

# Newtown Neighbourhood Centre's

## **NEWTOPIAN** **Outreachers**

### **PROGRAM EVALUATION**

Volunteers, Staff And The Organisation

**MARCH 2019**



**LEARNING QUEST**  
STRONGER THROUGH CHANGE

**Evaluation research and report partner**

## Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT.....</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>METHODS &amp; KEY FINDINGS .....</b>  | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>BACKGROUND .....</b>  | <b>12</b> |
| <b>DETAILED REPORT.....</b>  | <b>18</b> |
| <b>PART 1: VOLUNTEERS .....</b>  | <b>18</b> |
| VOLUNTEERS LEARNING AND GROWTH AS A RESULT OF PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM ..... | 18        |
| CONTRIBUTIONS TO VOLUNTEERS LEARNING AND GROWTH .....                            | 31        |
| COMMUNITY CONNECTION .....   | 38        |
| VOLUNTEERING.....  | 45        |
| <b>PART 2: NNC STAFF/KEY STAKEHOLDERS .....</b>                                  | <b>56</b> |
| TEAM MEMBER AND GROWTH AS A RESULT OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROGRAM .....           | 56        |
| CONDITIONS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO TEAM MEMBER GROWTH AND LEARNING.....              | 59        |
| <b>PART 3: NNC ORGANISATION STRENGTHENING .....</b>                              | <b>60</b> |
| <b>APPENDICES .....</b>  | <b>62</b> |
| <b>APPENDIX 1: VOLUNTEER DEMOGRAPHICS .....</b>                                  | <b>62</b> |
| <b>APPENDIX 2: PROJECT OBJECTIVES &amp; RESULTS .....</b>                        | <b>63</b> |
| <b>APPENDIX 3: THE ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE .....</b>                         | <b>65</b> |

## Acknowledgements

I believe the Newtopian Community Outreach Project is a sign of hope in terms of what a community can achieve when it comes together to take action on homelessness.

This project has only been possible, and successful, thanks to all the following people:

- The funding partners who supported the development of the project – NSW Government & Inner West Council (Funded by the NSW Government through the Stronger Communities Fund), Uniting and Westpac Foundation,
- Our many donors and supporters through events like Newtown Festival and the Newtopian Sleepout who make it possible for us to try things, and sustain things, like this project,
- Newtopian Outreach volunteer themselves – without committed locals willing to take a risk and be part of something outside their comfort zone this would not have gone from idea to reality,
- NNC staff team, led by Elaine Macnish, who took on the project without knowing exactly how it would land, provided great professional guidance to everyone involved, and also stayed open to learning and growing through the experience and
- Jane Horvath, our incredible pro bono project manager, who went above and beyond to ensure that everything remained on track to deliver a high quality, impactful and sustainable project

We are incredibly appreciative of the work of Connie Henson, CEO of Learning Quest, who generously contributed her knowledge and research skills to the project. Connie's work clearly demonstrates the increased confidence and sense of connection felt by the volunteers through the program.

We are so excited about sharing the insights from this research and seeing how we can continue to create a more Newtopian community – where people sleeping rough are not ignored, but connected with as human beings, and, wherever possible, assisted on a pathway to housing.

Liz Yeo  
CEO Newtown Neighbourhood Centre

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the NNC for inviting Learning Quest to be part of this innovative program. It is a privilege to be able to use our skills/resources to contribute to our community. Our research and practice is focused on understanding and facilitating change and growth for individuals, organisations and systems. Neurobehavioural science has highlighted the importance of meeting basic psychological needs for connection, control (including safety) and contribution for individual well-being, learning/growth and performance. Our research to date has underscored the role meeting these needs play when people experience an unexpected/unwanted challenge.

This program provided a unique opportunity to observe and compare previous findings with a group of people who choose to expose themselves to a challenging situation, thus adding to the knowledge related to cultivating the conditions that enable people, organisations and systems to become stronger as a result of experiencing challenges.

From a personal perspective, I thoroughly enjoyed working closely with the NNC team (staff and volunteers). I would specifically like to acknowledge and thank Jane Horvath for her contributions to this report which includes writing the background, several appendices and providing incredibly rich feedback. It was a delight to collaborate with Jane on this project.

Lead by Liz Yeo, the NNC is an organisation that is courageously experimenting, learning and applying bold new ways to best utilise community resources to address complex and at times seemingly unresolvable challenges. As this research has revealed, the NNC's strengths-based approach underpinning this program identifies and leverages a previously 'untapped community resource' and simultaneously builds the capacity of that resource. It is an honour and delight to have been involved.

Connie D. Henson, PhD  
CEO Learning Quest

## Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to examine the impact of the Newtopian Outreacher program on:

- the volunteers in relation to learning and growth, community connection and volunteering,
- staff members/key stakeholders in relation to learning and growth, and
- the organisation in relation to the tangible and intangible outcomes.

Further, the conditions that lead to learning and growth for both volunteers and NNC staff/key stakeholders was examined.

This report forms part of the overall program evaluation. It is not a complete program evaluation and does not include any data or analysis related to the impact on clients and other community stakeholders which is documented in separate reports.

## Executive Summary

In response to a 1,300% increase in street<sup>1</sup> homelessness, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC) implemented the Community Homelessness Outreach Project designed to expand assertive outreach by engaging and training local volunteers. The volunteers are referred to as the Newtownian Outreachers.

The program positively impacted volunteers, NNC staff & NNC as a whole.

### Volunteers

Volunteers gained knowledge about homelessness, personal insights and accurate empathy which resulted in increased confidence, competence and their proclivity to initiate positive interactions with people sleeping rough. This prosocial behaviour also coincided with a reduction in avoidance behaviours such as averted eye contact.

| Volunteers' Response | Volunteers' Skills in relation to homelessness |                         |                       | Volunteers' Behaviour when encountering a person experiencing homelessness |                                |                        | Volunteers' Emotions (unpleasant) when encountering a person experiencing homelessness |             |         |              | Volunteers' Ideas on Community     |                                  |                                  |
|----------------------|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|--|--------------------------------|------------------------|--|-------------|---------|--------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                      | Knowledge <sup>1</sup>                         | Confidence <sup>1</sup> | Advocacy <sup>1</sup> | Conversation   | Conversation rather than money | Avoidance <sup>2</sup> | Sad  | Frustration | Anxiety | Helplessness | Level of importance in their lives | Level of Connection <sup>3</sup> | Level of Engagement <sup>3</sup> |
| 91% - 100%           |  |                         |                       |  |                                |                        |  |             |         |              |                                    |                                  |                                  |
| 81% - 90%            |  |                         |                       |  |                                |                        |  |             |         |              | Post                               | Post                             |                                  |
| 71% - 80%            |  |                         |                       | Post   |                                |                        |  |             |         |              | Pre                                |                                  | Post                             |
| 61% - 70%            | Post   |                         | Post                  |  |                                |                        | Pre  |             |         |              |                                    | Pre                              | Pre                              |
| 51% - 60%            |  |                         |                       | Pre  | Post                           |                        |  |             |         |              |                                    |                                  |                                  |
| 41% - 50%            | Pre  | Post                    |                       |  |                                |                        |  | Pre         |         |              |                                    |                                  |                                  |
| 31% - 40%            |  |                         |                       |  |                                | Pre                    |  |             |         | Pre          |                                    |                                  |                                  |
| 21% - 30%            |  | Pre                     | Pre                   |  | Pre                            |                        |  | Post        | Post    |              |                                    |                                  |                                  |
| 11% - 20%            |  |                         |                       |  |                                |                        |  |             | Pre     |              |                                    |                                  |                                  |
| 0% - 10%             |  |                         |                       |  |                                | Post                   |  |             | Post    | Post         |                                    |                                  |                                  |

<sup>1</sup> Movement of "A great deal" and "A lot" responses pre/post program from Online Survey  
<sup>2</sup> Volunteers acknowledged either moving to the other side of the footpath or avoiding eye contact  
<sup>3</sup> Movement in "moderate level" response pre/post program

The table above summarises key findings from the quantitative Online Survey in relation to the volunteers' skills, behaviours, emotions and ideas on community connection pre/post project. The "yellow" represents pre-project and "green" represents the post-program results.

*I learned who is at risk and can recognise vulnerable situations and different ways to approach different people and their needs.*

*...in the past, I would avoid eye contact, and now I am more open to hearing the unique story they might tell.*

<sup>1</sup> The 1,300% is the increase as per the annual Inner West Council Homeless Street Count; the change from 2017 to 2018.

In addition to shifts in their comfort to interact and provide information to people who were homeless, outreachers described themselves as having more willingness and confidence to advocate for an 'inclusive and just community'.

Upon completion of the program volunteers described a reduction in 'unpleasant' emotions such as sadness and helplessness when interacting with rough sleepers. Likewise, volunteers perceived more 'pleasant' emotion such as empowerment, inspiration, and even joy at the conclusion of the program.

*I worried about looking like an idiot and not knowing what to say.*

*When you get a result – one chap been in a car for a year. And he went into one stop, and they housed him in two weeks' time! I felt joy and pride*

Volunteers credited their growth and learning to a combination of the program elements such as formal training, mentoring from NNC staff and the structure/safety provided through strong project management.

*Some volunteer work is very unstructured. This was different. This was really well planned, and I could feel it, creates structure and gives freedom and comfort.*

*I got a lot out of the staff who were so open, and that was really good for me because they gave some much of selves, so open and honest.*

They also relied on and strengthened personal attributes such as cognitive/mental self-regulation, emotional wisdom and personal values as well as relationships with family and friends. Relationships also featured as a key component of how volunteers perceived 'community'. The strengthening of connections within their community (with both rough sleepers and others) was seen as an important outcome of their volunteer experience. They also valued the opportunity to contribute to their community.

*The fact that this was my community and that was important – feeling a sense of connection with where I live - Connection to place. It has allowed me to see what is going and the what you can do about it*

*Hearing the conversations – learning the human picture of Newtown. It is not just restaurants and bars – there is humanity in the area*

All volunteers indicated an intention to volunteer with the NNC in the future and 85% immediately registered to participate in phase 2.

## NNC Staff

NNC staff developed technical skills such as presentation, mentoring/coaching and interviewing skills as well as shifts in perceptions of volunteer ability and willingness to contribute in a way that enhanced the service and was meaningful to the volunteers. Likewise, NNC team members gain valuable insights related to the value of deeply engaging versus simply educating community members about homelessness and injustice.

*Now I understand what volunteers want and what volunteers can and want to do and how. What motivates and importance of building a good experience for them.*

*The program highlighted how many people are willing to get involved and so many people don't have any idea how to get involved and this gives people the opportunity.*

Similar to volunteers, NNC team members attributed much of their growth and learning to the quality of the relationships, strong communication with volunteers.

*Quality and calibre of the people who volunteer – we had high expectations and high standards*

*This has given confidence and trust. The staff can trust volunteers to do the job.*

## The Organisation

The NNC as an organisation also benefited from an enhanced capacity to serve clients and the overall strengthening of the organisation as a whole. Specifically, they described a greater 'organisational' confidence, adaptability and willingness to innovate in response to challenges.

*Comfortable with new projects – in the past, it looks like it's too hard, but now I would not avoid. I am willing to put my hand up.*

*You have to start more outside in your approach – what the community cares about versus what we as a professional service organisation are interested in.*

*Dreaming big – imagine if -- what is success, how would you do it and measure it.*

## Methods & Key Findings

### Methods

Data was collected from the volunteers (n=19) and key NNC staff/stakeholders (n=8).

The volunteers completed an on-line 46 question survey prior to and upon completion of the project. This provided quantitative and qualitative data. Unless otherwise noted, the quantitative questions were rated on a 5-point scale:

- a great deal,
- a lot,
- a moderate amount,
- a little or
- none at all.

To simplify reporting, the above categories were collapsed combining 'a great deal' and 'a lot' and 'a little and none at all' for most analysis.

Both the volunteers and NNC staff completed semi-structured interviews at the end of the program. These interviews also provided an opportunity to record unanticipated volunteer and staff insights and experiences that were not otherwise captured in the structured component of the evaluation. A thematic analysis of this qualitative data has been integrated into this report.

### Key Findings

This program had a positive and significant impact on the volunteers, NNC staff/key stakeholders and, the organisation as a whole.

Personal learning and growth was significant for volunteers and staff. Increases in personal and community connections benefited staff and volunteers as well, contributing to organisational and community strengthening. Intention to volunteer and perceived value of volunteers to the organisation was enhanced.

The program was also seen to have contributed to overall adaptiveness, resilience and confidence to innovate for NNC staff.

### Volunteers

Learning and growth for the volunteers was significant. For example, knowledge about homelessness and how to respond to a person who is experiencing homeless or sleeping rough increased. Volunteers also gained personal insights that resulted in increased empathy and self-awareness including the revelation and testing of previously held assumptions/personal biases.

From a behavioural perspective, the volunteers reported they were more likely to engage with a person who was experiencing homelessness post-program and were less likely to avoid contact when they saw a person who appeared to be sleeping rough. Moreover, post-program volunteers were more likely to perceive themselves as having the capacity and willingness to advocate for an

‘inclusive and just community’— several volunteers indicated they had already initiated projects either in collaboration with the NNC or through their workplace.

Behavioural changes coincided with a shift in the volunteers’ emotional responses, which were characterised by a general reduction in unpleasant emotions such as anxiety, sadness, frustration, guilt and feelings of helplessness. Likewise, satisfaction, inspiration and even joy featured in the volunteers’ description of their emotions at the conclusion of the program. Volunteers also described experiencing an increased perception of empowerment, including the belief that they were making a valuable and valued contribution.

Consistent with research with other populations, the volunteers described several personal strengths that they believed contributed to their growth/learning. These included: cognitive/mental self-regulation, emotional wisdom and personal values. In terms of external factors that assisted their learning, volunteers emphasised the value of relationships with friends and family, as well as, the relationships they formed with the NNC staff. Formal training was highly valued; however, volunteers emphasised the importance of the overall project management/structure and the close coaching/mentoring from the social workers as critical to their ability to learn and grow as a result of their experiences in the program.

Relationships are the core of how volunteers see their community. They defined a ‘strong community’ as one where people are engaged, inclusive and supportive of each other. Most volunteers indicated that community was important in their lives pre-program. Even with this high baseline, there was still an upward shift in the degree of community importance from pre to post-program. Likewise, most described a relatively high level of engagement in their community pre-program; nevertheless, there was an increase in their feelings of connection and engagement at the end of the program.

The volunteers’ experiences interacting with people who were sleeping rough, reinforced their belief and value of ‘human connections’. Their experiences in the program helped the volunteers see the value of relationship at an individual level between themselves and people who are sleeping rough, but also, for themselves and as a means to strengthen the community as a whole.

Volunteers viewed their volunteer experiences positively. They perceived a range of positive outcomes for themselves, the organisation and the target recipients. Most had previous experience volunteering. Direct service delivery, fundraising and events were among the types of volunteer work prior to this program. All expressed an intention to volunteer for NNC in the future.

### **NNC Staff/key stakeholders**

NNC staff/key stakeholders indicated that they experienced significant personal growth and development as a result of being involved in this program. Technical skills such as presentation and mentoring were described. However, perhaps more significantly, staff/key stakeholder described changes in their perception of volunteer motives and the value of engaging community members more deeply into the work of the Centre. Similar to the volunteers, the staff highlighted relationships/bonding as critical to their development through this program.

### **The organisation as a whole**

Staff/key stakeholders highlighted organisation strengthening both in terms of tangible outcomes such as, the expansion of the services to more clients and greater community awareness, but also greater confidence, adaptability and resilience of the NNC to address new challenges and to innovate.

## Background

In response to community concern and a 1,300%<sup>2</sup> increase in street homelessness, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC) sought financial support to run an innovative project to address the situation. The project ran from December 2017 to January 2018.

