

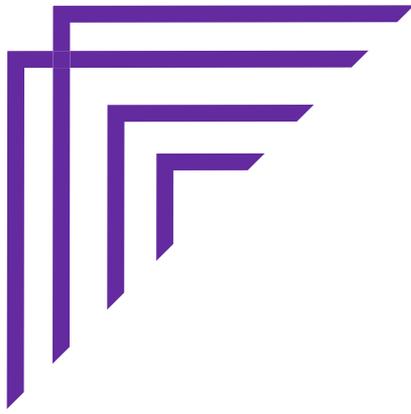


2022 - 23

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 financial year 2022-2023.

It has been another year of moving forward with our strategic plans to maintain Dandenong Community and Learning Centre and ensure it remains a viable and financially stable Centre for our communities.

A necessary part of our strategy has been to undertake a restructure of the organisation which was carried out in February this year. As we have progressed throughout the year, the restructure has provided opportunities for the Centre to maintain its financial viability, enable restructuring of our ACFE programs and successfully receive funding and partnerships.

We have developed wonderful partnerships, that have increased and broadened our programs to enable us to further meet the current and future needs of our communities. Our partnerships with Community of Mental Health Australia, Department of Health, Monash Health, Cultural Perspectives, Settlement Services International, Be Connected Programs, and together with funding from the Victorian Men's Shed Association and the City of Greater Dandenong Council, have created tremendous opportunities for our learners; all of which you can read more about in our General Manager's Report which you will find on page 4.

The Centre's survival throughout the year is a great credit to our General Manager, Merina Ashdown, who joined us in June last year. Merina has worked alongside the Board of Governance and side-by-side with our Treasurer, Niloo Amendra, to achieve the turnaround that was needed to bring the Centre to where it is today. You will find our Treasurer's report on pages 5-6.

Our collaboration with the City of Greater Dandenong Council has provided much needed funding to enhance our community garden. We have 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. A big thank you goes to our funders; we are always ever grateful for your continued support and commitment to our Centre, that assists us to do 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 Health
- Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
- Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
- Community of Mental Health Australia
- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia
- Magistrates Court of Victoria
- Monash Health

Early in this financial year our Board member, Anthony Yeo resigned, and our Board has welcomed two new members, Michael Hillier and Nirangeni Jeyapalan, who come with a wide range of community experiences, qualifications and skills.

I would like to give a big thank you to all our staff, volunteers and 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.



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Kathleen West

As I come to the end of my report, it is with great sadness I advise I have resigned as Chairperson of the DCLC Board of Governance and am extremely pleased to advise our Treasurer, Niloo Amendra has been confirmed by our Board to take over the role of Chairperson, and which will be finalised at this AGM. I am sure Niloo will, as she does in her Treasurer role, put everything into continuing to ensure the Centre's financial viability, sustainability and future growth that meets community needs. Whilst I am sad to leave, I know that I am taking with me 10 years as a Board Member and 9 years of that as its Chairperson. I have met many, many challenges over that period of time, worked with different Board members and community organisations, and greatly enjoyed giving back to the community, being part of its change and growth to become a learning centre as well as changing its name in recognition of its new structure. It has been a wonderful experience that I will always treasure.

Thank you to all our Board members, staff, external organisations and communities for your continued support and many different ways of involvement that ensures our Centre continues to thrive.

Lastly, as I hand over my role of Chairperson, I want to 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.

Kathleen West
Chairperson, Dandenong Community & Learning Centre



GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Merina Ashdown

2022-2023 has been a year of significant change and growth with the continued challenges of the economic constraints nation-wide along with tight funding constraints. The successful delivery and smooth operations of our pre-accredited classes has been due to the incredible achievement from all involved, including our administration, finance, education, and projects teams who have helped make the centre a vibrant, warm and welcoming place for our community.

The education team have undertaken an increase in high numbers of Adult Community Further Education (ACFE) enrolments and student contact hours over the last year, and this has been due to the hard work and efforts of our staff and volunteers at DCLC who have worked closely together, to support each other along the way. They are the most passionate, 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.

Dandenong Community and Learning Centre have been through its challenges such as undertaking a significant restructuring of both staff and ACFE programs to ensure there were profitable and sustainable programs for the future of our organisation.

