities for people with an intellectual disability in our region.

The report presents six key themes generated during this extensive community consultation, highlighting the areas of greatest need in the primary health care system for people with an intellectual disability. The six key themes are as follows:

- Accessibility and reasonable

adjustments, workforce, mental health, creating safer communities, preventive health care, interface with other sectors

WVPHN will utilise these key themes to guide the future directions of the SPIDAH Project to support greater accessibility to primary health care for community members as well as capacity building for treating health practitioners.

NEXT STEPS: WVPHN will utilise these key themes to guide the future directions of the SPIDAH Project to support greater accessibility to primary health care for community members as well as capacity building for treating health practitioners.

Suicide prevention trials look to understand local needs

The National Suicide Prevention Trial is a suicide prevention initiative funded by the Commonwealth Government at 12 different sites across Australia over a four-year period. Each of the trial sites was led by a local PHN and aimed to improve the understanding and current evidence base around effective suicide prevention strategies at a local level for priority population groups and the broader population.

WVPHN led and oversaw two trial sites, Great South Coast (GSC) and Ballarat, Gold Fields regions (noting that Geelong was also another trial site that WVPHN led, but that falls outside the scope of this project). Each trial site established a Leadership Group made up of people with lived experience of suicide, and representatives from the mental health and suicide prevention service system, as well as other local services (e.g., local Council).

Leadership Groups undertook extensive planning, leveraging of local data and insights to commission a range of interventions with the intent to reduce self-harm, suicide attempts and deaths. A place-based approach to suicide prevention intervention design that takes into consideration local needs, priorities, circumstances, and population groups was adopted, utilising a Collective Impact framework.

The Collective Impact framework engages people who have lived experience of suicide, local community members, clubs and associations, government, and service sectors, bringing together local knowledge, skills, and expertise to identify solutions that will provide the most impact for the community and collectively reduce suicide rates.

The overarching objective of the place-based suicide prevention trials was to apply this collective impact, evidence-based approach to deliver activities that aim to:

- Support people at risk of suicide, their families and carers.
- Reduce suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and suicides.
- Maximise regional opportunities for coordination and integration of activities and sharing of evidence-based learnings.

A final report on the two trials will be released next year.

NEXT STEPS: A final report on the two trials will be released next year which will help inform future actions.

Suicide first aid training works on a collaborative, community approach

In May 2022, residents aged 15 plus in Victoria's Great South Coast region were offered the opportunity to do free suicide first aid training. The training was offered as part of the Great South Coast Suicide Prevention Place Based Trial (GSCSPBT), a joint commitment between WVPHN and the Australian Government.

Recognising the benefits of collaborative, community-based approaches to suicide prevention, the 90-minute online training program, which was delivered by Livingworks, taught participants how to recognise when someone is having suicide ideation and how to respond to keep them safe.

The training was developed after it was found the average person is more likely to come across someone having thoughts of suicide than experiencing a heart attack. Currently, less than 1% of Australians are trained in suicide first aid. Research indicates that when a person is experiencing suicidality, their friends, family and peers are most likely to recognise indicators. Having a direct conversation about an individual's suicidality is found to decrease their suicidal intent. So, the more people who know what to look for and what to do when someone is having thoughts of suicide, the safer our communities will be.



Social media tiles from the Live4Life Great South Coast campaign.

339 community members were reached to learn about Men's Health and Wellbeing under the coordination of Outside the Locker Room

620 community members participated in Mental Health First Aid education, with 35 local members trained and qualified to deliver the Mental Health training

203 community members and providers were engaged to commence Livingworks Suicide Prevention START training - it teaches how to recognise when someone is having thoughts of suicide and how to respond to keep them safe - www.freestarttraining.com

2,000+ Resource Packages were distributed to community providers and networks, as well as men's sheds, sporting clubs, hairdressers, golf clubs and the like to provide formal and informal community-based support for people at risk of suicide

55 GPs were engaged in a review of their understanding of and capacity and capabilities for working with people at risk of suicide. It included an analysis of GP professional development needs; barriers, gaps and opportunities

844 users visited **Ballarat Mental Health Support** in a 9-week timeframe and they conducted a total of 1,110 sessions and 3,163 page views, 63% were females - 37% males

Service redesign co-design connects with community

In mid-December 2021, WVPHN released the Service Redesign Co-design Report, a report designed to help guide how WVPHN connects, develops, funds and coordinates services for health care across western Victoria. Over the course of 2021, WVPHN met with health service professionals, people with lived experience and other interested members of our community as part of a far-reaching co-design process.