The goal of NNC's *Community Homelessness Outreach Project* was to build and sustain a stronger, more just community, through local volunteers, once trained, taking-action. Specifically, equipping community members in their daily lives to provide housing related information and social connection to rough sleepers who were open to such assistance and connection. And in return, community members would gain a greater sense of wellbeing and connection to their community. NNC would strengthen its role/reputation within the community and with its partners to enable it to better deliver on its purpose.

The project vision was to leverage NNC's expertise and strong community leadership role to recruit and train local volunteers in *homelessness*. Volunteers would apply their newly acquired knowledge, gain deeper skills and more confidence by conducting hands-on outreach with local rough sleepers, under the leadership and coaching of NNC staff. Volunteers would have opportunities to reflect on their experiences to gain greater insights. The project would be supported via the recruitment of a highly skilled team of pro bono volunteers in areas such as social research, PR, project management and event management.

The project would provide opportunities for capacity development for NNC staff/key stakeholders through formal training and taking on new roles such as project leader, presenters and volunteer managers. The project would collect rich data and stories that are sharable and provide evidence of the social impact achieved. The project would create assets to generate further benefits to NNC and a vehicle to support the goal of sustainability.

Most importantly, the project would deliver actual positive social impact. It was recognised that the experience for the project team needed to have an element of "fun" but if social change was not being delivered, the project would not be deemed as successful.

The volunteers became to be known as the *Newtopian Outreachers*.

The key strategies underpinning the project were:

1. Follow project management processes & practices; allow for unexpected successes & insights.
2. Integrate the project within NNC's ecosystem e.g. strategy, partners and services,
3. Deliver an exceptional experience for all stakeholders,
4. Encourage purposeful conversations e.g. balance "a good chat" with provision of housing related services,
5. Conduct an academic-level research study,

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<sup>2</sup> The 1,300% increase is a per the 2017 to 2018 Street Count undertaken each February by Inner West Council. The actual numbers are 4 people (2017) to 28 people (2018).

6. Record and apply lessons learned and
7. Determine how to sustain the project into 2019 (and beyond) early in the project.

The project leveraged and further developed the BIG Community Impact Project framework<sup>3</sup>.

## Detailed project description

The project phases were:

- Plan: December 2017 to February 2018
- Design: March to April
- Execute: May to November
- Close: December to January 2019

### Phase 1 - Plan

The planning phase commenced by running an Impact Success Planning workshop and interviews with key stakeholders. Detailed project objectives were established and agreed to by the Project Sponsor (Liz Yeo, CEO) and Project Leader (Elaine Macnish, Community Strengthening Manager).

Key to planning was a solid understanding of the project's ecosystem. For example, in October 2017 NNC initiated a monthly professional outreach service with Inner West Council and housing & health services partners. NNC also offers a weekly One-Stop-Shop service on Thursdays at NNC's building which again includes services from the housing sector, case management, crisis accommodation and Centrelink. NNC offers boarding house outreach services. These three services would prove to be key to the success of the project.

The project needed to recruit at least 16 local volunteers for the Outreach roles. The volunteer roles were advertised via social media and letter box drops. Due to the innovative nature of the project, the Inner West Council included an article, which helped to promote the recruitment drive. The volunteer hiring process involved submitting a written application and attending 30 minute in-person interview conducted by NNC staff. There were 23 applicants, and 19 volunteers were selected.

In addition to the outreach volunteers, 14 pro bono volunteers were recruited throughout the project, with skills in the area of communication, social research, facilitation, training development, project management and event management.

The project team designed the data collection and reporting objectives<sup>4</sup>. The objectives were:

- Report against the project objectives,
- Closely monitor the volunteer experience and outcomes for rough sleepers,
- Conduct an academic-level research study,
- Report to funders on project progress,

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<sup>3</sup> For further information on the BIG Community Impact Project Framework visit <https://theimpactbusiness.biz/tools-big-community-impact-projects/>

<sup>4</sup> Some data collection and report objectives were identified in a more organic manner throughout the project, as data was analysed.

- Weekly reporting to volunteers on social impact, and
- Analyse how information about rough sleepers can be captured and shared (formally and informally) via stakeholders & communication forums to maximise outcomes for rough sleepers

The data sources identified included:

- Rough sleepers
  - outreach engagement forms
- Volunteers
  - pre-project and post-project online questionnaire<sup>5</sup>
  - 25-minute post-project phone interview
  - the Net Promoter Score (NPS) surveys following each project activity
- NNC Staff and external training presenters
  - feedback survey following training delivery
  - 25-minute post-project phone interview

### Phase 2 - Design

Training objectives were agreed, the training program was designed, and the following modules were created:

- S1.1 Project Scope & Understanding Homelessness,
- S2.1 Services System Explained,
- S3.1 Specific behaviours – Trauma,
- S3.2 Specific behaviours - Mental Health,
- S3.3 Specific behaviours - Drug & Alcohol,
- S2.2 Services Explained – Police,
- S3.4 Services Explained - Assertive Outreach Worker,
- S4.1 How to Engage during the Outreach,
- S4.3 Services Handbook, and
- S4.2 Team activity Case Studies.

The training materials were developed and delivered by subject matter experts from NNC, Mission Beat and NSW Police. The training presenters, prior to delivery were trained in presentation skills via Jeff Kim (Westpac, Senior Facilitator, pro bono).

The project's research study was designed and executed by Dr. Connie Henson (Learning Quest, pro bono). The key aim of the study was to assess the changes the volunteers underwent during the project in terms of their beliefs, perceptions and behaviours in relation to homelessness, community and volunteering. Volunteers conducted an online survey (pre/post project) and 25-minute post-project interview. Further assessments were conducted with NNC/stakeholders and the NNC organisation as a whole.

In order to capture the Newtownian Outreach story, the project team engaged Alberts Media to record the journey. The film production schedule and volunteer interviews were planned.

### Phase 3 – Execute

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to Appendix XX for the Volunteer Pre/Post Online Survey

Training was delivered over 4 consecutive Wednesday evenings commencing in May. The training was facilitated by a professional, highly experienced facilitator who is a clinical psychologist (Andrew Wu, Upfront Leadership, pro bono). The first training session included a critical team building exercise, which laid the foundation for the program. All outreach volunteers successfully completed the training program.

Following the 4-week training program, volunteers deepened their skills by applying their acquired knowledge via conducting hands-on outreach. Dividing the 20 volunteers into teams of 5, each team conducted a monthly outreach on 2 pre-determined routes around King Street, Newtown. On outreach night, the team of 5 were further divided into 2 teams; each led by 1 professional from NNC. Each volunteer conducted 4 rounds of outreaches; in total 16 outreaches were conducted during the June to September period which resulted in 114 engagements with rough sleepers.

During the first round of outreach, the NNC leaders lead the engagement with the rough sleeping community member. On the volunteer team's second and subsequent outreaches, volunteers were encouraged, if comfortable, to lead the outreach with NNC taking on a coaching role. Only 2 team members would approach a rough sleeping neighbour at any one time.

### ***The Outreach process***

The weekly Wednesday evening outreach process involved volunteers meeting at NNC at 6:00pm wearing their "Newtopian Outreacher hoodies" which were awarded to them on the final night of training. The outreach session commenced with a team pre-brief, led by NNC staff (Outreach leaders). The purpose of the pre-brief was to:

- provide the volunteers with an update on any new information regarding rough sleepers and project statistics e.g. average number of engagements per outreach, number of people connected to case management, etc
- communicate and apply any lessons learned from previous outreaches,
- agree the outreach routes and return time,
- re-emphasise the need for privacy of the information collected about rough sleepers,
- check-in with volunteers with any questions or concerns they may have, and
- agree roles for the night e.g. two people to engage and one to collect data.

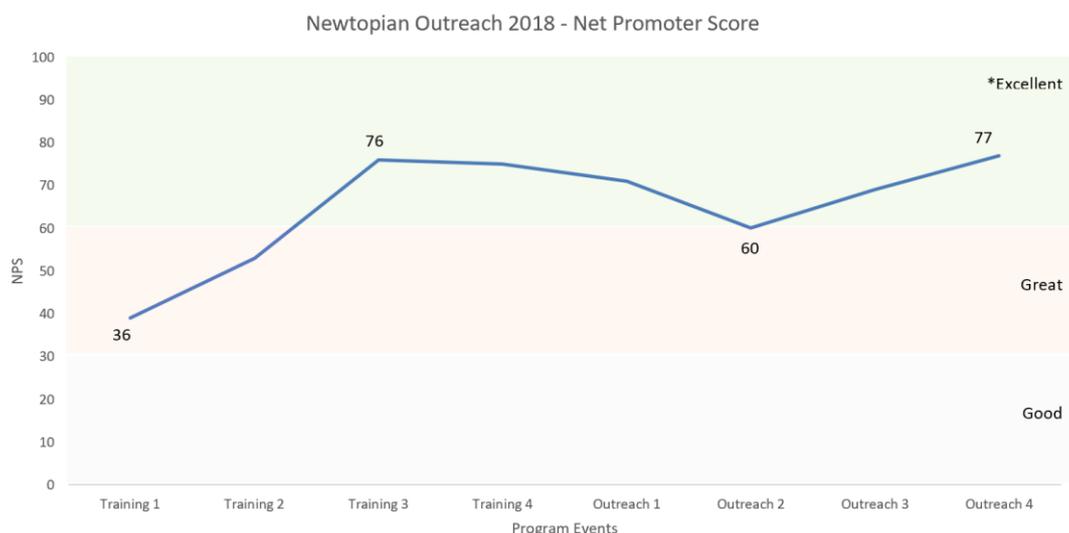
The volunteers would gather outreach materials (Telstra phone cards, information cards e.g. Linked to Home and data collection sheets). Each team was equipped with mobiles for cross-team communication.

Outreach ran for approximately one hour. The teams would approach a rough sleeper and engage in a friendly, purposeful chat, offering housing related information. If desired, under the supervision of NNC staff, organisations such as Linked2Home or MissionBeat were engaged via phone. Once the conversation was complete, the team would walk on and record data. On average 7 engagements were conducted each evening.

The teams would meet back at NNC at the agreed time. The volunteers would enter data collected (in a secured excel spreadsheet) and participate in a de-brief. The purpose of the de-brief was to:

- Share updates on people engaged,
- If relevant, NNC staff would discuss and agree any follow up actions<sup>6</sup> e.g. contact a furniture provider where someone was housed but had no furniture, be on the lookout for someone who was introduced to One-Stop-Shop, follow-up with a case manager, communicate updates to the professional outreach service, and
- Check-in with each volunteer to share insights, learnings, & importantly to ensure all were ok.

In between the outreach (and training) the data collected (including Net Promoter Score (NPS)) was analysed to gain insights and “tweak” the project and outreach process as required. The diagram below shows the volunteer journey using consolidated NPS.



\* Source -Net Promoter Score® Benchmarks <http://indexnps.com/>

In October, the volunteers participated in temporary accommodations visits to gain a deeper understanding of the services available to rough sleepers and what rough sleepers experienced. Each visit commenced with a 45 – 60-minute question and answer session with the facilities’ case manager or manager. The volunteers were then taken on a walk through the facilities.

The project was established as a pilot given the uniqueness of the approach and limited funding. Based on the project’s early successes evidenced by project outcomes and the feedback by NNC staff and volunteers, in September the project team commenced planning for 2019. This activity was key to meeting the project’s *sustainability* goal.

<sup>6</sup> While NNC would conduct some follow-up actions post-outreach, it is important to note, that at time of this report NNC did not directly provide case management services for rough sleepers. However, rough sleepers were encouraged to attend NNC’s House Services One-Stop-Shop, held each Thursday to access services such as Centrelink, Housing NSW, temporary accommodation and case management provided by various partners. Further, a monthly Professional Outreach is conducted, led by NNC; information gained during the volunteer outreach was feedback.

In October, the volunteers were asked if they were interested in continuing with outreach and potentially participating in other projects related to assist rough sleepers. With an 85% volunteer resign-up, the project team commenced developing a new governance model to drive the “service” in 2019. A “brainstorm” workshop was held with the volunteers, a list of “good ideas” captured, a Community Action Board was created, and board roles were filled.

Filmmakers from Alberts Media (Gene Alberts and Charlie Taperell), captured the journey of Newtopian Outreachers, with specific focus on Elaine Macnish and two volunteers, Stefanie McKeever and Lee Coleman.

The Newtopian Outreacher short documentary is located [here](#).

#### **Phase 4 - Close**

In November a *thank you and community celebration* was held at Newtown Dendy (event sponsor), with refreshments sponsored by Newtown Fitness First. The Newtopian Outreacher short documentary was shown and the Newtopian Outreachers celebrated with family, friends and community members. Special guests included Jenny Leong (MP, Greens Member for Newtown) and Alex Greenwich (MP, Independent NSW Member for Sydney). A lively Q&A session with held with a panel of Newtopian Outreachers.

Each volunteered successfully completed the program and received a Certificate of Achievement.

During December and January final funder reports and research study were completed. The lessons learned were reviewed with the project team. The first Community Action Board meeting was held.

# Detailed Report

## Part 1: Volunteers

### Volunteers learning and growth as a result of participation in the program

Learning and personal growth for volunteers went well beyond the program objective to acquire knowledge and information related to homelessness.

In addition to increases in knowledge, the volunteers gained personal insights, increased self-awareness, expanded empathy and boosted confidence as a result of participating in the program. Likewise, there were positive changes in the volunteers’ behavioural responses from pre to post-program. Behavioural changes included more frequent and deeper engagement with people who were sleeping rough, as well as, reductions in ‘avoidance behaviour’ when encountering people who appeared to be experiencing homelessness.

Growth also included shifts in emotional responding. Emotional shifts involved reductions in unpleasant emotions (such as sadness, anxiety, and frustration) and increases in their experience of positive emotions (such as empowerment and satisfaction) when encountering a person experiencing homelessness.

### Changes in thinking, behaviour and emotional responding

#### Knowledge

Volunteers acquired new knowledge and information related to homelessness.

Prior to participation 42% volunteers indicated their current knowledge about homelessness was ‘a little’ or ‘none at all’. At the conclusion, only one person described their knowledge as ‘a little’. Likewise, at the conclusion, 68% described their knowledge as ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’ compared with 42% prior to participation. Comments within the surveys suggested that volunteers’ knowledge also shifted from conceptual to practical as a result of participation.



| Online pre-program survey  | Online post-program survey  |
|--|---|
| I have some understanding of homelessness through undertaking work-related research on human rights and homelessness. However, my knowledge is more theoretical than practical.  | I feel like my knowledge is significant compared to my family, friends and colleagues.                                      |
| I had the opportunity to research and produce a training series for health professionals on homelessness in 2016.  | I understand the causes, implications and vulnerability of homelessness.  |
| I was able to consult with a broad range of specialists in the homelessness sector to develop a detailed knowledge of factors and challenges that can be present for people experiencing homelessness and those at risk. | I have been able to deepen my practical understanding of the lived experience of homelessness through the Outreach program. |

In the individual interviews post-program, volunteers described a greater breadth of knowledge about the complexities associated with homelessness and inter-relationships/dependencies of services for people experiencing homelessness. Participants also indicated that new information had dispelled misinformation and similar to their comments within the survey, reported having a deeper understanding of how to apply new knowledge practically.

