CONNECTION

West Wimmera Health Service | Autumn 2025



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A FEW WORDS FROM THE CEO

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Connection and once again we have all sorts of useful information for your reading pleasure.

Hello to Mat Bale, our front cover model. Our TAC support team plays a key role in helping Mat get on with his busy life including as a farmer and drone photographer. Read on to see how we work with Mat and how you can become part of the team.

Our Nhill Community Garden is a triumph of vision and connection and we are proud to have been a key enabler in its success. The garden continues to grow in size and is a hive of activity every day of the week. Long may it grow.

If you enjoy great company, connecting with people and having a laugh then our Social Support Group could be for you. Turn to page 12 to find out what's available and hear more from our team members about why they love it.

Further on you'll find updates on the major capital projects we currently have underway at Rupanyup and Nhill Hospital. These have been some time in the pipeline but demolition has started at Nhill and we are in the process of selecting a building contractor for Rupanyup

In closing, thank you to everyone involved in fighting the recent Little Desert fires which at various stages were of some concern to our Natimuk facilities. Goroke and heartwarming exhibition of rural communities pulling together when it matters most for everyone's benefit.

Have a great autumn and here's hoping for some rain soon.

Ritchie Dodds **Chief Executive Officer** WWHS COMMUNITY

GARDENS

A Story of Resilience, Leadership, and Community Integration In 2010, a group of Karen refugees made their way from Werribee to the small town of Nhill, thanks to the support of AMES Migration and Luv-A-Duck. This marked the beginning of a new chapter for the Karen community, as they settled into life in a Western country.

John Millington, General Manager of Luv-A-Duck at the time, was among the first to welcome the newcomers, facilitating visits to the town's police station, schools, banks, hospitals, shopping centre, and other essential services. He was also involved in getting many set up with a job.

A key hurdle was the cultural shift, both within their community and in their interactions with the local services. Many community members arrived without basic English language skills. Adapting to the Western culture required not just learning a new language through English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, facilitated by Nhill Learning Center and Neighborhood house, but also navigating the social norms of a place far removed from their homeland.

At the heart of this transition was community leader Kaw Doh, who became the spearhead for facilitating the integration of the Karen community into Nhill. Every week, Kaw Doh, traveled to Melbourne for educational opportunities. Despite the ongoing hardship and conflict still affecting his home country, Kaw Doh has built a solid life in Australia, now having three kids at school level. He has been instrumental in guiding his people through the challenges of settling in a new country. His leadership has been crucial in providing support and direction for his community, ensuring they have a voice and a path forward in their new home.

As you can imagine when two cultures collide, there can be many differences. A deeper challenge arose for those without jobs or meaningful daily activities, especially for the older generation, who struggled to find purpose in a new society.



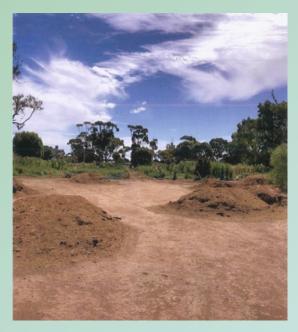
John Millington and Kaw Doh

In 2011, a pivotal step in the community's integration took place when the local hospital, under the leadership of the West Wimmera Health Service (WWHS) Executive Team, John Millington, and other community members helped establish a committee that would meet every month to support the Karen community's settlement. This committee played a vital role in launching the project of creating a community garden — a space that would become not only a symbol of integration but also a source of pride for the Karen community. In the Karen culture, farming plays a crucial role to their livelihoods, not too dissimilar to those in Nhill. The strong partnership saw the gardens develop from a dusty old paddock to a lush green paradise.

Enthusiastic community members such as Tracey Preston, Sonia Colbert, Wendy Sherwell, Sallie Millington, and Heather Dufty gave their free time in the early stages, working until the Garden was self-sufficient. The project quickly gained momentum, securing a \$30,000 grant, the community was able to build a pavilion, toilets, and essential facilities. Made possible through collaboration with the Hindmarsh Shire Council and the WWHS Engineering Team. Later on, the Rotary Club of Nhill provided a grant to install an irrigation system, ensuring the garden would thrive long-term. The Rotary Club of Nhill laid out a ring main thanks to LAD.



