

STRATEGIC PLAN

UPDATE
2026 ONWARDS



Contents

Foreword from Board Chair and CEO	1
Measuring, tracking and accounting for our progress to date 2023-25	1
Priority 1. Local care for local people	2
Achievements 2023-25	2
Objectives 2026 and onwards	4
Priority 2. A shared future	5
Achievements 2023-25	5
Objectives 2026 and onwards	7
Priority 3. One Dhelkaya	8
Achievements 2023-25	8
Objectives 2026 and onwards	10
Priority 4. People first	11
Achievements 2023-25	11
Objectives 2026 and onwards	13
What to expect in 2026 and onwards	14

Acknowledgement of Country

Dhelkaya Health is located on the traditional lands of the Djaara people. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of this nation. Dhelkaya Health is committed to achieving equality in health status between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.



Our services are delivered on the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung people. Artist: Kerri Douglas



Dhelkaya Health acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government



Ms Vanessa Healy
Dhelkaya Health
Board Chair

Ms Sue Race
Dhelkaya Health
CEO

Foreword from Board Chair and CEO

As we present this Strategic Plan Update for 2026 and onwards, we celebrate the remarkable progress we've made against our 2023–26 plan while looking ahead with renewed purpose.

Healthier Together has never been just a slogan. It's the heartbeat of Dhelkaya Health, guiding us through amalgamation, integration, and innovation to deliver truly local, compassionate care.

Over the past three years, we've achieved so much and these milestones, documented here, reflect the dedication of staff, volunteers, partners, and community. Together we've turned vision into reality and our performance monitoring, quarterly reviews, and transparent reporting have kept us accountable, adaptive, and aligned with community need.

This update honours those successes while setting bold objectives for the final year of the 2023–26 plan. In early 2026, we'll launch another highly consultative process involving surveys, forums, cross-campus workshops, and partner roundtables, to co-create the next chapter. Just as before, every voice will shape our path.

Together, we're not just planning for the future. We're building it as One Dhelkaya, with people first and healthier than ever.

OUR PRIORITIES

1. Local care for local people
2. A shared future
3. One Dhelkaya
4. People first

Measuring, tracking and accounting for our progress to date 2023–25

The proof of any strategy is in its execution. Since the launch of our 2023–26 Strategic Plan, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to robust and transparent tracking mechanisms documented in the plan. This ensures accountability to our board, staff, partners, and community, while enabling adaptive course-corrections based on real-time data and feedback.

Over the past two years, we've leveraged a multi-layered approach:

- quarterly tracking of Strategic Plan objectives tied to executive key performance indicators
- annual and quarterly surveys (e.g. People Matter Survey, Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey)
- monthly performance monitoring to the Board of Directors and Department of Health
- formal reporting through our Annual Report of Operations.

These align with Victorian Department of Health requirements, including the Statement of Priorities. They also align with external accreditations from bodies like the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

Community accountability shines through our Annual Reports, website updates, and Community Advisory Committee forums, where we've shared milestones like the 2024 Rainbow Tick Accreditation preparation and Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) implementation.

We publish media releases and social media updates regularly to keep our broader community informed about our work.



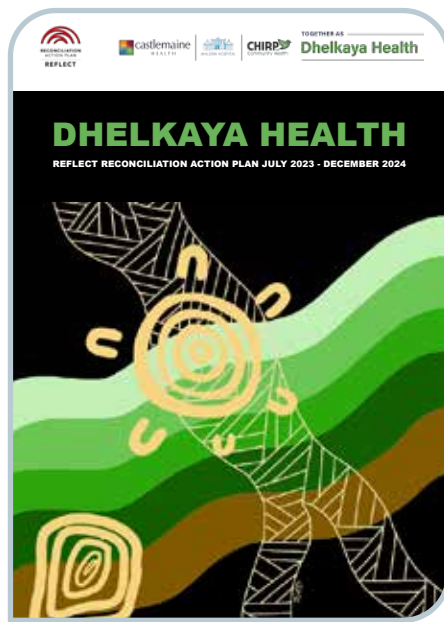
Priority 1. Local care for local people

Our intent: We will be here for our community so that consumers have a strong voice in how we do what we do, the community leads their own health prevention and protection, and all of the community sees that we are here for them.