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| I understand the issues around homeless more than before.<br>I wanted to learn more, and the program is hugely successful in that way.   |
| Learning about what the other services do, I was not aware of how well connected the NNC is to others. Now I understand what NNC does. The program helped to fill in the picture of what supports exist. It is all about relationship building and networking.                                   |
| The complexity of the issue from a community point of view has been reinforced for me in this experience. It is not easy to understand the system even without any other issues - And they (clients) have really complex problems.   |
| I did not have the knowledge base and skill base in dealing with this issue and responding to people in outreach. The program showed how to help; Showed me a different way of doing outreach.   |
| I've been working with homeless for <i>a long time</i> , but what impacted me was the training was very thorough. We did learn a lot in training– it was very interactive, and we learned about the actual reporting and taking the statistics – which taught me you could be more professional. |
| I did have a good understanding of homelessness, but not practical skills to talk with people who are homeless. I also think I am probably thinking more deeply about the issues.  |
| The training gave a deep understanding of what people are dealing with and how frantic that situation is not to be able to access services.  |
| I think prior to the program I was looking at homelessness as an issue sitting over there and now, I have walked into it a bit and see how issues are influencing each other.  |
| I learned there are different types of people. I learned who is at risk and can recognise vulnerable situations and different ways to approach different people and their needs.   |
| Certainly, when I was growing up the notion was that if you were homeless, it was your fault – previously that was my belief - now I have data to know different.  |

When asked to describe their thoughts when they see a person who appears to be sleeping rough or experiencing homelessness, both pre and post-program, volunteers often thought about the unfairness inherent in their situation and contemplated what leads a person to find themselves in this situation.

Post-program, volunteers also thought more specifically about what they could do in the moment, e.g. ...can I engage positively, ... do I know them by name.

| Online pre-program survey   | Online post-program survey  |
|---|---|
| Where they'll sleep tonight.  | I think society is unfair. I think that if I can even just say hi and smile that can add a positive thing to their day.         |
| I wonder... how did they end up in this situation? What must it feel like for them? I usually think that they have come from a very underprivileged background and have been a victim of some sort of abuse.                              | Generally, I think if I can do anything to help them. It can be hard sometimes to decide that in the moment. It takes practice. |
| Many things, e.g. What happened to get someone there? Why isn't our government doing something or why isn't it a human right to have a house? Why do people wall by and act like they are invisible?                                      | I think that we as a community can do better to house and support these people who live among us.                               |
| I hope that they are not in that situation due to lack of social support services - knowing that they probably are. And I hope that, especially at this time of the year, they have found relative physical comfort and are not too cold. | There's a lot more to the story... can't assume anything! Get to know the person.   |
| Usually, I am thinking should I give that person some money or food or have a chat and so on. I usually think it's not a choice that they would have made if they had other options.  | I wonder if I know them (by name), how long they've been there or how long they've been homeless, and what they might need.     |

### Increased insight and awareness

Insight and self-awareness arose as a clear theme in the volunteers' reflections of their learning experiences in the interviews. Many of the volunteers described changes in how they perceive themselves, particularly in terms of relating to people who are experiencing homelessness. Some participants described becoming aware of personal biases and vulnerabilities and how their experiences in the program enable them to test personal assumptions and stretch themselves to overcome hesitations and discomfort.

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| I feel I am growing and pushing myself to do something that I could not do   |
| I am aware of a shift in myself. Now If I see someone acting strangely - I think okay maybe that is what they need to do. Now things for me are – ‘Predictably unpredictable’ -- I’m okay with it, and I am not bothered by usual behaviour, I know more about it. |
| Before this project – I’d never had an interaction with a homeless person. Through taking part, we were set the challenge to speak with someone on the street – now I ask people on the street how they are going.   |
| It reminded me that I don’t like to talk to people and especially strangers<br>Going up to strangers is hard – but you have to put on your big boy pants on, and it has become easier - practice makes perfect – anything gets easier.                             |
| When I see people on the street, I think they have a horrific story, in the past, I would avoid eye contact, and now I am more open to hearing the unique story they might tell.   |
| It has made me get out of my selfish ways – I am busy, and I forget to think about less fortunate people. It has taken me out of my comfort zone. Made me aware -<br>I know what else could happen in that moment instead of just a money exchange.                |
| Made me so much more conscious of how lucky I am. I think that I have more appreciation for what it is like to live rough and have been able to learn how to interact with rough sleeper and people who are homeless.  |
| There was one person I approached, and I was not sure, but I felt good that we connected, and a lot happened - Reminds to not dismiss before trying.   |
| Opened my eyes to dealing with people. I’m definitely impacted in a positive way.<br>It gives you an idea of what you can do.  |
| I also realised that through this process, you are getting to know yourself better and what you bring to this situation – that kind of growth is part of it as well.   |

## Empathy

Volunteers’ increase in knowledge combined with personal insights and self-awareness contributed to greater empathy. A clear theme that emerged in the post-program interviews was a shift to seeing and relating to people who are experiencing homelessness as fellow human beings, with all the same needs and wants, despite differences in appearance and living status. For some, this meant recognising that we have more commonalities than differences. Some participants experienced rich conversations and gained perspectives about the ‘humanness’ of people they met on the streets, who they previously perceived as somehow different. Other volunteers deepened their perspective about how some specific circumstances such as experiencing illness or injury, would make it all-the-more distressing for people sleeping rough or living with housing insecurity.

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| Previously I thought of them as ‘the other’ – through conversation they become more relatable. Even when just walking to the library – if I see someone and it will jog my thought process           |
| Here I saw people at their worst - Opened my eyes to what their life is really like -- Created more empathy  |
| I think for me it is really impacted how I think about other people -- Deeper compassion for people who are different<br>I now see them not someone to be fixed, but a person<br>I’m less judgmental |

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| It is the idea that you can meet a person and realise a really rich experience with them. I've grown in my perception for people on the street begging are not all homeless and made me realised how quickly life can change |
| I have learned that the level of human contact that they need is something that most people could do if they knew how.   |
| I saw people as people – learn to treat people better and they open up.<br>People are normal no matter what they are enduring.   |
| I think we have all learned that the people are fundamentally the same and things happen in their lives and through talking and making connections we see the commonality and not the differences.                           |
| Breaks down the otherness and people relating, and pooling resources and they help each other and relating with others – you start to see connectedness – the characteristics that we all share.                             |
| When you get to know someone more, little nuggets in their life drop.<br>When you hear a story more in-depth, you approach with a bit more compassion.   |
| We have conversations with people, and they are really enlightening, and you see they are genuine.   |
| Now, I think about when we discharge people from the hospital and the anxiety that must create for these people.   |

### Confidence

Volunteers reported higher confidence post-program when engaging with rough sleepers. Similar to many people, participants reported feelings of uncertainty and specifically being unsure of what to say when approaching a person on the street prior to participation.

Confidence to interact with people sleeping rough shifted for volunteers with 37% describing their confidence prior to participation as 'a little' or 'none at all', and only 21% indicating 'a lot' or 'a great deal' of confidence. While at the conclusion, all 100% volunteers described at least a moderate level of confidence and 47% indicated they had either 'a lot' or a 'great deal' of confidence.



| Online pre-program survey   | Online post-program survey  |
|---|---|
| Enough confidence for a simple quick interaction.   | I must admit that I've surprised myself at how my confidence in this has improved!  |
| Very confident in my work environment, however in this situation, they usually approach me.   | I feel much more comfortable and confident to speak with people who appear to be sleeping rough or experiencing homelessness - both respectfully and practically. |
| I feel comfortable to act in ways that are respectful of a person's dignity, but I would like to learn ways to be of practical assistance without being intrusive or just to be a positive or empathic presence in that moment. |   |

In the post-program interviews, the volunteers described not only knowing what to say but having the confidence that their interactions had the potential to be beneficial in both a practical and emotional way. In addition to increases in personal confidence, participants also indicated a higher belief that interventions could help people become homed.

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| I've definitely grown in confidence when approaching strangers – maybe people in general and especially people on the street. Confidence to not have everything prepared and not have a preconception of what they will think of you -- those things run in your mind when you don't know.                      |
| I think we walk past people in the street and don't know what to do --It has enabled a much better understanding.   |
| I've become more confident in being able to approach people I don't know people otherwise may have walked past but feeling uncomfortable.   |
| My confidence was built – I was a little tentative, not knowing what to say and what to do. Learned a bit about listening from the staff – you can see they are relaxed, and good listeners and they may drop a few things in conversations -- Knowing which way to shift the chat and what you can offer them. |
| Even though I work in homelessness – I did not really know how to approach them as a young female in a non-controlled environment. I am certainly more comfortable.   |
| I feel more confident to have a conversation – ask basic questions as part of rapport<br>And I know some practical ideas to share.  |
| Before I asked, "how will I be in this?" will I stuff this up, will I be helpful?<br>The program really supported people in knowing what to do and gain confidence.   |
| Feeling more comfortable chatting with people on the street – as opposed feeling uncomfortable coming out of the IGA.   |
| Before the program, I did not have high expectations I thought it was about not feeling invisible but to know that there are pathways to being homed.<br>I did not have hope that we could get people into homes.<br>The difference is having connections with an organisation that can get them into homes.    |
| You can speak with more authority because of actual practical experience.<br>Makes you more passionate to make a case – more vehement – I seize every opportunity to make a decision at a higher level.   |
| I felt hopeless and helpless that I could not do anything. Now have a purposeful chat – and introduce from NNC.   |

This greater confidence extended beyond the ability to engage in one-to-one interactions with people who are experiencing homelessness. There were also changes in the volunteer's perception of their ability to **advocate** for an 'inclusive and just community'.

At the beginning of the program, only 21% perceived themselves as having 'a lot' or 'a great deal' of competence to advocate, while 63% indicated 'a lot' or 'great deal' of competence at the end. Likewise, prior to participation 47% rated themselves as having 'a little' or 'no' competence to advocate, and only one volunteer rated themselves as having little competency for advocacy at the end.

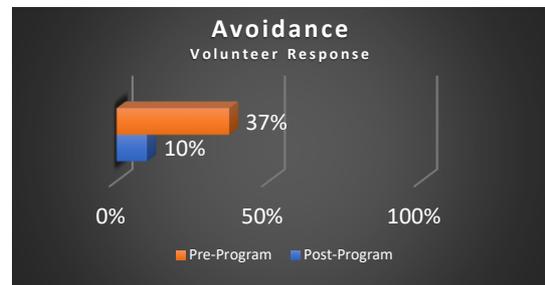


## Behaviour

Volunteers made pro-social changes in what they do when they see a person who appears to be sleeping rough or is experiencing homelessness. The most significant changes in behaviour were associated with positive interaction and reduced avoidance.

Avoidance type behaviours decreased. Prior to participation 37% volunteers acknowledged either moving to the other side of the footpath or avoiding eye contact, and only 10% described this behaviour at the conclusion of the program.

Prior to participation, 52% volunteers indicated they engaged in conversation, while 79% engaged in conversation post-program. Likewise, pre-program 21% initiated conversation rather than simply giving money when asked, compared with 52% post-program.



Open-ended comments suggest that when **specifically asked for assistance** from a person who appeared to be experiencing homelessness or sleeping rough, volunteers shifted their behaviour from pre to post-program. Most typical responses pre-program was to give money, say hello/chat briefly or try to help. Post-program, comments and in interviews, volunteers described more specific actions, e.g. ask what specific help they needed; told them about NNC or gave relevant advice.

| Online pre-program survey  | Online post-program survey   |
|--|--|
| If they ask for money, I would usually give them up to five dollars if I have it handy. If I don't have small money, I usually apologise.  | Ask them about what kind of assistance they're seeking. Try to understand their unique situation.  |
| I usually just smile and rush past but depends. If it seemed very urgent and I think I would stop and help.  | I listen, I rarely give anyone money - happier to buy things for them if they ask. Outside of Newtonian outreach, I haven't been asked for any other sort of assistance.               |
| I would stop and have a chat to them. Find out what they need and see if I can help out. Depending on what they need, happy to help out.   | If I can give them some money or grab them some food I will. Or give some advice on relevant services or aid if they are distressed.   |
| If they are begging for money, I say no and move on. I don't think anyone has ever asked me for anything else. If it was non-financial assistance, I would consider the request. | I would ask them what kind of help they need and try and talk it through with them. I will help them myself if I can or let them know about where they might be able to get more help. |

| Online pre-program survey   | Online post-program survey  |
|---|---|
| I usually make excuses for why I can't help them.   | Approach, usually giving money, talk to them about the NNC, try to collect some info and wish them luck. So far I haven't gotten any requests beyond money.   |
| I try to gauge if they're genuine and if I have time, try to engage in conversation, ask if they want me to buy them some food or a drink.  | Speak to them. Have a conversation. From there I might know the details of some specific services that can offer the assistance requested.  |
| At the moment I don't feel confident to do much more to assist than provide some dollars if they are asking or sometimes, I've popped into IGA to buy some basic food supplies and hand them over. There are one or two locals that I have a quick chat with when I'm heading their way and have a little time - I feel like that's been a positive way to help connect and feel we're both a part of the same community. | I know that I can refer them to the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre. Also support services such as Mission Beat, ambulance or police.  |
| I try to help if I can.   | Have a chat. Usually, recommend NNC and sometimes give money.   |
| Give them assistance.   | Engage; help to work out the type of assistance needed and help them to connect with relevant agency/workers.   |
| Tried to help them anyway that I can.   | I assist in whatever way I can, time permitting. Most often to provide some cash, sometimes food or water but recently I have spent more time to talk and make a connection. Outside of Outreach, I have also begun to mention NNC to individuals whom I've connected with previously just to provide a reminder. |

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| Having done it a few times, and I see that it can have an effect. I'm motivated to offer a chat. Now I don't think what you do has to be huge. A chat can make a difference - I'm seeing the value in the chat.  |
| I spoke to this guy at a central station, I would not have before - but because I felt more comfortable, I did.  |
| Affected how I deal with people every day - I'll be more compassionate to people less fortunate and be more proactive to engage and give money and help they reach potential they are working for  |
| I'm activity speaking about the work to others including with my class - and I've told them all about it. It has made me feel less afraid to discuss the reality with the students.  |
| I will continue with monthly outreach.   |
| I've been toying with the idea of a small project to get a pool of mobile phones for people doing outreach - to connect those people to a caseworker and housing etc. it would be a crucial thing to have access to phones - there is interest in NNC volunteers to work on that. I will do that with joint sub-committee. |
| I will get more involved with NNC - Because I have more awareness of what they do.   |
| I have volunteered with other organisations, and now I am moving towards homeless - I will be an Outreach worker again.  |

The interviews revealed that in addition to inspiring the participants to volunteer for additional organised outreach evenings, the program motivated and empowered participants to interact with people who appear to be homeless or sleeping rough beyond the bounds of the program, which was one of the objectives of the program. Participants reported a range of specific changes in their day-to-day behaviour as well as the initiation of specific collaborative projects that have grown out of their experiences in the program.

## Changes in emotional responding

Volunteers in the program chose to participate in a volunteer activity that was challenging. Research suggests that experiencing a challenge is often a catalyst for growth and development. However, these same challenges can be stressful and invoke a range of emotions. Similar to others who have experienced challenges, the volunteers experienced a range of emotion both during the training and as they interacted with people who are currently sleeping rough. They reflected on experiencing feelings as diverse as sadness and anger to joy, pride and hopefulness as they interacted with people who are experiencing homelessness.

The progression of the program, as well as the perspective adopted by the volunteers, impacted the emotions they experienced. The nature of the emotional reaction changed over time.

Volunteers reported a reduction in 'unpleasant' emotions from pre to post-program. The qualitative comments and responses in the interviews suggested that while any particular interaction with a person who was currently rough sleeping could evoke a painful response, overall the volunteers experienced a reduction in 'unpleasant emotions' upon completion of the program.

Volunteers made a distinction between their feelings when interacting with people who were currently sleeping rough, compared to how they felt when they thought about the bigger picture of homelessness in their community and society at large. When they stepped back and considered the conditions that created home insecurity/inequity they described frustration, anger and cynicism. These feelings were separate and different from what they described feeling when actually interacting with people who were currently sleeping rough. In the interviews, volunteers' descriptions of their emotions when interacting with people who were experiencing homelessness are best characterised by an increase in 'positive emotion'.

This combination of frustration 'with the system' and 'positive feelings towards the actual people who were experiencing homelessness may have been a motivating factor that influenced positive behavioural changes, including, the advocacy described earlier.

