



## New(town) Beginnings #1/21

Dear Neighbour,

For frontline staff lucky enough to have some time off over Christmas, the summer break not only provides much-needed downtime with loved ones, but holidays often help keep that pesky occupational hazard known as vicarious trauma at bay.

However after the mania of December, it can also be a strange time of year for workers in our sector. I, like many others, am acutely aware of the impact the end-of-year shutdown will have on many of the people we normally support or even those who we haven't engaged with yet, but know we exist.

Just before the Christmas break, an elderly and frail 86-year-old gentleman arrived at our drop-in Information and Referral Service at the Centre, saying he needed a yes or no response to a blood test that he had a few weeks prior.

Although he lives locally, none of our staff recognised him as a regular visitor and therefore as is often required, they had to employ some well-honed detective skills to figure out how he could be supported.

He seemed a little muddled but mentioned seeing a doctor in Redfern, so my colleague Colin called the outstanding team at Aboriginal Medical Service. They unfortunately had no record on file but suggested we try the Redfern Community Health Centre. After speaking with them, Colin quickly deduced that it was a COVID-19 test the man had had and was still awaiting the results.

A few (frustrating) calls later, including to the COVID-19 Hotline, followed by Service NSW and finally RPA Hospital, we were able to tell the gentleman that thankfully he'd received a negative result.

Without access to a mobile phone, he had no idea how to find out the results. My colleagues were so relieved that we were able to get his result as he had been isolating at home for a few weeks without contact. As a result of the self-imposed quarantining, he seemed quite frazzled and anxious when he finally arrived at the Centre.

**Newtown Neighbourhood Centre**

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We are so pleased he came to us before we closed our doors for the break, as we cannot think of where he would have gone to ask for help otherwise. It took close to an hour and two staff members to help him but in our line of work, it is always time well spent.

Both parties walked away feeling positive and it was a wonderful reminder of how grateful we are that we can be there to support the most vulnerable members of our community.

Mel

Community Strengthening Team