



35th Annual Report

Manning Valley

Neighbourhood Services Inc.

20th October 2016





Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc.

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Our Vision

Our Vision is
a joyous, diverse
and inclusive community
that celebrates
its uniqueness and strengths

Our Mission

MVNS is a community
development organisation
that resources and empowers
individuals, groups and the
community in the Manning
valley and surrounding LGAs, to
address issues that affect them.

MVNS Activities Umbrella

Neighbourhood Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information & Referral • Advocacy • Community Development • Resume writing. • Cheap use of phone, fax & computer. • Support for community members who need to talk • Promotion and assistance for community groups • Tax Help - July to Oct - free assistance with tax returns for low income earners • Groups and courses <p>Contact the staff and volunteers 6553 5121</p>	Catering for the Community at Bushlands – Bushland Tukka <p>Supporting community through a social enterprise cafe and catering.</p> <p>Resources, training and outreach service provision</p> <p>Contact Caron 5535121</p>	Garden Kitchen <p>A kitchen resource that provides support toward self-reliance to disadvantaged clients in a purposeful approach which provides a meal, advocacy, education and opportunities to commune.</p> <p>Contact Caron 6553 5121</p>	Manning Valley Cooperative Living Program <p>Financial assistance and case work for individuals & families in crisis.</p> <p>Available to all people living in the Manning Valley who are experiencing financial crisis and/or other misfortune or suffering which is contributing to poverty or helplessness.</p> <p>Contact 6553 5121</p>		Manning Cultural Connections Committee <p>To promote social inclusion and provide an engaging intercultural platform in the Manning Valley with a focus on appreciation and awareness of Africa's contribution to Australia.</p> <p>Contact Jane 65535121</p>	Manning Valley Community Gardens <p>Development and maintenance of a sustainable garden for the community by the community</p> <p>Contact</p>
	Manning Valley Women's Group <p>Aims to promote, support and empower women in the community</p> <p>Contact Mary 6592 9315</p>	Cooperative Legal Service Delivery <p>Building cooperative & strategic networks of key legal services and community organisations</p> <p>Contact AJane Project Officer 6592 9315</p>	Manning Valley Interagency <p>Forum for government and non-government services to network and discuss local issues. Meets 1st Wednesday of each month in Taree.</p> <p>Contact Caron 6553 5121</p>	Mental Health Court Support and Referral Project <p>An information, referral and court support program for people with a lived experience of mental illness.</p> <p>Contact Anne 0427 507 679</p>	Wingham Akoostik Festival <p>Raising the cultural profile and diversity of this region and showcase local talent through music.</p> <p>Contact Donna 0417 570 359</p>	
					Migrant Settlement Project Worker <p>Information & referral for migrants and NESB residents of the Mid North Coast.</p> <p>Contact Jane 6553 5121</p>	Manning Environmental Education Group <p>Aims to encourage MV residents to develop an awareness and appreciation of their natural environment</p> <p>Contact Kirsty 6592 4830</p>

Annual General Meeting (AGM) Agenda 2016

**Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc.
Thursday 21st October 2016 at 10am
Old Courthouse, 4 Farquhar St, Wingham**

1. Welcome
2. Attendance and apologies
3. Adoption of Minutes of 2015 AGM
4. Brief visual presentation of Bushland Project
5. Reports:
 - a. Chairperson's Report
 - b. Treasurer's Report
 - c. Manager's Report
 - d. Catering for the Community at Bushland
 - e. Migrant Support Project Worker's Report
 - f. Cooperative Legal Services Delivery Report
 - g. Mental Health Court Support and Referral Project Report
 - h. Manning Valley Cooperative Living Report
 - i. Manning Valley Community Gardens Report
 - j. Food From the Heart Project
 - k. Akoostik Festival Report
6. Appointment of Auditor
7. Appointment of Returning Officer
8. Election of Management Committee members:
 - a. Chairperson
 - b. Secretary
 - c. Treasurer
 - d. Committee Members
9. General Business
 - a. Motion: Form 12 for Department of Fair Trading to be lodged and signatories be authorised for lodgement
 - b. Any other business placed on the agenda prior to the commencement of the meeting
10. Close of meeting

Chairperson's Report

During 2015/2016, MVNS has continued its mission and has prospered in addressing many issues which affect the community; resourcing and empowering individuals and groups along the way. This year has been a year of growth, planning and action.

As a collective, MNVS staff and volunteers have strived towards meeting goals set by strategic planning workshops during the previous year. The focus this year on continuing to source sustainable funding, strengthening and growing programs and the capacity of the organisation to continue to service disadvantaged individuals and groups in the wider Manning Valley.

MVNS has planned and held host to fundraisers such as *Groovin' in the Garden* which was reported to have been enjoyed by young and old, and the *My Wardrobe Rules* fundraiser to be held later this month, with many more fun, community driven events to come, which will feed funds back into the programs which support our community.

MVNS over the year has also put great effort and time into leading the creation and planning of the *Mental Health Court Support and Referral Project* which was officially launched last month in partnership with other community organisations central to the Manning Valley. We welcome new volunteers and staff onto the project.