Black corn being harvested



There has been a lot of growth since 2010



A chill area to keep away from snakes

After some time, a committee was no longer needed and the Karen community started to facilitate their needs independently as it has grown to nearly 300 people! Each year, the garden continues to grow and expand, with generous donations from local farmers and groups. More recently receiving a tractor from the Landcare Network. This is in recognition of the thousands of native trees the Karen community plant throughout the region.

Today, the garden has become a cherished place where Karen families can grow a little piece of their homeland, cultivating a variety of vegetables, some familiar and others unique to their culture, such as taro, black corn, and sugar cane. The garden serves not only as a place of nourishment but as a gathering point where community members can connect, celebrate their heritage, and share in the joys of growing food together. The community gardens are available to all community members.

The journey of the Karen community hasn't been easy, but their resilience and determination has made joining the Nhill community successful, to now being employed by almost 30 businesses in the region! As the Karen community continues to grow and integrate into Nhill, their story is a testament to the power of support, leadership, and the shared goal of building a thriving, diverse community. Kaw Doh's leadership, alongside the support of the wider generosity of the Nhill community, has paved the way for a brighter future for the refugees from Burma/Myanmar.

The generosity and welcoming nature of the Nhill community is not only felt by the Karen people but by many other foreign residents who have made the town their home. This spirit of inclusion and support is a defining characteristic of Nhill, where newcomers are embraced and helped to settle in and thrive. For many, the kindness and willingness of locals to lend a hand or offer resources has been a key factor in successfully transitioning into their new lives.



Kaw Doh in the Sugar Cane patch



Vast array of crops



IMELINE OF ACTIVITIES





Karen Community Arrive in Nhill





2011

WWHS, Luv-A-Duck & local community members form a committee



Grants received - WWHS Engineering Team and Hindmarsh Shire Council help build essential facilities



Garden grows with the help of the community



THE REPORT OF THE PROPERTY OF

2013



A community of shared cultures and practices exist today!







JOIN US AS A SUPPORT MORRIS MO

We're seeking an enthusiastic individual to join our team and provide support for our TAC client in Kaniva, helping him live his best life!

Mat lives on a small farm just 6km from Kaniva, offering a laid-back work atmosphere. Mat has a passion for drone photography, so you're sure to have a unique and enjoyable time working as his Support Worker.





"The environment is amazing, just out on the farm, it's so peaceful,"

About the role:

- One-to-one support in a client's home and in the community.
- Personal care, cooking, cleaning, driving client to appointments and outings.
- Day, afternoon, and overnight shifts available.
- Staff cabin, where rostered staff can take breaks and sleep overnight.
- On the job training provided.



"Three highlights of working here would be shift versatility, Mat as a client is a lovely man, he's very easy to work with, and the third would be West Wimmera Health Service, they're very helpful, it's very rewarding,"

Symone, Support Worker

Requirements:

- NDIS Check and Police Check
- Full drivers licence
- Current first aid certificate

Benefits:

- Competitive pay rates
- Maxxia salary sacrificing
- On the job training







To find out more about the role and to apply, head to wwhs.net.au/careers



FOR THOSE AGED 65+

Have you recently retired?

Do you enjoy great company, connecting with people and having fun?



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES?

- Outings in the community and surrounding areas Games,
- exercises, craft, movies days, great meals, and much more...





WHAT IS A SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUP?

The groups are facilitated by our Social Support Assistants at each of our sites, and provide people aged 65 years and over with the opportunity to get together with others and enjoy a range of activities and outings. We are all about fun, keeping active, and supporting you to live your best life!

June's Story

Hi, my name is June Walsh. I lived on a farm just outside of Minyip with my husband Frank for many years and moved into a unit near Dunmunkle Lodge in 2011. Over the years I have volunteered for various groups around Minyip, and I have attended social support group for over twenty-five years. Gail Jackson who ran the group at that time introduced me. I was a bit hesitant to join at first, but I am glad that I did as I get so much from it. We had holidays to places such as Mildura, Swan Hill, and Portland, and outings to Goroke, Stawell, Nhill and St Araud to name just a few. I enjoy our craft days on a Monday sharing chats around the table and I love our Tuesday when we have a home cooked lunch. Also, I look forward to Thursdays when we

The staff at Minyip all look after me, especially Sandi and Wendy who take great care of us all in the group. I enjoy the company of all the others who attend, and I would encourage anyone in our community to come along. I am sure you would thoroughly enjoy it.

venture out on a bus trip together. I attend social support for companionship.

