



Communities
of Wellbeing

ANNUAL REPORT – 2022



Chairs' Report

Despite commencing with another Covid-19 flare up, 2022 has been a particularly successful and varied year for Communities of Wellbeing.

Monthly Meetings:

A New Year – February 2nd

Forced back into lock down our first meeting for the year was held online and used to plan out our coming year and to introduce a concept of monthly themes

Courage with Amy Corcoran – March 2nd

What a great night in one of our most gorgeous Maroondah Parks – Warriren Reserve in North Croydon. “Perfect” is how I’d describe our March event under our theme Courage and Connection. How wonderful it was to be outdoors, sharing a meal, good conversation and a chance to hear from Amy Corcoran, a Wellbeing Certificate graduate about her lived experience with mental illness. Amy’s courage in presenting her story was amazing and her commitment to her work with Mind Australia to support others experiencing similar struggles is to be admired. Surrounded by the beauty of the outdoors and the relaxation of COVID restrictions made for a wonderful evening.



Diversity with Mel Jeffery – May 4th

Mel Jeffery used her own life experience and her training in psychology to provide us all with an understanding of what it means to be neurodiverse.

For our theme of Diversity we partnered with Eastland and Maroondah City Council’s Youth services to provide a space for young people and their parents to connect and celebrate IDAHOBIT day. A day we appreciate all genders, sexuality and their related expressions. It was a fun afternoon of eating, talking and laughing as we connected over our shared desire of inclusion and equity for all.



Trust with Lela McGregor – June 1st

Our theme for June was Trust and our presenter was Highway Foundation's Lela McGregor. Lela is an expert in the delivery of Applied Positive Psychology experiences and led us in an exercise of creative painting and listening. All participants enjoyed the opportunity to paint their own unique expression and then share that with the group. Lela has a way of bringing joy into activities aimed at building wellbeing for ourselves and others.

Highway Foundation is a not for profit aimed at connecting young people to have safe conversations with others in similar life stage and sharing similar life experiences. Our young people struggle to find authentic connections at school and the recent pandemic has also robbed them of the opportunities for high quality connections. Highway is filling the gap and using expert youth facilitators, trained to create the space for young people to talk about what matters most to them and build connections

July 2022 Gratitude



Our focus was on wellbeing through the lens of Gratitude. Natalia brilliantly led us in a meditation to focus us firstly on our breathing and then a person we were grateful for. This then led into time to write a gratitude letter the action and important step in showing our gratitude and receiving the lasting positive emotion that comes with the intentional practice. We then heard from Ros and Edwina about the science of gratitude and its importance in creating wellbeing, happiness and life satisfaction. It is the greatest of all virtues and one we can work on, benefit from and easily share with others. Ros spoke of the third wave of gratitude research which is focusing more on the neuroscience, brain activation and change that comes from consistent practice. It was inspiring and will hopefully help us become more motivated in creating our own daily gratitude practice.

"I don't have to chase extraordinary moments to find happiness – it's right in front of me if I'm paying attention and practising gratitude."
Dr Brene Brown (Professor and Author)

Respect with Alice Young – August 3rd



Our topic for August was Respect and there is no better person in Maroondah to share her story and expertise with us about this topic than Alice Young. Alice is a proud Yorta Yorta, Gunnai and Gunditjmara woman who has worked in education for 20 years and most recently as the Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO) for the schools in the Maroondah network. In her work she provides support and education for all our indigenous young people, enabling them to connect with their history and celebrate their heritage.

Alice gave us a bit of her history and then reflected on the themes of Respect, Relationships and Reconciliation from an indigenous perspective. It gave us much to think about and for many the opportunity to rethink our own attitudes and relearn from the new information provided. One highlight was receiving a greater understanding of the importance of relationships with family and land to indigenous people, and how this will always be prioritised. It was evident that our indigenous ancestors have much to teach us about how to successfully support the wellbeing of self and others.

