

Annual Report 2021–22

Connect. Learn.
Action. Enable.



Contents

Acknowledgement of Country

We proudly acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and provide services. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. commUnity+ acknowledges this land was never ceded; that it always was and always will be Aboriginal land.



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About commUnity+

Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd (commUnity+), is a multi-disciplinary community organisation that provides services predominantly across Melbourne's north and west regions.

From our grassroots origins as a residents' action group at the Deer Park Neighbourhood House, we have grown to become a large community-based organisation funded by local, state and Commonwealth government departments and enhanced through partnerships and collaborations.

We strive to enable positive change and growth for people through a range of prevention and early intervention programs including Community Education, Children's Contact Services, Neighbourhood House, and Legal Services (through Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre). We also undertake community engagement and development activities.

Our clients are people facing disadvantage, hardship and social exclusion, with particular focus on members of communities new to Australia. We support vulnerable children and women, and those who need a helping hand to achieve justice and fairness when dealing with governments and the legal system.

Our team of dedicated professionals delivers our purpose to support, strengthen and enable individuals and diverse communities in Melbourne's north-west regions to flourish through respecting diversity and striving for social justice.

We partner with a number of community, corporate and government agencies to enhance our service delivery and increase access for our community.

commUnity+ is a company limited by guarantee and is a registered charity endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.



Chair Report

Susanne Legena
Chair



I am proud to reflect on a year of incredible resilience of people, families, communities and across society. This reflection includes the role of commUnity+ and our staff, volunteers and partners in their unwavering resolve to help people and families across Melbourne's west and north-west to overcome challenges, hardship and disadvantage to live safe, fulfilling and prosperous lives.

In 2021-22 COVID-19 continued to impact everyone's lives while health impacts and restrictions ebbed and flowed. As the restrictions eased during the year, employment demands rose, migration restrictions lifted, returning to a new-normal way of living was explored, and the demand for the vital programs and services delivered by commUnity+ rose including settlement support, community engagement, family and legal services, and community education.

Melbourne's west and north-west represents two of Australia's most culturally diverse regions, coupled with higher levels of disadvantage. In Brimbank alone, 54% of residents are born overseas¹ a quarter of households are low-income households². This heightened the importance of embarking upon an ambitious Business Plan spanning the five priorities of the 2021-24 Strategy spearheaded by the development of a commUnity+ community services model that places individual community members' needs, strengths and individual circumstances in front of our service design and delivery. Our ReConnect initiative undertaken during the year was designed with this in mind.

Over the next year several commUnity+ locations will be consolidated to establish place-based collocated service hubs in key locations in Deer Park, St Albans, Keilor Downs and Broadmeadows. This will strengthen our presence and impact across the west and north-west regions and represent another dimension to our person-centred approach. Our move into the nearly completed Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre in October in

partnership with Brimbank City Council, and collocated with Good Shepherd and Distinctive Options, will realise the vision of the Board and management imagined in 2018.

This year in October we will turn 40 providing an important moment for commUnity+ to reflect on our journey over 40 years from humble beginnings in Deer Park as a community organisation whose purpose was and still is to *meet the needs of the people as expressed by the people*.

I am deeply thankful for the dedication and contribution of our staff and volunteers, management and leadership team over the past year, after a period of much internal and external change. Our CEO Tracey Gaudry joined us in June 2021 in an interim capacity and transitioned to the role ongoing in December, bringing leadership stability and together with the leadership team to establish sustainable momentum across the whole organisation in working towards our vision where everyone in the West has a safe place where they feel they belong and live the life they choose.

As I reflect on six years as a commUnity+ Director including three years as Chair I want to thank my colleague Directors across the years for their support, collaboration and expertise in guiding our important work to realise our shared goals. I will finish up as Chair (but remain on the Board) at the 2022 Annual General Meeting grateful to have been able to serve the commUnity+ mission and purpose, and happy that the organisation is well placed to continue its work for the next 40 years.

¹ 2021 National census: <https://profile.id.com.au/brimbank>

² community demographic resources website (social atlas): <https://atlas.id.com.au/brimbank>

CEO Report

Tracey Gaudry
Chief Executive Officer



commUnity+ has come out of the year much stronger than we went in.

People, families and communities across the globe endured a second year constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic with greater Melbourne experiencing 90 days of lockdown in 2021-22 in addition to the 130 days in 2020-21.

With many of our team at commUnity+ providing vital frontline community services, we have continued to learn about and work to overcome the rising impacts of COVID-19 on the people living across Melbourne's west and north-west including exacerbated mental health issues, increased financial stress, difficulties in engagement including technology, additional barriers facing CALD communities including employment security, and burnout and exhaustion³.

We know our services needed to ensure that 'people' are at the centre and that we respond to their needs and preferences with flexibility and coordination, and we connect with service partners beyond commUnity+ scope. Our services must be culturally safe and focus on prioritising choice, self-determination, ownership and empowerment.

This year an independent review highlighted that the challenges we have face as an Adult Education provider are widespread, and we have charted a plan to strengthen engagement, participation and outcomes for our student participants. This included Education programs shifting focus to settlement, foundation and employment themes to better meet the needs of students based on their entry point. Students' experiences were enriched by experiences across complementary commUnity+ services.

The voices and needs of people living in one of Australia's of diverse communities are being increasingly reflected in our work, informed by the ReConnect project, mapping client journeys, and the data and information we collect as we build an evidence base to measure progress and impact.

³ Interviews on the frontline.

We are determined to strengthen our financial and resourcing sustainability and continuously review and improve our operations to ensure that the continuity and development of our staff and services are less dependent upon program-specific, term-based funding.

I reflect on a year of incredible resilience across our staff, volunteers and Board, stakeholders, partners and communities. We know a healthy, high performing organisation will deliver greater impact for the communities, families and people we service. Our community services and programs have never been more vital as reflected in the 2021 census findings for people living in Melbourne's west and northwest. Staff have not wavered in their commitment to supporting our clients, students and participants.

All levels of government have continued to provide exceptional support over the year, including vital continuity funding and capacity building funding during COVID-19. This has made a difference in many ways during these challenging times including retaining staff, supporting online delivery, reducing our client waiting lists, and more.

The Board of Directors lead by Chair Susanne Legena are great leaders in their own right, and wonderful mentors, thank you.

Finally, each and every day, I go to work excited by how our people are helping to improve the lives of people in the communities we serve. Each day, I finish work reflecting on something amazing that has happened across the organisation whether it be how colleagues have supported a student, visitor, participant or client, or each other, their team or the organisation. Thank you to each and every staff member and volunteer.

Education Services

commUnity+ is a respected community education and training provider with a proud thirty year history providing employment, foundation, and settlement programs.



The Education team continued to operate with restricted onsite access during 2021-22. In the context of the pandemic, commUnity+ maintained blended program delivery and kept students engaged via several methods including conferencing, eLearning, email and phone support, and self-paced learning resources.



While education services gradually returned onsite in 2022, we continued with the blended program delivery model that was implemented in response to the pandemic. This innovative service provision accommodated student needs and ensured individual education and employment aspirations were realised.

Adult Migrant English Program

The Adult Migrant English Program provides English language tuition to eligible migrants and members of communities new to Australia. Students learn foundation language and settlement skills, which enable economic and social participation. Program hours were recently uncapped, which means students can now study to vocational rather than functional-level English.

Throughout 2021-22, the Adult Migrant English Program moved between classroom-based and virtual delivery. Digital platforms and self-paced learning resources were used for the first half of the year.

During term one 2022, commUnity+ offered classes using a 'three-hour block model', with students onsite for a maximum of three hours each week. This was gradually increased to full time. Once onsite, teachers continued to embrace diverse teaching methods, for example, using singing to build everyday vocabulary among new students, and newspaper articles to help advanced students learn grammar.

Across all classes, games were a particularly popular way of enhancing speaking skills. The online learning platform, Kahoot, was also a favourite as it is engaging, fun and inclusive.





As restrictions eased, teachers embraced the opportunity to undertake excursions to provide students with cultural and settlement experiences. Destinations included the Melbourne CBD, the Melbourne Museum and the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Holistic student welfare remained a focus throughout 2021-22, with many commUnity+ partners providing support, including:

- Brimbank City Council coordinated the Living in Your Neighbourhood program and students visited council facilities to find out about available services.
- Migrant Resource Centre North West Region Settlement Services Officers attended classes to provide settlement and welfare advice.

- Services Australia delivered presentations about allowances, subsidies and related services.
- The Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre held sessions on fines and infringements, motor vehicle accidents and tenancy issues.
- The Western Bulldogs Community Foundation ran an employment program to help students explore education and employment pathways.
- Victoria University students undertook practical placements and taught Adult Migrant English Program students both online and onsite.

Truong

In 2019, not long after arriving in Australia, Truong started Adult Migrant English Program classes in St Albans. At the time, he did not speak English well and a family member helped him enrol.

When Truong first started classes with his teacher, Patrick, he was helped with grammar, speaking skills and career-planning skills. His class went on excursions to the Melbourne CBD and had a BBQ in a park. This helped Truong feel settled in Australia as he began to understand Australian culture.

When Truong reached the milestone of 250 hours of education, Patrick asked if he would like to do the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training class. His enthusiastic response was, "Yes!"

During the class, Truong learnt job interview skills and résumé writing. He also did a practical placement at Woolworths.

Truong joined the Youth Class, which he enjoyed because it focused on communication with other students his age. The Youth Class was provided online while restrictions were in place, and teacher, Sindy, reviewed each lesson with grammar games.

In December 2021, Truong was granted Australian permanent residency and he applied for the Health Service Assistant course at Victoria University. During his studies, he learnt about the Australian health system, communication, transporting patients to different departments, and healthy food groups. In July 2022, Truong will undertake a three-week placement at the Northern Hospital.

In 2023, Truong will apply for Australian citizenship, as he is keen to become a true-blue Aussie.

Truong says, "I am very thankful to the commUnity+ team and the teachers for helping me to pursue further study and future employment."

