



## Words from the CEO, Paul McDonald

Welcome to our spring edition of Imagine.

As snap lockdowns become a rolling feature of the year, we have all had to manage our expectations and navigate the associated challenges. Anglicare Victoria's support for vulnerable families remains critical, but the dedication of our staff and volunteers gives me confidence in our ability to meet the needs of our communities.

We have recently launched an appeal for children in out-of-home care. Many young people urgently need extra support during these isolating times where mental health has become fragile. I know these young people appreciate the help your donations provide.

This edition features stories on the rise of gambling during the pandemic, educational youth excursions to Tasmania, and some heart-warming client stories.

I know you will be reaching out to those around you at this time. Best wishes to you.

Go well.

Paul McDonald  
CEO



## SPECIAL REPORT: Gambling rates not in favour of young and vulnerable during COVID-19.

**Anglicare Victoria (AV) has one of the largest financial counselling teams in Victoria, helping people recover from the financial impacts of bushfires, and get back on their feet after the impacts of COVID-19.**

Our dedicated Gambler's Help team of financial and therapeutic counsellors, community educators, and venue support workers play an important role in helping people impacted by gambling harm.

The risks of gambling are well known, with the potential for gambling to lead to debt,

## this month's issues

**P2** · Gambling rates not in favour of young and vulnerable during COVID-19

· Unconditional support when they need it the most

**P3** · Engaging youth in the great outdoors

· Meet the team

**P4** · Debra and Frank share their foster care story

self-isolating behaviours and in some instances, crime. Those who experience serious financial losses and continue to gamble are likely to confront relationship breakdowns, job losses and mental health problems. The financial stress created by gambling is also associated with exacerbating levels of family violence.

Gambling problems occur on a spectrum, and many people – not just ‘problem gamblers’ – experience problems from gambling losses. AV’s financial counsellors consistently note that it is vulnerable people on low incomes who tend to suffer the most harm from gambling. A study for AV found that young people were between two and four times more likely to be problem gamblers than adults.<sup>1</sup>

### COVID-19 and gambling

The Australian Gambling Research Centre published a survey of more than 2000 people in October 2020 that looked at gambling behaviour during the pandemic. Survey participants self-identified as gamblers.

It found that almost four in every five people (79 per cent) were already experiencing or were at risk of gambling-related harm. The highest risk group was young men aged 18-34, who were the most likely to sign up for new online betting accounts, increase the frequency and monthly spend on gambling, and be at risk of harm.

AV’s team of experienced financial and therapeutic counsellors help clients who are already suffering harm from gambling. As with many other areas of social services, early intervention is the most effective way to prevent serious harm – rather than after the damage has been done.

**If you or someone you care about is struggling with gambling, help is available by phoning 1800 244 323, or visit [gamblershelp.com.au](https://gamblershelp.com.au)**



<sup>1</sup> S Sieglff, Exploring the nature of gambling for young people living in rural communities, Anglicare Victoria, June 2017. Report available at <https://www.anglicarevic.org.au/research/gambling-and-young-people-report/>

<sup>2</sup> R Jenkinson, K Sakata, T Khokhar, R Tajin and U Jatkar, Gambling in Australia during COVID-19, Australian Gambling Research Centre, Australian Institute of Family Studies, October 2020

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## UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT WHEN THEY NEED IT THE MOST

**Residential care is a critical part of the out-of-home care (OoHC) system. The homes offer vulnerable young people the support they need at the most challenging points in their lives. Numerous services and carers provide safety and nourishment in a supportive setting to help our young people develop positive relationships and feel safe and accepted, no matter what.**

*“We’re there for the real high-needs kids, and we don’t give up on them. We do everything we possibly can to support and nurture and help them grow into lovely adults. Standing with them, hand in hand, through those tricky years is vitally important. They can achieve great things in life.” – Trevor Dray, Program Manager, Residential Care*

Andrew\* is a young man with autism and learning difficulties. His challenges with controlling his emotions led to him being placed at one of AV’s

therapeutic residential care homes. With the help of dedicated support services, AV successfully reunified Andrew with his family in 2021.

