



**36th Annual Report
Manning Valley
Neighbourhood Services Inc.
October 2017**



Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc.

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Contents

Our Vision	3
Our Mission	3
MVNS Activities Umbrella	4
Chairperson's Report	5
Treasurer's Report	6
Manager's Report	7
Bushland Enterprise	10
Migrant Settlement Project	14
Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) - Taree/Forster	18
Mental Health Court Support and Referral Project (MCSR)	21
Manning Valley Cooperative Living Program (MVCLP)	24
Manning Valley Community Gardens	26
Akoostik Music Festival Report	28
2017 Special Thanks	31
Appendix A: 2016 - 2017 Financial Reports	32



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

<p>Neighbourhood Centre</p> <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>	<p>Catering for the Community at Bushlands – Bushland Tukka</p> <p>Supporting community through a social enterprise cafe and catering.</p> <p>Resources, training and outreach service provision</p> <p>Contact Caron 5535121</p>	<p>Garden Kitchen</p> <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>	<p>Manning Valley Cooperative Living Program</p> <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>		<p>Manning Cultural Connections Committee</p> <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>	<p>Manning Valley Community Gardens</p> <p>Development and maintenance of a sustainable garden for the community by the community</p> <p>Contact</p>
	<p>Manning Valley Women's Group</p> <p>Aims to promote, support and empower women in the community</p> <p>Contact Mary 6592 9315</p>	<p>Cooperative Legal Service Delivery</p> <p>Building cooperative & strategic networks of key legal services and community organisations</p> <p>Contact AJane Project Officer 6592 9315</p>	<p>Manning Valley Interagency</p> <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>	<p>Mental Health Court Support and Referral Project</p> <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>	<p>Migrant Settlement Project Worker</p> <p>Information & referral for migrants and NESB residents of the Mid North Coast.</p> <p>Contact Jane 6553 5121</p>	<p>Wingham Akoostik Festival</p> <p>Raising the cultural profile and diversity of this region and showcase local talent through music.</p> <p>Contact Donna 0417 570 359</p>

Chairperson's Report

Welcome to the Annual Report!

The year started very well with the news that Family and Community Services had renewed our Community Builders Program funding for a further three years. There are to be changes to reporting and some priorities determined but we are well placed to manage these. There was a general sigh of relief as time was of the essence with another financial year looming.

On the theme of funding, the Management Committee and staff are always on the lookout for funding opportunities to support or expand our services. One application for a Community Safety initiative was successful and you will hear more about it as we know more and the project gets going.

The fundraising events, My Wardrobe Rules, Groovin' in the Garden and the BBQ at Bunnings all helped boost the bottom line of our self-funded projects and sales continue to grow at Bushland Tukka.

We were disappointed not to secure ongoing funding for the Court Support Project, which thanks to the energy and commitment of Anne and the court support volunteer's team proved there is a need for such a project.

Please read the reports from Caron, Jane, Anne, Chelsea and Donna as they give a small window into just some of the work they do and the things that are happening in the community.

Also, please take some time to wander around the back of the building to see the results of all the hard work from our Work for the Dole people and other garden volunteers.

A big thank you to:

- Jane, Kerrie, Chelsea, Anne and Jasmine who work to keep the ship afloat! and to Caron who keeps us all on an even keel!
- All the volunteers who cook, dig, water, answer the phone, pick up the mail, bank, answer questions, collect bread, run music festivals, make flat whites etc., anything that needs doing! More ship floating!
- The volunteer Management Committee that meet each month, support Caron and is the rudder of the organisation.

You are all appreciated!

Angela Pink

Chairperson



Treasurer's Report

I am pleased to be able to present the Treasurer's report for 2016 – 2017.

This year has seen a strengthening of MVNS financial position with a number of extra grants awarded for both infrastructure and program development.

While core funding for the Neighbourhood Centre itself has not been increased in many years, we continue to manage our funds effectively and capably allowing us to still continue to support various self funded projects such as the Bushland Tukka Cafe.

I draw your attention to the comments made by the auditor in her report, namely:

- There was an increase in revenue due to Housing funding (upgrade of infrastructure at Bushland) and Law and Justice funding (Mental Health Court Support Project), and an increase in sales at Bushland Tukka Cafe
- There was an increase in expenditure due to additional employee costs and the beginning of upgrade at Bushland

Our assets are well in excess of expenditure, leaving us in a good financial position for the coming year. Budgets remain tight however and will continue to be monitored by the Manager and the Management Committee to ensure the ongoing viability of MVNS.

