

Transforming Lives



PICTURED: Cheryl Cooper; Janet Symes, Waminda Community House Co-ordinator; Chris Thorne, Central Hume PCP's Aboriginal Health and Community Support Worker and Carol Alliman at Waminda Community House.

Central Hume Primary Care Partnership (Central Hume PCP) improves the health and wellbeing of people in its communities.

We do this by helping organisations work together on complex health and social challenges in our region. This way, we make the most of available resources, avoid duplication of effort and achieve outcomes our community needs and deserves.

A community house that becomes a one-stop medical centre once a fortnight is transforming lives.

Benalla community members who use the Waminda Community House health services say they attend more health care appointments than they ever have.

Why? Because of the relaxed neighbourhood centre atmosphere, connections to other health and support services and casual conversations with staff.

It all started with a dental van visit in 2016 and has grown into a fortnightly service attracting more and more people.

Cheryl Cooper, who has been using the medical service since it started in December 2018, said the ease of access is important.

"You don't have to run from one part of town to another to see a doctor, optometrist, nurse or dentist.

Carol Alliman, another customer, says it's the setting and friendliness of staff and the community at Waminda that enables people to feel comfortable enough to attend health care appointments.

The dental van first came to Waminda Community House in July 2016 and over two days saw 36 people from the local community.

None of the people had ever had a dental check before.

Janet Symes, House Co-ordinator said the growth in attendance has been incredible.

"With the assistance of Central Hume PCP's outreach worker Chris Thorne, word of mouth and social media platforms, the 'one stop health shop' has increased since its inception, with regular and new members attending on Tuesdays," Janet said.

"We have seen so many changes for people's health. A big part of that is the social benefits. The co-location with the community house means we reduce isolation, people get out in the community, they come in and use the house for other reasons like doing a course or picking up some food,"

She has seen first-hand how the service has improved people's health and that the connections to others in the community have important wellbeing benefits.

Cheryl Cooper said when she arrived in Benalla three years ago, she was lonely.

"I'm Indigenous and when I moved here, I was isolated. Since visiting Waminda about 18 months ago, I've got more connections in the community. When I first arrived, I didn't know how to find other Indigenous people and through the connections I've done that.

"It's also important to Indigenous women to have a female doctor – it's cultural; women's business."

The GP van, which also has an Aboriginal Health nurse, visits every two weeks. The dental van and optometry service are scheduled several times a year and coincide with the GP van day, making it a one-stop shop.

▶ Funding

- The GP van is funded through the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health at the University of Sydney, with an MOU with Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service. Funding to run the GP van is from RWAV (Rural Workforce Agency Victoria). It funds a GP and an Aboriginal Health nurse.
- The Dental Van is funded by Dental Health Services Victoria through Northeast Health Wangaratta.
- A \$10 glasses scheme is funded by RWAV through Optistore and the Melbourne University School of Optometry.
- Central Hume PCP paid for electrical infrastructure required at the Community House to support the dental van operations.

▶ PCP Role

The Central Hume PCP team:

- Developed the concept of health outreach services delivered at the Community House.
- Helped with planning and research regarding identifying need in the community, worked behind the scenes to connect the relevant organisations at a local, state and interstate (University of Sydney) level to support the delivery of the services.
- Linked outreach services to the Community House.
- Support Waminda Community House to maintain numbers by connecting various service providers so that they can also spread the word.
- Convenes the Central Hume Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Planning Network to collaboratively address any needs in the community.
- Promoted the outreach services in the community through all partnerships.
- Supports community to attend these outreach services by providing connections to agencies that can assist with transport as needed.

▶ **To learn more about Central Hume PCP please visit our website:**
www.centralhumepcp.org

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Central Hume
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