**Achievements
2023-25**



Consumers	Stakeholders	Protection, prevention & primary care	First Nations Peoples	LGBTIQA+
Consumer Participation Framework implemented	Actively involved community groups in fundraising	Nutrition and quality food standards implemented	Reflect RAP finalised and implemented	Rainbow Tick Accreditation achieved
	Volunteer contributions extended and strengthened	Community wellbeing supported in line with Mount Alexander Shire's Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan	Partnership with Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC) strengthened	Social Impact Framework developed to support LGBTIQA+ wellbeing
		Public Intoxication Trial completed	Social Impact Framework developed to support clients with complex care needs	



Reflect RAP

Advancing reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Actions were grouped across four pillars – relationships, respect, opportunities and governance. Implementation was guided by a dedicated working group, which included Aunty Kerri Douglas and Aunty Julie McHale, alongside First Nations and non-First Nations staff. Our Reflect RAP has strengthened relationships with First Peoples, enhanced cultural safety in our services and advanced opportunities for Indigenous employment and procurement.



Public Intoxication Trial

A health-led approach to safely support intoxicated people

Implementation featured a dedicated service at our Castlemaine campus as part of the Mount Alexander Shire trial site. The service offered assessment, sobering support, and referrals to care. Partnering with local Aboriginal organisations and health services, the focus was on culturally safe responses, diverting people from police or emergency involvement, addressing underlying issues like addiction or homelessness, and contributing data to refine the statewide model for safer, more equitable outcomes.

Rainbow Tick Accreditation

Safe, inclusive services and workplaces for LGBTIQ+ people, patients and staff

Awarded after rigorous independent assessment against six national standards developed by Rainbow Health Australia, the accreditation affirms organisational practices in cultural safety, staff training, consumer consultation, and continuous improvement. It signals to the Mount Alexander Shire community that Dhehkaya Health actively addresses LGBTIQ+ health disparities, fosters welcoming environments, and embeds inclusion across governance, policies, and care delivery.





Assurance	Measures	Achievements
Our consumers have a strong voice	Increase in percentage of committees with consumer representation	Community Advisory Committee membership renewed with an increase in diversity
	Increase in voluntary participation in community engagement activities	Volunteer contributions extended and strengthened with 125 volunteers engaged and working across more than 25 programs
Consumers lead their own health protection	Specified initiatives and associated action plans achieved	Social Impact Framework developed with measures to be introduced in 2026
Community sees us as relevant	Reconciliation continuously developed to achieve a Stretch RAP by 2026	Implementation of Reflect RAP completed. Innovate RAP drafted in consultation with First Nations peoples and Reconciliation Australia
	Dhelkaya Health accredited for Rainbow Tick by 2025	Full accreditation achieved in October 2024

Objectives 2026 and onwards

Consumers	Stakeholders	Protection, prevention & primary care	First Nations Peoples	LGBTIQA+
Establish a consumer register to facilitate and enhance community engagement	Explore a donations model that is fit for purpose	Co-design the development and implementation of a Women's Health Clinic	Establish a formal partnership with Djaara to enable embedding of Djaara values and aspirations into environmental and infrastructure projects undertaken by Dhelkaya Health	Implement the Social Impact Framework in consultation with consumers



Trishaw Program

The Trishaw Program, in partnership with Cycling Without Age Castlemaine, was a finalist in the Excellence in Public Sector Residential Aged Care category in the 2025 Victorian Public Healthcare Awards. The nomination was based on the program's innovative approach to combating social isolation among older residents in aged care.

Launched in 2023, the program enables trained volunteer pilots to take elderly passengers, many with limited mobility, on gentle, wind-in-the-hair rides through local gardens and along scenic trails using specially designed electric trishaws. This simple yet profound initiative reconnects residents with nature, community, and joyful memories, significantly enhancing mental wellbeing, physical stimulation, and social inclusion.

The program fosters intergenerational connections, with volunteers sharing stories and laughter during rides, while addressing loneliness, which is a key health risk for older Victorians. Expanded to include a second trishaw at Maldon in 2024, the program exemplifies person-centred care and community collaboration, demonstrating how small-scale innovations can create lasting impact in rural healthcare.



