

A CHANCE TO GIVE BACK

In early 2018, after years of trauma and crisis, Carlos was facing homelessness and a bleak future.

Battling with poor mental health, following an earlier experience with homelessness, his life had fallen apart and he had lost everything important to him.

With limited options, Carlos was forced to move into a boarding house. Being a long term Newtown local, Carlos was aware of the Centre but had never needed to access our services.

Finding himself in a challenging situation, Carlos turned to Newtown Neighbourhood Centre to connect him with relevant services and NNC staff became crucial in helping to rebuild his life.

A pivotal point in Carlos' journey was later that year when he was asked to become one of the key members of the planning and steering committee for the Community Linkers program.

The Boarding House Community Linkers program was designed to reduce social isolation and build support for residents living in boarding houses across the Inner West. A group of former

NNC clients were recruited and trained to mentor others who are currently living in boarding houses.

The project's aim is to create a pathway back into employment, to increase the participants' financial security and to build their capacity to thrive within the community.

This step has been a big transition for Carlos and the opportunity to get involved with the program came at a time when he was feeling helpless and isolated. The program gave him the motivation to relook at his life and the strength and determination to rebuild it.

"This project is close to my heart for so many reasons and even though it's only been a short time, I've already seen the profound impact it can have on mentors and residents, explains Carlos.

"I'm aware of the day-to-day struggles that people living in boarding houses go through so I can assist other residents and empower mentors to use our experiences to help others."

"One of the biggest differences we have seen is in the mentors' confidence and their

increasing willingness to take on new challenges but also their motivation and ambition has increased, explains Newtown Neighbourhood Centre's Project Lead, Mischa.

Carlos agrees and says he now sees co-design as the "only way forward to address some of the big issues we face such as homelessness, poverty and social isolation".

For Carlos, the program has helped rebuild his life, reconnect with his past as a designer and he continues to be involved in the Centre generously volunteering his time.

Carlos, who is currently studying a Diploma of Community Services, is now also working with NNC on a new idea to develop a space that encourages individuals to develop their creative skills.

"My experience with NNC and the program has been incredibly positive and had a profound impact on my life. It's inspired me and my creativity and the future feels so positive."



Photo: Diana Shypula

YOU HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre aims to build an inclusive, resilient, self-reliant and creative community.

We offer support services to the local community and provide assistance to those most vulnerable.

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

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

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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Dendy Newtown
Diana Shypula
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NNC volunteer facilitators for family and social inclusion programs
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Oz Harvest
Share the Dignity
Sly Fox
Tanya Plibersek MP
The Art of Mentoring
Thread Together
Two Good Co.

Funders

Commonwealth Department of Health
Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation and Science

We also work with our partners and with the broader community to find practical local solutions to address homelessness and social isolation in the Inner West.

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

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



Photo: Kirsten Muller

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Supporters

Inner West Council
NSW Department of Communities and Justice (previously NSW Family and Community Services)
Street Smart
Uniting Foundation
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Marlborough Hotel

Newtown Festival Media Partners

FBI Radio
2Ser
The Music
Happy Mag
Yeahsure
Sindy Sinn
Yeah Rad

NEWTOWN

Neighbourhood Centre



Photo: John Wallace

GRATITUDE REPORT 2019



The 2018-2019 financial year was another year filled with challenges, opportunities and fun at Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC). Change is the name of the game these days, and we are always striving to keep up with shifts in social policy, government funding models, technology, demographics, and community concerns.

Over the last financial year we reviewed our longstanding Aged Care programs in line with new requirements under the Commonwealth Home Support Program and our own strategic direction. As a result of that review, we said farewell to some wonderful staff at NNC who had co-ordinated our Shopping service and our small Good Neighbour volunteer program.

I want to acknowledge the longstanding contribution of those staff members and the professional and caring way in which they dealt with the changes, and prioritised the needs of our clients, ensuring they were all able to access alternative services within the Inner West. Their approach ensured that despite this change bringing about some understandable sadness, the whole process was very smooth.

