

A close-up photograph of a woman wearing a grey ribbed hijab and a vibrant, multi-colored patterned top in shades of blue, green, and purple. She is smiling broadly, showing her teeth. In the background, another person's head and shoulder are visible, and a car door handle is partially seen.

BUILDING VIBRANT AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21



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We proudly acknowledge Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We recognise that this land was, and still is, Aboriginal land and that sovereignty was never ceded.

About commUnity+

Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd (commUnity+) is a multidisciplinary agency located in Melbourne's western suburbs, delivering a range of prevention and early intervention programs focused on informing and engaging with our community. This is achieved via high quality Adult Education, Legal Services (Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre), our Neighbourhood House program and Children's Contact Service, as well as a range of community and individual development activities.

commUnity+ has grown from a small residents' action group to a large community-based organisation that delivers programs from a variety of locations in the West, North-West and Inner Melbourne.

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. commUnity+ receives funding from local, state and Commonwealth government departments.

commUnity+ partners with private, community and government agencies to enhance our service delivery, including through allied services, and to increase access for our communities.

Our services are pivotal to building social capital and the agency of people living in Melbourne's western suburbs.

Chair Report

The year 2020-21 will be remembered for the greatest challenge our world has faced in a lifetime – no nation, community or individual has been spared from the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

One of Victoria's fastest growing regions is Melbourne's West, home to more than 850,000 people and a diverse population where more than 160 languages are represented. Embedded across multiple sites in the West, commUnity+ has focused on maintaining access to our vital services to help people and families overcome challenges, hardship and disadvantage to live safe, fulfilling and prosperous lives.

As we continued to innovate in our approaches to connect with, and support our clients, students, participants and the community at large, and maintain organisational stability, the Board and leadership team embedded a continuous improvement plan for our governance and imagined the commUnity+ 2021-24 Strategy through a consultative process. The Strategy articulates commUnity+'s ambition to support, strengthen and enable the individuals and diverse communities in the West to flourish.

The five priorities of our Strategy are spearheaded by the co-development of a fully integrated commUnity+ service delivery model, that brings together and provides all programs and services around our community members' needs, strengths and individual

circumstances. We look forward to collaborating with staff, clients, students and participants, community leaders, stakeholders and partners as we co-develop this model, and through its implementation, improve life outcomes for people and communities in the West. Our new service delivery model will perfectly complement our future collocation with other community service providers at the new Brimbank and Aquatic and Wellness Centre, planned for completion in mid-2022.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to our staff, management and leadership team for their strength, resilience and commitment over the past year, under extraordinary circumstances that no-one could have foreseen.

We farewelled George Giuliani, our Interim CEO, in August 2020 as he supported a smooth transition to incoming CEO Steve Johnson. Unfortunately Steve encountered significant health issues a short way into his tenure and was forced to step away from commUnity+. I am pleased to share that Steve is doing well. Our General Manager Bryan Smith held Acting CEO responsibilities while we appointed Tracey

Gaudry in June 2021 in an interim capacity, to develop and enliven a multi-year Business Plan, to deliver our new Strategy, strengthen alignment, and build sustainable momentum across the whole organisation towards our vision.

Thank you to my fellow Directors for your support, collaboration and expertise in guiding our important work to realise our shared goal, where everyone in the West has a safe place where they feel they belong and live the life they choose.



Susanne Legana
Chair

CEO Report

It would be easy for reflections of the past year to dwell on difficulty. The world has remained gripped in a global pandemic that has taken millions of lives, cost people their health and livelihoods, and kept many of us physically apart from family, friends and community.

Within Victoria, greater Melbourne experienced 130 days of COVID-19 lockdown during 2020-21 alone.

The impact on people already experiencing hardship or disadvantage was exacerbated, including the communities we serve and support. The richness in cultural diversity of people living in the West masked a reality of increased hardship across social, economic, employment and health dimensions.

We, however, reflect on a year of incredible resilience across our staff, volunteers and Board, stakeholders, partners and communities. Our prevention and early intervention programs have arguably never been more vital. Staff have not wavered in their commitment, meeting the challenges of working together and supporting our clients, students and participants, apart.

During remote delivery of our Adult Education programs, staff nurtured a rich team environment, identifying the learning needs of students from each cohort, and resumed onsite teaching in 'block' models of three hours at our education sites on every occasion possible. Digital literacy became a priority across all programs.

The legal services program of commUnity+, the Brimbank-Melton Community Legal Centre, experienced first-hand

the severe impact that COVID-19 has had on many of our clients, with lockdowns exacerbating financial hardship and related legal issues, including homelessness and escalating risk of family violence. To complement our existing programs, we commenced the Family Law Access Project; a collaborative partnership funded by the Victorian Government.

Our Children's Contact Service significantly strengthened operations through both virtual and onsite services from two locations. In May 2021, the Federal Government announced a vital capacity building funding initiative from 2021-22, to ensure that more parents experiencing financial hardship can access government-funded services to support their critical family needs.

The commUnity+ Neighbourhood House seized the opportunity to re-imagine community engagement through online programming, which will be embedded into the range of programs and services thanks to continued support from Brimbank City Council and the Victorian Government.

Across commUnity+, our Shared Services team ensured all staff were kept abreast of COVID-19 and other developments through regular formal and informal engagement, and supported with technology, resources and support to enable a fully flexible work

environment. Our wellbeing and leadership programs supported individuals and teams over the course of the year and will continue to evolve in the future as we strive to maximise the wellbeing and engagement of our staff, in and outside of their working lives.

I want to thank all levels of government for their phenomenal support this past year. As a community not-for-profit organisation, their support is vital for commUnity+ to support communities in the West to flourish.

Finally to our staff and volunteers, including our Board of Directors led by its Chair Susanne Legana, I want to express my gratitude for your warm welcome, for 'leaning in' to strengthen our collaboration and collective endeavour, and your unwavering focus on improving the lives of people in the communities we serve.



Tracey Gaudry
CEO

Education Services

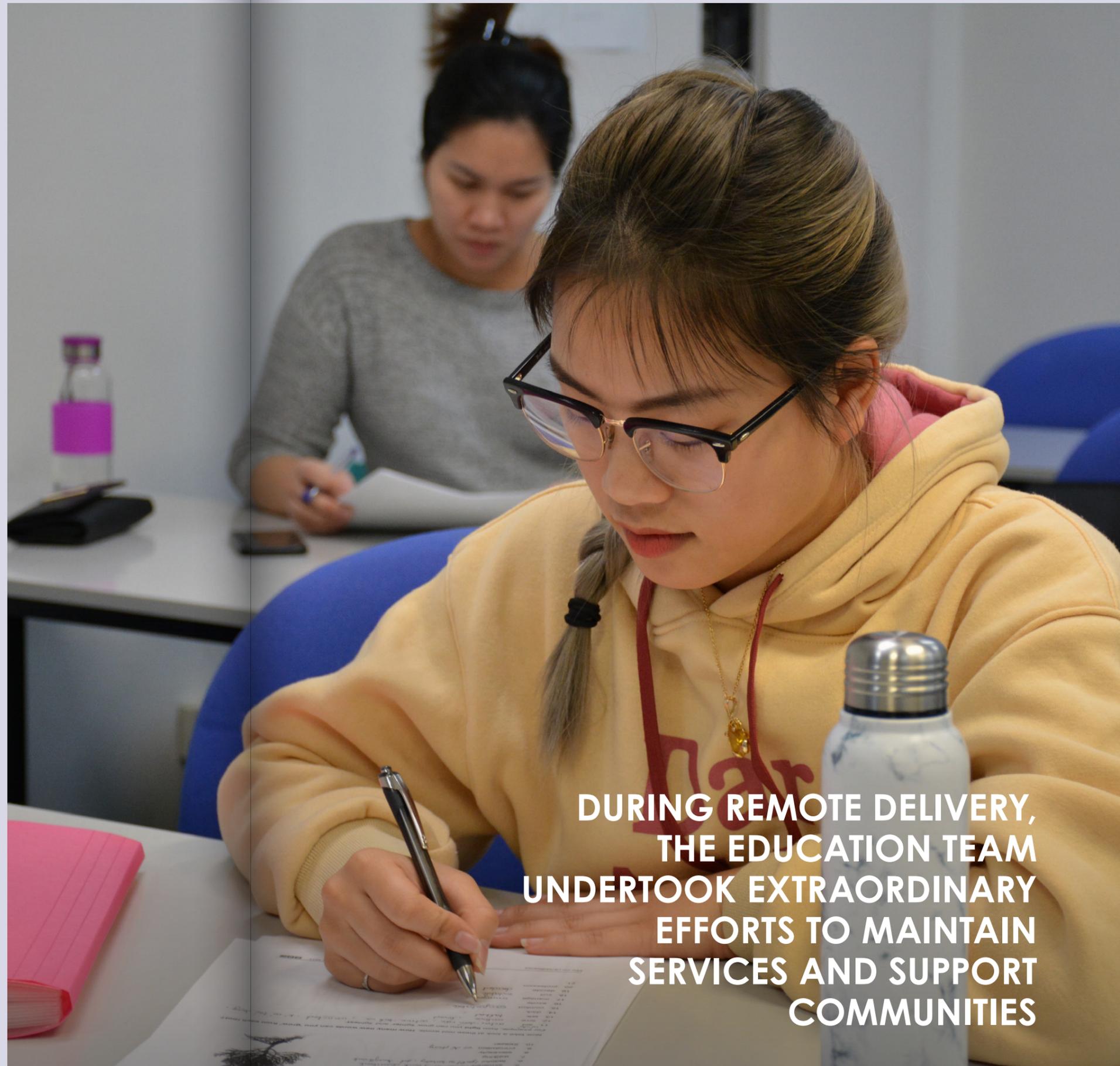
As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact education service provision throughout the 2020–21 year, the team undertook extraordinary efforts to maintain education and training programs amid restricted onsite access.