Many thanks to Kerrie McTaggart for her efficiency in carrying out the day to day financial transactions and accounting procedures for MVNS.

It is pleasing to see the unqualified opinion regarding MVNS and our ongoing financial viability by the auditor.

I am pleased to commend to you the tabled financials reports.

(Spring) Thi Ngoc Xuan Nguyen

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.

Every October I say I will start writing the next years' annual report so that it's not such a daunting task come the following September. But it never works out that way! Each year seems to get busier and faster. It's only the unique activities, successes and stresses that make each year stand out from the others.

Having such amazing and long-term staff and volunteers, it's good to know that it's not just me saying how much busier we're getting and the extra need for our services at a time when there is so much uncertainty for a lot of people – especially jobs and financial insecurity on top of the day to day hardships that many people experience. We do this extra work with no extra funding and face a real difficulty in deciding which services need to be limited.

We continue to self fund many projects that provide an option for community members to be involved in their community in various ways. For example, the Community Kitchen, the Community Gardens, the Bushland Tukka Cafe and Catering, State Debt Recovery Work and Development Orders, Centrelink work placements, etc.

2016/2017 started with the recruitment of our new Mental Health Court Support and Referral Worker and the launch of the Court Support Project for a 12-month pilot. Many thanks go to the Law and Justice Foundation for being brave enough to see the potential and value of such a fundamental early intervention project. See more in the MHCSR report.

Housing NSW provided us with much needed funds to upgrade the external and internal walls, security and some planting at the Bushland Hub where our Bushland Cafe and Catering social enterprise is located.

Bushland Tukka Cafe had a quiet start to the year due to the heat which is easy to forget at this beautiful time of year. It has been all go since March and getting busier each month both at the cafe and for catering. Thanks and admiration go to Jazz and her team of volunteers who are so committed and do a fabulous job! Thanks also to Angela for keeping the MVNS outreach kiosk rolling.



A couple of years ago we received funding through the Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal foundation to deliver some youth programs focused on developing skills of young people wanting to work in the entertainment industry. It has taken some time to get underway, but in June we delivered our first round of workshops - REVERB - in partnership with Midcoast Council at the MEC. Thanks go to Russell Ingram the Youth Development Officer and Chris Tippet for this fabulous partnership. We're looking forward to delivering more in coming months.



We also received funding through the Stronger Communities funding from Council. This funding is to allow us to purchase a Coffee Cart and coffee machine to provide coffee and limited food at the Taree Local Court. It will provide opportunities for young people to learn barista skills and customer services skills. At this stage the Court is not allowing us to do this on their premises so we are looking for alternative arrangements.

The year ended with an announcement of funding from Justice NSW which will allow us to employ a worker to engage with young people in the Bushland area and establish social structures to increase safety for this community. A much needed program.



Neighbourhood Centre – funding for the Neighbourhood Centre has been extended for a further three years to allow time for appropriate review. However, at this point we are still unaware of what our service delivery will be focusing on under the new Targeted Earlier Intervention program.

Once again, we exceeded our targets for all of our programs. Our statistics this year show that we continue to deliver services to a broad spectrum of the community through our various programs with approximately 6,500 information, referral, advocacy or support statistics recorded. We provide an enormous amount of information to community services and workers through our interagency network. Our website and our resources are extremely well utilised and our Facebook page is also a great avenue for delivering information to the community about our services.

We have been the recipients of much generosity this year. Our hard working volunteers (who we hate to lose); donations in many forms; monetary donations from the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the local Wingham Community Markets, Wingham Rotary Club to name a few.

Fundraisers – this year, some enthusiastic committee members decided it would be worthwhile to raise some funds for a rainy day. My Wardrobe Rules was born last October! A great concept and a lot of work! Thanks to Susie, Sam, Anna and Celeste and their band of volunteers for pulling it together. It was an enormous task taking in so many elements e.g. recycling, repurposing, etc. MWR had another outing at





the Neighbourhood Centre in May as we had many clothes left over. It will continue in various forms as long as the energy is there.

