

NEWTOWN

Neighbourhood Centre



Photo: Diana Shypula @ Koshka Media

GRATITUDE REPORT 2022

A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

We entered the 2021-2022 Financial Year in lockdown with COVID-19 still present in the community. Our team continued to do an incredible job and were creative in finding ways to reach out to those who needed our services. The past few years have been extremely challenging and created further impact on those in need. I was proud that Newtown Neighbourhood Centre was still able to offer essential support to our community.

This past year has highlighted the importance of our programs. Despite navigating lockdowns and restrictions, the team continued to meet deliverables for our government funded contracts and ensure they maintained a high quality of service.

Unfortunately, the impact of COVID-19 meant that the popular Newtown Festival, held every year in November (since 1978), was once again cancelled. Despite this loss of income, we did however receive a number of COVID related grants to help support our clients during the pandemic which kept NNC in a sound financial position.

Every two years, we undertake an external staff survey to identify strengths and areas for improvement. In December 2021, we were excited to be recognised (for the second time!) with the 2021 Voice Project Best Workplace Award. The award acknowledged the team's high level of engagement and satisfaction (an impressive 93% when benchmarked against other organisations).

I am incredibly grateful to our community (both individuals and businesses who have faced their

own financial challenges during the pandemic) for rallying together to support the displaced residents who were impacted by the tragic events of the Boarding House fire.

On March 15, I was woken by the sounds of emergency service vehicles racing down my street. Following the noises, I wandered down in the dark and witnessed the horrors of what unfolded that morning. Immediately my heart sank when I realised that the building on fire was a boarding house that only years ago, I had visited to photograph and interview one of the residents.

For hours I felt helpless as I watched the emergency workers courageously search for residents and extinguish the fire. Being on the Board of NNC I am aware of how hard the team has worked to advocate for better living conditions. This tragic event should not have had to occur to shine a light on the lack of safe and affordable housing.

In this report you will read how our team quickly rallied together to offer support to these displaced residents. I was deeply moved reading that many of the residents

waited patiently out the front of NNC each morning for the doors to open. It brings me great pride in our team and the work that they do each and every day.

In 2020, we started developing our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). After a lot of hard work and consultation, in April 2022, our RAP document was officially approved by Reconciliation Australia. This important document acts as a framework, ensuring that we continue to grow as a more culturally safe and competent organisation.

In May 2022, I joined 30 dedicated members of our community in NNC's annual Newtopian Sleepout. Despite being woken by torrential rain late in the evening, the participants smashed the fundraising target and raised over \$98,000. The experience gave me greater insight in to just some of the challenges that those sleeping rough experience on a regular basis.

In June 2022, we farewelled our incredible CEO, Liz Yeo, who I have had the pleasure of working with in my role as President over the past seven years. Liz is deeply respected by the community and has placed NNC in a very strong position during her tenure. As a Board, we are thrilled to welcome Elaine Macnish as the incoming CEO. Elaine has been with NNC for five years leading our Community Strengthening Team. We look forward to working with her to take NNC to its next chapter.

As you may already know, at the end of 2022, NNC will be relocating to our new home on Darley Street. This is an exciting time – a new location and CEO. We are ready for fresh beginnings and excited to see a bright future ahead for NNC.

I offer my warmest thanks for your connection with and support of NNC and its cause. We look forward to continuing to partner with you as we remain committed to creating a more vibrant, connected and equitable community.

Jo Wallace
President, NNC



Photo: John Wallace

A QUICK RESPONSE WHEN TRAGEDY STRUCK OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

In the early hours of Tuesday March 15, a horrific fire destroyed a boarding house in Albermarle Street Newtown; two blocks from the Neighbourhood Centre. Three men were tragically killed with another 10 residents left homeless and without any possessions.

The news hit our staff hard, in particular those from the Boarding House Outreach Service who support boarding house residents across the inner west, and many were familiar with this property. Although Newtown Neighbourhood Centre did not have any active clients at the boarding house at the time, staff felt a responsibility as the leading organisation in the boarding house sector, to act quickly and provide critical and immediate support for these displaced residents.

Staff arrived at the site on the morning of the fire and sprung into action. The local police and fire department, who were still trying to determine how many residents had been inside, had referred the survivors to NNC.

The gentlemen, aged between 40 – 80 years old, were in a state of significant shock and the team was able to provide counselling support to help them process the significant trauma they had experienced.

The first priority was to find temporary accommodation and ensure that their immediate needs were met. A big thank you to our terrific partners at Addison Road Community Organisation and Thread Together who responded quickly to our requests for food hampers, plus underwear and clothing for the men.

“The residents were in disbelief. They had nowhere to live and nowhere to call home. Every day that week they kept showing up at the Centre as they had nowhere else to go,” reflected Karen, Homelessness Services Team Leader at NNC.