Students remained engaged via several platforms and methods – including conferencing, Skype and Zoom, eLearning, Google Classroom and Moodle, as well as email and phone support, and through self-paced learning resources. Teachers, meanwhile, provided remarkable support and social connection for students restricted to the home environment – often with other family members, including school-aged children, also engaged in remote learning.

Pre-accredited Programs

Pre-accredited programs were one of the most challenging to provide throughout the year, with restricted onsite access and teachers unable to personally interact with students.

Pre-accredited programs are short modular courses that provide a pathway to accredited or qualification based programs. Intended for students who are new or returning to education and training, themes include digital literacy, employment, language, literacy, and numeracy.



**DURING REMOTE DELIVERY,
THE EDUCATION TEAM
UNDERTOOK EXTRAORDINARY
EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN
SERVICES AND SUPPORT
COMMUNITIES**



To support community members impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, several employment-focused programs were provided remotely throughout the year:

- Develop Your Career
- Apply for Employment
- Prepare for Interviews
- Transition to Employment
- Balance Career and Caring
- Advance Your Career
- Basic Computer Skills
- Stay Safe Online
- Microsoft Office Introduction
- Microsoft Office Intermediate

Popular language and literacy programs were also continued, including Conversational English, and the team explored innovative methods for program delivery, including eLearning English.

Adult Migrant English Program

Legislative changes that removed the maximum-hours cap saw the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) transformed. Previously, students were entitled to 510 hours of complimentary English language tuition. In the future, eligible students can study to 'vocational English level' – rather than 'functional' or settlement-focused – which provides options for students to re-engage with commUnity+ to pursue employment pathways.

Program delivery has evolved over the past 12 months, shifting between onsite and offsite classes, and focusing on the use of audiovisual material and common text – including newspapers and television programs – to enhance speaking skills. Kahoot! has become a particular favourite among students, enabling engaging and inclusive learning via online games.

Staff continued a focus on holistic student welfare, assisted by the Migrant Resource Centre providing settlement support; pre-service Victoria University students undertaking practical placement, and the Western Bulldogs Foundation facilitating local CALDplay Sports Programs football games.

In the coming year, the AMEP will enhance professional development for pathways counsellors and teachers, improve holistic welfare for students, and promote employment and education pathways.

Skills First

In spite of the difficulties arising from the dynamic COVID-19 pandemic environment, with ongoing commUnity+ management support the Skills First team managed to overcome a range of challenges. A new, remote client assessment process was developed, and teaching was adjusted to support learners.

Mouna's Story

Our AMEP students' first point of contact is a home-grown success



Before she enrolled in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), Mouna Sen encountered the challenge faced by many migrants: Employers were failing to recognise her home-country expertise and skills. Despite having a Bachelor of Business Administration and several years' business development and sales experience, Mouna remained largely unemployed for more than a year after she migrated from Bangladesh in 2019 to reunite with her Australian husband.

Able only to secure casual work, Mouna recognised that education would improve her communication and writing skills, and increase her confidence during interviews.

In 2020, Mouna enrolled in the AMEP 'Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and

Training' at commUnity+. With external employment placements unavailable due to COVID-19 restrictions, Mouna opted to undertake her practical component within commUnity+. The learning journey with commUnity+ was wonderful," she said. "And I wanted to complete practical placement in the administration area."

Following placement, Mouna asked the commUnity+ Operations Manager, Enisa Hajdarevic, whether she could volunteer for another two weeks, demonstrating an appreciated willingness to support the administration team. "Mouna had built a great rapport not just with students, but with other internal and external stakeholders – case managers, colleagues, and teachers," Enisa recalls.

Mouna was subsequently appointed to a Receptionist position that was advertised as her volunteer period was drawing to a close. Reflecting on her experience, Mouna says: "I am a better person now, more confident [and] I have a vast knowledge about Australian culture and working in a professional environment."

Her manager echoes those sentiments. "Mouna took on the Receptionist role with a lot of confidence and passion," Enisa says. "Having Mouna be part of the administration team has motivated many Adult Migrant English Program students not to give up and to keep going, as opportunities are out there. Being a first point of contact, with a calm, can-do attitude, Mouna has demonstrated great outcomes thus far."

“THE LEARNING JOURNEY WITH COMMUNITY+ WAS WONDERFUL”

Teachers encountered difficulties similar to those of the previous year, and with limited onsite access, used various technologies to offer continuous education delivery and to support students; including eLearning, online and phone conferencing, and self-paced learning.

Professional development, enthusiastically embraced by the team, focused on remote learning and on using technology within education to enhance skills and maintain student engagement. Peer support was also provided to facilitate sharing of teaching and learning strategies. Meanwhile, regular online meetings were held to create a platform for support, as well as providing opportunities to improve procedures, and opportunities for trainers to identify areas to be improved.

"Although we have seen remarkable progress and change in the way the program has been delivered, the effort made by our students has also been overwhelming," says Skills First Training Manager Ana Paula Balica. "Students from beginner- to intermediate-level courses have also made incredible efforts to learn how to use the technology, and how to participate in remote learning despite the challenges they face."

Such a transition could not have been achieved without the support of the diligent commUnity+ Education Services administration team, who not only ensured that all learning activities and documents were delivered in a timely manner, but also ensured that all compliance obligations were met.

New Site

2020–21 saw a consolidation of commUnity+ education services in St Albans, with a new integrated facility at Main Road West that includes:

- Administration services
- Eight classrooms equipped with laptops and portable projectors
- New client-assessment offices
- Office space for staff and teachers
- Student spaces

While COVID-19 pandemic restrictions impacted the final fitout and use, the facility provides a potential model for future commUnity+ sites, offering a well-resourced and welcoming space for local community members to engage with education and access team support.

Skills for Education and Employment

While the education sector in general is experiencing great disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, commUnity+ has maintained its commitment to the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program, providing high-quality education that challenges, stimulates, and enables students to achieve personal, educational and career success.

The SEE program provides a maximum 650 hours of language, literacy, and numeracy training to enable eligible job seekers to participate more effectively in education, training, or employment. The program is delivered across Australia, in metropolitan and regional areas and in remote communities.

The commUnity+ student population is culturally and linguistically diverse. Due to pandemic restrictions, more than 200 students in the program have been transitioned to remote and flexible learning. Continuous adjustments in both pedagogical practises and learning platforms enabled the team to embrace a 'blended-program delivery model'.



By making a rapid transition to a range of online platforms such as email, WhatsApp and Zoom, teachers were able to modify courses for remote delivery. For some classes, using virtual online platforms allowed teachers to increase social presence and to facilitate student engagement. In the case of students displaying limited digital literacy, teachers continued to provide much needed support and guidance via phone calls.

During remote delivery, staff nurtured a rich team environment, focused on identifying the learning needs of students from each cohort. Simultaneously, a professional development schedule promoted staff development and ensured that teachers stayed current with pedagogical practices.

It has been pleasing to see how students have welcomed our flexibility in finding ways to

support them. In addition to daily check-ins, a Student Welfare Plan has been developed and implemented. The teachers are also regularly updated about other support services that are available to our students through commUnity+ and other external agencies.

1,463

EDUCATION SERVICES USERS

Vietnamese, Arabic, Chinese

TOP 3 LANGUAGES

Looking Forward

Looking ahead, Education Services plan to:

- Embed innovation and delivery techniques adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic within the Education Services portfolio
- Enhance the flexibility and sustainability of the Education Services portfolio
- Expand industry-specific education qualifications
- Increase employers willing to employ graduates from commUnity+ education and training programs
- Maintain focus on meeting community needs – specifically employment, foundation skills, and settlement-based education and training programs
- Strengthen education-to-employment pathways, further study, and community participation.

Legal Services

Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre (BMCLC) is a program of commUnity+. BMCLC provides free legal services to people who live, work or study in the Brimbank, Melton and Bacchus Marsh communities.

Our key areas of legal practice include family law, family violence, infringements, minor criminal matters, tenancy, and civil matters (such as insurance, debt and motor vehicle accident disputes). BMCLC has its main office in St Albans, and provides generalist and specialist outreach clinics in Sunshine and Melton.

