

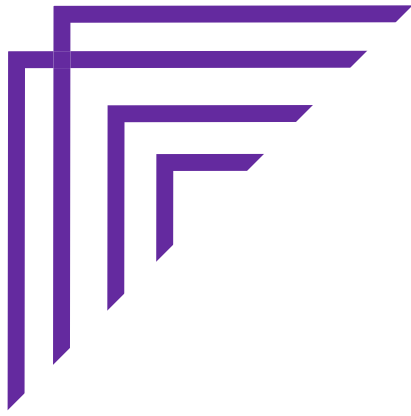


2021-22

ANNUAL REPORT

DANDENONG COMMUNITY
& LEARNING CENTRE





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We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the country throughout Victoria. Our Centre lies on Bunurong land. We pay respect to the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.





CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Kathleen West

Welcome to our Annual Report for the year 2021-2022.

I am delighted to tell you we were excited to finally open our doors full-time and be one of the first Centres to do so, in early January this year. Our learners were eager to come in and enjoy face-to-face learning once again, after such a long time of learning via visual media that they told us was not the same as being on site and learning.

Life at the Centre is back to normal with many activities our communities are engaging in. That is not to say it has been an easy year, and despite the many difficulties the Centre has encountered, our programs and classes have continued to run, with the tremendous commitment and input from our coordinators team, staff, teachers and volunteers. Throughout the year our Centre has introduced several new classes that range from Introduction to Childhood Education through to CNC Woodworking Skills. You can read all about our classes and learners on Page 6, where you will find a report from Diana Lambros, our Education Coordinator.

Although it has not been an easy year our team (coordinators, staff and volunteers) have pulled together and worked collaboratively, and with myself and our Board Secretary, to keep the Centre running for six months without a Centre manager. Our previous manager moved on to a new career in late November, and due to the situation in the employment market it took until late May to find a manager who had the right fit and experience to come in and get to know the team, work with them and manage the Centre in line with our Strategic and business plans.

In this respect, our new General Manager, Merina Ashdown, joined us in early June, and has demonstrated great commitment to achieving positive outcomes for the Centre as we continue to develop learners' skills, enhance our programs and work with the many communities, partners and funders with whom we are involved. You will find Merina's report on Page 4.

During this same difficult period our communities showed great interest in the Centre which has resulted in some increase in enrolments and classes, which we are continuing to grow and develop further throughout 2022/23. We also increased our volunteer numbers and are always ever grateful for their commitment and work they do across the many classes, programs and projects the Centre runs. Our Community Shed picked up when we reopened in January and has been running face-to-face classes and our volunteers have put great effort into the community garden and redefined our front garden. They have well achieved what they set out to do with bringing back the community gardens, and our thanks go to Bunnings for the plants they have provided and the partnership we have created with them. You will find our Community Shed Coordinator, Ian Wilsushen's report on Page 7.

Our highly valued and experienced Administrative Officer, Susan Paisley, retired earlier this year, and we will be ever grateful for the many years of hard work, commitment and support she provided to staff, volunteers, learners, stakeholders and every person who came through our doors. Consequently, we hired a new administrative officer, Melissa Graham, who has already demonstrated great strength in her capability to work and achieve in her role without the presence of a General Manager for 3 months.



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Kathleen West

This latter part of the financial year has seen two Board members resign their positions. We were very sad to see our tremendous and hardworking Treasurer, Gerard Francis, resign after 3 years on the Board as the Treasurer, due to needing to concentrate more on his own enterprises. Thank you, Gerard, for all your input and tremendous changes you have made to the Treasurer's role and the positive impact it has had on the Centre, you will be greatly missed.

We were also very excited to have welcomed Niloo Amendra onto our Board taking up the role of Treasurer. Niloo is a highly experienced CFO, and we know her experience, qualifications and skills will be well utilised in her Board Treasurer role. Niloo's Treasurer's report can be found on Page 5.

The other resignation came from the Board's Secretary, Suzelle Allet. We thank you Suzelle, for all your hard work and send our best wishes. I am very pleased to thank our Board Member, Leve Louis, who has stepped into the role of acting Secretary until we find a new Board member.

A big thank you to our Board of Governance Members for your continued commitment in yet another year of change, working together and ensuring we continue to maintain high standards of compliance and reporting. This big thank you also goes to our team mentioned above, what a year it has been for you, you have been a tremendous asset to the Centre, and we could not have achieved all we have without you.