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. It is not funded.

Key Achievements

The retention of many fabulous, passionate and loyal volunteers (some who have been there since its inception) ensures the cafe remains receptive to the community needs and is working its way towards viability. We also have many new volunteers who come and go depending on their personal commitments. We also have volunteers who support the cafe through other means (E.g. shopping, catering deliveries etc.). You are all amazing – thank you!

The Café and Catering service has now been trading for 3 years! Opening 5 days a week has been successful and needed given the influx of new workers with Biripi.



There has been a definite growth in turnover and customer numbers (brackets =15/16) with approximately 1400 (1700) catering clients, 8000 (6000) cafe customers and 112 (50) events. Catering jobs were from as little as 6 to as many as 100.

Our partnership with Biripi has strengthened this year as they have settled in to their new offices.

While MVNS continues to self fund the cafe, the cafe income is gradually improving and now the aim is to have it covering the costs of the cafe supervisor and ultimately being able to pay another worker.



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 – we held another Certificate II course this year with 10 participants. Volunteers also got to complete their First Aid training.

Last year we received a Volunteer Small Equipment Grant through the Federal Government, this year we spent it!

This year we received a grant from Housing NSW to upgrade the external and internal walls of the shopping centre, improve security and do some planting. This has been a gradual process. But worth it!



I received a call from Brunswick Women's Choir last year asking if we would like them to attend the cafe for a performance on their tour of the east coast. Of course, I said yes! We made a small news story on Prime.

We undertook some small business financial planning earlier this year which was very beneficial in helping us to see where we could make changes to improve our bottom line and reduce wastage.



Community Development



Community development is still a priority for us at Bushland. We are constantly looking at community engagement activities – small and large. We held a Mother's Day drawing competition with Manning Gardens Kindy, a craft day at the centre along with many other activities. We also sponsored the Bushland night cricket team last summer.

Community Garden

The community garden is now a good source of staples for the cafe as well as a lovely place to sit in nice weather and have a cuppa or lunch. We have new sturdy outdoor tables thanks to the Mens Shed.



Future Plans

Our aim is to ensure the cafe is sustainable into the future and provide outreach services at this location. We want to upgrade our office space so that it provides for small meetings and as an information kiosk with access to computers for the public. We believe there is a major need for community development and engagement in this community to ensure it does not become further disadvantaged and socially isolated. We would like to develop a vision for the enterprise that is generated from community will.





Challenges Encountered

There are many challenges with this project. The main one being the lack of funds to engage a worker to further develop the enterprise as a sustainable business and community resources.

The marketing of the cafe remains challenging with so many other priorities and limited time.

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.



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.

Establishing and maintaining networks continues to be essential to providing not only appropriate client services but also the delivery of capacity building projects. Many thanks to the TAFE ESL teachers who have been so generous throughout the year with their time and involvement in group information sessions, providing information for funding applications and capacity building projects including the kitchen table conversations project.

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 activities which have raised awareness and celebrated cultural diversity in our community with the purpose of breaking down barriers and promoting social inclusion of our CALD community. Many of these activities have relied on working in partnership with other services increasing the workers capacity to deliver such projects.

These activities include:



- Mid North Coast Cultural Youth Exchange Trip in Taree and Port Macquarie (July 2016) in partnership with Northern Settlement Services and Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre in Newcastle
- Multicultural Careers Day Taree (October 2016)
- Harmony Day events in Taree and Port Macquarie – film screenings of *Constance of the Edge* and panel discussion (March 2016)
- Culturally Responsive Practice Training Taree (April 2017)
- Cultures in the Manning Festival in Taree (May 2017)
- Refugee Week film screenings of Molly and Mobarak (June 2017)

Involvement with the NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP) continues to be a great benefit to the Migrant Settlement Service. This year has seen an audio-visual upgrade to facilitate NSP teleconferencing, provision of standardised client consent forms (available in translated languages) and access to partner’s knowledge, ideas and expertise.

Key Achievements

The screenings of the documentary *Constance of the Edge* and panel discussion was a great tool for raising awareness of not only refugee resettlement in a regional area but of settlement generally. While the film focused on the importance of belonging it also highlighted many issues which can impact on settlement. The response by the community in Taree and Port Macquarie to the screenings was fantastic with both venues booked out. The panel discussion was a good opportunity to expand on the issues raised in the film and discuss broader issues, particularly around refugee resettlement in a regional context. Many thanks to local refugee support groups for each area, our hosts and our panelists for their support.

