



Annual Report 2022-23

Opening doors for opportunity

Acknowledgement of Country

We proudly acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and provide services. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. commUnity+ acknowledges this land was never ceded; that it always was and always will be Aboriginal land.







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About commUnity+

Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd (commUnity+), is a multi-disciplinary community organisation that has provided services predominantly across Melbourne's north and west regions for more than 40 years.

From our grassroots origins as a residents' action group at the Deer Park Neighbourhood House, we have grown to become a large community-based organisation funded by local, state and Commonwealth government departments and enhanced through partnerships and collaborations.

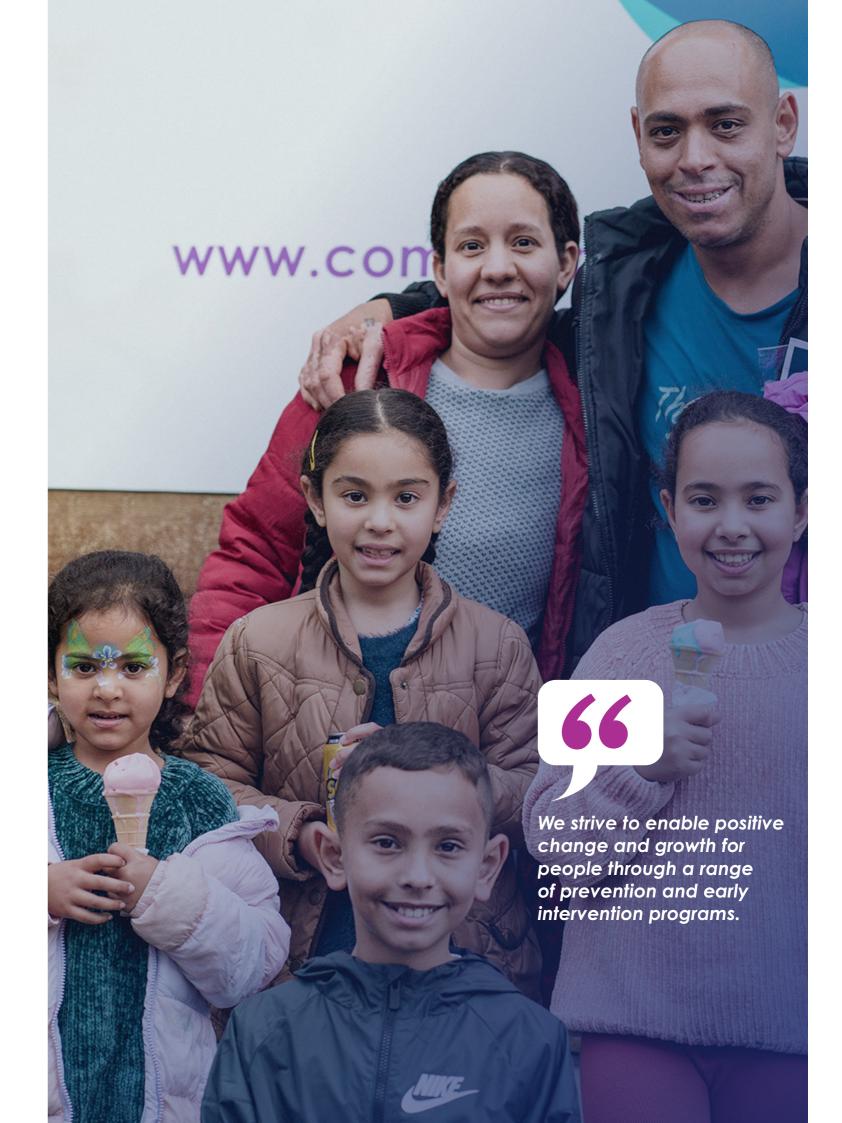
We strive to enable positive change and growth for people through a range of prevention and early intervention programs including Community Education, Children's Contact Services, Neighbourhood House, Legal Services (through Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre) and community engagement and development activities.



Our clients are people facing disadvantage, hardship and social exclusion, with particular focus on members of communities new to Australia. We support vulnerable children and women, and those who need a helping hand to achieve justice and fairness when dealing with governments and the legal system.

Our team of dedicated professionals delivers our purpose to support, strengthen and enable individuals and diverse communities in Melbourne's north and west regions to flourish through respecting diversity and striving for social justice.

We partner with a number of community, corporate and government agencies to enhance our service delivery and increase access for our community. commUnity+ is a company limited by guarantee and is a registered charity endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.



Chair Report

JACKIE MEAD

Over the course of 2022-23, commUnity+, our people and community emerged to a post-pandemic environment confirming the critical role that commUnity+ plays in supporting people and families to overcome challenges, hardship and disadvantage to live safe, fulfilling and prosperous lives.

Employment demands rose alongside inflation and the cost of living. Migration restrictions were lifted, giving rise to population growth across the West, and our role in community education for settlement and employability skills, community engagement, family and legal services is in more demand than ever before.

We entered the second year of our 2021-24 Strategic Plan with clear intent, and realised significant progress across all five strategic pillars while recognising three major milestones.

The first was the celebration of our 40th Birthday in October 2022 at our birthplace in Deer Park. Since our commencement in 1982 as a Neighbourhood House with one part- time coordinator, we have grown to an organisation engaging more than 100 staff delivering programs across Melbourne's West, Northwest and Eastern suburbs.

The second was the completion of the new Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre (BAWC) to become one of commUnity+' three major hubs as part of the Brimbank City Council's vision to offer a suite of complementary co-located community services for people accessing the centre. I thank my Director predecessors for their vision in 2017 when the masterplan for BAWC was developed.

The third was the recognition of commUnity+ by the Australian Government as an exemplar in the provision of family and children's services in receiving funding to establish a third Children's Contact Service in Glenroy. This addresses significant demand alongside our existing services in Brunswick West and Deer Park.



Underpinning everything we do at commUnity+ is ensuring that each and every person who accesses our services has a positive experience and that the outcomes they realise are enduring. To this end, we established new 'hub' models for two of our main sites, at Deer Park and the new BAWC, where community service personnel are on hand to introduce community members to the wide and complementary range of programs and services.

At all levels of commUnity+ we strengthened our organisational capacity including in our governance, with the update of our Constitution, and expansion of the Board to ensure we carry the skills and diversity needed to reflect our governance responsibilities and relevance to our community. In support of this we completed a complete refresh of our Charter and Board-level policies.

The success of an organisation like community+ directly relates to the efforts of our staff, volunteers including our Board, and our leadership team. It has been my honour and privilege to see how hard they work and how passionate they are. Not only do they have my thanks they also have my deepfelt respect. We know the 2024 financial year will bring challenges, we are well placed to meet them and to continue to deliver on community need.

CEO Report

TRACEY GAUDRY

For commUnity+, 2022-23 was a year that might arguably be summarised as high in ambition, activity, progress and impact.

The growing richness in cultural diversity of people living across Melbourne's rapidly growing Northwest and West is matched by increased need across social, economic, employment and wellbeing dimensions.

Our staff delivering programs and services to meet increased community demand, were supported day in day out behind the scenes, by their colleagues who provided systems and support across shared services and program management, development and administration.

Our legal team at the Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre successfully obtained reaccreditation as a community legal centre for another three years, cementing BMCLC as a vital provider of legal services in the West. We were able to increase our focus towards priority community members including victim-survivors of family violence, people experiencing homelessness, people with disability or mental illness, CALD people, and First Nations Peoples.

Our Children's Contact Service expanded into a new site at Glenroy CCS in January 2023, and we applied capacity-building funding to increase services, upgrade facilities, and to provide crucial training and development for the CCS team.

The Neighbourhood House team continued full program delivery across the year, and commenced involvement in the Inclusive Communities at the new Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre (BAWC) program in collaboration with Brimbank City Council, the Good Shepherd and Distinctive Options, designed to offer community members a personcentred access to our complementary services.

Our Community Education portfolio experienced an increase of more than 10 percent in enrolments across programs over the course of the year, including the commencement of a new Employability Skills



Training program. With the full resumption of classroom delivery, we consolidated several sites and refreshed others to strengthen our accessibility to community members and for participants to enjoy welcoming and fit-for-purpose facilities across all our delivery locations.

Beyond our facilities establishments and upgrades at St Albans, Keilor Downs, Glenroy and Deer Park, our growth and development included improved IT equipment, systems and security, increased communications and community presence, and deepening relationships with leading community organisations across the West.

Our staff reflects the diversity of our vibrant communities and they are a focus for development and enrichment.

In acknowledgement of our team's extraordinary dedication, a new recognition program aptly named APPLAUSE was launched alongside leadership development and targeted courses and training.

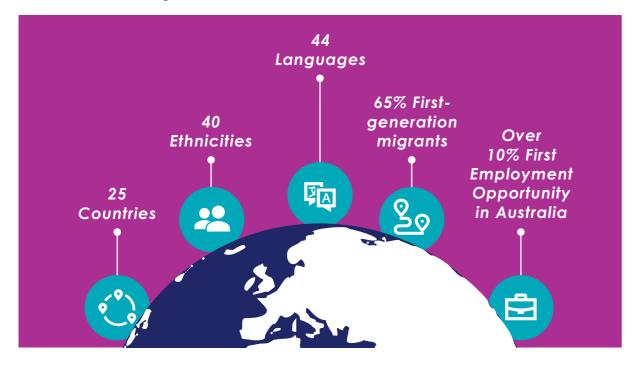
Turning 40 was not only a milestone for commUnity+ and the community, it was also a trip down memory lane with a display of every Annual Report since our inception in 1982.

Thank you to all levels of government for their continued support over the year in recognition of the importance and impact of commUnity+ and the services we provide.

Thank you to every member of the commUnity+ team, from staff to volunteers and student-placements to our Board led by our outgoing Chair Susanne Legena and new Chair Jackie Mead. I learn and develop every day from your guidance and support. To the whole team, you are the reason we change people's lives and life outlook.

A Snapshot of our Diversity and Impact in 2022-23

Our Diversity



commUnity+ purpose is

"to support, strengthen and enable individuals and diverse communities in the West to flourish". We embrace diversity in everything we do and employ talent from the very communities we help.

65% of our team are first-generation migrants. We represent over 40 ethnicities and come from 25 countries. We speak 44 languages. commUnity+ represents an authentic pathway to settlement, engagement, enablement and employment in Australia for new migrants, with commUnity+ providing the first employment opportunity in Australia for more than 10% of our current staff.

With our diverse team, we provide services and programs to some of the most culturally diverse and disadvantaged communities in Victoria, particularly across the Brimbank, Hume and Melton LGAs. Within these communities, our programs are targeted towards culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community members. Our community education programs in particular are focused on helping provide new migrants during their settlement journey with pathways

into further education or employment in Australia. Our education team has a highly diverse workforce, using their shared migrant experience to help guide and teach students in their new journeys in settlement and life in Australia. Similarly in other programs, our staff often come from the same communities as our clients and participants, allowing us to provide culturally appropriate and informed services

With our staff and broader students, clients, and community, we run numerous events each year celebrating our diverse and multicultural community, including recent celebrations and shared meals for events such as Refugee Week, Adult Learners Week, 40th Birthday celebration and a shared cultural lunch during Neighbourhood House Week

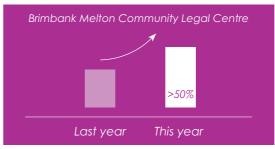
Our Impact

Our diverse team continues to deliver more outcomes with ever greater effectiveness.

