

2014/15 HIGHLIGHTS  
NEWTOWN  
NEIGHBOURHOOD  
CENTRE



# OUR VISION STILL BURNS STRONG

In 2014/2015, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC) celebrated 38 years of operation. Over the course of those four decades, we have seen many changes, challenges and achievements, but have always remained committed to our NNC vision of: "a just community that includes and acts". We are all about connection, inclusion, action, and fun!

The Centre plays a vital role in Newtown and the Inner West, providing community members with access to information and support and referring them to other services if needed. We also organise fun community events like Newtown Festival, Newtown Community Market, and the Sydneyvision Song Contest. Our activities and events provide opportunities for celebrating the community's creativity and quirkiness, in turn adding to the vibe of the Newtown area.

Some of the highlights of 2014/2015 include:

- ➔ NNC successfully obtained funding for our specialist Boarding House Outreach Service, in the wake of significant NSW Government reforms to homelessness services funding.
- ➔ As part of the Markets in May project, NNC volunteers and staff met with over 300 locals at Newtown Market, asking them what they love about Newtown, what they would like to change, and how they would change it. This consultation has led to a number of initiatives aimed at preserving Newtown's unique character in the face of numerous pressures and changes.
- ➔ NNC increased its engagement with the broader community through the enhanced use of social media, and we have gained hundreds of new friends and potential supporters as a result.

A big change in 2014/2015 was the resignation of Lisa Burns as NNC CEO following 10 years of dedicated service. Lisa led NNC through a period of tremendous growth and deserves great credit for cementing NNC's position as a trusted and capable community services provider throughout the Inner West.

Liz Yeo assumed the role of NNC's new CEO in February 2015. A long-standing Newtown local with 28 years' experience in the non-profit sector, she is tremendously excited about leading the Centre into its next phase of development.

One of Liz's first priorities has been to get out and about and meet as many stakeholders as possible within government, local business, and the broader community. NNC is focused on ensuring that it meets the highest quality standards in terms of service, as well as being up to date with the ongoing changes to aged care, disability and homelessness service delivery.

None of what NNC does would be possible without the dedication and skill of its 45 staff and 80 volunteers, along with all the individuals and organisations that support us financially or in kind. This generosity enriches individual lives as well as the life of this community as a whole.



**KAREN WALSH** BOARD PRESIDENT  
**LIZ YEO** CEO

## BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

President: Karen Walsh

Vice President: Digby Hughes

Treasurer: Wayne Tynan

Secretary: Amalina Wallace

Ordinary Members: Paul Shiel,  
Mel Harrison, Jess Cadwallader

## NNC PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- Active Linking Initiative
- Art in Newtown
- Art at Tom Foster
- ATO Tax Help
- Bike Shed
- Boarders and Lodgers Service
- Boarding House Act Evaluation Project
- Boarding House Outreach Service
- Community Based Activities
- Community Builders Partnership
- Community Garden
- Community Kitchen
- Counselling Support
- English Conversation Class
- Front Counter Information and Referral Service
- Fun and Games
- Good Neighbour Program
- Marrickville Grows
- Multicultural Neighbour Aid:  
Communities from Former Yugoslavia
- Multicultural Neighbour Aid: Greek Speaking
- Newtown Community Market
- Newtown Festival
- One Stop Shop
- Room Hire
- Shopping Services
- Social Support Services
- Sydneyvision Song Contest
- Ukulele Music Group
- Volunteering and Student Placements
- Walking Group
- Wellness Programs - Healthy & Connected and New Moves
- Wrap with Love



# VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

**Two top awards and a string of grants suggest that NNC is meeting its goals of building a more vibrant and cohesive local community.**

When radio station FBi asked listeners to pick Sydney's best Live Event of 2014, one gig emerged as a clear winner. NNC's flagship fundraising event, Newtown Festival, romped home at the station's Sydney Music Arts & Culture awards, winning its category in something of a landslide. "The festival draws people for the sense of community," explains FBi Program Director Caroline Gates "but also because they know its going to be a really fun event."

Festival Director Sue Andersen says the fact that 100,000 people turned up to see 30 live music acts and other attractions at the 2014 festival is testament to the event's place in the hearts of the local community. The FBi award came on top of the festival winning Best NSW Community Event at the Australian Event Awards. The wins form part of a string of recent successes for NNC, which exists to create a more inclusive, resilient, vibrant, creative, and self-reliant community.

