

New end-of-life support

By Matthew Sims

The transition from learning you have a life-limiting illness into death has become a little bit easier for south-east Victorians.

Palliative Care South East (PCSE) officially opened its new purpose-built Palliative Care Community Wellbeing Hub in Narre Warren on Wednesday 10 May.

Health Minister Mary-Anne Thomas, Narre Warren North MP Belinda Wilson and Berwick MP Brad Battin joined staff members and community members to celebrate the opening of the new space.

First launched in July 1985 in David Street in Dandenong with limited space, the new space features a purpose-built education room, occupational therapy equipment, on-site counselling rooms and clinical rooms, an art therapy room and a social enterprise cafe providing about 500 weekly visitors with a peek into the role which palliative care plays in their community.

The building was completed thanks to a \$2 million state government investment announced last year.

The not-for-profit organisation provides home-based care to more than 1000 clients a year in Dandenong and Casey, parts of Kingston and Cardinia.

The launch also included a special dance performance from Hampton Park Wurundjeri dance group Djirri Djirri, led by Wurundjeri, Dja Dja wurrung and Ngurai illum wurrung woman Mandy Nicholson.

PCSE chief executive Kelly Rogerson said they were "thrilled" to welcome the public at the launch.

"This hub provides a beautiful welcoming space for our staff and volunteers to work and be supported, for our community to visit and receive supportive care and it provides the opportunity to expand our service delivery op-



Narre Warren North MP Belinda Wilson, Palliative Care South East chief executive Kelly Rogerson, Health Minister Mary-Anne Thomas and PCSE board chair Margaret O'Connor AM helped officially open the community wellbeing hub. 334358
Picture: MATTHEW SIMS

tions," she said.

"It reflects the hard work of our staff and supporters and the fundraising efforts of many."

Ms Rogerson thanked architect Jake Kelly and the builders at Newpol for their work on the project.

"The building was built on the generosity

of so many individuals...our volunteers and staff...and extraordinarily generous business partnerships who gave us furniture at cost price and listened to the stories our clients and carers and knew that each dollar we saved would be allocated to new services to support their community," she said.

PCSE board chair Margaret O'Connor AM said while the building was new, the ethos of

the staff would remain the same.

"We continue to offer spiritual care and clinical care through palliative care physicians, skilled clinical nurses and nurse practitioners," she said.

"Today, we have a beautiful welcoming space for both staff and volunteers to work and where they are supported."

PCSE took in 1300 referrals, took in 900 new clients and supported 737 people to die during the 2021-22 financial year, 80 per cent of which died in their place of choice.

Demand for palliative care was expected to grow by 50 per cent across Australia by 2035 and double by 2050.

Ms Thomas said she was proud to help support the new hub's construction and development.

"We often think of palliative care as end-of-life, but it's so much more than that," she said.

"This new hub is just one example of how we're delivering Victorians the end-of-life care they need and deserve, no matter where they live."

Member for Narre Warren North Belinda Wilson said the new hub would provide close support for those requiring care in Melbourne's south east.

"Palliative Care South East now has the world-class facility they need to support more people across Melbourne's south-east to get the end-of-life care they need close to home," she said.

One of the founding members of the organisation Dr Ruth Redpath was present during the launch and said it was "extraordinary" to see the new building come to fruition.

"The thought and planning to make this a welcoming space, I can only imagine what an extra contribution to the community it's going to make," she said.

"It's quite overwhelming."

Council excludes workers

By Emily Chapman Laing

South-Easter Metropolitan Region MP David Limbrick has called for the Minister of Local Government to review Casey council's meeting time.

"Constituents in Casey council have made it clear they are not happy with the monthly council meeting time of 4 pm," Mr Limbrick told State Parliament on Thursday 4 May.

"Constituents say that working people are being excluded from meetings.

"Other councils hold their meetings at times when people can attend."

Mr Limbrick stressed the inefficiency of council meetings being scheduled at a time when many Casey residents are "still at work or caring for their kids after school".

The issue has reportedly been raised often to administrators at council meetings, with locals growing more frustrated as the problem remains unaddressed.

"As the council is still under administration, there are no councillors to take this matter to," Mr Limbrick said.

The City of Casey administrators have said they will not be reviewing the scheduled meeting time until December.

"My question is, will the minister investigate why the meetings are being held at 4 pm, whether the community has had a voice on this and why they will not review this prior to December," Mr Limbrick said.

The government has responded, but concrete answers are yet to be given.

"We are aware that this concern has been raised and Local Government Victoria has contacted the City of Casey to follow up," a government spokesperson said.

City of Casey Head of Governance, Integrity and Legal Support, Michelle Tipton says the council's governance rules prevent the administrators from changing the meeting time until 2024.

Hospital death preventable

From page 1

As a result of the internal review findings, changes were made to the ligature audit process, which are now conducted annually by two or three people from several wards. Monash Health also developed a "Mental Health Inpatient Ligature Point Assessment and Management Procedure" in the wake of the man's death.

But a legal representative for the family of the deceased, Associate Professor Jonathan Phillips said Monash Health "failed to provide him with a safe hospital environment".

He said it is "well understood by health systems and individual hospitals" that disturbed persons will use the means available to them to attempt to take their lives and the method used by the deceased was an "obvious method" and "not a new understanding".

It was "unreasonable" that the ligature point was not removed, given more than two

years had passed since its initial identification, Assoc. Prof Phillips said.

Ms Fitzgerald agreed the presence of the ligature points in the man's room "was inherently unsafe having regard to [the deceased's] known risk of suicide". "The removal of these ligature points from the inpatient Unit was clearly not a difficult or time-consuming task, as it was completed within two days of Mr Harvey's death," she said. "It cannot be known whether [the man] would have found some other means to take his own life at this time, had the known ligature point not been available to him, but he would not have had the opportunity to take his life in the way he did, had the known ligature point been removed."

If you, or someone you know needs support, connect with Lifeline by phone 13 11 14, text 0477 13 11 14 or chat at lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat.

Connecting our communities

Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs are on the road to smarter technology



Busy main roads in the south-east are experiencing smoother traffic flow with smarter technology.

Our cutting-edge technology allows us to monitor and manage congestion to allow traffic to flow as efficiently as possible so you can travel to your next planned event with ease.

Our boosted team of specialists have made improvements from Cheltenham to Dandenong to Cranbourne.

When something goes wrong, we'll see it, tell you how to avoid it, and clear it to provide you with smarter, smoother journeys and travel times you can count on.

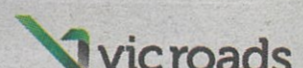
Find out more at smarterroads.vic.gov.au

These include:

- installing 390 traffic cameras to help monitor and respond to incidents
- installing 48 dynamic pedestrian crossings that allow people enough time to cross safely and avoid holding up traffic unnecessarily
- undertaking the biggest traffic light review to give you a better run at the lights
- clearing more than 500 incidents in your area to help keep traffic flowing.



Authorised by the Department of Transport and Planning, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne



12602563-JW20-23