All of these achievements were achieved with a substantial investment in capability and capacity within a modest overall financial investment (6% increase in expenses) to prepare us for our next, ambitious strategic plan.



We delivered 67 programs which was a >40% increase on last year.



Legal services increased by over 50% and community legal sessions doubled. Focusing on priority client groups: 61% of our clients experienced family violence and 27% suffered from disability or mental illness.



We increased the number of students we served by more than 10% to 1,737.



We expanded our CCS service by opening up a new centre in Glenroy.

We delivered an increase in client sessions of >45% to 2,694 sessions supporting 667 clients.

Community Education Services

commUnity+ is a Registered Training Organisation, and a respected community education and training provider with a proud 30-year history of providing employment, foundation, and settlement programs.

The Community Education portfolio comprises:

- Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)
- State-funded programs (Skills First)
- Skills for Education and Employment (SEE)
- Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE)
- Employability Skills Training (EST)



2023 saw the return to full-time face-to face delivery across all programs as COVID-19 pandemic restrictions eased and eventually ceased. To date all classes are running onsite face to face with additional support for students being provided remotely.

Students and teachers readjusted well after an extended period of remote and blended delivery. Across all delivery locations, we continued to focus on providing services to clients facing disadvantage and social exclusion, and those in communities new to Australia.

Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

The Adult Migrant English Program provides English language tuition to eligible migrants and members of communities new to Australia. Students learn foundation language and settlement skills, which enable economic and social participation. Program hours were recently uncapped, which means students can now study to vocational rather than functional-level English.

At the start of term one 2023, we moved Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) delivery from Victoria Square in St Albans to the Brimbank Wellness and Aquatic Centre (BAWC) in Keilor Downs.

Teachers continued to embrace diverse teaching methods, using singing to build everyday vocabulary among the lower-



level students and newspaper articles for the higher-level students to learn grammar and keep abreast with current affairs. Across all levels, games were particularly popular to enhance speaking skills.

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Each of our sites has sets of laptops for students' use. Computer use has been very popular with all students as teachers focused on everyday matters that require computer skills. These included accessing Centrelink online, booking different types of appointments online and looking and applying for rental properties.

At BAWC, we share the first floor with Distinctive Options and Good Shepherd. The centre is a hub of activity, with a gym, swimming facilities and childcare.

The student composition remained diverse, with most students speaking Arabic, and the 26 to 40 years age group recording the highest number of enrolments.

AMEP students are eligible to enrol in the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET), which offers 140–160 hours of in-class learning and 40–60 hours of work experience. The first SLPET class for 2023 started on 24 April with 16 students. As an illustration of the direct applicability of this program, after 200 hours of learning in class and on work placements, one of our SLPET students Sara Yeneneh joined the commUnity+team as an Education Administration Officer supporting the AMEP (see student spotlight).

Student excursions were highlights for the AMEP. As in previous years, Brimbank City Council coordinated the Living in Your Neighbourhood program and students visited council facilities to find out about available services.

The Migrant Resource Centre (North West Region) Settlement Services Officers attended classes to provide settlement and welfare advice.

Other regular events included:

- Services Australia presentations about allowances, subsidies and related services.
- Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre sessions on fines and infringements, motor vehicle accidents and tenancy issues.
- the Western Bulldogs Community
 Foundation employment program, which helped students explore education and employment pathways.
- Victoria University students' practical placements, which included teaching AMEP students online and onsite.

Sara's Story

Sara Yeneneh Alemseged is one of five Alemseged family members who attended the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET) program in 2023.



Sara, her sister, two brothers, their mum and their father came to commUnity+ to enrol for the AMEP and eventually five of them joined the SLPET program and the mum proceeded to do the Course in Initial EAL. On placements, the family went their separate ways, gaining experience with the NDIS, IT, community services, education, and allied health services.

Sara's sister Rosa, a qualified physiotherapist, was offered an ongoing position as a Physiotherapy Assistant while she waited for her practising registration to come through. Meanwhile, just weeks after completing the SLPET program, Sara gained full-time employment as an Administration Assistant here at commUnity+.



My name is Sara Yeneneh Alemseged and I arrived in Australia from Sudan in November 2022. I completed a bachelor's degree in management information systems while in Sudan and have two years of experience as an Administrative Officer. I completed the SLPET course with community+, which gave me the confidence and skills I needed to search for work, write a CV, improve my communication and teamwork skills, and understand how to prepare for job interviews. The course also provided

me with the opportunity to make new friends, understand Australian workplaces, and identify my strengths and areas for improvement.

The commUnity+ team always made me feel welcome and they were friendly and supportive of me and my colleagues if we had any questions or concerns.

I was given a work placement opportunity as part of the course requirements, and it was a really great experience. It helped me understand more about workplaces in Australia.

After my studies, I found a job as an Administration Officer at commUnity+, which was my goal when I first started the course. I consider it a great start to my career journey in Australia.

I highly recommend taking the courses at commUnity+, specifically the SLPET course, for people like me who want to start a new career or find their dream job.



State Funded Programs (Skills First)

Funded by the State Government of Victoria, the Skills First program provides subsidised education and training for eligible students. commUnity+ programs – predominantly English as an Additional Language – are delivered by commUnity+ in St Albans, Keilor Downs, and Broadmeadows with an outreach program in Forest Hill in Melbourne's Eastern suburbs.

In 2022–23, commUnity+ provided seven qualifications in English as an Additional Language (EAL): Course in Initial EAL, Course in EAL, Certificate I in EAL (Access), Certificate II in EAL (Access), Certificate III in EAL (Access), Certificate III in EAL (Access).



Throughout the year, the number of enrolments increased from 150 to 162. Most students (48%) attended our St Albans and Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre (BAWC, Keilor Downs) campuses, and 52% attended our outreach sites at Broadmeadows and Forest Hill.

The Skills First program focused on delivering quality education with a thoughtful and flexible approach that recognised the unique characteristics and learning needs of each of our students. Our dedicated teaching staff encouraged students to participate in lessons, solve problems, and experience the real world through the materials used.

From traditional worksheets to class presentations, hands-on activities, peer work to include learning circles, excursions, computer activities, guest speakers and applications with interactive activities, teachers empowered students to make choices about their learning process and content.

Our teachers also participated in professional development opportunities, further enhancing their teaching skills, keeping up to date with the latest education trends. These achievements show our passion for education and dedication to the success of our students, and we are proud to have such a talented and committed teaching team at commUnity+.

Tuyen's Story

Tuyen immigrated to Australia 13 years ago at the age of 25, hoping to secure a better future.



In 2022, one of Tuyen's friends recommended commUnity+ to her, and without any hesitation, she enrolled in the Certificate III in EAL (Access) program to enhance her communication skills. Attending classes, Tuyen immersed herself in her learning which included the Australian accent, and practising pronunciation, which boosted her understanding of oral language and effective communication with others.

Tuyen has nothing but praise for her class teacher, who fosters a nurturing and dynamic environment that promotes a safe and inclusive learning experience for everyone. She deeply appreciates the teacher's patience, ability to provide detailed explanations of concepts, and encouragement for students to freely express themselves.

Tuyen plans to pursue a career in childcare or aged care, and she has developed a career pathway to guide her towards this goal. She is motivated and enthusiastic, and we extend our best wishes to Tuyen for continued success in her studies.

Skills for Education and Employment (SEE)

The Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program provides high-quality education and training opportunities to help job seekers build their language, literacy, numeracy, and digital skills to assist them into employment or further education.

It is suitable for a range of ages from youth groups to mature-aged students, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

With uncapped hours for the past three years, SEE clients have greater access and a longer time to benefit from the program with the added advantage of rolling intake. There were 176 students enrolled in the SEE Program as at 30 June 2023 with 10% of the enrolment in Outreach sites. Qualifications offered through SEE at comm-Unity+ include English as an Additional Language and Certificate in General Education for Adults together with

the opportunity to undertake pre-accredited courses through Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) programs.

Our teachers employ a range of teaching techniques and adjust their teaching strategies to reflect student needs and progress. They also review instructional materials to facilitate learning and enhance the intellectual and personal development of their students.

Staying up to date with research and content around teaching and learning practices is crucial for our team. Professional development is embedded within staff workplans and assists with the team gaining fresh perspectives and insights into the current teaching practices while encouraging their professional growth.

Mariza's Story

Mariza Caballes was born in the Philippines and moved to Australia in 1996 at age of 23.



Mariza worked as a cleaner at Crown Casino in Melbourne until 2001 when she moved to Byron Bay, where she worked in a convenience store and at the Byron Bay Cookie Company.

In 2013, Mariza returned to Melbourne and accepted a job as a cleaner in a dental practice. Mariza speaks and understands English quite well and wants to improve her spelling and writing to be able to fill out forms and write letters with accuracy. Mariza enjoys learning about and using digital devices and has identified pronunciation and the correct use of pronouns as areas she would like to keep working on in order to be able to prepare for future employment.

Before starting the SEE Program, Mariza suffered severe anxiety and panic attacks. Although she was very motivated to learn, she was scared to attend classes.

In only six months since her first day in the SEE Program in January, Mariza's confidence and wellbeing has dramatically improved. She attends classes five days a week and says these days are highlights of her every week because they allow her to socialise with her peers and practice English.

Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE)

Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) comprises pre-accredited programs that are short modular courses which create pathways for learners to further education and employment. Programs include digital literacy, employment, language, literacy, and numeracy. We are funded by the Adult Community, and Further Education Board to deliver programs in Brimbank and Hume with Digital Essentials Levels 1 and 2 being split between Hume and Brimbank and the rest of the programs being delivered in Keillor Park, St Albans and Deer Park. The programs delivered range from 16 hours to 64



hours in duration. And include courses like Microsoft Office Introduction, Stay Safe Online, Apply for Employment, Introduction to Working in Australia and many others. The most popular programs are, Conversational English Introduction, Basic Legal Rights, Introduction. And while the programs are delivered concurrently with the other programs (AMEP, SEE and Skills First programs), teachers also include excursions and incursions that are ACFE focused to bring variety to the students' learning experience. Students have found the ACFE programs very useful as they provide them further support for their accredited courses. With the coming on board of a Pre-Accredited Program Coordinator we look forward to growing the range of pre-accredited offerings.

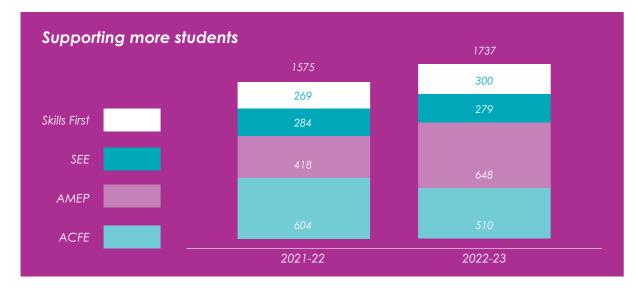
Employability Skills Training (EST)

Funded by the Federal Government, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Employability Skills Training (EST) offers job seekers an intensive 75-hour program, delivered full time (25 hours per week for 3 weeks) or part-time (15-hours per week for 5 weeks). The program focuses on building workplace skills and knowledge, developing IT awareness, problem solving and communication skills and helps participants develop a resume and improve interview techniques, job preparation and job-hunting skills.



