

# Media Release

25 November 2022

## Unique, intergenerational social enterprise café opens

An exciting new café in Torquay is giving local residents with disability fantastic job skills opportunities – with an intergenerational twist!

**Saturday 3 December is [International Day of People with Disability](#), aimed to increase public awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability.**

Run by Catholic, for-purpose organisation [VMCH](#), Star Café is a social enterprise aimed to help people build skills and experience in a real-life working environment, on their pathway to finding paid employment. More than 10 trainees will be supported by hospitality and disability support workers over the next 12 months, serving Torquay locals and visitors with delicious food and great coffee.

Recent figures show working-age people with disability are twice as likely as those without disability to be unemployed. Insufficient work experience is one of the most common reasons people with disability have difficulty finding work (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020).

Star Café Coordinator Cathy Rundle, a former disability support worker, educator and restaurant owner, says what also sets Star Café apart is its intergenerational benefits, with the café located at VMCH's [Star of the Sea Aged Care Residence](#).

"It's been received extremely well by aged care residents, along with other customers, so far. The excellent coffee, homemade sweets and lunch options have been a hit. The residents are wonderful and are excited to have this café so close to home. Once we welcome more trainees, the relationships between generations will be something beneficial and truly unique."

Cathy says there is a real need for this kind of learning hub on the surf coast.

"This café will provide a much-needed supportive and non-judgmental environment where clients can feel comfortable and gain skills and knowledge that can lead to meaningful employment opportunities."

Star Café follows the success of VMCH's first social enterprise café [Where Is My Coffee?](#) in Wangaratta, which, since opening last year, has given 22 people vital work experience, with two going on to find paid work and six more transitioning to paid roles.

Cathy's 20 years' experience as a chef will also be invaluable to support trainees who want to build on their culinary skills, with her homemade cakes and biscuits already flying out the door following the café's soft opening two months ago.

Carlyn is one of Star Café's first two trainees and says interacting with customers, particularly older residents, has already helped to build her confidence. The 22-year-old is hopeful perfecting practical skills like making muffins, sandwiches, cleaning and washing up will help her secure paid employment down the track.

"I knew Cathy before because she was my trainer at Encompass (day program). I'm enjoying my time here, especially having hot chocolates and iced chocolates, and when Cathy brings her dog Rosie to visit the café."

VMCH General Manager Disability Services Daniel Carter says he's confident the "incredible outcomes" achieved at the organisation's Wangaratta café will be mirrored at Star Café.

"We are proud to offer meaningful opportunities for the thousands of people with disability across Victoria who are actively seeking to enter the workforce," Daniel says.

"There is obviously a huge skills shortage across all sectors at the moment, thanks to the lingering COVID pandemic. Cafés like ours are an important piece of the puzzle to help solve that issue. Here at VMCH our goal is to support 100 people to find and sustain award wage employment by 2025, and we're well on our way to doing that."

**Star Café will officially launch on Tuesday 6 December. There will also be photo and interview opportunities at the café prior to Int. Day of People with Disability on Friday 2 December (please contact Cassie on 0402 422 852 to arrange).**

**Star Café is located at Star of the Sea Aged Care Residence, 1290 Horseshoe Bend Road, Torquay.**

**The team is currently seeking trainees with NDIS funding. If you or someone you know may be interested, please call 1300 698 624.**

### **Media enquiries**

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## **About VMCH**

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic, for-purpose organisation, compassion, respect and inclusion aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

