

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



About commUnity+

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Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd (commUnity+) is a multi-disciplinary state-wide agency located in Melbourne's western suburbs. We deliver our programs from various locations in the West, North-West and Inner Melbourne.

commUnity+ has grown from a small residents' action group at the Deer Park Neighbourhood House to a large community-based organisation funded by local, state and Commonwealth government departments and other philanthropic trusts.

commUnity+ delivers a range of early intervention and prevention programs focusing on informing and engaging with our community through high quality Adult Education, Legal (through Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre) and Family Support Programs, as well as community engagement and development activities.

We also partner with a large number of private, community and government agencies to enhance our service delivery and increase access for our communities. Our services are pivotal to building social capital in Melbourne's western suburbs.

To keep up-to-date with the activities and programs of commUnity+ throughout the year, visit our website: www.comm-unityplus.org.au

Or keep in touch via social media on:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CommUnityPlusServices

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/community-west

Twitter: [@Comm_Unity_Plus](https://twitter.com/Comm_Unity_Plus)

We pay respect to all Community Elders and people past and present who have resided in Wurrundjeri Land, who have been integral in the learning that has occurred upon this land over time.



Strategic Plan

2017-2022

Our Vision

Safe and vibrant communities where people are engaged, respected and in charge of their future.

Our Purpose

To understand the needs of individuals and communities we serve and provide effective and efficient services to increase economic, social and cultural participation.

Our Values

Responsive

We will listen to our diverse communities, measure impacts and make informed decisions about the services we provide.

Empowering

We will respect the strength of our communities and collaborate to deliver holistic services.

Accountable

We will be responsible and self-reflective. We will acknowledge and celebrate achievements.

Our Objectives

Connect to, engage with and understand the changing needs of our community

Strategies:

- Develop community needs and engagement strategies for all programs.
- Develop and implement a 'theory of change' including co-design, review and evaluation frameworks for all programs.
- Build community strengthening programs and strategies to improve student and client retention.

Delivering integrated and multi-disciplinary services

Strategies:

- Develop an integrated/multi-disciplinary service planning framework and service delivery plan.
- Build collaborative partnerships and multidisciplinary approach to assess client needs.
- Provide wrap around services to clients with complex needs building on the expertise of all the programs within commUnity+ and external agencies.

Develop a sustainable organisation

Strategies:

- Ensure all programs are financially sustainable and accountable.
- Develop and implement workforce development planning to build skills and knowledge of the staff.
- Maximize the operational and infrastructure efficiency to support service deliver.

Build the advocacy skills of and represent the voice of our community

Strategies:

- Participate in appropriate policy reform and advocacy networks and research to influence decision makers.
- Develop advocacy strategies with community input and participation.

Chairperson & CEO Report



Susanne Legena, Chairperson

This Financial year 2018-2019 – has been a year of internal focus – reflection, re- evaluating, refocusing, reiterating and strengthening on the strong foundations we operate and excel on. commUnity+ continued to deliver integrated services offering our clients and community valuable education, legal, family and community services programs, neighbourhood and community development projects. With the expansion of the education program to the North East (Hume), Inner Melbourne and the East, there has been greater focus on investment in leadership roles to support improved planning, support and mentorship for all our staff across all the sites. Prudent planning, continued stakeholder and client engagement, monitoring and evaluation have been the continued focus of all programs delivered across the organisation.

The Board, CEO and the Executives have focused internally to ensure our systems, process and controls continue to support the expansion of commUnity+ and the ability to adhere to the scrutiny of expenditure to increase accountability to our funders and community. An extensive internal audit conducted by independent auditors has provided the Board the extreme confidence in our governance and operational functions lead by the CEO and the executive teams. The Cultural Review undertaken by C4M Consulting has also highlighted the continued effort of the organisation to manage staff and volunteers during the period of continued growth and also identified some of the existing organisational development initiatives that will enhance our staff support, retention, morale and professional development. With a workforce of more than 125 employees, CU+ has reinvested in developing important projects – like Pay Parity Project, Passport to Wellness Programs, Total Reward Policy, establishment of People Management Group that will continue to contribute to our staff performance and well-being. We strongly believe the staff commitment, passion and efforts - support commUnity+ to offer excellent services to our community.

The Board continued to focus on the governance function offering the CEO and the executives' additional support through the Finance and Risk Management Sub Committee and the Governance Sub Committee meetings. These sub-committees offer the strategic advice, planning, monitoring and mentoring functions to ensure we exercise all the Board Governance duties in a diligent manner. The Board members have continued to participate in a collaborative and collective manner to assist in their voluntary capacity keeping the best interest of the organisations.

We thank all the funders Commonwealth, State, Local Government and philanthropy agencies who have helped the organisation to expand our programs and we would like to acknowledge the ongoing support we receive. We are delighted to note that we have also secured additional funding for the Child Contact Services for Melbourne's Inner region and retain the funding for Melbourne's West till 2024. The education's funding (at both state and commonwealth level) support has allowed the organisation to expand to new regions and started delivering services to new locations across Melbourne.

The Commonwealth Funding supported commUnity+ to continue to deliver Skills for Employment and Education (SEE) program in the North-West and Inner Melbourne regions and Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) in the West. We continued to delivery SEE in the west, Skills First – State-wide and pre-accredited programs in Brimbank and Hume region. With our consortium members - Learning for Employment (Lfe) our education team deliver English language and settlement skills to newly arrived communities including those arriving due to humanitarian concerns in their home countries.

