



New(town) Beginnings #36

Dear Neighbour,

This year staff have been getting to know our board members more intimately, as they each join our online team meetings to share some insights about why they were inspired to join Newtown Neighbourhood Centre's Board.

Jackie Finlay was first up to share her experience. Jackie is a Legal Aid lawyer and close neighbour of NNC, living just a few metres away from the Centre.

"I felt quite connected to the community when my daughter attended the local primary school but as she grew older I wanted to widen this connection. I walked past NNC every day and felt a strong synergy between the work that we both do and started to enquire about ways I could get involved."

As a specialist social security and NDIS lawyer, Jackie understands more than most the struggles many of our service users face:

"Essentially, we're working with a similar client base - I mostly sort out issues people are having with Centrelink and the National Disability Insurance Agency. I love it - it feels like a reason to bother putting a law degree in practice."

Since her time on the board, Jackie's family have also found ways to contribute. This year her stepdaughter signed up as a Newtopian Homeless Outreach volunteer and she has been sharing her learnings about homelessness ever since.

"For me, it's all about having a sense of belonging in a big impersonal city. People generally look out for each other in Newtown, regardless of where they've come from and I feel as though NNC is a strong catalyst for that – it brings all corners of the community together."

Siobhan Toohill is another local resident who also got to know about the work of NNC by walking past the Centre every day on her way home.

As the Head of Sustainability for a major bank, Siobhan takes a macro approach to address broader societal issues such as climate change and human rights, but outside her professional life, Siobhan strongly values a granular lens.

"One of my mentors talks about the importance of being connected at a very local grassroots level, as it gives us a deep understanding of ourselves and our purpose. I really love hearing the stories of impact as they bring the work of NNC to life."

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre

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“I think NNC exemplifies the vibrancy and acceptance of Newtown overall. It’s a point of connection for people who need support and for those who want to support others.”

And in true NNC spirit, Siobhan also loves bringing the community together in her home by hosting regular salon events.

“When we first moved to Newtown many years ago, we felt very lucky to be living in such a special place and we saw ourselves as the stewards of the house, rather than simply owners.”

“We decided to host these events by selecting a particular topic and inviting a couple of guest speakers, along with 30 or 40 people - way more than the space comfortably allows - but that was intentional. We’d provide a communal dinner and allow like-minded people to gather around for a common purpose focusing on social and human impact.”

“Through these nights, relationships were born, friendships blossomed and new businesses were created. Connecting people is at the heart of this which also embodies NNC’s ethos.”

So just like NNC, the board is filled with an eclectic group of passionate individuals, many of whom were inspired to join after witnessing some of the transformational work undertaken by our team.

So what’s in store for 2021 and beyond?

“This year, as for many, has brought along tremendous change for NNC with more to come. I’ve been so impressed with how agile and adaptable the organisation has been in the way it has handled things so far, and I’m really looking forward to the new opportunities the move to Tom Foster Community Centre will provide next year”, reflects Jackie.

And for Siobhan, “I can see NNC is evolving and I would love for residents of Newtown to be able to articulate how they see NNC’s purpose in the community. We will no doubt continue to achieve and contribute towards supporting our beloved inner west.”

Having been forced to move our meetings online due to the pandemic, we now have the additional benefit of getting to meet our Board members and gain insight into their passion for NNC.

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre is currently recruiting new members, and for 2020 we have waived the joining fee! Becoming a member allows you to be more involved in your local community, have a say in the direction of the Centre and vote at the Annual General Meeting.

If you are interested in becoming a member of Newtown Neighbourhood Centre, [please apply here](#).

Mel

Community Strengthening Team

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