



# WRAD HEALTH NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2023 EDITION

## A NEW ERA

### Welcome to our new-look newsletter, and our new name and image.

WRAD Health, formerly known as Western Region Alcohol and Drug Centre (WRAD), has re-launched with a new name that reflects the broad range of medical services being offered and recognises that substance use is a health issue.

The change, made after nearly 40 years with the original title, was adopted unanimously by the WRAD Health committee of management.

CEO Geoff Soma said the original name didn't cover the range of health services now being offered to the community.

"WRAD has worked hard over the years to address the broad range of problems facing people in recovery and remains committed to promoting substance misuse as a health issue," Geoff said.

WRAD Health includes the Handbury Medical Suites bulk billing general practice with six doctors, along with a psychologist, psychiatrist and specialist substance misuse and mental health clinicians.

"We are taking a broader, holistic approach to treating clients and families with substance use issues and providing services for a range of health presentations," Geoff said. "Health issues affect everyone in the community, and as a health issue so does substance misuse."

"For years we've worked hard at promoting the WRAD Centre," he added. "People understand that the acronym relates to substance misuse; now we're focusing more on promoting the broad range of services that we offer."

"We are confident that people will recognise that WRAD Health stands for quality treatment for everybody that can benefit from what we offer." WRAD Health's website and social media have been updated with the new logo and colours and signage at the centre will be updated at a later date.



We are confident that people will recognise that WRAD Health stands for quality treatment for everybody that can benefit from what we offer."

## EXPLAINING OUR LOGO

The new logo for WRAD Health with hands beneath the image represents the organisation's commitment to providing compassionate person-centred healthcare services.

WRAD Health recognises that many people seeking healthcare services are often vulnerable and

face challenging situations. Those who choose our care are often experiencing physical, mental health concerns or emotional pain. They may be feeling overwhelmed or face complex health issues requiring sensitive and specialised care and treatment.

The WRAD Health logo symbolises this with the two hands cradling the person to offer comfort and support and it is symbolic of being welcoming to all.



# GEOFF RETIRES

**WRAD Health's longest serving CEO Geoff Soma will retire at the end of June, ending a 23-year career with the organisation.**

Geoff turns 70 next month and has overseen WRAD Health's growth from 10 to 38 staff plus seven contractors delivering a much wider range of health services across the region. He will retire at the end of June.

WRAD Health operations manager Mark Powell will be acting CEO from July 1. "WRAD Health is in good hands with skilled staff and a very supportive and dedicated committee of management," Geoff said.

WRAD Health committee of management chairperson Helen Taylor paid tribute to Geoff, describing him as the driving force behind the organisation's commitment to improving health outcomes for the region.

"Geoff came with fresh ideas and a great deal of experience in managing drug and alcohol-related issues and he has been terrific in his leadership role over the past 23 years," Helen said.

"He has an uncanny ability to manage finances and he was able to support WRAD Health to develop many new programs to support people in our community. Geoff was able to attract a variety of skilled and capable staff and juggle all kinds of different roles very successfully to ensure WRAD Health has moved forward."

GEOFF SOMA

Geoff has been a staunch advocate for developing local health services and changing community attitudes to support people with substance misuse issues.

"It has been a wonderful career working with great people providing services to our important client group," Geoff said.

"There have been many achievements along the way and I am very proud of where WRAD Health is today and what we stand for."

Geoff says he is most proud of developing WRAD's position in the community, its broad range of services and its ability to influence community perceptions about substance use.

"There is now greater acceptance of substance misuse as a health issue and that has been incredibly important," he said. "The community has embraced that and attitudes have improved for the better."

Geoff says the development of integrated wrap-around services, including having clinical, medical, psychiatric, dual diagnosis and social workers based at the same centre, has been beneficial for the local community.

In recent years, key improvements have included the development of outreach services for clients with substance misuse issues, the growth in medical and allied health services, including more GPs, psychiatrists, consultant psychologists, developing wall murals, documenting recovery stories, recruiting Paul Jennings and Archie Roach as patrons, and the introduction of an after-hours service.

"I think it's great that we have a bulk billing medical practice providing accessible health care for clients," Geoff said.

Geoff will remain a strong campaigner for the Lookout Rehabilitation Centre.



