

the centre

connecting community in
north & west melbourne inc.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ariel Valent



Busy and diverse year of activities

The past 12 months have been both dynamic and successful for The Centre. We finally had a clear year, free from COVID interruptions.

The biggest program for the year was Queensberry Cup, held on Queensberry and Enrol streets in October 2022. Taking the place of the retired Spring Fling, Queensberry Cup was a bicycle race and street festival that captured the imagination of both locals and visitors.

With 30 bicycle entrants, 50 volunteers and an audience of 5,000, Queensberry Cup was a gift from the North & West Melbourne communities to itself. It was a post-COVID party that everyone from the Deputy Lord Mayor to Peter Mac Men's Shed got involved with.

Our other events in Spanish Language Fiesta, Vesant, Diwali, ANZAC Day and others all provided opportunities for the community to connect and mark important occasions, either in celebration or commemoration.

This year also marked the last year of our Docklands Neighbourhood House program. Through weekly programs like play sessions or social fishing, through special events like the Sports Day and Cirque Culinare and through hundreds of personal interactions, support and referrals at the Neighbourhood House, Jason Butcher, Dhanya Nair and volunteers provided the Docklands community with a place for

community connection and empowerment. Despite a strong community-driven campaign and support from all quarters of Docklands organisations, City of Melbourne chose not to fund Docklands Neighbourhood House beyond June, effectively shutting it down in its previous form. The Centre remains supportive of the Docklands community in its ambitions for increased social connection and neighbourhood development.

Long-standing program Home Away From Homework Club saw rapid expansion through our partnership with North Melbourne Language and Learning. A new partnership with Coarum House saw The Centre deliver digital literacy training to more than 30 people experiencing homelessness. Other new programs include courses in Spanish and Event Management.

Our groundbreaking WorkOut program with returning prisoners came to an end after 12 impressive years. Community Development in North Melbourne in the last year focused on addressing the needs of key cohorts identified in the recent Community Needs Analysis, including economically disadvantaged people and culturally and linguistically diverse people. Unfortunately, we noticed more and more people struggling to make ends meet and we tried to ease the burden by helping with programs such as the Power Saving Bonus.

North & West Melbourne News has had a stellar year with four superb issues and taking out the Best Victorian Newspaper Award. Sing No!W Community Choir finally got some performance opportunities and the Viva La Seniors program went from strength to strength.

The year saw a number of staffing developments. The Centre bade farewell to Jorge Jorjuna and welcomed Khalid Farah to the Community Development Co-ordinator role. We were sorry to see Furdus Sulman go at the end of her contract, but were delighted to welcome Kashifa Aslam to the Community Outreach Co-ordinator role.

The Centre is powered by its volunteers and I would like to thank every volunteer journalist, tutor, newspaper deliverer, event assistant, program helper, board member and front desk volunteer.

The Centre remains committed to working with our local community to provide the support and opportunities needed for community enrichment and to address disadvantage. We look forward to making this journey with you.

CHAIRS' REPORT

Karl Hessian & Kay Oke



Centre focuses on connections

This has been the post lockdown year with the challenge to agencies to re-evaluate community needs. We are impressed with how well The Centre has been able to adapt and create a series of programs suitable for this time and also establish connections with a wide range of services in North and West Melbourne.

Funding for the neighbourhood house in Docklands was discontinued by the City of Melbourne. It was disappointing to have to finish the innovative programs The Centre managed in Docklands. However it means that The Centre will now be focusing entirely on North and West Melbourne.

The inaugural Queensberry Cup was an important event. It marked the coming out of the lockdown era and provided a community celebration. The 2023 Queensberry Cup should be even bigger.

The North & West Melbourne News has been very successful and won the award for best community newspaper in Victoria. Congratulations to the amazing team of Maurice, Anne and Janet for contributing to produce such a high class paper – now 200 issues strong in its 44th year.

We would like to thank the management team, staff and volunteers who have contributed to making The Centre work. Special thanks to Ariel for keeping it all together and continuing to focus on current as well as future possibilities.