## Emotions evoked during the program

The pre and post-program qualitative measures demonstrated positive shifts in the participants' emotional response, particularly in relation reduction in sadness, frustration and helplessness, as a result of their interactions with people currently sleeping rough. It is noteworthy that a greater number of volunteers acknowledged feeling anxiety in the post-program interviews than on the surveys. In fact, descriptions of anxiety early on featured in their reflections of their experience in the interviews. It may be that the 'safety' of the interview and the retrospective perspective enabled

volunteers to become more aware of the shift and therefore the acknowledgement of elevated anxiety at the beginning.

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| I felt nervous at first.<br>I was not sure how it would play out.  |
| Nervous and anxiety to start with – I thought oh god what have I signed up for now.  |
| I felt – on a purely selfish level – I felt a bit scared at the beginning.<br>After the first 2-3 I felt better.   |
| I was hesitant at first.   |
| I could feel the nerves of others.   |
| Initially, I was apprehensive and nervous about meeting with people who appear a bit scary. I was impressed by the interest and willing volunteers had to go out and engage with homeless and rough sleeper and dedication of NNC and other organisations to go out and connect. |
| I felt fear/nervous of approaching people.<br>I worried about looking like an idiot and not knowing what to say.<br>The first couple of weeks we could observe the professional staff.   |
| I was in a group of 3- I tended to be the one that stood back – especially with women. I knew they were experiencing domestic violence - I was not sure if my contribution would be welcome.   |
| Even with the training, I felt like I did not know what to expect.   |
| I had a touch of imposter syndrome – when I really just put on a hoodie - I found myself wondering what am I doing – what is the purpose?  |
| It is still an ongoing process to get out of my comfort zone – just putting myself out there.  |

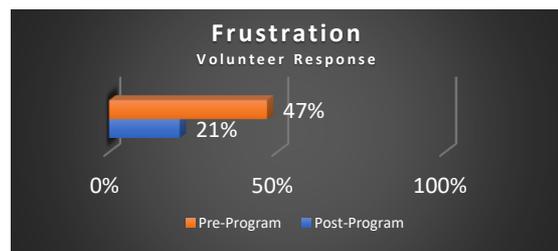
Pre-program, only 16% of volunteers indicated they were experiencing ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’ of **anxiety** and 0% rated their anxiety as ‘a great deal’ or ‘a lot’ at post-program. Likewise, 58% indicated they felt ‘a little’ or no anxiety’ at the beginning and this rose to 100% describing themselves as feeling ‘little or no anxiety’ at the conclusion of the program.



Pre-program, 63% volunteers described feeling **sad** ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’ when encountering a person who appeared to be homeless or sleeping rough; compared to 11% at the conclusion. Likewise, only 11% indicated they experienced ‘a little’ or no sadness when encountering a person who appeared to be sleeping rough or experiencing homelessness pre-program, while 89% described little or no sadness when encountering a person who is experiencing homelessness at the conclusion of the program.



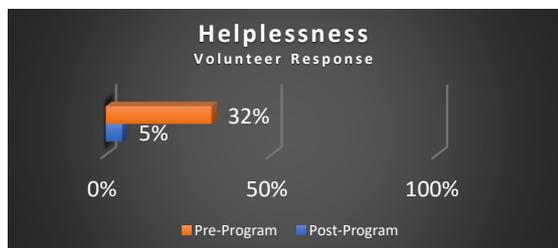
**Frustration** similarly shifted, with 47% describing feeling frustrated ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’ prior to participation reducing to 21% describing ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’ of frustration at the conclusion.



There was a reduction in feelings of **guilt** from the beginning to the end of the program. Pre-program 37% indicated the felt ‘a great deal’ or ‘a lot’ of guilt when encountering a person who appeared to be homeless. Only 16% described feeling guilty at the end of the program.



Feelings of **helplessness** decreased for volunteers, with 32% indicating they felt helpless ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’ at the beginning and only 5% reported ‘a great deal’ of helplessness at the conclusion. 37% of volunteers described ‘little’ or ‘no feelings’ of helplessness at the beginning and 68% at the conclusion.



Open-ended descriptions of their emotions suggested empathy influenced volunteers’ emotional response pre and post-program; however, post-program there was also a tendency to voice an action component connected to their emotion, e.g. ... then I engage with them; feel a responsibility to check if they are ok.

| Online pre-program survey  | Online post-program survey  |
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| Empathise that they're going through a tough time.   | I feel sad for their situation and what they must be experiencing. Then if I engage with them a little through a conversation or even an exchange of a smile, it's a good feeling.  |
| I feel empathy for their situation and frustrated that our society fosters this inequality.  | I feel for them and feel a responsibly to talk to them to check if they're ok.  |
| I feel a little bit guilty for not helping them and feel guilty that I am in a better position and that sometimes I take my good life for granted. | I still feel quite sad at seeing someone in that situation and wish I could do more to help. But I am also glad that I know there are some things I can to help the person, such as having a chat, talking about services they can use, and just saying hi. |
| I feel sad that they don't have a home...and I feel frustrated that as such a wealthy society so many people still struggle.                       | I don't get caught up emotionally.  |

| Online pre-program survey   | Online post-program survey  |
|---|---|
| I feel like I want to know what has happened to them in their life to have them be in that situation? | Empathy and love.   |
| Concerned, sad and compassionate but often inadequate or uncertain too on how to provide assistance.  | I feel concerned for the person's wellbeing and a level of empathy and desire to make a small connection at least.                        |
| Concerned, sometimes downhearted about the general situation which leaves some people sleeping rough  | Increasingly understanding of difficulties, risks and challenges for that person. More inclined to interact with that person. Empathetic. |

In the interviews, volunteers elaborated on the strength and impact of the emotions they experienced during their interactions with rough sleepers.

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| I had one gentleman who was distressed – I felt I left him distressed<br>I did not know how to de-escalate the situation – I want to have the skill to talk with but not trigger them.   |
| On a human level, I encountered a woman in the car park, and lots were happening, and I could see for her it was a mountain to climb   |
| I did feel sad to see how some live – it was not very dignified - not being able to look after themselves  |
| As one particular point with a person we met - I felt very tired and a little bit low. I felt her emotion. Especially when she explained about the domestic violence – it was eye-opening and could not stop thinking about her              |
| Last outreach with a lady, it was very touching very human - It was when she opened up and told her story – raw emotions, and I was able to relate to her and her being a woman and I felt she needed to be – we all need to help each other |
| I was amazed at my response to a person that I meet on the 4 <sup>th</sup> time. We helped her, and two days later, I was still thinking about her.  |

### Emotions evoked by a systemic perspective

Stepping back and viewing the broader perspective invoke a range of feelings for many participants including frustration and cynicism towards the system.

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| It made me really sad – cynical about society and angry.<br>I am very political, and I thought about how policies infuriated me. You don't really need to meet these people to see what we actually need to do.<br>As a society, we just don't care – because does not effect that many people. |
| The thing that frustrates me is the system is so complicated.<br>One stop shop helps because it helps people find a way through.<br>They need case management.  |
| I felt frustration – the system has so many cracks in it, and I felt how money gets wasted on things, not grassroots.   |
| Felt very empathetic – I know some people live on the street because they don't want to live conventionally. I was remembering to respect other people's values and, I can't change anyone.   |
| I was confronted with lots of homelessness as I walk around.<br>I am looking at same people & know we are in the same community & I'm just walking past them.<br>It is about the whole population looking in and stifled by fear.   |

### Emotions at the end of the program

A sense of satisfaction and pride dominated the feelings towards the end of the program. It is important to note that the volunteers' experience of 'positive emotion' was palpable in the post-program interviews. They described a range of 'positive feelings' including hopefulness, inspiration, pride, happiness and satisfaction. Many volunteers also described a sense of empowerment and recognition that their efforts had made a difference.

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| It is also encouraging because we do make a difference.  |
| When you get a result – one chap been in a car for a year.<br>And he went into one stop, and they housed him in two weeks' time! I felt joy and pride.   |
| Proud of myself to go out and do that.   |
| I felt a sense of empowerment – great to have the knowledge, to say this is what you can do or where you can go. To instantly help by calling services if needed.<br>I feel happier by being connected.<br>I'm feeling more satisfaction – The time is only a small amount, but it made a big difference in my satisfaction. |
| I know I have played my part.  |
| Being seen to be doing something profound -- Wearing the hoodie and being seen.  |
| Lots of satisfaction – knowing it made a difference.   |
| Visiting a hostel – very humbling speaking with workers.   |
| It was really exciting to be part of a new program and that was open to new approaches.  |
| I felt inspired – cheesy, but that is how I felt during the training.<br>Especially when I learned about different jobs that happen in the sector.   |
| The simple humanity of connecting with people – the more we do it the more influence we are having.<br>Just to have a chat - to make their minute.   |
| I see the power of connecting - I felt hopeful that we are making a difference and cut through.  |
| I have always spoken to people but now this is more powerful   |

The combination of increased 'positive emotions', decreases in 'unpleasant emotions' and sense of empowerment is potentially a powerful contributor to the behavioural changes noted earlier in this report.

Neuro-behavioural research has found that unpleasant emotions, particularly anxiety are associated with avoidance behaviours. Moreover, the perception of making a 'valuable and valued contribution' as well as the ability to 'connect with other human beings' have been identified as basic human needs. Fulfilling these needs is associated with increases in the associated activities. Likewise, pleasant emotions and even the anticipation of pleasant emotion, particularly in combination with the belief that their 'actions will have an impact' has been associated with increases in pro-social behaviour.

## Contributions to volunteers learning and growth

Previous research has suggested that many people who face challenges in their lives emerge from the experience with greater skill, confidence and improved resilience. There are some factors that have been associated with personal growth and development in these circumstances, including those that might be thought of as ‘pre-existing personal strengths’, as well as, factors that are part of the person’s external environment such as ‘healthy relationships’. Earlier qualitative research has primarily examined populations that were forced into unexpected or unavoidable challenges such as loss of a job, the death of a family member as well as clinical ‘case studies’ involving people who have experienced very significant trauma such as, combat and victims of violent crimes.

Although not a specific objective of the program, the nature of the program presented an opportunity to test whether people who voluntarily put themselves in a ‘challenging situation’ reliably learn and grow. Additionally, this program enabled us to explore the factors that contributed to learning and growth for this group.

## Personal resources that contributed to growth and learning

Volunteers in this program relied on their previously acquired skills, experiences and personal characteristics to help them learn from the challenges and opportunities that were presented in the program. In the interviews, volunteers identified a wide variety of personal strengths and resources and reflected on how these contributed to their personal and professional growth. Personal resources described by the volunteers can be clustered into three broad categories:

- cognitive/mental regulation,
- emotional wisdom, and
- personal values.

### Cognitive/mental regulation

The ability to manage stress and self-regulate thinking is essential for using challenging circumstances as a catalyst for learning. Cognitive/mental regulation includes the ability to be mindful (present in the moment), apply analytical thinking under pressure, to remain open-minded, curious and optimistic. Individuals who can regulate their thinking/emotion are well positioned to accurately perceive, openly embrace and adapt to novelty and challenges they encounter. In this program, participants chose to put themselves in a situation that they knew would likely be personally challenging. Many reported knowing that they would be able to ‘count on’ their previously developed ability to regulate their thinking. Some participants were pleasantly surprised by their ability to ‘rise to the occasion’.

I am very mindful person and have been through a lot and I can listen well.  
I remember at the beginning of the program there were questions about people becoming too emotionally invested – I did not know how to demonstrate to the group, but I knew it would not be a problem for me.

I am easy going.  
I practice reflection.  
I went in with open mind – I decide from day one, as someone who wants to learn more and experience more.  
We all have our judgements – I think I put those aside.

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| <p>At the beginning I was thinking – I hope I can do this well<br/>         You want to have a positive engagement.<br/>         And wonder how you can do something positive in a negative situation<br/>         I think that is the part of it is just leaping into it.<br/>         We all have things we wish we would not have done and things that we did well, but we have to just leap in.</p> |
| <p>I guess I like to think myself a bit open, even if first I feel put off, I know you just stick with it you will take something from it.</p>  |
| <p>I have had an analytical background in my work.<br/>         I break down issues to understand.<br/>         In the habit of pulling apart the issues.</p>   |
| <p>The other thing I have learned is there no point being involved if you can't change something - I see my role to do what I can control – have positive conversations. I can see that the caseworkers can do something, that makes people aware of what can be done.</p>  |
| <p>I'm naturally curious.<br/>         Interested in trying new things and being openminded.</p>  |
| <p>I have a sense of humour – it is good to be able to have a laugh with people, they like to laugh too.</p>  |
| <p>I also think it is the knowledge that you have to just jump in and do it.</p>  |
| <p>I would say optimistic – you need to realise that people are experiencing shit things and you need to be optimistic, or you would give up.</p>   |
| <p>Being a hopeful person is a part of it.<br/>         Having a sense that small things matter.</p>  |

Curiosity is often associated with resilience and mental regulation and was assessed in the surveys. Curiosity was assessed by asking the volunteers about the types of questions they would like to ask a person who appeared to be experiencing homelessness or sleeping rough. *(Note; this item was framed more theoretically 'If you could ask a person who is homeless or sleeping rough any question, what would it be? And does not necessarily reflect a question that they actually did ask.)* The types of questions volunteers wanted to ask did not change through the program, both pre and post-program the questions volunteers wanted to ask centred about two themes: knowing the person's 'story' and providing immediate direct assistance.

| Online pre-program survey   | Online post-program survey   |
|---|--|
| Where are you staying that night?   | Do you have somewhere safe to stay?  |
| What do you need from me that could support you?  | What would make their life better right now?   |
| I think the first question would have to be: Would you like to be not be sleeping rough?  | How are you? What is your story?   |
| What is your story?   | Is there anything I can do to help?  |
| This is a hard question to answer because it comes with a sense of helplessness and perhaps dread that I may not be able to help. However, the question I would really like to feel comfortable to ask is "I can see that you're doing it tough right now - is there something I can do to assist you?" | I would want to know their story and also what they would need to feel safe and supported in life. |

## Emotional wisdom

A second theme that emerged in terms of personal resources was emotional wisdom. This included the ability to empathise and use sophisticated interpersonal skills to respond compassionately and authentically. Participants in this program uniformly demonstrated an understanding of the power of connection. They expressed a desire to overcome personal or other barriers to provide healthy connections for the people they encountered on the streets.

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| So long as you try, and you bring who you are to the situation that is all we can hope for – training is, of course, important, but you have to bring yourself.  |
| Good to remind myself that these could be anyone and they are deserving of a safe place to sleep and if they don't have it is unlikely to be their fault.  |
| I feel as if I don't have the same experience, but in some way, I have some empathy and understanding the insecurities.  |
| I think as humans we are wired to reach out and relate to each other. Even within the communities of people who are homeless – it strikes at our core – we are supposed to be with others – it is a big deal.<br>We all have some willingness to connect.<br>Empathy and compassion.   |
| I think it is being able to reflect on past on experience and wish I had someone to help me then and bring it forward and say how can I help.<br>Like remembering being lonely and tell them what I would have wanted in that situation. Reflect on how to action what I feel.<br>If you have some empathy and people orientation and curiosity and are able to listen to people that's a lot of it, but don't overly personalize- there is no sense of me actually taking on the burden, but I can still see how terrible it is for them. |
| I think I have a strong empathy for people. I've had difficulty in my family still ongoing. And I know how it is to support people when it is needed.<br>Having difficult experience to think beyond my friends and family. I know the value of talking – spending time with people, that time is easy to give if you have that switch on your head.<br>That realisation that it is not a massive thing but that time to spend with people. -- within in everyone.   |
| I want to even the balance when things are unjust<br>Having a sense of wanting to help others.<br>There have been times in my life that others have helped me, and I want to help others – in a positive way.  |
| What benefits us most is being connected. It is not the individualism.   |
| I am a good listener.  |
| I live on a street, near a park and a young woman came to live in the park. The response of my neighbours was about what should we do, and we should get rid of her – they had a lot of fear about her presence.<br>I found myself thinking there must be something else we can do. I said hello and spoke to her she was scared and traumatised – she came to live near me and I wanted to help.  |
| I'm very comfortable with other people – so training in the group and the outreach workers. I am not shy of talking to people and interested in finding out their stories, I don't mind getting on the front foot in terms of talking to people.   |

The survey data added weight to this finding by revealing no change in the wishes volunteers had for people that are experiencing homelessness or sleeping rough from pre to post-program.