We must praise and acknowledge the highly valued contributions and efforts of dedicated MVNS employees, volunteers, management committee, students, partners, supports and donors; with special mentions to Caron, Kerrie, Jane, Jasmine and Chelsea for their diligence and always exceeding the expectations of their roles.

I hope you enjoy the reports that follow in this Annual Report which address the programs and projects central to MVNS and celebrate the innovative workshops, training, events, festivals, groups, culture and resources which enhance, empower and build community capacity.

Diligent planning and action continues for the 2016/2017 year ahead so that our organisation MVNS can continue to address needs, issues, hardships and disadvantage in this diverse community.

With much anticipation for the year ahead,

Jo Newby (nee Paton)

Chairperson



Treasurer's Report

I am pleased to be able to present the Treasurer's report for 2015 – 2016.

MVNS Inc.'s financial administration and account record keeping are professionally managed and administrated by our Manager, Caron Watson, and Administration Officer, Kerrie. I would like to thank them for their on-going excellent financial administration and support to me as Treasurer.

Essential Assurance Service Pty Ltd again audited the financial accounts. Rhonda Futterleib and her staff are professional and thorough in the audit process. It also helps that they understand community organisations.

The tabled audited financial statements demonstrate last year's financial position. Some things to note:

- We made a moderate overall loss of \$10,859, which reduces our member's funds to \$52,161. The Board is aware of the need to raise addition general funds and various sub committees are working on fundraising activities. The success of 'Groovin in the Garden' recently has given us a morale boost!
- We had a reduction in revenue due to less emergency relief funding - \$25,000
- We received Law and Justice Foundation funding, \$10,000, for the Mental Health Court Support and Referral Project.
- Revenue from Bushland Tukka was \$71,000 – a great result. Caron, Jazz and the volunteers are working to get the café into profit.
- Interest was lower than last year due to drop in interest rates and the use of the Bushland Project funding.
- There is an increase in rent due to changes at Council. We have taken over responsibility for the building including the Court House and now pay increased rent to Council. We plan to offset this by renting the space out to community groups

Family and Community Services (FACS) – Community Services has advised services that receive the Community Builders program funds that the Department is planning some changes to the contracted outcomes of the program. Whatever the changes are I think we are in a good position to meet any challenges and continue to deliver services and programs to the community.

The ability of MVNS to continue to deliver programs within the funding guidelines and boundaries of our various funding bodies is down to Caron, Kerrie, Jane, Jazz and now Anne's commitment to the community and making things work. They and the team of invaluable volunteers who support them work a miracle – so much done by so few for so many!

Angela Pink

Treasurer



Manager's Report

The Manning Valley Neighbourhood Centre receives funding through the Community Services NSW – Community Builders program. Community Builders is a funding program which aims to strengthen communities and particularly the disadvantaged groups within them.

Community strengthening is about building the capacity of and opportunities for people to actively engage in a wide variety of social, economic, cultural, recreational, learning and civic activities. It also includes supporting the relationships and networks that result from these activities.

I think it's important to say how frustrating annual reports can be! Firstly you want to make sure you don't miss imparting the breadth of what has been achieved, secondly, you know you will and thirdly, if it's too wordy you know that it might not get read! But it would be a shame not to celebrate the year that was 2015/2016 which now seems SO long ago!

I encourage you to read all reports because I know absolutely and without a doubt, that they cannot possibly convey the incredible amount of work that has been achieved this year. Reading them will pay respect to the workers who have all achieved above and beyond (as usual). I can't thank enough and be grateful for the MVNS staff – Kerrie, Jane, Jazz and Anne (yes there are just 5 paid staff), and the hoards of volunteers who assist to deliver any number of other programs.

Every volunteer is unique and plays a role which allows us to deliver and spread our services further afield. Special mention needs to go to the volunteers at Bushland Tukka (see separate report), Chelsea coordinating the garden and her band of volunteers; our admin volunteers Betty, Kris, Jennifer; Kate providing Emergency Relief; and Angela at Bushland. In the kitchen we have Deb, Rosemary and Raelee. And of course the Management Committee chaired by Jo.

July 15 saw the beginning of the transition of both our Migrant Support service and our Emergency Relief service to partnerships with Settlement Services International and Bucketts Way Neighbourhood Group. While this has required a lot of extra work, it is good to know that our autonomy is still intact.

MVNS made a couple of huge commitments this year by self funding a project worker to continue to develop the Bushland project for a further 6 months, and to take over the lease of the entire Courthouse Community Centre. This has required innovating and testing avenues for fundraising and I thank everyone for their efforts. While most of the fundraising activities are to be held in the 16/17 year, much of the planning has been throughout the year - especially 'Grooving in the Garden' and 'My Wardrobe Rules'. The year once again started with the funding reform for Targeted Earlier Intervention Programs (TEIP) looming. However, by the end of the year it had still not been rolled out. While we are hopeful that the role of Neighbourhood Centres and community development will remain a Government priority, there is still no certainty as to what our role will be.



While the Mental Health Court Support and Referral project worker didn't start until June, the first six months of the year required a significant allocation of time to establish the structures. While obtaining funding for this project was my remaining dream, it wasn't just held by me, but a number of others. With the Coordinator now on board the practicalities of the project now lie with her and our focus will be to ensure the project proves and meets the need and if so, to secure further funding.