Unfortunately, the residents had not only lost personal items but also forms of identification.

After securing temporary accommodation for the men, the staff focused on obtaining birth certificates and Centrelink cards. Newtown Neighbourhood Centre was overwhelmed with the offers of support and messages of hope from the community. Over \$40,000 was donated to the Centre to support the residents directly. Initial donations were used to purchase basic clothing and food items, opal cards, mobile phones and ATM cards to access Centrelink crisis payments. Many of the survivors continue to suffer from the after effects of the fire, so staff are still working with the gentlemen to address issues that have arisen since the traumatic and life changing incident.

The team have also managed to find safe and secure housing for the men. The residents are all now settled in their new homes and are slowly starting to put the incident behind them and start to move on with their lives. One of the survivors has returned home to family, four of the residents are now living in social housing and the other five have moved into other boarding houses in the area.

One resident expressed his gratitude for the Centre staff: “I would be lost without NNC. I now have my own flat with a big balcony and a budgie to keep me company.” He also added that because of the generous donations from the community, he is able to go and visit his family in Mildura, Victoria for Christmas for the first time in many years.

Another one of the displaced residents had been living in boarding houses for the past 20 years and following the fire, NNC was able to find him his own place in an over 55's housing complex, which meant he no longer had to share a kitchen or bathroom.

“He was so excited when we moved him in! One of his first comments was that he had never had his own washing machine. He asked if I would help him use it, and it was eye-opening to see how something that we take for granted could make such a difference to someone's life,” expressed Karen.

Thank you to the community for your concern and support. Your generosity helped these residents rebuild their lives!



BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

LOCKDOWN SUPPORT

Despite being forced to close our doors in July 2021, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre ensured that those most vulnerable in our community felt supported and not isolated during the lockdown.

The team continued to provide online case management and were creative in how they assisted our clients. On a regular basis, staff dropped off food hampers and care packages that contained essential items such as toilet paper, masks, gloves and hand sanitiser. Along with these weekly deliveries, our staff also distributed key information on vaccination hubs and how to protect oneself against the virus.

Our Aged Care team made weekly check in calls to their group members and provided them with a range of activities including exercise videos, virtual bingo, brain teasers and little notes of support to let the members know we were thinking of them.



OPENING BACK UP TO THE COMMUNITY

After months of lockdown, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre reopened its doors in November 2021. With the support of COVID-19 grants from the Department of Communities and Justice and Inner West Council, NNC employed a Covid Response Coordinator.

This role was to assist anyone directly impacted by the virus, including those who had to isolate after testing positive and those who had lost their income. 126 individuals and families were helped with food

supplies, rent or utilities assistance, baby food and nappies, mobile phone data and medication. This role was also able to provide emotional support for people who were feeling stressed and socially isolated.

The income from the grants was also used to employ a temporary COVID Marshal to keep everyone on the premises safe. It was great to have a friendly face welcoming people back to the Centre and triaging our clients' requests. The role assisted the team with addressing COVID-19 protocols and ensured that the foyer space did not become overcrowded, whilst making people feel comfortable about coming back out into the community after the extensive lockdown.

PAINT THE TOWN REaD

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre is proud to be part of the Paint the Town REaD initiative and has recently launched our very own Newtown mascot.

Gadi, named after Gadigal Land on which we work, was revealed at our Paint Inner West REaD event in May where we celebrated Garranga Bumarri's birthday.

The program highlights the importance of early literacy and encourages families to read, sing, rhyme and play with their children from a young age. We look forward to Gadi meeting the community at some of our upcoming events!



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

In March 2022, we hosted our annual International Women's Day event. Despite the torrential rain, it was amazing to welcome over 50 women into our hall for a morning of celebration, laughter and fun.

The women were made to feel special with lots of free goodies and enjoyed a professional dance class.

A big thank you to our partners who provided a delicious morning tea, new clothes and beauty products and service support information for all our guests.

TACKLING HOMELESSNESS

SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR



745

PEOPLE ACCESSING NNC'S PROGRAMS +
SERVICES EVERY WEEK

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

Throughout the pandemic, our Information and Referral service continued to support people via phone and regularly updated information online for where people could seek additional help during the lockdown.

It was a welcome relief for many of our clients when we reopened in November and the team of staff and volunteers noticed a considerable increase in people who were now looking for assistance.

The service continues to operate four days a week and provides support to an average of 10 people a day, answering a range of requests from someone seeking crisis support to more general needs for information.

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre relies heavily on volunteers to support our work. We would like to say a big thank you to all our volunteers who stayed engaged with their programs and clients throughout the pandemic.