Pre and post wishes reflected the volunteers' empathy and sense of justice. Their wishes centred on wanting people to feel safe, connected and respected; and to be homed.

| Online pre-program survey  | Online post-program survey  |
|--|---|
| To have a free cheap place to stay for as long as they please to help them get back on their feet.   | The government to implement a housing first model to solve the practical issue but to also give confidence/support during trying times for people.  |
| Respect and compassion.  | Make them safe and self-sustainable.  |
| I would wish that they had a home - but a home that enables someone to fully live. So, it needs to be connected to the community, infrastructure, provide opportunities for work, friendship, creating, meaning and belonging. | To have a safe and secure home with any supports necessary to make that comfortable and right for each person.  |
| My wish would be for him or her to be able to accept all offers of help without feeling shame or guilt.  | Everyone has a home and the services/ support they need to keep them happy and safe. I would wish for their suffering to be lifted, for their needs to be met and for them to be free of regret and grief of their past, to be able to move into a life they would have chosen for themselves!!! NOT MUCH REALLY. And that is ONE wish. |
| Justice  | To be happy (whatever that entails for that person)   |

### Personal values

A final theme regarding personal resources was personal values. Volunteers consistently identified their personal ethics, morals and beliefs as core to both their decision to volunteer, as well as, being a key contributor to their growth and learning through the work.

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| I like to pretend it is a fair world and I will do what I can in my immediate world to make it fairer – I believe it is a fair thing to do.<br>So, in my fair world they would have a home, so I want to make it a reality. |
| Even before I started, I committed to doing it, and we all went in with full commitment do it.  |
| I think certainly growing up in a working-class family and have social welfare<br>And see the value of essential assistance to success.<br>I have a strong sense of social justice and social services.                     |
| Commitment to professional and personal social justice principles and this is a practical way of applying in my community.  |
| My core values – I've been lucky with a healthy family, support system, went to private school, but have always had a sense of social justice and now understand the system.  |
| Don't have financial resources to help but this was a great way to educate myself to help.  |
| I guess my general outlook, I have always been very socially conscious and interested in homelessness.  |

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| I realise I could easily be in the situation they are in, and that makes me realise it could happen to anyone and it is not what some would say that these are bad people whose choices have led them here. |
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| I think I have an innate will to volunteer. |
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| I think my commitment is important. |
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| I cannot be an expert in everything but maybe I did not need it. |
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| I have the wherewithal to do it. |
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| I sway towards socialism – how can people have many houses, and some have none. |
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## External conditions that contributed to growth and learning for the volunteers

External resources also played an important role in assisting volunteers to learn and grow as a result of their experiences in the program. Much of the external support identified as important by the volunteers was integral to the program and included training, staff role modelling and coaching, structure and program management.

Relationships of all types represented the foundational element of external resources. Similar to Learning Quest’s previous research, participants identified the importance of emotional support as well as the necessity of at least one person encouraging to ‘push them out of their comfort zone’ and/or to try out new behaviours.

### Training

The training was highlighted by participants as having incredible value to them. Virtually all volunteers spontaneously described the training as a core success element of the program during the post-program interviews

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| Firstly, I think the training has been very good at providing expertise in all areas. |
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| We felt supported and encouraged. |
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| Attention to detail and personal commitment to the program was high. |
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| The training prepared us to take part in the outreach. |
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| Training was really great, I learned how it all fits. |
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| Training gives preparation. |
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| All the training was really useful – all the speakers did a great training. |
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| It prepared me for my experience in meeting and talking to homeless people. |
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| At the beginning at the training – there were emotional things with memories |
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| Helped me realise everybody has things in their past that impact them. |
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| Made it easy, with dinner provided – that was a great idea – brings people together, it is learning and social. |
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| The way the training was done – sharing lived experience. |
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| Training was so structured and well-timed, and I am full of awe for the people who set it up. |
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## Professional program management and credibility of the NNC

In addition to the formal training, volunteers were keenly aware of the positive impact provided by the overall program structure and management. They highlighted the strong program management including the focus on data collection as a source of credibility and as a contributor to perceived safety. Likewise, the ethos of the NNC including the obvious community collaboration featured significantly in the participants positive learning experiences. Some also commented on the value of having peers as role models.

Neuro-behavioural research has highlighted the importance of ‘feeling safe’ including having ‘a sense of control’ for enhanced performance, coping and general wellbeing. Moreover, learning and growth occur when this sense of safety is balanced with stimulation/novelty. Participants ability to ‘take risks’ by trying new behaviours was enhanced by the structure and program management which increased predictability and contributed to a sense of safety.

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| I think NNC ethos is a driver for me – connected with my values.  |
| It is extraordinary that NNC came up with the idea.   |
| I thought the structure of the program was good.  |
| It was good for us to see the follow through and know it was helpful - there was a clear outcome.   |
| Seeing the input had outcomes and seeing services working together.   |
| I’ve volunteered other times when people feel they don’t can make a difference– they don’t feel commitment.   |
| The commitment that the NNC was willing – we went into it we took it seriously.   |
| Jane did amazing job with the project management.<br>Some volunteer work is very unstructured. This was different. This was really well planned, and I could feel it, creates structure and gives freedom and comfort.  |
| Jane is the glue – she is such a professional operator and the organisation and commitment to the data and feedback and adjusting accordingly.<br>She was so positive and so professional all the way through and very pleasant.  |
| Great work by Jane – lovely lady and she deserves lots of applause for all the work she has done.   |
| So professionally managed – Jane and Colin and Elaine have all played an important role.  |
| I can access the NNC easily and I am close by.<br>It was a low commitment – easy volunteering.<br>This project enabled me to do that with the time commitments and could do.  |
| Overall the whole experience – the structure and seeing how many people wanted to do this volunteer work.<br>Also observing others. Sometimes see the other person do something incredible and you see them change/grow.<br>The groups of three work, sometimes you are wondering where do I stand and don’t want to be in the way, and sometimes you see something that you would not have seen if you were in it or far away. |

### Professional Social Workers

The professionalism, patience, and ability to role model was critical to the success of the program and was seen by the volunteers as essential to their learning and growth. This is consistent with science, which has demonstrated the fundamental need for interpersonal connection to sustain healthy functioning for human beings, and especially important to their support, learning and behavioural change.

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| Leadership by example for Colin and Elaine.<br>Over the four outreach's we learned – observed and then we did it, and they watched.   |
| Elaine & Colin made a big difference and helped us to know how it all fits in. They also helped us fit in.  |
| I felt that Colin and Elaine were fantastic. On outreach, I felt frozen because I don't experience many homeless people and Elaine guided me on what I was supposed to do.  |
| Caseworkers were amazing, really calm & really patient in supporting people & explaining things.  |
| Really enjoyed going with Colin and Elaine.   |
| I got a lot out of the staff who were so open, and that was really good for me because they gave some much of selves, so open and honest.<br>Divided people into teams to do the outreach – no pressure but gentle encouragement from Elaine and Colin, they got the balance right. |
| All good team.  |
| The staff stayed involved and connected with you to keep you going.   |
| Those staff are not there for a job; I can see it is a vocation for them – they are so dedicated, caring and so professional.   |

### Friends and Family

In addition to the support volunteers received through the program, many also identified the importance of relationships outside of the program as a catalyst, or support for their learning & growth.

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| My daughter is experiencing mental health issue, and I can see it in others.   |
| Personal experience and my family background included migration; parent came through the war in Germany in the '40s. She was homeless and bombed out a few times, poverty and disease and trauma and dislocation living detached from extended family. I learned from her. |
| I'm in my '50s – people come into my life to make a change & they have all had an influence on how I am.   |
| I think it is my wife, who has a connection with humankind – pushing to think more about what is going on with others and make their life better   |
| Personal life my boyfriend, he as a rational person and he is well read. Good to talk to him about this - he helps me think rationally.  |
| I want to make my family proud – they are very socially conscious.   |
| I learned from others what friends do and say.   |
| My family has become closer. We have a shared interest and growing knowledge of homeless. Mother wants to do food van now.   |
| I have had nothing but support; my husband is supportive.<br>Friends have been inquisitive.  |

## Community Connection

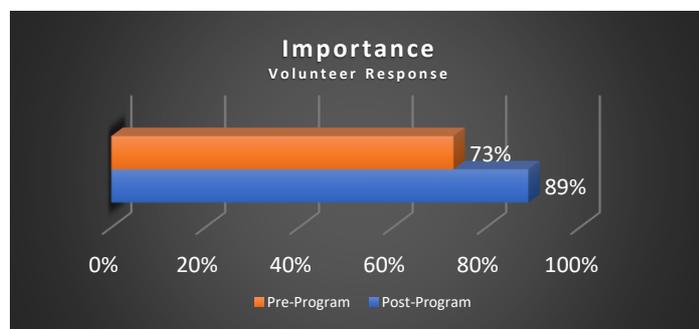
The program sought to increase the volunteers’ connection to their community.

Volunteers achieved enhanced community connection through their participation in the program. Most volunteers described the community as important to them and perceived themselves as connected and engaged with their community prior to the program. Even so, importance, connection and engagement increased for the volunteers following their participation in the program. Volunteers reported a rise in the number and quality of their relationships with a diverse range of community members in addition to the people they met through outreaches.

The predominate definition of community was one of connection and inclusion. This ‘social lens’ in their perception of community may help explain the broader impact participants believe the program had on the community; through their interactions with family, friends and other community members.

### Importance

Volunteers described their community as having a ‘great deal’ or ‘a lot’ of importance in their lives both before 73% with a slight shift upwards 89% after participation in the program.



| Online pre-program survey  | Online post-program survey  |
|--|---|
| Community makes me feel like I belong somewhere and also contributing to making a difference in others’ lives.   | A strong community encourages others to put themselves out there and be a part of it.   |
| Gives meaning to our lives. Valuable supports. It's healthier to be connected.   | It gives a sense of belonging.  |
| Life is easier when you are surrounded by people you can rely on.  | Important for me to feel safe in the community and to have support and interaction  |
| I come from a very small family, so the community is massively important. Without a community/communities, I would feel isolated, lonely, and anxious about what might happen to me in times of trouble.                       | Community to me indicates a level of compassion and civility, which I 1) find lacking in many areas today and 2) feel is probably the most important indicator of how any society is going. |
| Knowing you are surrounded by a majority of people who wish to improve the offerings of a neighbourhood and increase overall vibe and quality of living.   | It is a reflection of how much we care about the people around us and embodies the values we want to be a part of   |
| As a migrant moving to Australia 4 years ago, without any family here, the community is what connects me to this area. Knowing people, feeling valued, accepted and respected (as a teacher) all connect me to this community. | I live, work and socialise within Newtown and St Peters. Having moved to Sydney from overseas, I really valued the community around me. They are my family.                                 |

| Online pre-program survey   | Online post-program survey   |
|---|--|
| <p>Because I believe that good community helps to progress humanity and helps human beings to feel more connected when part of positive communities, more engaged and more empathic. We must work towards creating positive communities that support one another as humans were meant to be connected not isolated. Research also shows positive and supportive communities have powerful flow-on effects to other facets of society as well.</p> | <p>Feeling connected to your community and valuing the importance of community sends a message to yourself and to others that- we are all in this together. Including people has far greater benefits than only looking out for yourself or your own click of friends/family. There's no reason we can't work toward and focus on developing a community that promotes inclusion and sharing of resources. Over pockets of wealth. There is a lot of evidence-based research that shows isolation, criminalising and stigma causes more harm to people living on the fringes of society whether that be due to addiction or family breakdown. If we can incorporate positive community interaction even if in seemingly small ways is well worth it.</p> |
| <p>It makes me feel that I'm a part of a group of people who believe in similar values and have a sense of fairness and inclusion of others. It helps also to introduce our daughter to the local community so that she can see how to behave and participate in ways that are positive and supportive. She feels a sense of identity and connection.</p>   | <p>I have learned that sharing struggles, values and actions brings us closer and builds connection and belonging - much better for our collective wellbeing and wonderful to share that too with our most vulnerable so that they can begin to recognise they are valued and supported.</p>   |

### Meaning

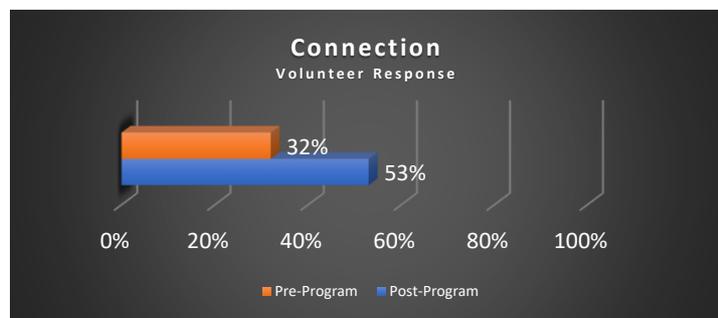
The volunteers' responses suggest that they considered 'place' as a component of the community, however, relationships between community members dominated how volunteers derived meaning from the community. The volunteers described the members of their community broadly as people who live and work within a general geographic area as well as friends, family, businesses and visitors.

| Online pre-program survey  | Online post-program survey  |
|--|---|
| <p>Community is what connects me to people around me and connects me to the place I live.</p>  | <p>Personal connections and comfort doing anything in your area.</p>  |
| <p>Community is very important to me. I see my family and friends often, and we help and support each other. As for the wider community, I am still quite disconnected but would like to be more involved</p>                    | <p>Community is multifaceted. It's the people who live or identify with an area. Many organisations or schools are their own mini-community, which exist within a wider community.</p>  |
| <p>Sense of belonging and companionship</p>  | <p>Sense of belonging and inclusion</p>   |
| <p>This is a tough question. Community means so many things to me - it is a physical space but also a mental space. A place where I feel I belong, where I fit in but can also be myself, where diversity is valued, where I</p> | <p>It means having neighbours to say hi to when you walk down the street, people to talk to, places to go, a sense of happiness where you live, things to do, a feeling that people are working together and creating positive things, a feeling of joy and love,</p> |

| Online pre-program survey  | Online post-program survey   |
|--|--|
| feel connected to other people. Community means an opportunity to have a voice, to interact, to share, to debate (in healthy ways), to eat food with others, to laugh and to create.   | fresh air, a clean environment, people are safe and secure, people are thriving.   |
| A group of people with diverse views but at least one shared value working toward common goals. For Newtown/Erskineville I think of geography as a part of it too.   | A group of people, possibly geographically concentrated, working to achieve positive goals for themselves and others.                        |
| Looking out for each other. Making sure everyone meets/is treated in accordance with a minimum standard (agreed by a consensus in that community).   | To me, community means looking out for one another and sharing in each other's lives on an individual level for the greater collective good. |
| Community is a group of people with similar (or different) values and priorities, who care about other members of the group.   | Humans taking care of humans, no judgement, no trying to "fix" people... Acceptance and curiosity.   |
| A shared sense of values, place and belonging. That we each add and pull positive energy from our shared interactions and willingness to connect. That we feel part of a place that accepts, values and celebrates who we are and what we bring. | Making our spaces safe, inclusive and enjoyable for all. Contributing our collective efforts and strengths to achieve this goal.             |

### Connection

Most volunteers indicated they felt at least a moderate level of connection to their community both before and after the program, with 68% prior increasing to 89% post-program. 32% described their connection as a lot or a great deal pre-program, lifting to 53% post-program



Volunteers tended to define their community through a social lens. They highlighted the importance of a sense of connection, belonging, inclusion, safety and caring both pre and post-program.