We are proud of Truong and delighted that he has found a pathway to his preferred occupation and is on his way to making a valuable contribution to society.

Skills First

Funded by the State Government of Victoria, the Skills First program provides subsidised education and training for eligible students. commUnity+ programs – predominantly English as an Additional Language – are delivered predominantly in North and West Melbourne, with an outreach program in South-East Melbourne.

commUnity+ Skills First delivery locations during 2021-22 included Coburg, St Albans, Taylors Lakes and Forest Hill. Qualifications included Course in Initial English as an Additional Language and Certificate IV in English as an Additional Language.

The program was delivered remotely during the first half of the year and students impressed their teachers with the confident adoption of technology. During November 2021, classrooms once more came alive with onsite delivery following the lifting of restrictions.

Teachers demonstrated exceptional commitment to delivering quality education and participated in professional development sessions to familiarise themselves with new digital platforms. Staff worked tirelessly to adapt classroom-based sessions for online delivery via Google Classroom, Moodle, and Zoom, and participated in weekly collaborative meetings to discuss blended program delivery and creatively resolve challenges.

Administration staff supported students and teachers and delivered outstanding service to the community, printing and posting thousands of self-paced learning resources each week. They effectively engaged with our community and responded promptly to community needs.

Business continuity support

commUnity+ appreciates the support of the State Government of Victoria who provided business continuity grants over the past two years which enabled continued service provision to continue and vital staff retention.



Ophelia

*Ophelia was referred to commUnity+ by her employment services provider. Administration staff contacted Ophelia for a new client assessment and, while she was initially apprehensive, it was clear she wanted to find her pathway but was unsure where to start.

Ophelia's English language skills and digital literacy were limited and her dream was to learn how to communicate and write without error and finalise her medical receptionist course.

Ophelia started classes and engaged with the other students while participating in activities and discussions. She would constantly ask questions about how to improve her speaking skills and spent hours at home with her classmates practising interview techniques.

Ophelia was keen and capable and, after developing an interest in the construction sector, she enrolled in a traffic controller course. She also completed a computer course at St Albans Library and searched for online classes to improve her skills.

Ophelia is due to complete a Certificate II in English as an Additional Language in 2022 and would like to progress to Certificate III in English as an Additional Language.

From being a student who was reluctant to enrol in the Skills First program, Ophelia has become a prominent advocate of commUnity+ as she encourages her fellow students to develop their skills. She also represents our vision to help every student find their pathway.

As teachers and part of the commUnity+ team, we aim to see our students develop in all areas. As Joyce Meyer stated, "Teachers can change lives with just the right mix of chalk and challenges." In our case, it is a mixture of whiteboard markers and challenges!

*Name has been changed

Skills for Education and Employment

The Skills for Education and Employment program supports eligible employment seekers with limited digital, language, literacy, and numeracy skills who are experiencing labour market barriers. The program is particularly suited for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, mature-aged students, and young people.

To improve access and participation, the Skills for Education and Employment program now has uncapped hours for two years, and rolling intakes. A greater focus on digital literacy has also been incorporated.

Development of knowledge and skills based on a planned program of education and training enables students to make informed career and course decisions and effectively navigate pathways to education and employment.

The team is made up of ten teachers with the expertise and professional knowledge to deliver the curriculum and support learners on their journeys. The program focuses on professional development, enabling teachers to improve their pedagogical practices in the rapidly changing educational landscape, particularly during the pandemic.

Adult Community and Further Education

Adult Community and Further Education comprises pre-accredited programs that are short modular courses which create pathways for learners to further education and employment. Programs include digital literacy, employment, language, literacy, and numeracy.

During the 2021-22 financial year, the Adult, Community and Further Education Board supported service providers including commUnity+ – in the context of the coronavirus pandemic and restricted onsite delivery – to focus on curriculum development, marketing, and professional development, rather than provide the full allocated hours.



Vera

Vera is an eager, positive and organised learner who studies Course in English as an Additional Language full-time (25 hours a week). She is a diligent student and constantly seeks to improve her digital, language, literacy and numeracy skills.

Vera migrated to Australia from Serbia many years ago and used to work in a Toyota factory. Most of the other workers were also from Former Yugoslavia, so Vera communicated with them almost exclusively in Serbo-Croatian.

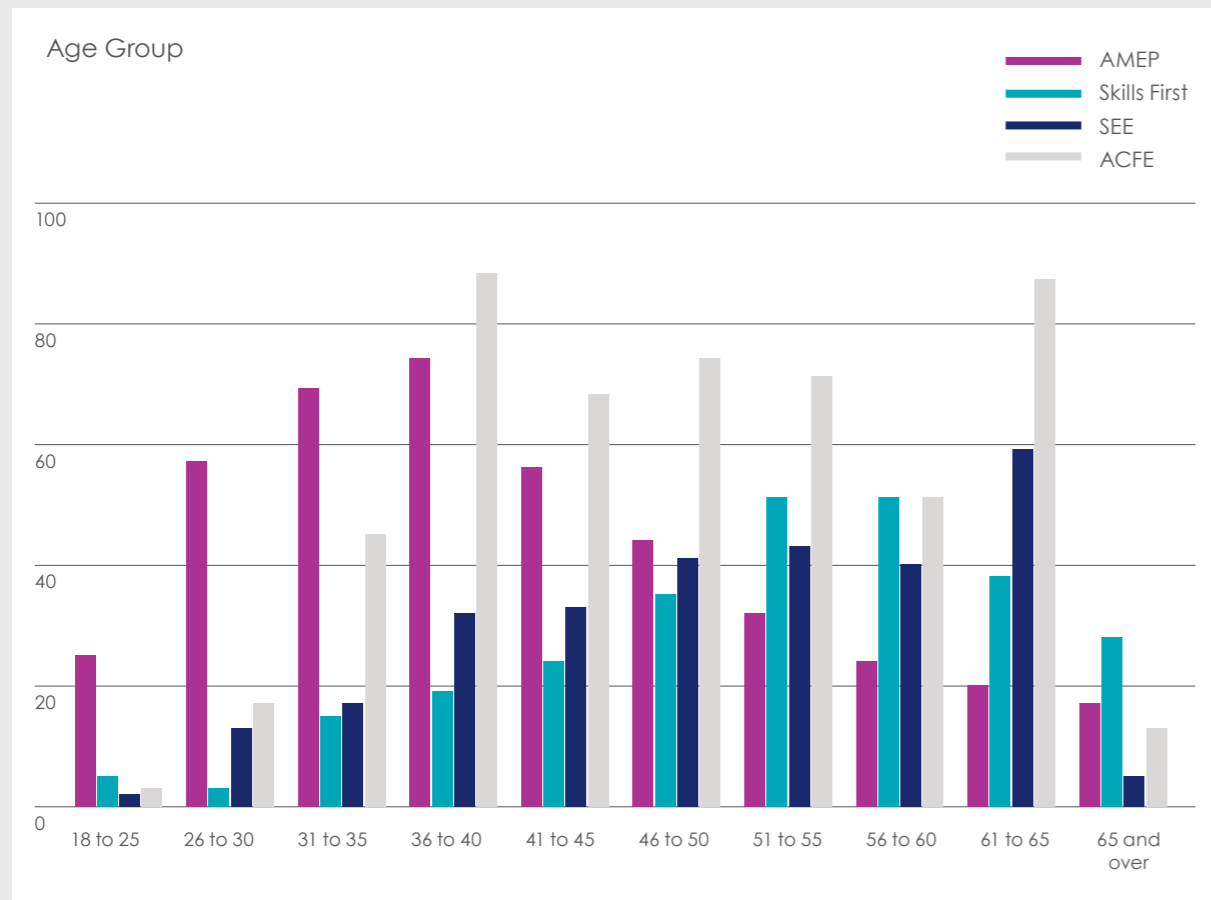
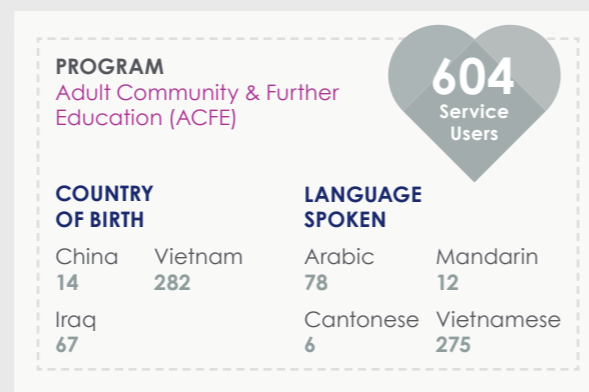
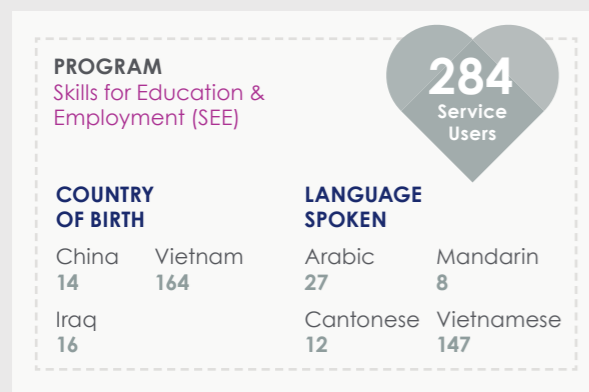
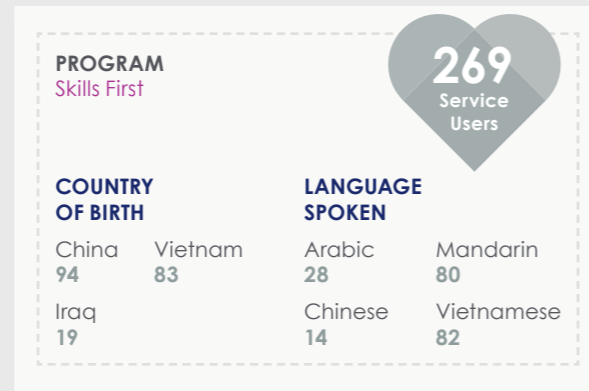
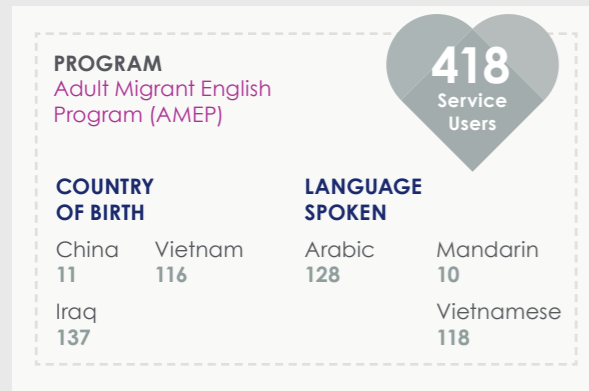
As Vera started her studies with commUnity+ during the fully remote period of delivery, she was initially anxious that her allotted 650 hours of tuition would pass and she would not gain what she desired from the course. The teacher reassured Vera that considering her fantastic efforts to always do her homework on time, as well as regularly revise the learned content and seek specific feedback to identify areas of improvement, she would gain a lot from her education.

