

# SEEDS

## SPECIALIST EDUCATION AND EVOLVING DISABILITY SERVICES

ISSUE **04**

NDIS tips  
and tricks

Do I need  
some help?

New office in  
regional Victoria

Meet our  
footy champs



SCHOOL  
HOLIDAY FUN  
WITH VMCH

04



Carla's son Orlando has autism spectrum disorder and they received their first NDIS plan earlier this year. NDIS participants share their NDIS tips on page 4 & 5.

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Horse riding in regional Victoria and accessible sports are some of the fun things people of all abilities have enjoyed with the support of VMCH.

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### SEEDS

We welcome your feedback and  
contributions to SEEDS.

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## A WORD FROM THE SEEDS GENERAL MANAGER

**Welcome to the new edition of the SEEDS magazine where we share our latest news and help you make the most of the NDIS.**

November marks an important time for people who use our services in Melbourne's east as they start to access NDIS support. VMCH SEEDS is dedicated to helping you navigate this new approach to supporting people with a disability.

VMCH has already supported hundreds of people through the NDIS planning process in other parts of Victoria and I urge those in Melbourne's east to use our resources to help you get the most out of the scheme.

Reading our SEEDS magazine offers you a picture of the range of our services. Whether it is NDIS pre-planning, support coordination or direct support services – our NDIS experts can help you achieve your goals. With more than 110 years' experience providing services and support to people with a disability, we also continue to offer innovative and inclusive services for people of all ages and abilities.

Over those 110 years, community support has played a huge role in helping us deliver life-changing disability services and I am delighted to share news about some of our fundraising campaigns.

VMCH's annual fundraising dinner, Art After Dark, raised more than \$135,000 to buy new equipment and toys for our Early Childhood Intervention Services. We are now hoping to raise \$120,000 for a special Christmas wish – the refurbishment of our Flexible Respite Service in Wantirna South. You can read about how this wonderful service on page 12 & 13.



Can you help us make a special Christmas wish come true for children like Lachie? Page 12 & 13.

This is our last SEEDS magazine for the year and the festive season is fast approaching. I hope everyone in the VMCH community has a safe and happy Christmas and New Year. We look forward to another great year in 2018.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Williamson'.

**David Williamson**  
**General Manager SEEDS**  
**Specialist Education and Evolving**  
**Disability Services**

## NDIS TIPS AND TRICKS



### ORLANDO'S STORY

Orlando attends VMCH specialist school, St Paul's College. His mum Carla talks about their experience with their first NDIS plan this year.

#### What preparation did you do that was useful before your planning meeting?

I went to a couple of information sessions held by VMCH and asked many questions. I also asked people questions that had already had their planning meeting. The more people you talk to, the more information sessions you go to, the more you read, the better prepared you will be.

#### Any advice for people preparing for their first NDIS plan?

Be prepared. Talk to people who have already been through the process, talk to experts, read information. You need to be in control and know what you want and what's best for your child.

#### How different is your family's life now that you have an NDIS plan?

It's comforting to know that there is supports now and in the future too. Most people's worry is what's going to happen in the future for their children when they can't look after them anymore? It feels like you're being supported and having your individual needs met.

#### Have you gained any new support services?

It's opened up socialisation and community participation for Orlando. He gets to go out into the community with a carer and do things that we would find challenging.

The other day he went bowling, which really surprised me, because I never in a million years would have taken him bowling because I couldn't imagine that he would cope. But, apparently he really enjoyed it.



### SEAN'S STORY

VMCH customer, Sean, has cerebral palsy and uses funding from his NDIS plan to help him enjoy activities including wheelchair basketball and to attend his local gym.

#### How's life different for you now that you have a NDIS plan?

It's pretty good. Monday I go to wheelchair basketball, Tuesday I have a group activity, on Wednesday I go to the gym with a support worker, then sometimes I'll do something else on Thursday, I also have physiotherapy on Thursday. I didn't do that before because there was a lot of money involved in doing that stuff.

#### Has the NDIS lived up to your expectations?

I would say yes and no. I have to use a lot of my own money and there are a lot of appointments and stuff still going on. Apart from that, it's pretty good.

#### What would you do differently next time around?

Better planning on how to spend the money because all this gym and stuff is a lot of money out of my own pocket. Next time I am going to see if my next plan they can help me more with the cost of doing the activities.