They described the members of their community broadly as people who live and work within a general geographic area as well as friends, family, businesses and visitors. Both pre and post-program volunteers described a 'strong community' as one in which people are engaged, inclusive, helpful and supportive of each other.

### Engagement

Likewise, most volunteers reported being at least moderately engaged in their community pre and post-program, 63% and 73% respectively, with an upward shift from pre-program 21% to 37% in those describing their engagement as ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’. Open-ended comments supported these ratings.



### Relationship Expansion

Participants experienced shifts in their relationship to NNC as well as gaining or expanding their relationships more broadly within their community. New or enhanced interpersonal connections included relations with neighbours, fellow volunteers, NNC staff, as well as, the rough sleepers met during the outreaches. On the whole, participants described more and better relationships with other community members and enhanced connection to NNC and Newtown more broadly.

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| I wanted to connect with the community, and it is not easy to connect with neighbours. The fact that this was my community and that was important – feeling a sense of connection with where I live - Connection to place.                      |
| I’m more in touch with Newtown and good to see the involvement of the volunteers and network of facilities and resources that exist for people who are homeless even if not well organised.   |
| I was already invested in the community - But I met new people, and that was the best part. I feel like I am more connected to the community – not sure if really the case or I just feel it. Both the staff and the homeless community.        |
| I know the NNC better. I knew they did the home visitation; I did not know the boarding house and one-stop shop and the philosophy around the centre.   |
| I guess I’ve grown in terms of having a feel of a community, when on the ground and talking to people that are disadvantaged. Gives a bigger sense of community and sense of responsibility and being a part of the community has grown for me. |
| More comfortable in my neighbourhood.   |
| The program taps into the strengths of the community – we all have stretched to make a difference. We all have different personality and strengths and we all chip away with the conversations.   |
| Talking about ways I have changed – I have met people who have lived in my community. It was an inclusion for me too.   |
| It has allowed me to see what is going and the what you can do about it Hearing the conversations – learning the human picture of Newtown. It is not just restaurants and bars – there is humanity in the area.                                 |
| Start to get a sense of the breadth of the issues and what we are as a community. I’m more connected to the neighbourhood. There is a lot of good in Newtown. We all live in Newtown that is why we did it.                                     |
| I think it was good to meet with other people who have a similar worldview. There was one volunteer that lives in my street, in fact, two people live in my street – I made connections with my neighbourhood.                                  |

### Volunteers definition of a strong community

Volunteers described a 'strong community' as one in which people are engaged, inclusive, helpful and supportive of each other.

| Online pre-program survey  | Online post-program survey   |
|--|--|
| Quietness in peace   | Diverse, open, strong participation and voices   |
| Friendly, supportive, accepting, an opportunity for all, activities that can be accessed by all, creating things together  | A strong community has many social activities, whether casual or organised, by NNC or just members of the community. Members to feel a strong support network and be aware of whatnot is available to them and others.   |
| One that supports each other particularly its most vulnerable members, one that provides resources that assist the community to bond and grow, one that shows compassion and kindness to the other, one that bands together  | In the context of this project, at the very least everyone has a home and is safe and there is a sense of connection, trust, reliability, and joy between and amongst people...and also connection with the environment around them  |
| People interacting, talking, helping each other, respecting difference, valuing difference, creative projects, food, laughter, music, discussion, places to go, a healthy environment, parks to play in, everyone having a home and a place to belong. A strong community is also one that doesn't easy break - so has deeply held values and structures that hold it together, but also has some flexibility to grown and change. | The local chemist knowing the locals by name. The chicken shop giving discounts to the people in need. The high school kids banding together to make changes. The local MP being honest and engaging. Educated residents. Switched on and compassionate counsellors. Public events. The locals feeling heard and acknowledged by others. |
| People being selfless and seeing beyond personal gain. Being aware of the collective need and reflecting shared values that we can all live by.  | Inclusive and supportive of one another.   |
| People who go out of their way to get to know, interact with and support other community members.  | People with support networks. These can seem invisible at first, which is why it's hard to really 'see' if a community is in good health or not.   |
| Lots of connections. A safe and accepting place that fosters diversity and the expression and exchange of knowledge and diverse views/perspectives. A community with the capacity to solve its own problems with support if required.  | Compassionate individuals; strong community sector; lots of opportunities to participate in community activities; supportive and effective government services; inclusive policies and practices; fosters a sense of belonging   |

### Impact beyond the program

The volunteers described a healthy relationship and strong connection with their community. This connection created a durable foundation that not only contributed to their personal learning and growth, but also facilitated their ability and willingness to share their experiences, insights and learning through participation in program with other people in their lives. This spontaneous social sharing helped to expand the impact of the program further into the wider community.

In the interviews, the volunteers overwhelmingly described the program as having a significant impact on their personal lives and the broader community. They identified increased awareness within their social circles due to their efforts including, social media and live interactions with friends, colleagues and family. They also recognised a strong sense of curiosity within the community about the program and more generally of people wanting to understand the causes of homelessness what they could do to contribute to reducing homelessness.

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| People are fascinated about this project, and people want to find out ways that members of the public can help.  |
| I find that people are so curious about this program – people are wondering how we got to this situation, and why it is hard to solve it.<br>People try to understand how it could happen to them – I talked about the situation that could occur to cause the slide and spiral. |
| The thing professionally, once I came to training, I could see that we could modify and scale down for council staff – our staff could use this  |
| They are curious, and they ask what do you do, and what do you offer.<br>And they want to get involved too - My girlfriend was on the train, and someone was asking for money, and she called me for information.  |
| Friends are a bit more aware, and NNC makes it more relevant and connected. Helps to commit to being a part of something bigger.   |
| They have been impacted with social media -because I bombarded them with what I think they should be thinking about.   |
| Individually I hope to have an impact on others to do what I have done in this program and interact differently with people on the streets.  |
| All curious about what is happening – they saw the hoodies.<br>They have been interested and asked if I know who that person on the street.  |
| They know I am interested, and they are interested to some degree.<br>It reduces stigma – I am able to share that experience.  |
| Social circle has more awareness since I've been involved.   |
| Yes – I think it has given them an awareness of what is possible.<br>The more I talk, the more I get into depth.   |
| Friends were surprised – they asked what made you do that – they are busy and want to spend time with family and do something fun.<br>It made them think a bit about how caught up we are in our world.<br>We can all put a few hours to reduce someone else's pain.             |
| There is direct applicability to my work.<br>Sometimes we work at a different level such as writing reports etc. – the outreach keeps it very real. – I now have the ability to make a point about what needs to be done. That is big.   |
| I have spoken with family and friends and have normalised it.<br>It is having an impact – just like the clients, it will not be one interaction but the hundred's – it is the same with family and friends.  |

While all volunteers described at least one positive response from either family or friends, there were a couple of volunteers who mentioned feeling disappointed with the response of some friends.

I have been disappointed with some friends.

But some people brush it away – when I say what I am doing, but nobody is reciprocating with interest – it makes me question the religious way they are living

I think there is a deep-rooted fear – the press is all around drug use – not a full picture.

Some friends lack compassion.

## Volunteering

This evaluation sought to understand the role volunteering has played in the lives of people who volunteered for this program. Likewise, volunteers’ perceptions of this volunteer experience and expectations for future volunteering were also gauged in the post-program survey.

Although there was significant variability in the types and length of previous volunteer experience, overall, volunteers described their previous, and this volunteer experience, positively and perceived their efforts as having made a difference. The volunteers indicated that they intended to volunteer in the future and saw time and skill set match as the key hindrances.

### Previous volunteer experience

The intensity, type and length of time volunteering differed across the group of volunteers. Some reported having minimal volunteer experience prior to the program, and one person reported volunteering 2 years full-time overseas. 53% of participants had their first volunteer experience in their teens, 26% began volunteering in their 20’s, and 21% had their first volunteer experience in their 30’s. In the six months prior to the program, volunteers reported between 0 hours ranging to one person who volunteered for 30 weeks. Eight had volunteered between one and nine days.

Service delivery was the most common type of volunteering with 74% doing so, pre-program. The next most common type of volunteering was events 58% follow by fundraising 52%. A few also provided pro bono, 26% and, 32% indicated they participated in ‘other’ types of volunteering.

|                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|
| <b>Fundraising</b>      | 10 |
| <b>Events</b>           | 11 |
| <b>Service Delivery</b> | 14 |
| <b>Pro Bono</b>         | 5  |
| <b>Other</b>            | 6  |

### Perceived outcomes of volunteering

Most (74%) volunteers felt their volunteer efforts prior to this program had made a difference, Their comments suggested that they saw benefits of both direct and indirect service.

|  |
|--|
| I feel like I've helped young people understand more about mental illness and where to seek help if they are struggling :) I feel like I've helped to smash the stigma surrounding mental illness and have also grown and learnt a great deal in return :) |
| In one role, I was helping children to improve their writing skills and could see the outcomes very clearly which was so satisfying. In other roles, I was able to raise money which I knew would directly benefit those in need.                          |
| Mentoring- mentees confidence improved, they made new friends and really came out of their shells.   |
| Particularly, personally, I raised \$2600 for NNC at the inaugural Newtownian Dream sleep out in August 2017.  |
| I served the community at events as a first aider, which positively impacted anyone needing first aid. When wearing the uniform and interacting with the community, I was proud to contribute to the public image of St John Ambulance.                    |
| My help made the difference between women choosing to breastfeed or not and helped many women succeed who might otherwise have given up  |
| Helped learning in schools; improved environment (tree planting)   |

|   |
|---|
| People had options and choice that were not available to them before the volunteering   |
| Small differences. At lifeline, someone feels better for a conversation. English group people have fun and more connected with the community. Political campaign - no we lost! :) |
| It has increased campaign exposure, helped with understaffed facilities, improved social media content and hopefully added to happy morale during work hours.                     |

As a result of their previous and current volunteering, volunteers described positive outcomes for themselves, the organisation, community and target recipients.

Positive outcomes at the personal level included new experiences, knowledge/understanding and confidence. The organisations were seen to have benefited by being able to ‘test’ new models, build awareness and contribute to a sense of cohesion and community. Target recipients were seen to have received support and practical assistance.

| Previous volunteering   | Volunteering in this program   |
|---|--|
| <p>Myself – a new experience and practical skills. Meet new people. Continue involvement with the community. Organisation- to work with the community to fulfil its potential. Community- feel their needs are being met and they can contribute to social change target recipients- support.</p>   | <p>Me – got to experience homelessness from a different point of view, i.e. Outreach Organisation – to see whether service delivery could be done in an innovative way as well as build community around an issue Community – members have learnt more about an issue Target recipients – hopefully are given more support and kindness and compassion.</p>  |
| <p>The basic outcomes centre on social inclusion, and then building trust to support people into housing/ other services</p>  | <p>Greater connection between individuals. Knowledge collection and sharing to help improve services that are offered and inform those who may need them</p>   |
| <p>Myself – gain more knowledge and a deeper understanding of the problem<br/>The organisation – see whether this model works and if so, can implement it as a new innovative way of service delivery and community involvement, also assume possible education around the issue. Community – greater participation and through this a good way to advocate/ push for change<br/>Target recipients – to feel a part of the community, to show that there are people that care and want change, to perhaps make some difference in their lives that they see as positive</p> | <p>I certainly developed more knowledge about homelessness and what can be done. It is hard to comment on the broader outcomes, but I do feel the project has created a sense of solidarity in the NNC and the participants in working on this issue.<br/>I think positive for all: improved understanding of, a better skill set to work with and therefore more personal willingness to interact with the homeless for me personally, a good project outcome for the Newtownian Outreach pilot, higher visibility in the community for both the work of the NNC and the level of homelessness, and improved results for the homeless with whom we engaged.</p> |
| <p>Myself: push myself out of my comfort zone and engage with the community outside of work<br/>The Organisation: be a positive advocate for NNC while achieving their goals. Community: strengthen the positive image of NNC in the</p>  | <p>Greater personal confidence and capability to offer practical assistance, for the organisation we were able to provide an effective conduit to link more people in need to NNC services and therefore assist more people, community awareness and visibility of the program, greater</p>  |

| Previous volunteering   | Volunteering in this program   |
|---|--|
| <p>community target Recipients: to actually make a difference to their lives<br/>Hard to say as it is ongoing.</p>  | <p>connection between community members and shared effort/purpose. Bottom line more practical assistance to people experiencing homelessness and greater sense of connection to supports or awareness of supports.</p> |
| <p>Most outcomes have been around building a greater sense of agency and capability in people who have experienced significant disadvantage and/or low self-esteem. A solid number of students have continued with further study, some have come back to assist others. Mission Australia has noted that students have reported higher self-esteem and positive attitude from the experience. Many reported that having the opportunity to study liberal arts allowed them to develop wider perspectives of their own circumstances, events and society. Along with other supports, some students have moved from in-house residence to independent living and jobs. There have been many positive changes whether small, short-term and sometimes longer-term. I felt so gratified to be able to provide some insights and practical support/humour to help people do things they previously felt was beyond them.</p> | <p>The outreach program's linkages made for rough sleeping people to services is the evidence of positive difference made. Growing awareness of the outreach program and homelessness issues is another.</p>           |

### Feelings towards volunteering

Volunteers descriptions of ‘what volunteering meant’ to them were similar pre and post-program. Their descriptions clustered into several categories including helping, focusing on other’s needs, fulfilling a ‘social contract’, gaining connections and skills/experiences.

| Online pre-program survey   | Online post-program survey   |
|---|--|
| Means not putting myself first and trying to show a better side of humanity.<br>Putting work in to share the privileges I have for others who aren't so lucky.  | Giving yourself and your time up to offer unconditional help.  |
| Gaining new experiences and skills. Meeting new people. Connecting with local organisations.  | Becoming a member in something because I enjoy it /love it/ are passionate about it.   |
| Helping others by giving my time and skills without wanting something in return<br>It means trying to make a difference where I can, helping out, learning new skills and knowledge, meeting new people, offering my skills and knowledge (where relevant), expanding my world, growing as a human. | *Education on services available to the less fortunate be and spreading the word among my peers and helping homeless be aware of what is available * Giving back to the community. |
| I think if you have skills that are of a broader social benefit, and you can afford to, then sharing those skills freely is part of your social contract.   | I have something of value to contribute to making something better than it currently is. It's a way of a community supporting each other.  |
| Giving your time, engaging with strangers, having an open heart and ready to listen.<br>To me, volunteering means taking the time to connect with our local community through offering up the gifts of our talents, passions and interests for the betterment and strengthening of our community.   | Giving time to help improve the conditions of people's lives and the environment we live in. Using whatever I have to give back to others.   |
| It's really different from?? paid employment. It is giving from the heart. It is important to me to put my money where my mouth is and not just be an armchair agitator.  | A way to give back and make connections.   |
| A way to lend some of my strengths and efforts to assist the community. A way to give back and pay forward some of the good fortunes I've been given.   | A means to invest time, expertise and energy/enthusiasm to improve circumstances for others and feel I am making a worthy contribution.  |
| Offering time and or expertise/experience to help a person group community.   | Giving time and using experience and skills to help others.  |

Volunteers indicated they generally felt positively towards volunteering pre and post-program. Pre-program they acknowledged some concerns that volunteering could have negative impacts such as enabling the government to abdicate responsibility or eroding the level of service by replacing highly skilled workers with less capable volunteers. These concerns were not voiced post-program.

| Online pre-program survey   | Online post-program survey  |
|---|---|
| Incredibly valuable experience. Not always what you may expect at first but a positive process.   | Refreshing, encouraging and eye-opening.  |
| I feel excited! I feel good that I will be able to help those in need. I know I cannot move mountains, but any contribution will help. I feel way more confident going with NNC and experienced people.   | Feels satisfying, my small contribution feels like it helps the less fortunate. Also, interacting with homeless people Keeps me level headed - I could easily get to the same position. We are all the same Love the social integration in the community with like-minded people. |
| I think it is a really good thing; however, I am also wary about certain volunteer positions that may impact negatively on the caring professions (nfp may look to fund things in the future by getting volunteers to do jobs instead of hiring skilled workers who have a certain level of expertise due to limited funding); it allows the government to abdicate responsibility and it may cause de-professionalisation and de-skilling of the sector. | I Love it - rewarding and recommend it to others as a perfect way to decide how and where to give your time and effort (rather than being paid to fulfil someone else's agenda).  |
| Generally, I love it! There have been times when it wasn't ideal. For example, one role was very unstructured, and I wasn't sure what I was meant to be doing. I did my best for a while, but ultimately, I did not continue volunteering in that role.   | Very enthusiastic. I would highly encourage people to volunteer in whichever way they can.  |
| It typically makes me feel like I am contributing and 'giving back'. It's nice to be able to get immediate feedback that you are helping someone.   | Generally, I really enjoy it. I feel like I can do good things.   |
| Very positively. It gives me as much, if not more, satisfaction than my job.  | I think it is a really good thing to do that brings people and communities together.  |
| I think often the volunteers get more, or as much back from the experience than the intended recipients. The shared effort is incredibly rewarding.   | Very good. It is both a positive contributions and almost always a learning opportunity.  |

**Intention to volunteer**

On the post-program survey, all but one Outreachier indicated an intention to volunteer at least two hours in the next six months. Most anticipated volunteering one or more days and 26% anticipated volunteering at least ten days ranging up to 29 weeks. In reflecting on their experience in this program in the post-program interviews, 100% of the volunteers stated they likely to volunteer for NNC at some point in the future, most indicated they had already registered to continue with outreach activities with the NNC.