Another year and big thank you to our funders, we are always ever grateful for your continued support and commitment to our Centre and the work we do for our communities:

- City of Greater Dandenong Council
- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
- Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia
- Magistrates Court of Victoria
- Monash Health

As I come to the end of my report, I take this opportunity to wish all our learners and program participants a great year ahead of learning, self-development and making friends at our Community Centre. We look forward to working with you and our communities in 2022/23 and to see you dropping into our Centre to say hello, finding out who we are and what we do, enrolling in our classes, and letting us know how you are going.

Kathleen West
Chairperson, Dandenong Community & Learning Centre



GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Merina Ashdown

2021-2022 has been a tough year through the first part of it with the continued challenges of COVID and in the later part of the year, the recovery phase for our community members and learners post COVID. The second part of the year started with Dandenong Community and Learning Centre (DCLC) being one of the first community and learning centres to re-open to the community. The recovery of COVID and the return to normality of pre-accredited classes and community programs back up and running was an incredible achievement from all involved, including our coordination, administration, finance, education, and projects teams who helped make the transition seamless.

Taking on the new General Manager's role this year was made at ease with the support of our outstanding coordination/administration/finance teams which includes Ali Aziz, Diana Lambros, Melissa Graham, Ian Wilshusen and Deepa Nair. This fantastic group of enthusiastic staff have been a tremendous support to me and have worked diligently all year long.

The Dandenong Community and Learning Centre team have undertaken a surge of growth and increase in high numbers of Adult Community Further Education (ACFE) enrolments and classes over the last year, and this has assisted with having robust processes and systems put in place as without a strong infrastructure we will not be able to sustain growth into the future. Our staff and volunteers at DCLC have worked closely together, to support each other along the way. They are the most committed and enthusiastic team to work with, we are continually striving for a high quality of service delivery, continuous improvement, and best practice strategies to ensure all our learners have a positive learning experience at DCLC.

Development of partnerships with a number of community organisation's and groups has allowed us to deliver a range of ACFE programs to some very disadvantaged groups providing them with valuable interaction within their local communities. Partnering with other neighborhood houses has provided Dandenong Community and Learning Centre the opportunity to support each other in the delivery of programs and sharing of staff and resources.

Continuation of our long-standing partnerships with the City of Greater Dandenong Council (COGD), Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) has supported us to deliver much needed community programs including social connections, community lunches, volunteering programs, community shed programs, community development initiatives and community garden projects.

Some of the highlights and achievements of this year have included:

- The successful increase of ACFE enrolments over the past year.
- The rebuild of the centre and ACFE pre-accredited classes since returning to the centre post COVID.
- The successful delivery of social recovery programs and initiatives to support the COGD members/learners reengage back to the centre and the community.
- Completion of the re-design volunteer community garden project.
- The implementation of mandatory and regular Professional Staff Development.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all the DCLC staff, volunteers, our partners, and funders and especially the supportive members of our Board of Governance, who work tremendously hard behind the scenes. I sincerely thank them for their continued support with new project initiatives and programs and for being focused to ensure the future long-term sustainability of Dandenong Community and Learning Centre.

Thank you

Merina Ashdown
General Manager



TREASURER'S REPORT

Niloo Amendra

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.” – Charles Darwin

DCLC remains resolute and continues serving the community with dedication and commitment. It’s invaluable human resource assets and more specifically the teaching faculty continued to be the driving force of stability.

The Centre is appreciative of the federal and state government’s support which ensured the Centre could continue to operate and deliver the much-needed services to the Dandenong community.

Similar to many other organisations, the Centre experienced challenges during the year, transitioning and adapting to a new normal. With the support of our communities, the strong foundations established in our training and development resources and our volunteer teams, we have been able to consolidate our operations during the year. The operating loss reported in the financial statements is a reflection of the commitment to continuing to serve the community during this year that required resilience, courage and doing things differently.