Chairperson & CEO Report

We were also very fortunate to deliver programs focused on retraining and supporting clients who were retrenched or were potentially facing redundancy through the Transition to Work program in partnership with Western Initiative Community Group (WICIG) at state and commonwealth level. The employability skills training of our education programs is highly regarded by our partner agencies and we thank all the Job Active Providers and Employers for their support.

Our Community Legal Centre staff have excelled once again and provided excellent information, advice, casework representation, community legal education activities to our communities in Melton and Brimbank and participated in law reform activities. We continue to deliver innovative projects like the Vietnamese Lawyer Project, Family Violence Projects at Sunshine Hospital, Darley Maternal and Child Health Centre, Bacchus Marsh courts, and continued to deliver tenancy clinics at St Albans. The volunteers and partner agencies support adds great value and contribute to our success.

The Child Contact Centre services have provided innovative approaches to manage our service delivery efficiently keeping the child centric focus in mind. We continue to reduce significant waiting periods and also provided new innovative group sessions to assist the parents to manage the child contact arrangements.

The Neighbourhood house activities have excelled in delivering innovative and vibrant programs to new communities, families and children who participate in a range of activities facilities by the program staff. Church groups, community members, and other partner agencies also support commUnity+ to incubate a range of programs from our Deer Park Community Hub. This has meant we have many more communities meeting at our centre and building our social capital and addressing social isolation.

The Corporate team staff have provided human resources, finance, infrastructure support including facilities and IT support. They work as business partners and offer the operational support to ensure our programs can deliver quality service. We thank all the staff in the Corporate Services who are very stretched for time and resources, and work long hours to support commUnity+. We have also met all the compliance, accreditation, reporting requirements for our contracts and committed to ongoing quality and continuous improvement. Our registered training organisation has secured re-registration till 2024 which is an incredible achievement.

On behalf of the organisation, we thank all the staff, volunteers for their ongoing commitment and work. Of particular note is the hard work and ongoing commitment of our past and present executive and leadership team: Andrew Burns, Branka Stevanovic, Simon Roberts, Melissa McShane Murphy and all the program managers in the education, legal, child contact program and corporate services.

We also thank all the Board members – James McCarthy, Sejla Kadric Greg Bowers, Kim Nguyen, Nella Buccheri for their incredible commitment and support to commUnity+ and to the CEO and the Chairperson.

Susanne Legena – Chairperson
Rachna Muddagouni – CEO



Executive Team

2018-2019



Andrew Burns
Chief Operating Officer

Andrew oversees the operational planning and delivery of the core programs of commUnity+. These include Family (Child Contact Services), Legal (Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre) and Neighbourhood House Programs. His role is key to the effort to embed an integrated service delivery approach across the organisation.



Melissa McShane Murphy
Chief Finance and Business
Operation Officer

Melissa oversees finance, risk, reporting, contract management, operations, facilities, human resources and compliance work of the whole organisation with a team of finance and infrastructure professionals.



Branka Stevanovic
Director of Education

Branka oversees a large team of staff who have the responsibility for the development and implementation of all education programs and ensures all contractual arrangements for Skills for Employment and Education (SEE, Adult Migrant Education program (AMEP), Victorian Training Guarantee (VTG) and Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) programs are met.



Simon Roberts
Strategic Program Adviser
(Dec 2018)

Simon Roberts provides strategic advice and build partnerships in collaborations with the program areas to articulate the value of our existing program and/or develop new programs.

Note to Branka: thank you & farewell

After 13 long years, Branka Stevanovic – the Director of Registered Training Organisation, decided to step down, avail her long service leave, rest and explore other career opportunities in her life.

Branka joined commUnity+ (formerly known as Community West) as a trainer, with the particular focus on delivering English as a Second Language (now known as English as an Additional Language) to newly arrived, unemployed adult learners with limited or no English Language skills.

She has lived the dreams of CU+ over the last 13 years, taking on a management role as a Coordinator in 2013 and thereon moving up the leadership ladder to take on the Director of the RTO in 2016.

She has taught and managed the Skills for Employment & Education Program (formerly known as the Language, Literacy & Numeracy program (LLNP), Skills First, Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP), many Pre-accredited programs funded by Adult Community & Further Education (ACFE) and excelled managing multiple small and large education projects.

She has a passion for stakeholder engagement, curriculum development, business growth and strong commitment to quality. Her dream, passion and commitment supported our organisation to champion cause and mission – helping CU+ to expand to over 22 sites in the last 7 to 8 years.

She has supported complete two successful re-registration and other compliance audits – always ensuring our results and outcomes were outstanding. It is with great sadness we bid good bye and celebrate her achievements with pride. Thanks Branka, you will be dearly missed by all.

I am truly devastated as she was my inspiration, true colleague and my strength. However I know it is a right decision for her personally and the Board and I want to respect her decision.

- Rachna Muddagouni (CEO)

Board Members



Susanne Legena, Chairperson

Susanne was elected to the commUnity+ board in 2016 and the Chairperson in 2017. She is the CEO of Plan International Australia and an advocate for foreign aid and community development, gender equality and youth participation.

Susanne has held various executive roles at Plan International Australia including Executive Manager overseeing and leading operations, Deputy CEO and Director of Public Engagement leading policy, advocacy and communications efforts. She has previously served as Chief of Staff to the Victorian Minister for Energy, Resources and Community Development where she contributed to key policies on energy and climate change as well as leading the implementation of A Fairer Victoria a whole of government social policy action plan to address disadvantage and promote inclusion and participation.

