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travellersaid.org.au

Travellers Voice

This magazine is produced with the generous support of V/Line

We look forward to seeing you soon.

Travellers Aid

CEO Update

As always - safety comes first.

It is strange to be sitting here writing this with similar thoughts to this time last year when we emerged from another extended lockdown. Again, I'm feeling that our community is a little anxious as the state reopens. We may be looking forward to reconnecting with family and friends, but we may also be a little apprehensive about COVID case numbers and what that may mean for travel and assistance when in Melbourne or in Seymour. You are not alone if you are feeling like this.

I am proud to say that the Travellers Aid team has continued to work every day throughout every lockdown to assist travellers when needed. I am proud of our team for their hard work and dedication, particularly through the four lockdowns in 2021.

As we reopen, Travellers Aid has increased our staffing numbers and both staff and volunteers have undergone intensive training in infection control to protect our service users from COVID transmission. All of staff and volunteers are fully vaccinated so we can safely welcome people back to our sites.

I would also like to remind you that International Day of People with Disability (IPDwD) took place earlier this month on 3 December. This is a United Nations observed day aimed at increasing public awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability. The day also celebrates the contributions and achievements of people with disability and promotes inclusion. You can learn more about this special day on the IDPwD website www.idpwd.com.au

We hope to see you soon.

Elias Lebbos | Chief Executive Officer

Take a break!

Travellers Aid is delighted to have received funding to set up an innovative new program across Victoria – the Participation Assistance Service. This program will provide respite for unpaid carers who look after parents, partners, adult children or other family members and friends, so that they can have some time out to attend to their own personal needs. This may be to attend medical appointments; to go shopping; to engage in leisure activities; to attend cultural or social events or just have a rest.

Travellers Aid will meet the care recipient, who may have travelled with their carer into a regional centre or into metropolitan Melbourne and accompany them on fun and flexible outings. The carer can be confident that their loved family member or friend will be well supported by trained Travellers Aid staff or volunteers during their absence. The program can also be booked for joint outings of the carer and the care recipient to enjoy an activity together.

Activities will be tailored to individual preferences and will include a range of options such as visiting a local attraction; enjoying an art gallery or museum; attending a music concert or the theatre; experiencing the ambience of a local park or a regional zoo; attending a local farmers' market or the Queen Victoria market. Travellers Aid will work with the carer and the care recipient to make sure the outing is enjoyable and stress-free for everyone.

We will also build on our partnerships with regional and metropolitan community groups and volunteer organisations, as well as transport providers, tourism providers and event organisers to support local, accessible experiences.

If you would like to participate in this program, either as a volunteer OR as someone who would like to access this program for some respite, please email info@travellersaid.org.au

For further information, visit the Travellers Aid website www.travellersaid.org.au or call us on 03 9654 2600.

It's OK to feel anxious as we return to travel.

We at Travellers Aid know that getting back on the bus, train or tram isn't always as simple as just locking your front door and heading into town. The past two years have left many of us feeling uncertain about so many aspects of everyday life, including travel, whether it's a local trip, an interstate holiday or international journey. We understand that many people may be experiencing anxiety as they contemplate attending events or even being in places where there are a lot of people milling around.

We want you to know that our services are here for everyone experiencing distress or anxiety who needs a little support to give them confidence as they travel, no matter what the length of the journey.

Anxiety has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and can be a barrier to participation and connection. Anxiety about travelling to an unknown destination on an unfamiliar train, bus or tram route can become overwhelming for a person suffering from anxiety.

We'd like to share Lauren's story with you.

Lauren suffers from anxiety and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). You'd never know it to look at her, or perhaps even to speak with her, but it's there, underneath the calm, capable exterior.

Like so many others, in Lauren's uni days she travelled around by train. "The trains are scary. I remember being so scared that it would go the wrong way and then you have to get off and you don't know where you are."

In more recent years Lauren has found ways of mitigating her travel anxiety.

“Now I’m the kind of person who has to travel the route prior to the day for a job interview. Then on the day I feel more confident, as you would usually feel nervous before an interview as it is.”

“I get sweaty, shaky and sometimes feel dizzy. And sometimes I have to lie down to avoid a panic attack and so I don’t faint.”

“Knowing that Travellers Aid is there makes me feel more comfortable. I feel ok with trams because I can see where I’m going. But at the train station I feel really overwhelmed.”

“Travellers Aid at Flinders Street Station has a really nice, calm, light and airy vibe. It’s easy and clear how to get help at the front desk. You can just walk straight up and ask for help.”

“I will go there to ask for help because I feel silly and embarrassed to ask other people, but with Travellers Aid you know you’re not going to be judged.”

Travellers Aid services are here to help you, your family and your friends to reconnect and travel again. You can book our services online and know that there will be a friendly face to greet you at Southern Cross, Flinders Street or Seymour station to help you to your next destination. Our lounges and waiting areas are a safe space with friendly and helpful staff and volunteers who can help you find your way, offer you a drink of water or just have a sit down away from the noise of the busy station platforms.

Book your service at
www.travellersaid.org.au

We're proud to be part of accessible tourism as Victoria reopens!

Travellers Aid is proud to be working with the Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC), to welcome you back to travel in Victoria. VTIC have a particular focus on accessible and inclusive tourism and events. As Victoria's peak body for tourism and events, VTIC runs the Victorian Tourism Awards and is one of the only states in Australia to include an accessible tourism category. Travellers Aid is proud to have been a previous recipient of this award.

In early December VTIC will launch the important Accessible Tourism accreditation, which acknowledges accessible tourism (across all disabilities) as a pivotal part of the support needed to encourage travel and movements around the state. There is a large disparity between the number of people identifying as having a disability, and those who travel with a disability. We can all agree that accessible and inclusive tourism and events are pivotal for the survival and growth of the tourism industry here in Victoria – which is what VTIC aims to achieve through this accreditation program as well as their other endeavours.

So if you need assistance to travel again, we encourage you to book your trip and then book your Travellers Aid connection service. Travel around Victoria confident that you will be assisted at our sites and by VTIC tour operators. Over the next five years, Victoria will need visitors to help recover its tourism economy. Your support of Victorian tour operators will help the transport and tourism sectors bounce back.

When you are ready to return – know that we are here for you.

For more information on the amazing work VTIC does, please visit their website www.vtic.com.au

Anxiety Support Resources 2021

Service	Focus	Phone number	Operating hours
NURSE-ON-CALL	Expert health advice from a nurse	1300 60 60 24	24 hours/ 7 days
Area mental health services triage	Generally the first point of contact for people seeking a specialist mental health response that will identify the urgency and nature of response required **www3.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealthservices/**	Phone numbers are available in each area	24 hours/ 7 days
Beyondblue	Depression, anxiety and related disorders	1300 22 4636	24 hours/ 7 days
Lifeline	Crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services	13 11 14	24 hours/ 7 days
SANE	People affected by complex mental health issues	1800 187 263	10am – 10pm weekdays
Kids HelpLine	Telephone counselling service for people aged between 5 and 25 / 24-hour service	1800 55 1800	24 hours/ 7days
SuicideLine VIC	People affected by suicide	1300 651 251	24 hours/ 7 days
OCD and Anxiety helpline	Anxiety disorders and depression	1300 269 438 or 9830 0533	10am–4pm weekdays

Sourced from https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health/mental-health-services/support-and-intervention/telephone-and-online-services

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