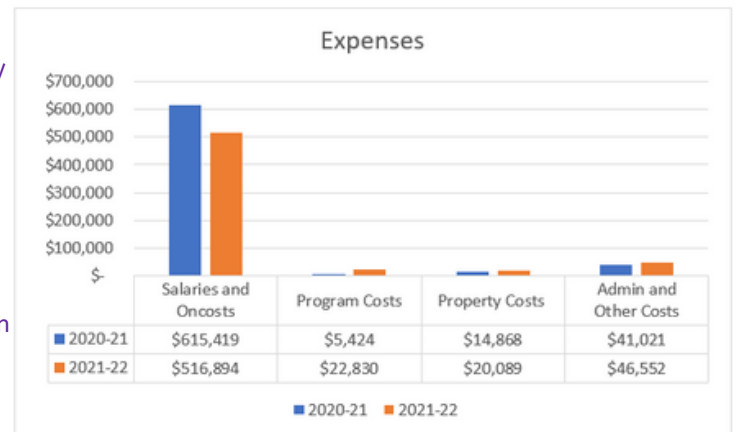
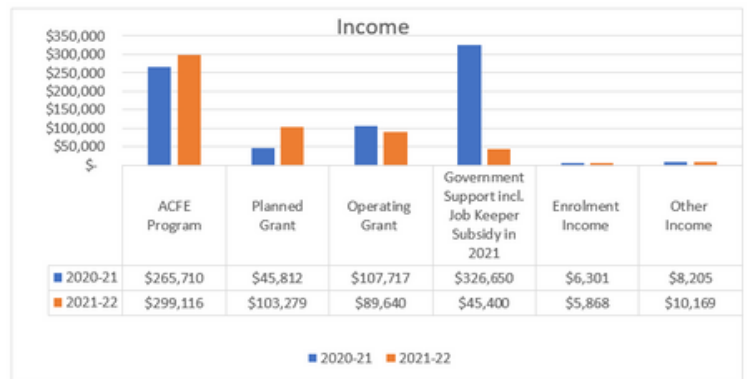
Financial Position

DCLC is financially well positioned with cash at bank at \$ 846,721 and net equity of \$584,811 as of 30th June 2022. DCLC will strive in creating services that are meaningful and value adding; a stewarding role in enabling our communities be engaged socially and economically through our range of services.

The financial stability that the balance sheet position provides ensures a degree of sustainability, allowing the Centre to diversify and expand by investing in new program initiatives, and infrastructure. Our new Centre Leadership is looking forward to working collaboratively with our stakeholders in empowering our communities with lifelong learning.

Income and Expenditure

The graphs below show income and key operating costs as a comparative with last year. The Centre received an income of \$ 553,472 and concluded the financial year with a deficit of **\$(52,893)**, which is underpinned by higher income from program grants when compared with the prior year.



Thank you

Niloo Amendra
Treasurer



EDUCATION COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Diana Lambros

What a wonderful year! If I were to sum up the year with one word, it would be 'celebration.' This has been the first full year back, where we have not been disrupted by lockdowns and could fully immerse ourselves with community again!

There have been lots of achievements!

Our hospitality learners have been busy learning new cuisines and dishing up delicious lunches every Tuesday. If you have not joined us already, come and taste the food on offer and connect with community members over lunch in a welcoming space. Some of our hospitality learners also completed the Safe Food Handling unit, giving them a recognised industry entry point for employment.

The Café Skills class has learnt how to prepare and serve hot drinks, from lattes to cappuccinos and hot chocolates, the barista machine has been running hot. Our EAL hospitality learners have enjoyed learning English whilst getting creative in the kitchen. Applying language acquisition techniques in a hands-on approach with a delicious meal to share.

Our computer courses have always been popular but this year we have experienced an even higher demand in this area. It has been great to see our learners taking on the challenge of beginning or expanding on their digital skills. We also introduced a bilingual computer class for our Dari community members, which was very well received.

In our English language classes, we have welcomed new learners from Afghanistan and Ukraine and stand by them proudly as they create new pathways for a safe future. We recognise their resilience and will keep the light of hope and healing alive.

The wood working shed has been busy as we have seen projects come alive. Learners have created small projects for their homes, and some have taken on the advanced level of design and CNC construction. Feel free to pop in and see some of the creations.

With our partnerships, we have started many new sewing classes. This gives learners the opportunity to gain experience a new skill or share a skill and connect fellow like-minded participants. Wonderful projects have been completed, from murals, to bunting, collages and even dress making.

The Wellness pilot program was introduced this year and it allowed our learners to experience approaches and strategies in finding balance and relaxation for mind and body. The program was a success, and it will return next year and expand to include self-development.

We are delighted to feel the 'buzz' back in the centre from all the positive interaction and lively engagement.

So, let us celebrate! Well done to all the learners. We applaud your commitment to lifelong learning and are proud of all your achievements.