The Cultures in the Manning Festival in partnership with the Manning Regional Art Gallery was held on the 14th May at the Manning Regional Art Gallery. Again, this year the festival celebrated the diversity of the many cultures from around the world found here in the Manning Valley, alongside our local Aboriginal Biripi culture. The festival was an opportunity to promote social inclusion by giving people a firsthand experience of the cultures through the activities at the festival. Providing a range of interactive and free activities continues to be a successful way to involve people, particularly families. Activities included Chinese drawing, cultural performances, craft and cooking demonstrations, free children’s activities and a range of food and handicraft stalls.



The Kitchen Table Conversation project funded through the NSP Innovation fund was a community engagement project that aimed to identify settlement needs, challenges, and issues including emerging issues and aspirations of newly arrived female migrants and refugees living on the Mid North Coast. This project was a great opportunity to better understand the target group, their needs for, and barriers to successful settlement. In addition, two conversations were run with Taree and Port Macquarie services to identify possible partnerships to help meet the needs identified.



The main aspirations identified revolved around education, training, employment, communication/language, acceptance and living a good life with family. Barriers were also identified through the conversations. These findings will be used to inform the work plan and focus for the coming year. The *Migrant Support Mid North Coast* Facebook page



was developed in May 2016 because of the project to overcome barriers to access the service and promoting the service. It has also been a very useful tool for general awareness raising and promoting events to both the CALD and broader community. Many thanks to Caron for leading this project and sharing her extensive knowledge of community engagement, it was a rare opportunity to work together on a project.

Challenges

The biggest challenge this year has been capacity to deliver the evolving number of possible projects in a part-time position while continuing to deliver core services from the work plan.

Future Plans

Information resulting from the *Kitchen Table Conversations* will continue to inform project development and the sourcing of funding opportunities to deliver projects that address the main issues identified. Increasing CALD residents' economic participation by increasing their capacity to gain employment will be one of the main areas of focus as employment is a key factor to successful settlement and impacts positively on the individual's financial capacity and the wellbeing of themselves and their family.

Many thanks to the many project partners, volunteers, committee and staff who have continued to provide much needed support and laughs over the past 12 months.

Jane O'Dwyer

Migrant Settlement Project Worker

Photos of the Events

21 & 22 July 2016, Youth Cultural Exchange Trip



18 October 2016, Taree Multicultural Carers Day



21 March 2017, Harmony Day Taree – Constance on the Edge screening and discussion



30 March 2017, Harmony Day Port Macquarie– Constance on the Edge screening and discussion



14 May 2017, 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 the year the ongoing action plan was implemented focusing on the key areas of the plan, financial and consumer literacy, better engagement with local Aboriginal communities and disability, mental health and the courts. There were also a number of projects addressing areas outside of the action plan in response to emerging and unmet legal needs.

The Taree/Forster area continues to be well resourced with services providing an extensive coverage of non-legal and legal advice services to the community. Services include the Port Macquarie Legal Aid office that provides outreach clinics in Taree and Forster; the Mid North Coast CLC provides services in Taree (including Bushland) and Financial Counselling services are available in Wingham, Taree and Forster.

The CLSD worker continues to promote all legal and financial outreach services and act as a distribution point for resources and information face to face and via the CLSD email distribution list to CLSD partners and the wider community services sector. With the changing nature of services in the community services sector it is important workers remain up to date with available legal and non-legal services for appropriate referrals and to share accurate information with clients in a timely manner.

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:



- Taree Naidoc Day Celebrations Legal Hub – July 2016
- Law Week Birth Certificate Day for Aboriginal People in Taree – July 2016
- Salt Water Women’s Camp Legal Hub and Aboriginal Wills day in partnership with Gilbert + Tobin who provided pro bono services - November 2016
- Sexting and Cyberbullying CLE for community workers – February 2017
- Mental Health Court Support and Referral Project was completed in June 2017 (See separate report)
- Radio Project was completed in June 2017. Ngarralinyi Radio station broadcast 5-minute segments on financial and consumer literacy issues delivered by Legal Aid, MNCCLC, NSW Fair Trading and MNC Financial Counselling Service



Other activities included:

- 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
- Speed Networking event in Tuncurry – March 2017
- MERIT Working Group (see Key Achievements below)

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, Forster Indigenous Interagency, Mid North Coast Multicultural Network and Mental Health Interagency.