When onsite classes started, Vera immediately felt more relaxed and made many new friends. Vera became particularly good friends with one of her fellow classmates and they both enrolled in a Certificate III in Non-Urgent Patient Transport. Vera says, "If not for English classes in the program, I would not have been ready to commence this course."

When classes transitioned back to partially onsite delivery, Vera's confidence with speaking and listening improved dramatically. In class, she was also able to connect with people from different cultural backgrounds (Vietnam, Laos, Lebanon and Ethiopia).

Vera is due to complete her Course in English as an Additional Language in 2022 and would love to progress to a certificate. She is currently also enrolled in the Digital Essentials Level 1 course. All of the above-mentioned courses, and Vera's excellent work ethic and desire to continually improve will, undoubtedly, contribute towards her gaining fulfilling long-term employment.

Service Users 2021-22



Australian Vocational Education and Training student outcomes 2021

The Australian Vocational Education and Training student outcomes 2021 report provides a summary of the outcomes and satisfaction of students who completed nationally recognised Vocational Education and Training during 2020 – based on data collected in mid 2021. The figures are derived from the National Student Outcomes Survey, which is an annual survey of Vocational Education and Training students.

Information is presented for commUnity+ qualification completers, that is students undertaking either accredited curriculum or Training Package qualification

commUnity+ Qualification completers

- Achieved their main reason for doing the training 88.7%.
- Satisfied with their training overall 76.2%.
- Recommend training provider 75.2%.
- Satisfied with support from training provider 77.4%. Refers to online transition during coronavirus pandemic.

Data provided by National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Looking Forward

In early 2022, commUnity+ engaged Social Ventures Australia to undertake an independent review of the Education portfolio. The review outcomes will underpin the 2022-23 strategic direction of the Education portfolio. Our aims are to:

- Refresh the Education portfolio mission, vision, strategy, and program mix to grow impact and sustainability.
- Improve measurement and evaluation strategies, including continuous improvement, data collection, and monitoring, to facilitate ongoing portfolio improvement.
- Refine financial and program planning, modelling, and management to improve financial sustainability.
- Improve the portfolio's effectiveness, encompassing business development and management, and referrals.

Legal Services

Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre (BMCLC) is a commUnity+ program that provides free legal services to people who live, work or study in the Brimbank, Melton and Bacchus Marsh communities. BMCLC's key areas of legal practice include family law, family violence, infringements, criminal law, tenancy, debt matters, insurance disputes and motor vehicle accidents.



**BRIMBANK MELTON
COMMUNITY
LEGAL CENTRE**

In 2021-22, BMCLC continued to develop and grow capacity to deliver high-impact legal assistance through specialised generalist and family law teams, each headed by an experienced lead lawyer.



This structure has allowed us to provide better support and supervision to our lawyers, and to gradually increase the complexity of the legal matters we can assist with. This ultimately means a better experience for our clients, who receive 'end-to-end' legal assistance, including in contested matters and matters requiring court representation.

In 2021-22, we transitioned to an online case management system, which greatly improved the efficiency of our file administration and data collection processes. This increased the time that our lawyers were able to spend directly assisting clients.

Services and Projects

The core funding for the majority of our services is from the National Legal Assistance Partnership, with funding coming from both the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments. With this funding, we provided a number of generalist and family law clinics and provided ongoing assistance and representation to clients experiencing disadvantage.

In addition to our core services, we delivered a number of additional projects, detailed below.

Family Law and Access Project

In 2021-22, we continued the Family Law Access Project. This collaborative partnership with Women's Legal Service Victoria, WEstjustice and Barwon Community Legal Centres aims to:

- Increase access to holistic legal assistance in family law for disadvantaged clients in the West (Metropolitan and Regional Victoria), and
- Provide access to high-quality, interdisciplinary family law legal advice and assistance.

Funding provided by the Victorian Government helped address the needs and gaps in family law services in the West, particularly for those experiencing family violence. Throughout the year, we gradually increased the number and complexity of the matters managed by our family law team, and successfully assisted a number of clients with contested family law matters.

Melton Family Violence Project

In recognition of the high rates of family violence and unmet legal need in the region, in 2021-22 BMCLC was provided with additional Victorian Government funding to provide legal assistance to victim-survivors of family violence in Melton. With this funding, we delivered additional legal services and engaged with local service-providers to ensure they were able to effectively identify and refer legal issues experienced by victim-survivors of family violence, including family law, tenancy, debt and infringements issues related to their experience of family violence.

Duty Lawyer Services

BMCLC's duty lawyers provide legal assistance in family violence intervention order matters at Sunshine and Bacchus Marsh Magistrates' Courts, primarily to victim-survivors of family violence. Our duty lawyers provide 'on-the-day' advice and court representation, which helps clients navigate the often stressful and complex court process and ensures that their safety is prioritised. Our duty lawyer services are funded through our core funding (at Sunshine) and by the Victorian Government (at Bacchus Marsh).

Early Resolution Services

In May 2021, we introduced the Early Resolution Service at Sunshine Court, providing pre-court assistance to clients in family violence intervention order matters, and helping them resolve their matters before the day of court. Victorian Government funding was provided for services at a number of Victorian Magistrates' Courts locations and has been extended for 2022-23 following a positive evaluation showing the benefits this project had for clients, service providers and the courts.

Over the first year of this project we saw first-hand the benefits of our clients engaging with lawyers at an earlier stage in their legal matters, helping to resolve matters at an earlier stage and reducing the stress of attending court for victim-survivors of family violence.

Health Justice Partnerships

BMCLC lawyers provide legal assistance through our health justice partnerships with Sunshine Hospital and Melton Health and Community Service, both of which are funded by the Victorian Government. Through these partnerships, we work alongside allied health services to provide holistic wrap-around support

to clients to ensure that they receive assistance with legal and non-legal issues.

Building and developing connections with staff during periods of remote service delivery was a challenge, but our lawyers developed and strengthened these relationships through regularly meeting with different teams, delivering presentations about our service, and providing training on identifying and referring legal issues.

Legally Assisted Family Dispute Resolution

During the year, we continued our partnership with the Sunshine Family Relationship Centre and Monash Law Clinics to provide legal assistance to separated parents undergoing family law mediation. This project brought significant positive impacts for clients, with very high rates of resolution, which prevented families going through the unnecessary stress of court processes.

While our involvement in this project is currently funded from our core funding, we are working with our project partners to develop an evidence base on the impact of this project to seek funding to expand this service.

Community Legal Education and Professional Development

In 2021-22, we provided community legal education to groups in our local community, as well as commUnity+ Education students. Topics included road rules and infringements, and family law and family violence. Our focus was on reaching new migrants who may not have had a good understanding of their legal rights in Australia. We also ran a number of our regular divorce workshops in English and Vietnamese to help people complete their own divorce applications.

In addition to services to the community, we provided professional development sessions for professionals working in our partner organisations and local service providers to help them better identify and refer the legal issues experienced by their clients. We received great feedback from participants, with most reporting that they learnt a lot from the sessions, and that they were more likely to refer clients to our service.

Advocacy and Law Reform

As well as assisting clients with their individual legal issues, BMCLC is committed to advocating for systemic law reform to help effect broader change that will benefit our clients and help to avoid many of their legal issues from occurring in the first place.

Over the 2021-22 year, BMCLC engaged in a number of advocacy activities, including:

- A comprehensive submission to the Victorian Parliament's Inquiry into the Victorian Criminal Justice System. We advocated for government reform and funding to better divert vulnerable people out of the criminal justice system. We also highlighted the growing issue of the criminalisation of female

victim-survivors of family violence, and encouraged the government to introduce better processes to identify and support victim-survivors of family violence at an early stage.

- Local media awareness on the issue of rental stress in the Brimbank and Melton regions.
- Making significant contributions to the Federation of Community Legal Centre's advocacy to the Magistrates' Court of Victoria to ensure accessible and fair practices for the most vulnerable members of our society.
- Contributing to a number of sector-wide advocacy activities through our active membership of working groups alongside other Community Legal Centres.

Sally

Sally* moved to Australia ten years ago and speaks limited English.

Her ex-husband perpetrated ongoing family violence against her and their young child. After separating five years ago, Sally and her ex-husband had an informal parenting arrangement where he would generally spend time with their child every second weekend.

Sally has a serious mental health condition and during the extended Victorian lockdowns her mental health deteriorated. She was involuntarily admitted to hospital for mental health care for a short period. During this time, child protection workers temporarily placed their child in the care of her ex-husband. After Sally was released from hospital, she sought to have their child returned to her, but her ex-husband refused and denied her any contact with their child. He applied for a family violence intervention order against Sally

on behalf of himself and their child, and made a number of allegations of family violence that Sally told us were completely fabricated. At this point, Sally sought our assistance.