All indicated that they believed their volunteer efforts within the program had made a difference. Comments suggested the volunteers not only saw the impact of their individual efforts, but also gained insight into the power of the collective effort of the group/community.

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| As an individual my impact is small, but as a team, we make a mark and create awareness.   |
| I think this project has been very effective in that a large group of volunteers have developed knowledge and skills that are absolutely vital for our community   |
| Strengthen people’s feeling of connection to a community and improve their mood  |
| My efforts alone didn't make a difference, but as a collective, the Newtownian Outreachers have made a difference.   |
| I have definitely felt a positive connection through a number of outreach engagements. Also, a really positive result where we managed to house someone  |
| The one-on-one impact can often be undetectable but at other times, surprising at what people have achieved with a level of encouragement, support and guidance.   |
| I realise that something as seemingly inconsequential as a "Hi" and a chat can really have a positive impact on people. I'm more and more convinced of the need to remove "stuff" from my life and fill it with acts of compassion, care, generosity, kindness and love to others and myself |
| The outreach program's linkages made for rough sleeping people to services is the evidence of positive difference made. Growing awareness of the outreach program and homelessness issues is another.  |
| I have seen people take new action and begin to see themselves as having some level of agency to take positive action to improve their circumstances or to see themselves and their circumstances in new ways.   |
| Cut thru, meaningful connection and assisted someone vulnerable who needs assistance. Very humbling.   |

### Hindrances to volunteering

The factors volunteers reported that prevented volunteering in the past, were similar to the factors they believed could prevent them from volunteering in the future. These included time pressures and finding the right cause or match for their skills.

| Prevented volunteering in the past   | Could prevent future volunteering in the future   |
|--|---|
| Busy life, travelling overseas for work - volunteering didn't actually come into my mind | Laziness and not managing time well enough  |
| Getting caught up in a busy life without thinking about volunteering.                    | My life schedule at the time. Throughout my life, I will always volunteer at some time or another   |
| Work, family & study commitments   | Time, opportunities   |
| Having enough time, finding the right thing to volunteer for                             | Feeling burnt out, feeling it makes no difference, negative perspective on the state of the world   |
| Work commitments and finding a volunteering role to meet my interests.                   | Work commitments and availability   |
| Finding the right cause for me   | Time/money constraints, lack of knowledge of good matches between my skill set and volunteering opportunities.                                    |
| Time constraints, lack of awareness or connection to what is going on                    | Time constraints  |
| Overwhelmed with my own situation/life   | Actually I really appreciated the rigour of this project....but, I do think I can get fatigued by surveys, so I do think it needs to be balanced. |

### Hopes for volunteering

Prior to the program, volunteers described a range of things they *hope to get out of this volunteer experience*, including increasing their knowledge of homelessness, increasing personal compassion and providing assistance to people who are experiencing homelessness or sleeping rough. They also described the desire to be connected and gain a sense of purpose.

| Pre-program   |
|---|
| Hopefully a better outcome and a new direction for homelessness as a whole.   |
| Gain new experiences and skills. Meet new people. Continue involvement with NNC.  |
| Gain more knowledge of homelessness. Look at how outreach works in practice, give back.   |
| I wish to increase my knowledge about homelessness but also increase my love and compassion for helping homeless people in our community. I also wish to partner with people who are just as passionate about making a difference to the lives of our homeless. |
| A sense of purpose and activism.  |
| To give practical assistance and positive support to people who have encountered significant challenges in their life.  |

Volunteers had similar hopes for future volunteering experiences including gaining knowledge, contributing, feeling more connected and assisting others.

| Post-Program  |
|---|
| More knowledge of different levels/types of assistance.   |
| Encourage peers to do the same.   |
| Give more time to helping the homeless.   |
| Depends on what I do. However, I enjoy contributing to a larger goal.   |
| To help others and to feel like I am giving back in a positive way.   |
| I would like to continue to develop skills and strengths in social justice practices and also just make stronger connections, friends, relationships.   |
| Make a contribution that makes the best use of my skills  |
| Feel more connected to my community and that I was doing something for others. To connect with other like-minded individuals.   |
| For me, being less judgemental and more accepting of those with differences.  |
| Continued contribution and support of people experiencing homelessness. Potentially expansion to other services or improvements to expand reach and effectiveness of the community outreach programs. Reach more people with more practical, long-term support. |

## General feedback

Volunteers offered a range of other spontaneous feedback and suggestions for the program, including tweaks to the training and data collection. The desire to increase the frequency of outreaches was a consistent theme. Otherwise, it is important to note that unlike the thematic data presented above, these isolated comments do not necessarily represent the overall response or perceptions of the group but do merit reporting and are listed below.

### Advice for future volunteer participants

Volunteers were asked for any advice they would offer for people considering participating in the next intake for the program. All indicated they would recommend the program to others and a few had specific suggestions for those considering volunteering.

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| Be self-assured and don't be scared; not one time did I feel in danger.  |
| Just treat everybody the same it is okay.  |
| Just be open to what you hear - At the first you have your own views about why people are homeless. And you find out it is okay to just hear the whole story and realise you don't know anything about their lives; there are people with incredible lives just happen to be homeless. |
| Get into and just do it – get out of your safety zone to make this small contribution.   |
| Can't find out if they will enjoy unless they experience it. I suppose if they are thinking about doing but not sure they should give it a go.   |

### Suggestions related to training or program design

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| In terms in the follow up with survey's give more time and wait a few days to get the survey and get it back right away – we need some time to process what happened.  |
| I would say that the less time between outreach would be better – because had to schedule around it – once every 2 or 3 weeks.   |
| Do outreaches more frequently.   |
| Visits not frequently enough – should be fortnightly.  |
| Month interval is too long the gap is too big – fortnightly is helpful to realise that they need more practice and momentum.   |
| Explained how it works and give dates for outreaches up front – I thought I would be involved every week.  |
| Changes made during the pilot were good ones.  |
| I thought before we went to the first outreach that it would be helpful to meet homeless people before we went out.  |
| In one of the training programs – there was a time when I had to share a deep secret – I find those activities very uncomfortable, and I do not like it at all.  |
| I wonder if could get same with 3 training sessions.   |
| There was a lot of team building that was not necessary for all 20 people because we worked in 3's later on.   |
| I feel like in training there was too much emphasis on protecting the volunteers – I feel like that people went in knowing what was involved and we don't have to be safeguarding. Give people the chance to grow It's all adults taking part. |
| Wanted more contact with other volunteers in the program - we only went out 4x.<br>Making connections with others was not easy.  |
| One thought that on the data collection side. We could collect more when the client shows up at the centre – the data we have is helpful and the more we have, the more we can help.   |
| I found the survey's every week too much, quite repetitive. I know we need the evidence base – still.  |
| We could learn more about trauma-informed care – how not to add to their trauma – there was a gap in the training around de-escalation of aggression and emotion.  |

**Comments/Suggestions for next phase and structure/organisation**

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| I think there should be a homeless person on the board, someone closer to the action a person who is or has been homeless.   |
| Maybe we could have a web-based forum like Facebook to identify when we see a homeless person then outreaches could find them  |
| Compassion and coordination and data are the three of the legs<br>Using the data to coordinate how to deliver compassion to most with the least financial and time cost means there are more resources which means more outreach.  |
| It would be good to make it possible so someone with a physical disability could participate. I'm not sure if there was a lift at NNC.   |
| One difficulty with NNC – it is a 19 <sup>th</sup> century town hall – authority and gravitas – it makes is intimidating – it is also near the police station and courthouse.<br>I have walked past and did not know it was okay to go in.<br>To go out in the hoodies and invite people makes it easier for them. It humanises that building. |
| We need some ways to soften the building – make it more approachable.  |

**Overall comments on the program**

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| I think that we should keep it going – if there are willing people.  |
| Really good initiative.  |
| It has been fantastic; it is innovative.<br>I ask around if anyone knew of this happening anywhere else, it feasible to take novices to do this.                             |
| No one knew how well it would work – it became obvious that it was professionally run and highly engaging for volunteers, I am rewarded to see that it is such a great idea. |
| Cannot imagine not doing it.   |
| Thankful for being in part of it.  |
| Hopefully, we have shown that it is simple, and it works.<br>Having set up the model – with minimal training.  |
| I ended up feeling like a good person.<br>It made me feel good to know how to connect.<br>We want to help people when we see struggling.                                     |
| Newtown is a bohemian place that it has a village feel, and I want to look after my neighbours and help them get what they can to be happy in life.                          |

**Summary: Volunteer Experience**

Volunteers described themselves as having a variety of personal characteristics and qualities that lead them to volunteer, and ultimately gain high value from participation in this program. These include mental/cognitive regulation, emotional wisdom, and personal values. They tended to have a strong connection with the community, which increased during the program. All had some previous volunteer experience.

The interaction of various program elements including formal training; program management; coaching relationships with the staff; and especially the experience of interacting with people who were currently sleeping rough contributed significantly to positive outcomes for the volunteers.

Likewise, the reputation of NNC provided a level of credibility and confidence for volunteers, which grew as a result of their participation in this program.

Their participation in the program resulted in significant learning and growth, reductions in 'unpleasant emotions', increased positive emotion, sense of empowerment and feelings of interpersonal and broader community connection for volunteers. Their behaviour shifted away from avoidance and towards more pro-social behaviour.

Their intention to continue volunteering for this program and overall increased desire to volunteer in their community is strong evidence of a positive volunteer experience. Moreover, if sustained, the combination of the positive changes is likely to contribute to strengthening the community as well as continue to enhance the overall wellbeing for volunteers.

## Part 2: NNC staff/key stakeholders

### Team member and growth as a result of involvement in the program

Eight NNC staff/key stakeholders (referred to as team members) including professional social workers, specialist presenters and leaders were included in this study. All team members reported having learned and developed as a result of their involvement in the Newtopian Outreacher program. These learnings including changes in technical skills; presentation, interviewing, mentoring, and volunteer management. Importantly, team members reported gaining insights that assisted in shifting untested beliefs/assumptions.

#### Acquired technical skills and confidence

Presentation, interviewing skills and mentoring skills increased for team members. The presentation training and practice was highly valued by NNC staff. They reported increased confidence and competence to inform and influence a broad audience - who did not necessarily have a similar technical background or understand the complexities of the issues. Team members also described an expansion of skills that are also relevant for their day-to-day jobs, such as, interviewing and mentoring others.

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|---|
| The training we did for outreachers has given me confidence to present in other settings.   |
| Presenting workshop helped me – both putting it together and delivering it.   |
| The background I learned helped me know how to pitch it and what to tell them. Did not want to assume they (volunteers) knew things that they would not.  |
| Participating in the training and then actually doing it increase my confidence in presenting. I had never had training in delivering training and presentation – this helped.  |
| I learned a lot from presentation skills especially working with other presenters.  |
| I had not interviewed before and now I feel comfortable in doing it.  |
| Lots of growth and learning –lots of new skills.<br>Interviewing.<br>Training.<br>Mentoring.  |
| I was outside of my comfort.<br>I feel more comfortable now.<br>Now I am enjoying interviewing and mentoring people.  |
| The presentation training helped and the practice and feedback.<br>Before my night – Jane and I practiced in the space.<br>Standing in the hall – I knew this is where I am going to stand and here is the stage. Jane gave feedback on the whole thing. That helped a lot. |

### Changed perceptions of volunteer motivation

Empathising with the volunteers enabled professional staff to tailor their communication/presentations to achieve understanding and motivation.

Perhaps more importantly, accurate empathy that was achieved through working alongside volunteers, lead to testing and dispelling previously held beliefs that people who are not working in the sector ‘don’t care’ and ‘can’t help’. Team members also indicated they were in some ways surprised, but pleased, to find out it is possible to structure a program that makes use of intelligent, well-meaning community members, who do not have professional training or experience to provide meaningful services.

|   |
|---|
| Shifted my perception about others – I used to think people don’t care.<br>Changed in my perception of the community.   |
| My view was that’s what volunteers do has changed a lot.<br>Now I understand what volunteer want and what volunteers can and want to do and how.<br>What motivates and importance of building a good experience for them. |
| There are people in the community with lots of fear – stigma about homeless and mental health, but the volunteers were open.  |
| At times, I was very uncomfortable with the idea of volunteers – but learned that is a part of it, and you have to go through the pain, and you have to bring people along – and everyone is valuable.                    |
| The program highlighted how many people are willing to get involved and so many people don’t have any idea how to get involved and this gives people the opportunity.   |
| I felt heartened that people want to do this volunteer work.  |

### Education, engagement and value creation

In addition to shifting their perception of volunteers’ motivation, team members came to recognise the value of not only educating but engaging members of the broader community about homelessness and injustice. Team members also shifted their perception of how volunteers and pro bono workers from outside the sector could add diversity and value that does not necessarily exists within the sector/organisation.

|  |
|--|
| We are unlocking resources –uncovering hidden value.<br>It’s about giving people in the community the space to do that.  |
| In this social-political climate – division is used as a tool. The more people know about these issues, the more they vote in the way to help people.  |
| Engaging community members assist police a lot – more people who are checking on their (clients) welfare the better.<br>It helps us to know they are checking on them; then they can call us if needed.<br>They can let me know, and I can get involved. |
| Through Jane, I am learning how to get grants, show efficacy, and how to make programs better.<br>This increases sustainability for the service and tests new ways of working.   |
| Jane came with such a different skill set –I learned so much project management and how to engage volunteers and know what they are looking for.   |
| It is a way of unleashing value that was there that was captured or otherwise not available previously.  |

When I met Jane, I thought here is a corporate – wants to do some good, I don't know what she can do. She wants to do something – it will be me giving to her but I actually think I got 10X more from Jane than she gave me.  
You look back and think how naive and stupid to have thought that.

### Levels of growth for team members

The more closely involved the team members were to the program, the more profound the learning and personal growth.

I learned so much about what community is, a lot of words that we use that are hollow, but community means something more to me now.

The project has been a huge growth and learning for me.  
In the start from December 2017 to April – times I felt overwhelmed – because lots of new areas but I have grown from doing it all.

Mentoring and being a team leader for the 1<sup>st</sup> time.  
Now I am sharing my knowledge with others – try to make them feel comfortable.

Confidence and calmness increased.