#### Any advice for people preparing for their first NDIS plan?

Plan very thoroughly, what you want to say. Plan thoroughly about how you want to spend the NDIS money.

#### What do you think would improve the NDIS?

I was one of the first people in Ararat to get a plan, a lot of people didn't know what to do. I wasn't sure what to expect.

I'd like more help in the planning. You are in charge of your own plan but in some cases you really shouldn't be because it's a lot of paperwork and there's a lot of people you have to ring and you have to sign off on this and that.



## JOSHUA'S STORY

**Catherine's son Joshua attends VMCH's Early Childhood Intervention Services and she says the NDIS has been life-changing for their family.**

### **How is life different for your family now that you have an NDIS plan?**

Josh now has speech therapy, he has music therapy and we're hoping to start aqua therapy and we have done occupation therapy with our plan as well.

We would never have had the funding to do all that otherwise. It has been incredible for Josh and we've really seen him come on which is the most important thing.

### **What was your first planning meeting like?**

Our experience was great. We were really well prepared and I think that worked in our favour.

VMCH staff were great in helping us prepare. VMCH staff in early intervention services were really good at pointing out what would work well and what wouldn't, particularly since Josh did not have a diagnosis – they helped me express what was difficult for Josh on a day-to-day basis.

### **Any advice for people preparing for their NDIS planning meeting?**

Don't do all the preparation by yourself. In my case it was great having Liz (VMCH speech therapist) and Kathryn (VMCH occupational therapist) helping me.

The more information you have, the better. I think going to a pre-planning workshop would be valuable. You only have an hour or 90 minutes (in a planning meeting). You need to communicate what you and your child are dealing with on a day-to-day basis.

## VMCH RUNS FREE NDIS WORKSHOPS

VMCH regularly runs free workshops about NDIS planning. Find out what you need to know about the NDIS so that you can make the most of your planning meeting. VMCH expert NDIS staff will share tips and inside knowledge of the planning process to ensure that you are prepared as possible for your first NDIS meeting.

For more information please call **1800 798 921** or send an email to: [seeds.response@vmch.com.au](mailto:seeds.response@vmch.com.au)

**VMCH**  
Villa Maria Catholic Homes



SEEDS Psychologist, Jessica Ducat (pictured centre), meets some VMCH clients studying for transition to education training course.

## DO I NEED SOME HELP? WHEN TO SEEK SUPPORT FROM A PSYCHOLOGIST

Mandy did not want to go to school, she was sleeping a lot and had lost her appetite. Her parents were very worried and did not know what to do.

Mandy's intellectual disability, which affected her speech, made it difficult for her parents to uncover what was behind these changes. She had always loved school and used to jump out of bed to start a new day.

With the help of a psychologist, the family uncovered that Mandy was feeling scared about starting high school the following year. The psychologist helped Mandy understand the feelings that she had been having.

The psychologist also worked with Mandy and her family to create a plan to help her cope with this transition. The plan included several short visits to the new school, she met some teachers and students and they created a storybook that explained her high school routine step-by-step.

VMCH SEEDS psychologist, Jessica Ducat, says many people at some point need to see a psychologist. Unfortunately, people with a disability are at higher risk of a mental illness going unrecognised because of the effects of their disability.

“Mental health is one of the most important factors in determining the quality of your life. Unfortunately, many people fail to seek help,” Jessica says.

Family, friends and support workers can play a vital role in helping people with a disability to seek help.

### **1** Warning signs, the quick five.

Jessica says people can show many signs when they are having a tough time dealing with an issue on their own.

She suggests five key signs to look out for when deciding whether an individual may need support from a psychologist.

1. Changes in sleep.
2. Changes in diet.
3. Are they still connecting with friends and peers?
4. Are they participating in regular daily activities like school, social activities, sport?
5. Are they maintaining hygiene (showering, etc)?

## 2 Early intervention during times of change

Getting help early can make a big difference. That is why it could be beneficial to seek the support of a psychologist during times of major change. It could be moving from kindergarten to school, life after school and other times of change.

“Forward planning before a time of transition can make a big difference for someone going through a big change,” Jessica said.

“Within my practise I like to plan what’s happening for clients not only now but within the next five years and what’s happening with the supports in assisting that person.”

## 3 The risk of “being strong” during tough times

People are often encouraged to ‘be strong’ to deal with problems and challenges. Jessica suggests this can cause more problems in the long run.