The Cafe has required a lot of support on my part this year and the challenges of running between the two locations has stretched my capacity and not been easy for me or staff members in Wingham and Taree. I'm ever hopeful that we will obtain funds to ensure the cafe remains viable!

Another significant project this year was with GTCC and TAFE to develop a website resource for transport options in the Manning Valley with a searchable app providing travel options and links to local transport services. Funding was provided through the Department of Transport and promotion continues.

We have had some excellent media this year. Chelsea has done wonders with the Garden facebook page and following (I'm learning!) But also TV and print media has been significant.

It's also heartening to see that the time and effort put into the website over the past few years (thank you Ayesha Hilton) has been worth the effort. This financial year we had 91,000 visits and 335,000 hits!

We provided a service to over 7,000 clients at the Neighbourhood Centre. This doesn't include Bushland – see separate report. Every project more than exceeded their targets MVNS' commitment to the community sector in the Manning Valley goes above and beyond. We continue to field and disseminate thousands of emails and enquiries to hundreds of workers in the sector. Our commitment to developing or keeping worker resources updated is unique.

Technology has almost sent us into melt down this year! With the roll out of the NBN and the resulting issues, we have spent most of the year either waiting for set up or resolution of the fall out. Unfortunately, this becomes extremely time consuming. Behind all of the 'out there' activities and delivering projects, is the requirement to continue to meet the red tape funding bodies require. This is always challenging for a small organisation where there is limited staff and one level of management. I mentioned the mental health project being the last of a number of community development dreams, but there is one more, although not around community development. Last year I ended my report with this sentence – 'I would like to see the Neighbourhood Centre funded with some certainty so that workers can feel safe and secure in their jobs'. Ditto for this coming year!

Caron Watkins

Manager



Bushland Enterprise



The Bushland Enterprise is a multi-faceted project that included the development of the Bushland Tukka Cafe and Catering Service, Community Garden and Bushland Community Hub. This project seeks to meet the needs of community members more comprehensively and effectively through early intervention and prevention actions. The main aim of the project is to reinvigorate and unite the community through shared interests, the spirit of harmony, cooperation, creative enterprise and empowerment.



Key Achievements

A social enterprise is only as good as the team and the passion that drives that team. This enterprise generates a commitment and ownership that is extremely generous. The whole team is always willing to put in that extra time, or extra effort depending on what is needed at any moment in time. Jazz, Trish, Paul, Pat – you guys rock! Thank you all. Thank you to Catherine, Jenny and Jackie – our tireless shoppers! Thank you also to others who have come and gone this year.

The Café and Catering service has now been trading for 2 years. Earlier this year we started to trade 5 days a week 8.30 to 3. We are still aiming to open longer hours once security measures are in place.

I don't believe there is a day that goes by without someone 'discovering' the cafe or commenting on the value of the cafe. People from both within and outside of the local community. For example, I got a call earlier this year from a choir in Melbourne asking if they could come to the cafe and perform in October! The choir director had discovered us on Google and wanted to provide a free performance while touring down the coast.



Throughout 2015 the Enterprise Coordinator spent considerable time developing the Community Hub with the old supermarket being gutted and licked into shape. However, lack of funds has seen this on hold for now.

Funding for the cafe ceased in June 2015. With the commitment of staff and volunteers, MVNS has been self-funding the cafe since this time.

The café and catering service is providing pathways to employment and opportunities for volunteering and work experience through hands on experience and TAFE qualifications in hospitality. Once again, we ran a Cert II in Hospitality at the Cafe earlier this year through TAFE outreach. 15 students enrolled. Three went on to volunteer in the cafe. Another Barista training was held with 'Doppio or Nothing Espresso'. This is a fantastic opportunity for individuals interested in pursuing a career in hospitality.

This year we were successful in obtaining a Volunteer Small Equipment Grant through the Federal Government which has allowed us to upgrade, replace or purchase much needed equipment.

There has been a definite growth in turnover and customer numbers with approximately 1700 catering clients, 6000 cafe customers and 50 events. Catering jobs were from as little as 10 to as many as 120. As we didn't fully trade a full year in 14/15 it is difficult to do a direct comparison but we do know that numbers and turnover is steadily growing. Aside from the cafe and catering we have also hosted or provided many events and information services at the cafe. Anything from children's activities, Fair Trading Information days, Money Counts information sessions to a Rotary lunch.



Community Development

Aside from encouraging and supporting regular outreach services to attend the centre, we continue to commit to community development activities as much as possible by identifying and addressing needs in the community, which remains a priority for us. This community especially has many needs. However, it is beyond our capacity to do this on our own. Success lies in getting more services to partner in providing services and support.



Volunteers enjoying a well-deserved Christmas in July at Mansfield on the Manning!

Community Garden

The community garden is located at the back of the shopping centre with direct access through the arcade. This year has seen it flourish as a garden and an avenue for cafe produce. Thank you to Ian, Department of Juvenile Justice and other volunteers for helping to keep it in shape. We are still hoping to build a deck out over the current 'water course' to make the space even more enjoyable. Thank you also to Sam and her volunteers who allowed us to use one of their artworks in the garden. The view from the seating area is now much more attractive. New tables are currently being built by Taree Men's Shed for outdoors and we thank the Men's Shed for their ongoing support. They are always only too willing to make our dreams come true!

