

NEWTOWN

Neighbourhood Centre



Diana Shypula @ Koshka Media

GRATITUDE REPORT 2021



Photo: Mark Mordue/Addi Road

In the 2020-2021 financial year, COVID-19 continued to gift opportunities as well as challenges for Newtown Neighbourhood Centre and our community.

I am so proud of the way our staff and volunteers continued to adjust and respond to the uncertainties brought by the pandemic.

The team found creative ways to safely support our most vulnerable and isolated community members. This included regularly delivering supplies to clients in boarding houses and social housing complexes and establishing our own food pantry at the front of the Centre.

Our local community was incredibly generous and compassionate in its response to assist people struggling through the pandemic. It was humbling to see restaurants providing free meals for people who had lost work, and we are grateful to everyone who dropped supplies into our food pantry. I am extremely lucky to work and live in a community that is so caring. COVID-19 also fostered closer collaborations between community organisations in the Inner West – a welcome upside to the crisis. Inner West Council provided additional funding to several organisations, including NNC, to support our local COVID-19 response. An exciting outcome from this has been the ongoing conversation around how we increase the profile of volunteering, and opportunities for volunteering, across the Inner West.

Due to the pandemic, the NSW Government invested additional funding to ensure more people experiencing homelessness were housed. Newtown Neighbourhood Centre was thrilled to be part of this “Together Home” program through our partnerships with Community Housing Providers.

The increased investment resulted in the recruitment of three new staff who provide support to rough sleepers as they transition into secure housing. Neil’s story in this report is a wonderful example of the life-changing impact of this evidence-based program.

In 2020, it became clear that we needed to find a way to keep our doors open for vulnerable members of our community who access our face-to-face services. NNC invested in a new Community Connections Co-ordinator role. Matt was a wonderful addition to the team and along with some of our Newtopian Outreach volunteers, his role has enabled us to provide frontline Information and Referral for people who come to the Centre, often as a last resort and in crisis.

Rob joined NNC as our Aged Care Manager in July 2020 and since then the team has grown. We now have two new Aged Care Social Support groups meeting at the Centre and a new cohort of wonderful volunteers trained to connect 1:1 with older, socially isolated clients. The pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of social connection and these services.

This year our Administration team has focused on the development of plans for our new site at Tom Foster Community Centre. While the move is now delayed to mid 2022, a great deal of work has been done to try and ensure that the new site will be a welcoming and safe community space for everyone.

In 2020-21 we undertook another voluntary external Work Health and Safety audit. Newtown Neighbourhood Centre is proud of our high safety standards. The audit highlighted our progress areas as well as giving us a continuous improvement plan to work through in the next few months.

The unfortunate decision was made to cancel Newtown Festival in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. We are taking the opportunity during this pause to reflect on the future of the event and will be consulting the broader community about potential directions for this iconic event.

This year we finalised and implemented Newtown Neighbourhood Centre’s next Strategic Plan for 2021 – 2023. Over the past 12 months we have remained on track to achieve all our priority goals including the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan, a Volunteer Strategy, the achievement of Quality Standards, and securing a renewal of our Specialist Homelessness Service contract.

We have made it through year two of a (hopefully) once in a hundred-year pandemic. I truly hope it sets us on a future path where the close collaborations and partnerships continue, where government continues to invest in evidence-based programs like Together Home, and where our community continues to come together to support those who are likely to experience the ongoing effects of the pandemic.

Thank you as always for your generous support,

Liz Yeo
CEO

THE SECURITY THAT COMES WITH A HOME

In August 2020, Neil* fell asleep in his new bed, in his new apartment, with the realisation that he now had a safe place to call home.

He had just been accepted into the Together Home Program and had been paired with a case manager from Newtown Neighbourhood Centre.

The Together Home program was developed by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) as a government response to the threat of COVID-19 within the homeless community.

The program is based on the successful international 'Housing First' model: a person-centred and trauma-informed framework that champions the principle that safe, stable and secure housing is a human right.

The investment by DCJ was divided amongst community housing organisations to deliver the program in NSW. Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC) is proud to partner with St George Community Housing (SGCH) and Metro Housing to offer case management support for their residents.

Prior to 2020, Neil had suffered from deteriorating mental health and a number of poor life choices had left him living on the street.

"My home became the State Library of NSW, where a group of us would camp after the library closed. My kitchen became Martin Place with its nightly homeless food services and my bathroom was at The Station."

Prior to being accepted in the Together Home Program, Neil states, *"I was just existing."*

Everything changed after Newtown Neighbourhood Centre began supporting Neil.

"It honestly feels like someone gave me my life back. I still find myself even after a year, just stopping and looking at my apartment and being so incredibly thankful for the possibilities it has given me."

The case management support provided by Newtown Neighbourhood Centre allows clients to address individual challenges, as

well as any underlying factors which may have contributed to their homelessness.