Due to the constraints of the budget and limited funding made available, Dandenong Community and Learning Centre looked at other innovative initiatives to support the running of the centre which included:

- Sponsorships from local Dandenong organisations and service providers.
- Monday Market Days/fundraising initiatives - where baked goods were sold to the community.
- New partnerships/funding opportunities developed with funding organisations such as Community Mental Health Australia (CMHA)

Development of new partnerships this year with a well-recognised organisation such as Community Mental Health Australia (CMHA) has provided the opportunity for our centre to service householders whom reside in both Dandenong and Dandenong North to be connected into local mental health and wellbeing services that they otherwise would not have been aware of or have access to. We employed three highly qualified community people connector's who have had over 2000 conversations with householders about their mental health and wellbeing.

Continuation of our long-standing core partnerships with the City of Greater Dandenong Council (COGD), Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) 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 funding.
- Stronger partnerships established with Monash Health, Enliven, Settlement Services International (SSI), Cultural Perspectives, Men's Shed Association and Community Mental Health Australia (CMHA).
- The successful delivery of restructured ACFE programs has proved to be financially viable.

Looking ahead into the new year, the future is bright for DCLC, and we are looking forward to 2024 with great optimism as DCLC continues to serve the City of Greater Dandenong.

The following initiatives and programs are what we aim to achieve in FY 2023-2024:

- Diversification of grant income streams
- Tight control of costs including implementation of volunteer teacher program
- Introduction of new programs outside existing ACFE programs that will result in a positive operating result
- A stronger marketing and communications presence within the community

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. 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

Introduction

I am pleased to present the Treasurer's report for the Dandenong Community and Learning Centre (DCLC) for the financial year 2022/2023. This report provides an overview of our financial performance, challenges faced, and strategies implemented during the year to address these challenges.

Overview of DCLC

DCLC is a community centre dedicated to providing training and development resources to enable employment or further education. Our mission is to support the community in their journey through studying, recreation, and employment by fostering social connections, learning and growth.

Challenges Faced

The past year has been marked by several challenges, primarily due to the reduction in government and grant funding. In response to this challenge, a series of strategies were implemented, aimed at securing the financial sustainability of the Centre:

- **Restructuring of Programs:** programs were restricted to ensure the recovery of costs incurred, setting a minimum threshold of 8-10 learners to break even.
- **Staff Allocation and Reduction:** we made adjustments to staff allocation, reducing working hours and positions to align with our budgetary constraints. This was a difficult decision to make, however was required to make sure the Centre could continue to operate with the lower income.
- **Grant Applications:** grant opportunities were actively sort to align with our mission and purpose, diversifying our income streams.
- **Sponsorships and Donations:** we also reached out to corporations within the City of Greater Dandenong for sponsorships and donations.
- **Strict Budget Control:** we maintained strict control over operational budget costs for classes and the Centre as a whole.
- **Collaboration with Providers:** we continued to collaborate with new providers and venue hirers to expand our offerings.

Achievements

Despite the challenges, we made significant progress during the year:

- Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) class hours delivered were 31,714 hours, a 4% increase (or 1,110 hours) compared to the previous year.
- Secured a concession rebate that was at \$30,619, \$17,695 higher than the previous year.
- Successful in securing grants, notably from Assisting Communities Direct Connection (ACDC) project, focused on mental health and wellbeing support for the local community and the Victorian Strengthening Multicultural Grant for our CALD communities.

Financial Summary

For the financial year 2022/2023, DCLC reported an income of \$667,542, which represents a 20.61% increase from the previous year and an operating deficit of \$(238,595).

The increase in revenue represents the ACDC and Victorian Strengthening Multicultural grants that incurred related program delivery costs, whilst marginally contributing to DCLC's fixed costs.

The operating deficit for the year was largely driven by the higher staff salaries, wages, Program expenses and higher than budgeted ACFE program delivery costs.

Our financial position as of June 30, 2023, includes cash at the bank amounting to \$590,319 and net equity of \$346,215.