We tried to negotiate these matters with Sally's ex-husband's lawyer, but they refused to allow Sally any time with the child. We filed a Family Court application on Sally's behalf, which was ultimately successful, and interim court orders were made that enabled Sally to spend substantial time with their child. Final orders allowed her to spend ongoing substantial and significant time with the child. Following this, Sally's ex-husband withdrew his intervention order application against Sally.

*Name has been changed

During 2021-22, BMCLC:

ASSISTED 1,599 CLIENTS:

73%

were experiencing financial hardship

40%

spoke a language other than English as their first language

32%

were experiencing, or at risk of, family violence

13%

were experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

Julia

Julia* is a victim-survivor of family violence and works as a nurse. Following a family violence incident where her partner strangled her to the point of unconsciousness in front of her daughter, police were called by a neighbour and attended her property.

When police arrived, Julia was understandably highly traumatised and disorientated, having just regained consciousness. Despite her being visibly distressed, the police responded to Julia in a very heavy handed and poor way that failed to understand the reasons why she was acting in that way. This included them telling her that she was "acting like a child" (which we later witnessed when reviewing the body-worn camera footage from the police).

The situation escalated when a friend of Julia's attended the premises and tried to physically retaliate against Julia's partner. When the police intervened, Julia tried to protect her friend and de-escalate the situation by attempting to get between her friend and the police, leading to a minor scuffle with police.

Julia tried to apologise to the police officers, but they told her, "Don't say sorry to me again, put your hands behind your back!" and they handcuffed and arrested her. Julia was charged with criminal offences including assaulting a police officer, which placed her at risk of a minimum sentence of six months' imprisonment, and resulted in suspension of her nurse's registration pending the outcome of the charges. Julie sought our assistance to contest the charges so she could return to work.

We negotiated with the police, arguing that Julia was in a heightened state due to the severe family violence she had just experienced, and that the poor police response led directly to her reaction. Eventually, the police agreed to withdraw some of the charges, and recommend Julia for diversion for the remaining charges. This allowed her to avoid a criminal record and to return to work as a nurse.

*Name has been changed

PROVIDED:

1,474

legal advices

250

family violence intervention order duty lawyer services

28

legally assisted family law mediation services

378

ongoing representation services.

Looking Forward

We have a number of exciting plans for the 2022-23 year and beyond, including:

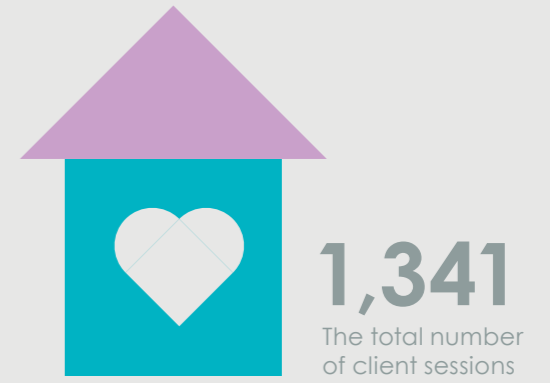
- The commencement of an outreach clinic at commUnity+ new premises at the Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre, where we will be developing partnerships with, and working alongside, the co-located services including community+ Education, and Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand.
- Working alongside, and developing collaborations with, the new Sunshine Specialist Family Violence Court, and the Brimbank Melton Orange Door Network.
- Further development of our data collection and reporting processes underpinning our evidence-based practice, and contributing to the development of an organisation-wide outcomes framework.
- Conducting a legal-needs analysis for the Brimbank and Melton regions, utilising service, census and other data to better understand and advocate for the legal needs of those communities.
- Reviewing our legal service guidelines to ensure that we are having the greatest possible impact, and that we are reaching the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community.
- Working alongside our colleagues in other commUnity+ programs to develop an organisation-wide integrated community services model. This will ensure that we provide person-centred services that meet the needs of our community, and provide targeted early intervention with clients to address their legal and non-legal issues at the earliest possible stage.

Children's Contact Services

The Children's Contact Services (CCS) operates across the Western and Inner Regions of Melbourne, from practices located in Brunswick West and Deer Park at commUnity+ main premises. The CCS provides a child-centred, safe and neutral service to separated families.



The key focus of Children's Contact Service (CCS) is to enable children of separated parents to have safe contact with a parent or significant other who they do not live with. The service offers Onsite and Virtual Supervised Visits in situations where there is a perceived or actual risk to the child, and a Changeover Service where staff facilitate the handover of a child to prevent the child being exposed to conflict between the parents.



The 2021-22 year was extremely busy for the CCS program, with capacity building federal government funding received to reduce waitlists for families needing our services. Our team worked hard to recruit and train new staff, develop new rosters to increase capacity, find alternative spaces to deliver services and manage the many additional hours of work required before each new family attended their first visit. The team put in a huge effort throughout the year and the results speak for themselves.

Waitlists reduced dramatically across both sites for all types of service provision. The waitlist at the Deer Park centre reduced from eight months (2020-21) to one month (2021-22). The waitlist at the Brunswick West centre came down from six months (2020-21) to one month (2021- 22).

Although the increased clients and services are important, it is even more important to see that our clients benefit from their experience of using our service. The CCS is unique in its position within commUnity+ as our clients attend on the basis of a court-ordered requirement. Our staff work hard to engage with clients in a neutral and non-judgemental manner so we can establish relationships that allow us to work together for the best outcome for the child. All our clients are asked to provide feedback, which is given to the Attorney General Department at the end of service delivery.

Across both sites, session numbers in the six months from January to June 2022 almost **doubled** due to initiatives to best use the additional funding to grow capacity.

- 242** Brunswick West sessions
July to December 2021
- 409** Brunswick West sessions
January to June 2022
- 229** Deer Park sessions
July to December 2021
- 461** Deer Park sessions
January to June 2022

2021-22 Client Satisfaction

Brunswick West - **100%** of clients reported that they felt supported throughout the service provision.

Deer Park - **98%** of clients reported that they felt supported throughout the service provision.



Care and perseverance is paramount

The CCS team take great satisfaction in knowing we made a difficult time just a little easier for many of our families.

CCS has a formal feedback mechanism. Client feedback illustrates the importance of our role.

We look forward to continuing to make a difference to families that are experiencing separation. We feel humbled and privileged by the opportunity to deliver this vital service to a broader section of the community.

The service was very beneficial in assisting a safe and secure environment for the children to build a relationship with the other parent. The staff were always professional, supportive of the process and made a very difficult situation less stressful and a more positive experience for the children.

The service was very good for my child and me. My relationship became very good because of the service. I am very thankful for that.

I am forever grateful to you both. No words can express my gratitude!!! THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING!!! Thank you so much!!! What you have done will not go unnoticed. Thank you so much. We love you so much.

I felt supported and that my child was completely heard, supported, and seen.

Just wanted to say thank you so much again for today's call and outcome, the best news I've had in a long time - your work is truly appreciated. All the best, have a great weekend.

I think the ladies are wonderful and it was a relief to know that my child was taken care of. The staff were quick to see if she was not okay and that is fundamental for us. I am very satisfied with the service. I cannot thank you enough.

Thank you Ruth and team. The visit with my children was an amazing, blessed experience. Thank you for helping us reunite.

The children have been welcomed with open arms and lots of smiles. We always leave on a positive note and have found what could have been a nerve-wracking experience to be very relaxed. Thank you.

My child was nervous, and the staff really helped her. Thank you.

Best wishes and thank you for all your service and kindness to us both.

The commUnity+ staff were very supportive in enabling my access to my child. I am really pleased with the service they give.

Looking Forward



commUnity+ will establish a third Children's Contact Service in 2022-23. In response to the funding made available in the 2021-22 Federal Budget, commUnity+ successfully applied to establish a new CCS in a new northwest Melbourne location.

This is an excellent opportunity for commUnity+ to extend our reach to meet the needs of more members of our community. Although the establishment of a new CCS is a big task, it is one we have undertaken before and is an opportunity to use our experience and expertise to create a vital new service.

We will start work on the project towards the end of 2022, with service delivery expected to commence in early 2023. Exciting times for commUnity+ and, most importantly, our clients.

Neighbourhood House

2021-22 was an exceptional year for the commUnity+ Neighbourhood House.



On top of our existing programs, 12 new regular and ongoing programs commenced and almost 250 new community members connected with the organisation through the Neighbourhood House. In a year that had us in lockdown and closed for three months this was an outstanding accomplishment.



A further three seasonal programs were delivered through grant funding received from the Federal Government Department of Social Services: Swimmin' Women, Wayapa Wuurkk, and Circus Fit. The team also delivered nine Community Information Sessions and hosted three excursions.

Through partnership with our peak body, Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, our Neighbourhood House is a provider of the Safe Seats, Safe Kids program and is a Power Saving Bonus provider. Both programs provide vital services to our community, with free child restraint fittings offered fortnightly at our Deer Park site, and help provided to access the \$250 government rebate for electricity account holders.

Outside of formal programs, and with an open-door policy, the team also offered support, guidance and advice for community members looking for all types of assistance. It's hard to predict when and how our team may be needed, but it is rarely a boring (or quiet!) day. We have started referring to the Neighbourhood House team as 'human google' and are extremely proud of their ability to deliver exceptional customer service and community support, and provide everyone who walks in the door with positive experiences.

"I would be lost without the neighbourhood house. I feel so welcome here and it is my only place to meet people and socialise."

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

COVID-19 and the New Normal

Across 2021-22, our Neighbourhood House provided essential response, recovery, and reconnection services to our community due to the ongoing and continually evolving COVID-19 pandemic. We are proud of the key role we played to keep our community supported and connected.

In October 2021, we hosted a State Government 'Neighbourhood Pop Up' immunisation clinic onsite at Deer Park. These pop-ups provided harder-to-reach communities with access to COVID-19 vaccines in a safe and familiar local environment.

Over the six months from July to December 2021, our Neighbourhood House Team, in partnership with The Tin Shed St Albans and Brimbank City Council, distributed up to 800kg of food relief to families experiencing disadvantage each month. These food hampers provided an essential lifeline to community members.

As programs and face-to-face services returned to our Deer Park site, staff continued to show amazing flexibility and adaptability to constantly changing restrictions, requirements and safety measures.