Starting in March in collaboration with Wise Employment's Disability Employment Services program, commUnity+ delivered a pilot EST program to 16 job seekers in Broadmeadows. The program ran over 5 weeks, with 10 participants successfully completing the program in April 2023. Wise Employment praised the program for the support it provided participants and particularly thanked the teachers for their effort and commitment.

Community Education – Illustrating our impact



This data reflects healthy and increased enrolment numbers for 2022 – 23 across most programs totalling 1737 enrolments. In 2023 we have seen a significant improvement in attendance. Improved attendance leads to improved outcomes for students which in the case of the EAL sets the foundation for further study or employment.

Of the 2023 cohort, many students have already secured part time employment, running own businesses or full time employment. We also have students who are enrolled in VET courses in other organisations concurrent with their enrolment in EAL at commUnity+. Our plan is to have as many of our students seeking VET courses in 2024 enrolling in commUnity+ VET courses from the start of semester two.

Looking Ahead to 2023-24

Looking ahead to 2023-24, our focus will be multipronged.

As a Registered Training Organisation, we are required to always maintain current registration with VRQA. During 2023, commUnity+ has worked diligently to prepare for re-registration in 2023-24 and successfully secured this.

We will strengthen education pathways to community participation, employment and further study. We will be able to celebrate success when we have evidence that students are enriched through their community education experience.

The EAL Framework has been reviewed and the new Framework has now been released. commUnity+ will be delivering the new EAL Framework. Post re-registration- commUnity+ will be confirming qualifications to add to our current Scope of Registration.

Addition of new courses to our Scope of Registration is going to support the strengthening of education pathways to employment specifically. The new courses we are exploring for addition to Scope of Registration are targeted to support employers in the West. commUnity+ will continue to improve employer engagement and partnerships which in turn will strengthen student education to employment outcomes, provide insights regarding qualifications for scope extension, and guide program delivery and assessment strategies.



Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre (BMCLC) delivers free legal services and community development activities in the Brimbank, Melton and Bacchus Marsh communities, with aim of enhancing access to justice, promoting early intervention and prevention of legal and related social issues for community members experiencing marginalisation and disadvantage.

We specialise in family law, family violence, infringements/debts, minor criminal matters, tenancy, motor vehicle accidents and other civil matters.



Our main office is located in the busy urban hub of St Albans and we conduct outreach clinics and services across our catchment area in conjunction with key partner organisations, including:

- Australian Vietnamese Women's Association
- Melton Health and Community Services
- Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre
- Sunshine Hospital
- coHealth Needle and Syringe Program
- Sunshine Family Relationship Centre.

BMCLC also conducts a range of community development and engagement activities, including:

- Community legal education sessions for community members
- Professional development training for staff of community services
- Secondary consultations for staff of community services, to assist them in identifying and referring clients for legal support
- · Law reform and advocacy activities
- Regular attendance at community events.

2022-23 Priority initiatives

Improved client intake and triaging processes

A significant focus during the 2022-23 financial year was refining our intake and triage processes to ensure that we were effectively targeting our assistance towards the clients experiencing the greatest levels of need and where we can have the greatest impact with our limited resources.

Through updated intake guidelines and improved intake and triage processes, we have seen a significant improvement in our targeting of priority client groups in 2022-23, including:

- 27% of legal services delivered to clients with a disability or mental health condition, up from 6% in 2021-22
- 44% of legal services delivered to clients both overseas, up from 12% in 2021-22
- 90% of legal services delivered to clients belonging to at least one of our priority client groups, up from 72% in 2021-22

Data and Case Management Process Improvements

Following the transition to an online case management system in early 2022, in 2022-23 we fully moved our legal practice to this new system with the support of the Federation of Community Legal Centres. While there is work still underway to further improve these processes, this change has seen a significant improvement in the efficiency of our legal practice, allowing us to spend more time directly supporting our clients, and has greatly improved our ability to collect and analyse service data, improving our ability to understand and advocate for the issues we see in our work, and to make evidence-based decisions in designing our services.

Funding Advocacy

In order to continue to diversify and strengthen our revenue streams, we engaged in significant funding advocacy with our funders and local members of parliament.

Through our funding advocacy in 2022-23, we were successful in obtaining:

- A 12-month extension of existing funding through the Department of Justice and Community Safety for legal support for victim-survivors of family violence in the Melton region
- New 3-year- funding from the Victorian Legal Services Board for a project to provide legal support and education to African Australian communities in the West

Through combined advocacy across the community legal centre sector, we were also successful in obtaining funding to provide additional legal support to victim-survivors of family violence at the new Sunshine Specialist Family Violence Court.

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New partnerships

BMCLC's outreach services and projects grew from strength to strength throughout 2022–23 and we launched the following new initiatives:

- An outreach legal clinic at the new commUnity+ premises at Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre, colocated with commUnity+ Education programs and the other community services providers onsite.
- The development of a referral pathway with the Brimbank Melton Orange Door.
- Regular professional development sessions for staff at the Brimbank Melton Orange Door, with BMCLC staff providing secondary consultations.
- A Health Justice Partnership with cohealth's Needle and Syringe Program in Braybrook.

2022-23 Services and Projects

In 2022-23, BMCLC delivered over 1600 legal services, as well as community development activities, across a range of projects and outreaches. This is a snapshot of our most significant services and projects.

Health Justice Partnerships

In 2022-23, BMCLC lawyers continued to deliver co-located legal support through health justice partnerships with Sunshine Hospital and with Melton Health and Community Services. Through these partnerships, our lawyers work closely with health and social support workers to provide wrap-around legal and non-legal support for clients and to reduce the barriers to obtaining legal assistance. As well as legal support, our lawyers regularly provide secondary consultations and professional development for non-legal professionals at these services, to help them to better identify and refer the legal issues of the people that they work with.



In 2022-23 we also commenced a new health justice partnership at coHealth's Needle and Syringe Program in Braybrook, where we are providing legal support to community members with drug dependency issues.

Duty Lawyer services

BMCLC continued to provide specialist Family Violence Duty Lawyer services at the Sunshine Magistrates' Court and the Bacchus Marsh Magistrates' Court throughout the year, with our service at Sunshine seeing a significant increase in demand as it transitioned to be a specialist family violence court in October 2022. BMCLC lawyers play an important role at court, supporting and assisting victim-survivors of family violence to navigate court proceedings and advocating for their safety. Our lawyers are trained to provide trauma-informed and culturally safe services and are experienced in systems navigation, which helps families access community and justice services in a timely manner.



The Vietnamese Lawyer project

This partnership between BMCLC and the Australian Vietnamese Women's Association (AVWA) aims to improve access to justice by delivering legal advice and information in Vietnamese via a bilingual lawyer. The project started in 2016 and continues to achieve its objectives of overcoming language and cultural barriers so that the Vietnamese-speaking community in Melbourne's west can access legal, social and mental health support services.

Legally Assisted Family Dispute Resolution

BMCLC continued its partnership with the Sunshine Family Relationship Centre and Monash Law Clinics to provide legal assistance to separated parents undertaking family law mediation. Mediation processes are often stressful events that take place during periods of family breakdown and family violence. Our continued involvement in this project means that our clients feel safe and supported, and it has resulted in high rates of disputes resolving.

Family Law Access Project Highlight

The Family Law Access project (FLA) started as a partnership between Women's Legal Service Victoria (WLSV), BMCLC WEstjustice, and Barwon Community Legal Service, with WLSV providing family law capacity building support for lawyers working in the project. This project was by both the Commonwealth and Victorian governments. The project's aims are to increase access to holistic family law assistance for disadvantaged clients in Victoria's west and to embed Family Law expertise across the Community Legal Centre sector.

Through this project, we have been able to greatly increase our capacity to support clients with family law issues, and we have predominately supported victim-survivors of family violence, helping to have a positive impact for clients, enhancing legal, economic and wellbeing outcomes for some of the most vulnerable members of our community.



This funding was provided in recognition of the lack of affordable family law support in the West, and it has allowed us to support many clients that otherwise would have not been able to access legal support. Evaluation of this project has shown it has had a very positive impact for support clients, and in May 2023 we participated in a panel discussion about the impact and outcomes of FLA.

In late 2022-23, we were pleased to secure an extension of funding for this project, allowing BMCLC, WEstjustice and Barwon Community Legal Service to continue to provide the family law support funded by this project.

Cheryl's Story

Cheryl reached out to BMCLC for assistance with a Family Law property matter. Twenty years earlier, she had separated from her husband due to significant family violence. She fled the family home, finding refuge in crisis accommodation. The violence left Cheryl with long-term psychological and physiological injuries, which meant she was unable to work and relied on a Disability Support Pension to make ends meet. Cheryl was afraid of her husband and had not pursued a property settlement prior to connecting with our service.



Cheryl's husband engaged a private lawyer who made a settlement offer well below what Cheryl was entitled to. We negotiated on Cheryl's behalf (which was unsuccessful) and later started family law litigation, which resulted in her receiving a property settlement that was \$130,000 more than her husband's initial offer. Cheryl could not afford to engage a private lawyer and would not have been able to achieve this outcome without the support of BMCLC.

Sarah's Story

When Sarah came to BMCLC, she had approximately 32 fines, totalling \$12,000. At the time she incurred the fines, Sarah was experiencing severe and ongoing family violence perpetrated by her former partner. A number of the fines were actually incurred by her ex-partner.



During the relationship, Victoria Police made 17 Family Violence Intervention Order applications to protect Sarah and her children.

Because of the abuse and violence, Sarah was diagnosed with a mental health condition and referred to a medical practitioner and a counsellor for ongoing support.

BMCLC gathered supporting medical materials (including mental health assessments and treatment reports) and lodged an application to Fines Victoria under the Family Violence Scheme. **Fines**Victoria accepted that family violence contributed to Sarah incurring the fines and withdrew all of her infringements.

Deng's Story

Deng, who is from a non-English speaking background, had a traumatic brain injury that left him reliant on a Disability Support Pension. The injury caused behavioural, emotional and cognitive difficulties that impacted his day-to-day life.



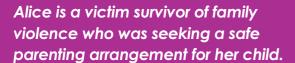
Deng attended BMCLC for help with fines he had incurred for not providing a valid concession card for train travel, refusing/failing to give his name and address, and using indecent language. The fines totalled \$647.

Deng said he had in fact provided his details to one of the officers who spoke his primary language and that he felt overwhelmed by the situation and unable to properly process the questions due to his limited English and brain injury.

We assisted Deng by submitting an application for Review on the Grounds of Special Circumstances to the Department of Transport. The Department withdrew the fines and Deng was issued with a warning. Deng was very happy with this outcome.

Alice's Story

Alice came to BMCLC through our partnership with the Sunshine Family Relationship Centre's mediation program.

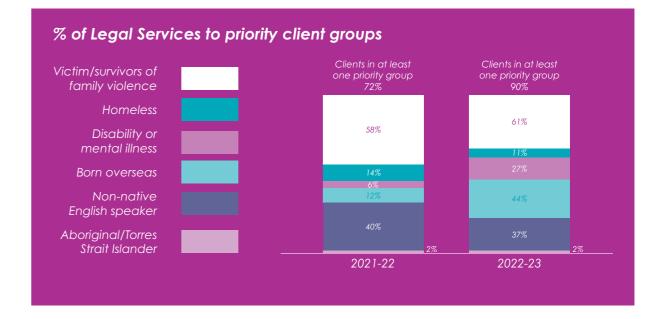


An intervention order was in place against her former partner to protect her and her child, however Alice thought it was important for the child to have a relationship with the father as long as there were safety measures in place. Alice was uncertain how to prepare for and proceed with the mediation process and wanted to better understand her options.