TREASURER'S REPORT

Niloo Amendra

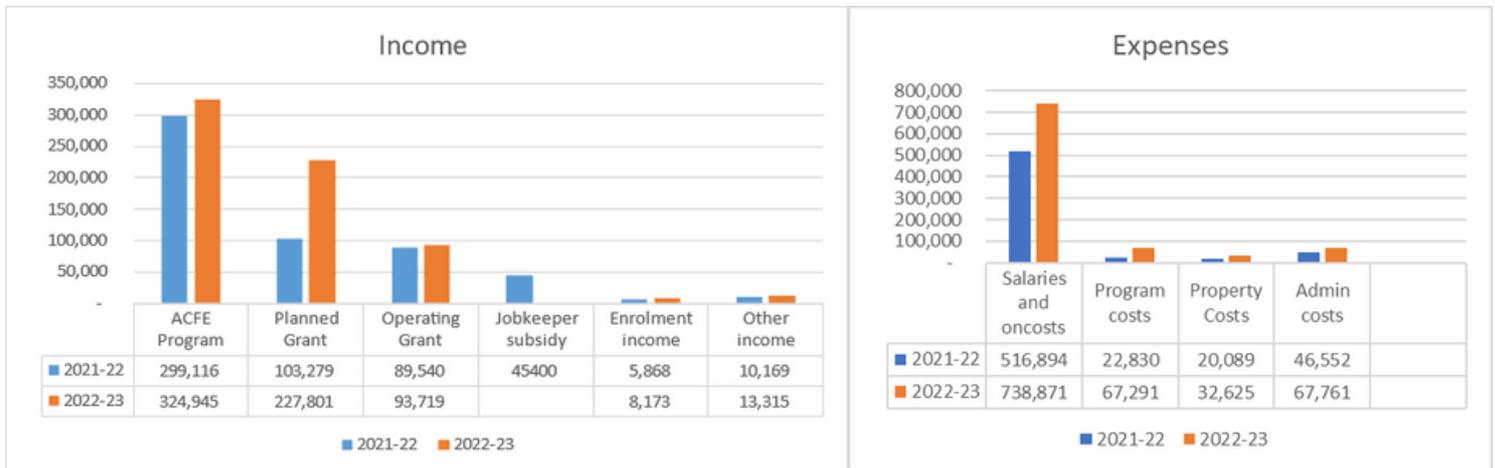
Future Strategies

Looking ahead, we remain committed to improving the financial stability of DCLC, with a focus on diversifying the Centre's revenue streams.

Key strategies for the year ahead include:

- **New Community Classes:** we have already begun work on delivering a new suite of community classes and look to consolidating these programs during the year.
- **Securing Grants:** we will continue to actively seek grant funding.
- **Cost Control:** we will maintain tight control over costs, including recruitment for volunteer teachers.
- **Diversified Programs:** introduction of new programs outside the existing ACFE programs that will contribute revenue towards growing and supporting both our employees and local communities.
- **Enhanced Engagement and Marketing:** we aim to establish stronger relations with the community via marketing and communications across the City of Greater Dandenong community in order to increase awareness of the Centre.

In closing, I want to express our gratitude to all our employees, volunteers, stakeholders and partners who have supported us throughout the year. Your dedication and commitment have been instrumental in helping us navigate the challenges we faced. We look forward to another year of serving the wonderfully rich and diverse Dandenong community.



Thank you.

Niloo Amendra, Treasurer



COMMUNITY SHED AND GARDEN REPORT

Ian Wilshusen

Woodworking, "A man who works with his hands is a labourer; a man who with his hands and his brain is a craftsman: but a man who works with his hands and his brain and his heart is an artist" by Louis Nizer

It certainly has been another challenging year with the Dandenong Community and Learning Centre (DCLC) community shed. Despite the challenges DCLC have met these challenges with determination and courage to continue to deliver quality programmes to our many and varied community of learners.

The community shed team have created specific classes for those with a disability. They have also introduced a new woodworking class catered to meet the needs for ladies on Wednesdays, and this is delivered by the very talented Tim Chen who is a great asset to our community. Tuesdays is now open day for the general public to enjoy woodworking classes.

DCLC have continued to partner with disability organisations which include;

- The Bridge
- Bourke and Beyond
- Wallara

Working closely with these organisations have enabled access and support for those with a disability to part take in woodwork.

Our community garden has many veggie garden beds rented out thanks to the enthusiasm by our volunteer enthusiast Branka Loukas who has bonded the participants together to create garden beds overflowing with herbs and vegetables.

We are always on the lookout for volunteers to finish off the reconstruction of the community garden and with continued maintenance we have had a new volunteer Jason who has begun working on constructing the community garden in time for summer.

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.

In the upcoming FY 23-24 we look forward to:

- New innovative community shed classes.
- Continuation of the current woodworking classes.
- New ESL woodworking classes.
- An increase in ACFE classes and NDIS participants joining our woodworking classes.

I would like to express my gratitude to all our community and garden volunteers, community, partners and learners that have enabled us to continue serving our community in Dandenong.