With the introduction of 'proof of vaccine' certificates, we found our community in desperate need of support to access their certificates. Our team was able to provide this service by installing Vic Service Apps, creating MyGov accounts, and printing and laminating vaccination certificates. The team supported more than 100 community members in this way. For community members with limited access to technology this was invaluable.



As the community adapted to living with COVID-19, so did the Neighbourhood House programs and services. Our focus going into 2022 was to continue to provide essential services and support the community to access accurate and up-to-date COVID-19 information, but also to ensure our social and recreational programs continued. Like many workplaces, in 2022 we were affected by rolling staff shortages and illness, which impacted our ability to consistently deliver programs. Thanks to our team's flexibility and our community's understanding, we were able to continue to keep people active, engaged and connected.

We know this pandemic will most likely continue to throw us a few curve balls but, in many ways, we emerged from it stronger, more resilient and more flexible.



"Before COVID-19, isolation was a big part of my life. During COVID-19 it got worse for everyone and then I decided I had to do something. And since I did and came here, the isolation has gone."

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

ReConnect

In March 2022, the Neighbourhood House Team embarked on the 'ReConnect Project'. The project was designed as a COVID-19 recovery community engagement project to support the Deer Park community to reconnect with each other and discover, or rediscover, Neighbourhood House offerings and community assets. The project was undertaken on behalf of the Neighbourhood House by Tracey Oliver, Community Development Specialist and Consultant.

The objective of the project was the engagement and recruitment of community members to take part in the design and implementation of co-produced community activities within our Neighbourhood House.

Our objectives were to:

- Expand the reach and audience of the commUnity+ Neighbourhood House.
- Contribute to the broader understanding of the various needs of our diverse community.
- Provide the opportunity to shape and lead community-driven activity.
- Inform our future community, person-centred engagement, and service delivery design for commUnity+.

Our engagement strategies included a community survey, pop-up community activations, and a community visioning workshop.



Pop-Up Community Engagement initiatives were hosted at the following sites:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Ballarat Road Shop Strip | Deer Park Cricket Club |
| Deer Park Seniors Cairnlea Community Centre | Bunnings Caroline Springs |
| Deer Park Guides | Deer Park Library |
| Deer Park Club | Hunt Club |

Community members also participated in the community visioning workshop. The workshop was underpinned by principles that acknowledged:

- Participant rights to be involved in decision-making that affects them.
- That participants' roles were central to the outcome.
- That participants' input would influence future decision-making.

Central to the workshop were the questions:

- "What would you like to see happen in Deer Park?"
- "How do we get started on this action?"

Through a range of interactive methods, 29 projects, activities and concepts were generated across four themes: Events, Advocacy, Physical, and Programs. After further exploration and group activity, a vote resulted in the following most popular ideas:

1. Community market – Event
2. Improve public transport – Advocacy
3. Music hour/Demo Club/Skill Share – Programs
4. Ownership of public space – Physical and Advocacy

From the concepts developed through ReConnect and recommendations arising, the Neighbourhood House Team committed to immediately actioning several ideas. This includes the installation of a Little Book Exchange, the establishment of a Deer Park Community Garden, and the hosting of a Community Market in November. Many more are in planning stages for activation next year.

Michael

Life hasn't always been easy for Michael. He has battled with both his physical and mental health. By 2015 the impacts of anxiety and depression meant he found himself barely leaving his home.



Approaching his 30's, Michael decided he had to make change. With the help of his cohealth support worker he connected with our Neighbourhood House.

Our Neighbourhood House Manager, Emma Price, can still recall the initial phone call Michael and his support worker made to the Neighbourhood House. "Michael was nervous and quiet. He was very open about how anxious he was and still wasn't sure that he would come along". Accompanied by his support worker he attended his first fitness program the next week. Since then, there has been no looking back. Since that day Michael has rarely missed a class. He attends two to three programs a week including our Switch to Fit and Zumba classes. "He is almost unrecognisable to the first time I met him. He is confident, he takes a leadership role in setting up and packing up for classes and is a hugely

popular and active member of the Neighbourhood House".

What makes Michael's story even more remarkable, is that most weeks he walks the 40 minutes to the centre. Not even the wet and cold Melbourne winter conditions have stopped him.

The Neighbourhood House Team are proud of the role they can play in enabling Michael and others experiencing barriers to participation to access social and recreational opportunities, but more importantly we are proud of Michael for his commitment and drive, despite any challenges he might face.

From Michael, "The Neighbourhood House has been really supportive of me in my personal journey to better myself. They have been supportive with multiple and different things. The staff, the instructors and other community members are great. They inspire me to come more and more each week"

"commUnity+ is a real support network and provides a true safe space for everyone. I'm truly grateful to everyone I've met here".



External onsite partners:
Community Collective Support Pathways (Psychology), Parents Next

Program partners:
Reclink, Brimbank City Council, IPC Health, Bunnings, Neighbourhood House Vic, Network West

Neighbourhood House Participants

310 program participants

50% users over 55 years old

86% female

36% live in Deer Park

Representing 49 different countries of birth other than Australia

Around one-third self-identify as having a disability

The Neighbourhood House is grateful for the continued financial support of the Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Brimbank City Council. In the 2022-23 FY our work will also be supported by a successful grant application from the Melbourne Airport Community Fund.

"I would be lost without the neighbourhood house. I feel so welcome here and it is my only place to meet people and socialise."

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

"I came here for a community lunch my neighbour told me about and now come for the exercise classes and the knitting group. I really look forward to coming."

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Looking Forward

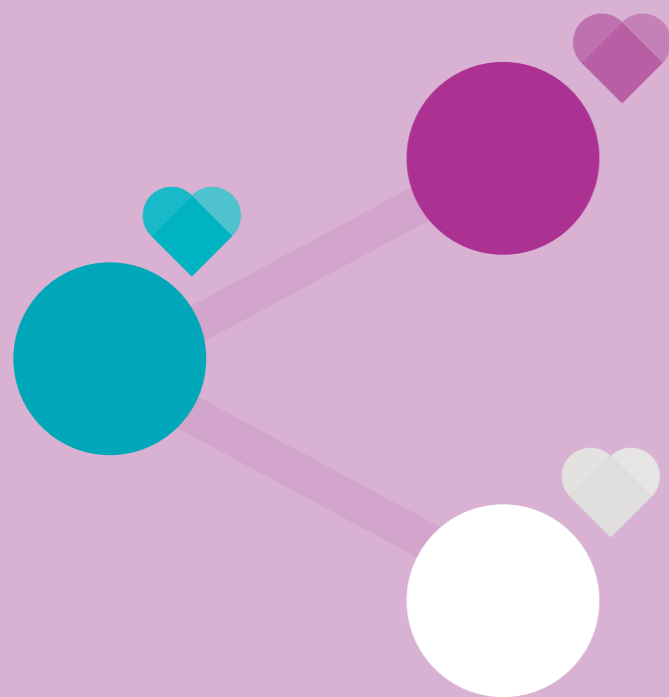
Key priorities for the Neighbourhood House in 2022-23 include:

- Implementing the ReConnect recommendations.
- Building upon existing, and creating new, partnerships to support the development of new community projects, initiatives and programs.
- Reflecting upon and celebrating commUnity+ 40-year history.
- Embedding our learning from the pandemic – resilience, flexibility and adaptability.
- Continuing to create equitable and accessible opportunities for all community members to be engaged, connected and empowered.



Shared Services

Shared Services had a year of focus, reinvigoration and adaptation.



Shared Services adjusted to our new environment and found new and innovative ways to work in a hybrid setting. The ongoing changes in work from home arrangements became 'business as usual' and we continued to innovate in this space. Our goals for the year changed throughout, and we implemented continuous development initiatives to improve data collection, develop governance practices, and improve service delivery.



Our facilities saw some regular uplifts, with more to come. Our Deer Park site launched a beautiful courtyard space to sit, relax and rejuvenate in. While not ideal during the winter months, this is a gorgeous new area for all commUnity+ members to utilise during the warmer months. Come on down and check it out.

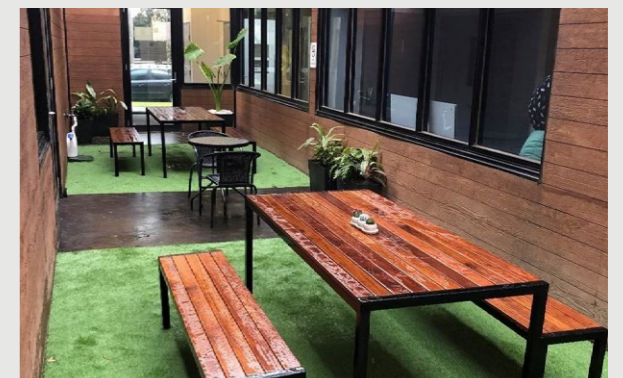
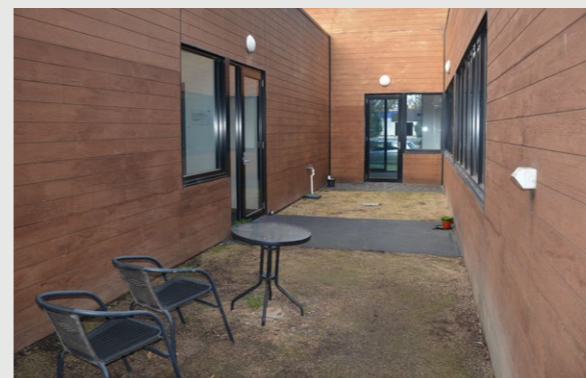
Finance had a busy year of reconciliations and invoicing, and further developed our business modelling capabilities. After an overall positive year, resulting in a minor surplus, we are excited for the next few years to come, and further investment in our organisation. Working online meant the team was able to be flexible and efficient.

During the year, we worked on developing our new Hub at the Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre (BAWC). The centre will open in September and we will move in and fit it out towards the end of 2022. Education classes and Legal Outreach classes will start in January 2023.