The service co-design focused on mental health, chronic conditions management, and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) support services. WVPHN also looked at gaps in knowledge and where further input was needed from the system and current service providers working in chronic conditions management.

Through a series of workshops, phone interviews and surveys, members of the community were

asked what was working well, what could be improved and what ideas they had for potentially enhancing the services.

The co-design process was completed across three phases – Learn Phase, Design Phase and Test & Refine – which allowed WVPHN to gain deeper insight into what matters to people providing and visiting WVPHN funded services.

Three key ideas for service redesign were presented during the final Test & Refine phase:

- Collaborative service contracts – contracting services that bring together a spectrum of care (e.g. mental health, chronic conditions and AOD).
- Facilitation of partnerships – strengthening and nurturing partnerships between our service providers to facilitate smoother referral pathways, improving coordination and access to care.

- Developing centralised hubs – bringing multidisciplinary teams together virtually or in a physical space to respond to specific needs of the local community they support.

The co-design process determined that these three ideas have the potential to deliver better patient care through improved access to services, connected and coordinated support, and greater consistency across services.

NEXT STEPS: A tender for the service redesign will be issued later in 2022. A key focus will be on service providers to work with other providers and potentially integrate services that are available to the community.

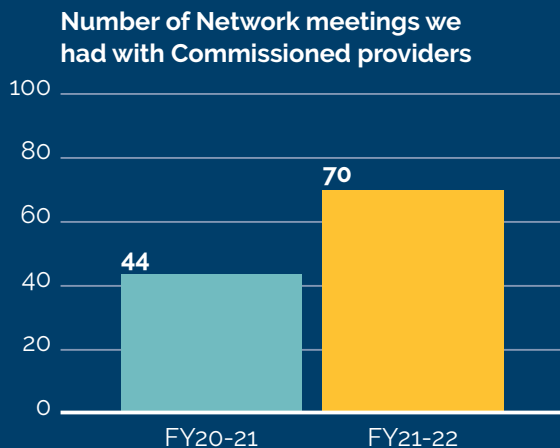
Connecting to understand local workforce recruitment

Between March and April 2022, general practices and service providers were invited to share



AOD and Chronic Conditions

AOD Episodes of Care FY21-22



987
Total Number of Individual Clients

14,948
Total Chronic Conditions Occasions of Service (OOS)

their ideas and experiences of the primary care workforce in an extensive series of workshops. The Workforce Strategy is a response to reports from WVPHN commissioned programs and general practices highlighting the challenges faced by primary care providers in rural areas, primarily concerning workforce recruitment and retention.

The workshops were the first step in developing WVPHN's Workforce Strategy to support the future of the workforce in our region. In addition to online workshops, WVPHN held face-to-face workshops in Ballarat, Geelong, Warrnambool, Hamilton, Edenhope, Warracknabeal, Horsham and Beaufort.

The workshops formed the initial stage of a co-design process to help WVPHN build a comprehensive understanding of workforce challenges and work together with service providers to determine solutions that will support the current workforce and attract the future workforce to primary care in western Victoria. Additionally, they also helped to guide WVPHN's Digital Health and Engagement Strategy, that is focused on identifying the current and future needs of digital health and digital literacy in western Victoria and how WVPHN can support these transitions.

NEXT STEPS: The workshops were the first step in developing WVPHN's Workforce Strategy to support the future of the workforce in our region

New Practice Connect website launched

During the year the new WVPHN Practice Connect website was launched providing general practice staff with a range of online resources all in one convenient place.