**Geoff came with fresh ideas and a great deal of experience in managing drug and alcohol-related issues and he has been terrific in his leadership role over the past 23 years**

HELEN TAYLOR  
WRAD HEALTH CHAIRPERSON

“People need to be supported within their communities,” he said. “The Lookout is a worthwhile project, especially for Indigenous clients who want treatment on country. I think we’re getting close and that it will happen in the near future. We need to keep pushing for this important service for our region and will continue to communicate with the Department of Health and other key political allies.”

He says the time is right to retire. “I have been doing this for a long time and have been a manager since 1985 in Melbourne, New Zealand and now Warrnambool.

“It’s time to be doing other things, such as walking, gardening, reading, music, spending time with family and hopefully some travel.”

Geoff started as WRAD director on August 2, 2000 but his career in the field stems back to 1984.

From 1984-88 he worked at Odyssey House in Melbourne, firstly as a welfare officer looking after the personal needs of more than 150 clients engaged in the residential program and then later in counselling and as treatment administrator.

In 1988 he moved to Christchurch, New Zealand to become Director of Odyssey House, a role that encompassed everything from welfare and treatment administration to finance and marketing.

In 2000 Geoff and his family decided it was time to move back to Australia and the WRAD opportunity was a perfect fit.

Working with people battling substance misuse issues can be challenging and stressful, but Geoff has always focused on the positives.

Regularly I hear something positive about what clients have achieved by using one of our services,” he said.

“I think we contribute to the social fabric of the community in that we provide essential support so that people can affect change.

“At least weekly I hear something positive about what clients have achieved by using one of our services,” he said.

“By doing my job, I provide opportunities for people to engage in treatment. Seeing people achieve and feel better about themselves and to be able to stand up and take on challenges and support other people along the way is incredibly inspiring.”

Geoff has always emphasised the importance of teamwork at WRAD Health. “I was always taught that whatever you do in an alcohol and drug service is an important part of a bigger wheel,” he said.

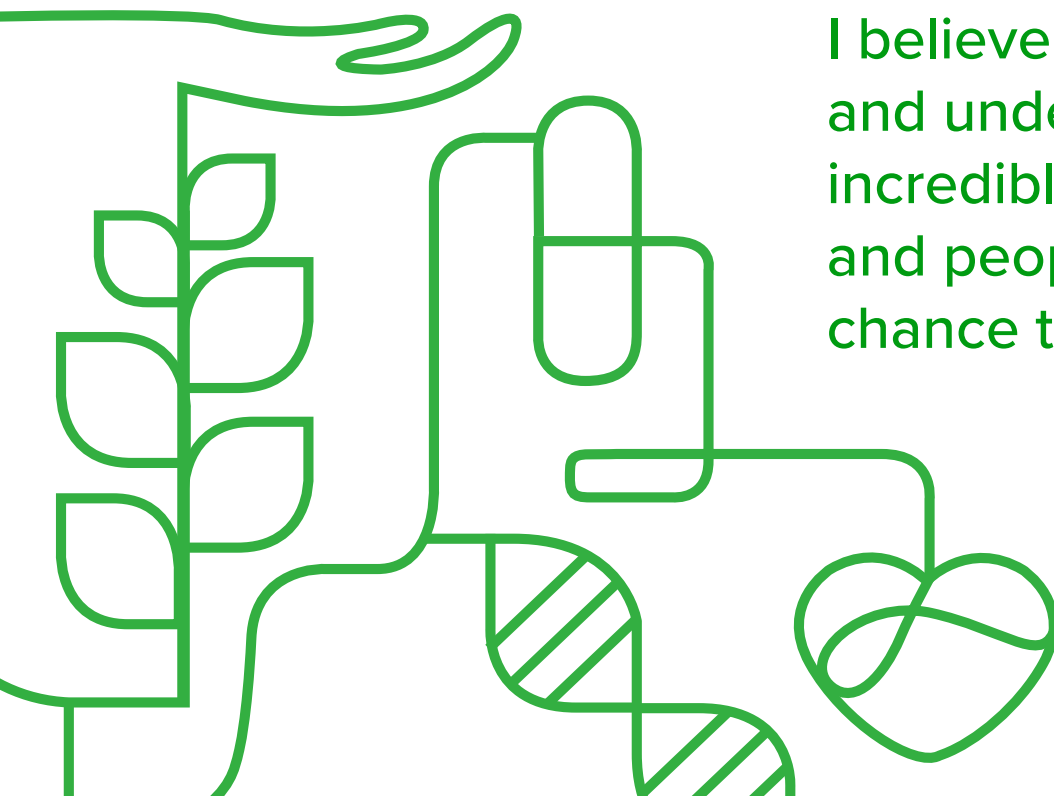
“I’m part of a team that works really hard and is passionate about what it’s doing. It’s satisfying to look back at the many achievements over many years with different projects WRAD started or been involved with other agencies.