There will be a turnover of Board members at the 2023 Annual General Meeting. Thanks to Bill Liddy who left earlier in the year after 15 years as a Board member and to Trang Tran who joined us.

Karl Hessian stepped down as Chair in June and long-time board member Kay Oke took over the

position then. We thank all the departing Board members and look forward to welcoming a new energy to the Board for 2023-24.

Volunteers for Board positions or for helping deliver our wide range of programs are always warmly welcomed. The Centre relies on its volunteers and we thank everyone who has contributed over the last 12 months.

We look forward to an exciting year ahead.

Karl Hessian – Chair until June 2023
Kay Oke – current Chair



The inaugural Queensberry Cup was a big hit with both competitors and onlookers.

Centre staff and key contractors

Director: Ariel Valent

CEO / COO: Craig Barry

Community Development Co-ordinator: Jorge Jorjuna (until February); Khalid Farah (from March)

Community Events Co-ordinator: Yulay Pezo

Community Education Co-ordinator: Jorge Jorjuna

Community Development Officer: Jason Butcher

Community Outreach Co-ordinator: Furdus Sulman (until November); Kashifa Aslam (from January)

Community Outreach Workers: Dhanya Nair, Cindy Huang

Team Leader – Homework Club: Laurence Angwin

Session Supervisors – Homework Club: Peter Robert, Ayla Dempsey

WorkOut Program Co-ordinator: Francis McMillan

Digital Tutors: Louise Cindric, Arya Chandrakadevi

Pilates and OAE: Fernanda Corr, Alice Wilcox, Bethany Rayner

Community Choir Tutor: Susie Kelly

Art Tutors: Shyamawee Bosa, Rebekah Symons

Editor – N&WM News: Maurice Gaul

Production Manager – N&WM News: Anne Burgi

Distribution Co-ordinator – N&WM News: Rashi Jain

Advertising Co-Ordinator – N&WM News: Janet Goham

Cleaner: Mitulal (Zefa) Gebrakidan

Student Placements: Brigitte Metaxas, Katherine Moss, Kane Thompson, Catherine Vender, Matt Penfold

Centre Board members

Karl Hessian (Chair until June 2023)

Kay Oke (Secretary until June, Chair from July)

Lorna Haman (Deputy Chair)

Gary Dowling (Treasurer)

Kathleen McPherson (Secretary from July)

Ben O'Connor

Kate Ritchie

Tom Seddon

Bill Liddy (until February)

Trang Tran (from March)

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Community Development Portfolio plays a pivotal role in connecting with the local community, fostering partnerships, and delivering essential programs and projects to meet the community's aspirations and needs. This year we strengthened our team by hiring North Melbourne resident Khalid Farah as the dedicated Community Development Coordinator (CDC) and Cindy Huang as the International Student Community Outreach Worker, improving inclusivity and cultural sensitivity in our initiatives.

Our focus during this year was on developing tailored programs and projects that addressed the diverse and evolving needs of the community. The newly appointed CDC developed two new plans. Building on the 2021-22 Community Needs Analysis, the Community Development plan sees culturally and linguistically diverse and economically disadvantaged residents involved in shaping the development of our programs to foster a sense of ownership and meaningful connections. The Volunteer plan aims to enhance our volunteer recruitment, training, and retention processes, ensuring that our volunteers have a meaningful impact on the community and are provided with growth opportunities within the organisation.

Partnerships

Partnerships played a critical role in amplifying the impact of our initiatives during 2022-23. Queensberry Cup helped us initiate many new community partnerships, including with Peter Mac Men's Shed, International Women's Peace Group, Lord Smith Animal Hospital, Somali Women's Development Association, North Melbourne Rotary and many others. We also partnered with Ozanam House on the Men's Afternoon Tea and participated in the North Melbourne Primary School fete. Our partnership with Melbourne Polytechnic provided valuable Community Service student placements at The Centre.

Partnerships with Hobsons History Project, Wholefoods Unwrapped Collective, Western Public Health Unit and others will bear fruit in 2023-24.