Practice Connect tool kits provide a comprehensive range of materials to improve all aspects of running and managing a general practice. Alongside this new website WVPHN Practice Facilitators also provide additional support by visiting practices and by providing assistance over the phone or via email. This service is provided free-of-charge to all general practices across the Western Victoria PHN region. [Visit the website](#)

Remote patient monitoring helps patients with chronic conditions

In August 2021, WVPHN announced it was coordinating a remote monitoring program involving the distribution of 30 CareMonitor licences to selected general practices for a period of 12 months to help in the care of patients with chronic conditions.

Remote patient monitoring involves the use of digital health technology to provide real time links between health providers and their patients.

The CareMonitor remote monitoring platform allows members of a patient's multidisciplinary care team to coordinate and integrate patient care through a range of tools for securely collaborating, communicating, monitoring and managing patient health.

As part of the CareMonitor licence, general practitioners and a patient's care team can use the digital platform to access important information on a patient's health readings (biometric data) enabling early detection of potential issues and reducing chances of hospitalisation.

Patients can enter their own health measures such as blood glucose

levels, blood pressure, heart rate and weight. This data can then be seen in real-time by all the patient's care team.

Giant Knitted Bowel Virtual Tour

In June 2021, during Bowel Cancer Awareness Month, WVPHN was pleased to promote the Giant Knitted Bowel Virtual Tour.

Participants could join an online educational journey through the bowel to learn about the symptoms of bowel cancer, how to prevent it and all about the free Bowel Screening Home Test Kit.

The Giant Knitted Bowel was the work of some very dedicated, generous people who four years ago knitted and weaved 50kms (30kgs) of wool into this enlarged replica. Complete with polyps, tumours and haemorrhoids, it demonstrates what an unhealthy bowel looks like to educate the public on the dangers of bowel cancer and how to prevent it.

The virtual tour was produced to deliver a very important message: know the symptoms of bowel cancer, use the home bowel screening kit and see your GP if you have any symptoms. With early detection, 90 per cent of bowel cancer cases can be cured.

Bowel cancer claims the lives of 103 Australians every week (5,336 people a year). While the risk of bowel cancer increases significantly with age, the disease doesn't discriminate, affecting men and women, young and old.

Our Board

Western Victoria PHN is governed by a nine-member Board with a mix of five appointed and four elected Directors. The Board operates within the Board Charter, which applies to Directors individually and/or to the Board collectively.



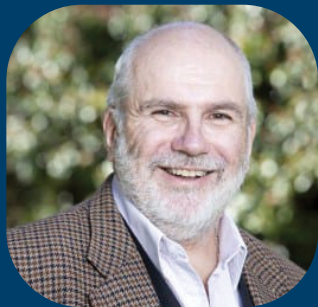
Ms Lynne McLennan
Chair



Professor Susan Brumby
Deputy Chair



Marie-Louise Aitken
Director



Dr John Barrell
Director



Cath Evans
Director



Ms Karen Foster
Director



Dr Bernard Shiu
Director



Tyrone McCuskey
Director



Dr Jane Opie
Director

Ms Lynne McLennan – Chair

Lynne is an experienced Chair and has worked for more than 20 years in primary care roles in rural and regional areas, across all levels of government. Between 2001 and 2022 Lynne was the CEO of UFS Dispensaries Ltd. Lynne was the Deputy Chair of the Committee for Ballarat and spent more than six years as President of Ballarat Health Services. Lynne is the current Chairperson of the Board of the Art Gallery of Ballarat.

Professor Susan Brumby – Deputy Chair

Susan was the founding Director of the National Centre for Farmer Health and has practical experience as a rural nurse, midwife and primary health care manager serving as an Executive of Western District Health Service for 21 years. She has published widely and presented nationally and internationally on rural and regional health with specific expertise in farmer health. She is a Fellow of the AICD and a board member of South West TAFE and Wannon Water.

Marie-Louise Aitken – Director

Marie worked as a psychologist and supervisor in rural private practice in Horsham and Warracknabeal for over 20 years until her retirement from clinical practice in June 2022. She brings a wealth of knowledge concerning mental health issues and the barriers to care experienced by rural people. Marie also has extensive experience as a Board Director; she is a Life Governor and Past President of the Rural Northwest Health Board and was formerly Board Chair of Wimmera Health Care Group. She is now proud to be Deputy Chair of Grampians Health, a newly formed

health service designed specifically for regional, rural and remote Western Victorians. Marie recognises the need for improved coordination between primary, secondary and tertiary health systems; she is committed to working with people to improve health and wellbeing. Marie is a graduate of the AICD.