What are the benefits of a social support group? Hear from our Social Support Assistants



Sandi Hatcher Minyip

""It encourages a more active lifestyle, feeling less isolated at home, builds healthy friendships with others by meeting new people.

You can find new interests and passions, you become more confident in yourself, you make long lasting friendships"



Belinda Swan & Debra Russell Murtoa

- Social interaction with both clients and staff regardless of background.
- Fun and laughter great for their mental health and wellbeing.
- The interesting places we visit, always great feedback and ever so thankful we run these days
- A reasonable price.



Wendy Pickering Minyip

"Social Support can help people feel like they belong in the community, they feel more valued in themselves. It can boost your mental health, it keeps you connected within the community"

Urgent diabetes care made easy.



Access urgent diabetes care from anywhere in Victoria.



Cost-free clinical assessment and medical advice through **any device**.



24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Interpreter services are available at no cost to you.

For a life-threatening emergency call Triple Zero (000) immediately





vved.org.au

INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DIABETES & THEIR CARERS













The **Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED)** allows you to access urgent diabetes care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You will be connected to our doctors and nurses via a video call, and receive medical advice from the comfort of your home.

How do I access the service?

- You will need a phone, tablet or PC with a camera to use the service.
- Visit <u>vved.org.au</u> or scan the QR code
- Please use one of the four buttons on the home page, depending on the category that best describes you.
- Once you complete the registration process, you will be linked directly to a virtual waiting room until it is your turn to be seen by a clinician.



Will I be speaking to a diabetes specialist?

• During peak periods, we have specialist diabetes nurse practitioners ready to help. We also have a team of emergency physicians, paediatric emergency physicians, general practitioners and nurses available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

What kind of urgent diabetes care can I get?

- In many cases, we will be able to help you virtually, and organise tests and prescriptions close to your home.
- We can provide sick day management, urgent prescriptions, and self-care advice.
- We will provide a follow-up plan or may ask you to come to an Emergency Department.

When should I call an ambulance?

- Please call an ambulance for life-threatening conditions. Examples include low blood sugar where the person appears confused or is not awake enough to eat or drink, OR your blood ketone levels are 3.0 mmol/L and above.
- If you think you have a life-threatening condition, contact Triple Zero (000) urgently.

Are interpreting services available to me?

- Interpreters are available free of charge.
- You can request one during the registration process.



vved.org.au



COMMUNITY HEALTH NEWS

To make an appointment or contact our Allied and Community Health Team, call main reception on (03) 5391 4222 and follow the prompts.

DIETITIANS

Our Dietitians provide guidance and medical nutrition therapy to help you manage health conditions and achieve your wellness goals.

Their services include:

- One-on-one consultations for personalised dietary plans.
- Community talks and cooking classes on topics like diabetes, heart health, and nutrition through all life stages.
- Supermarket tours to help you shop healthily.
- Home visits for in-person dietary support.

For more information visit the WWHS website: **wwhs.net.au** and search 'dietetics'



HAPPY HANDS ARTHRITIS GROUP

Our Happy Hands Arthritis Group is a free service for anyone experiencing arthritis of the hands.

The skilled and friendly Allied Health Team assist you to maintain movement and function, as well as share the different types of aids that are available to make daily living tasks easier.

Group sessions are delivered at the Nhill Hospital, with the frequency depending on the demand.

If you're interested in joining one of the sessions, call Allied Health Reception on (03) 5391 4267.



YOU DON'T NEED TO GET A REFERRAL FROM A DOCTOR BEFORE BOOKING AN APPOINTMENT WITH OUR ALLIED HEALTH TEAM!

PLUS, WE KEEP OUR FEES LOW:

Concession - \$10 | Non-concession - \$15

Allied Health pricing covers Dietetics, Exercise Physiology, Physiotherapy, Podiatry and Speech Pathology. There is no cost for Occupational Therapy or Social Work.