Thank you!

Ian Wilshusen, Community Shed Coordinator



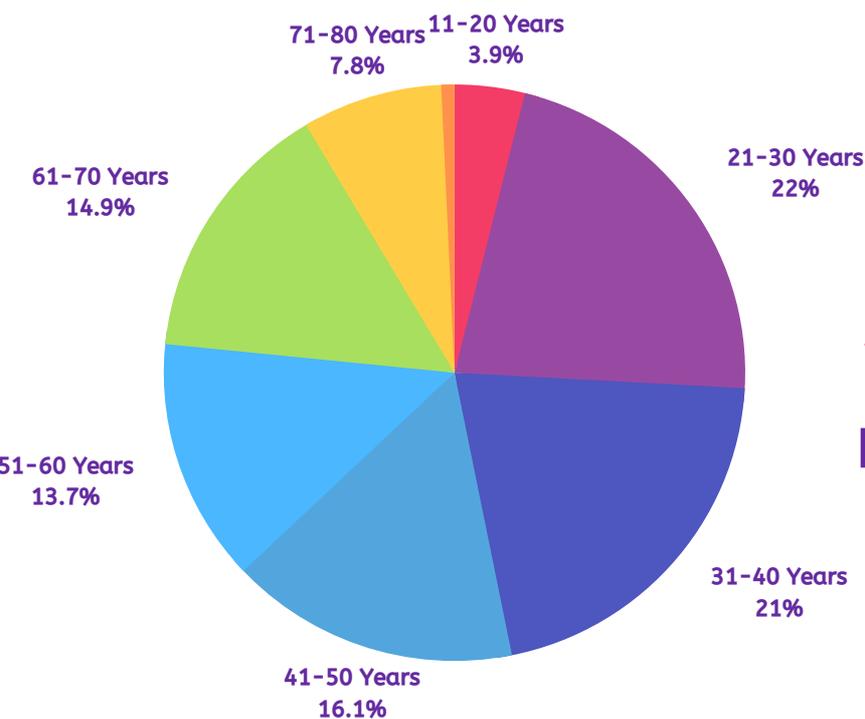
PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Stephanie Zaverdinos: Administration Officer

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 English as an Additional Language, Sewing and Textiles, Woodworking, Computers in English and Dari, and Hospitality.

Highlighted in the graphs below you will see the range of our participants who learn and socialise together:

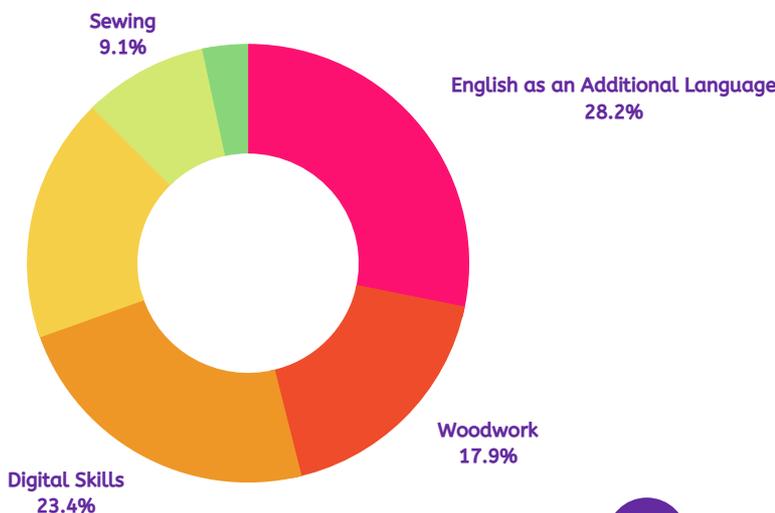
Learner's Ages:



Employment Status:



Class Popularity:

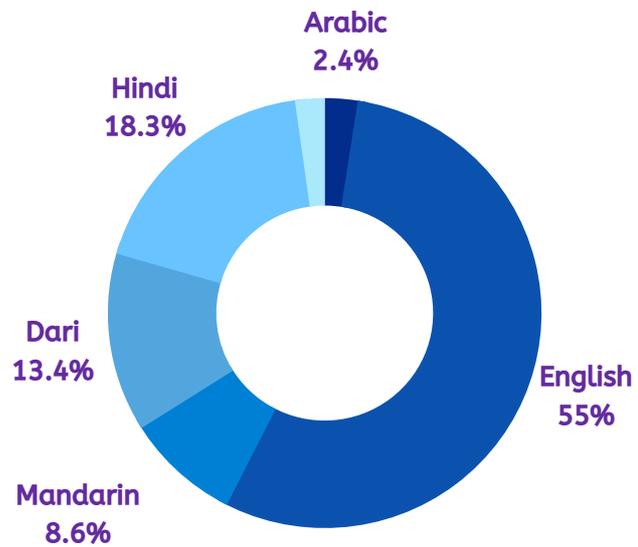




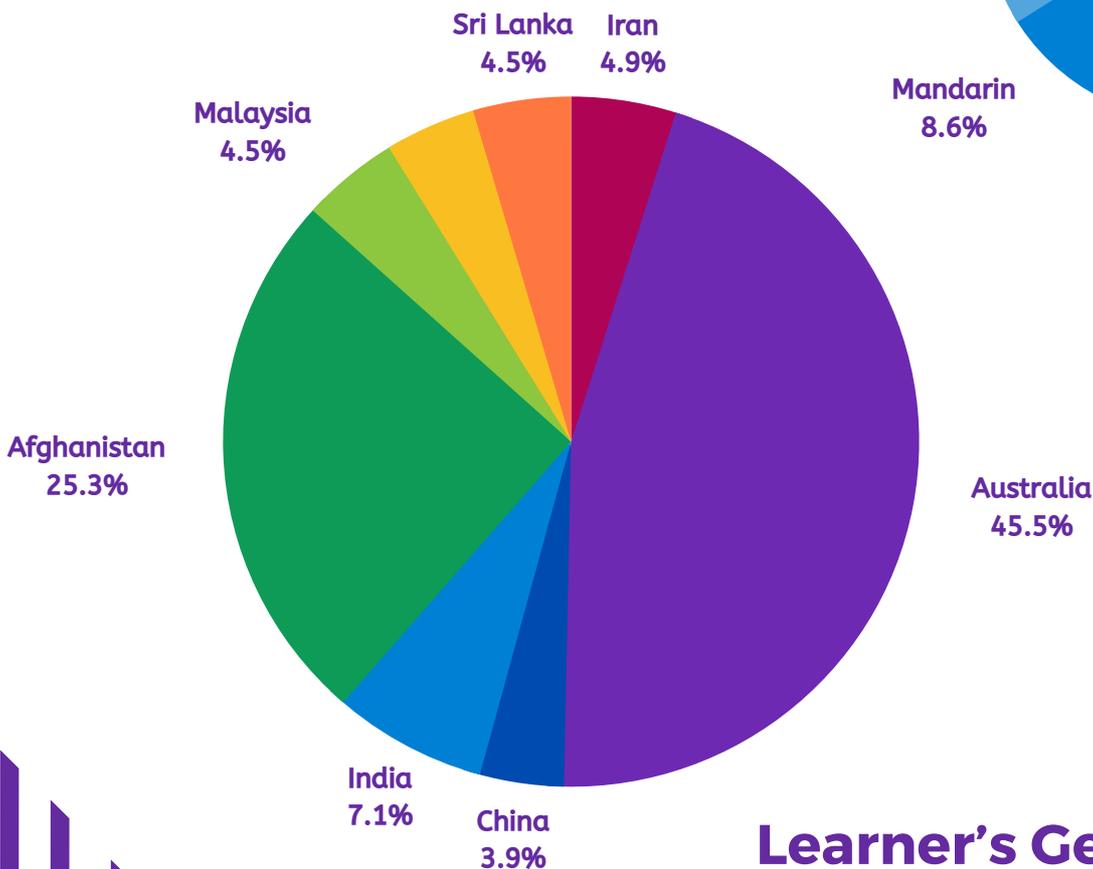
MORE STATISTICS



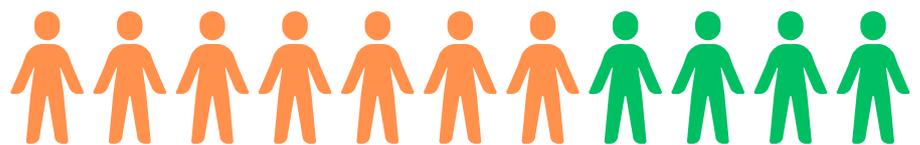
Learner's Linguistic Background:



Learner's Ethnicity Demographics:



Learner's Genders:



Key:  = Female
 = Male

Female: 243 | 68.4%
 Male: 112 | 31.5%



TEACHER STORY

I joined the Dandenong Community Learning Centre team in October 2017. Over the last six years I have been actively involved in teaching English language, Computer literacy and Introduction to Aged Care and community Services.