Forgiveness with Scott Williams – September 1st

Our topic for September was Forgiveness and we were fortunate to have Scott Williams, managing director of Simplicity Funerals (part of Le Pine funerals) to lead us for the evening. Scott shared with us his own story of redemption, as he navigated his way from a time in prison and a broken marriage, to a life where he can now forgive himself and focus on learning from the past to build a brighter future. There were many valuable takeaways from Scott's presentation but one that stood was a statement about managing our work and life. He proposed for us to think in terms of work-life "boundaries" as opposed to work-life "balance", as it gives us a greater sense of control and a greater likelihood of success.

Scott has written a book about his time in jail called "Mr. Ordinary Goes to Jail" under the pen name Wil Patterson where he details his experiences and reflections on his mistakes.

"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."
Viktor E. Frankl (Neurologist and Psychiatrist)



As part of October’s Mental Health Awareness month and in partnership with Maroondah City Council and Eastland, over 200 people attended our first ever film preview “How to Thrive”. Attendees gathered for delicious food supplied by Glen Park Community House and drinks by Eastland in the foyer of Eastland’s centre management, and after a welcome speech from Maroondah’s Mayor Mike Symon, made their way up to Hoyts’s Extreme theatre.

The movie did not disappoint. The diverse audience were unanimous in their praise of the show’s lead actor Marie McLeod, director Duy Huynh and Producer Andrew Kelly in the after-show Q and A. The movie showcased the benefits of using wellbeing skills and capabilities to support those going through difficult times and, although hard to watch at times as people struggled through their life circumstances, Marie expertly coached them to view life with more hope and optimism by providing the tools necessary to boost their wellbeing.



Awards:

Deakin Community Award – Best Community Organisation

On April 11th executive committee members Jodie and Edwina attended the Deakin Community Awards. Jodie received an individual award for her tireless work and generosity to community in her role as Director of Community partnerships for Eastland. Jodie goes above and beyond to ensure that many in our community less fortunate are provided with food and other essential items, supports many community groups to provide quality services and hosts events at Eastland.



Jodie and Edwina also collected the award for Best Community Organisation for Communities of Wellbeing. COWB are very pleased with the nomination, award and acknowledgement for the impact we are having and will continue to seek new ways of collaborating and supporting our community to grow their wellbeing skills, capabilities and their use within schools, business and community groups.

Deakin Community Grant \$9,500

We were excited to receive the Deakin Community Grant which will be used to create a Wellbeing Hub in Eastland and pop-up stand to outreach our workshops into community. We thank Michael Sukkar for his ongoing support and the opportunity to successfully apply for this grant that we know will have a huge impact on the wellbeing of the Maroondah community.

“Personal leadership is the process of keeping your vision and values before you and aligning your life to be congruent with them.”

Stephen Covey (Author of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People)



Small Business Victoria Grant - \$15,000

Communities of Wellbeing were successful in receiving a wellbeing development grant from Small Business Victoria. This grant gave us access to wellbeing training for business, coaching and \$15,000 to do an impact project in our local business community.

The focus for our impact project was raising the wellbeing of staff, retailers, and customers of Eastland Shopping Centre. Communities of Wellbeing (COWB) has aligned community values with Eastland and wanted to share our knowledge with the intention of building capabilities of Eastland staff so our local shopping centre can continue to support the community, and be better equipped to raise wellbeing.

Our impact project to date has seen COWB survey staff on their levels of wellbeing according to the wellbeing framework of PERMAH, deliver 10 hours of wellbeing training to 20 Eastland Centre management staff which focussed on wellbeing for individuals (ME level), teams (WE level) and then the whole Eastland community of retailers, shoppers and wider community (US level). We provided each participant with a wellbeing toolkit so that they could explore wellbeing practice for themselves and share with those they love and care for. COWB also supported the Jobs Fair where community members signed up to our “Strengths Kit” workshop. Here via coaching conversations individuals in small groups explored the discovery of their own strengths and how to use them to support their wellbeing, job prospecting and ongoing job satisfaction.

COWB are now providing training for businesses housed in Eastland. 10 Kadia Occupational Therapists joined us for a very engaging session on Strengths where they learnt about the 24 character strengths, and how important it is to know one another’s strengths when working in a successful team. The team enjoyed sharing their strengths and spotting them in one another.

