

Join the ISCHS Community Participation Committee

Inner South Community Health Service is looking for four consumers / community members for our Community Participation Committee.

The goal of the Committee is to help plan ways to engage with the broader community and meaningfully involve ISCHS consumers and community members in developing and planning ISCHS services.

The Committee has been operating for a few years and is the key body responsible for planning and implementing community participation at ISCHS. It currently has two consumers and five staff representatives. Meetings are every two months for two hours during working hours and members are paid a sitting fee for each meeting.

If you are interested in being involved with this Committee or would like more information please contact Tanya Hendry, Community Participation Officer by the 15th of July on 9525 1300 or thendry@ischs.org.au.

Community Winter Breakfast

You are invited to attend ISCHS' Community Winter Breakfast which is being held every Wednesday morning from 8 am - 9.30 am from July 23rd to August 27th at our SouthPort site located at 341 Coventry Street, South Melbourne.

The winter breakfast program provides a free, nutritious meal but also aims to increase connections between diverse members of the community. We encourage you to attend and meet others who live and work amongst you.



Indigenous elder, Aunty Judith (Jacko) Jackson with the Choir of Hard Knocks

The Annual Homeless Memorial

by Romi Grossberg, Social Worker

Over 300 people came together on June 17th to celebrate the annual Homeless Memorial event held at Peanut Farm Reserve, St Kilda. With homelessness on the government's agenda this year the event has never been more significant. Local council members joined homeless and disadvantaged people, community workers and indigenous elders to commemorate this occasion.

The Homeless Memorial was created eight years ago when the need was recognised to create a safe space for people to come together to honour and remember people who had died whilst homeless or because of homelessness. This year's event was opened with a traditional 'Welcome to Country', followed by the very popular Choir of Hard Knocks who effortlessly had the audience singing along.

Sister Rose from Sacred Heart Mission spoke beautifully before local actor and singer Alyce Platt and Claude Carranza sang. Local writers and poets from Roomers magazine took to the stage to read pieces of their work followed by an open invitation to the crowd to speak about those they knew who had died and to light a memorial candle. Venerable Loden Jinpa from the Tibetan Buddhist Society also spoke and there was a two minute silence in honour of those whom had died.

Volunteers ran the event and served BBQ food, soup and cake and a number of agencies worked alongside ISCHS to organise and fund the event.

ISCHS chosen to pilot oral health project

ISCHS is one of two community health services involved in a pilot project that is aiming to improve the oral health of residents of pension-level supported residential services (SRS). An SRS provides 24-hour accommodation and personal care for residents, and a pension-level SRS means that the fee for residents is no more than the pension plus rent assistance.

Robert Reid, Facility Cost Relief Officer, Supporting Accommodation for Vulnerable Victorian Initiative, at ISCHS said, "Pension-level SRS residents are among the most severely disabled members of our community, with limited family support and little or no disposable income. This project will give them the opportunity to improve their dental health, eat and enjoy food more easily, and improve their appearance and self-esteem. It will also provide relief for those in pain."

The Victorian government has funded ISCHS to be involved in a project that involves two broad parts. Part one is to provide oral health kits to SRS residents that contain toothbrushes, toothpaste and dental floss. The second part is to trial the use of oral hygienists and assistants to offer dental check ups, oral health resources and referrals for dental treatment.

Sarah Baron, a Dental Hygienist, has been employed at ISCHS to undertake this project and has recently started distributing the kits. She said, "There has already been lots of positive feedback and thanks from the residents with some saying that they have started brushing their teeth again since receiving the kit."

Sarah has also recently started dental screenings with some of the residents. She conducts a general check up focusing on decay, fillings and gum health and also talks about oral hygiene and looks at things such as diet and smoking. The aim of this is to increase the knowledge of residents as well as trying to change their behaviours to obtain optimal oral health. If further treatment is needed the residents will be referred to the Prahran centre and to a specific clinic with a dentist and hygienist.

Sarah said, "The outcome of the project is to not only increase this marginalised group's access to dental care but also to increase access to other services at ISCHS such as physiotherapy, podiatry and counselling as well as linking residents in with community groups and activities."

Getting to know your community - it could even improve your health!

by Tanya Hendry, Community Participation Officer

If you are reading this then you are likely to be a member of ISCHS and live in the local community. But how well do you know your community and your neighbours? I recently met Ricky Buchanan, a 33 year old member of ISCHS who suffers from either mitochondrial disorder or chronic fatigue syndrome - the doctors aren't sure. But basically this leaves Ricky bed-bound with very little energy.

Ricky had expressed her interest in participating at ISCHS but couldn't come to one of our sites so I went to her and asked her why she became a member. Ricky said, "I was hoping I would get to meet other members and be more connected to the community. But this hasn't happened." Ricky had also put notes into her neighbour's letter boxes in Balaclava introducing herself but had no response and still does not know her neighbours after living in her flat for almost seven years.



Ricky Buchanan

Ricky and I spoke about the importance of community connections and how even modern television shows reflect friends, neighbours and work colleagues acting as pseudo families. VicHealth has identified that belonging to a social network has a powerful protective effect on health and may also encourage healthier behaviour patterns (VicHealth, 2005). However, modern life, especially for someone with a disability, seems to often prevent these connections from being made.

Ricky said, "It's not just people with a disability who are isolated. Within a block of my flat there could be an elderly person and a new mother who are both feeling lonely but we don't know about each other." Ricky and I spoke about ways of overcoming this and one suggestion was starting an online forum for ISCHS members. Ricky has a great website at www.notdoneliving.net, however not everyone has access to the internet. So there is always the old fashioned way of knocking on your neighbour's door and introducing yourself - but remember that not everyone can always physically do this so if your neighbours haven't come to you then don't be shy about going to them!