BMCLC provided Family Law parenting advice to Alice and supported her at mediation to advocate for a Parenting Plan that achieved her objectives. Alice and the child's father reached an agreement for the father to have supervised time with the child on the basis that he provide regular clean drug screens. These are the first steps in the family's journey towards healing and recovery.



Community Legal Services – Illustrating our impact





As well as delivering on all significant funding targets, our 2022-23 service data shows that we have been successful in increasing the overall impact our services, with a greater focus on representation services, rather than more limited legal advice services, and with a significant improvement in targeting our services to priority client groups, as illustrated above.

Looking Ahead to 2023-24

2023-24 will be exciting for BMCLC as we look to further develop our community imprint and help those who need it most. Our areas of focus will include:

Strengthening our presence in the Melton region

With Melton being one of the fastest- growing regions in the state, BMCLC aims to strengthen community connections with local services to ensure that we are accessible, and our services and projects are widely known. Part of this project will be to strengthen existing partnerships and forge new networks.



Updating and improving business systems and operations

BMCLC will continue invest significant time and energy into further developing internal systems and processes to increase our efficiency and impact.

These activities will include reviewing and updating our intake and data collection

processes to measure our impact, delivering an enhanced client experience, and capturing the voices of our community.

Sunshine Specialist Family Violence Court

Building works and improvements are currently underway at the Sunshine Magistrates' Court in line with its designation as a Specialist Family Violence Court, and we have recently received new funding to support victim-survivors of family violence at the court. We will continue to work with Court staff and stakeholders to ensure that victim survivors of family violence receive client-centred and trauma-informed support that prioritises their safety and wellbeing.



The commUnity+ Children's Contact Service (CCS) enables children of separated parents to have safe contact with a parent or significant other who they do not live with.

The CCS offers onsite and virtual supervised visits in situations where there is a perceived or actual risk to the child, and a changeover service where our expert social workers facilitate the handover of a child to prevent the child being exposed to conflict between the parents.

commUnity+ has three CCS operating across the North and West of Melbourne, located in Deer Park, Brunswick West and Glenroy.



2022-23 was a remarkable year it was for the commUnity+ CCS, as we established a brand-new service in Glenroy while also significantly enhancing the capacity at our existing sites in Deer Park and Brunswick West. The dedication and hard work of staff throughout commUnity+ in supporting this growth of the CCS has allowed us to expand our services to support additional families across Melbourne's North and West.

The opening of a new service, starting from scratch, in Glenroy was a significant undertaking for commUnity+. From January 2023 we supported families from a suitable interim location in Glenroy primarily used as an Early Childhood Centre, while we were delighted to open a permanent site and start supporting families in Glenroy in the second half of 2022-23. The new facility is secure and welcoming, boasting two generously sized children's rooms equipped with a variety of toys and activities catering to all age groups. In 2022-23, we provided 155 client sessions through the new Glenroy CCS, and this number will greatly expand in 2023-24 now that this service is fully operational.

The new service been promoted throughout our networks and is a welcome addition to the Family Law suite of services in Melbourne's North-west.

Across all three of sites, we delivered 2,027 client sessions in 2022-23, up from 1,341 client sessions in 2021-22. Our increased capacity also allowed us to support more families in 2022-23, assisted a total of 667 clients, up from 502 in 2021-22.

Sam's First Sleepover

The CCS facilitated a very touching changeover between a father and his son Sam who have been attending the service for three years.

The family started with supervised visits and, due to the complexity of the case, could not progress to unsupervised time within the usual timeframes. There were several court hearings and each time the court asked if commUnity+ would provide additional visits as further assessments and reports were required. We accommodated this request, as a lapse in contact was not in the child's best interest.

Sam always enjoyed the supervised visits and would ask his father: "Dad can we go to the park?" and "Dad when can I sleep at your house?" Staff would gently explain that visits are only at CCS for the moment.



Over time, an order for daytime changeovers was made and we got to see the joy on both father and son's face as they headed out to the park. The next big milestone was to have a sleepover and a couple of weeks ago this occurred. Little Sam came to CCS with his backpack and proudly told staff he was having a sleepover.

Mum had done a beautiful job preparing Sam and he took out his soft toy and pyjamas to show our staff member and talked about how his dad was going to leave the night-light on for him. Dad started to cry and confided that it had been a long journey, but he was finally there.

*Child's name has been changed

Care and Perseverance

The CCS team take great satisfaction in knowing we made a difficult time just a little easier for many of our families.

CCS has a formal feedback mechanism. Client feedback illustrates the impact of our role.

Ruth and Jo were very welcoming and understanding. This made seeing my children very comfortable for both myself and my children.

Everything was wonderful, you guys were perfect for me. Please give my thanks to Mia, she was wonderful.

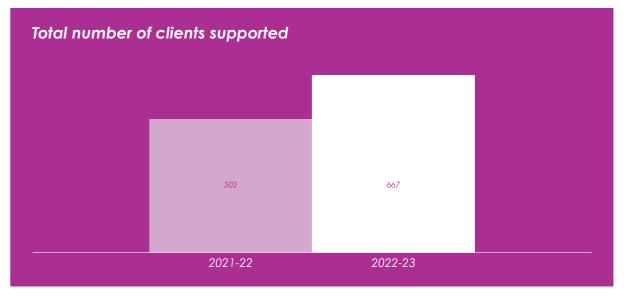
My first time using the service and the staff made it very easy and were very understanding towards myself and the situation.

Just wanted to let you know that we feel very safe with your services. Really want to thank you for the support of my daughter, much appreciated.

Great facility and all the staff have been very professional.

Children's Contact Services – Illustrating our impact



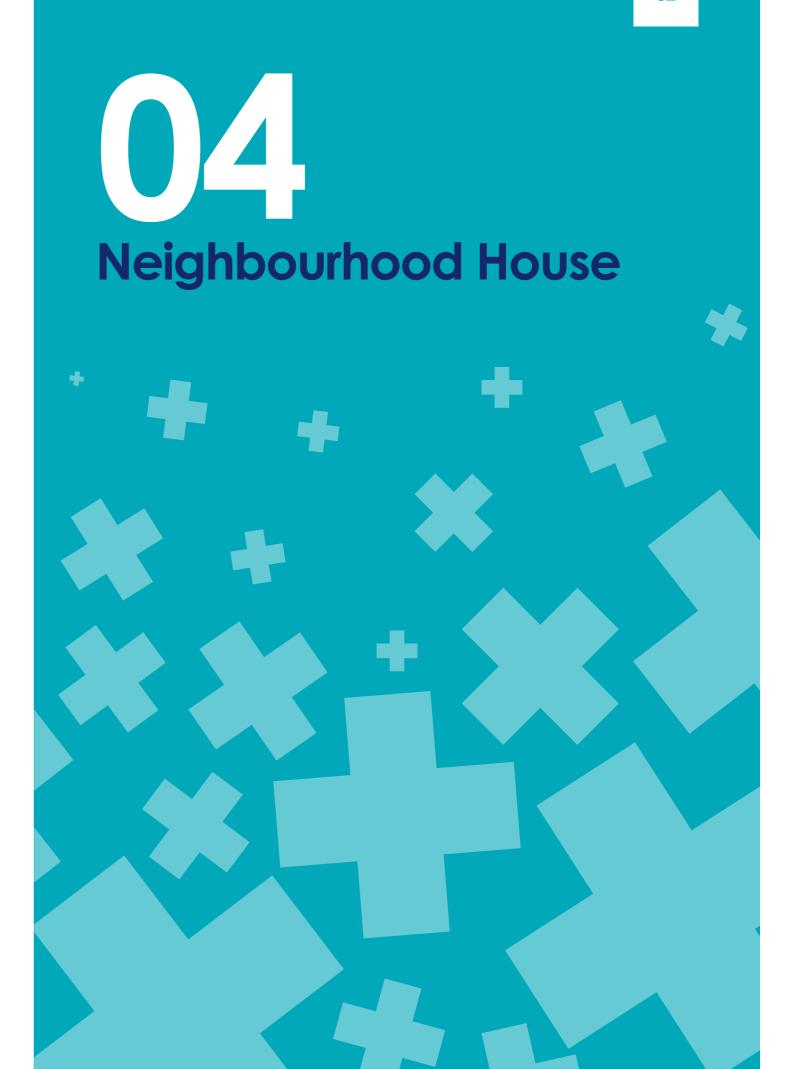


Looking Ahead to 2023-24

2023–24 will be another exciting year for CCS as we expand the children's playroom at our Deer Park site. It will be more spacious and welcoming and will accommodate larger families. In addition to the expansion of the site, building works are underway to improve the outdoor play area. This will enhance our clients' experience of using CCS and we are looking forward to seeing children enjoying the new space.

Expanding the capacity of our recently established site in Glenroy will be a top priority for the coming year. With the successful transition to our new location, we extended our operating hours and increased staffing levels to maximise accessibility.

Another exciting development is the partnership with Victoria University and our commitment to working together to provide placement opportunities for Social Work students. These placements will provide a meaningful learning experience for students and create pathways to potential employment opportunities, both within and beyond our organisation.



commUnity+ has its origins back in 1982 as the Deer Park Community Information Centre, which was set up by local residents in response to locally determined needs, with a focus on further learning and reducing social isolation. Our Neighbourhood House in Deer Park proudly continues this tradition, delivering a range of health, recreational, educational, and social support services, with over 300 participants registered for our programs at any one point in time.

Our Neighbourhood House delivers a range of programs across the week, including evenings and weekends, that are focused on social support and connection, and on health and recreation. In addition to our weekly programs, we have a Little Library Book Exchange, and our team regularly supports community members and commUnity+ education students with support and referrals.

One of new programs launched in 2022-23 was The Garden Club at the Hunt Club Community and Arts Centre, which is a community garden just down the road from our Neighbourhood House. This community garden in Deer Park is a great way for people to connect with their community and develop a green thumb. We worked in partnership with the Duke Street Community House, Brimbank City Council and the Hunt Club Community and Arts Centre, while support was provided by Caroline Springs Bunnings and seedlings were provided by the horticulture program at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, when imprisoned women are provided with education and qualifications in horticulture while they're in prison.

Another community development program lead by our Neighbourhood House team that was launched in 2022-23 was Inclusive Communities at BAWC, which is a program delivered at the Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre alongside Brimbank City Council, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, and Distinctive Options to support specific community cohorts to access the various health and wellbeing supports offered at BAWC. In 2022-23 we supported single mothers, carers, and older adults, and this program will continue in 2023-24.

During the 2022-23 year, our focus has been continuing to provide a warm and inviting space for all community members, while delivering additional programs supports community members accessing our Neighbourhood House.





Events and Excursions

In addition to our regular weekly programs, over the year we ran a number of special events and excursions for our local community.

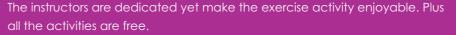
In November 2022, we ran our first Neighbourhood Market as part of the nationwide Garage Sale Trail initiative. This proved very successful, with many happy bargain hunters.