WHAT GOOD CAN A PODCAST DO?

Quite a lot! Our Farmer Wants a Healthy Life podcast is designed to let you learn about things that matter to you, by hearing the compelling stories from locals and people you might know.

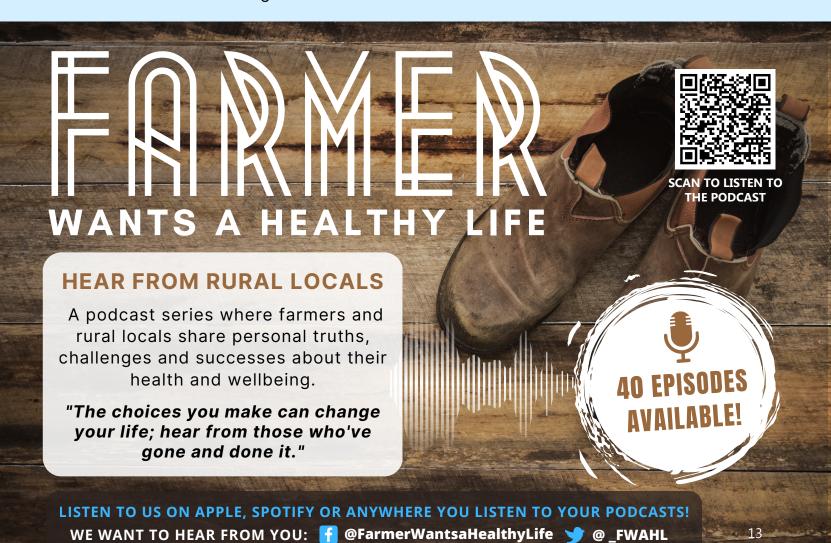
The podcast, affectionately known as 'Farmer', features 40 episodes of local voices and stories of their life experiences and resources that are there to help.

The most listened to podcasts are those that deal directly with mental health. That is no surprise. When we asked the local farming community what they would like to know more about, it was clear they wanted to understand more about how other farmers and farming families have

managed their mental health, especially during difficult and stressful times.

Each episode is a chance to hear from the voice of lived experience on a wide range of topics. There are stories from people who have traversed through challenging times, including depression, the effects of chronic pain and ill health, as well as stories from people who have found simple ways to find positivity and enjoyment in their life, and stories from locals who are here to help.

`Farmer' can be found wherever you get your podcasts or by searching 'farmer' on the WWHS website: **wwhs.net.au**





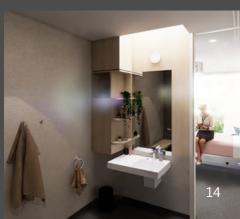
RUPANYUP NURSING HOME REDEVELOPMENT

The Rupanyup tender is now closed, and submissions are currently under review before the contract is awarded. Construction is expected to begin in late April this year, with completion expected in early 2026.

Below are some renderings of the planned development, which will feature 7 bedrooms (each with its own ensuite), a modern kitchen, dining area, lounge room and quiet area for residents and families.







KANIVA AGED CARE REDEVELOPMENT

The Kaniva Aged Care Redevelopment Project has successfully reached the design development milestone and received endorsement from the Project Working Group in December 2024.

The Service has applied for construction funding through the 2024–25 Regional Health Infrastructure Fund grant round and is now awaiting confirmation on whether the project will advance from the expression of interest stage to a full submission.

NHILL KITCHEN & STAGE 2 STORES REDEVELOPMENT

The Nhill Hospital Kitchen and Stage 2 Stores redevelopment has commenced with BLR Provincial Construction being awarded the contract and mobilising on site in February. The project was funded through the Department of Health, Victorian Health Building Authority and is expected to be completed by December 2025.

The project will extend onto the rear of the Nhill hospital and deliver a new kitchen, upgrade aging equipment, and enhance patient meal services. Additional improvements include a consolidation of the Service's stores department, new temperature-controlled store area, a staff dining room, IT infrastructure upgrades, and improved linen room, improving safety, and staff wellbeing.



MEET OUR HEALTH PROMOTION TEAM

WHAT IS HEALTH PROMOTION?