When asked how the stability of having a safe place to live has impacted his life, Neil responded,
"I sleep better, I eat better, my social anxiety issues are manageable. My days are filled with choice now, instead of just trying to survive."

Ensuring our programs are designed to benefit our clients, Neil was recently invited to be on the panel when NNC interviewed for the newest case manager.

"I think it is a testament to the way NNC operates that they included a client's perspective when bringing on a new team member. The unexpected opportunities to be involved with NNC are really positive and enjoyable aspects of the program."

Having experienced homelessness, Neil had a deep understanding of the many hurdles, obstacles and processes rough sleepers are forced to navigate. When the opportunity to enrol in university presented

itself, Neil jumped at it and is about to complete his first year in a Bachelor of Psychology.

"I wanted to study something that would allow me to become an advocate for the homeless community as well as being able to have a fulfilling and contributing career."

"The idea of going to university had always seemed like a pipe dream that I wouldn't achieve and I am so happy that this is now an option for me."

Neil is just one of the 40 clients our team of four currently work with and NNC is extremely proud to be able to deliver such a life-changing program.

This program highlights that without housing, people experiencing rough sleeping are unable to effectively engage with support. Without this support, they are unable to address the factors that contribute to their experiences of homelessness.

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre hopes to see continued investment in this program as we know first-hand the profound difference it makes for people like Neil.

*Names have been changed



BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR



NUMBER OF PEOPLE
ACCESSING NEWTOWN
NEIGHBOURHOOD
CENTRE'S SERVICES AND
PROGRAMS



NEWTOPIAN
OUTREACH
ENGAGEMENTS
(Newtown and Sydney
CBD)

OFFERING SOCIAL SUPPORT

At the beginning of 2021, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre developed its Individual Social Support Program, recruiting and training 25 volunteers to be paired with individuals who are over the age of 65 and socially isolated.

The program offers one on one social support that is tailored to the person's needs and may include home visits, phone and web chats or accompaniment on outings such as shopping, walking or for coffee and a chat.

We look forward to seeing this service continue to grow and involve more community minded individuals.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

In March 2021, we celebrated International Women's Day, hosting sixty women at the Centre for a morning of fun and pampering. The women enjoyed a delicious morning tea and were able to pick out some gorgeous new clothes and pamper packs.

There was also the opportunity to be professionally fitted for bras, enjoy massages and skin care treatments and have a professional haircut.

A big thank you to our partners and the local community who came together to make the event such a joyous occasion for these amazing women.



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SENIOR'S FESTIVAL

In April 2021, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre acknowledged Seniors Festival by hosting an event celebrating multiculturalism in the Inner West.

Attendees were encouraged to share stories of their culture and also reflect on the resilience they had shown during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

It was a special event filled with musical performances, dancing and lots of laughter. It was heart-warming to see so many of our seniors come together after a long period of lockdown.

A big thank you to the local organisations who joined us on the day and to our partners for funding the event.

NEWTOPIAN SLEEPOUT

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre hosted our fourth Newtopian Sleepout in May 2021. Despite COVID-19 restrictions limiting the number of participants, the event resulted in a more intimate and engaging evening.

The event raises vital funds for the Centre and gives participants the opportunity to experience the challenges that come with rough sleeping.

We are extremely grateful to the 36 community members who slept out for the night and raised an incredible \$92,000 for the Centre.



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TACKLING HOMELESSNESS

NEWTOPIAN OUTREACHERS CBD

Following the success of our Newtown Newtopian Outreach program, NNC was granted funding to roll out a similar model to address homelessness in Sydney's CBD.

After a number of COVID-19 hurdles, we were thrilled to have 40 volunteers complete their Newtopian Outreach training and participate in their first outreach in the city in August 2020.

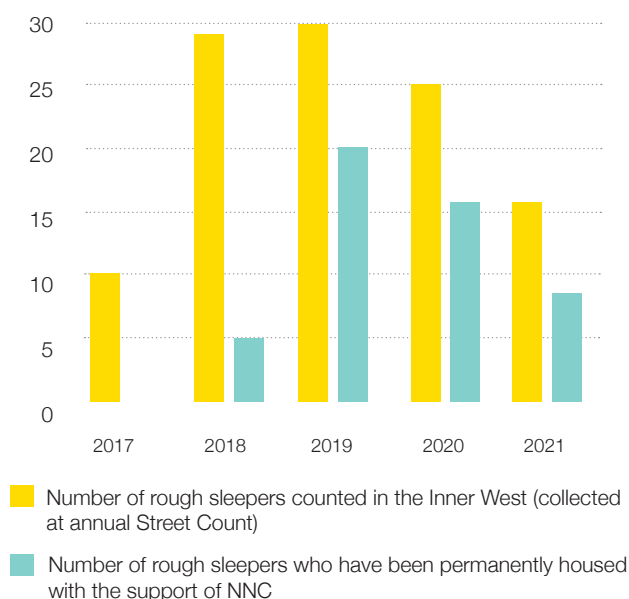
Our Newtopian Outreach volunteers participate in weekly outreaches, both in Newtown and the CBD, engaging with rough sleepers and providing information on how to access temporary crisis accommodation, where to get meals and find additional support services.