Key Achievements

The MERIT working group was formed in January 2017 following a Court Users Forum in Taree in December 2016 when Magistrate Hudson recommended the best avenue to advocate for MERIT in the area was through a submission on the need for the program Taree/Forster. The group worked on gathering relevant statistics and support letters for the submission. While working on the submission the group became aware the MERIT program was under review and being redesigned. Julie Bates from Department of Justice attended a CLSD meeting to provide an overview of the redesign and inform us the Taree had been identified as a priority area. On her recommendation we proceeded with our submission. At this time, we are waiting to hear the outcome of the redesign. This project is a great example of partner collaboration. Many thanks to all the partners involved in the working group.





Challenges Encountered

Time is always an ongoing challenge with this position. Being a one day/week position project ideas and delivery relies on maintaining strong partner involvement and commitment from partners.

I would like to thank the CLSD partners for their input, ideas and hard work. With partner involvement and collaboration there would be no CLSD.

Jane O'Dwyer

Taree/Forster Regional Coordinator



Mental Health Court Support and Referral Project (MCSR)

Funded by the Law and Justice Foundation

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.

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services (MVNS) received a grant from the Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales

Undertake the Mental Health Court Support and Referral Project in the Taree area. A Steering Committee was formed in 2015 with representation from the following partners:

- Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services
- Mid North Coast Community Legal Service
- Flourish Australia
- NSW Legal Aid
- Hunter New England LHD—Mental Health
- Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service (TAAS)
- Aboriginal Legal Services (ALS)
- North Coast Institute of TAFE
- Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS)



The Coordinator commenced in June 2016, volunteers were recruited and trained and the project commenced at Taree court on 19 July 2016

Aims

The project aim was to develop, implement and trial an information referral and court support program for people with mental health problems to:

- Link them to needed legal services (and vice versa), and/or
- Support them to navigate the criminal justice and housing tribunal systems at Taree Court.

Service Delivery

Court support is provided by trained volunteers who support clients by acting as a useful link to court services, and a friendly face in an intimidating environment. Volunteers support clients on the day of their court proceedings. This service can be given to potential clients through either of two pathways:



- referral to the Project Coordinator from partner community agencies, and assignment to a volunteer
- direct engagement through court services or by MHCSRPs volunteers at Taree Court on list day Tuesdays.

Intended Outcomes

Through the MHCSRPs, the target group is expected to benefit from:

- reduced stress, anxiety and other barriers they face in participating effectively in court and legal proceedings
- increased willingness to attend, remain at and fully participate in court
- better communication with Police, Legal Aid and court staff
- early identification of potential issues and linkage to appropriate legal advisors or mental health services
- support in navigating and understanding court processes and procedures

Evaluation Findings

The MHCSRPs supported 167 clients to negotiate court processes between July'16 – 16 May'17).

- over half (59%) of the clients supported were male.
- Most (91%) of these clients had mental health issues.
- Just over half (51%) of clients had support person with them. Of the 84 clients with support present, most (50) still requested direct support by volunteers.
- Most (75%) of clients had been to court before.
- About one fifth of clients had been to court for matters related to traffic while most (84%) went for other matters.
- Less than half (45%) of clients had contact with some health or community services before attending court.
- Eighteen clients wanted to represent themselves at court. After speaking with a volunteer, 9 sought legal representation.
- Volunteers attended Legal Aid interviews with 32 clients during October-16th May 2017 period.
- On average, volunteers spent over an hour with a client (77 minutes). This time varied between 10 minutes to five hours.



Evaluation Conclusion [From ARTD Final Evaluation]

Clients and their support people overwhelmingly expressed appreciation and gratitude for the MHCSRPs. They reported that volunteers had reassured, supported, and clarified things for them, helping them develop a better understanding of court processes and





experience less anxiety before their court appearance. These outcomes suggested that the program positively contributed to longer term outcomes for clients, those close to them, and Taree Court.