Dr John Barrell – Director

Dr Jon Barrell MBBS DRACOG FRACGP has 36 years' experience of Rural General Practice in Daylesford and Trentham. He is a strong advocate for effective, efficient and sustainable primary care and continues to work to enhance the training of future generations of primary care clinicians.

Cath Evans – Director

Cath is a lawyer and former Registered Nurse. She was a practicing lawyer, specialising in litigation and transitioned into executive management roles, becoming the CEO/COO of professional service firms, operating in Australia, NZ and the UK. She was previously a Director of Bayside Health (Alfred, Caulfield and Sandringham Hospitals) and is currently the Board Chair of Wayss, an organisation that provides emergency assistance to women experiencing domestic violence and homelessness services. Cath is currently the Interim Executive Director (Victoria) for the Property Council of Australia. Cath is also a graduate of the AICD

Ms Karen Foster – Director

Karen is a communications professional who brings to the board many years' experience in journalism, strategic planning and governance. A Port Fairy resident, Karen is also an elected Councillor.

Tyrone McCuskey – Director

Currently the CEO of McCallum Disability Services Inc. and Director of Western Victoria UFS Dispensaries Ltd., Tyrone is a registered CPA and graduate of the AICD with over two decades of senior management and director experience. More than half of his professional career has been working within regional communities across the health sector including ambulance, community services, pharmacy and medical practice.

Dr Jane Opie – Director

Dr Jane Opie has worked as a General Practitioner in the Geelong region since the early 1990s. She has additional roles as lecturer and medical educator within the Deakin University School of Medicine. She is a Director on the Kardinia Health Board and chairs its Quality and Safety subcommittee. She has completed a Masters of Public Health in clinical epidemiology and has an active interest in population based health interventions that improve the healthcare outcomes and healthcare experience of our community.

Dr Bernard Shiu – Director

Bernard is the owner and Clinical Director of Banksia Medical Centre in Newcomb. He was awarded the RACGP Victorian GP of the Year Award in 2020. Bernard is Deputy Chair of the RACGP Victoria Faculty and serves as an examiner for the college, as well as a supervisor and medical educator of almost 10 years. Bernard regularly lectures at Deakin University's School of Medicine and serves as an expert member for numerous official scientific and research organisations.

Our Executive Team



Rowena Clift
CEO



Andrew Giddy
Executive Director Strategy
and Engagement



Janelle Jakowenko
Executive Director Operations



Nigel Jarvis
Executive Director Finance
and Corporate Services

Rowena Clift - CEO

Rowena commenced as Chief Executive Officer in June 2020 and was previously Director of Service and System Integration at WVPHN. Rowena has over 20 years of experience in the health care industry and has qualifications in Nursing and Health Systems Management. She held previous leadership roles across various organisations in the acute sector in clinical, service redesign and system transformation and recently completed a secondment as Acting Chief Executive Officer of Ballan District Health and Care. Rowena is a Board Director for both Western District Health Service and G21 Alliance.

Andrew Giddy - Executive Director Strategy and Engagement

Andy's role aims to ensure alignment between the strategic directions of WVPHN and the work that we undertake to support better health outcomes across our region. His role works across all WVPHN teams to support engagement with our stakeholders to make sure their voices are heard in the development of programs. The role also combines feedback from stakeholders with the diverse data sets that are available to WVPHN to tailor our activities to our regional needs. This new portfolio includes engagement, communications, First Nations health, health intelligence, population health and strategy.

Prior to joining WVPHN in March 2021, Andy worked in the university, TAFE and clinical research sectors. He sometimes works as a veterinarian in wildlife rescue and Emergency Animal Disease outbreaks. He is a director and Vice President of Melba Support Services (a large NFP disability services provider) and a director of Scientia Clinical Research.