Susanne has a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences from Flinders University and a Master of Arts (Professional Communication) from Deakin University. She has had a career dedicated to working on social justice issues and commenced working life as a community development worker for an international youth-led student organisation and for several non-government organisations tackling family violence, poverty, youth unemployment and homelessness.



Rachna Muddagouni, CEO

Rachna Muddagouni was appointed the Chief Executive Office of commUnity+ on 12 June 2012. Rachna has over 20 years' management and executive experience in community organisations and public statutory bodies. She has worked in the legal, health and housing sector where she developed an appreciation and passion for innovation, strategic planning, change management and integrated service delivery.

Rachna formerly worked at Victoria Legal Aid as the Manager, Stakeholder Engagement and Innovation, where she managed the Bushfire Legal Help Project and established the Victorian Legal Assistance Forum (VLAFF). In 2006, Rachna was awarded Victorian Law Foundation Community Legal Centre Fellowship.



Greg Bowers, Treasurer

Greg Bowers joined the commUnity+ board in early 2017. Greg is currently the Chief Financial Officer at Trust for Nature in Victoria. Trust for Nature is a statutory authority protecting native plants and wildlife on private land in Victoria.

A Certified Practising Account with a Business degree from Ballarat University, Greg has extensive experience in financial management. Greg has overseen large scale financial and process management at the Australian Crime Commission and PMSC. A certified TEFL teacher, Greg has worked as an English teacher overseas and is passionate about opportunities that come through adult education.

Greg offers commUnity+ his extensive financial and operational management experience to oversee the next phase of the organisation's growth into the North Western and Inner Melbourne regions. Greg was appointed to the Board as Treasurer in 2018.

Board Members



James McCarthy

James has been a board member with commUnity+ since 2004 when we were known as Community West and has been the chairperson for 9 years and deputy chairperson for 3 years. James is a Social Worker with over 20 years' experience in the social and human services sector, and is currently working with Eastern Palliative Care.

He is involved with several other organisations and is the current chairperson of No To Violence, C-Collective (an organisation started by James) and was the previous president of Interchange Victoria. James has a number of other volunteer roles in the community including being a Justice of the Peace and roles with the Office of the Public Advocate.

James has a range of qualifications in areas including; family violence, governance, AOD, mental health and training and assessment. James has maintained a strong connection with the Western suburbs of Melbourne through the many roles he has held that aim to contribute in empowering and growing resilient communities.



Sejla Kadric

Sejla was elected to the commUnity+ Board in 2012. She is an associate director and chartered accountant at ShineWing Australia Pty Ltd. Sejla moved to Australia in 1996 and grew up in the western suburbs.

As a Board Member, her financial expertise ensures commUnity+ has highly developed financial and internal control systems to mitigate any risks.

Sejla has significant experience auditing not-for-profit organisations and understands the structures, rules and reporting obligations of incorporated associations.



Nella Buccheri

Nella was elected to the commUnity+ Board in 2016. She is currently the Associate Director of Legal Practice at Victoria Legal Aid. She has significant experience in criminal law and has over 10 years' experience working in the delivery of legal services through her role in the Legal Practice Directorate.

Nella is responsible for the general oversight of the operations of Assignments Unit to ensure that strategic objectives and priorities are being met. Nella provides advice to the VLA Board and the Senior Executive on issues relating to eligibility for grants of legal assistance and expenditure.

Nella is a local resident of the Melton area and has a strong interest in social justice. She is very supportive of the work we do in the west and would like to be part of that.



Kim Nguyen

Kim was elected to CommUnity+ Board in 2013. She has worked passionately in the employment and asylum seeker sector for over 18 years with a focus on improving the lives of people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Arriving to Australia as a refugee over 30 years ago, Kim is very aware of the issues faced by culturally and linguistically diverse communities and leads teams to improve opportunities for these cohorts with successfully integrating into the community and finding employment whilst showing respect to each person's individual story. Kim thinks outside the square and implements innovative strategies to provide a holistic assistance approach to the people she is assisting.

Kim has strong professional networks in Melbourne's North and West which add enormous value to her work with our Board. She strongly believes in promoting and integrating compassion, respect and honesty into her daily work.

Operations/People & Culture



The commUnity+ Corporate Services team has continued to provide efficient support to all programs to enhance the service delivery outcomes for clients. The corporate services include professional Human Resources services such as recruitment, induction, performance management, industrial relations, workforce development, and training.

The OHS functions that include staff well-being strategies have been highly regarded across the organisation. This year two important strategic projects were undertaken- Pay Parity Project (An equitable and consistent process of making fair and structured decisions about peoples' terms and conditions of employment) and the Passport to Wellness program.

Yolanda Sutherland, Ian Spinney, Diane Sweet, and Jacob Patterson have provided their professional expertise to manage the program meticulously which has resulted in great outcomes for the organisation.

Jerome Rodrigo, Thuan Nguyen, Lindim Shaqiri with the additional support from Javed Ahmed has continued to

support operations and infrastructure needs of the organisation (including IT services from Deloitte Consulting) for more than 22 sites across the state.

Their timely response with limited resources has been outstanding. The team is often very stretched, however, they maintain a good sense of humour and remain cohesive.

The finance team, Javed Ahmed and Binaya Bhatta provide ongoing support to staff and leaders of the organisation, assisting the organisation to meet its strategic objectives.