Future Plans

The beginning of 2016 saw a new direction of the centre with Biripi renovating some spaces and moving their CAMS team into the centre. This has seen the centre become busier but has also required some readjusting to ensure that both our services complement each other in this space and take it forward together. We hope to still be able to work together to provide a dedicated community meeting and activity space. Into the coming year we will need to focus on a business plan and promotion to work towards sustainability.



On writing this report, I can happily advise that we were successful in obtaining funding to start to beautify the shopping centre!! Along with funding to employ a worker to develop further sustainability for the project, this was the other priority!

Challenges Encountered

Renovations of Biripi office spaces meant that there was a lot of noise and dust to contend with during December and as a result we had to remain closed for all of January. The renovation of the office, meeting and workshop space next to the café is still in limbo. Taking the overflow from lack of storage in the cafe and not being required as a meeting space now that there is ample in the centre. There is still a need for the computer 'kiosk' which is being accessed regularly.

It is still a challenge to develop a vision that is generated from community will.

The marketing of the cafe remains challenging with so many other priorities. However, it is essential and will be a focus for this coming year. While wider community support has been great and varied, we need more!

While turnover is increasing, we still need to manage our bottom line. Thanks to Neil McKenzie for his time and generosity in mentoring Jazz and the volunteers this year. We have learnt a lot!

We continue to have our volunteer stalwarts with others coming and going. Providing a 'space' for volunteers is what the enterprise is about, so we recognise that they will come and go.

Funding opportunities to support the cafe through a paid worker remains extremely difficult to obtain, even though it is obvious to many that as a community development project it goes well beyond the bounds of a cafe and catering service.

Caron Watkins

Manager



Migrant Settlement Project

The Migrant Settlement project aims to increase clients' independence, knowledge, self-reliance and ability to navigate and access mainstream services and promote self-reliance to all eligible clients in the Mid North Coast regions, including Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Taree, Forster and Gloucester. This is achieved through support, referrals, information and advocacy and by supporting other services to do the same. This is achieved through support, referrals, information and advocacy and by supporting other services to do the same.



Harmony Day

Key Objectives

The objectives of the project over the last year include:

1. Provision of casework, information and referral to address settlement needs.
2. Conduct group information sessions.
3. Promotion and provision of service to local and outreach areas.
4. Publication of Multicultural Messenger.
5. Provide community advocacy and developing and maintaining networks with agencies.
6. To support the multicultural residents to feel a part of the community by forming links with other CALD residents and by participating in community activities.

Outputs

The service has continued to provide direct settlement services to clients through the provision of information, referral and casework assisting them to navigate and access services within the community to become self-reliant. The client group across all the area's service continues to be consistent with the demographics of each of the areas. New arrivals in all areas are mainly from, but not limited to Asian countries.

Group information sessions primarily delivered through the TAFE English classes in each of the service delivery areas continues to be a focus. Topics have been varied this year including health topics, wills and planning ahead, privacy and emergency services including the police and fire



services. Many thanks to the TAFE teachers for being so flexible in the delivery of these sessions.

Capacity building through the provision of information, community events and programs continues to be an important area of focus. This year has seen a high number of events which have aimed to raise awareness of, and celebrate multiculturalism in our community, educate the community and breakdown cultural barriers and importantly include CALD residents in our community.

These activities include:

- Mid North Coast Cultural Exchange Trip in Taree and Port Macquarie (August 2015) in partnership with Northern Settlement Services and Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre in Newcastle
- Multicultural Carers Day Taree (October 2015)
- Involvement in the Mid North Coast Refugee Support Group Community Forum in Port Macquarie (November 2015)
- Harmony Day event in Taree (March 2015) in partnership with Taree Library and GTCC Aboriginal Community Engagement Officer Tracey Anderson
- Cultures in the Manning Festival in Taree (May 2016)
- Yai Atem – Under a Sudanese Star school and community speaking event in Taree and Port Macquarie (May 2016)
- Refugee Week in Taree (June 2016) in partnership with Taree Library and Hunter New England Health Multicultural department.

Many of these activities have relied on working in partnership with other services. Being the only settlement worker on the mid north coast the opportunity to work with other services is invaluable.

Networking across the service areas continues to be important to providing quality service to clients. This year has seen a significant increase in referral to NSS migration agent to support clients with visa issues. Along with an increase in capacity building activities in Port Macquarie there has also been an increase in client services in the Port Macquarie area also.

This year has seen the Migrant Settlement Project join the NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP) which is a consortium of community organisations, led by Settlement Services International, delivering settlement services. This has seen the development of a new work plan to fit within DSS requirements. While unsure at the start of the year what it would mean to be part of the NSP, the year has shown it to be a great asset having access to experienced settlement workers and a mass of knowledge and resources.

Youth Cultural Exchange Trip



Key Achievements

The Cultures in the Manning Festival in partnership with the Manning Regional Art Gallery (14th May) was held at the Manning Regional Art Gallery. This year the festival celebrated the diversity of cultures from around the world found here in the Manning Valley, alongside our local Aboriginal Biripi culture.