We also provide outreach services through key partner organisations such as Djerriwarrh Health Services (now Western Health), Sunshine Hospital, Australian Vietnamese Women's Association and Sunshine Family Relationship Centre.



**AS WELL AS ASSISTING WITH
INDIVIDUAL LEGAL ISSUES, WE ARE
COMMITTED TO ADVOCATING
FOR LAW REFORM TO EFFECT
BROADER CHANGE**

Growth and Restructure

In the course of the 2020–21 reporting year, we were successful in attracting funding to increase our capacity, and implemented a new team structure, with our lawyers now working across two separate family law and generalist law units. The expanded team has allowed us to broaden our services and engage in increasingly complex legal matters, particularly in the areas of family law and family violence.

The team has continued to meet the many challenges of working through COVID-19, providing services in person or remotely as required. Across the year, we have seen first-hand the severe impact that COVID-19 has had on many of our clients, with lockdowns exacerbating financial hardship and related legal issues, as well as escalating the risk of experiencing family violence for many people trapped in the same home as a perpetrator.

Family Law Access Project

In early 2021, we commenced the Family Law Access Project; a collaborative partnership with Women's Legal Service Victoria, WEstjustice and Barwon Community Legal Service, funded by the Victorian State Government (administered

by Victoria Legal Aid) and designed to:

- Increase access to holistic legal assistance in family law for disadvantaged clients in the West (Metropolitan and Regional Victoria)
- Provide access to high quality, interdisciplinary family law legal advice and assistance.

Funding was provided to help address the identified needs and gaps in family law services in the West, particularly for those experiencing family violence. As a result, BMCLC has been able to expand the size and expertise of our family law team, allowing us to take on complex family law matters and provide end-to-end assistance to clients, including court representation.

Duty Lawyer Services

BMCLC's duty lawyers provide legal assistance in family violence intervention order matters at Sunshine and Bacchus Marsh Magistrates' Courts; primarily to victim survivors of family violence. Our duty lawyers provide on-the-day advice and court representation, helping clients navigate the often stressful and complex court process, while prioritising their safety. With many clients struggling with the requirement to attend court remotely during COVID-19 lockdowns, we have been able to ensure their views and concerns are properly heard and considered by the court.

In May 2021, we received additional funding from the Victorian State Government (administered by Victoria Legal Aid) to commence the Early Resolution Service at Sunshine Court, allowing us to provide pre-court advice in relation to family violence intervention orders, and to engage in pre-court negotiations to try to resolve matters ahead of the court date. This pre-court assistance is greatly beneficial to our clients, who are able to engage sooner with our lawyers, and also helps ameliorate the court's large backlog of matters due to COVID-19, by allowing some matters to resolve before being heard.

Health Justice Partnerships

Our lawyers provide legal assistance through health justice partnerships with Sunshine Hospital and with Djerriwarrh Health Services (now Western Health) in Melton, offering legal services alongside allied health services. This holistic wrap-around support to clients ensures they can simultaneously access assistance for legal and non-legal issues.

While the periodic need to work remotely during lockdowns has presented a challenge – not always being able to be present in person alongside these health services – we have continued to engage via technology with clients and staff at our health justice partnership locations.

Jane's Story

Tenant's financial hardship recognised by landlord

Jane* is a single parent with a fixed-term lease on a property she shares with her children. Prior to COVID-19 she had full-time employment, but she lost that job and now relies upon insecure casual work, resulting in a significant drop in her income. Jane managed to pay her rent during the 2020 lockdowns due to government income and rent support, and also had the security of the eviction ban, however these protections and supports have now ended and Jane is experiencing severe rental stress.

Jane came to our legal centre after her landlord issued her with an eviction notice, informing us she could not afford to bring her rent arrears up-to-date on her current, single income. Jane was unable to break her fixed-term lease without potentially facing significant penalties, and she did not want to go through the stressful process of eviction proceedings at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. We assisted Jane with writing to her landlord to explain her financial hardship, and to request they let her out of her

lease without incurring any fees. Jane's negotiations with the landlord were ultimately successful; avoiding financial penalties for breaking the lease and making it possible for her and her children to move into more affordable accommodation.

JANE WAS UNABLE TO BREAK HER FIXED-TERM LEASE WITHOUT FACING SIGNIFICANT PENALTIES

* All names have been changed



Susan's Story

Victim survivor of family-violence experience recognised and her rights upheld

Susan* is the victim survivor of family violence perpetrated by her ex-partner, which had resulted in numerous intervention orders sought by police on her behalf.

In an incident in late 2020, while Susan was still living with the perpetrator, he physically assaulted her, shoving her and punching her multiple times. As he held her by the neck against a wall, Susan attempted to defend herself by scratching him, drawing blood.

A neighbour heard this incident and called the police. When Victoria Police attended, they issued a family violence notice against Susan after the perpetrator told them that she had attacked him with a weapon. The police also

charged her with unlawful assault with a weapon.

In a later incident, the perpetrator attended Susan's home armed with a weapon, threatening to harm Susan and damage her property. Despite this subsequent incident, and the history of previous family violence, the police did not withdraw their intervention order application against Susan. At court, Susan consented (without admissions) to a final order, as she did not have the energy to fight the charges and wanted the matter concluded.

Shortly after this, when Susan and her partner had finalised their separation, she discovered he was involved in a new relationship. Out of concern for that woman's safety, Susan sent

his new partner a message warning her about the man's history of family violence.

Susan's ex-partner reported this to the police, and they charged Susan with breaching the family violence intervention order, alleging she had engaged in "controlling behaviour" by sending the message.

Susan came to BMCLC for assistance with these criminal charges. We negotiated with the police and argued that these charges were inappropriate given the history of family violence. As a result of advocacy by BMCLC, the prosecution ultimately agreed to withdraw all charges against Susan.

SUSAN DID NOT HAVE THE ENERGY TO FIGHT THE CHARGES AND WANTED THE MATTER CONCLUDED

* All names have been changed



Community Legal Education and Professional Development

Over the past 12 months, we have provided a number of community legal education sessions. In addition to our regular divorce workshops in English and Vietnamese that assist people to complete their own divorce applications, we provided a number of tenancy education sessions focused on renters' rights. This was a response to legal issues identified in our community, particularly as renters faced possible evictions following the withdrawal of government supports (such as increased income support payments and the eviction ban) in early 2021.

We also provided professional development sessions to frontline workers in partner organisations, to help them to properly identify and assist with clients' legal issues and to encourage referrals to our service. We provided training sessions for professionals on how

to write support letters to help their clients with legal issues, as well as on the Australian family law system.

Advocacy and Law Reform

As well as assisting clients with their individual legal issues, BMCLC is committed to advocating for systemic law reform to help effect broader change that will benefit our clients and help avoid many of their legal issues from arising in the first place.

Over the 2020-21 year, BMCLC engaged in a range of law reform advocacy, including:

- Submission to the Department of Premier & Cabinet regarding the Family Violence Reform Rolling Action Plan 2020-2023 (RAP2), noting the importance of economic security for victim survivors to recover and move forward with their lives
- Engagement with Dr Daniel Mulino (Federal Member for Fraser) to raise concerns about the Federal Government's

proposed rollback of responsible lending laws. Dr Mulino later spoke in the parliament against these proposed changes, and referenced his meeting with us and the impact that the changes would have on our clients.

BMCLC, alongside our partners in the legal assistance sector, has also contributed to a large amount of systemic advocacy through involvement in a number of working groups, including the Infringements Working Group, the Tenancy Working Group, and the Health Justice Australia network.

1,357
CLIENTS ASSISTED

402
ONGOING CASE SUPPORT

Looking Forward

Going forward, BMCLC is focused on continuing to grow our service and ensuring that we have the greatest possible impact for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community. For the 2021-22 year, we aim to use our increased team to expand the total number of legal services that we provide and to engage in more complex and high impact

matters, including additional matters in which we represent clients in court. We also aim to increase our systemic policy and advocacy work by building an evidence base of data and client stories that can be used to advocate to Governments, our funders and other important decision makers.

Children's Contact Service

The Children's Contact Service (CCS) operates across the Western and Inner Regions of Melbourne, from offices located in Brunswick West and Deer Park, providing a child-centred, safe and neutral service to separated families.

The key focus of the service is to enable children of separated parents to have safe contact with a parent or significant other they do not live with. The service offers Onsite and Virtual Supervised Visits in situations where there is a perceived or actual risk to the child, and a Changeover Service where staff facilitate the handover of a child to prevent the child being exposed to conflict between the parents.

The CCS acknowledges the importance of children maintaining a meaningful relationship with the

parent or family members with whom they do not live. The service is trauma-informed, and child-focused with the children's safety and wellbeing being the priority for staff. It is common in the CCS space for parents to seek to align staff to 'their side of the story', however a fundamental principle of our service delivery is to maintain a neutral position and not become involved in parental conflict.