The corporate services team continuously strives for ongoing improvements to enable commUnity+ to provide the best facilities possible for our staff and clients, while ensuring organisational financial viability and future sustainability.

A special mention and credit for the development of the Annual Report must be given to Cherie Sutherland who has joined the commUnity+ team, as the Communications Officer.



Education Program

2018/2019 Education Program

The 2018/19 period was a year of substantial change and growth for the Education program at Comm Unity Plus. Such change included:

- Re-accreditation as an RTO until 31st January 2024
- Successful Audits across all programs
- Additional VET courses to the scope, including Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care.
- Expanding Skills First Program in the South East Region, Springvale, Forrest Hill and Surrey Hills.
- Establishing partnerships with Proven Training Solutions and Melbourne Infinity Group to secure referrals to Skills First program and business growth for sustainability.

Over 1800 learners accessed our education and training. The feedback from learners, evaluation reports and other stakeholders have indicated significant positive outcomes and learning for our students. Importantly learners valued the overall support they received from Comm Unity Plus Services, which has allowed them to successfully improve their language, literacy, numeracy and employability skills.



Education Staff Members, Victoria Square

The **Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)** provides free English language training to eligible migrants and refugees in their first five years in Australia. The program provides up to 510 hours of English language tuition to help participants learn foundation English language and settlement skills, to enable learners to participate socially and economically in Australian society. Such participation can include employment, training or further study. All courses are customised to meet individual learning needs and improve learners' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.



Adult Education Students, Main Road West

The **Skills for Employment and Education (SEE) programme**, offers up to 650 hours of language, literacy and numeracy training to enhance and strengthen employability skills. Comm Unity Plus provided services to learners in the West, North West and Inner Melbourne regions as a member of the Learning for Employment (Lfe) consortium. We have strengthened our stakeholder relationships with Job Active providers, Centrelink and other agencies to increase referrals and help learners with barriers to employment.

Majority of the clients in the SEE program, (77%) are females and this trend continues to grow with the introduction of the Parents Next program which is an approved SEE programme activity. Understandable the program participants can experience frequent absences, taking into consideration that generally they are primary family carers.



Adult Education Students, Main Road West

The **Skills First program** is funded by the Victorian Government and provides subsidised vocational training. Referrals to the program is via Job active providers, Disability Employment Service (DES) providers and other local agencies. Over the past year we have continued to grow our engagement with local communities and established partnerships with recruiting agencies to deliver training to clients. Broadening our relationships has provided opportunities to expand our service delivery into Springvale, Forest Hill, Surrey Hills, Glenroy and Werribee.

By adding new vocational courses to the scope, particularly Certificate II in Cleaning, Comm Unity Plus has attracted the attention of Recruitment Service agencies as well as government employment initiatives such as Reconnect and west@work. This has resulted in an ongoing referral process and expansion of our program delivery across Melbourne.



Education Staff Member, Deer Park

The **Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) program** continued with its focus in line with the industry demands and expectations on improving employment, literacy and life skills through our Pre-accredited programs. We delivered over 35000 learning hours to clients in Brimbank and Hume regions.

All our programs aim at improving literacy, employability and engagement skills to maintain pathways to job opportunities for our adult learners as well as minimising social isolation and provide access to a range of other community programs.



Adult Education Students, Main Road West

Staff Professional Development and Training continues to be priority for our education team. Throughout the year we focused on supporting our trainers and administration staff to access training that will in turn, enhance their skills to better support clients on a daily basis.

Skills Victoria provides professional development via the VET Development Centre. In service and VET workshops ensure our teachers are enhancing their skills and in doing so are meeting the guidelines and standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs).

Given the significant diversity of our service users, it is not surprising that in collaboration with DPV Health Ltd, Comm Unity Plus identified the need for trainers and other staff to undergo Cultural Competency Training. The focus of the training was to increase staff knowledge and understanding of cultural issues and raise awareness about potential stereotyping of service users.

Other training during the year included further training for administration staff and program managers to improve their skills and knowledge of the student management system. This in turn ensures that Comm Unity Plus remains fully compliant in its operations and reporting to Skills Vic.

During the year we delivered another successful ACFE Capacity and Innovation Project (CAIF 10) with a focus on education and employment options for Youth. This has allowed staff to work collaboratively with other community education providers and relevant services in the region and design and develop programs that will address the learner cohort's needs and requirements.

Further training was provided by West Justice on Employment Law and Young People's Rights at Work. The Centre for Multicultural Youth provided training on Culturally Competent Youth Practice which further enhanced participants' skills and knowledge for application in their everyday worklife.

We thank our staff and learners for their hard work and commitment throughout the year and look forward to another successful, opportunity-filled year ahead.



Education (Skills First) Staff, Main Road West

Legal Program



Legal Services Staff, East Esplanade

Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre (BMCLC) is a community legal centre which is a program of Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd operating as commUnity+.

BMCLC provides free legal services through its two offices in Melton and St Albans for disadvantaged people who live, work or study in the Brimbank, Melton and Bacchus Marsh communities. There are a high number of new migrants in BMCLC's catchment area which make for a culturally and linguistically diverse community.

BMCLC is a generalist community legal centre that provides legal assistance in the following areas: family violence; family law; infringements; civil law (insurance, debts and motor vehicle accidents); and criminal law.