The festival was an opportunity to promote harmony and inclusion by giving people a firsthand experience of the cultures through the activities at the festival. Activities included art, food, music and cultural performances, craft and cooking demonstrations, free children's activities and a range of food and handicraft stalls.

Many thanks to all the people who contributed to the day including Deep Water Shark Gallery, Honest Exchange (fair trade), Tibetan handicrafts stall, Andy Snelgar, Waang Djarii Biripi Dance Group, Thai lady dancers, Liz Rankin and Susie Plodder with the children from St Josephs Primary school performed Filipino dance and a cultural dress fashion parade, Jack our Chinese violinist, Wingham Pipe and Drums band, Wingsong Choir, Afro Moses, our cooking demonstrators, Dina, Susie O and Susie P, our food stall holders and TAFE for providing our free children's activities.

Lastly many thanks to Rachel Piercy and the gallery staff and Amita Krautloher our ever dependable volunteer for a great festival. Approximately 800 people attended on the day. Next year will see the Cultures in the Manning theme and newly designed logo continue.

This year Yai Atem shared his story as one of the lost boys of Sudan, telling the story of his journey as he travelled across South Sudan and Ethiopia and eventually onto Australia. Yai talked at high schools in Taree, Wingham, Port Macquarie and Wauchope and community groups in Taree and Port Macquarie.

Yai was very generous sharing his very personal story. This was an amazing opportunity, particularly for the students, to try and gain some understanding of what it truly means to be a refugee and the trauma this involves. Feedback from the students and teachers was very positive, appreciating the opportunity to learn and get to know Yai.

Yai Atem refugee speaking event



Challenges

The biggest challenge this year was learning the new Data Exchange system (DEX) introduced by Department of Social Services. This continues to be a challenge as it evolves.

Future Plans

The year will start with a community engagement project with migrants on the mid north coast after successfully applying for funds through SSI's Innovation funding for 'Kitchen Table Conversations.' This project



will provide grass roots information on the needs of the target group and used to tailor the workplan to better meet the needs of the target group, and develop targeted programs.

Many thanks to all the volunteers, committee and staff who have continue to provide much needed support and laughs over the past 12 months.

Jane O'Dwyer

Migrant Settlement Project Worker

Cultures in the Manning Festival



Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) - Taree/Forster



The CLSD project is a regionally based program to legal service delivery in NSW that aims to improve outcomes for economically and socially disadvantaged people by building cooperative and strategic networks of key legal services and community organisations.

Key Objectives

There are three key objectives that the CLSD follows:

1. Assisting economically and socially disadvantaged people to be able to efficiently and effectively access legal services, to assist them to understand, protect and enforce their legal rights and interests.
2. Give consideration to legal needs and equity in the provision of legal services and resources.
3. Oversee the proposed planning and delivery of legal services is approached in a coordinated and cooperative manner between service providers.

Outputs

Throughout 2015-16 the current action plan (developed in March 2015) was implemented throughout the year focusing on the key areas of financial and consumer literacy, better engagement with local Aboriginal communities and disability, mental health and the courts.

The Taree/Forster area is now well resourced with services providing an extensive coverage of non-legal and legal advice services to the community. The Port Macquarie Legal Aid office is now firmly established, increasing the number of clinics providing outreach in Taree and Forster in the areas of Civil, Family and Criminal Law. The Mid North Coast CLC continues to provide services in Taree (including Bushland) and Wingham (via Redback) focusing on Civil Law. Financial Counselling services are also available in Wingham, Taree and Forster.

The CLSD worker is well placed to promote all legal and financial outreach services and act as a distribution point for resources face to face and via the CLSD email distribution list to CLSD partners and the wider community services sector. It is important to keep existing and new workers up to date to with available legal services to ensure workers make appropriate and timely referrals and community members are able to access legal advice and information to address their issues.

The CLSD program continues to have strong involvement from partners enabling the delivery of a range of projects and activities across the region.

Projects undertaken include:



- A partnership to develop a model and seek funding for a Mental Health Court Support Project has been ongoing for the 12-month period. See Key Achievements below.
- Tenancy Law for community workers in Taree (21/10/15).
- Understanding Planning Ahead Tools and Funeral Products (21/9/15).
- Radio Project – ongoing. The project aims to provide information on Ngarralinyi Radio station on financial and consumer literacy issues via 12 x 5min segments delivered by Legal Aid, MNCCLC, NSW Fair Trading and MNC Financial Counselling Service.
- Aboriginal Women's Yarn up Camp in Forster. (30/11/15) Partners provided legal information sessions.
- Aboriginal Wills day in partnership with Gilbert + Tobin who provided pro bono services (10 & 11/2/16). 18 Wills were completed.
- Mental Health Community Legal Education in Taree for community workers. Provided general and specialised information on mental health relating to law (5 & 12/5/16).
- Funerals and Centrepay session for Aboriginal people in Taree (27/5/16) in response to issues with ACBF and Centrepay and general issues around funeral products.

Other activities included:

- Along with other CLSD partners attended a round table with Dr David Gillespie and Senator Fiona Nash as part of the National Ice Task Force (4/8/15).
- Involvement in the Manning Valley Domestic Violence Monitoring Committee White Ribbon Campaign – 'Airing your dirty laundry' and White Ribbon Stall (Nov 2015).
- Worker continues to be an active member of the Family Law Pathways Network.
- Distribution of Legal Topics for Older People Diaries in Taree and Forster.