His interest in the AOD field never waned.

The alcohol and drug field interested me because people came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, different religions, different cultures but still had a lot in common with needing support, understanding and treatment,” he said.



I believe that kindness and understanding are incredibly important and people deserve a chance to change





# ACTING CEO AIMS FOR A STEADY SHIP

WRAD Health's upcoming acting CEO Mark Powell wants to steer a steady ship over the coming 12 months.

Mark will be acting CEO for 12 months from July 1 following the retirement of Geoff Soma.

"This is an exciting opportunity for me personally and allows me to continue the work the leadership team at WRAD Health has been implementing," he said.

During the period, WRAD Health will be advertising and actively recruiting for a permanent CEO.

"The exciting part about this opportunity is getting to work with a great team of staff who all bring a wealth of knowledge and strengths to the organisation," Mark said.

Mark says his main priorities will be to continue WRAD Health's good work and consolidate its service offerings in both the medical practice as well as the clinical team who deliver alcohol and other drug interventions and mental health support. "WRAD Health has undergone a significant period of growth and we need to stabilise those programs," he said.

"It's a significant time of change for the agency for the organisation and Geoff has been a major contributor to the success of the organisation along."

"My aim is to try to maintain the high quality of services to meet the needs of our community. We need to consolidate what we have achieved so far. In the past couple of years, WRAD has put its hand up and taken on a lot of extra work.

"I will continue to advocate for community needs, ensuring services we deliver are not only person-centred addressing substance use and mental illness but also offer for the inclusion of friends and family. The Lookout Rehabilitation Centre remains an essential part of the continuum of treatment and remains front and centre as a priority program for our community whilst also making sure we continue harm reduction work through our pharmacotherapy program.

"We need a full suite of services available and that's where these projects fit in."



WRAD Health is a great organisation with a great team of people providing a vital service to the region and I want to make sure that continues

Throughout his career, Mark has focused on the connection between mental health and alcohol and other drug problems. As a mental health nurse at the former Brierly institute, Mark was confronted with the impacts of drugs and alcohol on people's mental health after the centre was de-institutionalised and has remained a strong advocate for the services to meet the needs of people with concurrent mental illness and substance use issues.

"WRAD Health is a great organisation with a great team of people providing a vital service to the region and I want to make sure that continues," he said.

MARK POWELL



# NEW REGIONAL CARE PARTNERSHIPS

## WRAD Health is part of a new Regional Care Partnerships mental health and AOD program that will start on July 1.

This new program will provide psychological therapy, care coordination, low-intensity mental health support, brief intervention support for young people and alcohol and other drug services.

Western Victoria Primary Health Network (WVPHN) has secured \$1,301,908 funding for the project that will bring together a team of highly experienced health care agencies to deliver improved mental health and alcohol and other drug services in the Great South Coast region.

A partnership team involving Mind Australia, WRAD Health, Brophy Family and Youth Services, Portland District Health and genU has been chosen to run the new Regional Care Partnerships over three years.

WRAD Health will provide drug and alcohol expertise to the partnership.

WVPHN CEO Rowena Clift said the partnership would deliver mental health and AOD services that targeted the individual needs of health care clients who were seeking a holistic approach to their health support.

“The Regional Care Partnerships model is about care and coordination. Each client will be supported by a team of health care providers with specialist skills and knowledge to lead them through the journey to better health,” Ms Clift said.

Together, the aligned health care agencies will guide clients toward the support that is best suited to their needs no matter where they live in the region, ensuring services are sensitive to cultural needs.