Viva La Seniors

The Centre has a proud legacy of offering programs for older adults in the community to connect and stay engaged.



Local seniors enjoyed a 'dayplay' day as part of the Viva La Seniors program.

Centre Adventures are monthly day-long trips to places of historical, cultural or environmental interest. This year we asked participants about their preferred destinations, and trips to Puffing Billy, the Geelong/Lyrry and Ballarat Botanical Gardens were among the highlights. Seniors look forward to these trips, which always include morning tea and lunch, as it is an ideal setting for friendships to form and strengthen.

Seniors gather on the first Tuesday of each month for morning tea to share stories, support each other through challenges and chat about anything from forthcoming holiday plans to world politics.

Older Adults Exercise is a long-standing program where seniors gather to address strength, balance and body awareness with a trained physiotherapist. The popular program also allows for social connections to form. In April, a second program was offered at the West Melbourne Baptist Community Centre.

Yuhuan Xing, a PhD student from the University of Melbourne collaborated with The Centre to understand how digital technology can support new kinds of social programs for older people. From March, Yuhuan conducted site visits, observations of social programs, interviews with staff, and co-design workshops. Her preliminary findings suggest that rather than drastically overhauling existing social programs, technology should be integrated into them in a subtle way as a means of fostering incidental

social connections among program participants.

North Melbourne Agencies Collective

From February 2023, Director Ariel Valent became convener of North Melbourne Agencies Collective (NMAC), a network of 100 people serving the needs of the North Melbourne community. The group developed Terms of Reference focused on connection and collaboration. Themed topics with guest presenters were held on pathways to employment, housing and volunteering.

Social, Recreational and Creative

Sing Now! Community Choir enjoyed its first COVID-free year and rehearsed weekly at Sokol Melbourne under the expert guidance of Susie Kelly. After a long break, choir members revelled in a number of performance opportunities. Notably the choir was the first performance at Queensberry Cup, performed some Christmas repertoire at The Centre's end-of-year event and even got to perform at Susie's birthday party on the other side of the Maribyrnong River.

Commencing in 2021, the fortnightly **Men's Afternoon Tea** attracts both regular and casual attendees, including residents from Ozanam House. The facilitated discussion is always wide-ranging, sometimes provoking and often

entertaining. Coffee, tea and pastries are the lubricants of choice for social connections and personal development.

Out and About Community Walks gave newcomers and long-term residents alike an opportunity to explore their neighbourhood. West Melbourne was a focus of walks in late 2022, including explorations of criminal underworld history and ill-fated historical plans to expand Queen Victoria Market.

Music Club continued on a monthly basis with small gatherings of local people listening to, and talking about, music with meaning to them. Regular attendee Rob Matthews has shared his collection of classically oriented CDs with generosity.

In late 2022, local resident Jennifer Waters ran a **Life Writing** program for women from diverse cultural backgrounds. Dedicated participants created a powerful piece of writing from their own experience.

Community Support & Advocacy

Every week, The Centre assists people who walk through the door, phone us or contact us through social media. Sometimes it's serious, like needing housing or legal support and sometimes it's not, like looking for activity groups or asking for directions. Whatever it is, we do what we can to provide direct support or referrals to appropriate services.

Beyond the drop-in function, we participate in a number of initiatives.

Cost of living was an underlying theme this year. We saw more and more people struggling with the basic necessities of life with rent, inflation and interest rates all rising sharply.

At Christmas time, The Centre distributed 40 boxes of food to community members in need. We also distributed Queen Victoria Market vouchers to those doing it particularly tough. The Centre staff and volunteers helped 88 people claim a \$250 **Power Saving Bonus**, across two rounds. We also helped a community member write a submission to the Senate Inquiry on cost of living.

For the coming year we aim to design initiatives that effectively cater to the unique and evolving needs and aspirations of the local community. Furthermore, we also aim to work towards creating a cohesive relationship between our various programs, including our adult education courses, to offer a comprehensive and integrated support system for the community.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The Centre's education programs provide wide-ranging opportunities for community members to progress, whether that is towards getting a job, gaining life skills or keeping healthy.