The program invested in establishing relationships and setting up processes for referral intake. Although the number of clients referred to the service was not as high as expected, the high numbers of referrals out to other programs is an unexpected positive outcome of the program, as clients are better linked to community services.

Almost all stakeholders interviewed were convinced that the MHCSR is essential to fill the gap in service provision. The large majority of stakeholders felt that the program complemented, rather than duplicated, existing services. Some people commented that other services, family members or friends could provide similar support or referrals that the program provided, but most felt that by making this role their core business, the MHCSR left room for other services to support people in more specialised ways. Participants also commented that although this support could be offered through other avenues, it was clear that some people were falling through the cracks and remaining disconnected from community services in Taree.

Challenges Encountered

Establishing a new program is almost always fraught with teething problems. The Steering Committee was committed to ironing out issues before the project was launched, however, the project needed to get underway to put theory into practice. Engaging appropriate volunteers required more selective processes and training, referrals in to the project were not as high as we had expected, engaging with court staff and legal representatives required patience and time, addressing barriers collaboratively with other stakeholders was frustrating. Supporting clients with traffic matters did not eventuate.

Originally, we envisaged working very closely with legal representatives at court – that they would directly refer clients to us who needed support and referral. This did not occur and as the project went on we became more independent of them. This was to the detriment of the people we were supporting. Much thought has been given to the reasons for this. Our conclusion was that the culture of the court system is such that a new project such as this can seem threatening to the status quo. Services/ providers are still unsettled by change and many of the hurdles associated with this pilot are symptomatic of a wider systemic issue for people with a mental illness in the community. It would appear that this improved as time went on, indicating that perhaps the longer the project continued, the more acceptance there would be. Unfortunately, we didn't have that time.

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, Work for the Dole and Centrelink hosting, Work and Development Orders and orientation and training of volunteers involved with ER service, community garden and kitchen programs.

The following table provides a summary of numbers of clients accessing MVCLP service over the last twelve months (2016/2017).

Total funding Provided	ER Assistance 2016/2017	Total client numbers	Total Monday lunches delivered
Department of Social Services \$5,300 = Fuel \$900 Food \$2,675 Food parcels \$900	ER Assistance provided (including foodbank and Second Bite)	1265	706 - average 64 per month (no lunches provided in January)
Telstra Vouchers \$6,700	Clients assisted via ER appointments	215	
Electricity Vouchers \$27,850	<i>New Clients</i>	115	
	<i>Existing Clients</i>	100	
TOTAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED \$40,877	No. of ER clients Unable to Assist	117	

Thank you to Kate who was the first volunteer to take on the role of our Emergency Relief Worker after changes to our funding prohibited ongoing hours for our Community Services Support Worker. Ruben and Eleisha are now sharing this role. It remains extremely busy even with one eighth of the funding we have received in the past.

Primary issues identified by clients at interviews and the majority of referrals provided by MVNS ER workers are issues relating to financial hardship, health and housing.

Community Development

While we no longer have a dedicated Community Services Support Worker we continue to be involved in initiatives that help to support and empower our client base.



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. Thank you to the various volunteers who have taken responsibility for picking up and delivering this year.

Food from the Heart

Monday lunches

This program has been successfully running for over five years (commenced September 2012) and incorporates use of produce from the Manning Valley Community Gardens Project and Secondbite food-rescue. A team of voluntary chefs have delivered over 650 meals this year! Thank you to Deb, the Seventh Day Adventist crew, Chelsea and Kim.



St Vincent de Paul Wingham Branch have now joined us in providing a lunch on Thursdays as well.

Work & Development Orders (WDO)

People who are finding it difficult to pay off their fines with the State Debt Recovery Office can participate in the Work and Development Order program facilitated by MVNS. Clients have to meet various criteria to access this program. With other services gradually taking up accreditation to host WDO clients it has reduced the high numbers we were supporting in previous years.

Challenges Encountered

The nature of work in our ER program involves seeing clients who are presenting more and more with complex issues that require advocacy or case work. We are not always in a position to do this given our limited resources.



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.



Garden Redesign and Upgrade

This has been the major focus this year, and what a big job it was! The Coordinator and the garden benefited from the extra labour and injection of funds from the Work for the Dole initiative which saw up to 10 participants engaged over a 6-month period to help 'renovate' the gardens. This was a big task with a new watering system put in place, raised beds, all filled, planted and ready for Spring!