Priority 2. A shared future

Our intent: We will provide increasingly personalised healthcare, including improved aged care and home-based care offerings. We will prioritise partnerships, consumer-centrism and integration so that our community is truly getting what they need most.

**Achievements
2023-25**



Future clinical services	Sustainable care	Community-based offerings	Care integration	Support for the vulnerable
<p>Inpatient and aged care bed model reviewed to improve efficiency and effectiveness to maximise patient admissions</p> <p>Recommendations from Maternity Services Evaluation implemented</p>	<p>At Home program expansion implemented through Loddon Mallee Health Network's Better at Home program</p>	<p>Home Care Package provision established</p> <p>Community services integrated and expanded across Dhelkaya Health</p>	<p>Benefits of voluntary amalgamation reviewed and measures achieved</p>	<p>In-home support options increased and advocacy for improved housing options through My Home Network ongoing</p>



Maternity Services

Demonstrating Excellence in Women's Health at the 2023 Victorian Public Healthcare Awards

The award recognises the successful re-establishment of continuity-of-care maternity services through the Midwifery Group Practice Model. The model provides women with known midwives throughout pregnancy, birth, and postnatal periods. This gold-standard approach improves safety, satisfaction, and outcomes while reducing interventions and transfers to larger hospitals. Evaluated positively by La Trobe University, it empowers midwives, supports families locally, and exemplifies equitable, woman-centred care in regional Victoria.



Voluntary Amalgamation

Enhancing local access to high-quality health, aged care, and community programs while ensuring future sustainability and financial viability

The amalgamations between Castlemaine Health, CHIRP Community Health and Maldon Hospital enhanced local services and programs while delivering financial sustainability. The amalgamations brought staff with specialist knowledge and skills together to deliver more seamless pathways and continuity of care for clients, patients and residents. Key roles were expanded and new roles added in. The amalgamations also strengthened governance and administration, reducing duplication and directing more resources to frontline services.



At Home Programs

Hospital-level care at home to support early discharge, prevent admissions, and enhance recovery

The multidisciplinary At Home teams help patients to recover safely at home with family, reducing hospital stays, minimising infection risks, and improving satisfaction. These programs increase local bed capacity indirectly, promote ageing-in-place, and deliver cost-effective, person-centred care tailored to community needs. Key services include Hospital in the Home, GEM@Home and Residential in Reach, which deliver acute medical treatment, wound care, allied health and nursing support at home.



Assurance	Measures	Achievements
Service offerings extended	Achieve activity-based funding targets	Activity target achieved, sitting over 100% across the 2024-25 year
	Increase At Home episodes as a percentage of all admissions	An increase in home-based care has been achieved with 5.7% of admitted bed days delivered at home in 2024-25 compared to 2% in the previous year
	Increase in number and uptake of community-based service offerings	Community-based services increased by more than 120% in 2024-25 with 20,938 client service events delivered, increasing from 17,418 in the previous year
Access improved for "hard to reach" community members	Increased access to local services for the Maldon community	Allied health, counselling and diabetes education services have been introduced at the Maldon campus. Over 327 appointments were delivered across these services over 1-2 days per week in 2024-25
	Increase in number of vulnerable clients accessing services	Community wellbeing services for vulnerable clients are now well established with over 9 streams of care delivered. These range from Alcohol and Other Drugs, mental health, housing, family services and community health

Objectives 2026 and onwards

Future clinical services	Sustainable care	Community-based offerings	Care integration	Support for the vulnerable
Review and expand the provision of medical infusions including chemotherapy in the context of the development of the Loddon Mallee Clinical Services Plan	Expand the Residential in Reach service to Macedon Ranges and Romsey catchments	Embed virtual care in Residential Aged Care via the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department	Co-design the expansion of primary care, community and wellbeing services for Maldon community	Embed prescribed social activity and connection into treatment plans Implement and evaluate the creative therapies pilot project

Child Local

A new initiative supporting children's mental health



Child Local is a new Victorian initiative enhancing early mental health support for children aged 0-11 in Mount Alexander Shire facing developmental, emotional, relational, or behavioural challenges. Delivered locally by Dhelkaya Health, it provides families, carers, and educators with a dedicated, experienced staff member as a trusted first point of contact.

