



BURKE & BEYOND



Term 1 - 2026

AUTUMN

Newsletter

Term Holiday Dates

Thursday 2 April

Quarter 1 Ends

Friday 3 April - Monday 6 April

Easter Weekend (Public Holidays)

Tuesday 7 April

Quarter 2 Starts

Monday 8 June

King's Birthday (Public Holiday)

Friday 3 July

Quarter 2 Ends

Monday 6 July - Friday 10 July

Winter Break

Monday 13 July

Quarter 3 Starts



Message from the CEO

Lisa Sawatzky

As we move into autumn, I want to thank every person we support, our families and carers, our staff, and our community partners for the care, patience and teamwork you bring every day. The change of season is a good time to pause, check in on what matters most, and keep building the supports that help people live the life they choose.

Across our services this year, our focus remains on safety, dignity, and genuine choice and control. That means listening closely, planning with each person (and their circle of support), and making sure our environments, communication, and routines are accessible and welcoming. Inclusion is not a slogan—it is something we practise through everyday actions and respectful relationships.

This autumn we are placing extra attention on a few practical priorities that make a real difference:

- Staying well through seasonal change: supporting health through education on good nutrition, maintaining exercise, handwashing and hygiene - plus reminders about flu and COVID vaccinations where appropriate. If participants or staff are unwell, we encourage them to rest and recover.
- Safe and responsive supports: reviewing risk plans, incident learnings, and positive behaviour supports to ensure we respond early and respectfully.
- Strengthening communication: using preferred communication methods, assistive technology, and visual supports so everyone can participate and be heard.
- Growing community connection: supporting people to join local activities, volunteering, employment and education opportunities, and to build friendships.
- Workforce capability: ongoing training, supervision and coaching so staff have the confidence and skills to deliver high-quality, person-centred support.

To families and carers: thank you for your advocacy, partnership and trust. Your feedback helps us improve—please keep telling us what is working well and where we can do better. We are committed to acting on what we hear and to communicating clearly about any changes to supports.

Thank you for being part of our community. I look forward to the months ahead and to continuing our work together to create safe, meaningful and connected lives for people with disability.

Lisa Sawatzky

DANDENONG

Beyond Rhythm

Term 1 has been a dynamic and rewarding start for the Beyond Rhythm Band program. Participants have demonstrated strong teamwork and growing musicianship as they set up equipment, selected their practice playlists, and warmed up with instrumental sessions before layering in vocals. With support from staff, they focused on rhythm, timing, and active listening, building confidence with each rehearsal.

Due to a significant increase in participant numbers, the band has been operating in two groups this term. Both groups adapted quickly, collaborating on musical decisions, offering feedback to one another, and exploring new musical concepts to strengthen their performance skills. Participants embraced a range of new songs with enthusiasm, working hard to learn their parts in preparation for upcoming performances with the Council and Burke and Beyond. The energy, commitment, and creativity shown this term have set a strong foundation for the exciting opportunities ahead.



Horticulture

This term, participants in the horticulture group have each been assigned a specific role related to the ongoing maintenance of the community garden. These roles are designed to support the development of communication, teamwork, and responsibility, while also encouraging confidence and progression within each participant's role. The assigned roles include: Access and Safety Steward, Tools and Equipment Manager, Water and Weather Monitor, Plant Health Observer, Pest and Biodiversity Spotter, Build and Repair Lead, and Garden and Communication Recorder.



Podcast Program

Podcast participants are at various stages of production, using the studio at Pakenham Living and Learning Centre. They've been researching topics, writing scripts, recording high-quality audio, and learning to edit multitrack podcasts using GarageBand, including adding royalty-free sound effects and music.

In the afternoon Art Therapy sessions, participants have been exploring Neurographic Art, using flowing lines and creative expression to support relaxation, focus, and self-expression in a calm and engaging environment.



RINGWOOD

Overview

As we settle into the new year, it's been wonderful to see everyone return to work refreshed, motivated, and ready to take on new challenges in 2026. The energy across our programs has been fantastic, and we're already off to a strong start.