WorkOut

WorkOut is a long-standing partnership with Department of Corrections. Residents at the West Melbourne Judy Lazrusa Transition Centre undertake a six-week program to help them adjust to life and work after a prison sentence.

This year, 42 residents enrolled and 38 of those men completed the program taking away a job search folio and strong computer skills. The curriculum was refreshed to take account of post-COVID workplace realities and issues and new developments in technology.

"By the end of the course I had a complete resume and portfolio describing my strengths, skills and employment history. It has given me

much greater insight into what I can offer an employer." (Name withheld)

As this program ends after 12 years, sincere thanks to all who have contributed to the positive reintegration experience of the residents of JLC, especially Frances McMillan and Louise Cndric.

Home Away From Homework Club

The Home Away From Homework Club continued creating educational and social impact into its third decade. We were pleased to open the new Docklands Club in March 2023.

The other three clubs in North Melbourne have had successful years. The club run at North Melbourne Language & Learning has thrived and grown to over 20 students, including some younger primary school students.

With 61 students and an average of 16 tutors, a satisfying 1:4 tutor to student ratio was maintained. New innovations in the past year

include STEM activities, art therapy and visits from fire and police services.

Other Adult Education

The Centre's long-running **Pilates** program helps participants increase body awareness, posture and strength. Fernanda and Alice led seven weekly classes across the year. In March moving to the inviting atmosphere of the Quaker Centre in William St West Melbourne.

For many years The Centre has helped people advance their **digital skills**, whether on PCs or mobile devices. The Digital Essentials program was delivered for the general public four times, and following a trial, three times for the community of Ozanam House, which caters for people experiencing homelessness.

Even though The Centre has delivered the Spanish Language Fiesta for seven years, it has not offered any courses in **Spanish**. That

changed in 2023 when Colombian Katherine Taborda offered beginner classes.

The Centre developed a pre-accredited course in **Event Management** that ran in February 2023. Most of the participants were able to apply their skills in helping run the Vauvat Festival in Docklands and/or Spanish Language Fiesta in North Melbourne (see reports elsewhere).

Other Children's Education

Shyamawee Bhow hosted **Rainbow Art** classes on Tuesdays throughout the school terms, giving children opportunities to explore a number of media under expert guidance.

In 2023 The Centre created a new **School Holiday Program**, crafting fun and educational experiences to cater to various interests and age groups. In January and June, three-day coding programs filled our classroom with enthusiastic young teens.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Queensberry Cup

After two consecutive years of COVID interruptions, The Centre made the difficult decision to retire the long-standing Spring Fling. Instead, a dedicated team of mostly volunteers created a new event. The first Queensberry Cup, held on 22 October 2022 in Errol and Queensberry Streets, was a spectacular community celebration.

The billycart challenge and street festival attracted 5,000 people of different ages and backgrounds to enjoy a fun day, full of activities and entertainment. However, more important than that was the sense of community created, both prior to and at the event.

The billycart race was the centrepiece. In the weeks and months leading up to the event, teams of local people were dedicated to designing and crafting their racing machines. Melbourne North Service Centre provided design expertise and the Peter Mac Men's Shed opened its doors and provided material, skills and advice to mostly novice billycart builders.

Thirty entrants across four categories raced down Queensberry Street, with the standout racer being 10-year-old Oliver Furlong who took out the open age category. Deputy Lord Mayor Nicholas Reece presented Ollie and his family with the inaugural Queensberry Cup as well as the other age category prizes.

The Errol St Music Stage featured a wide range of professional musicians and dancers, starting with award-winning kids band The Muzicals and finishing with 10-piece Ethio-funk band Black Jesus Experience.

The Village festival's *Cirque Culture* brought together food, performance and community, exploring Vietnamese, Somali, Palestinian and Cypriot cuisines and cultures.

The smaller Community Stage outside North Melbourne Library featured local performers including the Sing Now! Community choir and Vietnamese and Chinese groups which presented authentic traditional dances with beautiful costumes.