The next phase of our journey with Eastland is to support their own internal wellbeing team to bring to life the concepts they have learned, so that retailers and shoppers can experience wellbeing each time they enter the shopping centre.

Eastland are committed to become a Community of Wellbeing.

Partnerships with:

Department of Education and Training
Education Week – Celebrating 150 years of Education

Communities of Wellbeing were again successful in 2022 in receiving the Education Week community grant. With the funding, in partnership with the Maroondah Positive Education Network and Maroondah City Council, we undertook a project that explored the best of education in the past and present and dreamed how education could be better in the future.

Working with Yarrunga Community House, Kerrabee, Donwood Aged Care and retired Maroondah community members, our students from Croydon Hills PS, Tinternvale PS, Ainslie Parklands PS and Heathmont College, participated in Appreciative Conversations. In these conversations they each discussed what worked well in the past, what is currently working and what everyone thought the future should look like. All groups were unanimous in declaring that the most valuable thing for successful learning outcomes was the relationships between students and teachers and this worked in the past, works now and will continue to work in the future. It was recommended that this should continue to be a major focus for teachers and students ongoing.

COWB are grateful for the opportunity to work with DET and their Maroondah schools in what was again another successful Education Week initiative.



Organisation of Sports Federations of Oceania

For many years Communities of Wellbeing have shared a common purpose with the Organisation of Sports Federations of Oceania (OSFO) to raise the wellbeing of its members. Edwina sits on their executive committee and her expertise is drawn upon to educate their athletes, coaches, officials and administrators. Most recently she is supporting their bid for funding as Oceania prepares for the home Olympics in Brisbane in 2032. For the first time the development of Wellbeing and Resilience will be a featured development pillar.

In previous years Communities of Wellbeing have partnered with Oceania sports to produce our POSEEDGE journal, conduct training courses and in 2022 we developed the first Wellbeing Hub experience at major regional sporting events. Some of these included:

- Presentation to Regional Sports and National Olympic Committee in Fiji – May 2022



Wellbeing toolkit workshop to 30 sport administrators. Edwina was awarded an OSFO Merit Award from Kevan Gosper for her work in improving wellbeing education in sport in Oceania over many years. She continues to advise and support the development and delivery of programs across the region.

- Wellness Hub – Oceania Athletics championships in Mackay - June 2022



Daily wellbeing sessions were run and each participant received a 'wellbeing toolkit' (250 were distributed) which taught how to create a shared language of wellbeing that enables every individual within the sport to be the best version of themselves individually and collectively. Whether team manager, coach, technical official, administrator or athlete, there is a need to develop wellbeing at the ME level and recognise that as they interact with one another it builds psychological safety and

wellbeing at the WE and US levels. This ultimately leads to greater wellbeing and improved performance.

Valerie Adams, five time Olympian and dual Gold Medallist co-delivered the sessions and spoke of her journey as an athlete. She encouraged participants to think about who is on their “bus” and whether those people are enabling the bus to move forward. Val also urged athletes to enjoy what they do and to take responsibility for their motivation and performances on the field.

We hope to continue our work with Oceania Athletics and maybe co-host a screening of Val’s new movie “More than Gold” due to be released in Australia in early 2023.



- Oceania Table Tennis Championships – Eastland – September 2022

During the Oceania Table Tennis Championships, hosted at Eastland, COWB delivered two Wellbeing Toolkit workshops to 100 athletes and coaches participating in the pre competition development camp. In this workshop Australia’s most decorated table tennis player, Russell Lavale co presented, revealing his own battle with mental illness and stressing the importance of wellbeing skills and capabilities to support their growth as an athlete and their opportunities to succeed in the future.

“Wellness is the complete integration of body, mind, and spirit – the realization that everything we do, think, feel, and believe has an effect on our state of well-being.”