In October and November 2022, we took a number of commUnity+ students and local community members on two excursion tours, including a visit to the Melbourne Museum and a trip on the iconic Melbourne Tramboat Cruise. The boat cruise is extremely popular with our Neighbourhood House participants and we have now been on it three times.

During Neighbourhood House Week in May 2023 we ran a number of activities across the week with the theme of increased community engagement and participation, including an expo of local service provides, a health and wellbeing date, and a cultural day where a huge turnout community members, staff and students brought cultural dishes to share for a fantastic luncheon.

Eve's Story

Since retiring I have been able to join five activities at the Centre. I have been able to keep fit in body and mind.



The staff are friendly and happy to have a chat, whether it's about the program or just a chat in general.

I will always be grateful that I walked into the centre to ask what activities they had, as it's the best experience I am having, keeping fit and meeting people with similar interests.

Dorothy's Story

I love coming to Chat and Chew to meet so many different ladies, to talk about so many difficult subjects.

I live alone and quite often I feel very lonely, so [it's great] to come out and mix with ladies I now, call my friends!

My favourite saying is "Enjoy every day of your life, because it's later than you think, no matter what your age, and don't fuss over the small things".

I miss my husband every minute of the day. I was married for 63 and a half years (a major part of my adult life), so coming to Chat and Chew makes me happy.





Strengthening community connection with the support of complementary community organisations

A key part of our Neighbourhood is partnering and working collaboratively with other local organisations. In 2022-23 we worked with the following organisations to deliver our programs:

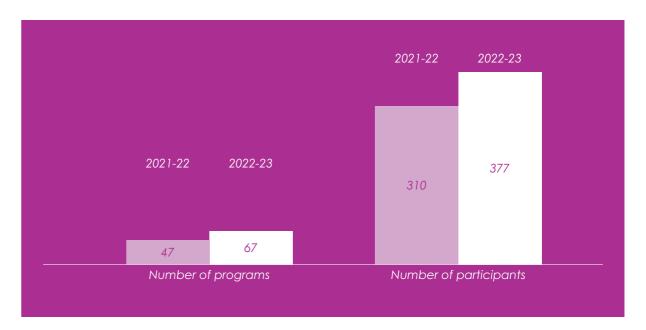


- Brimbank City Council
- Reclink Australia
- Neighbourhood House Victoria
- Network West
- IPC Health
- Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services
- Bunnings Caroline Springs
- Community Collective

- Deer Park Lions Club
- The Hunt Club Community and Arts Centre
- Duke Street Community House
- The Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
- Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
- Distinctive Options



Neighbourhood House – Illustrating our Impact



Looking Ahead to 2023-24

From 2023-24, our Neighbourhood House has become part of our commUnity+ Community Development function. The Neighbourhood House will continue to be the primary community development program while recognising the importance of community engagement and development as commUnity+'s core purpose. This progression was evident throughout 2022-23 as the team expanded to delivering community development programs at BAWC, the Hunt Club, and with peer community organisations. In 2023-24 our focus will be on continuing to look for community development opportunities across all of the communities we serve, including and beyond the local Deer Park community.

Supported by this change and an expanded team, our focus in 2023-24 will be to continue to grow and strengthen our community engagement and development programs, including our Neighbourhood House program, and to continue to deliver programs and services that meet the needs and strengths of the diverse communities that we work with.



Shared Services

Shared Services provides the organisational foundations underpinning commUnity+. Shared Services operates as an internal business partner and service provider to commUnity+ program and service delivery teams, as well as managing our compliance, supporting the effective governance of everything we do and meeting our statutory and corporate responsibilities. Its focus is to continuously drive efficiency and effectiveness so that commUnity+ can optimise outcomes for its service users.

The Shared Services portfolio comprises all the essential business services that are common across the organisation this includes finance, risk and compliance, communications, ICT, facilities, and people and culture.

This year in our endeavour to strengthen our engagement with communities in a consistent manner, we introduced the Community Service Officer roles both at Deer Park and Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre locations. Our Community Service Officers provide a principal point of contact at those locations and we also support our BAWC tenant partners Distinctive Options and Good Shepherd.



Shared Services provided a strong focus on enabling our programs to continuously deliver greater outcomes, with new facilities being brought online and an optimisation of our existing property portfolio.

Significant improvements and innovations were made to our technology platforms and our key processes and ways of working that helped drive up our efficiency.

The Finance team implemented revised budget planning, forecasting and reporting to continue to improve our financial management and outcomes from our various sources of funding.

Our Communications team drove improvements in our social media engagement across our key social channels as well as focusing on advocacy, partnership development and supporting the flow of information and community engagement which is crucial across all our programs.

Risk and compliance work made sure we achieved all our obligations and manage and deliver activity in line with our risk appetite so we stayed safe and better focused on our clients, with more employees completing fundamental training to keep our staff and clients safer than ever e.g. First Aid and Fire Warden training.

During 2022–23, commUnity+ commenced operations and service delivery at the Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre. This exciting new milestone was achieved through a lot of hard work from our Facilities and ICT teams that were thrilled to help set up a brand-new facility. As always keeping our communities and staff front of mind, the communications and consultations started a few months

ahead. Our students and clients were given the opportunity to do excursions into the new centre, building their confidence and increasing their levels of comfort.

Staff commenced transitioned into the facility in December 2022 and our Community Education and Legal services started operations at the new site in January 2023.

The Facilities team was also kept busy consolidating and improving many of our sites, including preparing the new Children's Contact Service facility at Glenroy.

People, Culture and Wellbeing

Our People and Culture team welcomed the new financial year with a clear focus on increasing our in-person interactions and development of staff. Whilst our hybrid working arrangements were streamlined and working effectively, we were conscious of the extra efforts required in strengthening our relationships across teams as well as with our communities.



Training and development, and capacity building was a priority across the organisation. This included elevating leadership skills across the organisation through carefully crafted long-term interventions such as the "Cultivating Leadership in community+" program for all people and program leaders, and the Senior Leadership Development Program.

Staff wellbeing and engagement continued to be one of our top priorities, with the intention of keeping our levels of energy and enthusiasm high.

Our 2022 staff survey showed a positive shift in engagement levels which was heartening considering that, like many organisations in the for-purpose sector we continue to face challenges in terms of talent retention, which kept our recruitment efforts relatively high over the year as we sought to attract the best talent in the market.

The introduction of our APPLAUSE program was, and continues to be a great success. Our whole of organisation engagement included a highly successful team building and challenge activity at our mid-year celebration.

Looking Ahead to 2023-24

As we build on the strong foundations established in 2022-23 Shared Services will focus on continuously professionalising our corporate services as well as working with our programs to help them improve service delivery and outcomes for every dollar and work hour they expend.

This will include the continuous leverage of automation and technology enablers as well as maintenance and optimisation of our portfolio of properties. To this end finance will improve the timely availability of management information to help our people and program leaders make better decisions and have a forward-looking lens on meeting our community's needs.

Our people and culture function aims to continuously attract, retain, motivate and develop our specialist talent so crucial to our community impact, and while maintaining its quality focus on the basics it will strengthen our focus on the most crucial aspect of our performance, our people and our unique culture.



Our work to attract and retain the best talent possible is exemplified by the team we are building in shared services, who often reflect the journeys experienced by people living in the communities we support.

Tanuja's Story

Meet our wonderful Executive Administrator, Tanuja!

She considers herself a fortunate immigrant, despite the challenges and obstacles that she has endured, including a four-year visa application process prior to migrating to Australia with her family in 2019.

While her husband quickly found work when they arrived in Australia, Tanuja was unable to work in Australia, and went from being a qualified Biomedical Engineer to a full-time stay-at-home parent.

Unable to pursue this same career path in Australia, Tanuja retrained in Human Resources while seeking employment in this area.



After struggling to find employment due to a lack of local experience, Tanuja undertook a volunteering placement at commUnity+ within our People and Culture team. This led to an interim position and then an ongoing role as Executive Administrator to the CEO, where Tanuja plays a vital part in supporting the work and governance of commUnity+.

Tanuja and her husband recently became Australian citizens and their family feels happy and at home in Australia as they approach the end of their Great Australian Migration Journey.



commUnity+ opened the doors of opportunity for me. It helped me restart my career and has encouraged me to pursue my ultimate career goal to become an HR practitioner while I work as an Executive Administrator. For this, I am grateful.



Everything we do is driven by our people. One of our greatest highlights for the year was the introduction and level of adoption of our peer-to-peer recognition scheme – APPLAUSE.

APPLAUSE was introduced to create a platform where anyone could recognise another staff member who exemplified commUnity+ values, outstanding professional behaviours, work ethic and leadership.

In recognition of the extraordinary efforts our staff make to serve our communities, we recognised the following members of our team:

2022-23 APPLAUSE Recipients

Name	Role at commUnity+
Javed Ahmed	Finance Manager
Umair Ahmed	IT Support
Wajahat Ahmed	Receptionist- Education
Loriss Aliass	EAL Teacher
Tracy Baker	Community Service Officer
Aradhana Bakshi	P&C Advisor
Ana Paula Balica	Manager- Skills First
Binaya Bhatta	Finance Officer
Kakali Chowdhary	EAL Teacher -SEE
Dzemka Civic	Administration Officer- Education
Gam Daw	Community Service Officer
Despina Partsinidis	Lead Teacher
Zaklina Dimovska	EAL Teacher- Skills First
Sinh Dinh	EAL Teacher- Skills First
Jen Eby	Administration Coordinator- CCS
Mikaela Farrugia	Community Lawyer
Tracey Gaudry	CEO
Aybek Gorey	EAL Teacher- SEE
Martin Ha	Manager- Policy, Impact and Enterprise
Enisa Hajdarevic	Deputy Manger- Operations, Education
Feruz Idris	Student Support Officer - Education Partnerships Admin Officer
Eddie Imo	Facilities Coordinator
Cheyenne Jensen	Neighbourhood House Assistant
Zana Klancevic	Administration Officer- Education
Constance Dela Cruz Ko	Communications Officer
John Kon	Community Lawyer
Thi Hang Lai	Student Support Officer- AMEP
Sangeeta Lata	Manager- SEE
Chau Bau Le	EAL Teacher- Skills First
Candy Lee	Administration Officer- AMEP
Andrew Lopez	Senior Social Worker- CCS
James Luu	EAL Teacher-SEE
Zac Martinez	Senior Social Worker- CCS
Mircea Mathews	EAL Teacher- AMEP

Name	Role at commUnity+
Tanuja Mehta	Executive Administrator
Aimie Meier	GM Shared Services
Mabel Msopero	Settlement Programs Manager
Fotina Musumeci	EAL Teacher- SEE
Aanchal Narang	Operations Assistant- Education
Nguyen Thi Bao Nguyen	EAL Teacher- Skills First
Sandya Nugapitiya	EAL Teacher- Out reach
Nim Peiris	Head of People and Culture





commUnity+ turns 40

We invited everyone to our 40th birthday party in October 2022, and we celebrated like it was 1982 again!

Our beginnings

commUnity+ started out as a local community group in 1982, the Deer Park Residents Action Group, who sought to make a change in the local community.

The group's mission was in response to locally determined needs for further learning opportunities and to provide a venue where people could drop in and find friendship, information, resources and to overcome problems such as isolation, loneliness and seek help for their personal problems. The centre was designed to provide a forum where collective resident action could occur. Its philosophy in 1982 was "To meet the needs of the people as expressed by the people".