The Spring Fling Dog Show tradition was kept alive in the Queensberry Cup and was a standout – both hilarious and competitive. There was also a showcase of local community organisations, interactive activities for kids, and food and drink to purchase.

Behind the scenes event manager Yuliy Perez tackled myriad challenges from sourcing 500 haybales to taratop closures.

The Queensberry Cup was the biggest contributor to the 2022-23 financial deficit, but worth it for the community spirit it engendered. In 2023 and beyond, we will look to contain costs and generate more financial support.

Thanks to all the racers, performers, facilitators, sponsors and supporters, and of course the festival-goers who made this inaugural event a big success. See you on 21 October 2023.

Spanish Language Fiesta

The eighth annual Spanish Language Fiesta was held on 25 March 2023. With the festival outgrowing its original laneway home, the 2023 event was held in Leveson St. The new location allowed for a more diverse range of activities and greater comfort, but with attendance slightly down on the previous year, some attendees missed the laneway atmosphere.

Attendees from across Melbourne had the opportunity to participate in various cultural activities. New elements included cooking from Venezuelan *Piñón de Origen* contestant Aly Ultras, the creation and destruction of a *piñata*, local bard Bete Noire performing Federico Garcia Lorca texts set to music and *Candombe*, the intoxicating Uruguayan Carnival.

Attendees enjoyed live entertainment, Spanish

classes, storytelling in Spanish, and delicious food and drink. Spanish Language Fiestas fostered a sense of belonging, integration and sense of identity for people from Spanish and Latin American backgrounds. This was seen both in the cultural exchange between Hispanic and other cultures and in the passing on of traditions to younger generations.

About 1,800 people attended this year's event, with an even split between locals and visitors, and between Spanish and non-Spanish speakers.

The Spanish Language Fiestas is a great representation of our neighbourhood: strong and engaged communities that love getting together to celebrate the vibrant mix of cultures that converge in Melbourne.

NAIDOC Week

In recognition of National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee, we partnered with Yam Strong Sista who at the time was our neighbour at 54 Errol St. Tsungurung woman Annette Sax spent a day out the front of The Centre, engaging with locals and visitors in storytelling and weaving activities.

Annual General Meeting

More than 20 members of The Centre gathered at Sokol Melbourne on Queensberry St on September 26 to hear reports of the previous

year's activities. This year's meeting was notable for being the first in-person AGM since COVID, the last with long-term Chair, Karl Hession and for its musicality. Kate Schmitt and Mira Devraj with accompanist Alistair Smith gave stellar performances.

North & West Melbourne Flag Raising

Following a lockdown inspired flag design competition, the official North & West Melbourne flag was unfurled and raised at an event on 27 August. The winning flag was designed by local resident Pat Connolly and recognises the Aboriginal heritage, natural environment, industrial and sporting history of our neighbourhoods.

Wellknownists of Melbourne University founder and competition judge Tristan Layton addressed the audience. Attendees adjourned to The Centre for tea and a cake with the flag design printed on top.

End of Year Celebration

This event, on 15 December 2022 at the West Melbourne Baptist Community Centre, attracted 100 people. Somehow, the fire alarm went off in the event set-up, but once the fire truck had departed, the activities went ahead with great success. There was free ice cream and hot dogs, a Christmas art bazaar and a performance of the Sing Now! Community Choir.

City of Melbourne Councillor Dr Olivia Ball presented the award for Victoria's best community newspaper to the North & West Melbourne News team.

ANZAC Day

Michael Halls, former director of The Centre, was guest speaker at the annual ANZAC Day commemoration, presented in partnership with the Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women. The solemn occasion was held at the Cenotaph on the border of North and West Melbourne, and featured a bugle performance by Alan Hickey, Legion secretary Trevor Evans reading the Ode, flag raising and laying of wreaths.



The free ice creams at the End of Year Celebration were a popular choice. Photograph: Jaya Williams

News keeps the community in touch with the neighbourhood

The North & West Melbourne News is more than a quarterly newspaper. Rather, it's the social glue that connects our vibrant local community.