This navigator offers timely advice, guidance, and seamless connections to professional care, promoting proactive intervention to address rising youth mental health pressures and ensure the right support at the right time.





Priority 3. One Dhelkaya

Our intent: Our newly amalgamated health service will build a single, unified identity, within which systematic and streamlined information guides sound operational decisions. Our facilities will be modernised, with reduced environmental footprint.

Achievements 2023-25



Single presence	Facilities & equipment	Environmental sustainability	Site planning	Digital solutions	Business systems
Dhelkaya Health branding and style guide finalised and implemented	Stocktake completed and progress made towards a single asset register	Sustainability reporting to quantify major sources of waste and energy use established	<p>Site master plans completed</p> <p>All Regional Health Infrastructure Fund (RHIF) projects completed within project timeline</p> <p>Capital investment pipeline proposals to support future RHIF rounds established</p>	<p>Regional Community Platform implementation progressing and Endoscopy Reporting Platform implemented</p> <p>Recommendations from Loddon Mallee Shared Services (LMSS) ICT transition review implemented</p> <p>Residential Aged Care Medication Management System implemented</p>	Budget management system enhanced and transition to panel bank provider completed



Branding Style Guide

A vibrant new branding style guide to unify the identity of a newly amalgamated organisation

The guide features a distinctive visual system centred on the Dhelkaya Health name with a colourful, contemporary palette, accessible typography, and inclusive imagery reflecting community diversity.

Rolled out across the website, social media profiles, uniforms, publications, and signage, it strengthens recognition, fosters pride among staff and clearly communicates Dhelkaya Health's values throughout the Mount Alexander Shire.



Sustainability reporting

A key strategic priority is reducing the environmental footprint for our operations

From 2022, Dhelkaya Health began tracking total multi-campus emissions and utilities consumption in annual reporting cycles. These detailed campus-specific metrics expanded to communicate a much fuller picture of operations, with new metrics included for greenhouse gas emissions, stationary energy and fuel use, and electricity use by source. Over time reporting now tracks the impact of new solar arrays, introduction of electric fleet vehicles and transitions in plant operations from gas to electricity. Results in 2024-25 show impressive reductions in total fuel use in buildings and greenhouse gas emissions from stationary fuel consumption.



Regional Health Infrastructure Fund capital projects

The RHIF is the primary source of major capital project funding for Dhelkaya Health

Over the last three years, Dhelkaya Health has secured multiple RHIF grants for essential upgrades.

These include demolition of the old nurses' quarters in Halford Street, critical infrastructure works at Castlemaine and Maldon campuses, residential aged care fit-outs, and fire/electrical safety improvements. RHIF funding also transformed Main Reception and the Urgent Care Centre, the Sterile Stock Room and added new parking for visitors.

RHIF funding is delivering real improvements around amenity and safety, and helping to modernise health services across Mount Alexander Shire.



Assurance	Measures	Achievements
We are visible to our community	Increase website and social media visits	Followers have increased on Facebook by 18%, Instagram by 44% and LinkedIn by 59%. Analytics demonstrate an increase in website engagement over time
We have a sustainable footprint	85% of reactive maintenance requests are closed within 30 days	Review of maintenance systems in progress
	10% reduction in energy and water consumption and waste produced by 2026	On track to achieve reduction target for stationary energy use with water use an area of continued focus
	Regional Health Infrastructure fund milestone targets achieved	All funded projects completed with milestone reporting achieved
Systematic and streamlined decisions	Recommendations from LMSS ICT transition review fully implemented	All recommendations fully implemented
	Balanced scorecard established and accessible via PowerBi platform	Activity and workforce reporting established with work underway to develop a balanced scorecard

Objectives 2026 and onwards

Single presence	Facilities & equipment	Environmental sustainability	Site planning	Digital solutions	Business systems
Explore low-cost/ no-code development platforms to enable a more sustainable approach to multimedia management	Document lifecycle asset management plan for proactive implementation	Progress the electrification of infrastructure through the implementation of the Electric Vehicle Fleet Transition Plan	Review site master plans for both campuses to ensure they remain fit for purpose	Adopt robust governance for the use of Artificial Intelligence in partnership with LMSS	Establish and implement a systematic rewards and recognition framework