Diana Lambros, Education Coordinator



COMMUNITY SHED COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Ian Wilshusen

This year has been a challenge, while we recover from the previous two years of uncertainty surrounding COVID-19.

We have welcomed Melissa Graham as our new Administration Officer, and Merina Ashdown as the new General Manager. These two people have brought with them a new dynamic into our team environment. With the changes, some challenges have arisen, which the team has worked together to overcome.

This year was always going to be difficult. After the impacts of COVID, the speed at which we have all been asked to step up and return to in-person learning for our programmes was an adjustment! Having said that, we have laid a strong foundation for the Centre moving into the future.

This year, we have been able to set up and provide classes for CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machine wood carving. It has been a great success! We also got a smaller machine up and running, to be used off-site through our partnership with Dandenong West Primary School.

We have been able to access grant government funds to upgrade and replace tools for the workshop. With this, we can continue to offer a high quality of projects by attendees at the Community Shed.

Tuesday's classes are going extremely well, with Tim Chen teaching. On Fridays, we run Wood Turning and CNC classes. Our regular Disability Provider woodworking classes on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays are going well and proving popular.

We, as a team, continue to reach out to other potential providers. The City of Greater Dandenong Council, Cornerstone and Grow2Be have all been recently approached – the latter having started classes regularly! We aim to enrich the services to those providers who can offer their clients.

Our Community Garden has had a big clean up, and work is continuing! New sleepers have been obtained to be assembled into more raised garden beds. We have also acquired some small portable greenhouses with zips that allow easy access to plants. Several timber structures, including the existing garden beds, have been painted in bright colours to enhance the garden's aesthetic and bring a welcoming atmosphere.

We have come a long way since the previous year! I am confident we will continue to grow. We are optimistic about our opportunities as we move into the future!

Thank you!

Ian Wilshusen, Community Shed Coordinator

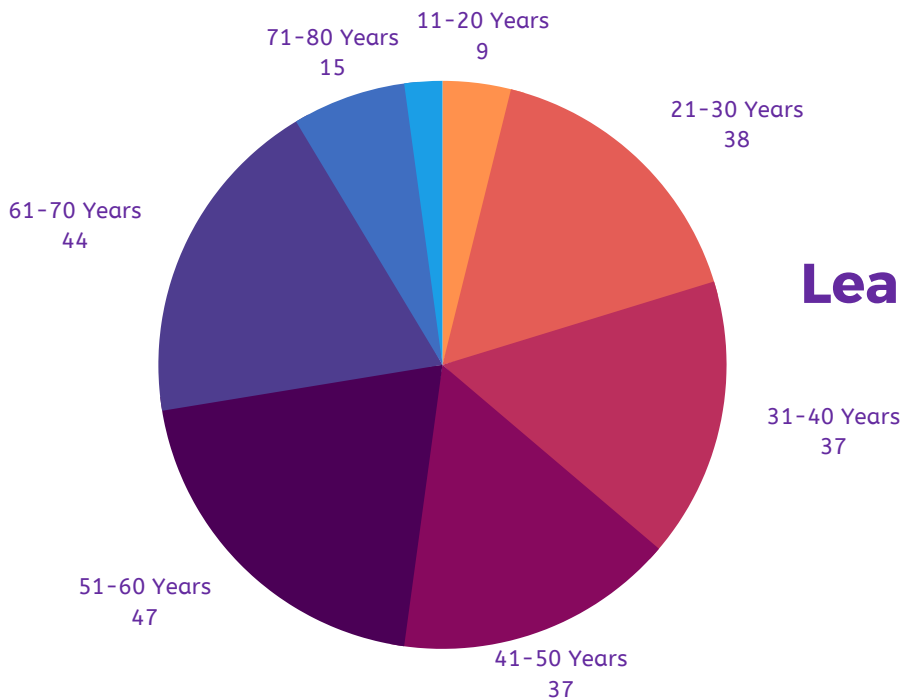


PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Melissa Graham

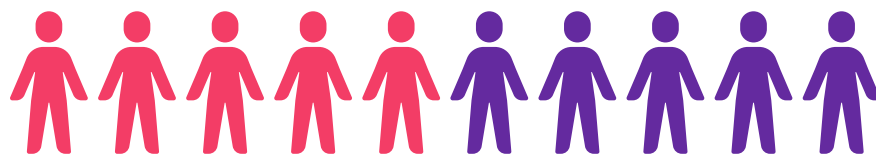
We have had a successful year of delivering classes to the many culturally diverse communities we work with across Greater Dandenong. Our Learners have greatly enjoyed participating in our classes that include Sewing and Textiles, Computerised Numerical Control Wood Carving, Computers in English and Dari, and Hospitality.