The News creates a sense of village and of connectedness by reporting on local events and activities and by highlighting locals who are doing interesting things. In the past year, four issues captured the fullness of our village's rich tapestry – social, cultural, artistic and educational. In June 2023, the 200th issue of the all-volunteer News was published.

Each quarter, our loyal distributors deliver the paper to thousands of home and unit letterboxes in North Melbourne and West Melbourne.

Each recipient then has a moment of decision. Will I bin it? Or will I read it and see what's going on in my neighbourhood?

We're delighted that the community has embraced the News and fed it bright and joyful, full of compelling and sparkling stories bursting with human interest.

Our success is due to our 20-plus wonderful volunteer writers. While some

are locals, others young journalism students, all give generously of their time and talents.

The News also runs reports from many local organisations that share updates of their group's activities, ensuring we are the genuine voice of this community.

Key coordinating roles oversee a stunning, eye-catching design (Anne Burg), healthy advertising revenue, making us self-funding (Janet Graham) and efficient distribution (Rashid Jain).

Occasionally, praise arrives unsolicited. Local resident Brendan Gleeson, now on leave as professor of urban policy studies at the University of Melbourne, wrote: The paper is a wonder: intelligent, warm, expansive and diverse.

Wider recognition came late last year from the Community Newspaper Association of Victoria, with the News named as best community newspaper in the state. Very gratifying!

We were also named runner-up in two other awards: best community content and best design and layout.

— Maurice Gaul News editor

DOCKLANDS

The past year has been a roller-coaster for Docklands Neighbourhood House (DNH), full of the joy of working with the community yet ending in sorrow.

In July, DNH and a local volunteer started one of its most popular programs: the Social Fishing Club. This program drew children and families from Docklands Primary School, new arrivals, international students, and established residents every Wednesday afternoon. In 2023 the program expanded to weekend sessions and a monthly barbecue.

DNH welcomed Dhanya Nair as Community Facilitator in August. We also brought together members of the local Indian community to form the Cultural Celebrations Working Group, which co-produced *Navaratri* (October 2022) and *Vaisant* (February 2023), with wonderful performances by residents of all ages, children's activities and dance workshops.

During Vasant, Library at the Dock staff held a bilingual children's story time and DNH led a children's workshop on making coloured powder for Holi.

DNH partnered with Docklands Representative Group to host *Reppa CeW* sessions, which in 2023 grew to include the Library at the Dock Makerspace. From December, we partnered with Docklands Toy Library to host weekly Afternoon Play Sessions for young families. We partnered with Seresare on Diwali and with Docklands Chamber of Commerce, Docklands Sports Clubs, and The District Docklands to host an end-of-year Sports Day and barbecue for more than 200.

As a new Neighbourhood House, DNH lacked many of the foundational supports established houses benefit from. Long-term funding has been an elusive goal. City of Melbourne and Development

Victoria provided six months of funding to June 2023. However, City of Melbourne management advised they would not seek to include DNH in its funding mix after that date.

With the support and assistance of Centre staff, volunteers and management, DNH began an advocacy campaign to prove community support and convince Council to amend its decision. It included 14 letters of support from key stakeholder agencies, philanthropic trusts and State and Federal government representatives, a petition with more than 550 signatures, and 34 public submissions on the City of Melbourne draft 2023-24 budget, all calling for the continued funding of DNH. Despite this overwhelming endorsement, City of Melbourne remained unmoved, and DNH as we knew it, was forced to cease operations at the end of June 2023.