We established a Risk and Compliance function and staff during the year to deepen our focus on risk and governance. Risk, business continuity and governance are key aspects of our business and we worked extensively on modernising our processes and policies.

We also improved our ICT capabilities, and engaged an organisation that provides onsite assistance with any ICT issues. Their hard work and diligence was crucial to keeping our system up and running throughout the year.

While challenging, 2021-22 was a successful year of development, adjustment and resilience. The team stayed fresh, contributed new ideas, and developed and improved our processes. We look forward to the new year with further improvements due and the new office at BAWC!





People, Culture and Wellbeing

We began 2021-22 with a hybrid approach to working arrangements. This ensured that each staff member was equipped to work in a safe space, whether onsite or remote.

Our focus was on supporting this transition by implementing systems that could be easily accessed from anywhere. Employee Portals enabled staff to access and update their data without any issues, log their time and attendance online, and keep track of their personal details, qualifications and training.

The roll out of the new Strategic Plan 2021-24 brought an enhanced focus on how each role, team and program contributes strategically to the commUnity+ vision and purpose. A performance planning and review process was introduced to support the focus on every individual working towards achieving our strategic priorities. This brought clarity, enthusiasm and energy to the team. Our approach included training on how to create SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-based) Goals based on the commUnity+ Business Plans. Coupled with this, increased opportunities to learn about and get involved in cross-program and organisation-wide initiatives was implemented.

While teams were working in a hybrid model, a focus on staff engagement was crucial to keep motivation, alignment and enthusiasm high. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, commUnity+ was able to gather as an organisation face-to-face twice during the year.

The end of year All-Staff event in December 2021 was a great opportunity for everyone to reconnect and rebuild their relationships with colleagues.

The mid-year All-Staff event held in June 2022 was an opportunity for the teams to connect with each other away from the work setting, relax and enjoy unleashing their competitive streaks with a bowling competition.

We added a new focus area – Wellbeing – to the Annual Staff Survey conducted in August 2021. The information gathered will help us understand the sentiments of staff and inform our future decisions. The overall results of the survey were similar to the previous year, which was a promising outcome considering the highly challenging environment we all worked through in the lead-up to the survey.

Based on the responses, five Key Areas were identified for immediate and continued focus:

- Continued focus on staff wellbeing.
- Support for ongoing hybrid delivery where applicable.
- More opportunities for staff engagement and collaboration.
- Opportunities for development and growth.
- Flexible and remote working opportunities.

Staff wellbeing and Mental Health Awareness were front and centre during the year. Multiple changes affected everyone's lives, both personal and professional. Wellbeing Leave was provided for all staff and was greatly appreciated.

Staff and volunteers provided the opportunity to share their wellbeing ideas online, which paved the way for our social media posts on 'Wellness Wednesday' and the 'Wellbeing Corner' in our monthly Bulletin.

The biggest challenge faced during the year was staff retention. This was felt across almost all industries and many organisations found it difficult to attract and retain talented, valuable staff. Increased efforts towards a more engaging and timely induction for new staff, and the speed of recruitment and decision-making helped commUnity+ keep on top of the challenges.

One of our greatest highlights for the year was the level of adoption of our peer-to-peer recognition scheme – APPLAUSE. APPLAUSE was introduced to create a platform where anyone could call out another staff member who



exemplified commUnity+ values, outstanding professional behaviour, work ethics and leadership. It was delightful to receive 93 nominations in only six months since its inception in November 2021. The nominated staff were recognised at our All-Staff gatherings and the feedback received was positive. It paved the way for us to create a culture of recognition of peer contribution and of appreciation for the work they do and the values they uphold.

With the return to onsite services, we anticipated the multiple challenges that staff may have faced with the introduction of updated regulatory and OHS requirements to be adhered to by clients. In response, we rolled out De-escalation and Occupational Violence Awareness and Training across all programs. This helped our staff build awareness of signs of distress, how to face challenging situations, and how to de-escalate such situations and protect themselves. Additionally, First Aid and CPR training equipped staff with hands-on skills to deal with emergencies.



Looking Forward



Investment in staff development and training will continue, with wellness the key theme.

We will progress our reconciliation journey to recognise and respect the First Peoples of this land.

Over the next year, commUnity+ is looking forward to transitioning our programs into the new Hub at the Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre, with a range of Education and Legal services to open.

We will establish a new centre for our Children's Contact Service in the North West region.

We will also focus on consolidating and improving all our facilities and equipment to ensure our physical presence and standard reflects the functional and support needs for our staff and communities.

There will be a move from our physical network drive to the cloud with an increased focus on cyber security.

Let's not forget we are turning 40! A major celebration is planned for October 2022 to celebrate commUnity+, our history and heritage and 40 years of community service provision.



Staff Spotlight



Zaklina Dimovska, EAL Teacher

Zaklina is our longest standing current staff member having started teaching with commUnity+ in 2008, back when we were known as Community West and located in a small house on Ballarat Road, Deer Park.

Zaklina is a busy mum of 3 boys (which may account for her calm approach to teaching!). She has a double degree from the University of Melbourne and, while she began her career as an Archaeologist, her heart eventually led her to teaching. "Teaching is a good fit for me", she says.

Zaklina recalls her early days of working with Community West, when there was no such thing as email – just notes posted in pigeonholes. As the organisation grew, she focused on her students while adapting to the many changes. "You work with the change that is going on around you but the focus is on the job," she says

As for the secret behind Zaklina's 14-year career with commUnity+, it's all about her colleagues and her students, many of whom have become like friends. She has learnt about their cultures and countries firsthand, come to understand new perspectives, and shared food that she had never tried before. "It opens your eyes to the world," she says. "They learn from you, and you learn from them."

Zaklina's approach to teaching is not strict. She believes in making her students feel comfortable, which allows their

confidence to develop. She likes to get to know the people she teaches, listen to their needs and understand what they want. She strives to develop lesson plans that are best suited to her students. "You need to teach them what they need to learn." And her mantra is, "Don't worry about mistakes, don't worry about how you speak, we are here to learn."

Zaklina says, "I am a quiet, people person. But when talking to students in the classroom, my introvert nature disappears. I'm an extrovert in the classroom!"

Throughout her time with commUnity+, Zaklina says she has been listened to, understood and catered for. She is thankful for the commUnity+ focus on flexibility and work-life balance because it means she can teach 2 days a week while focusing on her family. "commUnity Plus is like home, there is no reason to leave," she says. And her greatest source of pride? It's about continuing to teach and positively impact the lives of her students. "To continue to be able to do the job at the same pace and level as day one is what I am proud of."



FUN FACT

Zaklina's favourite reading genre is horror!

"Teaching is not easy but it is rewarding and great for your mental health. Even though there are challenges it keeps you going!"

Our Board



Susanne Legena
Chair

Susanne was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2016 and to the role of Chair in 2019. She is the Chair of the Governance Committee.

Susanne is the CEO of Plan International Australia and an advocate for community development, gender equality and youth participation. Susanne has previously served as Chief of Staff to the Victorian Minister for Energy, Resources and Community Development and the Arts, where she contributed to key policies on energy and climate change and led the implementation of A Fairer Victoria – a whole of government social policy action plan to address disadvantage and promote inclusion and participation.

Susanne has dedicated her career to working on social justice issues, tackling family violence, poverty, youth unemployment, and homelessness.

Susanne has a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences from Flinders University and a Master of Arts (Professional Communication) from Deakin University.



Greg Bowers

Greg was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2017 and to the role of Treasurer in 2018. He is the Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Greg is the Chief Financial Officer at Trust for Nature in Victoria, a statutory authority protecting native plants and wildlife on private land in Victoria.

Greg has extensive experience in financial management. He has overseen large-scale financial and process management at the Australian Crime Commission and PMSC.

A certified TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) teacher, Greg has worked overseas as an English teacher and is passionate about opportunities that arise through adult education. Greg brings his extensive financial and operational management experience to commUnity+.

Greg has a Bachelor of Business from Ballarat University and is a Certified Practising Accountant.



Nella Buccheri

Nella was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2016 and to the role of Deputy Chair in 2021. She is a member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Nella is the Associate Director of Legal Practice at Victoria Legal Aid. Throughout her career, Nella has developed legal expertise in criminal law and administrative law. She also has significant court advocacy experience. Nella has particular skills in exercising public power, specifically administrative law decision-making.

Nella is a resident of Melbourne's west, with a strong interest in social justice. She is an advocate for the work of commUnity+ in local communities and is committed to improving service provision in the western suburbs. Nella is particularly interested in providing better services in the Melton area for new and emerging communities and people experiencing family violence.

Nella has a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences, a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from La Trobe University and is an Australian legal practitioner.



Emma Hunt

Emma was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2020. She is a member of the Governance Committee.

Emma is working as Manager, Strategic Projects at Victoria Legal Aid (VLA). She is an experienced executive and senior lawyer with in-depth experience and proven ability to manage organisations as well as complex legal projects in the not-for-profit, community, and government sectors in Australia and overseas.

Emma's experience in leadership and management includes six years as a Co-Executive Director, Public Interest Law Clearing House (PILCH) Vic Inc. (now known as Justice Connect), seven years as a senior manager in the Department of Justice and Community Safety, and five years at VLA in senior roles.

Emma is passionate about the work of community organisations that seek to improve the lives of Victorians. Her career has been based on her belief that a strong legal assistance sector is a way of ensuring vulnerable Victorians receive the advice and help they need when engaging with the law and the justice system, in turn strengthening communities and individual agency.

Emma has a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of Arts from The University of Adelaide, and a first-class Master's degree in Criminology from The University of Melbourne. She is admitted to practise law in Victoria and holds a current practising certificate.



Olivia Joel

Olivia was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2020. She is a member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Olivia works in the Network Design and Transformation team at Australia Post and was previously a Manager at Nous Group, an international management consultancy. She is passionate about creating meaningful change through social policy and community development.

Olivia has worked with not-for-profit, government and member-based clients across a range of sectors, including education, human services, health and justice. She has worked extensively in business development, public policy, regulation, organisational performance and strategy.