The CLSD worker continues to build and maintain links in the community sector through regular attendance at network meetings including; Manning Valley Interagency, Great Lakes Network, Family Law Pathways Network and Mental Health Interagency.

Key Achievements

Without a doubt, the highlight for the year has been successfully obtaining funding for the Mental Health Court Support and Referral Project through the Law and Justice Foundation (after a vigorous application process). The project started in March 2015 when a subcommittee was formed. They developed an innovative project model to support people with mental health issues to navigate the court system and achieve improved legal outcomes. This project has been in the making for many years. The steering committee shared a vision and a passion which resulted in a great collaboration



to see the project to the stage where it was ready to roll out upon recruitment of the coordinator in June. Thank you to MNC Community Legal Centre, Legal Aid NSW, Richmond PRA (Flourish), Aboriginal Legal Service, HNEH Mental Health, Taree Court House, Judy Peach and to Caron for maintaining the vision.

Challenges Encountered

Time (one day/week) is as always an ongoing challenge with this position/project. Ideas and delivery relies on maintaining strong partner involvement and commitment from partners.

Future Plans

A number of ongoing and emerging issues have been raised throughout the year which will be the focus of future projects. Some of these include; birth certificates for Aboriginal people, lack of understanding and access of insurance products, super and entitlements, funeral products and credit and debit issues. The lack of local rehabilitation and detox facilities or the availability of the MERIT program is an ongoing issue and area of need which will be a focus for the coming year.

Many thanks to the many CLSD partners who make this program a reality.

Jane O'Dwyer

Taree/Forster Regional Coordinator



Mental Health Court Support and Referral Project (MHCSR)

People with a lived experience of mental illness are over represented at every stage of the criminal justice system. The language, surroundings and formalities may be unfamiliar and confronting.
NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

This project grew into a collaboration built on CLSD partnerships, but also within our own organization.

Many thanks go to Jane for her navigation and commitment to this. Also thanks to Judy Peach for her voluntary time and commitment – writing the funding application and then helping to develop the further requirements of the funding body.

Thank you also to the Working Party which morphed into an enthusiastic and focused Steering Committee who did lots of work prior to the recruitment of the project worker which has meant that the whole year can be dedicated to the piloting of the project.

The Steering Committee was formed in Jan 2016, after hearing of our successful application to the Law and Justice Foundation, with a wide range of local agencies taking part. A Coordinator commenced work in June 2016.



Launch of the MHCSR

MHCSR aims to develop and implement an information, referral and court support program for people with a lived experience of mental health issues.

We do this by:

1. Providing trained volunteers to assist people navigate the criminal justice and tenancy tribunal systems at Taree Court; and/or
2. Providing links to legal and community services (and vice versa).

It is envisaged that better understanding of court processes, volunteer support at court and appropriate referrals to community services will ensure better outcomes for all. The target group is people with a lived experience of mental health issues, their families and supporters. The project acts as a gateway to both legal and community services.



Both community services and legal services can refer in to the project via the coordinator who matches them with a volunteer for their court day. Volunteers ensure that people are linked in with legal representation, explain the court process and generally offer support and reassurance. Volunteers will also link them into community services where needed. We do not offer case management or legal advice.

Fifteen volunteers were recruited through local media and the Peer Support program at Taree TAFE. Each underwent training in Mental Health First Aid, and Legal and court processes and had a full project orientation.

An official launch was held in September. We were thrilled that both the Director from the Law and Justice Foundation and a representative from the Mental Health Commission saw it as a significant and worthwhile event to attend.

The project will be independently evaluated and we will be working hard at getting the project refunded and supported state wide in the future.

Anne McKenzie

Project Coordinator

Caron Watkins

Manager



Manning Valley Cooperative Living Program (MVCLP)

The MVCL Program provides financial assistance, information and referrals to community members in the Manning Valley LGA who are experiencing financial crisis. The MVCLP provides a holistic service incorporating three programs run by MVNS: Emergency Relief, Manning Valley Community Gardens and the Food from the Heart Kitchen Project.

The MVCLP attempts to ensure reasonable access to emergency relief for all people within the local area, upholding clients' rights and dignity in a way that maintains and encourages self-reliance within the individual.

Facilitation of the MVCLP includes advocacy, referrals, networking and orientation and training of volunteers involved with ER service, community garden and kitchen programs.

This year we have had to adapt to a significant reduction in funding while also initially having to field the same level of demand. As you can see from below figures, our reduction in funding from \$35,000pa to \$5,000 pa hasn't resulted in the same percentage decrease in clients. We have established new protocols which have allowed us to manage this as best we can. I want to thank Kate, our first ever volunteer providing emergency relief assessment and assistance.

ER Assistance 2015/2016	2015/2016	Total Client Numbers 2015/2016	2014/2015
ER Assistance provided (incl food parcels & lunches)		1870	1268
Clients assisted via ER appointments	320		385
<i>New Clients</i>	164		213
<i>Existing Clients</i>	156		172
Food parcels	90		
Monday lunches (41 sessions)	820		
Secondbite		1075	
TOTAL		2945	

Secondbite Food-Rescue Program

The Secondbite Food-rescue program is a collaborative project facilitated by MVNS and Coles Supermarket at Wingham. This project commenced in November 2012 and has been supported by ever increasing interest from the local community since its initiation. The Secondbite food-rescue program supplies healthy food to the community by making available fresh nutritious food that would otherwise go to waste and redistributing it to people who are homeless, living in disadvantaged circumstances or experiencing food security issues within the community.