A few snapshots of our participants are represented in the graphs below.

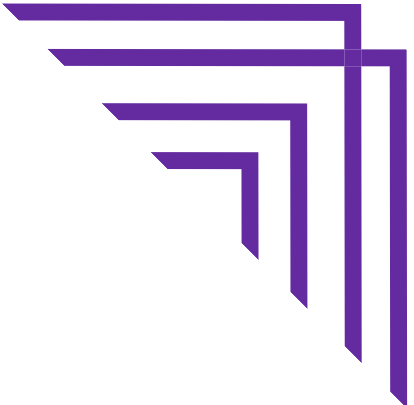


Learner's Ages

Linguistic Background



Learners who primarily speak a language other than English: **119 | 49.8%**
 Learners who primarily speak English: **120 | 50.2%**



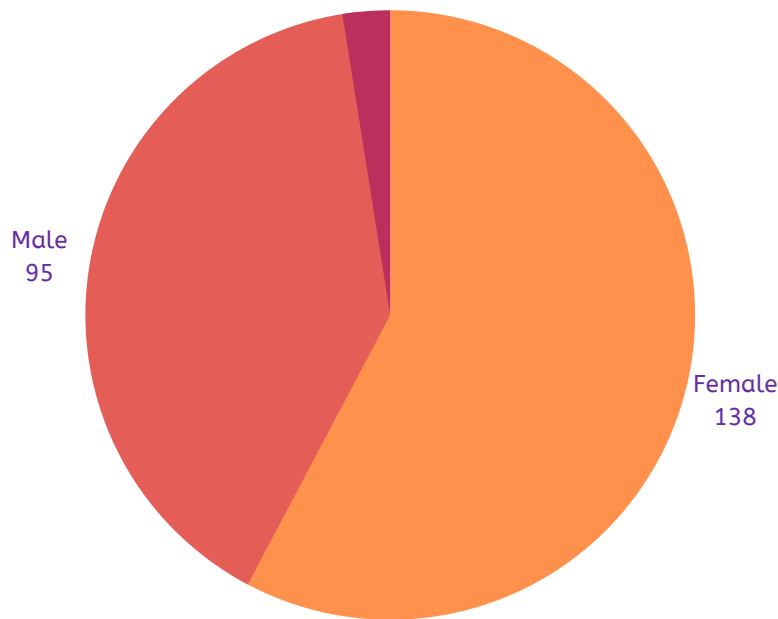
MORE STATISTICS

Employment Status



Learners Unemployed: 214 | 90%
Learners Employed: 25 | 10%

Other/Not Stated
6

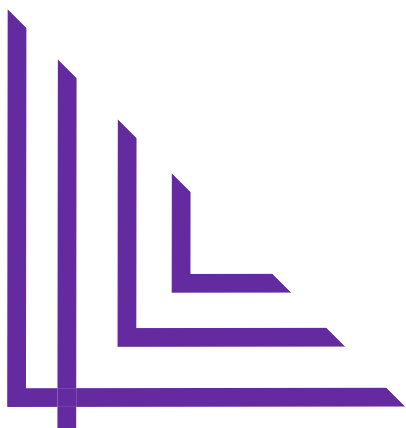


Learner's Genders

Place of Birth



Learners born overseas: 152 | 63.6%
Learners born in Australia: 87 | 36.4%





TEACHER STORY

I joined the Dandenong Community and Learning Centre team in June this year and have had some wonderful learners. Initially, my skills in illustration were put to good use as I showed my classes the basics of drawing from life, collage, and painting. Currently, I am mainly working with textiles, teaching embroidery, machine-sewing and pattern drafting with my classes. My focus is always to work along with everyone – we create best with open minds!

I have particularly enjoyed working with the creative young minds from our disability partner groups, fostering a love of creativity as well as practical skills that will see those learners grow and thrive.

It is exciting to see my learners improve their skills as they create projects that they are passionate about. They will take those skills, and that passion and creativity, into the rest of their lives to achieve wonderful things!