The goal of the CCS is for clients to move onto independent management of their contact



VIRTUAL VISITS CAN OVERCOME GEOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES OR PROVIDE A WAY TO SUSTAIN CONTACT WHILE WAITING FOR AN IN-PERSON VISIT

arrangements. CCS assists clients to achieve this in several ways, such as the provision of supervised visits, referrals, role modelling of appropriate parenting skills and submitting reports to the Court. We hope to assist parents to develop the attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviours to safely move to sustained and workable, long-term visiting and custody arrangements.

A Virtual Reality

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic provided the impetus for the CCS to explore alternative methods of contact, and Virtual Visits were established. The process was novel, with significant commitment required from the team to develop and implement this new way of operating. Once the new Virtual Visit practice approach was embedded into our service

delivery, we recognised it as an excellent addition to our existing suite of services. Virtual Visits are useful for families facing geographic challenges or as a means of sustaining contact while on the waitlist.

A year later, Virtual Visits are now part of the regular CCS offering. Over the 2020–21 period CCS provided 125 Virtual Visits – up from 27 the previous year. The language of Virtual Visits is now commonplace with our parents, legal representatives and courts. Formerly an optional buy-in for exceptional circumstances, it is now customary to receive court-ordered Virtual Time. CCS is also receiving requests from legal representatives for court reports of Virtual Visit contact.

Building Capacity

A challenge for all funded Children's Contact Services has been insufficient funding to meet demand. This has resulted in lengthy waitlists for clients, sometimes up to a year or even 18 months. To advise a parent they may not see their six-month-old infant until the child is two years old is, sadly, not an uncommon occurrence.

In response to these shortcomings, the Federal Government announced in the May 2021 Budget that it would be increasing funding for Children's Contact Services to \$101.4 million over four years. The purpose of the additional funding is to increase the capacity of all established Services to reduce waiting times as well as provide maximum service delivery to families at peak demand times, such as weekends.

IN 2020-21 WE CONDUCTED

170

CHANGEOVER SESSIONS

198

SUPERVISED VISITS

125

VIRTUAL VISITS

Looking Forward

At commUnity+, we expect 2021–22 to be a year in which both CCS programs are operating at a significantly increased capacity, providing service delivery at an unprecedented level. It is encouraging to be able to plan the development and implementation of a service model that reduces lengthy wait times and mitigates the negative impacts such delays can create.

On a broader level, it means that parents experiencing hardship can increasingly turn to the government-funded CCS services to meet their needs.

The future direction of the CCS is to continue to deliver a best practice service model that maintains our position as a leading service provider and the preferred choice for all our stakeholders.

Persistence pays off

The Children's Contact Service (CCS) made 46 contacts with one parent and 38 with the other to establish the first visit with the child

Some cases that come to the CCS can be extremely labour intensive, and subject to lengthy delays when the clients are unwilling to engage, despite being compelled to do so by a Family Court Order. CCS staff do not judge clients who present this way – our role is to support each parent with what they need, to manage the visits and put their child first.

Some of the common scenarios we encounter at the CCS include:

- One parent applies and is anxious to commence with visits, but the other party does not lodge their application or lodges the application many months later. This effectively prevents the contact between parent and child from commencing, sometimes for 12 to 18 months.
- Parents prove difficult to contact, with phone calls and emails not being returned and scheduled appointments cancelled. It is common to

make 10 to 20 contacts with a client before a visit, and we have had one case in which we had 46 contacts with one parent and 38 with the other. The child has since formed a relationship with their estranged parent.

- Parents sometimes do not understand their Family Court Order, and what they are required to do and why. Many clients are self-represented and there is not the option of suggesting they speak with their legal representative.
- Children are not always prepared for the visits. It is common for parents to request that the parent the child is visiting not be referred to as 'Dad' or 'Mum'. It is also common for children to attend the service with no knowledge of why they are there.

The service has a high rate of cancellations and works hard to organise make-up visits around the normal schedule. If the visits do not eventuate, the child and parent will not have sufficient time together to develop their relationship, and the report CCS prepares can only provide minimal information.

While referrals are made for therapeutic services for our clients, these are often not attended. Clients who do not agree to seek support for their own or their child's wellbeing are often stuck in an intractable position that makes working with them difficult. In the face of these obstacles, the Service exercises great patience and flexibility in the journey to resolution; finding ways around any reluctance to engage, accommodating trauma as well as material impediments, and always staying focused on the needs of the child.

OUR ROLE IS TO SUPPORT EACH PARENT AND PUT THEIR CHILD FIRST

Neighbourhood House

The past year has proved to be one of challenges, opportunities and growth for the Neighbourhood House

Like all programs delivered by commUnity+, and all Neighbourhood Houses across Victoria, COVID-19 saw the Neighbourhood House endure uncertainty, rolling closures and heavy restrictions on capacity even when open. The impact this has had on our ability to plan and deliver programs, initiatives and partnerships cannot be underestimated. Throughout the year, however, staff continued to show resilience and flexibility as we pivoted to new ways of working and

new approaches to engaging and supporting community members.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all Neighbourhood House staff and their efforts to maintain community connection, engagement and support. Further, the corporate support from the Shared Services team at commUnity+ has allowed the Neighbourhood House to continue to deliver programs, support and connections, despite the obstacles.



STAFF CONTINUED TO SHOW RESILIENCE AND FLEXIBILITY AS WE PIVOTED TO NEW WAYS OF WORKING AND NEW APPROACHES TO ENGAGING AND SUPPORTING COMMUNITY MEMBERS



Responding to COVID-19

Among our new initiatives for 2020-21 is our Food Relief program. Since April 2021, in partnership with the Tin Shed St Albans and Brimbank City Council, the Neighbourhood House has coordinated distribution and delivery of food relief to dozens of households per week. This includes the provision of pantry staples and fresh produce to local families financially impacted by COVID-19. This food relief provides a lifeline to families experiencing financial hardship, many of which are not eligible for government assistance.

Together Apart

Online options have increasingly become a feature of our community programming, with Storybook Tails and Minute Mondays proving popular. In 2021, through our membership with ReLink Australia, community members have access to a wide variety of recreational and social programming. Each weekday, ReLink hosts up to nine hours of programming, including commUnity+ Neighbourhood House favourites Zumba and Yoga, as well as Meditation, Jump Rope and Trivia.

A Fresh Perspective

This challenging period has afforded us the opportunity to examine and reimagine our Neighbourhood House and as Winston Churchill said, "Never let a good crisis go to waste". We head out of this year renewed and freshly committed, with a new Coordinator, Emma Price, joining commUnity+ in July 2021. Emma comes to the organisation with deep knowledge and experience in Community Development and Community Engagement. In parallel, the realignment of commUnity+ corporate skill sharing will increasingly support the Neighbourhood House to engage and connect with community, as well as increase marketing and communications to reach new and broader audiences.



Looking Forward

Key priorities for the Neighbourhood House in 2021-22 include:

- Increasing and diversifying programming
- Ongoing commitment to providing equitable opportunities and access to programs, events and activities
- Focus on creating culturally safe and welcoming programs, places and activities
- Providing community members opportunities to lead, shape and co-create initiatives, activities, events and programs
- Creating and developing mutually beneficial partnerships
- Building cross-organisational connections and pathways between participants, students and clients of all commUnity+ programs and services, to promote participation in – and opportunities to contribute to – community life.

In 2021-22, Neighbourhood House will continue to be supported in undertaking this work with vital funding from Brimbank City Council and the Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

Nayran's Story

Confidence in the water opens a world of possibilities

Swimmin' Women is a women-only learn-to-swim initiative, delivered by the commUnity+ Neighbourhood House. It is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services through a 'Driving Social Inclusion through Sports and Physical Activity' Grant. In 2021, the six-week program supported 20 local women to learn to swim, develop water safety confidence and created a cultural-safe space for participation in physical activity.

From instructor Nayran Tabiei's perspective, being able to swim is just one of the life skills she knows that students will take away from the commUnity+ Swimmin' Women course. "I'm focusing on empowering women more than swimming," she says.

As confidence grows in the pool, she observes, it begins to flourish elsewhere, too. "When they come in the water, the fear in their life? They leave it there," she says. "They start to think 'I can.'"

Sure enough, she has seen the students in her program — which supports adult migrant women to swim — follow her example; taking up voluntary roles, getting involved in a range of Neighbourhood House activities, developing language skills, overcoming cultural barriers and finding supportive friendships in their new community. A recent intake included women from Pakistan, Iraq, China and Australia. "Even with the barrier of language, when they start to swim they smile for each other and clap their hands — 'Yes, give me five!' You know? — and they become a group," she says.

Syrian-born Nayran was a champion swimmer and a professional chef before undertaking an arduous journey nine years ago, with her husband and daughter, to seek asylum in Australia. Like many before them, part of their trip was undertaken by fishing boat from Indonesia, through shark-infested waters to Christmas Island and immigration detention. After a year, the family were relocated to Melbourne and began to rebuild their lives. Nayran's three sons, however, had stayed behind in Iran with her mother-in-law. "You feel yourself destroyed from inside because something inside tells you that you are not a mum anymore," she says. "But when I came here, I said 'No, I should show the whole world we are strong, we are women, we can do.'"