Website

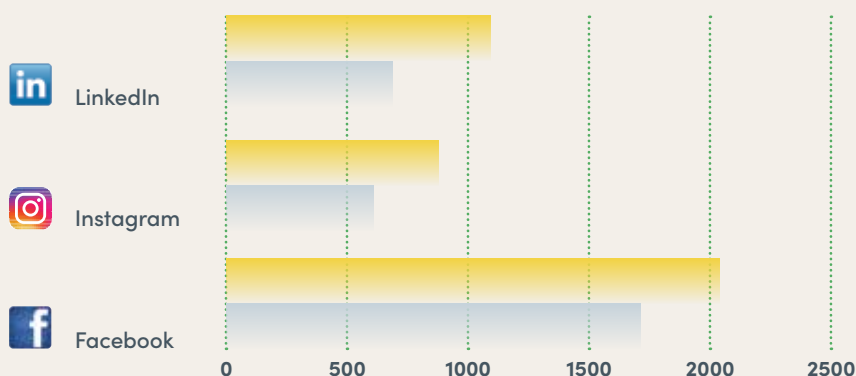
New website users* from 1 April 2025 – 20 November 2025

Direct	14K
Organic search	9.8K
Referral	7K
Organic social	687
Unassigned	12
Organic video	1

* New users are the number of unique individuals who visited the website for the very first time within a specified date range. These are users who have not visited our site or app before.

Socials

Social audience over time





Priority 4. People first

Our intent: We are on a mission to ignite passion and purpose in our people, by fostering a culture and values that promote high engagement, excellence and safety. We are determined to attract the best talent in our community, and once with us, invest in their development so we are future-ready.

**Achievements
2023-25**



Values culture	Safety culture	Safe & healthy workplaces	Learning & development	Skilled workforce	Work-life balance
<p>People Matter Survey action plan implemented</p> <p>Dhelkaya Health values reset and internalised</p>	<p>Speaking Up for Safety and Occupational Violence and Aggression (OVA) training programs in place</p> <p>Incident review and improvement system in place</p>	<p>MOVE Program reviewed and refreshed</p>	<p>Training needs analysis and education program complete</p> <p>Mandatory competency requirements reviewed for relevance and effectiveness</p> <p>High quality, timely and cost-effective learning opportunities available to all</p>	<p>Care to Lead program implemented</p> <p>Nursing Workforce Unit established</p> <p>Review of medical workforce model progressed</p> <p>Traineeship opportunities developed to help "grow our own"</p>	<p>Be Well, Be Safe workforce wellbeing program evaluated</p> <p>Obligations under Gender Equality Act 2020 obligations met</p>



People Matter Survey

We are on a mission to ignite passion and purpose by fostering a culture and values that promote high engagement, excellence and safety

The People Matter Survey results guide our annual workforce development plan. The 2023 and 2024 results show overwhelming improvement, with a positive increase in 100% of survey questions. Highlights over the two-year period include a 25% increase in 'my organisation places a high priority on the learning and development of staff' and a 21% increase in 'I would recommend my organisation as a good place to work'. The survey also showed bullying has declined by 11%, from 24.5% in 2022, and more than 70% of respondents agree Dhelkaya Health takes steps to eliminate bullying, harassment and discrimination.



Gender Equality Action Plan

Advancing gender equality through a range of actions documented in our Gender Equality Action Plan

Recruitment and onboarding is now more inclusive, with gender-diverse options and policies updated to support all family types. Pay equity audits are now scoped with Gender Equality Principles embedded, and exit interviews digitised for better insights. Enhanced surveys are eliciting staff perceptions of safety and respect, with training reviews underway. Foundational actions are complete or progressing, shifting focus to embedding changes, outcome tracking, and leadership accountability across all environments.

Speaking Up for Safety and OVA training

A strong culture of staff engagement through leadership and focus on quality and safety

Over 83% of staff have undertaken Speaking up for Safety training, which empowers staff to speak up and call out any safety issues. OVA training is provided for our most impacted front-line staff work groups with further training for all staff under development. 2024 People Matter Survey results for "Work Group Climate Safe to Speak Up" increased by 4% to 76% which is 6% above comparator peers. This shows the impact of focused work undertaken to improve employee experience and safety climate.