“We have also combined mental health and AOD under the single support umbrella. Not every patient will need support for both but for those who do, it will be a smoother and more coordinated experience when working toward improving their health and wellbeing.”

Mind Australia CEO Gill Callister said: “The Regional Care Partnership for Mental Health and AOD is a ground-breaking service model that will provide tailored support through an integrated suite of mental health and alcohol and other drug services.”

“People experiencing co-occurring mental health and wellbeing challenges as well as addiction will be able to access holistic wrap around support in one place, so that they can get the help they need to recover, stay well and to live fulfilling and independent lives in the community.”

WRAD Health operations manager Mark Powell said the agency was excited to be a part of this project. “For years we have seen the impact of mental health issues on the use of substances and vice versa,” Mark said. “That impact is significant to individuals their families and the already strained health system.

“We know addressing both conditions in a collaborative way improves outcomes. WRAD Health continues to work collaboratively with mental health treatment services to build an integrated model of care that addresses both mental health treatment with substance use treatment.

“The introduction of the new service model for mental health and AOD support follows a lengthy consultation process involving people with lived experience, their families and carers, and the health professionals who are responsible for delivering care.”

This consultation started 2021 by speaking with people from across the region as part of a process to co-design ideas for improving how mental health and AOD care is delivered.

The appointment of the new Regional Care Partnership consortium follows an open tender process undertaken in late 2022.



**WRAD Health will provide drug and alcohol expertise to the partnership**



# STRATEGIC PLAN LAUNCH

Over the next two years, WRAD Health plans to be more ambitious than ever before with the launch of its new strategic plan.

“Our vision is to be the go-to organisation for advocacy and promotion of good health and wellbeing for all people in south-west Victoria,” CEO Geoff Soma said.

“We will be promoting an inclusive service that highlights the values and uniqueness of all individuals,” he said. “This approach emphasises the need to provide a flexible, accessible, effective and acceptable services to all individuals in our community.”

WRAD Health embraces the principles of harm minimisation and offer services to all members of the community inclusive those from diverse cultural backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people who identify with the LGBTQIA+ community.

“Our mission is to provide comprehensive integrated healthcare that is person-centred and welcomes significant others such as families into the treatment team,” Geoff said.

WRAD Health’s strategic pillars are:

1. Client quality service and growth through provision of allied health and complimentary health treatment
2. Health Promotion to the broader community
3. Strong effective partnerships across the region particularly in the area of mental health and allied health services
4. Continue to grow the financial security of the organisation through quality service delivery
5. Maintain a sustainable workforce by expanding our leadership to meet the diverse needs of the community

WRAD Health has come a long way in more than 30 years of delivering primarily an alcohol and other drug services to the region. “We now offer a comprehensive health service with specialist services in medical practice, Hepatitis C treatment, pharmacotherapy, harm reduction, peer and family support, psychological services, dual diagnosis treatment, specialist support from addiction psychiatrist, dietician and alternative therapies,” Geoff said.

“Our purpose is to improve the health and wellbeing of each and every person who presents to WRAD Health whether it be for medical reasons, mental health support and/or substance misuse issues.”



We will be promoting an inclusive service that highlights the values and uniqueness of all individuals



# NEW DOORS OPEN

The Sliding Doors program has slid into a new larger space at the WRAD Health Centre.

After a major renovation, space for the program has been doubled, making it better for participants and easier for facilitators.

Group facilitator Lee Nicholson said the program had outgrown the previous room.

“To meet the needs of the program and the participants, we needed to expand the room and effectively double its size,” Lee said.

The issue came to the fore during COVID where it became obvious that participants couldn't sit so closely together.

“Capacity is still 10 but we didn’t realise how squashed we were until we got this space,” Lee said. “Some of the participants may have other health issues such as anxiety so being in a small, cramped room was not ideal.”

The response from participants to the enlarged space has been overwhelmingly positive.

“They love it,” Lee said. “Participants who have returned to the program after doing it in the previous small room are quite blown away by the size and how much better it is.”

The program was temporarily relocated to South West TAFE for about three months while the centre was renovated.

While the content is still the same, Lee says the extra space makes it easier to deliver the program.

