

Newsletter

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VincentCare
Engage. Enable. Empower.



Ozanam House Redevelopment Update

Welcome to our first edition of 2019 - bringing you the latest updates from the new world-class Homeless Hub and Resource Centre under

construction in inner-Melbourne, Ozanam House. Our external works are now largely complete and internal works are well underway with many different trades on-site working on different floors building features concurrently.

This month we will provide you with some insights into homelessness and health, some of our holistic health and wellbeing programs, the clients they support, and the vital role they play in homelessness recovery.

Update from the CEO

Happy New Year and welcome to the first 2019 edition of our Ozanam House redevelopment update.



I would like to take a moment to introduce myself as the new CEO of VincentCare Victoria. I would also like to acknowledge the vision and commitment of my predecessor, former CEO John Blewonski, who over the past nine years took the redevelopment of Ozanam House from concept to reality.

It is with pleasure and a sense of prevailing duty and determination that I take over not only this major initiative as it nears completion, but also the task of providing our valued supporters with these updates. I am pleased to see that preparations towards our launch are progressing well, with no loss of continuity. The Redevelopment site is progressing rapidly towards completion. The scaffolding has been removed, the external facade is finished, the landscaping is almost complete and the internal fit out is progressing well.

Our issue this month is based on wellness. Health and wellbeing encompassing physical, mental and social health, is important to all of us. We are lucky to live in a nation that places a great deal of importance on health and wellness – from the care and resources available, to the medical advances

and technologies we fund and employ; from the quality of practitioners, to the cultural and social emphasis on things such as sport and recreation – all of this is good for our minds and bodies. However, health service access is also one of the most highly debated policy, practice and funding concerns in Australia and Victoria. VincentCare works closely with a range of stakeholders to ensure our services remain evidence-informed, impactful and sustainable. We will continue to strive for ways to improve and grow our health platform, to meet our clients' needs.

Some of the key barriers preventing people experiencing homelessness from seeking health services are personal and practical. This includes issues related to appointment access/availability, costs of routine tests or treatments, being self-conscious and judged about their own hygiene and health conditions, and competing needs and priorities. Failure to keep up with preventative health often results in health issues or conditions needing advanced treatments due to extended periods of neglect.

In this issue you will be able to find out more about the difference accessing health treatments can make to the journey of recovery for our clients, and the dedication of our team of staff and health professionals that are involved in the provision of our health services support programs.

When the new Ozanam House was conceived it provided VincentCare with the opportunity to start with a fresh canvas for what optimal health care facilities and resources would look like for Victorians experiencing homelessness. The results will be evident in our new, purpose-built, holistic health clinic, co-located at the Homeless Hub on Flemington Road. It will be further emphasised by the extent of our health and wellbeing programs that will be integrated into our Homelessness to Recovery Model, and the dedication of staff who work professionally in this area.

Delivery of our health programs from our new Homeless Hub and Resource Centre co-located with the Ozanam House Redevelopment will commence from April 2019.

Quinn Pawson
CEO VincentCare Victoria

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Some facts about health and homelessness

- People that have experienced long-term rough sleeping have a life expectancy of just 47 years.
- People experiencing homelessness are at increased risk of a number of physical and mental health conditions including: psychiatric illness, substance use, chronic disease, musculoskeletal disorders, skin and foot problems, poor dental health, and poor general health.
- Health/medical services, mental health services and specialist counselling remain the most commonly needed services.
- Hospital emergency departments are frequently used by people experiencing homelessness for issues that could be addressed by a GP or social services.
- For people experiencing homelessness who present at hospital emergency departments, their unplanned admissions are high and length of stay is longer than average.

Ozanam Health & Wellbeing Snapshot

The ability for our clients to access and receive health and wellbeing services is an essential part of VincentCare's Homelessness to Recovery Model. In addition to the provision of housing support, VincentCare works with each person to understand their needs and to develop a range of goals including health goals that help to improve their health and wellbeing, increase their self-esteem, and their commitment and confidence in rebuilding their lives.



1,500+ HOURS

of health services will be provided to clients each year at Ozanam House in the new purpose-built treatment rooms.

Health services will include:



Doctor



Nurse



Dietician



Podiatrist



Dentist



Optometrist



Occupational therapy



Accupuncture

A holistic approach to health and homelessness

VincentCare's new Ozanam House Homeless Hub and Resource Centre will provide clients with essential services and support, enabling a personalised approach to recovery.

Recovery from homelessness requires an approach to housing, health and wellbeing that places the person at the centre of their own treatment and recovery.

Clients who present at homelessness services, such as VincentCare, may be experiencing any number of physical, psychiatric or psychosocial health issues that could be contributing directly or indirectly to their experience of homelessness. Senior Practitioner Doug Harding says that it's important to look at all these factors together.

"No two individuals are the same or have the same lived experience of homelessness or presenting health needs. It's important to take a personalised and integrated approach to homelessness recovery to ensure the best possible outcome."

