

**37<sup>th</sup> Annual Report  
Manning Valley  
Neighbourhood Services Inc.  
2018**

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### *Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc.*

**Address:**

**Old Courthouse Building,  
4 Farquhar St  
Wingham NSW Australia 2429**

**Postal Address:**

**PO Box 75 Wingham NSW 2429  
Phone/Fax: (02) 6553 5121**

**Email: [mvns@mvns.org.au](mailto:mvns@mvns.org.au)**

**Web: [www.mvns.org.au](http://www.mvns.org.au)**

**ABN: 79 194 271 854**



## 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

<b>Neighbourhood Centre</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information &amp; Referral</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Community Development</li> <li>• Resume writing.</li> <li>• Cheap use of phone, fax &amp; computer.</li> <li>• Support for community members who need to talk</li> <li>• Promotion and assistance for community groups</li> <li>• Tax Help - July to Oct - free assistance with tax returns for low income earners</li> <li>• Groups and courses</li> </ul> <p><b>Contact the staff and volunteers 6553 5121</b></p>	<b>Catering for the Community at Bushlands – Bushland Tukka</b> <p><b>Supporting community through a social enterprise cafe and catering.</b></p> <p><b>Resources, training and outreach service provision</b></p> <p><b>Contact Caron 65535121</b></p>	<b>Garden Kitchen</b> <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><b>Contact Caron 6553 5121</b></p>	<b>Manning Valley Cooperative Living Program</b> <p>Financial assistance and case work for individuals &amp; 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><b>Contact 6553 5121</b></p>		<b>Manning Cultural Connections Committee</b> <p>To promote social inclusion and provide an engaging intercultural platform in the Manning Valley</p> <p><b>Contact Jane 65535121</b></p>	<b>Manning Valley Community Gardens</b> <p>Development and maintenance of a sustainable garden for the community by the community</p> <p><b>Contact 6553 5121</b></p>
	<b>Manning Valley Women's Group</b> <p>Aims to promote, support and empower women in the community</p> <p><b>Contact Mary 6592 9315</b></p>	<b>Cooperative Legal Service Delivery</b> <p>Building cooperative &amp; strategic networks of key legal services and community organisations</p> <p><b>Contact Jane Project Officer 6592 9315</b></p>	<b>Manning Valley Interagency</b> <p>Forum for government and non-government services to network and discuss local issues. Meets 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month in Taree.</p> <p><b>Contact Caron 6553 5121</b></p>	<b>Community Safety Project Worker</b> <p>Develop social and physical infrastructure in the Bushland social housing area to engage young people and the wider community and increase community safety</p> <p><b>Contact Fiona 0476 756 515</b></p>	<b>Migrant Settlement Project Worker</b> <p>Information &amp; referral for migrants and NESB residents of the Mid North Coast.</p> <p><b>Contact Jane 6553 5121</b></p>	<b>Wingham Akoostik Festival</b> <p>Raising the cultural profile and diversity of this region and showcase local talent through music.</p> <p><b>Contact Donna 0417 570 359</b></p>
						<b>Manning River Turtle Conservation Group</b> <p>Aims to promote awareness of the Manning river Turtle as well as preserve their habitat for their ongoing survival.</p> <p><b>Contact Clare 0427 655 051</b></p>



## Chairperson's Report

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Welcome to the Annual Report!

Another busy year with successful projects, grant applications, new volunteers, the odd challenge and a new member of staff, Fiona Lee. Fiona is working in the Community Safety Project and is based at Bushland Hub.

MVNS was fortunate to receive a number of one-off grants over the year including a grant of \$10,000 from the Wingham branch of the Commonwealth Bank towards our work with young people. Information on the others are in the staff reports.

### Reports from Staff and Affiliated Organisations

Please read the reports from Caron, Jane, Fiona and Donna (Akoostik Music Festival) as they will give you an insight into the projects and work they are doing, accomplishments and challenges.

I would draw your attention to a several highlights. Jane managed a project that arranged for migrants and refugees to attend swimming and beach/water safety lessons. Another is the start of the Community Safety Project, Fiona organized meetings with community members and local Elders, as well as a family fun day. If you are a regular at Bushland Tukka, for a coffee and cake, you would have seen the gradual face lift of the whole building taking place. The final touch was planter boxes decorated by local children. The gardens at Wingham and Bushland Hub are both looking good and supporting the kitchen and café with produce.

### Planning

The management committee will be developing a new strategic plan over the next twelve months. We are generally on track with the current one, but the committee believes it is time to do a review and the changes to funding guidelines and the need for more and more complex reporting will need to be integrated into our plans.