Assurance	Measures	Achievements
We have an engaged and satisfied workforce	Improved staff engagement and satisfaction results by 5% each People Matter Survey	Engagement – 73.7 in 2024 increase from 62.6 in 2022; 17% improvement Satisfaction – 75.2% in 2024 increase from 60% in 2022; 25% improvement
	Improved safety climate results by 5% each People Matter Survey	Patient Safety Climate – 73.4 in 2024 increase from 60.9 in 2022; 13% improvement Safety Climate – 60.5% in 2024 increase from 43% in 2022; 18% improvement
	10% reduction in number of workplace injuries	18% reduction in hazards reported and a 52% reduction in lost time reported standard WorkCover claims in 2024
We facilitate meaningful career development pathways	90% of staff with documented performance development reviews	In 2024, 87% of staff had documented performance development reviews in place
	Staff agree that the organisation places a high priority on the learning and development of staff as measured by the People Matter Survey	In 2024, 64% of staff agreed learning and development is prioritised, up from 35% in 2022 – a 25% improvement
	20% reduction in excess leave liability	Not achieved

Objectives 2026 and onwards

Values culture	Safety culture	Safe & healthy workplaces	Learning & development	Skilled workforce	Work-life balance
Establish and implement a systematic reward and recognition program	Proactively identify, assess and control psychosocial hazards in line with the new regulations under the <i>Occupational Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations 2025</i>	Implement a planned strategy to reduce and prevent racism in the workplace	Partner with Bendigo TAFE and Monash University to operationalise the Learning Hub service model, and through our industry partnership with the Care Economy CRC scope a workforce innovation research proposal to evaluate the model	Partner with Goldfields Local Learning & Employment Network to increase engagement of young people locally in further education and skills development	Ensure the Right to Disconnect policies are fit for purpose and socialised within the organisation



Learning Hub

A major milestone is the completion of the \$4 million Learning Hub at Castlemaine campus

Developed in partnership with Bendigo TAFE, the Learning Hub offers the Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing and Disability) and the Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance. The Diploma of Nursing is set to commence in 2026. These courses pave the way for future programs and pathways for local learners and offer a powerful opportunity to attract and connect with First Nations peoples of all ages who wish to study and work locally.



What to expect in 2026 and onwards

In 2026, Dhelkaya Health will once again embark on a highly consultative, inclusive, and transparent process to shape our 2027-30 Strategic Plan, mirroring the collaborative approach that defined our 2023-26 plan.



The result was a strategy deeply rooted in community voice, staff insight, and partnership values. We are committed to replicating and refining this model, ensuring the next plan reflects the evolving needs of our community while building on our integrated identity.

The consultation will begin in early 2026 with broad, open engagement across all stakeholders. As we did in 2022, we will invite patients, residents, clients, families, and community members to participate through surveys and targeted focus groups. These sessions will be held in accessible locations and via virtual platforms to ensure inclusivity.

These sessions will build on the cultural integration achieved since amalgamation, reinforcing our breakthrough values (Empathetic, Inclusive, Professional, Transformative) while embedding the Victorian Public Sector core values. Volunteers and our volunteer committees, will have dedicated channels to contribute ideas on community connection and service enhancement.

External stakeholders and partners will also play a pivotal role. We will engage Mount Alexander Shire Council, Loddon Mallee Health Network, First Nations organisations (including BDAC and Nalderun), La Trobe University, Bendigo TAFE and community groups like Castlemaine Community House.

The consultation will run from March to May 2026, culminating in a Board strategic planning day in August to finalise priorities, initiatives and assurance measures. The new plan will launch in December 2026.

Just as the 2023-26 plan was built with our community, the 2027-30 plan will reflect lived experience, clinical expertise, and collective ambition. By putting people first, listening intently, and acting decisively, we will continue to earn trust as a local health partner that delivers contemporary, compassionate, and connected care.

Together, we will define what Healthier Together means for the next chapter.



**Dhelkaya
Health**

142 Cornish Street, Castlemaine VIC 3450
T. +61 (0)3 5471 3555
E. info@castlemainehealth.org.au

dhelkayahealth.org.au

Healthier Together