*“Thank you for letting me become the parent I needed to be to have my son back. Thank you for taking care of him and teaching him the skills, and bringing him to a place so that we can live as a family again.” – Andrew’s father*

\*Name has been changed

# ENGAGING YOUTH IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

**This year's Hike for Higher Education (H4HE) in Tasmania again delivered inspiration and guidance in an informal setting to young Victorians struggling with their school work.**

Delivered to two cohorts over two different weekends, a total of 52 students and 22 mentors climbed the hills of Maria Island while being exposed to ideas, people, and discussions "too large" for the classroom. The mentors were a selection of high level, positive role models such as Nova Peris (OAM, first Aboriginal Australian to win an Olympic gold medal), Indigenous Elders, and people from program partners such as Tennis Australia (TA).

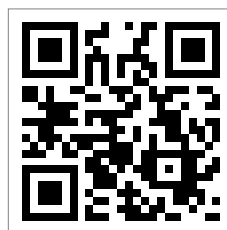
With over half the group holding Indigenous heritage, the camp had a distinctly cultural focus. AV's Cultural Advisor Uncle Ian set the tone for the retreats, and his deep cultural knowledge was a feature of activities across the entire trip. The young people were immersed in story, language and land from the moment Uncle began his Acknowledgement of Country.

*"To hear the kids reconnect in a group sense was beautiful. Education over the last 12 months has been very much just a tool, delivered online. The camp reiterated the importance of human connectivity; for human health, mental health, but also our aspirations."* – **David Law, Program Manager**

*"I used to think the world was against me—now I think the world is my oyster."* – **Dylan, H4HE participant**



Jarrah, Wotjobaluk - on country attending a smoking ceremony at the Hike for Higher Education.



**Scan the QR Code** to hear Dylan explain what the discovery of culture has meant to him.



## MEET THE TEAM

I am Chris de Paiva, the recently appointed Program Manager for Diocesan and Parish Partnerships for Anglicare Victoria. I have a background in Social Work and began my journey at Anglicare as Team Leader of the Homeless Support Services in 2019. I have a long history of working in faith-based organisations and I am committed to working alongside Parishes and Dioceses to develop and deliver programs that protect and empower vulnerable Victorians.

If you would like to discuss how your Parish could partner with Anglicare, please contact me on 0438 938 208 or [Christopher.depaiva@anglicarevic.org.au](mailto:Christopher.depaiva@anglicarevic.org.au)



## Debra and Frank share their foster care story

**In the late 80s, Debra and Frank first discussed the idea of foster care after seeing a TV advertisement calling for families to provide a home for children with additional needs.**

"The couple undertook the required care training, knowing that they could provide a loving home to children who require a little extra support.

Four-year-old James\* arrived a couple of months later, and the couple suddenly found themselves on a steep learning curve.

"It was challenging to begin with – I have to be honest – but there was no way we were going to give up on him," Debra said.

"James is the sort of person who wants to be involved in everything, so we promised ourselves that he would have all the same opportunities as other children his age. Once he settled into his new environment, we got him into basketball and bike riding."

Thirty-two years later, James is now living and working in Western Australia. He still loves biking. He receives support in managing his finances to ensure he can pay his bills and rent on time and budget for groceries, but he is otherwise independent. Debra and Frank continue to care for other foster children.

"The key is to stay positive and know there is support available when you need it. We don't know what we'd be doing now if we weren't caring for these children," said Frank.

**If you're interested in becoming a foster care with Anglicare Victoria, visit [anglicarevic.org.au/fostering](http://anglicarevic.org.au/fostering) for information or call 1800 809 722.**



**You can help every child have a Merry Christmas this year.**

To give to this valuable cause, you can either donate **online** or call us directly on 1800 809 722.

Visit [www.anglicarevic.org.au/toy-appeal](http://www.anglicarevic.org.au/toy-appeal) for more information