An initial bridging visa placed limitations on Nayran earning to support her family, so instead she gave all her energy to voluntary work, including teaching English. "I was working with the Asylum Seekers Centre, the Migrant Hub — everywhere they want me for cooking and swimming, I'll put my name," she says.

In September, her passion and efforts were recognised with an Achievement Award at the 2021 Victorian Multicultural Commission Refugee Awards.

Nayran has been working with commUnity+ since 2019, initially with the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), before moving into the broad-ranging role of Neighbourhood House Assistant. Even when she finally realises her driving ambition to open a café, to build on her catering and food-education business, Nayran says she will remain committed to Food Relief and teaching in the Swimmin' Women program.

Sensitive to cultural standards of modesty and the desire of some women for privacy, the six-week swimming courses are all taught by female instructors, utilising a private pool at the Tullamarine Swimming School. Nayran advises her clients to wear whatever they want. "Just come in the water and give your stress to the water," she tells them, for the first couple of sessions. "Hug the water, go underwater and shout from the bottom of your heart, all the problems you have — I want everything out."

By the third session, she observes, they are often still holding fast to their kickboards but just three weeks' later everyone has mastered the basic skills and can swim laps. "Little by little, I take their hand and dance in the water," says Nayran.

"I tell them, 'If Nayran can, you can.' Why [is it] I can? Because I put the fear away," she says. "Everything, not just swimming. It's an example for life."

"I SHOULD SHOW THE WHOLE WORLD WE ARE STRONG, WE ARE WOMEN, WE CAN DO."

Shared Services

As with the Education Services and Family and Community Services programs, a major focus within Shared Services across the year was adapting to new ways of working and supporting the organisation through the stop-and-start changes brought on by COVID-19.

People and Culture, Finance, Communications, Facilities and IT functions all adapted to new ways of working while continuing to deliver the core services needed for commUnity+ to operate.

As a community services organisation, our people are undoubtedly our most important resource. As for most Victorian businesses, the last year has continued to challenge the resilience, adaptability and tenacity of our staff and they have risen to the challenge admirably. We maintained our staffing level

over the year, finishing with 96 staff working the equivalent of approximately 74 full-time positions.

Focus on Wellbeing

The challenges of moving between onsite and remote service delivery continued throughout 2020-21. Focus on staff wellbeing was strengthened with regular staff updates, additional wellbeing leave, online seminars on topics such as 'Building Resilience' and 'Managing Stress at Work' and regular reminders of our confidential



THE SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT OF OUR STAFF WILL REMAIN A CRITICAL PRIORITY, WITH AN ENHANCED WELLBEING SUPPORT PROGRAM



Employee Assistance Program, available to support individual staff at any time. Small gestures such as sending all staff members a 'gift of positivity' during the long lockdown early in the year demonstrated that while we were physically apart, we were all in it together and not alone. This approach was received with much appreciation and gratitude.

Where it was possible to bring staff together we seized the opportunity, with staff inductions, training and our staff 'End of Year' gathering all achieved in person. Where we could not bring people together, we found new ways to work in the virtual world. Critical parts of our staff induction program have transitioned to online to ensure delivery in a timely manner. We celebrated International Women's Day from home with several of our female Board members sharing their inspiring stories and experiences with staff, and Australia Day was marked with a staff gathering, concluding with an Australia-focused trivia session.

Staff Development

The new ways in which we deliver services to our clients remotely was mirrored in our own staff development, with a continuing focus on making online learning available during lockdown periods. The range of courses available to staff has continued to expand during the year and more than 1,000 individual course modules have now been completed through our online learning system. The system was expanded during the year to a full HR platform, allowing staff to provide and update their information online without the need for paper forms. Over the next year, this system will continue to expand to support our recruitment, onboarding and staff development activities in a single one-stop shop for all staff.

Communication – both within commUnity+ and to the communities we serve – adapted across the year. Increased use of social media kept people informed of the services available and promoted the new online

services and programs that were introduced in response to COVID-19 lockdowns. Within commUnity+, communications played an important function in maintaining a sense of team through *The Bulletin*; a regular newsletter sharing news and information between staff across the organisation.

Sustainability

Our Finance team adapted to working remotely, embracing a number of significant work practice changes in a timeframe that would not formerly have been considered possible. The near-elimination of paper record-keeping, remote audits and electronic communication all accelerated the adoption of more sustainable practices. This was supported by the transition to an in-house payroll system during the year, allowing staff access to their own information online and streamlining basic processes such as timesheets and leave approval for staff members and their managers.



Remote Delivery

The Facilities and IT team continued to support staff to deliver services remotely. The transition of our operating platform at the start of the year allowed greater flexibility to support staff while they were away from the office or

classroom. Our capacity to internally manage our networks grew during the year, reducing the reliance on third-party providers for everyday support, while continuing to use those partners to support project work. Simple changes, such as

upgrading our phone system to an IP service, have allowed commUnity+ to be more agile in adapting to the remote working environment that has become the new normal.

96

STAFF MEMBERS

15

SERVICE LOCATIONS

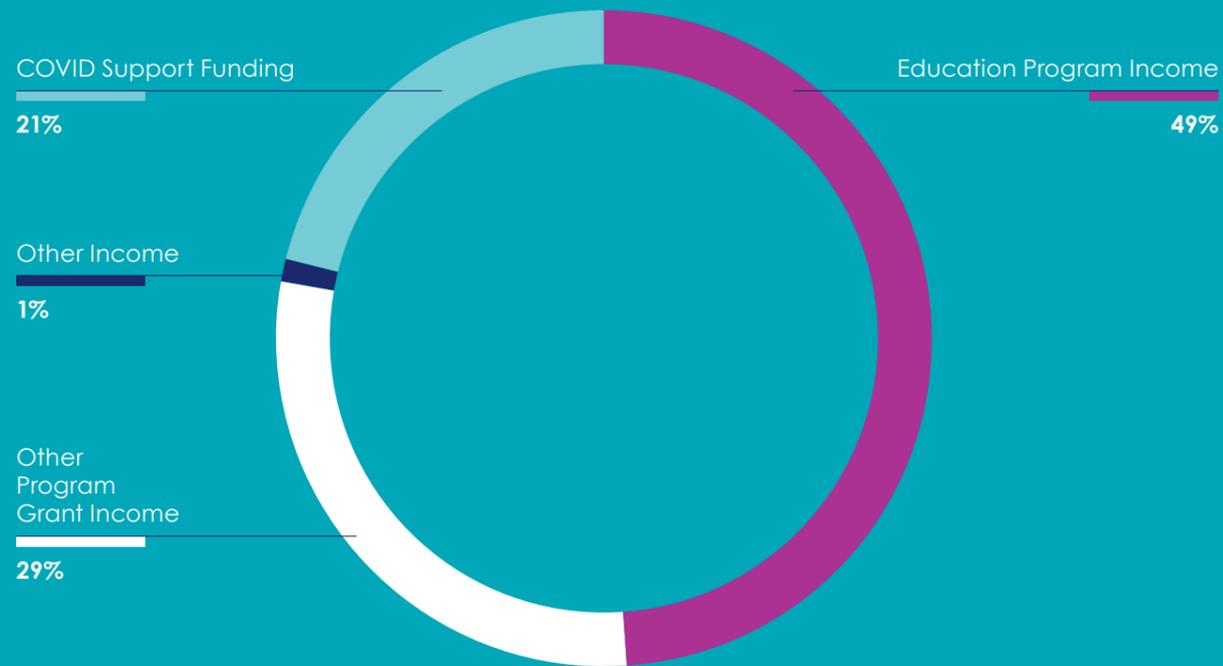
Looking Forward

Looking ahead, the ongoing enhancement of our office and learning environments will be a focus in the coming year, to ensure we have fit-for-purpose facilities for our staff and clients. This will include preparing to move services into the new Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre in mid-2022. We will continue to build on our IT network to assure its reliability and security and

finally – but far from least – the ongoing support and development of our staff will remain a critical priority through an enhanced wellbeing support program. We will enhance our processes to support learning and professional development for our staff and to guide the development and delivery of services for the community.