Since the changes made to our previous Aged Care service model we have developed an Individual Social Support service that is particularly focused on individuals who are ageing, at risk of social isolation and who are living in marginal housing such as Boarding Houses. An increasing number of older people are experiencing homelessness, or are at risk of homelessness,

and we want to ensure the social supports are there to help prevent such situations declining further as people age.

A highlight for me during 2018-19 has been the continued evolution of our volunteer based "Newtopian Outreach" project. A pro bono evaluation of the project showed the significant positive impact of this experience on the volunteers who have been involved. We were also able to recruit and train a second volunteer cohort as well as the majority of the original group continuing to do regular outreach well past their 6 month commitment. The Newtopian Outreach video launch at Dendy in late 2018 was a highlight for everyone involved in the project.

We have continued to focus on quality and safety in our programs and services. We undertook a comprehensive review of our Policies and Procedures to ensure they were meeting the new Aged Care Standards and the Australian Service Excellence Standards. We undertook an external WHS Audit through Deloitte to measure our progress since the previous audit and to inform our next three year WHS Action Plan. We provided training for all staff in LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice, as

well as core WHS training. To help progress our commitment to cultural safety and inclusion, Yarn Australia facilitated a workshop to reflect on our progress since our Apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in 2018.

We commenced a long term future planning process with a cross section of stakeholders and community members and developed our future scenarios for Newtown. We acknowledged that to involve the community properly in developing and owning the future for Newtown and for NNC we need to take more time with the community to do that. Because of this, we extended our current strategic plan for another year and set out a process for development of our future strategy.

In 2018 we also celebrated a huge milestone with the 40th Anniversary of Newtown Festival. It is incredible to think that this community festival has run continuously and successfully for over 40 years in support of Newtown Neighbourhood Centre.

I am incredibly fortunate to live and work in the heart of a community which truly shares the values we hold so dear at NNC – justice, inclusion, action and fun.

Thank you for the part you play in helping to create our own little Newtopia!

Liz Yeo
CEO | NEWTOWN
NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

Our Community Strengthening Team delivers targeted early intervention programs and services with a focus on children and families and Aboriginal communities. We facilitate a wide range of activities which increase community cohesion and social inclusion.

On any given day we may be organising a community barbeque in Marrickville South with families from the local social housing estate; running the One Stop Shop which brings together a wide range of community services and supports in one place for people at risk of homelessness; or providing information, support and referrals for women experiencing domestic violence. All these activities maximise social inclusion and wellbeing and help to strengthen our community.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

In March, NNC celebrated International Women's Day with over 60 guests attending a fun event, which included a local services information hub, workshops, and advice. Guests were also pampered with plenty of free goodies, including handbags filled with essential items from Share the Dignity, and the women were able to participate in a free jewellery workshop hosted by Ability Links, taking home a gorgeous bright clay necklace that they made.

A special mention to Liz Yeo, our CEO, who was awarded Newtown electorate 2019 Local Woman of the Year.

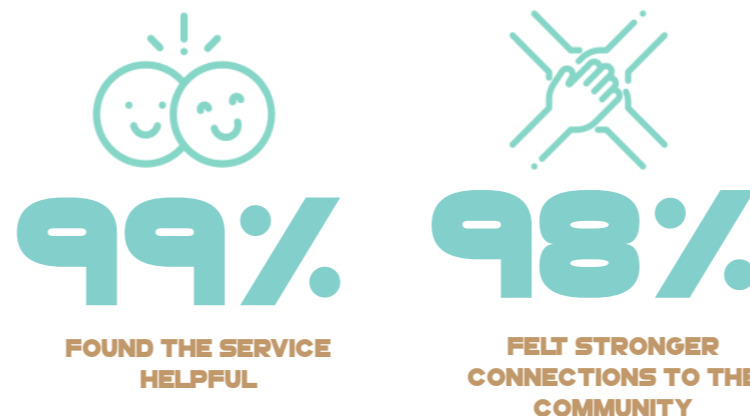


OUR WONDERFUL VOLUNTEERS

A big shout out to the wonderful volunteers who selflessly give their time to help keep the Centre operating. Our volunteers give countless hours to provide counselling, prepare a weekly low-cost accommodation list, run English, tai chi and family yoga classes, plus assist with running some of our essential services and events.