Secondbite produce is also used for Monday "Food from the Heart" kitchen lunches and in community cooking groups run at MVNS.



Work & Development Orders (WDO)

People who are having trouble paying off their fines with the State Debt Recovery Office are able to participate in the Work and Development Order program facilitated by MVNS where they can work off their fines through various activities. We remain one of the biggest providers of WDO's in the area (20-30pa). This is provided by MVNS voluntarily with no Government funding to support this and while worthwhile, requires significant time on our part.

Food from the Heart

This program has been successfully running for over four years (commenced September 2012) and incorporates use of produce from the Manning Valley Community Gardens Project and Secondbite food-rescue.

Program Description

This has a number of facets including free nutritious meals for Monday lunch for community members. This is an essential part of the MVCLP. It is a resource that provides support toward self-reliance for vulnerable community members in a setting which offers a free nutritious meal, advocacy, education and opportunities to commune and be involved.



Program Funding

This project is mostly funded through donations. It also provides opportunities for community members who wish to contribute to become involved. It is mostly resourced by volunteers. So - once again - a big thank you to the volunteers (Rosemary, Deb and Catholic Care) who keep the Monday Food from the Heart Project going. Many, many clients are eternally grateful!

The most beneficial parts of this project is the social benefits we see develop with people coming for meals either through their own friendships, or linking in with our own workers, but also the many times that clients become engaged as volunteers.

Monday Lunches

This year we provided over 1000 lunches to both existing and new clients. Many of these clients are linked into other services.



Manning Valley Community Gardens

The Manning Valley Community Gardens continues to be an important part of MVNS and as such the garden continues to gain strength, new volunteers, and new ways of interacting with the broader community.



Special Thanks!

- The fantastic and numerous volunteers
- Work for the Dole – ETC for their fabulous furniture
- Work for the Dole crew - Tursa - assistance with renovation and maintenance of the garden
- Donation from RSL from Anzac Day charity
- Club Wingham – funding for wheel chair accessible garden bed and table and roof over pergola
- Thank you to the multiple members of community for all of their donations of soil, plants books and more!



'Groovin the Garden' fundraiser

Ensuring the sustainability of the garden is a focus for any self-funded project. This year the volunteer coordinator enthusiastically threw herself into a new venture to replace the old car boot sale! Six months later it came to fruition. This makes it sound easy, but it involved a lot of time and effort and commitment from many volunteers (and family members). Thanks to all volunteers who made it happen and run so smoothly, musicians who donated their time to perform, local stall holders and members of our area for supporting this fundraiser and the community garden.

Thank you to our generous raffle donors – Tumbleweed, Yvette Hugill, Peter Campbell and the Akoostik Festival.



Monthly Morning Teas

Garden seeds – every second Thursday – a chance for any community member to come along and enjoy some activities, games, gardening and food. All for \$2!

Midwaste Workshops

Thank you to Midwaste and Shelley McClure for partnering with us to provide these fabulous, educational and value for money workshops. This year there has been 4! Attendees receive a compost bin or worm farm for \$20.



Facebook

Follow us on Facebook! The coordinator has managed to increase our Facebook likes and activity significantly this year – almost reaching 500 likes!



Northcott Life Skills Group -

Continue to visit us every fortnight for some gardening and a BBQ.

Sales from our own propagation and the shade house continue to be a major source of fundraising – so please come along and buy something.

Community members are also welcome to come and utilize the space, the pizza oven and make the most of what is available.

Chelsea Hands - **Garden Coordinator**



Akoostik Music Festival Report



The philosophy of MVNS is to resource and empower individuals, groups and the community in the Manning Valley and surrounding LGA's. The Wingham Akoostik Music Festival is the product of the resources provided and the empowerment gained by being under the auspice of MVNS.

Festival Outcomes

The festival outcomes:

1. Build social capital, empower the community and develops skills.
2. Provide a family friendly, safe, outdoor music event.
3. Encourage and increase overnight visitation to the region, providing economic benefit locally.
4. Promote cultural events in the Manning Valley, drawing recognition to the area as a destination for cultural tourism.
5. Deliver an event strongly supported by local artists and the community.
6. Promote awareness of indigenous culture.
7. Provide an opportunity for school age students to perform and to become involved as volunteers, gaining skills in event management and production.
8. Increase business in the region, supporting and building the local economy – creating economic benefit for the Manning Valley.
9. Work collaboratively with the Mid Coast Council, Chamber of Commerce, community groups, schools, musical tutors, artists and inducting and supporting volunteers in the organization and promotion of the Akoostik program.

Festival Achievements

Since being established in 2007, the Wingham Akoostik Festival is now recognised as one of the mid- north coast's most vibrant community-based events. The annual celebration of music, culture and community is held over three days (Friday to Sunday) every October, and brings together musical performers, creative artists, local businesses and producers, volunteers, school students, regional media, tourists and locals – alongside



some of Australia's biggest musical icons – for a family-friendly weekend of entertainment and cultural experiences.