Sliding Doors is a free day rehabilitation program delivered at WRAD Health for people who want recovery from the harms of substance misuse. Working with the evidenced-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), the program is designed to support healthier communication, teach tools to manage anger, frustration and anxiety, problem solve and manage urges and cravings associated with substance misuse.



## YOUTH LINK CONTINUES

Assertive youth outreach worker Harriet Rose is leaving WRAD Health but she will continue to have connections with the agency and the AOD field.

Harriet has been with WRAD for just over two years and helped to rebuild the assertive youth outreach program after COVID lockdowns, transforming it to a COVID-safe operation.

“It has been important to reconnect and rebuild relationships with the schools and transition out of COVID and resume providing outreach services into the schools,” she said.

“Rebuilding those community connections helps to create better outcomes for young people when there is a wrap-around collaborative approach that hopefully prevents children from falling through the cracks.”

While Harriet has loved her role at WRAD Health, she is returning to her first calling as

a nurse with Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

"I am a nurse by profession but haven't been working as a nurse for more than two years," she said. "At CAMHS I will still be working with youth but in a nursing role. I will probably still be seeing very similar clients."

CAMHS is transitioning from a 12-18 to 12-25 year-service. "They are expanding so it's a good time to join," Harriet said. "AOD and mental health are starting to collaborate and work more closely together so I hope to be part of that. I'm a really strong advocate for drug and alcohol support and my work here at WRAD Health definitely helped with that."

“The system is heading in the right direction and I hope that I will be able to advocate for WRAD Health and for drug and alcohol support in the mental health service.”



# FLYING HIGH

**Marc Cahill made a major career turnaround eight years ago, and now he's made another big move to Warrnambool.**

WRAD's new AOD clinician was previously an aircraft engineer before changing careers.

"I was working as an aircraft engineer but did mentoring on weekends with young people whose parents were deceased or in custody," he said.

"That led to a pathway to study after I lost my job at Qantas. I'm community orientated and like to support the underdogs and people who are missing out on things," he said.

Since the career change, Marc has worked in Melbourne as drug and alcohol forensic worker with young people in the justice system.

Now 57, he wanted to move to the country for a more relaxed lifestyle and to give something back to regional Victoria.

"Working in Melbourne, I could see that regional services missed out on a lot," he said.

Marc is already enjoying the change of pace. "I love it here," he said. "I used to come down here regularly on holidays and to go to the Folk Festival. That was part of the reason for the move; the lifestyle is so much more relaxed.

"I was aware of WRAD when I worked in Melbourne and the centre is held in high esteem so I'm pleased to have this opportunity."

Marc, who was born in Dublin but has lived in Australia for 34 years, says working in the AOD field is rewarding.

"We look at why the people we work with have substance issues," he said. "For most people where substance use is problematic, it's in response to pain or trauma from the past. They come to our services for support and guidance and it's rewarding when you hear some of their stories."

“

I was aware of WRAD when I worked in Melbourne and the centre is held in high esteem so I'm pleased to have this opportunity”

MARK CAHILL





# BUILDING ON COMMUNITY WORK

Veronica Paton's role as a group facilitator with the Sliding Doors team builds on her work in community services over the past 13 years.

As a case manager and more recently as an intake worked for WDEA Works, Veronica assessed people from Centrelink to make sure they were referred to the right programs and received the right supports, and to identify any issues they might have.

"It was about building a rapport with people," she said. "I sometimes talked to participants at Sliding Doors as part of this but now I can work more directly with people to help them."

The job put Veronica in touch with many people facing alcohol and other drug issues, so she completed AOD qualifications about five years ago.

"I used that training a bit in my previous position but I always wanted to use it more. I like to be able to help people," she said.



She did some work at the Warrnambool Prevention and Recovery Centre (PARC) but was keen to join WRAD's Sliding Doors program.

"It appealed because you're helping people to change their lives," she said. "You're teaching them the skills they need and then it's up to them if they want to take it on."

Veronica started in July and has grown to love the work. "Like everyone, I know people who have AOD problems and if we can help somebody, it's all worth it," she said.

"It has been awesome and I love working with fellow facilitator Lee Nicholson who shares so much knowledge, and everyone is very friendly"

Veronica was raised in Port Fairy and lived away from the region for 20 years before returning to Warrnambool. She is married with two adult children and three grandchildren.

