

Wednesday, 18 March 2020

BRIDGES RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS IN THE KNOX & SOUTH WEST YARRA RANGES

Bridges Connecting Communities has been caring for our elderly & disability community in Knox and the South West Yarra Ranges for 45 years and in this unprecedented time will COMMIT to being innovative and use a flexible response to continue with a high level of care for our clients during this unknown time.

At the beginning of the week we supported the recommendation of social distancing and closed our Social Support Group, reduced our Volunteer Transport service to transporting one client in the vehicle at a time to necessary appointments. The Pet Companion program, Phone a Friend, Friendly Visiting and Knox Senior Safety Register will continue but with a strict screening process for Volunteers and Clients. This will be dependent on our volunteer's choice to remain in the programs during this time.

Bridges recognises the importance of our workforce which is our greatest asset and will pledge to care for our 14 Staff and 260 Volunteers with the same compassion, ethical and high standard of care.

Bridges is using an innovative approach to supporting our clients to accommodate the changing environment that we are working in and are creating a Virtual Social Support program (VSSP) using an Assessment & Planning approach which will include:

1. Risk Assessment
2. Health Literacy
3. Action Plan for clients' needs
4. Action Plan for Bridges support to fulfil those needs
5. 2-3 times weekly facetime or phone calls to provide virtual communication and socialisation

This Assessment and Planning approach will enable us to have a clear understanding of our support base and how to respond to those needs. Each client identified at risk will receive regular phone calls for social connectedness & virtual communication.

Bridges is proactive in working with our IT specialist to develop technology that will support our VSSP and ensure our staff have access to our resources if there is a need for staff to work from home.

Bridges will work collaboratively with local organisations in the community to share resources eg. Knox Infolink our welfare group who provide food and care packages. Bridges is looking to support clients with these packages if needed using our Volunteer Transport Service while supporting the transport needs of Knox Infolink.

Bridges office will remain open at this current time and will continue to monitor the Governments advice whilst working in the best interest of our clients, volunteers, staff and stakeholders.

Yours Sincerely,
Bridges Board of Management