Our internal service data indicate that the legal assistance and community education we provide have intangible benefits for our clients, including: empowerment through awareness of legal rights and options; early resolution of legal issues and improved legal outcomes; and wrap-around assistance via an integrated service delivery model, all of which have enhanced our client's mental and physical well-being. BMCLC has sought to deliver these services in innovative and client-centred formats.

We would like to highlight some of our achievements in the 2018/2019 year:

- Generalist/Specialist project with Tenants Victoria. As a result of this project, BMCLC has introduced a Tenancy service supported by Tenants Victoria;
- Generalist/Specialist project with Social Security Rights Victoria. This project has enhanced referral pathways and secondary consultations between the partner organisations;
- The Health Justice Partnerships with Sunshine Hospital and the Moorabool Shire Council Darley continues to assist women who experience serious and ongoing family violence and related issues;
- The legal clinics at Western Health are currently fully booked and the BMCLC lawyer is working to capacity. It is foreseeable that we see an upward trajectory of referrals;
- The Vietnamese Lawyer Project. Conducted in partnership with the Australian Vietnamese Women's Association continues to assist the Vietnamese-speaking community in Melbourne's west by providing legal assistance through a bilingual lawyer;

- Commencement of a Family violence duty lawyering service at the Sunshine Magistrates' Court;
- We have worked collaboratively with other commUnity+ programs. We have delivered community legal education sessions to adult learners and conducted professional development training to staff within the Child Contact Service. In the coming years, we will build upon these internal partnerships.
- Pro bono partnership with the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office (VGSO). This partnership has been in place for several years and remains strong and dynamic. As part of this pro bono partnership agreement, VGSO staff members undertake 6-week rotations at the legal centre and more recently, the arrangement is for 3-month secondments. The contribution made by the VGSO staff has been invaluable in our providing access to justice for our community;
- Out of the Dark, numerous community legal education sessions delivered to prisoners at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre;
- We continue with our commitment to law reform and improved access to justice by our legal submissions to the Australian Law Reform Commission's Review of the family law system;
- Safe Resolutions (Property mediation for separated Vietnamese families). This project operates in partnership with the Sunshine Family Relationship Centre and Westjustice. Additionally, the collaborative framework facilitates legally assisted mediations in respect of parenting disputes;
- Weekly Family law/Family violence clinic in Melton. A clinic dedicated to assisting separating families experiencing family violence and family law issues. Additionally, we continue to conduct divorce workshops for English and Vietnamese-speaking community members.
- An impactful civil practice. For the 2018 calendar year, the Centre assisted clients in financial hardship to waive a combined amount of over \$216,000.00. In terms of our Infringements clinic, we assisted over 130 clients who had a combined outstanding fines amount of over \$340,000.
- Diversion program. Our lawyers have assisted dozens of first-time offenders gain entry into the Criminal Justice Diversion program – giving them a second opportunity to contribute to their community and maintain an unblemished criminal record.



Legal Services Staff, East Esplanade

Case Study

Bacchus Marsh Outreach and Duty Lawyer Health Justice Project

Susan's Story:

Susan presented at the centre as extremely fragile. She advised that she had one child to the relationship who was two and a son who was 7 from a previous, also violent relationship. Susan was referred to us through the Van Go Project. She had experienced substantial family violence which had been witnessed by her older child.

Susan applied for an intervention order. The other party engaged in systems abuse by way of applying for intervention order against Susan on spurious grounds. BMCLC assisted her with her family violence matters. The decision was made to further assist her with an application to the Federal Circuit Court for parenting orders. Throughout the proceedings BMCLC continued its collaborative work with Van Go's Case Manager, who provided therapeutic support for the client and who also assisted with some funding for subpoenas.

An Independent Children's Lawyer was duly appointed and the matter is now set down for trial

Legal in a Snapshot:

Information	1001
Advice	1232
Referrals	2374
Cases	576
CLE Sessions	28
Duty Lawyer Services	122
Dispute Resolution Sessions	31
Law Reform Submissions	3
Lawyers Delivering Services	8
Volunteers	42
Locations (Services Delivered From)	8
Professional Development Sessions	15



Legal Services Staff, East Esplanade

Children's Contact Service



Children's Contact Services Staff, Deer Park

commUnity+ is committed to supporting the needs of families in our local area, particularly families facing disadvantage and social exclusion, and those in communities new to Australia. Our services aim to help families function better and contribute to a supportive environment for children.

Currently we offer a Children's Contact Service to provide facilitated changeovers and supervised visits for children and their separated parents.

The Child Contact Service (CCS) has continued to make a great progress this year and met improved our ability to meet the demand of the service. We service seven local government areas in Melbourne's West and the team work collaboratively with great diligence, professionalism and passion.

There are strong referral pathways to external services and our internal programs to arrange support for the families post-separation which includes legal, financial, and individual counseling for families and children

CCS in a Snapshot:

LGA Served	6
Social Workers	3
1 Parent Applications	20
2 Parent Applications	30
Changeovers	831
Supervised Visits	228
Intake Assessments	123
Student Placements	3





Case Study

The Children's Contact Service provides a safe space for children to develop a relationship with the parent they are not living with. The use of the service is an interim measure for clients when circumstances are such that they cannot manage this themselves. It is hoped that with appropriate support and intervention families will move on from the service to self-management of their parenting responsibilities.

The Children's Contact Service worked with a family that presented with a number of issues that compounded the stress of family separation. The parents struggled to accommodate each other's culture, there were mental health concerns, anger issues and underlying hostility on both sides that impacted upon their ability to move forward and prioritize their daughter.