I've been inspired by seeing the opportunities to improve – I could see a lot of it change.  
I increased my skill set massively – if I was to leave NNC I have many other skills now as a result of these experiences.

I have a stronger bond with Colin for having journeyed with him.  
Doing outreaches and debriefing, greater respect and understanding our work.

For me, because my involvement was limited, the impact was less so.  
The interactions were positive and made me feel that people care and want to be part of the community.

I was put out of my comfort zone in several ways.  
Even the volume of work is overwhelming – lots of tears, but I've seen we can do it.

This has given me the confidence to create a business out of this.  
And it is fulfilling a purpose in my life, I could not even dream about combining pro bono, volunteering and turn it into a commercial project and it is coming together.  
NNC and this project has helped to launch a business – it has given me the confidence to launch.

It has been challenging, and because of the challenges this is most the rewarding project in my whole career.

When I very first raised the idea, I got a strong negative response – mindset, in general, to idea that we are the professionally trained people, why do people think anyone can do it -- some overt concern and resistance, but a willingness to try.

In the last couple of months that has changed – some of the people with the greatest concerns were at the film and were positive about the outcomes we achieved  
Resisters were the first to speak up and say how cool the volunteers were and what they could do.  
They can see now that volunteers are capable of making a contribution.

## Conditions that contributed to team member growth and learning

Team members described several conditions that contributed to their learning and growth. In addition to the formal training and practice of technical skills (described above), team members indicated that the caliber of volunteers, strong communication, high levels of involvement and seeing tangible outcomes contributed to their insights and personal growth.

### Communication, involvement and bonding

|  |
|--|
| Seeing the tangible outcomes has helped the shift in mindset.  |
| Quality and calibre of the people who volunteer – we had high expectations and high standards – selective recruitment was important.   |
| Communication – about what is happening and repetition of why we are doing things differently.   |
| I do think having the involvement of Jane and the other people with professional skills has been essential.  |
| I could see people connecting - Andrew’s facilitation created bonding.<br>People have to connect on a deeper level with each other.<br>Training increased connections/emotional attachments.   |
| Involving people as much as possible – I like this saying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me and I will not</li> <li>• Ask and I might</li> <li>• Involve and I will</li> </ul> |

### Summary: Staff/Key Stakeholder Experience

NNC staff/key stakeholders benefited from their role in this program in a number of ways, including, increased personal growth, connections with other staff and the community members (volunteers). Learning and growth was most significant for those who were most intensely involved with the program. The staff credited a combination of the calibre of the volunteers and pro bono workers, communication and bonding as contributing to their positive outcomes.

## Part 3: NNC Organisation Strengthening

The NNC Staff observed increases in organisational confidence, resilience and the ability to adapt several specific outcomes as well for clients such as expansion of reach (e.g. more referrals to services).

### Tangible outcomes and awareness

Staff recognised how the program had impacted the clients and the NNC as an organisation. This includes tangible expansion of reach (e.g. more referrals to services) and greater community awareness of NNC.

|  |
|--|
| At the centre we are seeing more referrals – people calling for service.   |
| We don't work with long term homelessness – because it too hard to move into boarding houses, we have to get other agencies involved. Now there is more multi-agency focus.  |
| We have another grant to build capacity for the boarding house community to train boarders. I have more confidence in this project now.  |
| Lots of recognition for the work (NNC). The number of parents who recognise me from the paper we stop and talk. Just this morning another parent came and talked about it to me.   |
| Someone asked a question at the Deny event.<br>Liz was blown away by the quality of the answers I could feel her move off the wall to answer the question. However, the Outreachers answered. Everyone was blown away – they were all talking about it. We (NNC) have a greater capacity with the volunteers involved. |

### Confidence, adaptability and resilience

Team members also reported greater confidence as an organisation and adaptability/resilience of the NNC to address new challenges and to innovate.

|   |
|---|
| The success of the project the is daunting.<br>At first I wondered do I have the skills to lead this and take it where it can go?<br>I've learned to do it through a process – I have learned to trust a process. |
| I learned that making the wrong decision it okay – Now I reflect and learn from it – and think about how to take it further.  |
| I don't have to be the expert at everything.  |
| Comfortable with new projects — in the past, it looks like too hard, but now I would not avoid. I am willing to put my hand up.   |
| I love creating this methodology and working with others.<br>Dreaming big – imagine if -- what is success, how would you do it and measure it.<br>Staying grounded.<br>And having fun.                            |
| We underestimate how successful we can be/<br>Let's plan for more success than we think.  |
| It's about recruiting a team not just an individual.  |

This has helped to take us back to the beginning of how we engage the community members and what we can do.

You have to start more outside in your approach – what the community cares about versus what we as a professional service organisation are interested in.

This has given confidence and trust.

The staff can trust volunteers to do the job.

### **Summary: Organisational Strengthening**

In addition to tangible outcomes such as more referrals and community awareness of the NNC, the organisation benefited in several important intangible ways. These include greater resilience, adaptability and confidence to innovate. These changes are particularly significant considering the ongoing shifts in funding, community expectations and especially the recent increases in homelessness within the community.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Volunteer demographics

The project recruited 19 community volunteers, consisting of 12 females, six males and one person who preferred to self-describe their gender. The majority of volunteers were between 25 and 44 years of age (Figure 1). Overall the volunteers were well educated with 16 out of 19 having attained a bachelor or graduate degree (Figure 2). Occupational status was similar, with 11 working as managers or professionals, and five working in community or personal services. Ten reported currently working full time, 3 part-time, 3 described themselves as students, 1 was working as a freelancer and 1 person reported currently taking a career break (Figure 3). Most volunteers lived in either Newtown or the immediately surrounding suburbs (84%).

#### Age range

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| 18-24 | 1 |
| 25-34 | 9 |
| 35-44 | 3 |
| 45-54 | 2 |
| 55-64 | 4 |
| 65+   | 0 |

#### Education

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 11 or below     | 2 |
| year 12         | 0 |
| cert III/IV     | 0 |
| advance diploma | 1 |
| bachelor        | 8 |
| grad diploma    | 2 |
| post grad       | 6 |

#### Occupation

|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Managers                        | 1  |
| Professionals                   | 10 |
| Technicians and Trades          | 0  |
| Community and personal services | 5  |
| Sales                           | 0  |
| Machinery operators and drivers | 0  |
| Labourers                       | 1  |
| Other                           | 1  |
| Student                         | 1  |

#### Employment status

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Employee FT                       | 10 |
| Employed PT                       | 3  |
| Not employed looking for work     | 0  |
| Not employed not looking for work | 0  |
| Retired                           |    |
| Disabled not able to work         | 0  |
| Student/FT PT                     | 3  |
| Other                             | 2  |

## Appendix 2: Project Objectives & Results

The project objectives were:

Objective 1: 100% of people who are experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping who agree to engage with the project receive information, support or referral to improve their current situation.

Objective 2: Volunteers

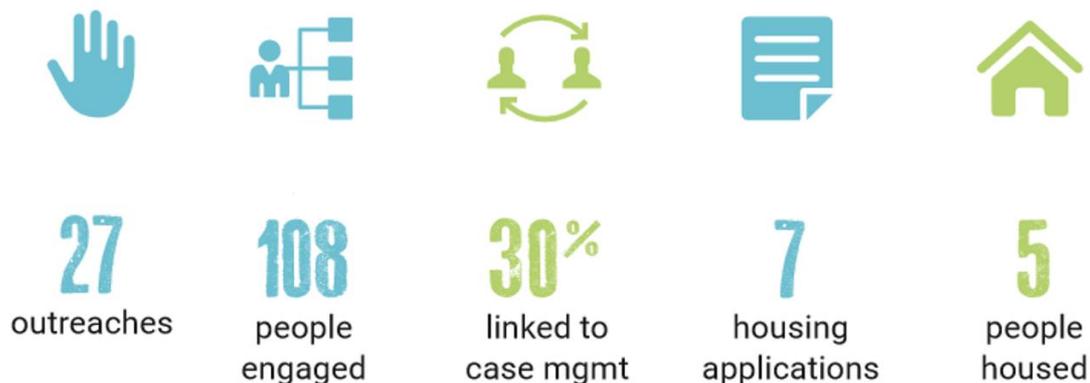
- Increase knowledge
- Increase Community Connection
- Exceptional experience with NNC and the team

Objective 3: For NNC as an organisation

- Broader community knowledge and awareness about NNC's impact
- Increase support – donors, locals and businesses
- Increase partnerships with government

Objective 4: The project is replicable/scalable

The combine impact of the community outreach and the professional monthly outreach over an approximate six-month period in 2018 of time was:



### Project Input, outputs and Outcomes

| Inputs   | Outputs   | Outcomes  |
|--|---|---|
| <p>2017 to 2018<br/>1,300% increase in street count (2 to 28) in last 18 months</p> <p>20 Newtopian Outreachers (volunteers)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased volunteers’ knowledge &amp; confidence (see Under question 5 for feedback quotes)</li> <li>• 16 outreaches</li> <li>• 114 engagements</li> <li>• 55 individuals (rough sleepers)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Multiple engagements – 23 (41%)</li> <li>○ Single engagement – 32 (58%)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 90% rough sleepers shared their name<br/>73% We had a <i>good chat</i></li> <li>• 70% We thought the engagement was helpful</li> <li>• 100 referrals to OSS</li> <li>• 3 people - arranged TA for individuals</li> <li>• 2 people – did health check in (ambos and MB)</li> <li>• 3 dogs &amp; 2 cats (new! Pet in the Park @ NNC’ss One Stop Shop)</li> <li>• 1 person - MB transport</li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Supported rough sleepers</b> - Linked 22% of rough sleepers to case management</li> <li>2. <b>Sustainability</b> - 85% volunteer signed up for Phase 2</li> <li>3. <b>Connection &amp; inclusion</b> – The kind of relationship between the volunteers and 47% of “regular” rough sleepers engaged, is changing from “them” to “us”</li> </ol> |
| <p>Staff capacity building</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 additional staff in with Outreach leadership skill</li> <li>• 6 NNC staff increase Presenter skills</li> <li>• Increased volunteer management skills</li> </ul>  |   |
| <p>Leveraging partners &amp; network</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 Pro Bono</li> <li>• Police &amp; Missionbeat provide Presenters; Fitness First, new sponsor</li> <li>• Help launch local business</li> </ul>  |   |
| <p>Sustainability</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created “assets” for potential future revenue e.g. training materials</li> <li>• Created community board</li> <li>• Proved approach and commitment for continuance</li> </ul>  |   |

## Appendix 3: The Online Survey questionnaire

Q1. What is your first name?

Q2. What is your last name?

Q3. What is your age range?

Answer Choices

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65+

Q4. What is your gender?

Answer Choices

Female

Male

Non-binary/third gender

Prefer to self-describe

Prefer not to say

Q5. What is your level of education?

Answer Choices

Year 11 or below

Year 12

Certificate III/IV

Advance Diploma and Diploma

Bachelor's degree

Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate

Post Graduate Degree

Q6. Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?

Answer Choices

Employed, working full time

Employed, work part-time

Not employed, looking for work

Not employed, not looking for work

Retired

Disabled, not able to work

Student/ full or part time

Other, please specify in comments

Comments

Q7. Which of the following categories best describes your occupation group?

Answer Choices

Managers  
Professionals  
Technicians and Trades  
Community and Personal Services  
Sales  
Machinery Operators and Drivers  
Labourers  
Other  
Student - not working  
NA

Q8. What is your post code?

Q9. What age were you when you did your first volunteering role?

Q10. My current understanding/knowledge about homelessness is

Answer Choices

A great deal  
A lot  
A moderate amount  
A little  
None at all  
Comments

Q11. When you encounter someone who appears to be homeless my level of confidence when interacting with them is:

Answer Choices

A great deal  
A lot  
A moderate amount  
A little  
None at all  
Comments

Q12. How do you feel when you see someone sleeping rough or homeless?

Q13. What do you think when you see someone sleeping rough or homeless?

Q14. When you see someone who is sleeping rough or homeless, what do you do?

Q15. If you are not in too much of a hurry, and a person who appears to be homeless asks for assistance of some sort, what do you do? Why?

Q16. In terms of my character and values, people I see who appear to be homeless are:

Answer Choices

Very different from me/my friends  
somewhat different from me/my friends  
Similar to me/my friends  
Very similar to me/my friends  
Not different at all from me/my friends  
Comments

Q17. In terms of people you encountered who appeared to be homeless, consider which of the following statements best represents your response: (tick all that apply)

Answer Choices

Moved to the other side of the footpath  
Avoided eye contact  
Deliberately made eye contact  
Mild social acknowledgement (smile, nod)  
Said hello  
Gave money  
Engaged in a conversation  
The homeless person asked for money, you stopped and chatted instead  
Bought them something to eat or drink  
Other (please specify)

Q18. The last time I encountered a person who appeared to be homeless, I felt

Answer choices - A great deal, a lot, A moderate amount, A little or None at all

Sadness  
Anxiety  
Fear  
Happiness  
Contempt  
Anger  
Disgust  
Surprise  
Joy  
Guilt  
Helpless  
Depressed  
Frustration  
Other (please specify)

Q19. At this point in time, my competence (ability, skill, knowledge) to effectively advocate for a inclusive and just community is:

Answer Choices

A great deal  
A lot  
A moderate amount  
A little  
None at all  
Comments

Q20. If you could ask a homeless person any question, what would it be?

Q21. If you could grant 1 wish for all homeless people, what would it be?

Q22. What does community mean to you?

Q23. How connected do you feel to your community?

Answer Choices

A great deal  
A lot  
A moderate amount  
A little  
None at all  
Why?

Q24. How important is community to you?

Answer Choices

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all
- Why?

Q25. Who are the members in your local community?

Q26. What does a strong community look like?

Q27. What does volunteering mean to you?

Q28. At this point in time, my level of engagement in my community is:

Answer Choices

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all
- Comments

Q29. How much volunteering have you done in the past?

Q30. In the past, what has prevented you from doing volunteering?

Q31. What kind of volunteering have you done before

Answer Choices

- fundraising
- events
- service delivery
- pro bono
- What did you wish to achieve/get out of this volunteer work? What were the outcomes for yourself; the organisation; community; target recipients

Q32. What were the outcomes for yourself; the organisation; community; target recipients?

Q33. How much time did you volunteer in the last 6 months?

Weeks  
Days  
Hours

Q34. What did you wish to achieve/get out of this volunteer work?

Q35. How do you feel about volunteering?

Q36. Through your volunteering efforts, do you think it has made a difference? If so, what difference did it make?

Answer Choices

Yes  
No  
Hard to say  
If so, what difference did it make?

Q37. Have you told your/family and friends you are volunteering?

Answer Choices

Yes  
No  
What has their response been?

Q38. How much time do you intend to volunteer in the next 6 months?

Weeks  
Days  
Hours

Q39. Do you think you might be interested in volunteering for Newtown Neighbourhood Centre next year?

Answer Choices

Very likely  
Likely  
Neither likely nor unlikely  
Unlikely  
Very unlikely

Q40. What do you wish to achieve/get out of future volunteering work?

Q41. What could prevent you from volunteering?

Q42. When attempting to be empathetic, which of the following best represents your approach:

Answer Choices

Imagined/considered what I would feel if I was in their circumstance

Vicariously felt the emotion of the person

Imagined/considered how they felt in this circumstance

Comments

Q43. In general, the amount of time/effort I spend in self-reflection (introspection) is

Answer Choices

A great deal

A lot

A moderate amount

A little

None at all

Comments

Q44. Do you have any additional comments? Thank you very much for taking the time and care completing this important survey.

Q45. My current level of personal social support is:

Answer Choices

A great deal

A lot

A moderate amount

A little

None at all

Comments

Q46. Thinking about people from all walks of life in regard to personal traits such as intelligence or talent, how much do you believe people can change?

Answer Choices

A great deal

A lot

A moderate amount

A little

None at all



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