We believe solving homelessness and making a real difference in people's lives takes the entire community and our Newtopians are a large part of our assertive outreach efforts.



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IMPACT OF COMBINED OUTREACHES IN NEWTOWN (2018 - 2021)



% OF SURVEYED CLIENTS WHO REPORTED NOTICEABLE IMPROVEMENTS WHEN EXITING THE BOARDING HOUSE OUTREACH SERVICE:

71%

Housing or living situation improved

77%

Emotional wellbeing improved

79%

Financial situation improved

100%

Increased confidence to tackle future challenges and opportunities

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

At the beginning of 2021, we hired a new Community Connections Coordinator to lead a team of volunteers to deliver frontline services to the local community through our Information and Referral Service.

The service supports on average 15 individuals per day with a range of requests. People may be seeking crisis support (for example to address homelessness or domestic violence) or they may have more general needs for information (anything from where to find a JP or a public bathroom, to how to access a disability or aged care service).

With the support of our volunteers and donors we were able to open the service up for an additional day per week, allowing more community members to access the service.

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre relies heavily on volunteers to support our work. Without them, we would not have been able to help as many people.

To all of our volunteers, thank you.

ASES ACCREDITATION

In June 2021, we achieved accreditation after being audited against the Australian Service Excellence Standards.

The auditor's feedback confirmed that Newtown Neighbourhood Centre is committed to its focus on those who are most vulnerable and they relayed that the clients they spoke to had expressed the importance and value of our services.

We are proud to be able to continue to deliver such high quality services to those in need.

YOU HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre aims to be known as the heart of the community - the place which creates opportunities for community connections, celebrations and support.

We provide professional and volunteer based support for those who are experiencing significant challenges in life.

We remain committed to ending homelessness and social isolation in Sydney's Inner West.

This is not a goal we can achieve on our own.

We value our relationships with other local providers who we work in partnership with to address the key causes of homelessness (such as domestic and family violence).

We also work with our partners and

with the broader community to find practical local solutions to address homelessness and social isolation in the Inner West.

We are grateful for the generous support of our donors, who give both financial contributions and gifts in kind, allowing us to lead the way and be innovative in creating stronger connections with community.

Together we are building a stronger more connected community while also celebrating the diversity of the Inner West.

CONTACT DETAILS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following people and organisations for their generous support:

SUPPORTERS

Active Kids Newtown
Adora Handmade Chocolates
Aesop
AMP – Marrickville Metro
ATO Tax Help
Barmuda
BlackStar Pastry
Blue Hand Group
Bread and Butter Project
Brickfields
Bourke Street Bakery
Bunnings Alexandria
Cognescenti
Connie Henson – Learning Quest
Connect Community Transport
Dandelion Support Network Inc
Diana Shypula
Fire and Rescue NSW
Fords Pharmacy
IGA Newtown
Inner West Police Area Command
Jenny Leong MP
Jo Haylen MP
MsG Skincare
Newtopian Champions
Newtopian Outreachers
Newtopian Sleepout participants
NNC volunteer counselling team
NNC volunteer facilitators for family and social inclusion programs
NNC volunteers for our Individual and Group Aged Care Social Support services

NNC's Donors & Regular Givers

Ooby Sydney
Orange Sky Laundry
Oz Harvest
Paloma Salon
Paul Van Reyk
Plant Daddy
Salsa for Seniors
Share the Dignity
St Pius OOSH
Sydney Basket Brigade
Tanya Plibersek MP
Telstra
The Great Club
Tokyo Lamington
Two Good Co.
WISE Employment

FUNDERS

Australian Government Department of Health
City of Sydney
Clubs NSW
Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
Inner West Council
NSW Department of Communities and Justice
NSW Department of Customer Service
Multicultural NSW
NSW Seniors Festival
Street Smart
Uniting Foundation
Westpac Foundation

PARTNERS

Accounting For Good
Addison Road Community Organisation
Canterbury City Community Centre (4Cs)
Cattleyard Collective
Centrelink
Community and Cultural Connections Inc
Community Restorative Centre
Connect Marrickville
Ethnic Community Services Cooperative
Haymarket Foundation
Inner City Legal Centre
Marrickville Legal Centre
Marrickville South Collective
Marrickville Youth Resource Centre
Metro Housing
Moving On, Moving Out (DVSM)
Newtown Public Housing Collective
Older Women's Network
Paint Inner West Read
Settlement Services International Local Area Coordinators
SMART Recovery
St George Community Housing
St Vincent de Paul's AOD Continuing and Coordinated Care (CCC) Program
Support the Girls
Sydney Local Health District
The Junction Neighbourhood Centre
The Reverend Bill Crews Foundation
Thread Together
Wesley Mission
Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, the Gadigal-Wangal People of the Eora Nation.