“If you are unsure, it’s always good to seek help and have that reassurance. I think that engaging with

a psychologist or a mental health professional shows a huge amount of bravery.”

## 4 Three steps to getting support from a psychologist

1. Make an appointment with a general practitioner to rule out medical reasons: medications, illness or pain
2. You can ask your general practitioner for a Mental Health Care Plan to see a psychologist. If you have a NDIS plan you may be able to access support under the goal of improved relationships.
3. Call the SEEDS Advisor for a referral to a psychologist. The typical wait time is two to four weeks.

If you would like to connect with our SEEDS psychologist please call SEEDS Advisor on **1800 798 921**.



## OUR SUPPORT DELIVERED YOUR WAY

VMCH’s team of health professional can offer you the supports you need to reach your independence goals, promote general health and well-being and access equipment you need and connect to your family and your community.

Our therapeutic supports include:

Psychology | Occupational therapy | Speech pathology | Allied health assistant  
Music therapy – children only at this stage

**CALL US 1800 798 921** or email [seeds.response@vmch.com.au](mailto:seeds.response@vmch.com.au)

**VMCH**  
Villa Maria Catholic Homes

## SIX EASY STEPS TO GETTING NDIS READY WITH VMCH

### STEP 1

#### Call us



Give us a call on 1800 798 921 to book a time to speak to VMCH staff about the NDIS.

### STEP 2

#### Meet with one of our NDIS experts



We'll make a time to meet with you to ensure you get the most out of the NDIS. Think about your current services, what you would like to continue receiving and what isn't working for you.

### STEP 3

#### Your first NDIS meeting. VMCH can help provide support coordination



You can nominate VMCH to provide all support coordination services to help you access a full range of services to suit you.





**STEP 4**

Talk to  
your  
Support  
Coordinator



Meet with your Support Coordinator to discuss your goals, needs and current services. VMCH has service options and flexibility to meet your needs and personal preferences.

**STEP 5**

Approve  
your service  
agreement



When you have decided on the services you want from VMCH, we will provide you with a service agreement.

This agreement will include information about how and when you will receive services from VMCH, and our responsibilities in supporting you. Look over the agreement and then you or your guardian need to sign it. Don't worry about losing your service agreement: we'll keep it on file.

**STEP 6**

You're ready  
to begin



Now the agreement is signed, VMCH can start providing services that match your goals and needs. You can change your services at any time by talking to your VMCH contact person.

Excited about  
**your** possibilities  
with the

**NDIS?**

So are we!



Our Disability Services team supports people of all ages and abilities at home, out and about, or at our centres. Call our NDIS experts during November and December to book a **free consultation** about your NDIS plan.

1800 798 921 or email [seeds.response@vmch.com.au](mailto:seeds.response@vmch.com.au)

[vmch.com.au/disabilityservices](http://vmch.com.au/disabilityservices)

**VMCH**  
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## REGIONAL OFFICE OFFERS NEW OPPORTUNITIES

**Sean likes having a laugh, high adrenaline sports, keeping fit, playing wheelchair basketball and spending time with his adorable puppy, Ruby.**

The 28-year-old has cerebral palsy and has never let his disability or people's attitudes get in the way of achieving his goals and having fun.

"I've had a lot of people over the years telling me that I can't do this and I can't do that and I like proving them wrong."

One thing that was holding him back though was a lack of supports outside of his family. That changed when he got his first NDIS plan this year and turned to Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH).

**"HAVING KEVIN TAKES A LOT OF THE STRESS OFF MY FAMILY. KEVIN IS A REALLY NICE GUY. HE HAS A SENSE OF HUMOUR. HE DEFINITELY PUSHES ME TO KEEP GOING IN THE GYM AND GIVES ME CONFIDENCE."  
– SEAN, VMCH CLIENT**

VMCH has helped Sean make the most out of his new NDIS plan. One goal was finding a support worker to assist him at the gym, swimming pool and to try new high adrenaline sports.

VMCH linked Sean with disability support worker, Kevin, and they go to the gym and the swimming pool. They will also try fishing and jet boating when the weather improves.

**“IT’S NICE TO CATCH UP WITH SEAN AND SEE THE BENEFITS HE’S GETTING OUT OF WHAT WE’RE DOING. IT’S VERY REWARDING.” –KEVIN, VMCH DISABILITY SUPPORT WORKER**

“Before the NDIS I was not getting any support. It was a lot of stress on my family,” Sean said.