Olivia has a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) and a Bachelor of Commerce (International Commerce) from Monash University and undertook postgraduate studies in globalisation and international economic law.

Olivia holds a certificate in Leading with Finance from Harvard Business School and is certified in Agile Project and Delivery Management.



Brendan Walsh

Brendan was appointed to the Board of commUnity+ in 2019. He is a member of the Governance Committee.

For more than three decades, Brendan has been a passionate and inspired contributor to non-profit organisations in Australia. His substantial experience includes roles as Senior Executive, CEO, Director, and Board Chair of a range of highly successful and strategically focused organisations. He has worked in community and social enterprises, as well as state and local governments.

Brendan is a trusted Strategy and Governance Advisor to many organisations across Australia and internationally. He has a passion for transforming organisations to better support the people and communities they serve. He also has interest and experience in helping organisations identify and seize opportunities for alliances, partnerships, and mergers.

Brendan has an MBA from the Melbourne Business School of the University of Melbourne. He is a Fellow (and Graduate) of the AICD. He holds a Diploma of Corporate Governance (AICD) as well as an Executive Certificate in Non-profit Governance from the Harvard Business School (Boston, USA).



Jackie Mead

Jackie was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2020. She is a member of the Governance Committee.

Jackie is a long-time resident of Melbourne's Inner West and has a passion for creating and supporting vibrant communities that are inclusive and compassionate at their core. She brings 15 years of not-for-profit experience, along with a background in consulting and human resources.

Jackie has a Bachelor of Commerce from Deakin University and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Melbourne (ANZSOG). Jackie has certification from the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Louise Walters

Louise was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2020. She is a member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Louise is the Assistant Director of Pricing at the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), where her role includes administering the NDIA's Australia-wide pricing policy.

Louise is dedicated to supporting commUnity+ towards its vision of building safe and vibrant communities in Melbourne's west, where people are engaged, respected, and in charge of their futures. She brings a decade of experience delivering business improvement programs across private and government sectors, as well as experience in the financial services and technology industries.

Louise is a resident of the inner west and has held a number of non-executive volunteer positions, including as a Board Director of the Brain Injury Foundation of Victoria.

Louise has an MBA from Melbourne Business School, University of Melbourne, and certification from the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Our Senior Leadership Team



Tracey Gaudry
Chief Executive Officer

Tracey is an accomplished leader with more than 20 years' experience in executive and governance roles. Her previous CEO roles for community and for-purpose organisations include Respect Victoria and the Amy Gillett Foundation. Her governance roles have included Vice President Union Cycliste Internationale, where she chaired the global Women's Commission and Advocacy Commission.

Tracey has led organisations to focus on crucial prevention and early intervention research and policy and programming initiatives supporting diversity, equity and inclusion in local, regional, national and international communities. Tracey is dedicated to supporting and enhancing the diverse communities that commUnity+ serves and has brought significant knowledge, experience and insights to commUnity+.

Tracey holds Bachelor degrees in Commerce and Science from Deakin University, a Masters in Management from the National Graduate School of Management, Australian National University, and is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Anna Doganieri
General Manager, Family and Community Services

Anna has a rich background in community services, criminal justice and government policy, which has given her a broad understanding of the issues and challenges in delivering community services.

Anna has 31 years' experience in the government and non-government sectors, and a proven track record in policy and program development and implementation. She has operational experience in not-for-profit and government settings including the Departments of Justice, and Health and Human Services.

Having worked in local operational settings, particularly in Gippsland, Anna has extensive experience in place-based, client-centred approaches and governance and coordination through working on a range of initiatives including Common Client Reform, Children and Youth Area Partnerships and the Latrobe Valley Authority.

Anna holds a Master of Public Policy and Management (Monash University), a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences and a Graduate Diploma of Education.



Craig Liddell
General Manager, Education

Craig has been engaged in the education sector for over 20 years, including community, higher, and Vocational Education and Training. His varied positions have included business development, policy, and program management.

Craig has a passion for the transformative nature of education, enabling diverse community members to access education and training, regardless of background and experience, based on personal needs and aspirations.

Craig has a Bachelor of Arts Communications and Media, a Diploma of Vocational Education and Training Practice, and an Executive Master of Business Administration.



Aimie Meier
General Manager, Shared Services

Aimie brings extensive experience in senior leadership roles in for-purpose and government positions spanning corporate services, finance, program management and strategic projects.

Aimie is passionate about creating better community outcomes. She has a strong belief that everyone deserves to have a community in which they feel safe, empowered and engaged. Her experience in housing has highlighted the challenges that our communities face, and she believes effective community organisations are one way to develop thriving communities. Aimie comes from both the disability and community housing for-purpose sectors with a wide range of experience across many corporate functions.

Aimie has a Master of Business Management, Graduate Certificate Business Management (Project Management), Graduate Certificate in Social Sciences (Housing Management and Policy) and a Bachelor of Commerce.

Funding organisations and Partners

Funding organisations

Adult Community and Further Education Board

Brimbank City Council

Department of Education and Training (Cwth) (via Djerrivarrh Community and Education Services Inc)

Department of Education and Training (Vic)

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Vic)

Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (Vic) (via Djerrivarrh Community and Education Services Inc)

Department of Social Services (Cwth)

Victoria Legal Aid

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (Australian Government) (via Djerrivarrh Community and Education Service)

Department of Home Affairs

Department of Education, Skills and Employment (Australian Government)

Partners

AMES Australia

APM Workcare

Barwon Community Legal Service

Brimbank City Council

Bunnings Warehouse

Caroline Chisholm Society

Community Collective Victoria/Support Pathways Education Services

Djerrivarrh Community and Education Services

Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria)

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand

Hume City Council

HWL Ebsworth

IPC Health

Job Prospects

Jobfind

Learning for Employment

MatchWorks

Migrant Resource Centre North-West Region Inc.

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria

Network West

ParentsNext

Reclink Australia

Sarina Russo

Services Australia

Uniting (Vic.Tas)