We'd once again like to welcome Veronica as our new service coordinator, who has been doing a great job at supporting both her staff and participants from the moment she began.

This year, participants have begun a newly structured curriculum designed to build confidence, grow independence, and expand practical skills across a range of learning areas. Ringwood also continues to work with community spaces such as Orana Neighbourhood House and Kew Neighbourhood Learning Center to offer courses such as Sport and Recreation, Cooking, Customer Service, and Work Skills, while also introducing a new course for 2026: Retail Styling. This new course offers participants a chance to be creative and put together individual flower arrangements as well as design and decorate Kew Neighbourhood Learning Centre and the Spare Chair Cafe for events and holidays such as Valentine's Day and Easter.

Our ongoing partnership with Pinchapoo has also remained a meaningful part of the year. Participants have continued to volunteer their time sorting products, preparing packs, and contributing to a charity that makes an enormous difference in the community. This hands-on experience not only gives back to those in need but also builds teamwork, communication and organisational skills.

Health and wellbeing have been another strong focus this term. Many participants have enjoyed weekly gym sessions, developing their strength and fitness, while others have taken part in tennis programs, learning new skills, staying active, and having fun with their peers.

As we look ahead, we're excited to carry this momentum into Term 2. With so much enthusiasm already on display, we can't wait to see what the rest of the year brings.



BALWYN

Living and Learning



T-Shirt Designing Adventures

Over the past 10 weeks, one of our groups has been getting creative during Library Time—diving into research, exploring different styles, and learning the ins and outs of designing their very own T-shirts. Their hard work came to life during an exciting trip into the city, where they visited UNIQLO and turned their ideas into reality. The results? Some truly amazing, one-of-a-kind T-shirt designs!

Art & Craft

Our groups have been bursting with creativity lately, finding plenty of opportunities to let their artistic imaginations shine. Everyone has been experimenting with different mediums and techniques to bring a wide range of unique art pieces to life.

In the Shed group, participants have been getting hands-on with clay—shaping, sculpting, and discovering what they can create with this tactile material. Meanwhile, the CRCC group has been exploring the magical effects of colour on tin foil, creating vibrant and eye-catching artworks.

Back on site, the Art & Craft group has been embracing the Easter spirit, learning how to craft moveable bunny rabbits—a fun and festive project that's brought lots of smiles. Creativity is definitely in the air!



KNLC - Independent Living Skills

What a fun place to learn independent living skills! The KNLC group has been cooking up a storm this term—literally! From delicious meatballs and fresh fruit salad to colourful coleslaw, chicken enchiladas, fluffy meringues, and warm scones, they've explored a tasty range of recipes.

Along the way, participants have been sharpening essential skills such as hand hygiene, food safety, and learning how to chop, measure, and stir ingredients with confidence. Each session finishes with a team clean-up—washing dishes, tidying the space—and then the best part... enjoying the delicious food they've created together!

Independent living has never been so fun (or so yummy)!



OUTREACH SUPPORT

Becky Chan

This summer I mostly focused on community cricket. They have given me the opportunity to run out the water, especially when it is a hot day, as the players require water more often to keep hydrated. I enjoy running out water for cricket as much as I do for footy, even though you run a lot more for footy than cricket.



I am very fortunate to have a summer sport close to home to build a community connection with, and I am looking forward to attending a lot more of Parkmore Pirates games next season.

I feel supported by the staff and feel better knowing they are there if I need help or advice. Having someone who isn't a family member makes it easier for me to talk openly and honestly. Since we live in different areas, it really helps to have each other for support, especially while out doing activities.

FRIDAY NIGHT SOCIAL

Participants have continued to attend in great numbers the Friday night social programs.

Participants at

Dandenong recently attended Bowling at Zone Bowl Knox where they played 2 intense games, supporting and cheering each other on.



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social media

Edited by: Becky Chan



Inclusion that counts

SUPPORTIVE | PROGRESSIVE | ACCOUNTABLE