According to the World Health Organisation, 'health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. It moves beyond a focus on individual behaviour towards a wide range of social and environmental interventions.'

OUR HEALTH PROMOTION TEAM'S FOCUS

The Health Promotion Team at WWHS works with, and for, our local communities to support better opportunities and understanding of health and wellbeing.

They do this in a number of ways, such as supporting community groups to increase opportunities for health and wellbeing through our Community Grants program, initiatives such as Café Health, the annual Grow Local, Eat Local cook off, and our Farmer Wants a Healthy Life podcast.

They also work closely with universities and other agencies who can bring extra resources to our region to tackle specific issues such as oral health. They undertake surveys and have developed health



and wellbeing profiles for each of our communities to ensure we are doing the right thing, in the right place, with the right people.

Whether it is supporting community gardens, working with local service clubs or developing research that is reaching the world stage, our Health Promotion Team is passionate about making the Wimmera and southern Mallee a great place to be healthy, active, well nourished and connected.

JAKE WIFFEN HEALTH PROMOTION OFFICER

Jake grew up in Geelong, where he studied at Deakin
University and completed a Bachelor of Health Sciences
majoring in nutrition and health promotion before furthering his
studies by completing a Master of Human Nutrition.

He has been a Health Promotion Officer with us for 3 years and thoroughly enjoys managing community programs, meeting new people and working together to improve the community's health and wellbeing.

HAMID GHADERI ORAL HEALTH PROMOTION OFFICER

A qualified dentist with over six years of experience in southern Iran, Hamid has a deep understanding of the oral health challenges faced by rural and underserved communities, particularly in areas where access to dental care is limited.

Hamid also holds a Master of Public Health and is an Adjunct Research Fellow at La Trobe University. He works closely with La Trobe University and the University of Melbourne to find innovative solutions to improve the oral health of our communities.

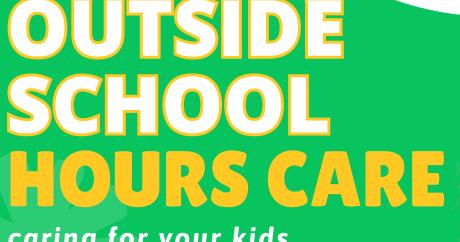
DOROTHY MCLAREN, HEALTH PROMOTION MANAGER

Originally from Canada, Dorothy has led the Health Promotion Team at WWHS for the past six years. Her connection to the Wimmera goes back much further than this role. Her first taste of the Wimmera was during her first role as a Coordinator at Grampians disAbility Advocacy, before moving on to become the first Rural Access Wimmera Manager, where she built inclusive communities for people with a disability across the Wimmera and southern Mallee.

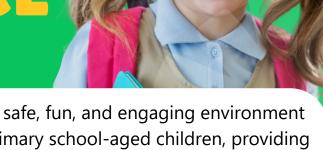
In addition to her current role, Dorothy is an Adjunct Research Fellow with La Trobe University, a member of Safer Care Victoria's Quality and Safety Expert Reference Group and serves on several health and safety committees. Her passion lies in advocating for rural communities, ensuring their unique needs are heard in policy and service development and that opportunities for health and wellbeing are available to everyone.

WWHS OUTSIDE





caring for your kids...



Our OSHC service ensures your child has a safe, fun, and engaging environment after school. This program is open to all primary school-aged children, providing parents with peace of mind knowing their children are in good hands.

After school, children are collected from all the Nhill primary schools and transported directly to Cooinda, where they are welcomed by two dedicated and caring staff members, Taylor and Charlotte. These passionate caregivers engage the children in a variety of fun and enriching activities. Whether it's playing board games, creating arts and crafts, or participating in outdoor sports, there is something for every child to enjoy.

The program's primary focus is to nurture creativity, teamwork, and active play, making sure every child has an opportunity to develop new skills while having fun. Taylor and Charlotte ensure that each child is involved, with tailored activities designed to suit different interests and age groups.

Spaces in this program are limited, so it's recommended to get in touch as soon as possible to secure a spot for your child. Don't miss the opportunity to give your child a safe, enjoyable after-school experience. Contact us today for more information!