HEALTH SUPPORT FOR BOARDING HOUSE RESIDENTS

Throughout the year, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre partnered with Primary Health Network and Healthcare Australia to host vaccination hubs for boarding house residents. The hubs were easily accessible for the residents and were integral in reducing the spread of the virus.

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre also partnered with Sydney Local Health District to visit and test boarding house residents for COVID-19 and assist with contract tracing when a positive case was reported in

a property. Personal Protective Equipment was provided to all the residents and temporary accommodation was offered to those who were unable to self-isolate due to shared facilities.

HOMELESSNESS FIRST RESPONSE COORDINATOR

In April 2022, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre employed a Homelessness First Response Coordinator. This role was created to meet the increasing demand of people who were presenting to the Centre as homeless or at immediate risk of homelessness.

The coordinator works to meet clients' immediate needs including finding temporary shelter, providing clothing, food and other essential services, before supporting them to find longer term housing pathways.

Thank you to everyone who has made a donation to the Centre in the past financial year and helped to fund this role.



TOGETHER HOME PROGRAM

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre is proud of our ongoing partnership with Metro Community Housing and St George Community Housing as part of the NSW Government's Together Home Program.

In the past year, NNC provided wrap around support for 60 clients who had recently been housed through the program. Prior to this, the clients had been experiencing homelessness and we helped them address underlying challenges that may have contributed to their experiences of homelessness such as mental health or addiction. The program recognises that without a safe place to live, people are unable to effectively engage with support and make changes in their lives.

YOU HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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

We provide professional and volunteer-based support for those who are experiencing significant challenges in life. We remain committed to ending homelessness and social isolation in Sydney's Inner West. This is not a goal we can achieve on our own.

We value our relationships with other local providers who we work in partnership with to address the key causes of homelessness. We

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

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.

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Photo: John Wallace

THANK YOU LIST

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

Supporters

Addison Road Community Organisation
Active Kids Newtown
Access Sydney Community Transport
Adora Handmade Chocolates
Aesop
AMP – Marrickville Metro
The Hon Anthony Albanese, Prime Minister Australia
ATO Tax Help
Aveda
Ben and Jerry's
BlackStar Pastry
Bread and Butter Project
Brickfields
Bourke Street Bakery
Bunnings Alexandria
Bunnings Ashfield
Carlisle Castle Hotel
Cognescenti Skincare and Fragrance
Connie Henson – Learning Quest
Connect Community Transport
Dandelion Support Network Inc
Diana Shypula
Fire and Rescue NSW
Fords Pharmacy
Goodstart Early Learning, Marrickville
Hannah Conda
Hepatitis NSW
IGA Newtown
Inner West Police Area Command
Jenny Leong MP
Jo Haylen MP
Mercy Foundation
Mountain Goat Newtown
Naz Church Enmore
Newtopian Champions
Newtopian Outreachers
Newtopian Sleepout participants
NNC volunteer counselling team
NNC volunteer facilitators for family and

social inclusion programs
NNC volunteers for our Individual and Group Aged Care Social Support Services
NNC's Donors & Regular Givers
Ooooby Sydney
Orange Sky Australia
Oz Harvest
Plant Daddy
Salsa for Seniors
Share the Dignity
St Pius OOSH
The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP
Telstra
The Great Club
Tokyo Lamington
Two Good Co.
WISE Employment

Partners

Accounting For Good
ACON
Addison Road Community Organisation
Aspen Medical
Canterbury City Community Centre (4Cs)
Centrelink
Community and Cultural Connections Inc
Community Restorative Centre
Connect Marrickville SaCC
Deadly Connections
Dress for Success
Ethnic Community Services Cooperative
Haymarket Foundation
Healthcare Australia
Hepatitis NSW
Inner City Legal Centre
Inner West Council
Marrickville Legal Centre
Marrickville South Collective
Marrickville Youth Resource Centre
Metro Housing

Moving On, Moving Out (DVSM)
Newtown Public Housing Collective
Older Women's Network
Paint Inner West REaD
Primary Health Network – Central and Eastern Sydney
Reclink Australia
Settlement Services International Local Area Coordinators - NDIS
SMART Recovery
St George Community Housing
St Vincent de Paul's AOD Continuing and Coordinated Care (CCC) Program
Support the Girls
Sydney Local Health District
TAFE NSW
The Reverend Bill Crews Foundation
Thread Together
Wesley Mission
Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre

Funders

Australian Government Department of Health
City of Sydney
Clubs NSW
Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
Inner West Council
NSW Department of Communities and Justice
NSW Department of Customer Service
NSW Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade
NSW Department of Social Services
Multicultural NSW
NSW Seniors Festival
StreetSmart Australia
Uniting Foundation
Westpac Foundation