Financial Report

Income

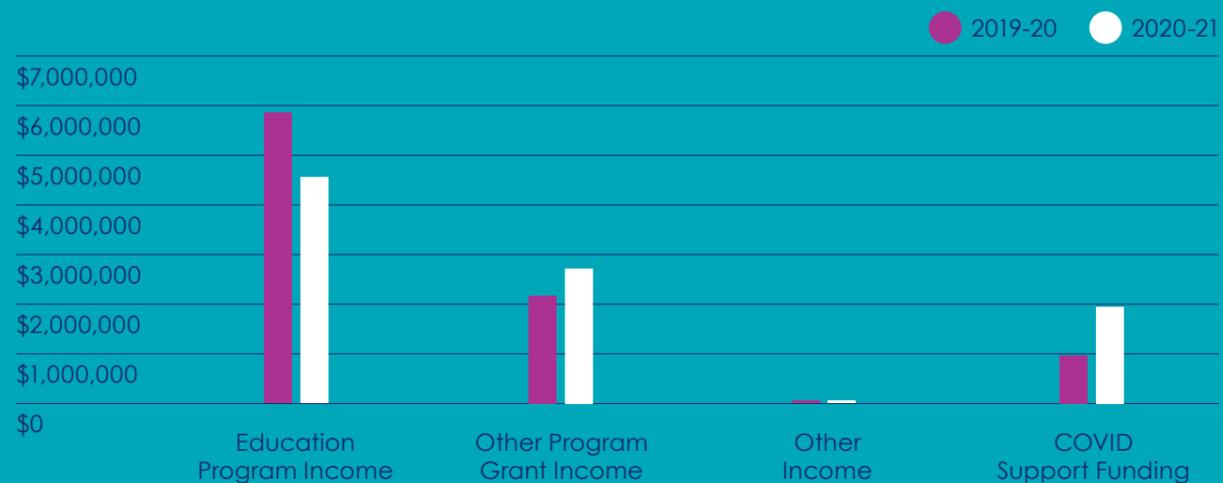


\$312,000

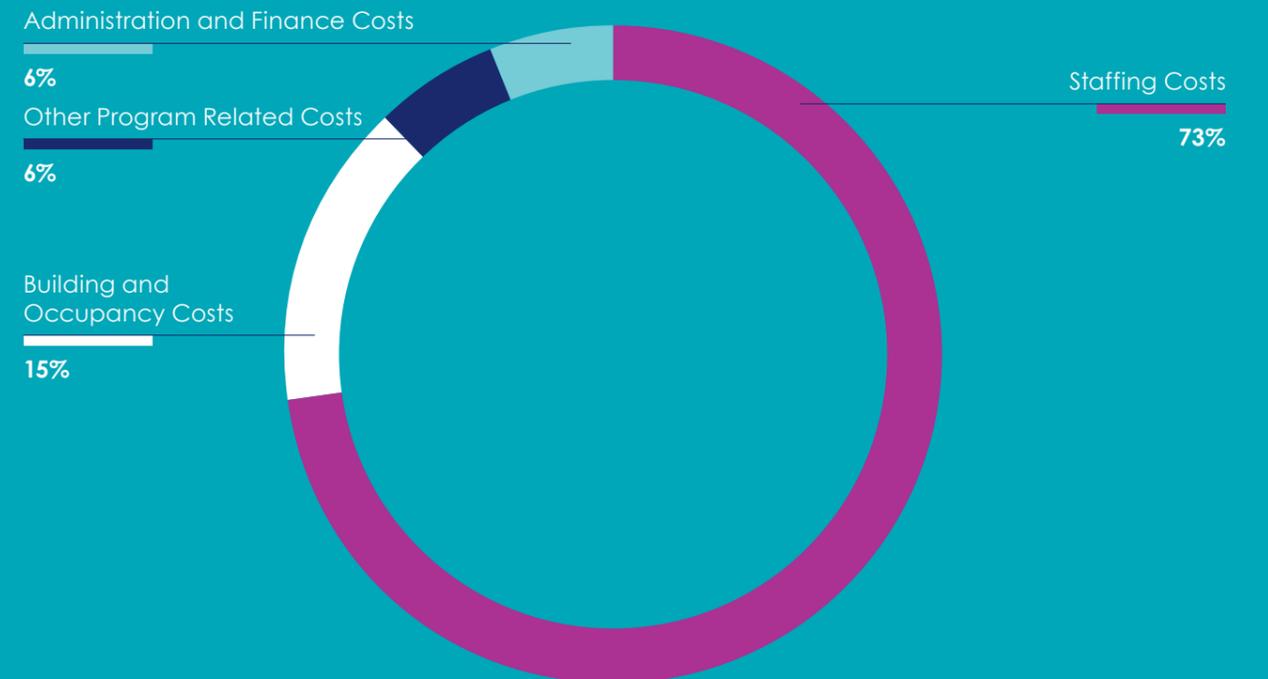
Legal program funding grew by 25% to deliver more services

COVID impacts

Ordinary income in Education programs fell \$1.2M (20%) due to COVID impacts, offset by specific support funding allowing retention of staff and continued program delivery



Expenses

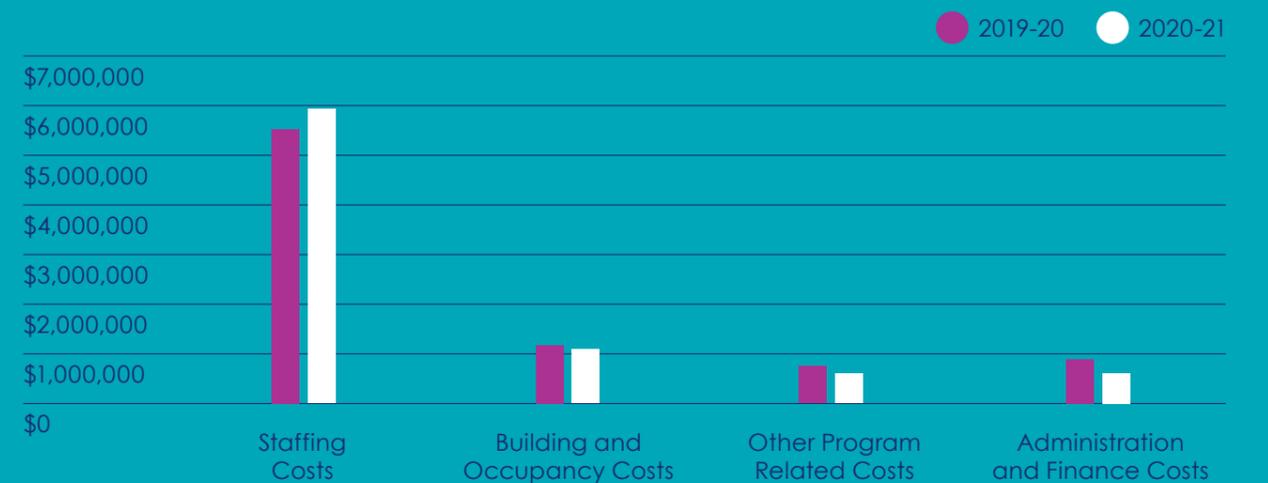


\$580,000

Program, Occupancy and Administration costs reduced by 21%

Staff levels

- Maintained to continue service delivery despite covid impacts
- Increased in the legal program



Financial Report

Balance Sheet

Comm Unity Plus Services Limited
As at 30 June 2021

	30 Jun 2021	30 Jun 2020
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$1,551,708	\$714,237
Other Current Assets	\$308,300	\$635,448
Trade and Other Receivables	\$219,654	\$393,826
Total Current Assets	\$2,079,662	\$1,743,511
Non-Current Assets		
Intangible Assets	\$803,289	\$1,212,528
Property Plant and Equipment	\$2,631,381	\$2,690,664
Total Non-Current Assets	\$3,434,670	\$3,903,192
Total Assets	\$5,514,332	\$5,646,703
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Lease Liabilities - Current	\$508,918	\$601,026
Provisions	\$459,722	\$339,743
Trade and Other Payables - Current	\$1,175,951	\$983,345
Total Current Liabilities	\$2,144,591	\$1,924,114
Non-Current Liabilities		
Lease Liabilities – Non-Current	\$275,699	\$638,481
Non-Current Borrowings	\$10,000	\$1,130,110
Provision – Long Service Leave – Non-Current	\$66,009	\$0
Total Non-Current Liabilities	\$351,708	\$1,768,591
Total Liabilities	\$2,496,299	\$3,692,705
Net Assets	\$3,018,033	\$1,953,998
Equity		
Asset Revaluation Reserve	\$395,300	\$395,300
Accumulated Funds	\$2,622,733	\$1,558,698
Total Equity	\$3,018,033	\$1,953,998

Profit and Loss

Comm Unity Plus Services Limited
For the 12 months ended 30 June 2021

	30 Jun 2021	30 Jun 2020
Income		
Corporate Services Income	\$13,971	\$27,081
COVID-19 Government and Other Assistance Payments	\$1,939,784	\$903,359
Fees Received	\$41,977	\$55,071
Grants and Other Funding Income	\$7,168,158	\$7,999,869
Interest Received	\$3,650	\$5,871
Other Income	\$31,285	\$15,088
Total Income	\$9,198,825	\$9,006,339
Gross Profit	\$9,198,825	\$9,006,339
Less Operating Expenses		
Data Management Fees	\$0	\$10,434
Depreciation and Amortisation Expenses	\$766,492	\$739,841
Employee Benefits Expenses	\$5,848,716	\$5,452,526
Finance Charges on Lease Liabilities	\$27,709	\$33,646
Interest Paid on Building Loan	\$4,557	\$65,865
Lease Expenditure	\$332,625	\$543,891
Loss on Sale of Property, Plant and Equipment	\$3,943	\$8,031
Other Expenses	\$874,770	\$971,238
Program Resources	\$275,978	\$534,788
Total Operating Expenses	\$8,134,790	\$8,360,260
Net Profit	\$1,064,035	\$646,079

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

PRINCIPLES

Lead and innovate to deliver high-quality services

Grow partnerships and alliances to extend the organisation's strategic influence

Deliver and continuously improve person-centric services

Preference data-driven and evidence-based decisions

Listen and respond to communities

Increase organisational sustainability

Reach more diverse communities

Contribute to building vibrant and connected communities

Model ethical practice and standards in our work and with our partners

VALUES

RESPONSIVE

We will listen to our diverse communities, measure impacts and make informed decisions about the services we provide.