Thank you
Helen Graham, Art, and Sewing Teacher

VOLUNTEER STORY

After a lengthy professional career at RMIT University, I decided to retire. My plan was always to do what I could to help in the community. So, in February 2022, I approached the Dandenong Community and Learning Centre (DCLC) to help in the Administration Office.

Volunteering at DCLC is a terrific way to bring positive change to people, communities, and society in general. Helping others and DCLC gave me pleasure in giving back to the community and assisting those people around me.

Working in administration throughout my career, I was pleased to be able to apply my knowledge and experience, in helping Melissa Graham the Administration Officer with all the related office duties. Volunteering is also good for my health and well-being. It can help protect both my mental and physical health and can give a sense of purpose in life.

Regardless of motivation, and time permitting, we should all consider making volunteering part of our lives.

Marie St Anne, Retiree - DCLC Volunteer





LEARNER STORY

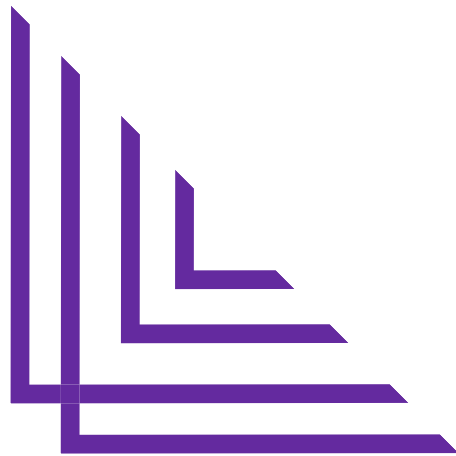
My name is Olga, and I am from Ukraine. I migrated to Melbourne in 2021 when Russia invaded Ukraine. The circumstances of my life were such that I ended up in Australia.

I did not have any knowledge of English. My sister who lives here in Melbourne took me to Dandenong Community and Learning Centre English classes held at Enjoy church. The teaching was only in English and all I understood was the names of the learners written on the whiteboard. I did not understand anything and cried throughout the whole lesson.

My teacher Devi, with her patience, and the ability to explain things clearly, her kindness and caring heart, was able to give me the confidence, encouragement, and the knowledge. I went to Devi's English classes for 5 months and thanked her.

I have now enrolled at Holmesglen TAFE to study English, at the second level. I am extremely glad that in my life there are caring people such as Devi. Her excellent attitude towards students and her knowledge is so humbling. I will be happy to meet her again and continue my studies with her.

Olga Kolesnik, English as an Additional Language Learner



LEARNER STORY

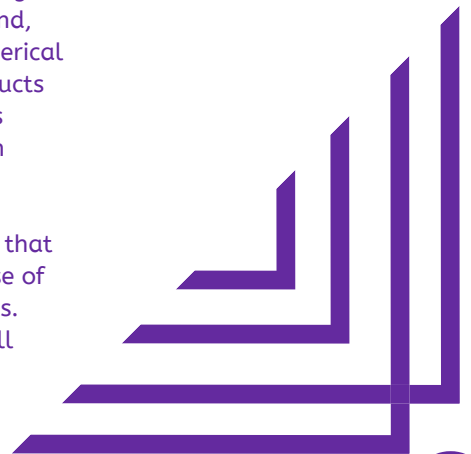
Growing up, Susan didn't have the opportunity to explore her woodworking passion. There were subjects that were tagged for 'women' and subjects tagged for 'men'. More recently she had tried to attend adult centre woodworking courses and was yet again met with firm resistance – the courses were exclusively for men.

Susan has since been an active learner at the DCLC community shed. Over the years she has been attending, she has developed from a beginner to an advanced level in using wood working tools like the lathe and the carbide wood turning chisel. She has created trays, bowls, pens and toys that have been given to the community and some have even been shipped overseas!

The other area that Susan wanted to improve was her computer skills. Having grown up in a non digital era, it was time for Susan to jump into the deep end, and she willingly did! At 64 years of age, she joined the CNC (computer numerical control) class, where she uses a computer software program to design products and then the cutting and laser machine to bring them to life. The course has enabled her to improve her computer skills whilst also create products from design to finish. Susan is adept at breaking barriers like gender and age.

