

“Whistle certainly makes life easier!”

In these five words, Claire McGregor sums up the many benefits the chirpy new arrival has brought to Heywood Rural Health’s aged care facility in southwest Victoria.



Heywood Rural Health strives to provide care and services to the community that are personal, safe, effective and connected. In doing this, we hope that the consumer experience is a positive one and that the community continue to have confidence in Heywood Rural Health as a provider of quality and safe healthcare services.

Leigh Parker
CEO
Heywood Rural Health

As Director of Clinical Services for the organisation, Claire is among members of management applauding the benefits of the Whistle software solution since its implementation in the 45-bed facility.

A purpose-built application for smart phones, Whistle has been developed in Australia to address the current and future communication needs of aged care workers and residents.

After trialling it at their facility, the Heywood team found that Whistle provided staff with effective answers to issues including message overload, excessive pager noise and problems locating other workers.

MESSAGE OVERLOAD – RESOLVED.

As Chief Executive Officer Leigh Parker explained, the facility’s previous nurse call pager system sent every nurse call message to every staff member on shift, whether or not the calls were relevant to them.

“This led to staff suffering from message fatigue,” he said.

“We used Whistle as a trigger to review that situation and take a good look at the nurse call system and how it was configured and operating.

“With the floor staff now using Whistle, we’ve been able to rationalise the number of messages going out to them, so that they receive only the messages they need to receive.”

PAGER NOISE – REMOVED

Before the advent of Whistle, the number of calls through the pager system used by staff resulted in ongoing noise which also created problems.

“Because everybody was getting everybody’s calls, their pagers were constantly beeping,” said Claire.

“By contrast, the Whistle device has a pleasant chirping tone, which is more subtle and less intrusive.

“This has been noted as something we probably wouldn’t have considered, because the health care workers were just used to all the beeping. But since the introduction of Whistle, people such as our activity staff who don’t carry pagers have commented on the huge reduction in the noise that was previously made by the nurse call pagers.”

COLLEAGUE CONTACT – EASY

In the pre-Whistle days, the need for workers to contact colleagues or supervisors in the three-wing facility also led to difficulties because of the limited number of cordless phones available to staff.

“We had lots of problems with staff not being able to find each other, or calling out for assistance or information, with residents then complaining about the noise,” said Claire.



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“Whistle gives staff the ability to contact each other without having to call out down corridors or waste time running around looking for people. They’re developing confidence in the product and they love its direct communication aspect. If they need one of the other staff members, they can now use Whistle to scroll to the name of that person and call them.”

TRAINING - STRAIGHTFORWARD

Training staff in the use of Whistle involved no problems thanks to its straightforward and user-friendly design.

“After Claire and I learned the system, we rolled out a 20-minute education session and then assisted staff when they logged in the first time,” said Support Services Manager, Leigh Beddows. “And that was pretty much all we had to do in regard to training.

“It’s a great system and integrates well with our existing system. We’ve had a few minor alterations made as we’ve gone along but that mainly related to working out what we need, which is par for the course with any new system.”

STAFF FEEDBACK - POSITIVE

Leigh added that feedback from staff has been “really positive.”

“They’re very happy with it as a communication tool, and with the lack of noise from the pagers going off all the time,” he said.

“Just the other day, a Registered Nurse said, ‘I love the fact that my pager hasn’t gone off all day!’ Previously she was getting all the calls, all day, but now she gets only the calls that are relevant to her.”

Claire agreed that staff had been quick to welcome the new product.

“About half our health care workers are over the age of 50, and some were a little reluctant initially,” she said.

“But once they began using it, they’ve really enjoyed the ability it gives them to contact each other so easily. The phones are charged at a charger bay near the nurses’ station, usually overnight, and each worker takes one when they start their shift.

“Whistle certainly does make life easier. And the Whistle people themselves have been really engaged in helping us, and very receptive to meeting any requests we have made.”

COST AND MAINTENANCE - ECONOMICAL

CEO Leigh Parker said that in addition to being well received by staff, the cloud-based Whistle was also an attractive option for management in regard to its cost effectiveness.

“It doesn’t create an initial or ongoing financial burden and it’s quite easy to administer and maintain,” he said.

FUTURE VISION - EXCITING

And while Whistle meets the current needs of the facility, the staff are also looking forward to exciting future developments. These could include the ability to contact other workers throughout the organisation in addition to the floor staff, such as maintenance and medical personnel, and the eventual inclusion of residents in the communication arrangement.

“The people at Whistle have a wealth of experience and knowledge about how aged care operates,” Leigh Parker said.

“They’re also interested in using technology to make the working lives of our nurses as easy as possible, and Whistle does exactly that.

“It works with staff to improve their day.”



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