# AFTER-HOURS SERVICE EXTENDED

WRAD Health's after-hours service pilot program has been extended until at least the end of August and may continue beyond that date.

The pilot had been due to finish at the end of June but additional funding has been allocated to allow it to continue as demand continues to grow.

In the first nine months, the medical service has seen 411 patients and the AOD/mental health team has achieved 280 contacts, mostly family members or significant others along with others presenting for their own assistance.

Western Victoria Primary Health Network (WVPHN) has funded the trial and the extension and is looking at other options for continuing the service.

WRAD Health operations manager Mark Powell said the response to the pilot had been very pleasing, showing such a service is needed.

"It has been very successful in terms of giving

people access after-hours to a GP service and it is very much appreciated by service users," Mark said.

"It has been beneficial to have appointments available for people who want to address their physical health needs and/or substance use issues out of hours, recognising that some may not want to come in during busy business hour timeslots.

"The family and friends component of the program has also been very well received with regular attendance of around 10 people."

WVPHN has surveyed users and received very positive responses.

The after-hours service was introduced last July to provide general practice, mental health and alcohol and other drug support

It is the first of its type in the Great South Coast region and gives people more options to access care.

The service is available on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 6-8.30pm and provides a variety of AOD, mental health and GP services.

# NEW WELCOME TEAM

WRAD Health has a new welcoming party.

Sue Van Rooy and Tracey Logan have joined as full-time receptionists, welcoming all visitors to the centre and helping people to make appointments.

While both are working full-time in reception, they also hope to get time to assist in accounts. Tracey started in February and Sue in March.

Sue worked for 21 years with Warrnambool Racing Club and then with Hamilton Racing Club for 10 months. However, she didn't like the travel and instead returned to work in Warrnambool at Star Printing.

"That work was in administration which meant I didn't get to meet many people so I liked the idea of this position with WRAD Health," she said.



"I meet different people that I've known around town, which is nice."

Tracey had been working in a receptionist at the Warrnambool Respiratory Clinic but was keen to move from that casual position to the full-time role at WRAD Health.

She returned to the city last August after the COVID-19 lockdowns to be closer to family after living in Cairns for six years where she worked at the busy city hospital.

"When COVID hit, we didn't get to see each other for three years," she said.

"I like dealing with people, which is why I'm in this type of work, and I hope I can help people with what they need."

## PRIDE IN YOUR HEALTH

**A conference in June will help to make organisations in the Great South Coast region safe and inclusive for the LGBTIQ+ community.**

The Pride in Your Health conference will be at Deakin University Warrnambool campus on Wednesday June 21 and will focus on health issues affecting the LGBTIQ+ community.

WRAD Health is the driving force behind the conference which is being organised in conjunction with numerous local councils, community services, and organisations.

"The conference will primarily target agencies in the health sector to look at their response and capacity to help people who identify with the LGBTIQ+ community, whether they are working in

drug and alcohol, mental health or physical health areas," operations manager Mark Powell said.

"We know that members of the LGBTIQ+ community have higher rates of substance use issues and mental health issues and there are many issues unique to the community, in part due to the stigma they have to deal with," Mark said.

"The conference will help agencies to find out how they can make their organisation safe and inclusive."

Keynote speakers will bring lived experience of the healthcare system and participants will break into workshops to focus on specific issues such as reducing barriers to treatment and getting Rainbow Tick accreditation.

The conference is a follow up to the Take a Step Forward conference that was facilitated by Leadership Great South Coast in 2022.





# SHARING STORIES



A new writing project is building on the success of WRAD Health's short story competition.

Sharing Stories: Strengthening Communities - Storytelling as a pathway to connection and awareness is helping people to develop their skills in writing life stories and will develop a learning tool to tackle de-stigmatisation.

The Warrnambool Library and Learning Centre was successful in winning a grant as part of the Libraries for Health and Wellbeing Innovation grants, funded by the State Library and Public Libraries Victoria.

The project is a partnership between Warrnambool Library and Learning Centre, WRAD Health, and One Day Studies.