Research conducted by VincentCare in partnership with other agencies in 2014, revealed

that people with mental health issues were particularly vulnerable to homelessness with 88 per cent of the homeless participants having a diagnosed mental illness. Many people also develop ill-mental health because of their experience of homelessness. Research also shows that people who have experienced long-term rough sleeping have a reduced life expectancy - just 47 years, compared to 77 years among other Australians.

Doug says these figures highlight the need for a new approach to homelessness.

"VincentCare spent three years researching and developing our Homelessness to Recovery Model (HRM), a first of its kind in Australia. Following a successful pilot program last year, the model will be implemented at the new Homeless Hub and Resource Centre. "The model has a heavy focus on engagement and the integration of health and wellbeing programs that

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promote recovery and people's sense of agency. It starts with developing genuine, predictable and consistent relationships with clients, and ensuring a safe, comfortable and accepting environment."

The new Homeless Hub and Resource Centre will have essential health services available on-site to clients to aid their recovery, encompassing the areas of physical, mental and social health, and including a dentist, nurse, GPs, podiatrists, alcohol and drug intervention, physiotherapy, acupuncture, optometry and occupational therapy.

The resource centre will also allow for social interaction with recreational facilities, an on-site café, open plan dining, as well as a gym, library and art therapy program.

"Creating opportunities for people to make connections, rediscover their strengths and pursue their interests creates a foundation for reconnection with significant others or a return to their communities of choice," Mr Harding said.



Health, the whole picture

George's Story

George has had it all - cars, houses, a business ... and through bad luck, and a failed marriage, George also lost it all.

When he separated from his wife, he was left with a plastic carry bag of clothes. "That was my first and only marriage and that led me into homelessness."

George would have lost his teeth and other aspects of his health as well, if not for the health platform available at VincentCare's Inner Melbourne Community Hub.

VincentCare was able to provide a range of service unique to George's personal health care needs. Vital services that clients will continue to receive, in brand new facilities, from the new Ozanam Homeless Hub and Resource Centre.

"So far, I've had my dental care taken care of and that's been life-changing. For years, I struggled to eat and had chronic earaches and balance problems. All that got fixed up the first year that I started coming here."

He has also been a regular user of the visiting GP and psychologist, and believes that he would 'be in a wooden box' if it wasn't for Duncan the GP, and Frank the psychologist.

Homeless clients such as George benefit from access to tailored services, and the case managed support to acknowledge and advocate for their health as a priority. Many clients come to VincentCare with multiple, complex needs impacting their personal security, physical health and mental wellbeing. Access to health services and mental health care can be transformative and even life-saving. "I was suicidal, I had nothing to live for, and Frank and Duncan gave me back my life."



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George acknowledges the role that physician Duncan has played in 'fixing a lot of his problems'. This has included helping George to move up the waiting list for a surgery to correct the C4 and C6 discs in his neck, and to his shoulder. "I've been waiting since 2012 for this. Both discs have severely deteriorated causing me a lot of nerve pain, but it will be fixed soon and I have Duncan and the nurses to thank for that."

George could not be happier with the help he's received from VincentCare. Without family in Melbourne, he relies heavily on the nurses to assist in his medical care and decision making regarding his health. "The nurses are like my

carers. They are like family... they have my best interests at heart and know what to do."

When George was asked how he felt towards his medical care team, he struggled to find the right words, eventually saying, "They've been supportive of me since the start, and I just want to thank them from the bottom of my heart; for giving me my life and health back, for getting my mind at peace, and just for caring."

He went on to say he now has a roof over his head, a nice bed to go back to, musical instruments to play, and songs in his heart. "The reason I have all this is because of VincentCare. Without them, I'd have nothing."

The dentist changing the lives of the homeless



Their poor dental state often adds to their loss of confidence and a feeling of shame.

“Once patients realise that I empathise with their situation, they are able to relax more easily and gain trust with us. They want to come back to us and get all their teeth fixed. Having a big smile on their faces and seeing their transformation is very satisfying and rewarding.”

One of the most exciting aspects of the new Ozanam Homeless Resource Centre will be client access to a range of wrap-around supports, including primary and allied health services, all in one location. Co-located with flexible accommodation options, the health platform will assist clients to achieve their physical and mental wellbeing goals. This will include the only homelessness-specific dental service in the state.

Other services will include spaces for nurses, visiting GPs and those working in the areas of alcohol and drug intervention, physiotherapy, acupuncture, optometry, and occupational therapy. These services will complement the case managed support that homeless clients at all stages of their recovery journey will receive.

VincentCare Senior Practitioner Doug Harding highlights the importance of having all these services operating within the one, client-focused practice framework. “Using recovery principles and trauma-informed practice helps ground our staff. It ensures we don’t default into just running programs in isolation, and we are actually assisting people to return to independence.”

This independence looks different for everyone. For some, it may include a life changing trip to the dentist.

When the Manager of the Special Needs team at the Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne first approached her to join the Ozanam Dental Clinic in 2010, Deepti Cherukuri was hesitant. “I didn’t know what to expect. I was ignorant. I didn’t know if I would be able to do it.” Deepti put her fears to one side – remembering her entrenched belief that everyone deserves good dental health and great dental service.