– Greg Anderson



Maroondah City Council Community Grant – Wellbeing Toolkits

Communities of Wellbeing were successful in receiving a community grant of \$3,000 to create more of our now famous Wellbeing Toolkits, which we have distributed via workshops to community groups across Maroondah. In these toolkits are the Wellbeing Blueprint posters which outline 29 small wellbeing practices that can be implemented daily to support wellbeing using the PERMAH framework, a gratitude journal, strengths kit and a band to remind us of the importance of self-compassion by asking ourselves the question, “What is the Kindness thing I can do for myself right now?”. Our 90 minute workshops are designed to introduce people to wellbeing capabilities that, when intentionally applied daily, will support wellbeing for us and those we love and care for.



Some of the workshops completed in 2022 were with:

- Maroondah Church leaders
- Ringwood Church of Christ youth group
- Mental Health Awareness month – Strengths Workshops online and in person.
- Bridge Builders Young women’s camp in Toolangi
- Staff, Students and Parents in our Maroondah schools
- Mental Health Practitioners, Psychologists and Social Workers
- East Ringwood Senior Women’s Football Team

We also participated in three local expos, 2022 Seniors Expo, Ringwood Bowls Club, and the Lift Project, where we spoke to attendees about the work of COWB and gave away elements of our toolkits to support their wellbeing.

Presentations and Committee Representation

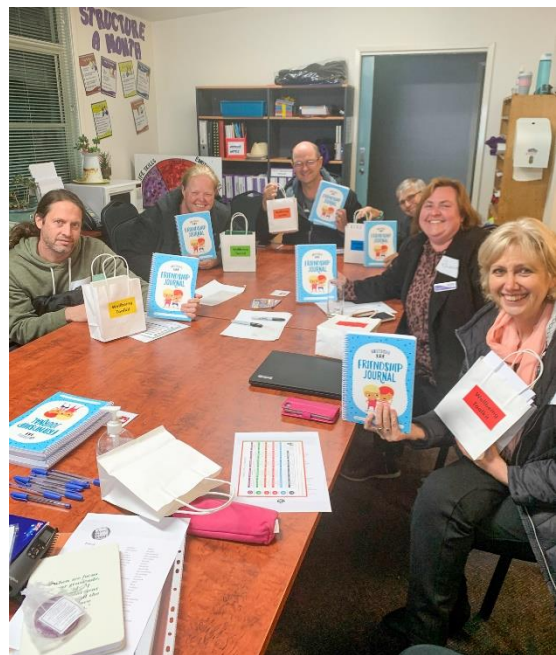
Maroondah Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee – we attended quarterly meetings of this committee and presented our partnership work we did with council on the Certificate for Creating Wellbeing.

Yarrunga Community House – we presented to their Annual General Meeting about the work of Communities of Wellbeing and how we could support them in the future.

Life Activities Clubs Croydon – we presented an overview of the work of Communities of Wellbeing and introduction to PERMAH

Participation in the graduation ceremony and celebration of the impact projects from the Certificate of Creating Wellbeing.

Communities of Wellbeing supported council in the promotion and delivery of the LIFT project. With over 500 people participating in further learning and application of wellbeing literacy, our community is certainly growing in their capability of managing their own wellbeing and of supporting others.



Acknowledgements:



None of the achievements of this year would be possible without the support of our many grant providers, partners, members, and friends but a special mention must be made of our executive committee. A great team of volunteers who give their own time to plan and manage the activities of Communities of Wellbeing Inc. Our committee for 2022 was made up of Maria Allison, Adam Cooper, Ros Duck, Peter Feeney, Peter Maguire, Jodie Murphy, Edwina Ricci, Natalia Sopelario, and Gail Woods.

Most of the committee are pictured above at a planning retreat held at Edwina's fabulous Toolangi property at the beginning of the year. We will be holding a similar planning day early next year so if you have ideas you would like considered or would like to attend, please speak to Edwina or Peter Feeney.

"Each one of us is like that butterfly, the Butterfly Effect. And each tiny move toward a more positive mindset can send ripples of positivity through our organisations, our families and our communities."

- Shawn Achor (Author of The Happiness Advantage)

Edwina Ricci
Vice-Chairperson

Peter Feeney
Chairperson