Janelle Jakowenko - Executive Director Operations

Janelle has 25 years' experience in the health sector, starting out in one of the more obscure allied health professions as a medical photographer. In 2008 she completed a Masters in eHealthcare with high distinction. She was one of only a handful of telehealth experts at the time, long before a pandemic turned it into business as usual.

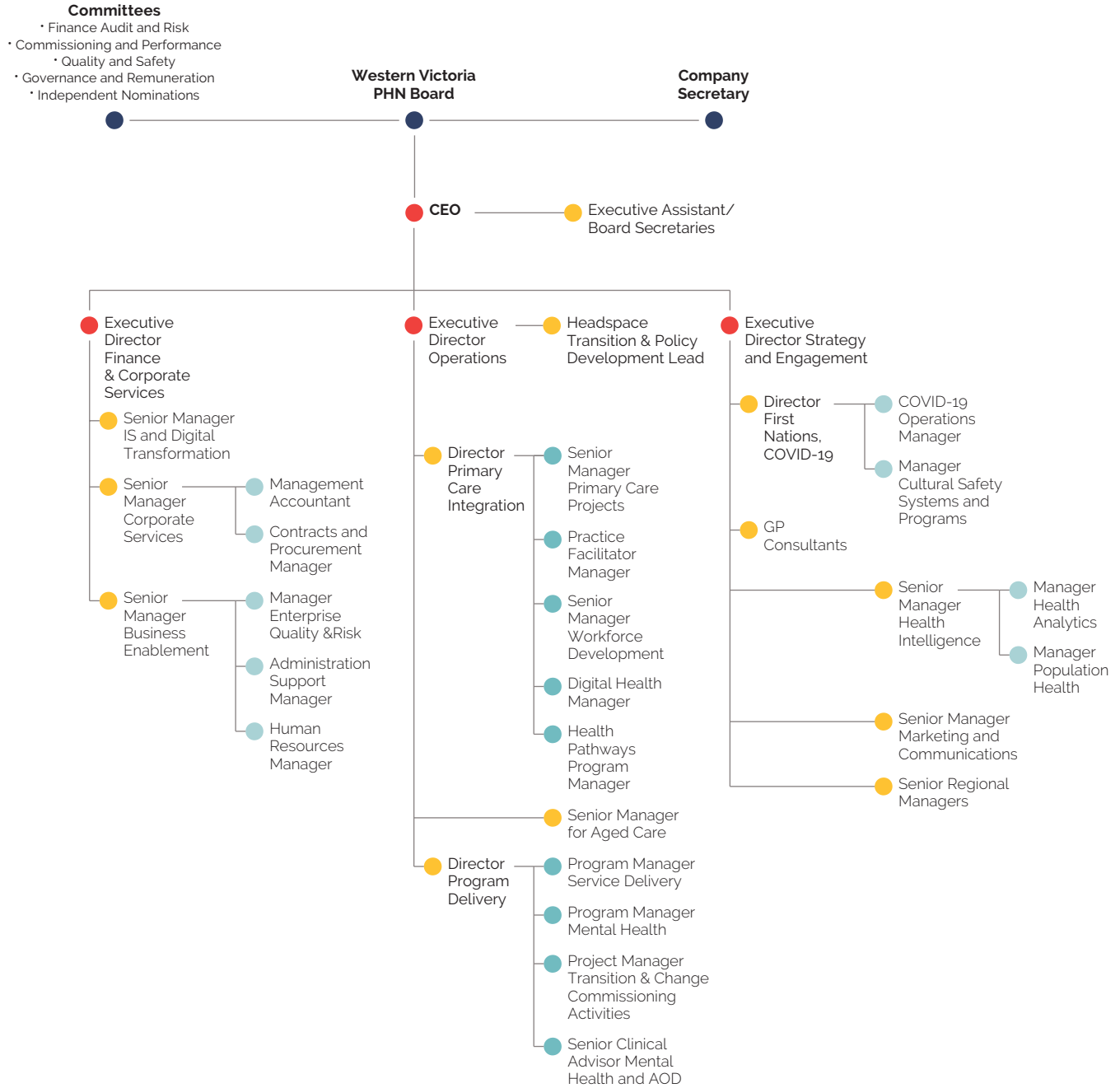
From 2010 to 2012, Janelle was a subject matter expert for the RACGP in telehealth and eHealth. She then went on to lead national programs for the Australian Medicare Local Alliance in telehealth and cross-sector collaboration. After AML Alliance was defunded, she moved into the acute sector leading complex, whole-of-organisation projects, firstly for Barwon Health, then for the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service. In Cairns she successfully led a \$50 million organisational turnaround strategy that had high-quality care as the core principle. Janelle is passionate about continuous improvement of complex systems so the people within can focus on their driving purpose. She is a director of Timboon Health Service.