Other victories include NNC receiving funding for 14 of its programs in 2015, with a total of 12 grants adding up to \$2.5 million in funding. The funds allowed the Centre to achieve some impressive results, including helping 300 boarding house residents stay in accommodation, allowing 400 aged and vulnerable people to remain independent, and attending to the needs of the 6,700 people who turn up to the front counter each year.

Meanwhile, NNC successfully tendered to be the lead agency for the Boarding House Outreach Service, along with community partners Women and Girls Emergency Centre (WAGEC) and Community Restorative Centre (CRC), under the NSW Government's specialist homelessness services.

The Centre also continues to play a lead role with Western Sydney University in a five-year research project to evaluate the impact of the NSW Boarding House Act 2012 on boarding house residents and the sector.



**NEWTOWN  
FESTIVAL**





# THE GIFT OF TIME

Volunteers are crucial to NNC's operations, helping to deliver programs that allow others to build skills, retain their independence and beat loneliness.

Jan had retired and was looking for a way to give back to the community when she turned up at Newtown Neighbourhood Centre and asked about volunteering. Jan's mix of skills meant that she was a good fit for the Good Neighbour Program and she now pays regular fortnightly visits to Newtown locals Stephen, 62, and Wolfgang, 84, both of whom are living with health issues and are at risk of social isolation.

"Stephen and I hang out, have a coffee or a hamburger and take trips on the light rail, which he loves," Jan says. "Wolfgang and I will take a short walk, have a coffee at a local cafe and argue about whose turn it is to pay." The benefits run both ways, with Jan enjoying the opportunity to get out and about in the community.

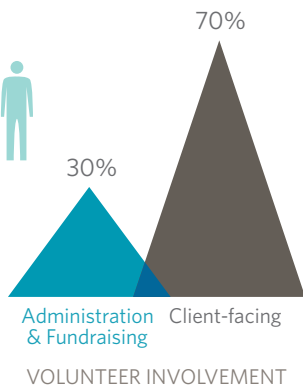
Volunteers are one of NNC's greatest strengths, contributing 12,000 working hours every year and allowing many of the Centre's core activities to continue. They help with programs ranging from the Community Kitchen and One Stop Shop to the Walking Group, the Wrap with Love knitting group, and Multicultural Neighbour Aid. Volunteer teachers provide free English language classes and volunteers also run the Fun and Games program.

"It's all about connecting the community and giving people who are isolated an opportunity to connect with their peers and other members of the community," says Volunteers and Supporters Coordinator Michelle Hunt. A focus on recruiting specialist volunteers in 2015 has seen NNC acquire new skill sets including photography, graphic design and media management.

80  
regular  
volunteers



25+  
programs



# A PLACE TO CALL HOME

NNC's Boarding House team works hard to ensure vulnerable members of the community have living environments that are safe and provide dignity.

Dirty, cockroach-infested and leaky, the room that 60-year-old Vietnamese immigrant Vu was provided in an Inner West boarding house was a disgrace. Already battling a serious lung condition, Vu was forced to contend with mouldy walls caused by the trickling in of water contaminated with pigeon faeces.

His life changed dramatically when with help from NNC's Boarding House Outreach Service, he was able to relocate to a modern one-bedroom unit in a Uniting Care facility. "Life is much, much better now," a beaming Vu says. "The neighbours are nice, everything is alright here. I actually like it."

NNC assists 300 people living in boarding houses through services run by a total of 15 staff and volunteers.



**The Boarding House Outreach Service** is a case-work support program that provides support to people living in boarding houses or who are looking to access boarding house accommodation.



**The Boarders and Lodgers Program** provides social support and assistance to residents of general boarding houses in the Marrickville LGA who are frail aged or living with a disability.



**The Community Linking Project** provides individual support and group social activities to residents of assisted boarding houses and those living in disability-supported accommodation.

"We are proud to be the lead agency in Sydney working in the boarding house space" says Boarding House Services Manager Paul Adabie. "We have four distinct boarding house funded services, including a social support service for older residents, a case management service we run in collaboration with WAGEC and CRC, a research project with Western Sydney University, and a boarding house operator engagement project."





# COMMUNITY HUB

Programs like the One Stop Shop and the Front Counter Referral Service make NNC a focus for both those in need and the general community.

Inner West resident Carly doesn't like to think where she'd be now if it weren't for the One Stop Shop. In early 2015, the 33-year-old was juggling a range of health and relationship issues when she was told she was being evicted from her home. Upset and unsure what to do, she turned up at one of NNC's weekly sessions connecting vulnerable members of the community with professionals from 14 organisations including Centrelink, Housing NSW, and Anglicare.