Enrol via our website: www.wwhs.net.au/oshc

Any questions, please email: OSHC@wwhs.net.au



West Wimmera Health Service's Maternal and Child Health nurses offer a range of services to women and families during pregnancy, after childbirth, and beyond. Our highly skilled and compassionate team currently service the towns of Nhill, Rainbow and Jeparit and from 1 April 2025, they will also service the Yarriambiack Shire Council areas including:

Monday - Hopetoun and Rupanyup/Minyip

Tuesday – every second Tuesday Beulah AM and Warracknabeal PM

Wednesday – alternate Tempy/Patchewollock and Murtoa

Thursday - Warracknabeal

The Maternal and Child and Child Health Nurses will be holding monthly immunisation clinics across the Shire.

For more information on the services our team offer, head to our website: www.wwhs.net.au/maternal-child-health or call (03) 5391 4249.

Key Ages & Stages Visits

- 1 Home visit
- 2 Two weeks
- Four weeks
- 4 Eight weeks
- 5 Four months
- 6 Eight months
- 7 Twelve months
- 8 Eighteen months
- 9 Two years
- 10 Three and a half years



Our Maternal and Child Health team offer 10 free Key Ages and Stages visits at set milestone dates to review your child's health, growth and development and talk about your own health and parenting experience.

Topics covered in these visits include:

- safe sleeping
- safety in the home
- immunisations
- feeding your baby (breastfeeding and bottle feeding)
- how play helps learning and development
- · family relationships and wellbeing







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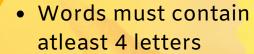
Quiz time...

- In which ocean is 1. Christmas Island?
- 2. Toro is fatty meat from the belly of which animal?
- "Flappers" are most 3. associated with which 1920s dance craze?
- The Spanish "Feliz 4. Navidad" translates to what in English?

5. True or false: an octopus is a mollusc?

Spelling BEE

X B M



- Words must include the centre letter
- Letters can be used more than once
- One point per letter
- Can you find the pangram = word with all 7 letters?



OUR SERVICES

AGED CARE

Service	Nhill	Jeparit	Kaniva	Rainbow	Natimuk	Rupanyup	Goroke	Minyip	Murtoa
Commonwealth Home Support Programme	•								•
Home Care Packages	•							•	
Residential Aged Care									

CLINICAL

Service	Nhill	Jeparit	Kaniva	Rainbow	Natimuk	Rupanyup	Goroke	Minyip	Murtoa
Acute Hospital Care									
Audiology									
Geriatrician									
Hospital in the Home (HITH)		•	•		•			•	
Immunisations									
Infection Prevention & Control		•	•		•			•	
Medical Imaging (CT, X-Ray, Ultrasound)	•								
Optometry									
Palliative Care Support		•	•		•	•	•	•	
Pathology									
Surgery - Ophthalmology, Oral and Orthopaedic	•								
Urgent Care									

DENTAL

Service	Nhill	Jeparit	Kaniva	Rainbow	Natimuk	Rupanyup	Goroke	Minyip	Murtoa
General Dentistry & Oral Surgery									
Oral Health Education & Promotion	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	

LEGEND: 23

COMMUNITY HEALTH

Service	Nhill	Jeparit	Kaniva	Rainbow	Natimuk	Rupanyup	Goroke	Minyip	Murtoa
Cancer Support									
Cardiac Rehabilitation									
Centrelink Station									
Community Nursing									
Continence Support									
Diabetes Support									
Dietetics									
Falls & Balance Group									
Gentle Exercise Group									
Health Promotion		•							
Healthy Legs / Happy Feet		•						•	•
Maternal & Child Health Nurse - Antenatal Care, Domiciliary Care, Immunisations and Key Stages Visits	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Maternal & Child Health Nurse - Day Stay Program									
Multicultural Support									
National Disability Insurance Scheme		•		•		•		•	
Occupational Therapy									
Physiotherapy									
Podiatry									
Post Acute Care									
Social Support Group									
Social Work									
Speech Pathology									
Transition Care Program		•		•		•			•
Transport Accident Commission		•		•		•		•	•
Specialist Wound Care Nurse						•		•	•

NEED HELP?