Nigel Jarvis - Executive Director Finance and Corporate Services

Nigel joined WVPHN in April 2021, bringing 11 years of finance and corporate services experience in the health sector, with the past 5.5 years in executive roles within the private acute setting. Nigel also has public health experience through previous employment and a board director role.

Nigel holds a degree in Commerce and is a Certificate Practicing Accountant. He is currently serving on the Ballarat Foundation board as Treasurer and Chair on the Finance Committee. At Beaufort & Skipton Health Services he is on the board as Treasurer, and is Chair on the Finance and Audit Risk Management sub-committee.

Organisation Chart



Clinical and Community Engagement

WVPHN has two dedicated Regional Integrated Councils – a clinical and a community council – each with representatives from the four sub regions of Ballarat and Goldfields, Wimmera and Grampians, Geelong Otway and Great South Coast.

Purpose of the Regional Integrated Councils:

- To advise WVPHN Board and CEO of the unique needs of their respective communities, including in rural and remote areas.
- To assist WVPHN to develop local strategies to improve the operation of the healthcare system for patients in the PHN.

The Regional Integrated Councils will do this by:

- Reporting to and informing WVPHN on opportunities to improve healthcare services through strategic, cost-effective investment and innovation. This includes providing WVPHN with advice on regional opportunities, issues, risks and interests as they relate to the PHN's strategic priorities.

- Acting as regional champions of locally relevant care pathways designed to streamline patient care, improve the quality of care and utilise existing health resources efficiently to improve health outcomes. This will include pathways between hospital and general practice that influence the follow up treatment of patients.

Clinical Advisory Council Members

MEMBER	REPRESENTING REGION
Dr Kate Graham – Chair	Wimmera Grampians
Caroline Gibson	Ballarat Goldfields
Emma Thurling	Ballarat Goldfields
Dr Nic Brayshaw	Geelong Otway
Sian Pritchard	Geelong Otway
Inger Neylon	Geelong Otway
Prof. Richard Harvey	Geelong Otway
Dr Eldon Lyon	Great South Coast
Nicholas Place	Great South Coast
Rebecca Van Wollingen	Great South Coast

Community Advisory Council Members

MEMBER	REPRESENTING REGION
Adele Kenneally - Chair	Great South Coast
Rebecca Alvarez	Ballarat and Goldfields
Maureen MacPhail	Ballarat and Goldfields
Amanda McCartney	Ballarat and Goldfields
Marilyn Dolling	Geelong Otway
Daryl Starkey	Geelong Otway
Traci Williams	Geelong Otway
David McIntyre	Great South Coast
Barry Watson	Great South Coast
Robyn Lardner	Wimmera Grampians
Rosalind Byass	Wimmera Grampians

Our Staff



Staff numbers

103 staff

90.6346

FTE as at June 30 2022

Staff Awards 2021

At last year's AGM five staff and one team were presented recognition awards based on their work and contribution to the organisation in relation to the values of the organisation. Staff are nominated by other staff and the Executive Leadership Team select the award recipients from the many nominations that are submitted. The values are:

- Respect – listening, valuing and responding to colleagues and stakeholders
- Connect - engaging, collaborating and being inclusive and professional
- Lead – being positive and embracing and learning from others

2021 Staff Recognition Award – Respect went to Diana Carli Seebohm and Jayde Cesarec

2021 Staff Recognition Award – Connect went to Tom Coverdale and Maryann Howard

2021 Staff Recognition Award – Lead went to Sara Thomas and the COVID-19 Response Core Team

Congratulations to all 2021 award winners.