Starting from the initial intake assessment the service worked to address the additional presenting issues and provide support and intervention to create the best outcome. The mother suffered from depression and feared hurting her child as she reminded her of the father. The staff validated her concerns and discussed the importance of seeking professional help to assess risk and provide assistance in coping with these feelings.

Despite her reluctance to seek additional help the staff supported her to re-connect with a psychologist to assist with her mental health issues. With the mother's permission the staff contacted the psychologist to streamline the process as much as possible. The mother continued seeing the psychologist and reported great benefit from the sessions.

The child's father presented to the service with a lot of anger directed towards the mother. As is often the case when parents are consumed by anger they lose sight of the child in the picture. The staff acknowledged the father's hurt and anger while reminding him that holding on to these emotions can get in the way of what he needs to focus on, his daughter. The father acknowledged that nothing was as important as his love for his daughter and he would ensure that his focus remained positive and calm throughout the visits.

Using a strengths-based approach the CCS staff continued to work with the parents to assist the father to focus on his relationship with his daughter and to support the mother's self-care and family functioning. The family was supported as they progressed from supervised visits to changeovers and ultimately self-management. The time frame from initial presentation to self-management was two years. The staff provided ongoing support throughout this time with timely interventions to keep things on track when necessary. Both parents thanked the staff for providing their assistance and enabling them to do something they wouldn't have thought possible two years ago.

To have clients present at intake with a myriad of issues that prevent them from being able to manage their parenting responsibilities to leaving the service confidently managing their changeovers independently is a great outcome for the CCS. We are very proud of our work supporting clients' to progress to self-management as ultimately this results in the best outcome for all parties, in particular the child.



Neighbourhood House

Comm Unity Plus Neighbourhood House continued to deliver a range of programs and events throughout the year, offering access and opportunities to the local residents and our internal clients from other programs to engage with wider community members.

With the support of the local government, local businesses, Comm Unity Plus internal services and programs, our Neighbourhood House successfully executed a variety of activities and programs, catering for the needs of almost all age groups.

For the youngest community members we organised fun and very engaging **Rhythm and Rhyme Program** incorporating it with the Playgroup activities.

To meet the needs of the **school age children** we successfully ran the **Homework Club Program** as well as **The School Holiday Program**, which proved to be very popular and also met the demands of the local community.

Another successful initiative, **the community lunches**, was organised once a month to celebrate or join the wider community in these social events. Community lunches were organised and linked to special events throughout the year so that we could raise awareness of some issues that are present in a wider society, e.g. R U OK day, Anti-Poverty Week, White Ribbon Day, Harmony Week, Biggest Morning Tea and Refugee Week. We take opportunity and invite guest speakers to this event so it becomes more meaningful and beneficial to all participants.