EMPOWERING

We will respect the strength of our communities and collaborate to deliver holistic services.

ACCOUNTABLE

We will be responsible and self-reflective. We will acknowledge and celebrate achievements.

COLLABORATIVE

We work well together and as one team for our community.

Looking Forward

The commUnity+ Strategy sets out our pathway towards realising our vision, that:

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

With our strategic priorities in place, the commUnity+ Board, management and staff have enlivened a multi-year Business Plan to deliver against our commitments, including a suite of key initiatives:

- Co-develop an integrated commUnity+ service delivery model that brings together and provides all our programs and services around the needs, strengths and individual situations of our clients, students and community members
- Establish a holistic community, partner and stakeholder program to guide how they shape our service design and delivery
- Enhance the commUnity+ Education portfolio to further support clients, students and community members' engagement with communities, education, and employment
- Expand qualifications offered by commUnity+ focused on employment needs, and to support commUnity+ staff professional development
- Develop a framework to ensure the diverse voices of our clients, students and community members are represented in everything we do



- Develop and enliven the commUnity+ Reconciliation Action Plan
- Strengthen advocacy for reform on issues impacting our clients, students and community members
- Grow and diversify enterprise and program funding and resources, to support and strengthen our programs and services
- Together with the Brimbank City Council and partners; plan, finalise and celebrate the transition of commUnity+ services into the new Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre
- Continue to invest in our people across wellbeing, development and growth.

As a community-focused organisation, our greatest asset is undoubtedly our people. We commit to embracing our principles in how we work at commUnity+ and living our values as individuals, with each other, the people and organisations we work alongside, and the people whose lives we strive to enhance across the diverse communities we serve.

We look forward to the future with enthusiasm and willingness to collaborate and work with our funding partners and peer community organisations, and to learn from, empower and enhance the communities we work with.

Our Board

Susanne Legena

Susanne was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2016 and the role of Chair in 2019. Susanne is the Chair of the Governance Committee.

Susanne is the CEO of Plan International Australia and an advocate for foreign aid and community development, gender equality and youth participation. Susanne has held various executive roles at Plan International Australia, including Executive Manager overseeing and leading operations, Deputy CEO, and Director of Public Engagement, leading policy, advocacy and communications efforts. She has previously served as Chief of Staff to the Victorian Minister for Energy, Resources and Community Development, where she contributed to key policies on energy and climate change as well as leading the implementation of A Fairer Victoria; a whole of government social policy action plan to address disadvantage and promote inclusion and participation.

She has dedicated her career to working on social justice issues, since commencing working life as a community development worker for an international youth-led student organisation, and for several non-government organisations tackling family violence, poverty, youth unemployment and homelessness.

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

Nella Buccheri

Nella was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2016 and the role of Deputy Chair in 2021. Nella is a member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Nella is the Associate Director of Legal Practice at Victoria Legal Aid. Nella has significant experience in criminal law and more than 10 years' experience working in the delivery of legal services through her role in the Legal Practice Directorate.

Nella is 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 the Western Suburbs. Nella is particularly interested in providing better services in the Melton area for new and emerging communities and people experiencing family violence.

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

Greg Bowers

Greg was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in early 2017 and the role of Treasurer in 2018. Greg 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.

Greg has extensive experience in financial management. He has overseen large-scale financial and process

management at the Australian Crime Commission and PMSC.

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

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

Emma Hunt

Emma was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2020. Emma is a member of the Governance Committee.

Emma is an Executive Manager at Victoria Legal Aid (VLA). Emma is an experienced executive with broad expertise across the legal, not-for-profit, and government sectors in Australia and overseas. Her experience in leadership and management includes six years as a Co-Executive Director, Public Interest Law Clearing House (PILCH) Vic Inc. (now known as Justice Connect), seven years as a senior manager in the Department of Justice and Regulation, and four years at VLA in a variety of roles.

Emma is an advocate for not-for-profit organisations that seek to improve the lives of Victorians experiencing disadvantage. Her career has been based on her belief that a strong legal assistance sector is a way of ensuring Victorians experiencing disadvantage receive the advice and help they need when engaging with the law and the justice system, in turn strengthening communities and individual agency.

Emma has a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) and a Bachelor of Arts from The University of Adelaide, and a first-class Master's degree in Criminology from The University of Melbourne. She is admitted to practice law in Victoria and holds a current practising certificate.

Olivia Joel

Olivia was appointed to the commUnity+ Board in 2020. Olivia is a member of the Governance Committee.

Olivia is a Manager at Nous Group, an international management consultancy, and is passionate about instrumenting 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 business development, public policy, regulation, organisational performance and strategy. Olivia currently volunteers as a mentor through YWCA's Asista program, which links girls aged 12-18 in the child protection system with a positive female role model to build self-esteem, resilience and confidence.

Olivia has a double degree in Law (Honours) and Commerce (International Commerce) from Monash University and undertook postgraduate studies in globalisation and international economic law.

Jackie Mead

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

Jackie is the co-CEO of Red Nose.

Jackie is a long-time resident of Melbourne's Inner West and has a passion for creating and supporting vibrant communities that are inclusive and compassionate at their core. She brings 15 years of not-for-profit experience, along with a background in consulting and HR.

Jackie has a Bachelor of Commerce from Deakin University and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Melbourne (ANZSOG). Jackie has certification from the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Brendan Walsh

Brendan was appointed to the Board of commUnity+ in 2019. Brendan 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, as well as state and local governments.

Brendan has a passion for transforming organisations to better support the people and communities they serve. He also has interest and experience in helping organisations to identify

and seize opportunities for alliances, partnerships and, when appropriate, mergers.

Brendan has an MBA from the Melbourne Business School, University of Melbourne. He is a Fellow of the AICD and holds an Executive Certificate in Non-profit Governance from the Harvard Business School (Boston, USA).

Louise Walters

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

Louise is the Assistant Director of Pricing at the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), where her role includes administering the NDIA's Australia-wide pricing policy.

Louise is dedicated to supporting commUnity+ towards its vision of building safe and vibrant communities in the 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 is a local resident of Newport and has held a number of non-executive volunteer positions, including as a Board Director of the Brain Injury Foundation of Victoria.

Louise has an MBA from Melbourne Business School, University of Melbourne, and certification from the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Our Executive Team

Tracey Gaudry

Interim Chief Executive Officer

Tracey is an accomplished leader with more than 20 years' experience in executive and governance roles. Her previous CEO roles for community and for-purpose organisations include Respect Victoria and the Amy Gillett Foundation. Her governance roles have included Vice President Union Cycliste Internationale where she chaired the global Women's Commission and Advocacy Commission.

Tracey has led organisations to focus on crucial prevention and early intervention research; policy and programming initiatives supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion in local, regional, national and international communities.

Tracey is dedicated to supporting and enhancing the diverse communities that commUnity+ serves and has brought significant knowledge, experience and insights to commUnity+.

Tracey holds Bachelor degrees in Commerce and Science from Deakin University, a Masters in Management from the National Graduate School of Management, Australian National University, and is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Craig Liddell

General Manager Education

Craig has been engaged in the education sector for more than 20 years, including roles in community, higher, and vocational education and training. Craig brings a depth of experience in business development, compliance and 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 personal background and experience, and based on needs and aspirations.

Craig holds an Executive Master of Business Administration from RMIT University, a Bachelor of Arts, Communications and Media from Macquarie University, and Diploma of Vocational Education and Training Practice from Box Hill Institute.

Beth Stewart-Wright

General Manager Family and Community Services

Beth brings to commUnity+ a deep understanding of the complex factors that lead to socio-economic disadvantage and marginalisation, and the invaluable role that not-for-profits and civil society can play in addressing these issues. Her experience in the not-for-profit sector includes international and local community development, research, disability advocacy and support, and senior management.

Beth has a passion for grassroots development and believes that empowering local communities to harness their own strengths and capabilities plays a critical role in challenging and interrupting cyclical disadvantage. She brings to the team a focus on collaborative partnerships, integrated service delivery, advocacy, and strategic program planning-and-design, to ensure meaningful, effective and responsive services that meet the evolving needs of our local community.

Beth holds a Master degree in Public Policy and Management, a Bachelor degree in International Development and a recreational pilot licence.