'Groovin the Garden' Fundraiser

Last year we held this fundraiser to share the garden while also looking at fun avenues for its' sustainability. At the time of this report the Coordinator is in the throes of organising the next one which will only be bigger and better!

Once again – thank you to all volunteers who make this event 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.

Midwaste Workshops

Thank you to Midwaste for partnering with us to provide these fabulous, educational and value for money workshops. This year there has been 3! Attendees receive a compost bin or worm farm for \$20. Our partnership with Midwaste gets more interesting as they initiate more avenues for community education around recycling and reducing waste.

Bees Wax Wrap Workshops

The coordinator has been putting on workshops to teach participants how to make bees wax wraps and educate on reducing plastic waste. Each workshop brings up to 20 participants to the garden.



Facebook

Follow us on Facebook! We are now at over 600 likes. We have tripled our following in 12 months.

Northcott Life Skills Group

The group continued to visit us every fortnight up to December last year for some gardening and a BBQ.

Sales

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



Bird houses, Bird Feeders and Insect/Native Bee homes made by one of the Volunteers are donated to raise funds for the garden.

Thank you to:

- The fantastic and numerous volunteers
- Work for the Dole – ETC for their partnership to reinvigorate the garden this year
- Thank you to the multiple members of community for all of their donations of soil, plants books and more!

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



Chelsea Hands - **Volunteer 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.

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.

The Wingham Akoostik Festival management committee is comprised of eight 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. The 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.

The Wingham Akoostik Festival offers a variety of innovative workshops, as a way of enhancing the event, 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. The creative output of these workshops is on show over the weekend of the festival via performances, displays and demonstrations.





Many Australian musical icons have played on the Akoostik stages over the years. 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 a growing number of visitors each year.

The festival outcomes that empower the community are:

1. Building social capital
2. Developing skills
3. Encouraging overnight visitation to the region
4. Providing economic benefit locally
5. Promoting cultural events in the Manning Valley
6. Drawing recognition to the area as a destination for cultural tourism
7. Delivering an event strongly supported by local artists and the community
8. Promoting awareness of indigenous culture
9. An opportunity for school age students to perform and to become involved as volunteers, gaining skills in event management and production
10. Collaboratively working with 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

Potential growth areas for the Akoostik Festival include:

- Increasing opportunities for corporate sponsorship will assist in increasing revenue. Corporate sponsors are becoming more interested to support the event and increase their exposure. For example, in 2014 to 2017 two corporate



sponsors have pledged large sponsorship amounts to support the event, as they recognise the economic and social benefits to the wider community.

- 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 and 2016 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. Festival volunteers manage food and beverage stalls, which generates approximately 2 percent of festival income. In addition, sales of merchandise at the event, including t-shirts, canvas bags and caps, currently accounts for approximately 2 percent of festival income. Revenue can be increased by making these items available for sale in local outlets prior to the event, and via online sales.

The October 2017 Akoostik Music Festival is the eleventh festival. We have increased the number of headline artists this year to include Kasey Chambers, Russell Morris, Eurogliders, Ella Hooper (Killing Heidi) with international artists from Canada (Twin Peaks) and from Toledo Ohio USA - the Turner Brown Band.

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



2017 Special Thanks

Volunteers & Supporters

- Our FANTASTIC volunteers - office, Bushland Tukka, garden, Garden Kitchen, Second Bite, Tax Help, fundraising 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
- Judy Peach
- Prime News
- Wingham Chronicle
- Midcoast Council – especially Russell Ingram
- Hunter New England Area Health Service
- 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
- St Vincent de Paul Wingham
- Interrelate Taree and Port Macquarie
- Aboriginal Legal Service
- Biripi APMC
- North Coast Area Health Service
- North Coast Institute TAFE (Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Taree and Tuncurry)
- Rudi's Meats
- Manning Regional Art Gallery
- **Global Care**
- Rod Moore - Absolute Building
- Swags for the Homeless

Funding Bodies

Special thanks also to our funding bodies:

- **NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS)**
- **NSW Department of Community Services (Housing)**
- 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

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





Appendix A: 2016 - 2017 Financial Reports

Please contact MVNS for copies of these reports.