Greater connections and collaborations yield excellent survey results

Since 2017, WVPHN has been conducting regular internal benchmarking studies through BPA Analytics. The latest 2021 survey had a 96% response rate from staff with resulting scores and responses tipping the organisation into the 'truly a great place to work' category.

The BPA database includes similar research data across most PHNs, which allows PHNs to benchmark against similar organisations.

"Flexible workplace and an excellent team who are all on the same page and support each other to achieve results collaboratively."

"You are not just a number. Your opinion is heard and matters."

Work that i am proud of

- Good working relations within the workplace or with external parties.
- Being helpful, helping others or providing assistance.
- Strong partnerships, networking, merging or liaison with other groups.

Employee satisfaction with their organisation

- Supportive environment, either from staff or from managers.
- Having a strong, clear sense of vision & future direction. Being strategic or forward planning.
- Clear communication, direction, expectations, instructions, vision, guidelines or goals.

Managers' performance priorities

- Honesty, truthfulness or telling it like it is.
- Good, effective communication.
- Timeliness, punctuality, being on time, no waiting, meeting by appointment, meeting timelines/deadlines or good time management.



What the organisation does well that i am proud of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community minded, focused or based. Sense of community. • Supportive environment, either from staff or from managers. • Flexibility, adaptability or embracing change.
Top organisation priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To serve the community. • To improve, become better, strive or innovate services, practices and outcomes. • To deliver good outcomes, especially for clients..
Most exciting things about potential challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good executive, senior or higher level management. • Community minded, focused or based. Sense of community. • Good opportunities for employment, development, learning or growth.
What employees miss most from before the pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues, the staff, or the people who work here. • Interacting with, or getting along with, others. • Face-to-face contact with colleagues, managers, clients, patients, or customers.
What employees value most in their current work arrangements during the pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility, adaptability or embracing change. • Working remotely or the presence, accessibility, or technological viability of a work from home policy. • Ease of travel, especially distance from home.
What employees have learned out of the “pandemic year”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility, adaptability or embracing change. • Being grateful, appreciative, or thankful. Not taking things for granted. • Effective or strong teamwork.
What the organisation did well in responding to the pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working remotely or the presence, accessibility, or technological viability of a work from home policy. • Supportive environment, either from staff or from managers. • Being prompt, responsive, quick, fast or speedy.

Working from anywhere continues to work well

This year was the second full year of staff not being required to work from an office setting, instead having the ability to Work From Anywhere (WFA). Most staff work from their home office and have been kitted out with the right equipment and technology to maintain excellent connection and engagement with WVPHN staff as well as people outside the organisation.

WVPHN has also made the commitment that staff are able to meet with stakeholders at a range of locations convenient to them and mandatory face to face meetings as required.

WVPHN is committed to continuing to deliver on the strategic directions of the organisation in a flexible and engaging manner, meeting the needs of our stakeholders. Our WFA model is supported with an 'engage everywhere' attitude. WVPHN also provides flexible and safe working

environments for staff called PoPPs (Points of Physical Presence) where there are opportunities for face to face meetings and collaboration.

WFA reduces the need for significant travel to attend the office and all face to face meetings. However, there is an expectation that teams still gather together and managers meet with their direct reports face-to-face from time to time.

Training hub available for staff

WVPHN staff have access to the KNOWVPHN learning library, launched in December 2021. KNOWVPHN is a digital content hub, housing over 100,000 resources from the world's top training providers.

Through KNOWVPHN, staff have access to a range of topics, from general to industry-specific training, plus many interesting and fun topics for general personal development.



Staff connecting at All Staff Days

During the year three All Staff Days were organised so that staff could both learn, connect with teams across the organisation and have some fun.

These all staff days are regular features for WVPHN and are important components of Working From Anywhere for the organisation.

The events are held at different location across western Victoria. Staff learn about the health care in the region and hear from local GPs and other health care professionals about the work they are doing.

Staff also have the opportunity to hear from other teams as well as work together on organisation-wide projects.

This year the three events were held at Narmbool (near Ballarat) in December 2021, Geelong in March 2022 and Dunkeld in June 2022.

Photos from various All Staff Days during the year.