Bryan Smith

General Manager Shared Services

Bryan joined commUnity+ in 2019 after 10 years with an employer association and more than two decades managing business and finance operations in a range of not-for-profit and commercial businesses. Bryan is the Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd Secretary and was Acting CEO from February to June 2021.

Bryan is a Certified Practising Accountant with a Business degree from Monash University and a Graduate Diploma in Corporate Governance from the Governance Institute of Australia.

Away from work, Bryan is a volunteer Director for a Community Health Service and a volunteer with the Country Fire Authority.

OUTGOING CEO

Steven Johnson

Steven has an extensive career focused on delivering services to vulnerable members of our community.

After working for the Victorian Department of Human Services for 22 years, which included assignments as the Manager of the Secure Welfare Service and CEO of the Parkville Youth Justice Precinct, Steven moved to the community sector, taking up senior roles at Whitelion, Hanover Welfare Services, and Berry Street. He has also worked as COO of Swisstec Health Analytics, a company that aims to deliver cost-effective and advanced digital health solutions to developing markets.

Innovation and a focus on providing quality outcomes have been a critical driving force in Steven's career. He has a reputation for significantly improving quality and results through building high-performing teams that are focused on achieving the best possible outcomes for clients and ensuring respectful relationships are at the forefront of the organisation's work.

Steven served as CEO of commUnity+ from August 2020 until February 2021, when he resigned due to illness.

Funders and Partners

Funders

Adult Community and Further Education Board
 Brimbank City Council
 Deakin University Australia
 Department of Education and Training (Cwth) (via Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services Inc)
 Department of Education and Training (Vic)
 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Vic) (formerly Department of Health and Human Services)
 Department of Health (Cwth)
 Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (Vic) (via Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services Inc)
 Department of Social Services (Cwth)
 Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria)
 Victoria Legal Aid

Partners

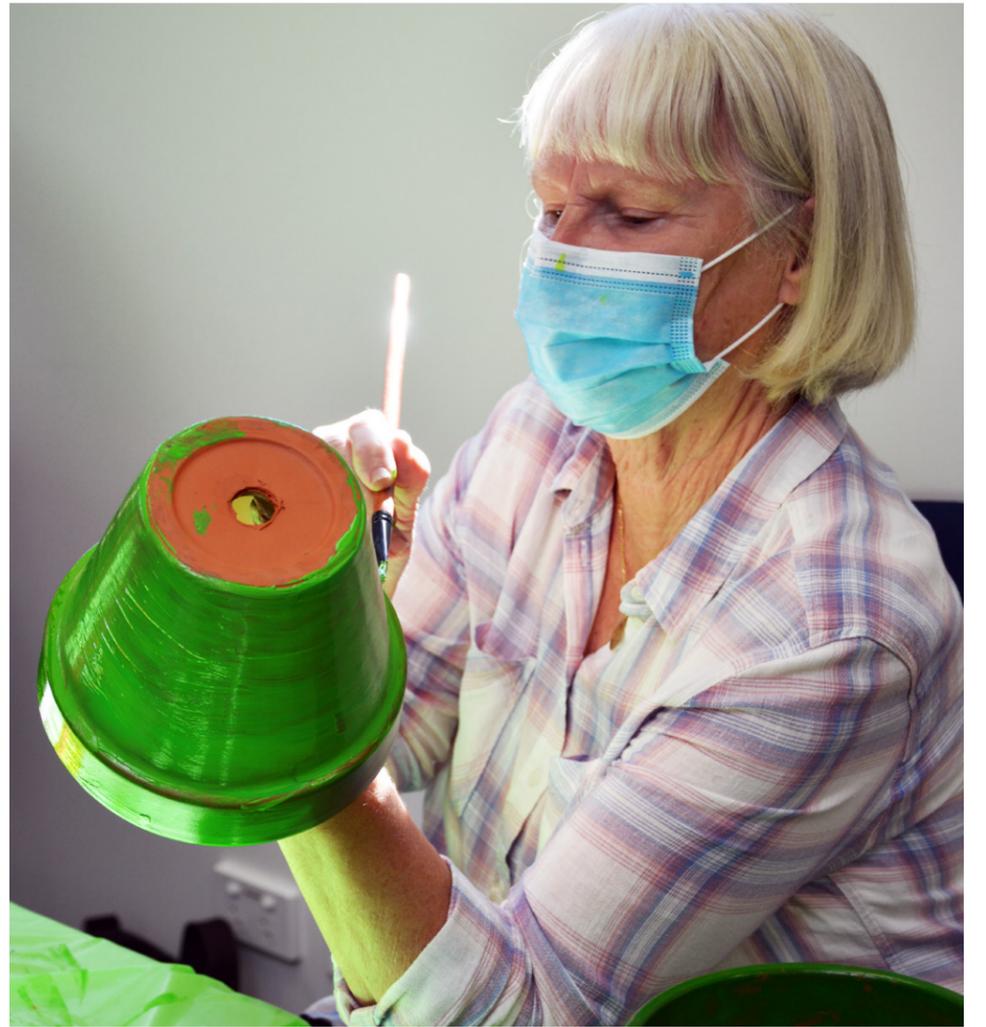
AMES Australia
 Anglicare Victoria
 APM Workcare
 Apprenticeship Employment Network
 Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
 atWork Australia
 Australian Children's Contact Services Association
 Australian Labor Party
 Australian Vietnamese Women's Association
 Bacchus Marsh Magistrates' Court
 Barwon Community Legal Service
 Berry Street
 Brimbank & North West Star Weekly
 Brimbank Learning Futures
 Brimbank Libraries
 Brimbank Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres
 Brimbank Police Service Area
 Brimbank Youth Services
 Brite
 Brotherhood of St Laurence
 Bunnings Warehouse

Campbell Page
 Caroline Chisholm Society
 CatholicCare
 Centrelink
 Central Highlands Community Legal Centre
 Centre for Multicultural Youth
 Central Victorian Group Training, Australia
 Consumer Action Law Centre
 Deakin University
 Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services
 Djerriwarrh Health Services
 Epping Community Services Hub
 Fairground Children's Contact Service
 Victorian Family Law Pathways Network
 Family Life
 Family Relationship Centres
 Federation of Community Legal Centres
 Flemington Kensington Community Legal Centre
 Fitzroy Legal Service
 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
 Growth Training Group

Health Justice Australia
 Human Rights Law Centre
 Hume City Council
 Inner Melbourne Community Legal
 Interact Australia
 IPAR
 IPC Health
 Job Prospects
 JobCo
 Jobfind
 JobWatch
 Justice Connect
 Learning for Employment
 MatchWorks
 Max Employment
 Max Solutions
 Melbourne City Mission
 Melton City Council
 Melton & Moorabool Star Weekly
 MiCare
 Migrant Resource Centre North-West Region Inc.
 Mity Digital

Moreland City Council
 Moorabool Shire Council
 Nabenet
 Neighbourhood Houses Victoria
 Network West
 Northern Community Legal Centre
 ParentsNext
 Orygen
 OzChild
 Reclink Australia
 Rehab Management
 Relationships Australia Victoria
 The Salvation Army
 The Salvation Army Employment Plus
 Salvation Army Social Housing and Support Network
 Sarina Russo
 Services Australia
 Social Security Rights Victoria
 Sunshine Magistrates' Court
 Tenants Victoria
 Tin Shed (St Albans Community Youth Club Inc.)

The Smith Family Communities for Children
 Tullamarine Swimming School
 Uniting (Vic.Tas)
 Van Go (Moorabool)
 Victorian Government Solicitor's Office
 Victoria Law Foundation
 Victoria University
 Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner
 WCN – WCIG
 WEStjustice
 Western Bulldogs Community Foundation
 Wesley Employment Services
 Western Health
 Women's Health West
 Women's Legal Service Victoria
 Workable Consulting
 WorkSkil Australia
 Youthlaw
 Youth Projects



commUnity+ Locations and Services

Corporate Office

822 Ballarat Road
Deer Park VIC 3023

Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre

195-209 Barries Road
Melton West VIC 3337

Suite 2-4,
30-32 East Esplanade
St Albans VIC 3021

Children's Contact Service

46 Grantham Street
Brunswick West
VIC 3055

822 Ballarat Road
Deer Park VIC 3023

Adult Education

90 Blair Street
Broadmeadows
VIC 3047

30 Craigieburn Road
Craigieburn VIC 3064

14 Gaffney Street
Coburg VIC 3058

822 Ballarat Road
Deer Park VIC 3023

63 Mahoneys Road
Forest Hill VIC 3131

1A Erickson Street
Springvale VIC 3171

Suite 6-8,
30-32 East Esplanade
St Albans VIC 3021

Shop 8-11 Victoria
Square
St Albans VIC 3021

81 Main Road West
St Albans VIC 3021

354 Main Road West
St Albans VIC 3021

356 Main Road West
St Albans VIC 3021

Watergardens Town
Centre
Level 1, Suite 9
399 Melton Highway
Taylors Lakes VIC 3038

Neighbourhood House

822 Ballarat Road
Deer Park VIC 3023



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