“Having Kevin takes a lot of the stress off my family. Kevin is a really nice guy. He has a sense of humour. He definitely pushes me to keep going in the gym and gives me confidence.”

VMCH has been providing disability services in Victoria for more than 100 years and recently opened an office in Ballarat to offer disability support services in regions including Ararat, Pyrenees Shire, Moorabool Shire, Golden Plains Shire and Hepburn Shire.

For Kevin, the NDIS had offered him a career change. After 33 years working at a goldmine in Stawell, Kevin was retrenched and looking for a change.

“This job is different. That’s what I enjoy about it. I get to see the sunshine, do stuff outdoors in the fresh air. Every day can be different,” Kevin said.

“It’s nice to catch up with Sean and see the benefits he’s getting out of what we’re doing. It’s very rewarding.”

VMCH’s new Central Highlands office helps people make the most of their NDIS plan. This includes NDIS plan management and support coordination, support with daily living and community participation.

Seeds Regional Manager, Jo Debrincat, said VMCH has already helped hundreds of people transition over to the NDIS in other parts of Victoria.

“We bring that expertise to the Central Highlands and look forward to helping people make the most out of the opportunities they have within the new NDIS,” she said.

“The NDIS is about choice and the arrival of disability service providers like VMCH into this region broadens people’s options.”

## LEARN MORE

For more information about the disability services VMCH offers in regional Victoria please call our friendly staff in Ballarat **(03) 8595 2497** Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

VMCH’s Central Highlands office is located at 72B Mair Street, Ballarat East. It delivers services to Ballarat, Ararat, Pyrenees Shire, Moorabool Shire, Golden Plains Shire and Hepburn Shire.

**PLEASE  
LIKE US**



**CHECK OUT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE,  
BECOME A FRIEND AND LIKE US**

Our SEEDS Facebook page keeps the people we support up-to-date on VMCH news. It includes stories about our achievements, our news and information about the NDIS.

So please join the conversation. We promise lots of news and you are sure to see some familiar faces in our posts along the way.

<https://www.facebook.com/VillaMariaCatholicHomes/>

## A CHRISTMAS WISH

**Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH) is urging the community to get behind its Christmas Appeal to help brighten the lives of children and adults with disabilities.**

Lachie, aged 15, is one of around 200 children and adults with disabilities who attend VMCH's Flexible Respite Service in Wantirna South on holidays and weekends; getting out and about in the community, trying new activities and making new friends.

Like most of the children who use the service, Lachie is on the Autism spectrum. This means if he gets a little bored, Lachie can get anxious and up to a bit of mischief.

With this in mind, VMCH is looking to raise \$120,000 through its 2017 Christmas Appeal to transform the tired and outdated indoor and outdoor respite space into a fun, interactive and safe environment for Lachie and his friends to enjoy.

As a not-for-profit organisation, VMCH receives no funding for capital works and relies on community donations to reach its target.

Lachie's mum, Fiona, is one of hundreds of parents who benefit from valuable respite while their children are in care.

She says she'd love to see the area given a facelift.

"At the moment it really is just a spot to drop-off and pick-up. There's nothing really there to stimulate the kids; there's space but it's not really utilised. Items to meet sensory needs like a trampoline, climbing wall



Lachie is one of around 200 children and adults who attend VMCH's Flexible Respite Service in Wantirna South.



An artist's impression of some of the features VMCH would love to include in its new space at the Flexible Respite Service in Wantirna.

or walking track would be great. Things to help the kids feel engaged and fulfilled, and reflect the high quality of the program delivered by the dedicated staff, would be great to see.”

The planned renovations, including a sensory garden, water feature, quiet area and play equipment, will make the area accessible and interactive.

“The building which houses the program (below left) was built in the 1970s as a nursing home and day hospital,” said VMCH Disability Services General Manager David Williamson. “The design does not come close to meeting the purpose-built needs of children and adults with disabilities. Improving the space will not only help children now, but also help attract new families to the service.”

Fiona explains just how vital respite is for families like hers.

“Having access to respite has actually changed how our family works. It means I can do a bit of (paid) work and also spend time with my other son, Tom, and meet his needs and desires,” she said.