VOLUNTEERS

FRONT DESK

Alan Cooke
Karen Kinzipp
Kathleen McPherson
Maryrose Kinnall
Millie Jensen
Tinh Nguyen
Zara Winter

NEWS

Maurice Gaul (editor)
Anne Bugli (production)
Janet Graham (advertising)
Rashi Jain (distribution)
Ed Zhao (illustrator)
Jim Weatherill (photographer)
Suzie Luddon (proofreader)

White:

Anna Hayth
Annette McQuarrie
Ben Shapiro
Ed Zhao
Flora Sclara
Gavan Tobin
Geoff Pound
George Preston
Hannah Parsons
John Smith
Kathanna Grouser
Laura Mialle
Lizzy Footner
Marlon Poynter

Maurice Gaul
Michelle Brett
Nancy Lane
Melojia Pajkic
Nicole Pereira
Rashi Jain
Stephen Hatcher
Suzie Luddon
Very Impressive

Zoe Sheridan
News Delivery
Alexandra Kent
Claire Teoh
Dawn Doherty
Elise Carr
Ellen O'Brien
Fouad Merai
Geoff Pound
Harold Fischer
Harriet Lancaster
Havo Mahmoud

Janet Graham
John Smith
Josh Rule
Kay Oke
Kim Sheridan
Laura Mialle
Lizzy Footner
Maurice Gaul
Michelle Brett
Nancy Lane

Nancy Nankervis
Nicole Pereira
Nigel Pereira
Rajiv Saena
Rashi Jain
Rosemary Tonkin
Stephen Hatcher
Tom Seddon
Uma Dingemans
Wayne Killingsworth

DOCKLANDS

Adilee Rawal
Chantal Verma
Dhanya Nair
Isuan Wright
Jennifer Priyadarshini
Margaret Howden
Melissa White
Payal Thakkar
Prathima Narasimha Raju
Reecha Kumari
Renae Farigan
Robert Howden
Shimi Kannoli
Shweta Pati
Sneha Madhwar
Uma Poomalal
Violeta Kitarevskia

EVENTS

Andrew Ila
Andri Marlin
Angel Andri Rey
Anne Bugli
Anthony
Ayla Dempsey
Benjamin Evans
Blanca Villani
Carly Oke
Ceair Flores
Charley Oke
Gauri House
Chris Cane
Cristina Mejia
Delice Kronk
Diana Lopez
Ely Garcia
Elvira Cibarras
Emma Dorte
Gladys Cristina Mejia
Gustavo Quintero
Hamad Alm
Harold Murillo
Neil Enrique Sanmartin
Osuna
Janis Butcher
Jenny Rallo
Jeremy
Joel Goh
Jorge Jorquera
Jose Mendocza
Justin Orme
Kathia Adam

Kathleen McPherson
Kay Oke
Laura Romero
Laurence Angwilt
Ledy Sanchez
Lily
Lina Viviana Ariza
Luis Venegas
Matt Penfold
Nataly Ansaldo
Nidhi Anand
Patrick Wright
Peter Wright
Reecha Kumari
Roda Castro
Sam Berry
Santiago Rubio
Shan Mosa
Sushma Reddy
Suzie Kelly
Tien Tian
Trevor Johnston
Tinh Nguyen
Wayne Killingsworth
Wendy Langmore
Yuhan Xing

HOMEWORK CLUB

Amitabh Jinka
Athena Koutsouvalis
Danielle Mauerer
Dawn Doherty

Uma Dingemans
Venkatesan Koluthuman
Waverley Louangpay
OTHERS
Bruce McKenzie
David Steel
Emily Smith
Gina Reyneke
Isabelle Khor
Jonathan Sule
Megan Fitzgerald
Natalie Chan-Lai
Ned Nicolson
Richard Barry
Scott Matheson
Supretha Vikresh Balaji
Young Lin

More than 150 volunteers contributed to the success of The Centre's programs in the past year. Whether it is driving the bus for Centre Adventures or greeting people as they come into the Emol Street shopfront, writing articles for the North & West Melbourne News or delivering it into people's mailboxes, helping at events or being a Homework Club tutor, we simply could not function without the strong support of our volunteer community.



Front desk receptionist, administration wizard, Homework Club tutor and singer at the photocopyer Trinh Nguyen (pictured) was celebrated as our 2023 Super Volunteer.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The year ended 30 June 2023 has been another year of growth for The Centre. Income grew by 20.4%, or almost \$125,000, which means The Centre's total income now exceeds \$725,000. This comes on top of income growth of 23.8% the previous Financial Year (FY). This growth was almost entirely due to an increase in grant funding of just over \$100,000.