To the benefit of countless VincentCare clients, Deepti took the position at Victoria’s first exclusive homelessness dental chair and has never regretted her decision.

Access to health care professionals who understand the situations and needs of homeless people, is an essential element of holistic, transformational recovery services offered by VincentCare.

Deepti discusses the importance of empathising with

“I don’t make assumptions, I treat everyone with respect and simply focus on helping the patients. They soon realise that dentists are really not that scary.”

her patients and communicating in a way that ensures each individual understands their options and different procedures, so they can make an informed choice. This helps patients to be involved and exercise autonomy over their personal health care decisions.

“I don’t make assumptions, I treat everyone with respect and simply focus on helping the patients. They soon realise that dentists are really not that scary.”

Many homeless patients walk through the door in great pain, with teeth in a very bad state. Some have not made dental hygiene a priority for decades.

Proud to smile

Jason's story

The experience of homelessness can impact every domain of a person's wellbeing. While personal safety and access to life's essentials become paramount, there are many things that can take a back seat. Dental hygiene is often among these.

Jason wishes to share his wisdom, and the impact that improved dental health has made to his self-esteem and wellbeing.

"I was petrified" he admits. After a bad childhood experience, Jason didn't see a dentist for over 40 years. During this time, he ignored his tooth pain to his own detriment - watching his teeth decay. Jason's experience with homelessness further exacerbated the problem. It was his contact with VincentCare services - soon to relocate to the new Ozanam House - that changed this.

After a period of physical and mental healing, Jason started to reconnect with community and family, and began volunteering for VincentCare. It was then that he became aware of all the services and programs available - including Victoria's only homelessness dentist service, an auspice of Dental Health Services Victoria.

Jason's acceptance of treatment was not instant. His case worker, Lauren, encouraged him to seek treatment. "As the appointment would get closer, I would change it because I was so scared. I was bought up hard, so nothing really shakes me but I was petrified of walking through to the dentist's room."

With Lauren's support, Jason remembers meeting the dentist, who was patient, sensitive and ready to listen. "I went from petrified to no worries at all because of the way they took care of me."

Jason had a full clean and went back later for three fillings, and then the fitting of his new teeth just before Christmas. Once his teeth were fixed he realised how much his dental condition had impacted his self-esteem. "I used to be so self-conscious, now I enjoy talking to people and I am not afraid to laugh. I feel healthier and happier."

He also felt the impact his new teeth had on others. "You want to see me and my son, we look like Luna Park, he is proud his dad's got teeth, and I am so happy to express myself these days."

So what would Jason tell others in Melbourne experiencing homelessness and dental issues?

"Forget about the past and book in to see the homelessness dental service, you'll be looked after and you will be happy to smile again. The guys I see walking out with full dentures are beaming. You can see their smiles from across the road."

Dental care is just one of the many holistic, wrap-around services that will be offered from the new Homeless Hub and Resource Centre. The positive impact of caring for and supporting 'the whole person' cannot be underestimated. While



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it takes more than a few fillings to help a homeless person to recovery, it is these little steps towards wellness that can have a profound impact on self-esteem, physical health, and mental wellbeing.

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Yarra Trams is helping the homeless on their journey to recovery in 2019

VincentCare will be visibly promoting our new Homeless Hub and Resource Centre in 2019 thanks to a new partnership with Yarra Trams.



VincentCare is pleased to announce their selection as one of eight community organisations, championing diversity and inclusion, chosen by Yarra Trams for their 2019 Community Partnerships Program.

VincentCare will share in \$1 million worth of free advertising on Melbourne's iconic tram network, providing the opportunity to promote our work to wide-reaching audiences across Melbourne.

VincentCare's CEO Quinn Pawson, was pleased Yarra Trams had recognised VincentCare's aspiration to be the leader in providing care, hope and advocacy for those facing disadvantage and homelessness.

"It is a wonderful time for VincentCare to have our name up in lights as we move towards

opening our world-class, client-centred, evidence-led development in North Melbourne. The Homeless Hub and Resource Centre will ensure clients are engaged, enabled and empowered to make decisions around their support and goals while building confidence and self-esteem to reconnect with their community of choice.

"We thank Yarra Trams for this opportunity, and look forward to our very visible engagement with their community program this year."

VincentCare will be using this valuable exposure to let as many Melbournians as possible know more about the redevelopment of Ozanam House, the services available, our co-located Homeless Hub and Resource Centre, and the many people we will be supporting from this location on a daily basis.

Redevelopment Major Partners

VincentCare would also like to acknowledge our current major partners, who have provided significant financial contributions towards the Ozanam Redevelopment.



Donate now

We are still seeking financial contributions from the community towards our Redevelopment project goal of \$47m. You can make a direct donation at www.vincentcare.org.au or if you are interested to raise funds to support this major homeless initiative, please contact fundraising@vincentcare.org.au

Donations to VincentCare are tax deductible.