The Festival has been recognised as Community Event of the Year in the 2014 Greater Taree City Council Australia Day announcements, Finalist in the 2015 NSW/ACT Regional Achievement and Community Awards, and Gold Winner of the Small Festivals category in the 2016 North Coast Tourism Awards.

Many Australian musical icons have played on the Akoostik stages over the years, including Joe Camilleri and the Black Sorrows, Grace Knight, James Reyne, Rick Price, Deborah Conway, Doc Neeson (The Angels), Richard Clapton, Wendy Matthews, Phil Jamieson (Grinspoon), Jenny Morris and Bill Chambers.

Performing alongside them have been hundreds of local and regional touring artists. The festival also features circus performances, mass choir performances, roving entertainers, vinyl record collectors' exhibitions and sales, yoga sessions, rock and gem displays, a 'chill out' lounge and market stalls with home-made and home-grown, local products. The enticement of the major artists and the local home-grown essence of the festival attracts growing number of visitors each year.

Along with the entertainment and displays, the Wingham Akoostik Festival offers a variety of innovative workshops, broadening skills, encouraging creativity, inspiring upcoming artists and leaving a legacy within the community. In the past these offerings have included songwriting, vocal classes, mosaic art, drumming, percussion, guitar skills, African singing, youth musician mentoring, building with bamboo and sustainable timbers and choral workshops.



Festival Management & Volunteers

The Wingham Akoostik Festival Management Committee is comprised of six members, all of whom are volunteers. Their function is to organise all elements of the Akoostik Festival, encompassing event management including sponsorship, fundraising, public relations, media and finances.

MVNS supports the committee by providing insurance for volunteers and the event, governance for the event and a paid worker to complete accounting services. MVNS also administers the annual internal audit of the festival accounts.



The specific roles and activities undertaken by each committee member are determined via regular meetings and ongoing consultation within the group, recognising that each member brings unique experiences and talents to the committee, as well as valuable community connections. At present, the group consists of: a community liaison officer, a recording studio operator, an accountant, a retired record store owner/operator, a local business proprietor and a market stall operator.

Future Growth Areas

Potential growth areas for the Akoostik Festival include:

- Increase opportunities for corporate sponsorship will assist in increasing revenue. For example, in 2014, 2015 and 2016 two corporate sponsors have pledged large sponsorship amounts to support the event, as they recognise the economic and social benefits to the wider community.
- Increase revenue from ticket sales. At the end August 2016 we have almost doubled (85% increase year on year) online tickets sales.
- Increase revenue from rental of stallholder sites. As the festival grows and stallholder revenue increases, the committee can justify higher rental fees, and can also attract more stallholders to the event. Income from stall sites accounts for approximately 4 -5 percent of festival revenue at present and income received in 2015 was 80% more than received in 2014.
- Value-adding through the sale of food, drink and merchandise, is another area which will contribute to creating a more sustainable future for the festival. Revenue can be increased by offering more gourmet lines of food and drink, including management of the food stalls by a qualified chef. Sales of merchandise at the event can be increased by making these items available for sale in local outlets prior to the event, and via online sales.



We aim to continue to empower the community via cultural events and skill development and bring excitement and enthusiasm to the Manning Valley.

Donna Ballard - **Member of the Akoostik Festival Committee of Management**

Note: Photos courtesy of Meryl Kemp Photography.



2016 Special Thanks

Volunteers & Supporters

- Our FANTASTIC volunteers - office, garden, Garden Kitchen, Tax Help, and Management Committee
- Ayesha Hilton
- Rhonda Futterleib – Essential Accounting Services
- Wingham RSPCA
- Wingham Rotary club
- Manning River Mens Shed
- Taree Local Courthouse
- Manning River Times
- Neil and Jane McKenzie
- Wingham Community Markets
- Club Wingham
- Judy Peach
- Prime News
- Wingham Chronicle
- Greater Taree City Council – Sarah Wilkinson and Michael Cross
- Hunter New England Area Health Service
- Alex Burns and the Northern Settlement Services team
- Pauline Smith - Salvation Army Financial Counsellor
- MNC Community Legal Centre
- SecondBite Food Rescue Program in partnership with Coles Wingham
- Manning Uniting Church Taree
- Holcim Quarry volunteers
- Legal Aid NSW, Port Macquarie
- Interrelate Taree and Port Macquarie
- Aboriginal Legal Service
- Biripi APMC
- North Coast Institute TAFE (Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Taree and Tuncurry)
- Rudi's Meats
- Manning Regional Art Gallery
- Catholic Care
- Global Care

Funding Bodies

Special thanks also to our funding bodies:

- NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS)
- Legal Aid NSW
- Department of Social Services
- Settlement Services International
- Greater Taree City Council (GTCC)
- Law and Justice Foundation
- Telstra, through the Telstra Bill Assistance Certificate (TBAC) Program
- FRRR
- Transport NSW
- Mercy foundation

Apologies to anyone who has been forgotten – there are so many!





Appendix A: 2015 - 2016 Financial Reports

Please contact MVNS for copies of the financial reports.