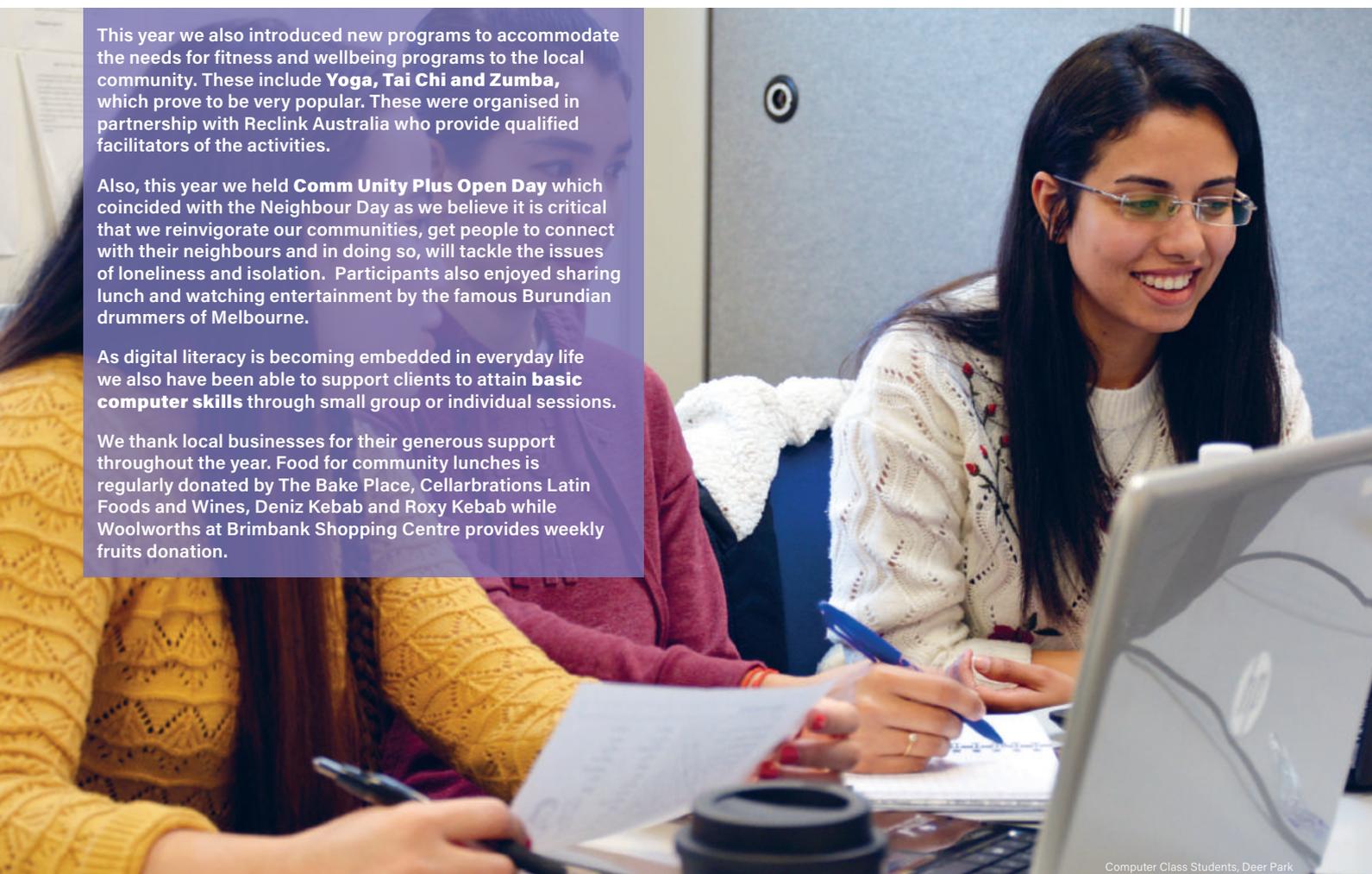
Zumba Class, Deer Park

This year we also introduced new programs to accommodate the needs for fitness and wellbeing programs to the local community. These include **Yoga, Tai Chi and Zumba**, which prove to be very popular. These were organised in partnership with Reclink Australia who provide qualified facilitators of the activities.

Also, this year we held **Comm Unity Plus Open Day** which coincided with the Neighbour Day as we believe it is critical that we reinvigorate our communities, get people to connect with their neighbours and in doing so, will tackle the issues of loneliness and isolation. Participants also enjoyed sharing lunch and watching entertainment by the famous Burundian drummers of Melbourne.

As digital literacy is becoming embedded in everyday life we also have been able to support clients to attain **basic computer skills** through small group or individual sessions.

We thank local businesses for their generous support throughout the year. Food for community lunches is regularly donated by The Bake Place, Cellarbrations Latin Foods and Wines, Deniz Kebab and Roxy Kebab while Woolworths at Brimbank Shopping Centre provides weekly fruits donation.



Computer Class Students, Deer Park



Computer Class Student, Deer Park



Zumba Class, Deer Park

Projects



Capacity and Innovation Fund (CAIF 10)

Youth – Engage in simple conversation about education and employment options.

The Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board's Capacity and Innovation Fund (CAIF) provided another opportunity for commUnity+ to develop and implement this project to design program to meet learner needs and increase participation and attainment in pre-accredited and accredited training programs.

This project was funded as a part of the CAIF 10 project funding in 2018. commUnity+ consulted and engaged with cohort of youth to identify gaps young people face around education, training and or employment opportunities in order to understand how best they can be supported to maximize their participation in training programs.

The program took into consideration access to transport, innovation-engaging programs to maximise their participation and address some of their life skills issues (financial literacy and knowledge of community support groups) to ensure the youth had wrap around services to support education pathways.

We thank the Steering Committee Group members for their assistance and support: Rachna Muddagouni, Daniella Gulaci, Branka Stevanovic, Jardi McInnes (WCIG), Bernadette Marantelli (CMY), Tania Sacco (YouthNow), Deidre Boaz (Brimbank City Council), Karen Hart (Youth Junction), Glenn Meiners (Wyndham Community Education Centre)

The findings and recommendation from the project are published as fact sheets for Learn Locals to use and assist the sector to increase reach and support for the women at risk to access education programs

Reconnect (WCIG and Djerriwarrh Partnership)

The Skills Reconnect Program has been a fantastic opportunity for CU+ to work collaboratively with other organizations to achieve the best possible outcome for people who have experienced disadvantage. Skills Reconnect is an initiative spearheaded by the Victorian Government to tackle Victoria's combined unemployment levels and skills shortages. This program is designed to offer education as a means of breaking the cycle of long term unemployment.

It also gives young Victorians who may have fallen through the cracks in mainstream education a second chance to obtain a qualification. Participants in the program will be linked with a coach who will assist them with creating an individualised learning plan, and then helping them with the transition back to education. Participants are offered the support they need to successfully participate in education, training and employment.

We are working together with our partners to deliver the Skills Reconnect program in several regions. commUnity+ delivers Reconnect in the Melton, Brimbank (apart from Sunshine) and Braybrook, and our delivery partner in the West is WCIG (Westgate Community Initiatives Group).

We also deliver in Hume, where our partners are Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services and Yarraville Community Centre.

Thank all the partner agencies for the collaboration and support. We thank all the staff who have worked on this project and made it a great success: Clarissa Wood, Virginia Tachos, Dinh Tran, Sandra Sandra and Peter Asi.

Transition to Work:

West North West Transition to Work has been appointed as Transitions Services Panel Member (2018-2020). West North West Transition to Work a consortium of led by Westgate Community Initiatives Group Inc. (WCIG) in partnership with Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd, were commissioned to deliver the skills and training support to retrenched workers under the Australian Government's Stronger Transitions package.

Stronger Transitions is a targeted package of intensive assistance supporting individuals in industries and regions especially impacted by structural change, to transition to new jobs and prepare for jobs of the future.

As part of this program a range of Core Transition Services and Additional Transition Services were offered to retrenched workers in the North and West Region.