Victoria University

WCN – WCIG

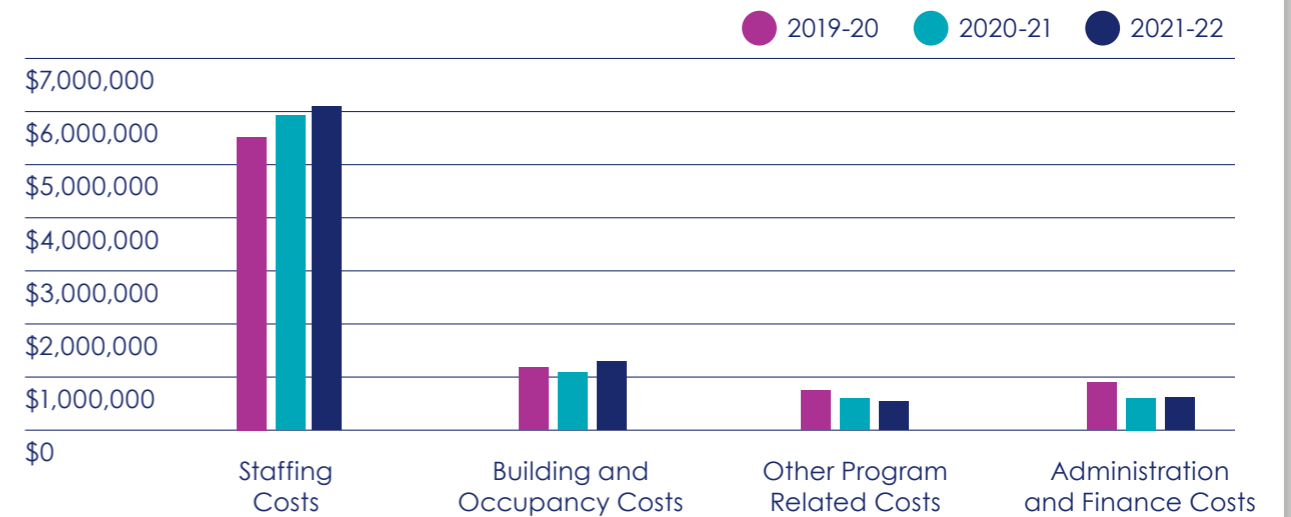
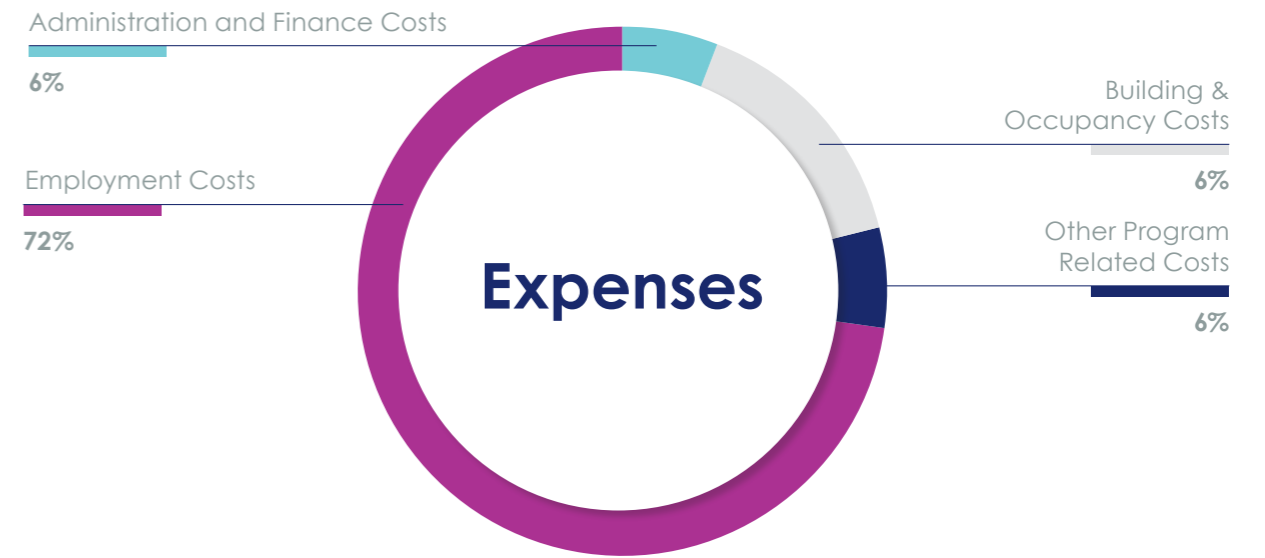
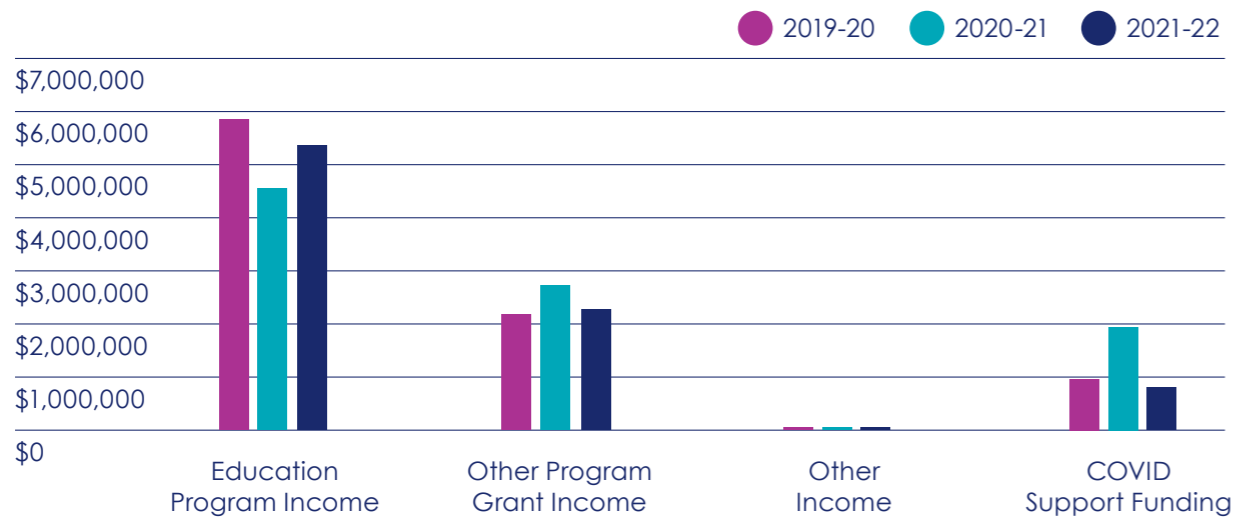
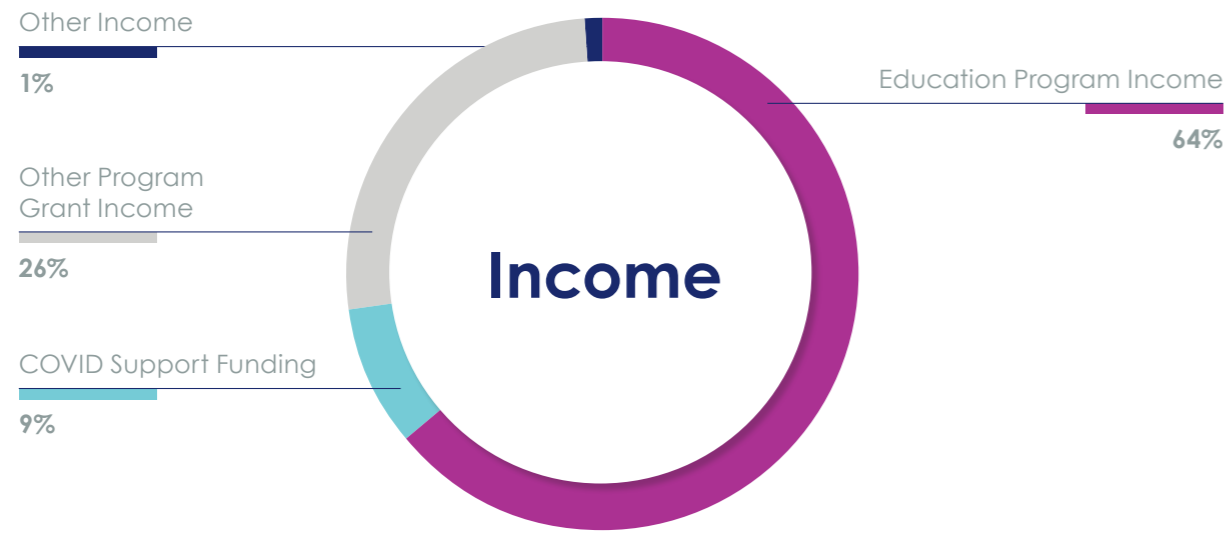
WEstjustice

Western Bulldogs Community Foundation

WISE Employment

Women's Legal Service Victoria

Financial Report



Financial Report

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income

For the year ended 30 June 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Revenues	8,387,672	9,198,825
Expenditure		
Employee benefits expenses	6,032,622	5,848,716
Depreciation and amortisation expenses	790,361	766,492
Finance charges on lease liabilities	26,170	27,709
Interest paid on building loan	510	4,557
Loss on sale of property, plant and equipment	8,796	3,943
Program resources	277,470	275,978
Lease expenditure	263,676	332,625
Data management fees	-	-
Other expenses	985,713	874,770
Total expenditure	8,385,318	8,134,790
Surplus/(deficit) attributable to entity	2,354	1,064,035
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Net gain or loss on revaluation of non-current assets	-	-
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	2,354	1,064,035
Total comprehensive income/(loss) attributable to entity	2,354	1,064,035

Statement of financial position

For the year ended 30 June 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,548,784	1,551,708
Trade and other receivables	318,200	219,654
Other current assets	301,065	308,300
Total current assets	2,168,049	2,079,662
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	2,546,444	2,631,381
Intangible assets	731,712	803,289
Total Non-current assets	3,278,156	3,434,670
Total assets	5,446,205	5,514,332
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	1,084,749	1,175,951
Provisions	519,417	459,722
Lease liabilities	361,922	508,918
Total Current liabilities	1,966,088	2,144,591
Non-current liabilities		
Borrowings	10,000	10,000
Provisions	67,354	66,009
Lease liabilities	382,376	275,699
Total Non-current liabilities	459,730	351,708
Total liabilities	2,425,818	2,496,299
Net assets	3,020,387	3,018,033
Equity		
Accumulated funds	2,625,087	2,622,733
Reserves	395,300	395,300
Total equity	3,020,387	3,018,033

Financial Report

Statement of changes in equity

For the year ended 30 June 2022

	Accumulated funds \$	Asset revaluation reserve \$	Total \$
Balance as at 1 July 2020	1,558,698	395,300	1,953,998
Surplus/(deficit) attributable to entity	1,064,035	-	1,064,035
Balance as at 30 June 2021	2,622,733	395,300	3,018,033
Surplus/(deficit) attributable to entity	2,354	-	2,354
Balance as at 30 June 2022	2,625,087	395,300	3,020,387

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 30 June 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Cash flows from operating activities		
Receipts from customers and grants	8,132,962	9,982,606
Payments to employees and suppliers	(7,432,311)	(7,239,606)
Interest received	6,067	3,650
Interest paid	(26,680)	(32,266)
Net cash generated from/(used in) operating activities	680,038	2,714,384
Cash flows from investing activities		
Proceeds from disposal of property, plant and equipment	-	-
Payment for purchase of property, plant and equipment	(23,234)	(50,000)
Net cash generated from/(used in) investing activities	(23,234)	(50,000)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Repayment of lease liabilities	(659,728)	(706,803)
Repayment of building loan borrowings	-	(1,120,110)
Net cash generated from/(used in) financing activities	(659,728)	(1,826,913)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	(2,924)	837,471
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	1,551,708	714,237
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	1,548,784	1,551,708

Strategic Plan 2021-24

Our vision

Everyone in the West has a safe place where they feel they belong and live the life they choose

Our mission

To support, strengthen and enable individuals and diverse communities in the West to flourish

Strategic Priorities

1. Deliver a fully integrated and person-centred community+ service delivery model
2. Strengthen education-to-employment pathways, further study and community participation
3. Amplify the voices of diverse communities
4. Strengthen financial security and sustainability
5. Build organisational capacity and capability

Principles

- > Lead and innovate to deliver high-quality services
- > Grow partnerships and alliances to extend the organisation's strategic influence
- > Deliver and continuously improve person-centric services
- > Preference data-driven and evidence-based decisions
- > Listen and respond to communities
- > Increase organisational sustainability
- > Reach more diverse communities
- > Contribute to building vibrant and connected communities
- > Model ethical practice and standards in our work and with our partners

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.

Collaborative

We work well together and as one team for our community.



commUnity+ Services and Locations

Corporate Office
822 Ballarat Road,
Deer Park VIC 3023

**Brimbank Melton
Community Legal Centre**
Suite 2-4, 30-32 East
Esplanade St Albans
VIC 3021

195-209 Barries Road
Melton West VIC 3337

Children's Contact Services

46 Grantham Street,
Brunswick West VIC 3055

822 Ballarat Road
Deer Park VIC 3023

Community Education

90 Blair Street
Broadmeadows VIC 3047

30 Craigieburn Road
Craigieburn VIC 3064

14 Gaffney Street
Coburg VIC 3058

822 Ballarat Road
Deer Park VIC 3023

63 Mahoneys Road
Forest Hill VIC 3131

Suite 6-8, 30-32 East
Esplanade St Albans VIC
3021

Shop 8-11 Victoria Square
St Albans VIC 3021

354 Main Road West
St Albans VIC 3021

356 Main Road West
St Albans VIC 3021

Watergardens Town Centre
Level 1, Suite 9 399 Melton
Highway Taylors Lakes VIC
3038

Neighbourhood House

822 Ballarat Road,
Deer Park VIC 3023

Melton West

Taylor's Lakes

St Albans

Deer Park

Craigieburn

Broadmeadows

Coburg

Brunswick

Forest Hill


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