The program has allowed Susan to express her creative passion with others that share the passion of woodworking. She has made friends, and shares a sense of camaraderie. Susan often helps out others in the group that have disabilities. Having experienced exclusion herself, it is her way of creating an inclusive all ability space for all community members

Susan Wilkins, Woodworking Learner





OUR TEAM



Board of Governance

- Kathleen West (Chairperson)
- Gerard Francis (Outgoing Treasurer)
- Niloo (Incoming Treasurer)
- Suzelle Allet (Outgoing Secretary)
- Anthony Yeo
- Garry Porter
- Leve Louis

Management

- Merina Ashdown – General Manager

Coordination Team

- Ali Aziz – Senior Coordinator
- Diana Lambros – Education Coordinator
- Ian Wilshusen – Community Shed Coordinator

Finance

- Deepa Rahul Nair – Finance Officer

Project Officers

- Daniel Kuol
- Maryam Haidari
- Amina Ali

Administration

- Melissa Graham – Administration Officer

Teachers

- Rod Bryson
- Tim Cheng
- Sobana Hanif
- Michelle Hood
- Aliya Mossammat
- Sadia Sheraz
- Devi Torpy
- Sarah Empeigne
- Helen Graham
- Maryam Haidari
- Maria Cima
- Samantha Riegl

Volunteers

- Muhammad Arif
- Jason Curtis
- Warunika De Silva
- Robyn Fricsons
- Christian Haider
- Prabhjot Kaur
- Priyanka Raja
- Babbar Singh
- Susan Wilkins
- Sowmya Koppiseti
- Shaista Veremeenco
- Sahin Cetiner
- Marie St Anne





OUR PARTNERS

We would like to thank our partners for their on-going support throughout the year and look forward to working together as we strive to achieve the absolute best outcomes for our communities.

- Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE)
 - Anglicare
 - Burke and Beyond
- Centre for Multicultural Youth
 - Chisholm TAFE
- City of Greater Dandenong Council (CoGD)
- City of greater Dandenong Volunteer Resource Centre
 - Community House Network (CHN)
 - Dandenong South Primary School
 - Deakin University
- Department Education and Training (DET)
- Department of Families Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
 - Drug Court: Magistrates' Court of Victoria
 - Enjoy Church
 - Enliven
 - Foodbank
 - Grow To Be
 - Jobs Victoria
 - Keysborough Learning Centre
 - Launch Housing
 - Life Without Barriers
 - Monash Health
- Neighbourhood House Victoria (NHC Vic)
 - Noble Park Community Centre
 - Noble Park Primary School
 - Rosewood Downs Primary School
 - Southern Migrant & Refugee Centre
- Springvale Learning and Activities Centre
 - Springvale Neighbourhood House
 - The Salvation Army
 - Wellsprings for Women
 - Wallara



OUR VALUES

*Supporting human rights,
locally and globally*

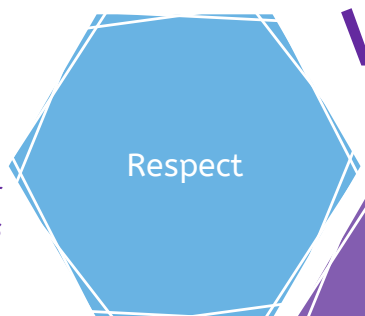


*Flexible in responding
to community needs,
while being proactive
when responding*



*Supporting principles
of environmental
sustainability*

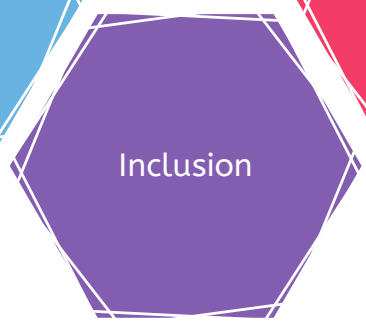
Our Values



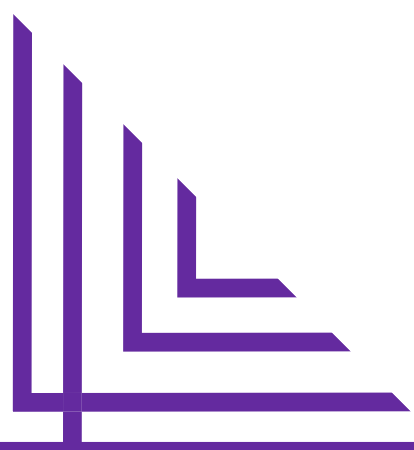
*Valuing other beliefs,
culture and opinions,
and celebrating our
differences*



*Being transparent,
accountable, ethical
and honest*



*Building capacity within communities,
connecting communities, celebrating diversity
and allowing communities to have a voice*





THANK YOU

FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



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