“When Lachie is at respite it gives us a break to take a breath. For example, we were able to have a party for Tom’s birthday, which we couldn’t do with Lachie here as too many people in the house can be overwhelming for him.”

David urged the community to dig deep for the appeal.

“All children deserve access to a safe, warm and secure space to relax and have fun. For children with disabilities, an interactive, calming and welcoming space is critical.”

If you can help, please call **1800 036 377** or visit [www.vmch.com.au/donate-now/](http://www.vmch.com.au/donate-now/)

**AS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATION, VMCH RECEIVES NO FUNDING FOR CAPITAL WORKS AND RELIES ON COMMUNITY DONATIONS TO REACH ITS TARGET.**



Sadly, VMCH does not receive funding for major capital works and must turn to our valued supporters to help us raise money to restore our much-loved Flexible Respite Service in Wantirna.

## NEWS FROM AROUND VMCH



### BALLOON FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS

Big congratulations to VMCH's very own Mt Waverley Panthers who recently won the Balloon Football League's eastern region grand final for the second year in a row.

The Panthers are five people who attend VMCH's adult day programs for people with a disability in Mount Waverley.

Each week the Mt Waverley Panthers played against a range of competitors from other disability services in Melbourne's east and fought tenaciously to score a place in the grand final against Pitt Street Heat.

The Panthers ended up winning the grand final by 13 points, 50 to 37. Well done to the outstanding team of players: Hemna Prabhu, Aysa Dvash, Jenny Keys, Josh Harrison and Gina Daglas. Jenny was named player of the final after scoring six goals.

Also, thank you to the support workers and volunteers who helped during the game and throughout the season.

Balloon football offers people with complex physical and multiple disabilities the chance to enjoy a competitive and social team sport.

Learn more about activities offered at VMCH's adult day programs in Kew, Mount Waverley and Wantirna South by calling 1800 798 921.



## AWESOME ART

Meet some of our talented artists, who exhibited their beautiful work at Box Hill Community Arts Centre.

The exhibition was an opportunity for the people who participate in our adult day activities program to showcase some of their work and collaborations.

If you would like to find out more about our adult day activities speak to our friendly staff on 1800 798 921.



## SCHOOL HOLIDAY FUN

Horse riding in Daylesford was just one of the fun activities enjoyed by the teenagers attending VMCH's recent school holiday program.

We have some terrific holiday programs and weekend activities for children and teenagers with a disability in Kew, Wantirna and Mitcham. To learn more call us on 1800 798 921.





**I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A ONE-OFF DONATION TO THE VILLA MARIA CATHOLIC HOMES' CHRISTMAS APPEAL TO RENOVATE ITS FLEXIBLE RESPITE SERVICE IN WANTIRNA SOUTH.**

**I PLEDGE TO DONATE \$ .....**

My donation will help pay for a sensory garden, water feature, quiet area and play equipment.

Full Name: .....

Address: .....

Postcode: ..... Phone: .....

Email: .....

**DONATIONS OF \$2 AND OVER ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.**

Cash  Cheque (made payable to Villa Maria Catholic Homes)

Please debit my (tick one)  Visa  Mastercard

Cardholder's Full Name: .....

Credit Card Number:  
 \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Expiry:  
 \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Cardholder's Signature: .....

Yes, I would like to receive more information about the VMCH Christmas Appeal and the people it supports.

**VMCH BANKING DETAILS**  
**ACCOUNT NAME: VMCH OPERATING ACCOUNT**  
**BANK: NAB**  
**BSB: 083-125**  
**ACCOUNT NO: 515 620 356**

[vmch.com.au](http://vmch.com.au)



**GENERATIONS OF CARE**

**VMCH supports people with a disability, their families, and carers through every stage of their life.**

**NDIS AND SPECIALTY SERVICES**

- NDIS support coordination and plan management
- Allied health services, speech & occupational therapy, physiotherapy
- Support in the home and community

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

- Early Childhood Intervention Services, music & play therapy
- Supported inclusion into mainstream schools
- Specialist education school, ages 5–18
- After-hours school care, school holiday programs & camping weekends
- Short-term accommodation (respite)

**ADULT**

- Group-based activities
- Day activity programs to develop social and life skills
- Camping weekends
- Short-term accommodation (respite)

**CALL US**

We can help you make the most of your NDIS plan.

T: 1800 798 921

E: [seeds.response@vmch.com.au](mailto:seeds.response@vmch.com.au)