The group held their first meeting on the 24th of February 1982 and the official opening of the Deer Park Community Information Centre was on Saturday the 23rd of October 1982 at the Deer Park (now Brimbank) Shopping Centre.

People and places

In 1982 we commenced with one part time coordinator. By 1991 we had 63 employees and volunteers. Today we employ and engage more than 100 staff, students on placement and volunteers.

We are place-based in our service provision spanning multiple sites and outreach locations stretching from our original base and commUnity+ owned premises in Deer Park across the west to Melton, out north to Craigieburn and as far as Forest Hill in the east.

As we turned 40 in October 2022 we commenced services as a community services partner with Brimbank City Council at the state-of-the-art Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre.

Space had been set aside in the newly built shopping centre for a Library, but was unsuitable for this purpose, so with much lobbying and convincing of the Sunshine Council this unused space became the Deer Park Community Information Centre. With almost no money, the community members themselves decorated and fitted out the space through volunteers and donations.

The initial underpinning purpose of the Community Information Centre was about providing programs and services that targeted disadvantaged women, specifically women who were victim to family violence. The organisation continued to have a strong focus on women & domestic violence right throughout the 80s and 90s.



Program and Service origins

Since our commencement in 1982 as a Neighbourhood House, we have been delivering Education, Community Development and Advocacy as well as providing support and information in Deer Park for 40 years. Today, there are more than 300 participants registered at any one time in our Neighbourhood programs.

In 1993 our Community Legal Program was formalised, building on our years of tenancy and consumer advice and support. Our legal services program, now called the Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre (BMCLC) is a member of the Federation of Community Legal Centres. BMCLC provides services to 1600 clients, and growing, each year.

In 1996 we were instrumental in the national launch of what is now known as Children's Contact Services. Our team currently provide vital family services from two services in Deer Park and Brunswick West supporting more than 650 clients per year. From 2023 we manage three purpose built Children's Contact Service sites with a new location being established in Glenroy.

As a Registered Training Organization since 1992 we now deliver multiple Community Education Programs for more than 1500 students per year.

Our Identity

Over the years we have been known as:

- Deer Park Community Information Centre (From 1982)
- Deer Park Community Centre
- Brimbank Community Centre (April 1997 2004)
- Community West (2004 2016)
- Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd (commUnity+), since 2016.

A Community Party: back to '82 and into the Future!

In true 1982 backyard party style, we had a local DJ, an ice cream van, dancing and dignitaries. Along with previous commUnity+ members, CEOs and employees, the local community turned out in force to celebrate with us. Even heavy rain couldn't stop us.

It was so much fun, and we loved seeing the Mayor of Brimbank, Jasmine Nyugen, dancing with locals and sharing delicious food from the Taste of Syria, run by one of our former Neighbourhood House employees.

As children laughed and ran around enjoying the ice cream, we listened to amazing stories from our community members, including one of our longest-serving employees Enisa Hajdarevic, and Tracey Oliver, who was one of our original Neighbourhood House Networkers.



It was a wonderful evening of celebration for all.

It is in these moments we can truly see the positive impact that commUnity+ has made over the past 40 years. Whether it was students taking over the DJ desk to play traditional music for us to dance to, or the engagement between all the party goers, it shows how commUnity+ supports everyone and helps build strong, connected communities.

So, we say Happy Birthday to us and look forward to celebrating with you all in another 40 years.











Transformation of key commUnity+ sites across the **West and North**

2022-23 was a year of strengthening our presence and accessibility through new and consolidated sites across our many service delivery locations.

KEILOR DOWNS

During 2022–23, one of our Strategic targets came to fruition. More than five years in the making, the Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre (BAWC), developed by the Brimbank City Council, opened. Becoming a future community partner at BAWC was endorsed in principle by the commUnity+ Board in 2017 and we are indebted to their vision. With our wonderful community partner organisations, co-tenants Good Shepherd Australia and New Zealand (GSANZ) and Distinctive Options, we have created a new community hub in Melbourne's west.

BAWC hosts six classrooms and a fully equipped commUnity+ Lounge where students, employees and visitors can grab a coffee, eat lunch, read a book or share study tips. We also moved our shared services (corporate) team to BAWC. This allowed us to

expand our community services spaces and offerings at our Deer Park site, which now hosts more Neighbourhood House, Community Education and CCS activities within the space that was previously allocated to the shared services team.

BAWC has provided the community with so many amazing opportunities to join in new projects, including the Inclusive Communities Project that is run by the tenant partners and Brimbank City Council. Whether it is cooking with Distinctive Options, legal education programs hosted by BMCLC, finance workshops run by GSANZ, or complementary passes to the BAWC gym and pool, the community has opportunities to meet people, engage with services and learn about how each service can support them when needed.



DEER PARK

Our Deer Park home saw some major changes during the year. The Shared Services Team moved to our BAWC site to allow for more community activities to be run at Deer Park. The move increased engagement with our CCS, Neighbourhood House and Community Education programs.

We also expanded our CCS area to enable families to connect and engage in a bigger space that fits more people and provides more opportunities for our services to be used.





ST ALBANS

Our Main Road West premises in St Albans had a full revamp during the year and the upgraded furniture and furnishings to provide welcoming and fit-for-purpose learning, collaboration and working spaces for students and staff.



Main Road West is dedicated primarily to

Community Education Programs and hundreds of students visit every day. The upstairs space is now more vibrant, with wonderful new plants and furniture. The upgrade also means that our employees are more comfortable and can move around easily in the office spaces. This enables more engagement with students across sites and allows teams to work together easily in person.

GLENROY

In September 2022, commUnity+ was granted funding for a third CCS to be established in Glenroy. During the year, the Facilities team worked to identify and create a new space to support CCS services to meet the high demand in Melbourne's Northwest. The new commUnity+ Glenroy site opened in June 2023.

The Glenroy CCS has several 'visit' rooms to accommodate both small and larger families. Access is easy because it's close to public transport and provides ample parking. The site also includes office spaces, that can be used by teams from different commUnity+ locations when working together with the CCS team.





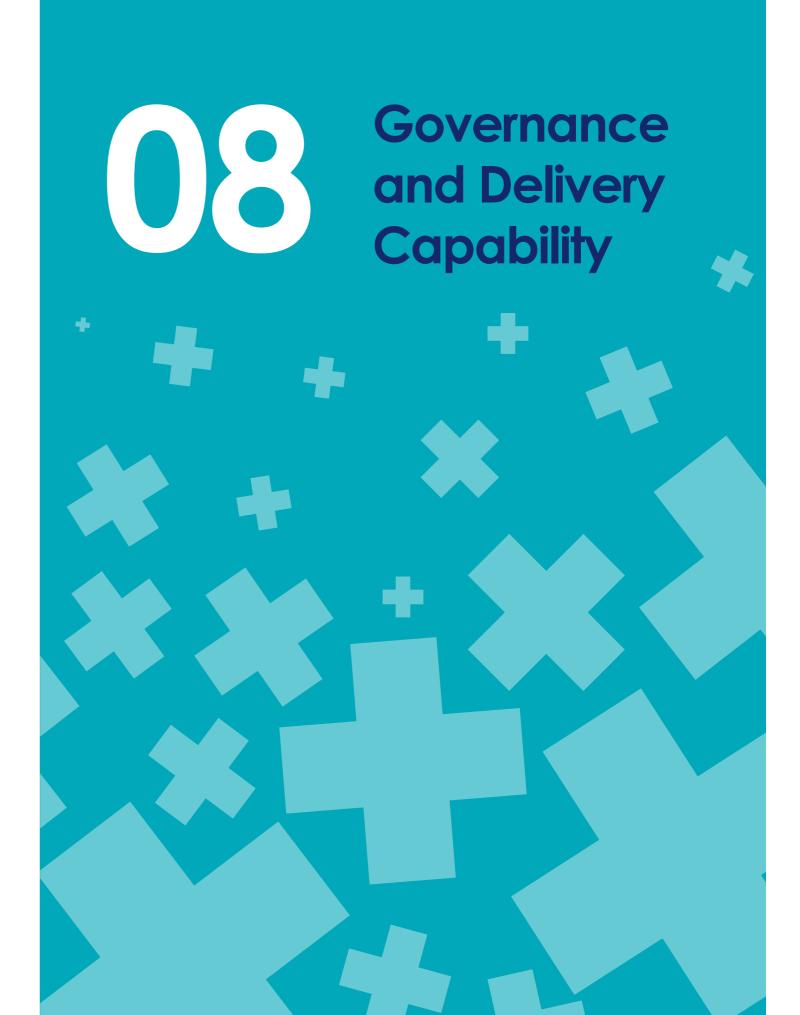


CONSOLIDATION

The establishment and expansion of several significant community hubs in highly accessible locations enabled commUnity+ to relocate programs from other locations and close these, achieving financial savings and strengthen our overall presence and accessibility.

With the strengthening and increased utilisation of the Main Road West premises in St Albans as well as the opening of BAWC in Keilor Downs, we closed our Victoria Square, East Esplanade, Coburg and Taylors Lakes Community Education sites.

Within existing catchment areas, we relocated Community Education programs to new sites in Craigieburn and Broadmeadows.



Our Board



JACKIE MEAD - CHAIR

Jackie was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2020 and took up the role of Chair in December 2022. She is a member of the Governance Committee.

A long-time resident of Melbourne's inner west, Jackie has a passion for creating and supporting vibrant communities that are inclusive and compassionate at their core. She brings more than 15 years of not-for-profit experience, along with a background in consulting and human resources.

Jackie holds a Bachelor of Commerce from Deakin University and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Melbourne (ANZSOG). She has certification from the Australian Institute of Company Directors and is proud to play a small part in the great outcomes being achieved by commUnity+.



EMMA HUNT - DEPUTY CHAIR

Emma was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2020 and took up the role of Deputy Chair in 2022. She is a member of the Governance Committee.

Emma is an experienced executive and lawyer with a strong background in managing organisations and legal projects across the non-profit, community and government sectors. Her leadership spans roles at PILCH Vic Inc. (now Justice Connect), the Department of Justice and Community Safety, and Victoria Legal Aid.

Emma currently works as an Associate Director with Victoria Legal Aid. She is driven by her passion for empowering disadvantaged Victorians through strong community organisations and a robust legal assistance sector. She holds degrees in law and criminology and has a current legal practising certificate in Victoria.



GREG BOWERS

Greg was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in early 2017 and has held the position of Treasurer since 2018. He is the Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Greg is the Chief Financial Officer at Trust for Nature in Victoria, a statutory authority protecting native plants and wildlife on private land in Victoria. With extensive experience in financial management, he has overseen large-scale financial and process management changes at various roles including Trust for Nature.

A certified TEFL teacher, Greg has worked internationally as an English teacher and is passionate about opportunities that arise through adult education. He brings his extensive financial and operational management experience to commUnity+.

Greg holds a Bachelor of Business from Ballarat University and is a Certified Practising Accountant.



NELLA BUCCHERI

Nella was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2016 and is a member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Nella is a senior lawyer and throughout her career she has developed expertise in criminal law, administrative law and litigation. Nella has particular skills in exercising public power, specifically administrative law decision-making. As a local resident with a strong interest in social justice, she is an advocate for the work of commUnity+ in local communities and is committed to improving service provision in Melbourne's western suburbs.

Nella holds a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences and a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from La Trobe University. She is an Australian legal practitioner.