Teaching English as a language is the core component of all learning that is imparted across all courses. My learners are from diverse CALD backgrounds and therefore English being a second language posits a challenge to learning at times. My persistent endeavour is to encourage them by sharing my own personal story and journey and thus engender confidence in them to persevere in their efforts.

My greatest success has been to see my learners succeed successfully in securing employment at the conclusion of their course. Furthermore, to have a bright future and more opportunities in the wider society.

I truly enjoy my role as a teacher and watching the learners grow emotionally, intellectually and socially, besides developing their academic and professional capabilities. Underlying these is my belief and endeavour to see them blossom as good individuals and model citizens of this beautiful country.

To me, being a part of the vision and mission of DCLC, has been my source of pride and joy.

Thank you for this opportunity,

Devi Torpy, English Teacher

VOLUNTEER STORY

Being a volunteer English Teacher is truly rewarding, not only for the class participants, but certainly for the teachers as well. All students in the classes are from different countries and each person brings with them their own story and experiences. In some of these countries education, particularly for Women, is not an option, it is merely a dream. Those who come to our classes are keen, committed, and happy to learn. Classes are informal and lots of fun, providing the ideal environment for learning.

We cover basic English principles, alphabet, simple grammar, sentences, reading, speaking and especially conversation which we do on a regular basis. For this we do role playing, whereby each class member pairs with another, and they read a simple script.

The ability to speak English for new arrival to Australia is so important, particularly for assimilation into the community. It opens pathways to further challenges such as employment, running a business, further education and empowers individuals to have a voice in our society.

Being a volunteer teaching English is a two-way learning experience. Not only does the class learn, but it is also a wonderful learning experience for the volunteer. To engage with those, from a variety of countries, to hear their stories and listening to their experiences is truly enlightening, and often quite humbling.

Thank you.

Robyn Fricsons, DCLC Volunteer





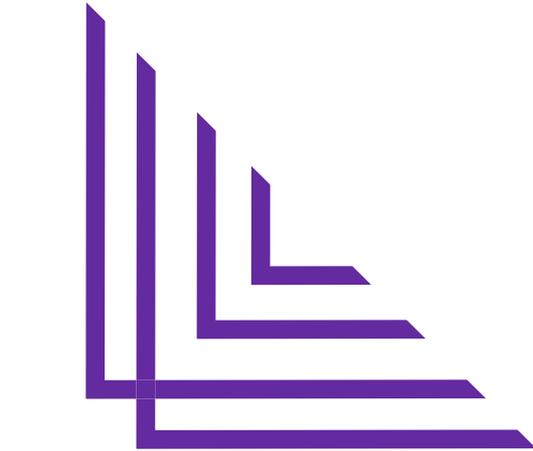
LEARNER STORY

My name is Tamara and I joined the Dandenong Community and Learning Centre (DCLC) in a couple of years ago. I have two sons and this year has been a challenging year for my family financially and DCLC have always been there to lend a hand when I couldn't put food on the table for my family with the provision of food bank supplies. I am grateful for all DCLC have done to support my family and I continue to be part of the Centre by taking digital classes, barista café classes as well as hospitality classes.

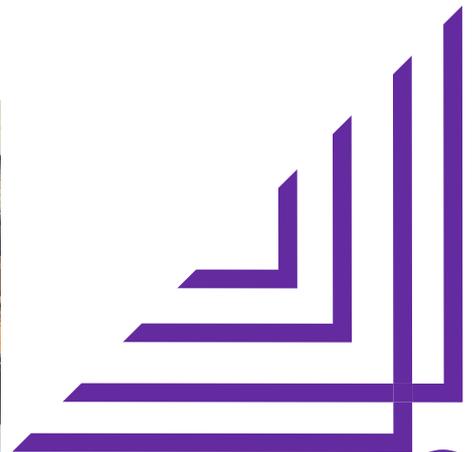
Being part of DCLC has taught me to grow in many ways I thought I could ever grow. I have met some fantastic friends from the local community.

I am very blessed to call DCLC my family and second home and I will continue to attend events and activities and classes at DCLC and hope others in the community can join the centre to enrich their lives.

