

MEDIA RELEASE

New social enterprise a community effort

A new social enterprise cafe in Nunawading is set to help people with disability gain essential job skills training and opportunities to join the paid workforce.

VMCH, a for-purpose aged and disability organisation, in partnership with Whitehorse City Council, will unveil “Where Is My Coffee? Nunawading at the Nunawading Community Hub on Tuesday 3 December.

The launch will coincide with International Day of People with Disability celebrations – reflecting the 2024 theme: ‘Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future’.

VMCH Board Chairman Julien O’Connell AO and CEO Sonya Smart, along with Whitehorse City Council Deputy Mayor Cr Prue Cutts, will unveil the vibrant new café - which aims to provide a safe and supportive environment where people can learn job skills at their own pace, guided by experienced hospitality and disability support workers.

VMCH CEO Sonya Smart emphasised the urgent need for opportunities provided through social enterprises like the café.

“We know that people with disability are almost twice as likely to be unemployed compared to those without disability – a statistic we can help change. Our various other social enterprises have shown incredibly positive outcomes, with 139 clients completing job skills training over the past year alone. Additionally, 33 people have secured Award-wage work through our Employment Pathways program – which is fantastic to see.”

Ms Smart added social enterprise is part of VMCH’s broader mission to ensure people with disability feel a sense of belonging within their community.

“With this in mind, we are particularly thrilled with the location of this cafe, nestled within Council’s fantastic Community Hub, which is also home to U3A and various sporting groups.

“We’ve seen the enormous benefits of intergenerational connections fostered through some of our other cafes and garden maintenance businesses – located within our aged care residences and retirement communities – and we have no doubt our new clients at Nunawading will have the same experience here.”

Whitehorse City Council Mayor Cr. Andrew Davenport said Council was “delighted” to partner with VMCH to bring Where Is My Coffee? to its Nunawading Community Hub.

“This is a vibrant site that brings people and new opportunities together,” Cr. Davenport said.

“Whitehorse City Council is committed to attracting and supporting dynamic social enterprises in our community. We encourage our Whitehorse locals to come along and support Where is My Coffee? and the employees who benefit from this valuable initiative.”

Where Is My Coffee? Nunawading is modelled on VMCH’s original Where Is My Coffee? café in Wangaratta, which has supported 46 people with training and paid work since opening in late 2021.

Brittney Hall, aged 23, is one of these trainees, and has recently secured her first paid role with VMCH Employment Partner, McDonald’s.

“I was pretty nervous when I went for the interview ... but when I got the job, I was proud and excited,” the mother-of-one said.

VMCH will continue to support Brittney on her career journey, which she hopes will lead her to further study and a role as a disability support worker.

Where Is My Coffee? is located at Nunawading Community Hub, Level 2, 106 Springvale Road, Nunawading. To learn more about VMCH job skills programs, call us on 1300 698 624.

Media enquiries

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About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic, for-purpose organisation, love, joy, courage and hospitality aren’t just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at home aged care.