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POONAM FERNANDES

Poonam was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2022 and is a member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Poonam currently works as a Principal Finance Adviser for the Department of Health and has industry experience in government, non-profit organisations, mining and resources, and financial services. Poonam has held several senior finance positions including Chief Finance Officer, Project Director and Finance Manager. She provides expert advice on finance and operations to support business planning, governance and risk management.

Poonam is passionate about her work with different communities. She is part of the Sikh Community and volunteers for her local Trillium community to build a vibrant neighbourhood so residents can form strong and lasting relationships.

Poonam holds a Bachelor of Commerce from Murdoch University and is a Certified Practising Accountant.



OLIVIA JOEL

Olivia was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2020 and is a member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Olivia is a Senior Manager in the Network
Optimisation and Strategy team at Australia
Post and was previously a Manager at
Nous Group, an international management
consultancy. She is passionate about creating
meaningful change through social policy and
community development.

Olivia has worked with not-for-profit, government and member-based clients across a range of sectors including education, human services, health and justice. She has worked extensively in public policy, regulation, organisational performance and strategy.

Olivia holds a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) and a Bachelor of Commerce (International Commerce) from Monash University and undertook postgraduate studies in globalisation and international economic law. She is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Directors Company Directors Course, holds a certificate in Leading with Finance from Harvard Business School and is certified in Agile Project and Delivery Management.



KRISTIE LAWSON

Kristie was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2022 and is a member of the Governance Committee.

Kristie is working as Director Corporate Services at Central Highland Rural Health. She has excellent skills in stakeholder management, project management and leadership, with several years of experience leading teams in the public sector working across state and local governments.

Kristie's leadership experience includes six years at Melton City Council, two years at Wyndham City Council and 12 years at the Department of Justice and Community Safety (formerly the Department of Justice). Kristie has strong social justice values and having worked extensively with communities in Melbourne's west, she understands current and emerging trends that are unique to the area, particularly those affecting vulnerable cohorts such as women, children and young people. Kristie is passionate about effecting real change and supporting place-based, trauma-informed and person-centred care to ensure that communities thrive and break the cycle of disadvantage.

Kristie holds a Master of Business Administration, a Graduate Certificate of Management and an Advanced Diploma of Business (Legal Practice).



SUSANNE LEGENA

Susanne was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2016 and held the role of Chair from 2019 to 2022. She is a member of the Governance Committee.

Susanne is the CEO of Plan International Australia and has 20 years of experience in the public and not-for-profit sectors working in community development, advocacy and social change. Susanne is a passionate advocate and spokesperson. She has seen first-hand Plan International's incredible work in places such as Laos, Uganda and Zimbabwe, and understands the importance of specific interventions for children and girls, especially for education in emergencies.

Susanne has recently been appointed as a Director on the Emergency Action Alliance (EAA) Board and has previously served as Chief of Staff to the Victorian Minister for Energy, Resources and Community Development, with responsibility for the whole-of-government strategy to tackle disadvantage. She served on the Australian Council For International Development Board for six years until 2022.

Susanne has dedicated her career to working on social justice issues, tackling family violence, poverty, youth unemployment and homelessness.

Susanne holds a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences from Flinders University and a Master of Arts (Professional Communication) from Deakin University.



VALERIE SACE

Valerie was appointed to the commUnity+Board in 2022.

Valerie is the Head of Strategy and Transformation at David Jones. She is a highly commercial strategy, transformation and project management leader with experience across diverse industries including retail, digital media, FMCG, waste management and community services. Highly agile and consumer-centric, Valerie brings outstanding skills in developing and implementing strategy aligned to organisational objectives. With a passion for solving complex problems and continuous improvement, Valerie has deep experience leading multi-disciplinary teams and applying exceptional communication, collaboration, stakeholder management and influencing skills.

Valerie is passionate about the work of community organisations that seek to

empower people affected by disadvantage and inequality. She previously served as the President of the Committee of Management of the Banyule Support and Information Centre (BANSIC), a not-for-profit incorporated association based in West Heidelberg. She was a 2022 recipient of a scholarship for the Women's Board Leadership Program through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's Office for Women in conjunction with the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Valerie is a strong believer and advocate of the power of diversity, particularly in board and executive representation.

Valerie holds a Bachelor of Science (Major in Business Administration and Accountancy) from the University of the Philippines and is a non-practising CPA. She is a Project Management Professional and a member of the ICDA.



BRENDAN WALSH

Brendan was appointed to the Board of commUnity+ in 2019. He is a member of the Governance Committee.

For more than three decades, Brendan has been a passionate and inspired contributor to non-profits in Australia. His substantial experience includes roles as Senior Executive, CEO, Director and Board Chair of a range of highly successful and strategically focused organisations. He has worked in community and social enterprises, state and local governments, and several private sector consulting firms.

Brendan is a trusted Strategy and Governance Advisor to many organisations across Australia and internationally. His client base ranges from small to very large non-profits, through to transnational commercial clients with a market value of USD180b. He has a passion for transforming organisations to have a greater impact for the people and communities they serve. He also has interest and experience in helping organisations identify and seize opportunities for alliances, partnerships and mergers.

Brendan holds a Master of Business
Administration from the Melbourne Business
School of the University of Melbourne. He is
a Fellow (and Graduate) of the Australian
Institute of Company Directors. He holds a
Diploma of Corporate Governance (AICD) as
well as an Executive Certificate in Non-profit
Governance from the Harvard Business School
(Boston, USA). In 2023, he was recognised as a
Justice of Peace.



LOUISE WALTERS

Louise was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2020. She is a member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Louise has worked as the Assistant Director of Pricing at the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), where her role included administering the NDIA's Australia-wide pricing policy. She currently works as Product Manager for Australia's largest real estate advertising company, REA Group.

Louise is dedicated to supporting commUnity+towards its vision of building safe and vibrant communities in Melbourne's west, where people are engaged, respected and in charge of their future. She brings a decade of experience delivering business improvement programs across private and government sectors, as well as experience in the financial services and technology industries.

Louise has held a number of non-executive volunteer positions, including as a Board Director of the Brain Injury Foundation of Victoria.

Louise holds a Master of Business Administration from the Melbourne Business School of the University of Melbourne, and certification from the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Our Senior Leadership Team

TRACEY GAUDRY - CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Tracey is an accomplished leader with over 20 years of experience in executive and governance roles. She has previously held CEO roles at Respect Victoria and the Amy Gillett Foundation. Tracey's governance roles have included Vice President of Union Cycliste Internationale, where she chaired the global Women's and Advocacy Commissions, and Director of the Sports Environment Alliance. Her leadership has focussed on prevention and early intervention research, and policy and program/delivery initiatives supporting diversity, equity and inclusion in local, regional, national, and international settings and communities.



Tracey is dedicated to supporting and enhancing the diverse communities that community+ serves and brings significant knowledge, experience, insights, and energy.

Tracey holds bachelor degrees in commerce and science from Deakin University and a Master in Management from the National Graduate School of Management at the Australian National University. She is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

CAMERON BLOYE - GENERAL MANAGER, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Cameron has extensive experience as a Lead Lawyer, Principal Lawyer and Manager Legal Services in Community Legal Centres across Victoria, including the Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre. He has worked across a broad range of areas of law and specialises in working with young people, victim-survivors of family violence, and people with significant mental health conditions and acquired brain injuries.

Cameron is a Board Member and Public Officer for United Housing Co-Operative, a social housing organisation based in Melbourne's inner-west that provides affordable housing to people experiencing



Cameron holds Bachelor of Arts and Juris Doctor (post-graduate law) degrees from the University of Melbourne and is currently studying a Master of Public Policy and Management focusing on social policy development and community sector governance.



Craig has been engaged in the education sector for over twenty years, including community, higher, and vocational education and training. His varied positions have included business development, policy and program management.

Craig has a passion for the transformative nature of education, enabling diverse community members to access education and training, regardless of background and experience, based on personal needs and aspirations.



AIMIE MEIER - GENERAL MANAGER, SHARED SERVICES

Aimie brings extensive experience in senior leadership roles in for-purpose and government organisations, encompassing corporate services, finance, program management and strategic projects.

Aimie is passionate about working to achieve better community outcomes and believes that everyone deserves to have a community in which they feel safe, empowered and engaged.

Her experience in housing highlighted the challenges faced by our communities and she sees effective community organisations as crucial

to developing thriving communities. Aimie's background in the disability and community housing forpurpose sectors gives her a wide range of experience across many corporate functions.

Aimie holds a Master of Business Management, a Bachelor of Commerce, a Graduate Certificate in Business Management (Project Management), and a Graduate Certificate in Social Sciences (Housing Management and Policy).



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Funding Organisations and Community Partners

Funding Organisations

Adult Community and Further Education Board

Brimbank City Council

Department of Education and Training (Cwth) (via Djerriwarrh Community and

Education Services Inc)

Department of Education and Training (Vic)

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Vic)

Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (Vic) (via Djerriwarrh Community and

Education Services Inc)

Department of Social Services (Cwth)

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (Cwth) (via Djerriwarrh Community and Education Service, and WISE Employment)

Department of Home Affairs

Department of Education, Skills and

Employment (Cwth)

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria

Victoria Legal Aid

Community Partners and Supporters

African Australian Legal Network

African Australian Legal Service

AMES Australia

APM Employment Services

APM Workcare

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

ASTA

Barwon Community Legal Service

Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre

Brimbank City Council

Bunnings Warehouse

Centre for Multicultural Youth – Community

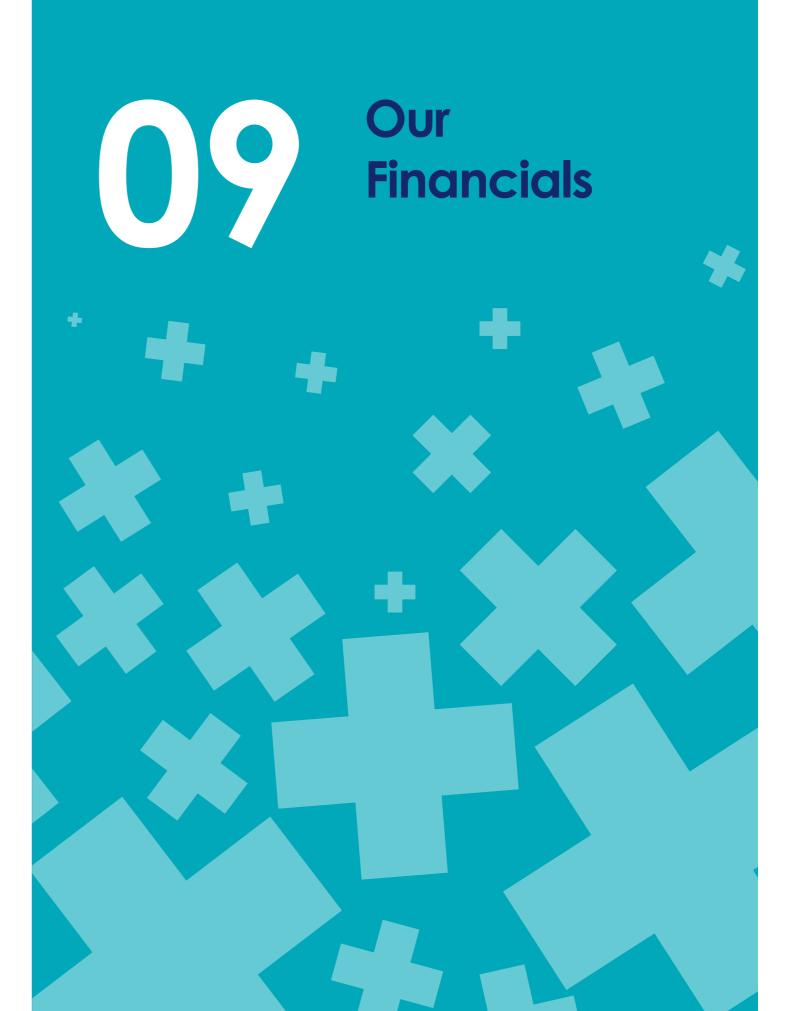
Support Group

Create Train Achieve (CTA)

