

## Reconciliation Week



This week is National Reconciliation Week. This year's theme is 'more than a word', with a focus on urging all Australians to take action to achieve a greater level of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. I hope you will take time this week to think about what we can all do to help address the injustices of the past and move to a future we can all be proud of.

## A reminder about our obligations to protect participant Privacy and Confidentiality

In order to complete the responsibilities associated with support work you will need to know information about participants which is likely to be very sensitive and which the participant will want to keep private. Before a participant will entrust you with this information, they will need to believe that you will protect it, and that you will not disclose it indiscriminately. The law provides protection to a participant's privacy, and guidelines regarding under what circumstances information can be disclosed to others. As a general rule, workers should not disclose any information about a participant, including their identity as a participant, to any person without the participant's informed consent, or if they are unable to provide informed consent, the consent of their 'person responsible'. Of course, if participants are friends and are aware that they are both with FOCAS, it is okay to share information about one participant to another which is not sensitive/confidential. A relevant example might be - you tell participant 'x' that participant 'y' has joined the local soccer team after participant x asks how participant y is going with their interest in playing soccer. There is no cause for concern in a situation such as this - unless you start sharing information which is personal, sensitive or confidential. If you are in any doubt - please check with me. Our obligation to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants extends to passing information to your colleagues in circumstances where the colleague has no need to know that information. Workers must always exercise care when discussing participant details in public situations/places so that information is not accidentally divulged to others. Documentation which identifies the participant as a participant, or which includes confidential information should always be securely stored.



## Welcome Anne

We officially welcome Anne Bruce to our permanent 'office based' team. Anne has now

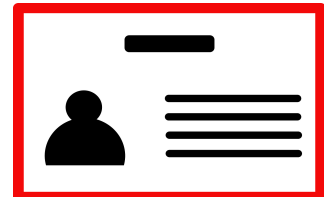


commenced in the role of Staff Rostering and Administration officer' and will be working in the FOCAS office on Mon, Tues and Wed. Anne is responsible for looking after the FOCAS admin/general enquiries email account - [admin@focas.org.au](mailto:admin@focas.org.au) and number - 0402 307 974 (on Thurs and Fri the I will monitor this number). You will have contact from Anne in

relation to updating mandatory staff documentation (screening checks, First aid, comprehensive car insurance and so on), general FOCAS admin and updates relating to both staff and participants and, in the future, staff replacements. Great to have you on board Anne!

## Keep track of your docs, checks

All FOCAS staff need to demonstrate that they meet certain criteria before they can commence their duties. They need a drivers licence, comprehensive car insurance, a first aid certificate, and the relevant police or NDIS checks. In order to make sure everyone is complying with those requirements, FOCAS needs to have copies of the relevant documents. When they expire, they need to be renewed, and documentation of the renewal needs to be provided. You should receive google calendar reminders of when renewal is due, however the onus is on you to make sure everything is up to date. If you are unsure, please contact Anne and we can quickly give you the relevant dates.



## The End of the Pandemic

Hands up if you're sick of COVID-19. I am! I'm sure we are all looking forward to going back to a life that is COVID 19 free. We can keep trying to contain the virus, but broadly speaking, there are only two ways to get rid of it for good, 'herd immunity' or vaccination. Herd immunity requires the bulk of the population to become infected.

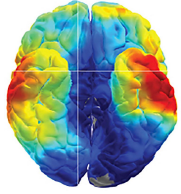


Vaccination requires that the bulk of the population get 'jabbed'. Proponents of herd immunity point out that COVID-19 infection is 99% survivable, so why should we get vaccinated? That sounds reasonable until you do the maths. 99% survivability means 1% of those infected die. For herd immunity, something like 15

million Australians will need to become infected. 1% of 15 million is 150,000 - People - Dead. Getting vaccinated is not a legal obligation, neither is caring whether vulnerable people live. As a person who supports people with a disability, you are eligible to get the vaccination of your choice now. As previously communicated I have letters prepared to take to your doctor proving your eligibility. Please drop into the office to collect one.

## Cognitive decline in people with an intellectual disability

As we age, our mental functioning deteriorates. This is a particular concern for people with an intellectual disability. As living standards improve, people with an intellectual disability are living longer, meaning more and more will experience these effects. Additionally, people with an intellectual disability are more likely to experience dementia, especially people who have Down Syndrome, whose chromosomal composition leaves them especially vulnerable. Lifestyle factors may also play a role, as there is some correlation between those factors and the onset of dementia. Things to look out for are; gradual loss of memory and thinking skills; increasing difficulty with conversation; personality changes; loss of motivation for



activities; increasing dependence; and deteriorating self care. You can find a helpful and instructive YouTube video at

[dementia.org.au/resources/videos/living-intellectual-disability-and-dementia](https://dementia.org.au/resources/videos/living-intellectual-disability-and-dementia).

At FOCAS we support a number of participants with intellectual disability/Down syndrome who are now aging. As they experience the impact of aging, their support needs will no doubt change. This is something we all need to be aware of and respond to with insight, practicality and sensitivity.