Tamara Huver, Food Bank Member and Cooking & Hospitality Learner

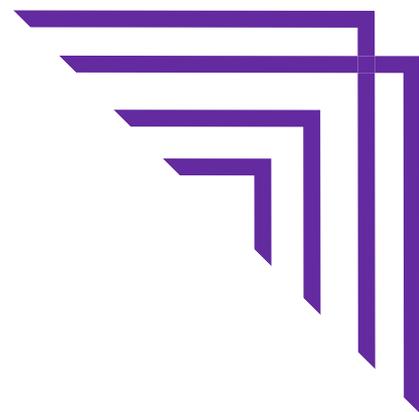


COMMUNITY PHOTOS





OUR TEAM



Board of Governance

- Kathleen West (Chairperson)
- Niloo Amendra (Treasurer)
- Leve Louis (Acting Secretary)
- Anthony Yeo (Outgoing Board Member)
- Garry Porter (Board Member)
- Michael Hillier (Incoming Board Member)
- Nirangeni Jeyapalan (Incoming Board Member)

Management

- Merina Ashdown – General Manager

Finance

- Girija Nedumaran - Finance Officer

People Connectors (ACDC Project)

- Daniel Kuol
- Ameneh Ahmadi
- Sarah Empeigne

Administration

- Stephanie Zaverdinos - Administration Officer

Teachers

- Rod Bryson
- Ian Wilshusen
- Tim Cheng
- Michelle Hood
- Aliya Mossammat
- Yasmin Rahman
- Devi Torpy
- Sarah Empeigne
- Anisha Shiak
- Maryam Haidari
- Anusua Ghosh
- Samantha Riegl
- Seetha Subasinghe

Volunteers

- Jason Curtis
- Robyn Fricsons
- Susan Wilkins
- Sowmya Koppisetti
- Shaista Veremeenco
- 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*



Human Rights



Responsiveness

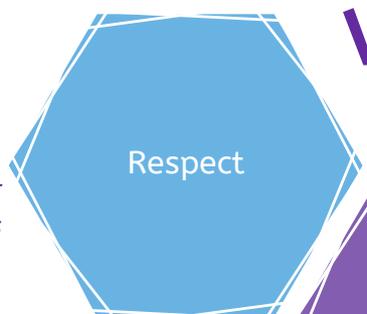
*Flexible in responding
to community needs,
while being proactive
when responding*



Environmental
Sustainability

*Supporting principles
of environmental
sustainability*

Our Values



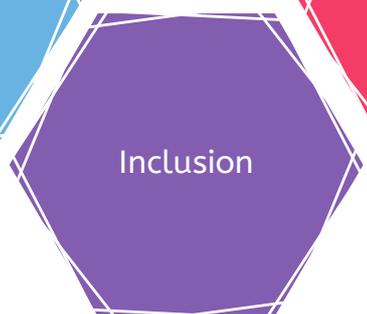
Respect

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



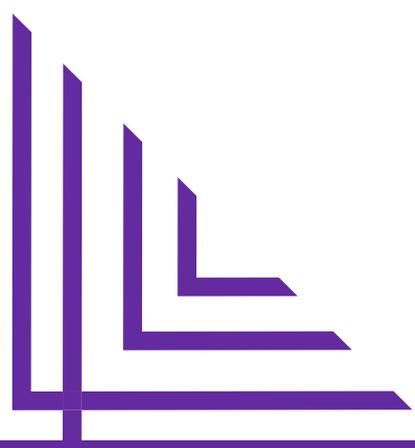
Integrity

*Being transparent,
accountable, ethical
and honest*



Inclusion

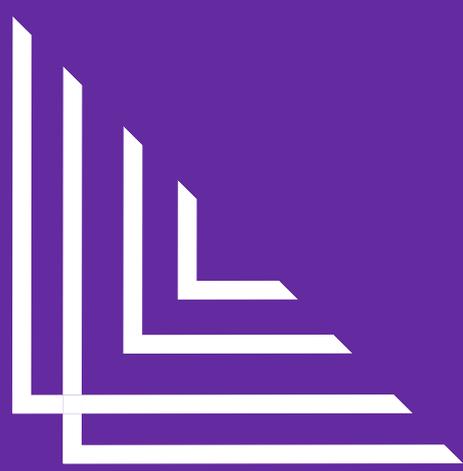
*Building capacity within communities,
connecting communities, celebrating diversity
and allowing communities to have a voice*





THANK YOU

FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



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