

ACCESS Project

Accessing Cancer Care Equitably using Support Services

July 2021 – June 2024

Thanks to the support of the Victorian Government, Cancer Council Victoria is delivering the ACCESS Project to improve access to supportive care for all Victorians affected by cancer.

The project aims to support the acute and primary health sectors to respond to increased demand for supportive care screening, psycho-oncology and practical support referral for people affected by cancer during COVID-19 recovery.

Beginning July 2021, Cancer Council is collaborating with Integrated Cancer Services (ICS) and health services to expand supportive care screening and services capacity within health services to ensure all Victorians have equitable access to information and support. This will be achieved by working with health

services to develop and implement tailored and sustainable referral pathways to **Cancer Council 13 11 20** which complement existing referral pathways and supportive care services.

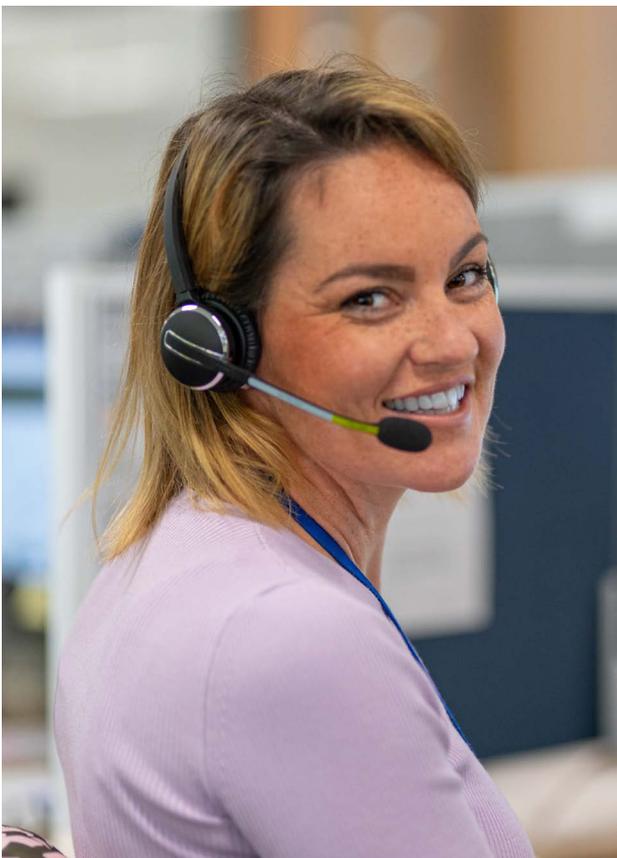
The focus will be on rural and regional communities and underserved populations that historically have experienced inequitable access to supportive care services.

This project aligns with the Victorian Cancer Plan 2020–2024, which recognises supportive care as vital to delivering quality cancer care.

Cancer care throughout COVID-19

During COVID-19, Cancer Council heard from clinicians about the pressures placed on resourcing that have resulted in the de-prioritisation of supportive care screening, assessment and referral. Given the barriers to accessing supportive care during the pandemic we expect demand for supportive care services to intensify, increasing the strain on nursing, allied health and psycho-oncology services within health services.

To identify and address service gaps that lead to inequitable access to care, Cancer Council will conduct an audit of supportive care services across the state. This information will also be used to update Cancer Council's **Cancer Services Guide** that will be available in 2022 to assist health professionals and people affected by cancer find the services they need.





Deliverables and timeline

The project will be implemented in two phases over four years. Phase 1 begins with the services audit and a pilot with Barwon South West Regional ICS and Grampians ICS, followed by roll out and engagement with remaining rural and regional ICS.

Phase two begins July 2022 and includes rollout to metropolitan ICS as the project focus expands to address inequitable access to supportive care services for underserved populations including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, of which metropolitan ICS have concentrated populations.

We will work to increase the capacity of our 13 11 20 information and support line and increase referrals to our psycho-oncology counselling and financial counselling, planning and legal services.

To meet increased demand, Cancer Council has recruited three **13 11 20** cancer nurses in regional areas (Ballarat, Geelong and Stawell), which will help to forge stronger connections with local health services and better understand the unique needs of people with cancer and their families.

Cancer Council will support health services to implement the initiative through tailored education workshops and promotion campaigns. Success of the project will be evaluated through pre and post implementation data analysis conducted by Deakin University, which will be shared with health services.

13 11 20 information and support service

Cancer Council 13 11 20 is a national cancer information and support service that is available to anyone with a question about cancer including patients, carers, family members and health professionals.

Depending on a person's needs, our nurses can refer to our directory of more than 470 supportive care services available across the State including financial counselling, psycho-oncology, wig services, accommodation and travel services, and respite care.

Most of our cancer nurses also work clinically across public and private settings and oncology specialties. Calls with our nurses are not time limited which enables them to do a detailed supportive care screening to determine what support is needed.

Referrals are best initiated at diagnosis, once supportive care screening is completed, but can be made at any point during the cancer experience as we can provide information about prevention measures as well as support from diagnosis, during treatment, through to survivorship and palliative care.

Cancer Council's new [online referral form](#) makes it easier for health professionals to refer people to cancer supportive care services.. Piloted with health services in Stawell, it aims to complement current health services supportive care screening and referral practices.

Upon referral to **Cancer Council 13 11 20**, our nurses conduct a full needs assessment and provide one-on-one tailored support via phone and email. With patient consent, we can provide feedback to health services about the outcomes.

For further information please contact Katherine Lane, Head of Cancer Information and Support Services, Cancer Council Victoria at Katherine.lane@cancervic.org.au