

## Western Melbourne Report : WM Executive Manager

The Western Melbourne arm of Gateways has experienced substantial growth and multiple innovative initiatives are gaining momentum as a result of all of the hard work from the team in 20/21.

This year in Melbourne we have been prone to extended lockdown periods and this has presented real challenges and frustrations. The key message for this annual report lies within the fact that the team have endless passion, and oodles of creativity which are backed up by a willingness to pitch in and help out in whatever way possible.

Our Recreational Program activities have been very successful and are as popular as ever. We have been able to run a couple of fabulous groups including the very popular Bright Sparks.

To ensure we have remained connected to our participants during lockdown, the team have had to develop innovative ways to provide further support and several online programs and information sessions were developed.

Our Camps Program has been significantly expanded and we are now offering an exciting variety of different camps – all ages, all stages, 2 nights away through to 5 nights away. We have been lucky enough to also be awarded \$40K from DFFH to run a camp for carers and siblings which brings us great satisfaction as we know how important those family members are to the health and wellbeing of participants.

In Individual Support, we have expanded services and in collaboration with the start-up of our new central intake system, we have been able to do more for vulnerable people in the community. We view this work as essential for individuals and as such have maintained a very high rate of continuity during lockdown.

Our government funded programs area has experienced considerable development and we are proud to report that the Child and Youth support program for young people with a disability who are deemed ineligible for NDIS funding, are now able to be offered a service. We have multiple young ones living with ADHD, FASD and other impairments who are able to enjoy one to one support and respite. Additionally we are proud to report the huge success of our Reminiscence Therapy project, a dedicated service response to people over 65 living in the community. This arts based project so ably led by our Creative Arts therapist, is a game changer. It brings a lovely presence and dignity to the older person by inviting them to reminisce over the chapters of their lives.

Our Support Coordination Team are reaching high productivity levels to help strengthen our financial health. It has been a tough year of working from home, coming back into the office, working from home again and then back to the office. This has built agility and flexibility in our approach which is always a good thing. The other exciting news for this service is that we have been able to expand into doing some specialist support coordination which will be up and running in the new financial year. We very much look forward to the PMFA staff coming to join the support coordination staff to strengthen the PMFA service response so we can offer more cohesive wrap around services.

## Western Melbourne Report

Our Therapy services remain in high demand and whilst we have lost some valued therapists to other roles, we are pleased to have gained some highly qualified and valuable staff. We acknowledge the resilience and innovation of therapy staff for their stamina and tenacity to adapt in their roles to support families during lockdown. It was a huge learning curve for all therapists to shift to telehealth supports that would provide some benefits to the children we supported and also to support families who were struggling under lockdown.

We managed to run multiple successful group offerings including:

- Fiction with Friends
- Crafting with Friends
- Song Writing Group
- Lego Group
- Bike Skills Group
- Happy Feet
- Early intervention therapy group

Getting the groups up and running this year has been a highlight with varied and new types of groups catering for a wide range of ages and supporting children and young people in different ways. We were awarded the Rosemary Malone scholarship based on the innovative “Venture On” nature based therapy group program. We have also been approached by the DET to offer both face to face and telehealth sessions to young children who are not able to use NDIS and we of course are doing our very best to accommodate these families.

My heartfelt gratitude to Rachel, Ashesh and Delia for your ongoing support and leadership of wonderful people, who give wonderful support to our wonderful participants.

Areas of Focus for the next 6 months include:

- Plans to start the Autism, language and dyslexia assessment in WM.
- Planning to Start the Uni of Melb Masters student placement program.
- Plans to include Accommodation in WM including STA and SDA.
- Acquire a multi-purpose facility to replicate PLACE that allows for a social connect day program, an activity space, job quest and REC spaces.