Warrnambool librarian Kerrie Nicholson said the first stage of the project is a series of workshops to develop skills in writing life stories. These workshops are led by professional writers and writing educators, Suzanne Hermanoczki and Jenny Valentish.

Later the project will work to develop a learning tool, an animation co-designed between project participants, WRAD Health, Warrnambool Library, and One Day Studios. The ultimate outcome of this project, is the skills development of participants, and that the co-designed animation will be used by WRAD Health, and accessible through the library, to aid in the de-stigmatisation in the broader community of addiction, recovery, and seeking support.

WRAD Health operations manager Mark Powell said the new project was an evolution of the short story competition which successfully operated over the past two years.

WRAD Health is supporting the project with the involvement of a clinician and a peer worker.



SARAH SERJEANT

## NEW DIETITIAN SERVICE

WRAD Health has its first dietitian on staff, adding to the breadth of services being offered at the centre.

Sarah Serjeant is providing dietetic services each Friday and hopes to expand the offering as part of WRAD Health's holistic approach to good health.

Sarah works full-time with the agency, two days per week on reception and two days in quality assurance, and more recently added dietetics work on Fridays. She is also working as a dietitian at Lyndoch Living on Saturday mornings.

The service is a welcome addition to the mix. "It's a new thing for WRAD Health but it's a worthwhile addition as nutrition is an important part of health," Sarah said.

Patients are normally referred from a GP. Many patients have a care plan chronic disease, such as Type 2 diabetes, and are entitled to rebates from Medicare.

"Everyone can benefit from nutrition education and advice," Sarah said. "There is also evidence that people with alcohol and drug related problems often have poor nutrition so this support could be very beneficial for their overall wellbeing."

"We can try to engage clients to improve their nutrition alongside the counselling they are receiving because we know that good physical and mental health can go hand-in-hand."

Originally from Warrnambool, Sarah completed her dietetics training at Deakin University in Burwood before returning to her home town.

"I definitely prefer the country," she said.

In addition to her work in reception, Sarah is helping WRAD Health with its quality assurance.

The role involves updating policies and procedures, assessing staff training needs, and helping with WRAD Health's upcoming AGPAL accreditation.

"There's a lot of work to do to make sure we're meeting all the accreditation standards," she said.

# LOVING WORK AND HER NEW HOME

Psychiatry registrar Sophie Boyd feels right at home in Warrnambool and at WRAD Health.

Although originally from England, Sophie has fallen in love with Warrnambool's beaches and now plans to continue living locally.

Sophie works for South West Healthcare (SWH) mental health services and is placed at WRAD Health one day each week.

After completing her medical schooling in England, Sophie embarked on specialist training in psychiatry. She is now into the fourth year of the five-year program.

Sophie completed her first year out of medical school at Oxford before moving to Melbourne, where she spent two years rotating through different specialities before moving into mental health.

She completed the first two years of her mental health training at North Western Mental Health before opting to do a rural rotation for her child and adolescent term, which brought her to Warrnambool.

"I just loved it straight away," she said. "I love the water and the nature. I got fed up driving the grey highway to work every day."

While she is loving her new home, Sophie is also loving her work. "The mental health field is fascinating," she said. "It's a moment when two people come together with one of those people being incredibly vulnerable and brave in sharing their life story."

"I'm interested in people and their stories and I think it is a privileged position to be in and I want to help people, that's why I went into medicine."

"Hopefully I can provide something that changes that person's life or changes the way they view their life. Being given the opportunity to do that is very rewarding."

Sophie says her time at WRAD Health is very beneficial to her training.



Hopefully I can provide something that changes that person's life or changes the way they view their life

"It's really useful to be in a specialist alcohol and drug centre where I can be exposed to the different ways of helping people and learn about the field in more depth," she said.

"It's also an opportunity for South West Healthcare and WRAD Health to form a closer partnership."

Sophie works with the access team at SWH and a lot of the clients she sees are also engaged at WRAD Health. "It's a really good opportunity to be across both sides. It means the clinicians here have access to the team at South West Healthcare and vice-versa."

Most placements are for six months but Sophie will be with WRAD Health for a full year.

Sophie now plans to stay in the region after completing her study.

"I walk to work along the seafront – you can't beat that," she said.

SOPHIE BOYD



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