We're very proud that one of our volunteers, Tom, was nominated for a Senior Volunteer of the Year Award presented by Inner West Council.

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR WE INTERVIEWED 133 CLIENTS WHO ACCESSED ONE OR MORE OF OUR PROGRAMS. FROM THIS WE FOUND:



SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SPACES

Over the past few months, we've been lucky to host the weekly Rainbow Families Inner West Playgroup on Thursday mornings. Families gather to play together, share morning tea, sing songs and even dance.

During the school holidays, the playgroup hosts Drag Storytime sessions in collaboration with local drag identities. Rainbow Families provides support to children and families within the NSW LGBTIQ+ community and the weekly play group facilitates connections for parents and children alike.



Our Group and Individual Social Support programs, provide a much needed opportunity for our aged clients, to remain connected and active in their local community. Danica Zec has been attending the Former Yugoslav Social group for over 10 years and is pictured here with one of our Rainbow Babies.

TACKLING HOMELESSNESS

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre's Boarding House Outreach Service is our largest single service funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice. This is a Specialist Homelessness Service which provides individual casework support to occupants of Boarding Houses in Sydney and across the Inner West. Our staff visit Boarding Houses and work closely with residents who are often in precarious situations and may be at risk of homelessness and/or living in unsafe, unstable or unaffordable environments.

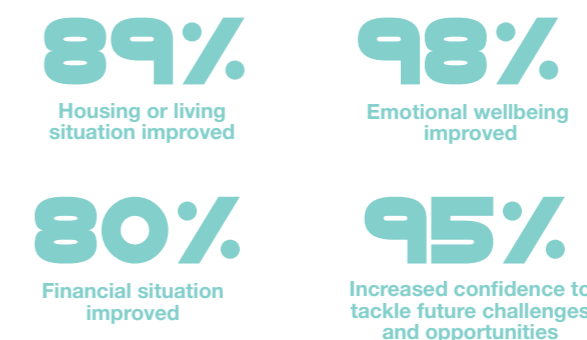
Our clients are usually experiencing financial and social hardship and are at high risk of social isolation. Our team assist people to work towards their goals to improve their situation. We have continued to engage with property owners and real estate agents to ensure they are aware of all supports available to them and to Boarding House residents.

A NEW HOMELESSNESS COORDINATOR

In response to the growing numbers of people sleeping rough in Newtown, we invested funds raised for the Centre in hiring a Homelessness Services Coordinator, Karen. Her role includes developing relationships with people sleeping rough and connecting them with the Centre and other appropriate local services.

In just the first few months, Karen's role made a huge difference - she provided short-term case management to 18 clients and by working in partnership with housing providers managed to find housing for 13 people sleeping on the street. We are only able to sustain Karen's role due to the generosity of our community.

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



NEWTOPIAN Outreachers

In 2018-2019, our professional and volunteer local outreachers together offered assistance and support to 108 people on the streets of Newtown.

In May 2019 our Newtopian Outreach team were recognised by the broader community through receiving Inner West Council's Volunteer Team/Group of the Year award. A heartfelt thank you to the team who work with us to help end homelessness in the Inner West.

A pro bono evaluation of the impact of the Newtopian Outreach project on the volunteers themselves was undertaken by Connie Henson, CEO of Learning Quest.

Connie's evaluation showed significant shifts for the volunteers in their knowledge, understanding and confidence in relation to connecting with people experiencing homelessness.

CHANGES IN VOLUNTEER OUTREACHERS



A TEAM EFFORT

In collaboration with 8 other community and state agencies, our Inner West Professional Outreach team won the NSW Local Government Excellence Award in the category of Community Partnerships and Collaboration.

The aim of this multi-agency team is to increase awareness of people experiencing homelessness and develop local responses to rough sleeping.

The professional outreach teams engage with rough sleepers and build relationships with individuals to better help them navigate the housing system.