The Centre's core funding provided by City of Melbourne, the Department of Families Fairness and Housing, and Department of Education increased by a modest \$17,685 as a result of additional revenue from Department of Education for training delivery. The remainder of the increase was largely due to support from Development Victoria and City of Melbourne for the operation of the Docklands Neighbourhood House. Unfortunately, funding for Docklands Neighbourhood House ceased on 30 June 2023 and no further funding has been secured to continue its normal operation beyond this date. Without funding, The Centre's involvement with the operation of Docklands Neighbourhood House has effectively ceased. This means that

The Centre - Summary Financial Data

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Income	725,766	602,475	486,359	556,079	518,988	497,509	518,152	522,839
Expenditure	812,742	581,274	434,165	504,317	544,688	536,880	507,697	472,605
Surplus/(Deficit)	(86,976)	21,201	52,194	51,762	(45,700)	(39,371)	10,455	50,234
Assets	254,984	331,447	309,330	205,938	157,640	199,082	262,112	271,805
Liabilities	154,804	144,491	143,395	92,177	95,641	91,383	115,043	135,191
Net Assets / Equity	100,180	187,156	165,935	113,761	61,999	107,699	147,069	136,614

The Centre can expect to experience a reduction in total grant revenue in FY 2023/24. After growing by more than \$26,000 in 2021/22, income from fees and charges declined slightly in 2022/23 to \$83,496. This is still about \$47,000 under pre COVID levels but is expected to increase in 2023/24.

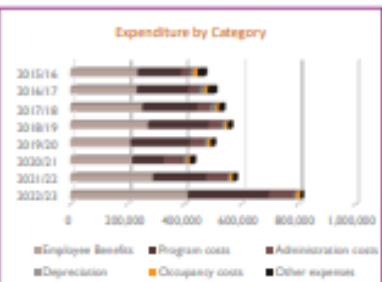
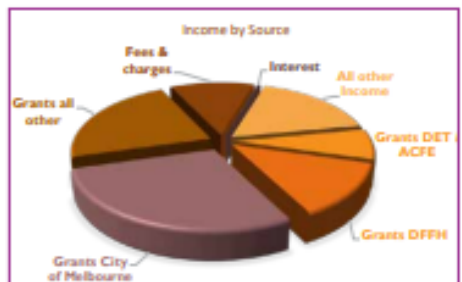
Off the back of The Centre's three years of healthy surpluses and increased revenue, FY 2022/23 resulted in a significant increase in program activity and events. In addition to operating The Centre and Docklands

Neighbourhood House and the activities associated with both, The Centre delivered five significant community events over the course of the year. As a result, total expenditure for FY 2022/23 increased to \$812,742 from FY 2021/22 expenditure of \$581,274.

The events included the Queensberry Cup, Spanish Language Fiesta in North Melbourne and Hol, Vasant and Navratri in Docklands. The total loss across the five events was \$61,102 which accounts for the greater majority of FY 2022/23 overall deficit.

The Centre's direct program expenditure grew by more than \$98,000 to \$284,756, and an increase in staffing to support this activity led to staff costs growing by about \$122,000. With the ceasing of operation of Docklands Neighbourhood House, we expect that both program costs and staff costs will decline in FY 2023/24.

The Centre finished the year reporting an overall deficit of \$86,976, effectively returning a significant amount of the surplus accumulated over the previous three years to the community. Despite this deficit, The Centre remains in a sound financial position with net assets totalling just over \$100,000.



With cash and liquid assets totalling nearly \$238,000 at 30 June this year, the Centre's Board has no concerns with regard to The Centre's solvency.

The full set of audited financial statements is available on our website. Finally, my thanks to the Chair and the Board for their assistance and diligent oversight, and to CFO Craig Barry and Director Ariel Valent for ensuring exemplary financial management throughout the course of the year.

Gary Dowling FSM
Treasurer