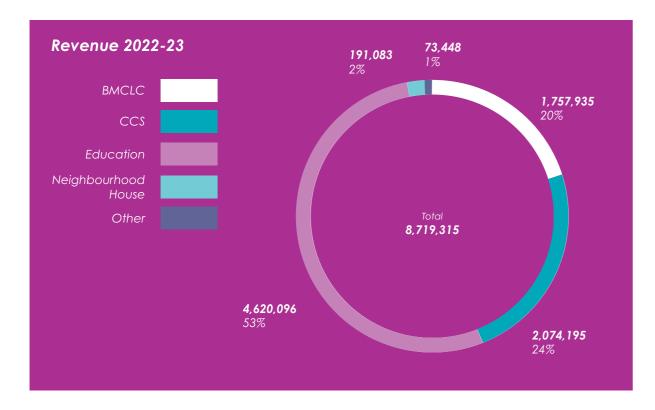
Deer Park Lions Club

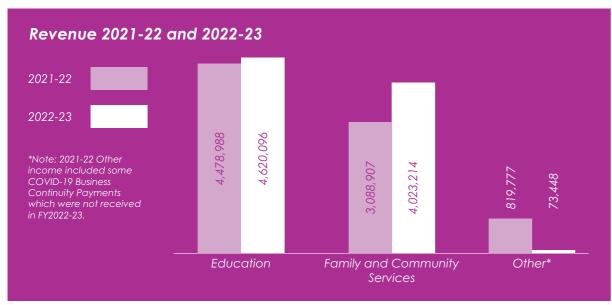
Distinctive Options Djerriwarrh Community and Education Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand Hume City Council Hunt Club Community Arts Centre **HWL** Ebsworth IPC Health Jobfind Learning for Employment MatchWorks Melton Secondary College Migrant Resource Centre North-West Region Inc. Mind Australia Neighbourhood Houses Victoria **Network West ParentsNext** Reclink Australia Sarina Russo Services Australia SYC (Job Prospects) Victoria University WEstjustice Western Bulldogs Community Foundation **WISE Employment**

Women's Legal Service Victoria



Financial Report – Snapshot







We pay a lot of attention to make the very best use of every precious dollar of funding we receive.

Optimising the outcomes from our assets is key. As with other years Education services were a large part of our service delivery, but we are increasing the scope and scale of our impact across our whole portfolio.

Our revenue is increasing in reflection of the recognition our funders have of the importance of the work we do. We are proud to state that our services have grown faster than our expense line because of our laser focus on continually doing more as efficiently as possible.

Financial Report

Statement of Profit and Loss and other Comprehensive Income

	2023 \$	2022 \$
REVENUES	8,716,760	8,387,672
EXPENDITURE		
Employee benefits expenses	6,095,816	6,032,622
Depreciation and amortisation expenses	900,063	790,361
Finance charges on lease liabilities	87,695	26,170
Interest paid on building loan	580	510
Loss on sale of property, plant and equipment	-	8 ,796
Program resources	352,455	277,470
Lease expenditure	308,246	263,676
Data management fees	-	-
Other expenses	1,128,587	985,713
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	8,873,442	8,385,318
Surplus/(deficit) attributable to entity	(156,682)	2 ,354
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Net gain or loss on revaluation of non-current assets	-	-
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	(156,682)	2 ,354
Total comprehensive income/(loss) attributable to entity	(156,682)	2 ,354

Statement of Financial Position

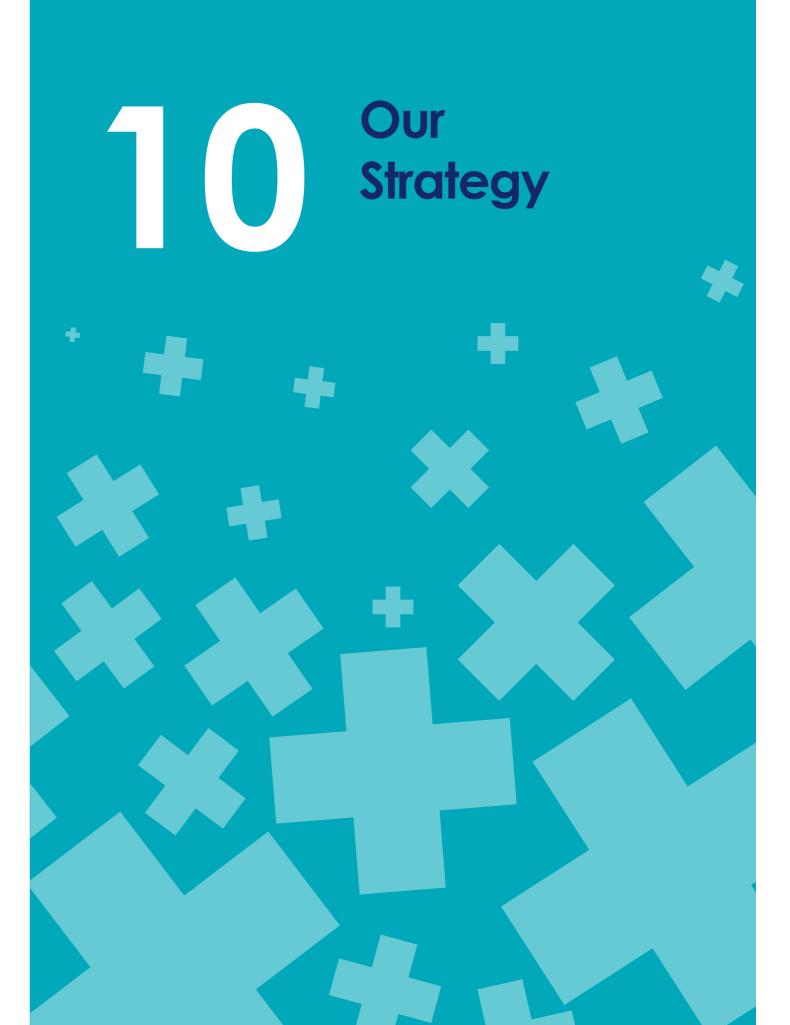
	2023 \$	2022 \$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,052,265	1,548,78
Trade and other receivables	258,808	318,200
Other current assets	419,677	301,065
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	1,730,750	2,168,049
NON CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	2,628,506	2,546,444
Intangible assets	3,882,466	731,712
TOTAL NON CURRENT ASSETS	6,510,972	3,278,156
TOTAL ASSETS	8,241,722	5,446,205
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	788,972	1,084,749
Provisions	569,467	519,417
Lease liabilities	773,871	361,922
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	2,132,310	1,966,088
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Borrowings	1,000	10,000
Provisions	69,561	67,354
Lease liabilities	3,175,146	382,376
TOTAL NON CURRENT LIABILITIES	3,245,707	459,730
TOTAL LIABILITIES	5,378,017	2,425,818
NET ASSETS	2,863,705	3,020,387
EQUITY		
Accumulated funds	2,468,405	2,625,087
Reserves	395,300	395,300
TOTAL EQUITY	2,863,705	3,020,387

Statement of Changes In Equity

	Accumulated funds \$	Asset revaluation reserve \$	Total \$
Balance as at 1 July 2021	2,622,733	395,300	3,018,033
Surplus/(deficit) attributable to entity	2,354	-	2,354
Balance as at 30 June 2022	2,625,087	395,300	3,020,387
Surplus/(deficit) attributable to entity	(156,682)	-	(156,682)
Balance as at 30 June 2022	2,468,405	395,300	2,863,705

Statement of Cash Flows

	2023 \$	2022 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Receipts from customers and grants	8,450,056	8,560,784
Payments to employees and suppliers	(7,948,535)	(7,860,133)
Interest received	27,395	6,067
Interest paid	(88,275)	(26,680)
Net cash generated from/(used in) operating activities	440,641	680,038
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Proceeds from disposal of property, plant and equipment	-	-
Payment for purchase of property, plant and equipment	(252,610)	(23,234)
Net cash generated from/(used in) investing activities	(252,610)	(23,234)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Repayment of lease liabilities	(675,550)	(659,728)
Repayment of building loan borrowings	(9,000)	-
Net cash generated from/(used in) financing activities	(684,550)	(659,728)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	(496,519)	(2,924)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	1,548,784	1,551,708
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	1,052,265	1,548,784



Strategic Plan 2021-24

Our vision

Everyone in the West has a safe place where they feel they belong and live the life they choose.

Our mission

To support, strengthen and enable individuals and diverse communities in the West to flourish.

Strategic Priorities

- 1. Deliver a fully integrated and person-centred commUnity+ service delivery model
- 2. Strengthen education-to-employment pathways, further study and community participation
- 3. Amplify the voices of diverse communities
- 4. Strengthen financial security and sustainability
- 5. Build organisational capacity and capability

Looking Ahead: 2023-24 Priorities

As we look to our priorities for the next year we are building on a period of both strengthening our foundations, and innovation. This was a year of investment in our people, our resources, our capability and capacity. Our resource strengthening included Information Technology, locations, property and equipment assets. This next year also marks the end of our existing strategic plan and we will be developing our forward looking and high impact strategy to continue to serve our communities for the next four years.

In keeping with our strategic priority to amplify the voice of our diverse communities and our core value of remaining responsive to them we will be establishing a Community Advisory Committee to help guide us in developing our priorities and optimising outcomes. We will be formalising our understanding of community members' strengths and needs in an evidence base, and against this mapping our service delivery performance to form an outcomes framework based on what matters most, the impact we have in the community.

We aim to continue to integrate, strengthen and expand upon our existing programs but add to the positive impact we have on our communities.

We are not only collaborating with our communities but also with an extensive group of community and service delivery partners and funding organisations all aligned with a common goal of supporting and strengthening our positive impact.

We will be deepening and extending our partner relationships to help ensure we focus on the evolving needs of the people we serve and that they are comprehensively met.

Services and Locations

Location

822-824 Ballarat Road,

Deer Park 3023

Level 1 / 90 Taylors Rd, Keilor Downs 3038

354-356 Main Road West,

St Albans 3021

Level 1 Suite 2-4 30-32 East Esplanade,

St Albans 3021

2/1100 Pascoe Vale Rd,

Broadmeadows 3047

46 Grantham St,

Brunswick West 3055

5 Blucher St,

Glenroy 3046 (new location from July 2023)

63 Mahoneys Rd, Forest Hill 3131

195-209 Barries Road,

Melton West 3337

75-95 Central Park Ave,

Craigieburn 3064

Services

Education / CCS /

NHH

Education / BMCLC /

Shared Services

Education

BMCLC

Education

CCS

CCS

Education

BMCLC

Education







comm-unityplus.org.au



1800 266 675