Funders & Partners

Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd thanks the funders, partner agencies, staff (past and present), volunteers, clients and community for their generous support contributions and participation.

Funders

Adult Community & Further Education (ACFE)
Brimbank City Council
Department of Social Services
Department of Education & Training (Victoria)
Development (DEECD)
Department of Health & Human Services
Department of Education & Training
(Australian Government)
Department of Justice
Victorian Legal Aid (VLA)
Ross Trust

Partners

All Primary & Secondary Schools in the
Brimbank/Melton Region
AMES Australia
Angliss Neighbourhood House
Anglicare
Association of Neighbourhood Houses &
Learning Centres
Asylum Seekers Resource Centre
Australian Council for Private Education &
Training
Australian Vietnamese Women's Association
aXcelerate
ANZ Bank
Bacchus Marsh Maternal & Child Health
Centre
Bhutanese Community Group
Brimbank & Maribyrnong Interfaith Network
Braybrook Community Centre
Brimbank City Council
Brimbank Early Years Reference Group
Brimbank Learning & Employment Steering
Committee (BLESC)
Brimbank Libraries
Brimbank/Melton Local Learning &
Employment Network
Brimbank Neighbourhood House Partnership
Group
Brimbank & Melton Leader
Brimbank North West & Melton Moorabool
Star Weekly
Brimbank Social Justice Coalition
Bunnings Warehouse
Campbell Page
Caroline Chisholm Society
Catholic Care Parenting Order Program
Centrelink
Centre for Innovative Justice
Centre for Multicultural Youth
Commonwealth Bank
Community Legal Centres (Western Region &
state wide centres)

Consumer Action Law Centre
Cohealth
CRS Australia
Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
Deakin University
Derrimut Community Centre
Djerriwarrh Community & Education
Services
Djerriwarrh Health Services
Don Nardella MP
Duke Street Community House Each
Employment
Energy & Water Ombudsman of Victoria
Family Mediation Centre
Federation of Community Legal Centres
Filipino Community Council of Victoria
Financial & Consumer Rights Council
Fitzroy Community Legal Service
Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service
Greek Elderly Citizens' Club of Manningham
Headspace
It Connexions
ISIS Primary Care
Job Prospects
Jobs Australia
Justice Connect
Lander & Rogers Lawyers
Landmark Printing
Lead West
Laverton Community Integrated Services
Learning for Employment Consortium
Legal Services Board & Commissioner
Life without Barriers
Maddocks Lawyers
Mambourin Enterprises NDIS
Magistrates' Court (Bacchus Marsh &
Sunshine)
Matchworks
Maurice Blackburn Lawyers
Max Employment
Melbourne City Mission
Melbourne Remand Centre
Melton City Council
Melton Health
Men's Referral Service
MacKillop Family Services
Migrant Resource Centre North West
Mind Works
Moorabool Shire Council
National Association of Community Legal
Centres
Network West Neighbourhood
House Network
New Energy

North Balwyn Senior Citizens' Club No to
Violence
Parent Education Network
Playgroup Victoria
RMIT University
Saint Francis' Filipino Community Club
Salvation Army Employment Plus
Salvation Army Social Housing Services
Sarina Russo Employment Access
Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
Springvale Monash Buddhist Temple
Stepping Up Consortium Sunshine Family
Relationships Centre
Sunshine Library
The Design Bus
Think West
Tracey Placement People
U3A
Victoria Law Assistance Forum
Victoria Law Foundation
Victoria Legal Aid
Victoria Police (Western Region)
Victorian Children's Contact Service
Network
Victorian Council of Social Service
Visy Hub
Volunteer West Network
Western Suburbs Law Association
Westgate Community Initiative Group
Wesley Mission
Western Health
West Metro Regional Aboriginal Justice
Advisory Committee (RAJAC)
Western Region Indigenous Family
Violence Regional Action Group
Women's Health West
Victorian Employers' Chamber of
Commerce & Industry (VECCI)
Victorian Government Solicitor's Office
(VGSO)
Victoria University
Violence Regional Action Group
Williamstown Community Education Centre
Wise Employment
Western Integrated Family
West Justice
Violence Network
Women's Health West
Wyndham Community & Education
Services
Yarraville Community Centre
Youth Junction
Youth Law
Youth Now

Our Locations

19 Argyle Place South, Carlton 3052
Child Contact Centre

822 Ballarat Road, Deer Park 3023
Head Office, Adult Education Services, Child
Contact Services, & Neighbourhood House

90 Blair Street, Broadmeadows 3047
Adult Education Services

30 Craigieburn Road, Craigieburn 3064
Adult Education Services

**Suite 2-4 & 6-8, 30 to 32 East Esplanade, St.
Albans 3021**
Brimbank Melton Community Legal Services &
Adult Education Services

14 Gaffney Street, North Coburg 3058
Adult Education Services

Level 1, 358 Main Road West, St. Albans 3021
Adult Education Services

Level 1, 356 Main Road West, St. Albans 3021
Adult Education Services

79 Main Road West, St. Albans 3021
Adult Education Services

81 Main Road West, St. Albans 3021
Adult Education Services

Melton Library and Learning Hub
Level 1, 31-35 McKenzie St, Melton 3337
Brimbank Melton Community Legal Services

Watergardens Town Centre,
399 Melton Highway, Taylors Lakes 3038
Adult Education Services

Shop 8, 11 Victoria Square, St. Albans 3021
Adult Education Services

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