With help from coordinator Helen Hwang, Carly spoke to experts who could help with her immediate problems, as well as provide assistance in managing her mental health and relationship challenges. She also received a phone card and a free meal. "Basically without the One Stop Shop, I'd be homeless, I wouldn't be eating and I wouldn't be able to make a phone call," says Carly.

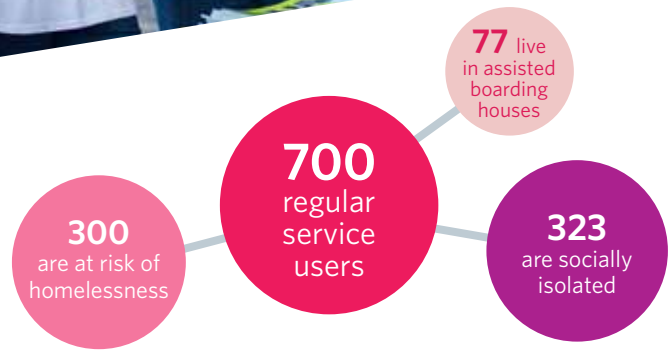
## Queries and referrals



It's not just those experiencing a crisis for whom NNC serves as an important focal point. Every week the Centre helps bring people together by providing a venue for activities ranging from dance and ukulele classes to yoga and meditation sessions. The 1 Bedford Street premises are the location for core NNC programs such as art therapy, and they're also relied on by external community support programs such as AI-Anon and Narcotics Anonymous.

NNC Program Manager Ken Saunders says the Centre's front desk, meanwhile, provides advice to people walking in off the street asking for help with everything from English lessons to domestic violence assistance and crisis accommodation.

Bookings for the Centre premises can be made at [www.newtowncentre.org/room-hire](http://www.newtowncentre.org/room-hire)



# ACTIVE & INCLUDED

Being frail aged or living with mental and physical disabilities can be isolating experiences, but NNC teams work hard to keep those at risk independent and connected.

When local boarding-house resident Dave decided he'd like to join the workforce, the team from NNC's Community Linking Project was ready to assist him. A resident at an assisted boarding house in Marrickville, Dave, 64, lives with an intellectual disability and was supported right through the job interview process at Afford Packaging, a business operated by the Australian Foundation for the Disabled.

He now travels to work two days a week, confidently tapping on and off public transport using his Opal card — a much cherished sign of his independence. Project Manager Carol Hamilton says Dave and other residents of the area's assisted boarding houses also benefit from recreational activities provided by the Community Linking Project, including excursions, visits to galleries and parks, and art and craft workshops.

"It can be very liberating and allows people with a disability to experience new things and new places," she says. "It enhances a sense of belonging and tackles the isolation and other challenges that go along with mental health and disability."

NNC's Shopping Service, for example, is aimed at the frail aged and people living with a disability. Depending on their level of need, participants are bussed or driven to the shopping centre or have their shopping lists filled by personal shoppers.

Multicultural Neighbour Aid services provide opportunities for older residents from various cultural backgrounds to socialise, connect and continue to live independently at home whilst remaining active community members.



# THANK YOU TO OUR MAJOR FUNDERS, SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS

## Government and community organisations

Ageing, Disability & Home Care – NSW Department of Family & Community Services

City of Sydney

Commonwealth Department of Health & Ageing

Commonwealth Department of Social Services

Leichhardt Marrickville Community Transport Group

Marrickville Council

Multicultural Health Service

NSW Department of Family & Community Services

StreetSmart

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre extends its gratitude to the many private individuals who have made donations to our campaigns and projects over the past 12 months. Your support is much appreciated.

## Business sponsors and donors

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Octopus Designs Newtown

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Signwave

Sydney Airport

Sydney Water

Sydney Welfare Fund

The Bower

The Green Living Centre

The Music

The Powder Principle

Town Hall Hotel

Word Travels

Zanzibar

In addition to the financial support provided by Commonwealth, State and Local Government, and our community partners, NNC generates 17 per cent of its total operating income through Newtown Festival, Newtown Community Market, room hire, and donations. These diverse sources of income enable us to provide our many services to the community. NNC's audited 2014/15 financial report is available on our website or by request to [admin@newtowncentre.org](mailto:admin@newtowncentre.org).

“ Without the One Stop Shop, I'd be homeless, I wouldn't be eating and I wouldn't be able to make a phone call. ”

Carly



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