With our core funding bodies - NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) and Department of Social Services (DSS) - requiring more "evidence-based practice" (EBP) it means:

- proving that there is a need for a service or being told that there is a need by the people giving you the money,
- showing that the activity we do is going to work (generally one proven to work by other people) or doing the activity that the people giving you the money want you to do.

This has implications for service delivery, our reporting and access to funding. The difficulties for MVNS lie in an increased work load without an increase in staffing levels, access to appropriate training and funds to undertake the training and the development of appropriate evidence-based practice for each of our service delivery streams.

With the FACS Targeted Earlier Intervention Reform (TEI) now in its fourth year and still some uncertainty as to how we are going to address the needs of the new target groups without an increase in funding, it makes planning even more difficult to undertake. Our achievements in the early intervention space are often difficult to measure.

### Governance

The Management Committee and Caron have a process of regularly reviewing and developing policies and procedures. This is time consuming, especially as there are often



changes to government regulations to be taken into account. This year we purchased a number of standard policies for areas that were currently not covered. Also, we contracted an external company to help us be compliant in our work health and safety (WHS) responsibilities. We want to provide a safe place for staff, volunteers and visitors. WHS is a complex area especially as we have two work sites and they include gardens (always a dangerous place!), a kitchen and café.

### **Many thanks to our staff and volunteers!**

All the volunteers who cook, dig, water, weed, answer phones and take messages, pick up mail, bank, answer questions, collect bread, make flat whites, shop, listen, sing, help people do their tax, teach people to use computers. All and anything that needs doing! Thanks to Chelsea who has returned to run the 'Grooving in the Garden' fund raiser for a third year, which by all accounts, will be bigger and better!

Thank you to the staff Caron, Jane, Kerrie, Fiona and Jasmine who keep the work moving forward, who do the seemingly endless reports to funding organisations and strive to achieve MVNS vision and mission!

Finally, thanks to the volunteer management committee that meet each month. We provide support to Caron and guide the organization. We were sorry that long time members Joanne Newby, Spring Ngyuen and Sue Martin left the committee during the year - they are sorely missed!

### **You are all appreciated!**

*Angela Pink*

**Chairperson, Management Committee**



## Treasurer's Report

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I am pleased to be able to present the Treasurer's report for 2017 – 2018.

Essential Assurance Service Pty Ltd again audited the financial accounts. Rhonda Futterleib and her staff are professional and thorough in the audit process. I am happy to report that they have concluded that MVNS is an ongoing concern and they will be issuing an unqualified audit opinion.

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

- We made a small overall loss of \$6,985.
- We received a number of one off grants this year including \$157,605 from NSW Department of Justice for the Community Safety Project.
- Bushland Tukka contributed \$61,000 to revenue.
- Interest on our term deposits was \$1,411.
- There were several fund raising initiatives throughout the year that brought in a total of \$8,600. Many thanks to the volunteers who make this happen. Apart from Groovin in the Garden, there was a Wednesday market for part of the year, a craft group, Chi Gong and plant sales along with fundraising for A Touch of the Brush project.

The program review being undertaken by The Department of Community Services – Community Services is still underway. At this stage funding will continue until June 2020 for Manning Valley Neighbourhood Centre.

Change is also happening with the grant for the Migrant Settlement project with tender notifications due by the end of this calendar year.

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

**Angela Pink**



## 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.

While we are still technically a part of the FACS Community Builders Program, we have been transitioning for the past 3 years to the Targeted Earlier Intervention model (TEI). This is yet to come to fruition. The full implications of the transition and what it will look like for us as a service are yet to be realised. I believe that community development remains an important and fundamental requirement even within a TEI model. We are hopeful that FACS agree.

It has been another busy year, overwhelming at times! Sustainability and relevance remain at the core if our service is to remain viable.

### Outputs and Achievements

We continue to **exceed our targets** for all of our programs. Our statistics reflect the hard work we do in delivering our services to a diverse section of the community through our various programs with over approximately 7000 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 its resources are extremely well utilised (approximately 40,000 visits per annum) and our Facebook page is also a great avenue for delivering information to the community about our services.

Outcomes for many of our clients are difficult to measure due to the nature of the interventions that we provide and the short-term engagement by necessity. However, we do know from return clients the difference that our service can make in their lives. Programs delivered across our organisation provide services to thousands more people.

June 2017 year saw the announcement that we would receive funding from Justice NSW to establish a much-needed **Youth/Community Development Worker at Bushland** for an 18-month project. The reality saw the engagement of a worker in April 2018. (See separate report) While the focus is on youth, this project also builds on Bushland Enterprise initiatives to continue to engage this community and develop appropriate initiatives for the residents. This one also focuses on safety for the whole community.

The finalisation of the **beautification of the Bushland Hub** this year was a major achievement with hundreds of hours required to manage and resource. The external building painting was finished last financial year. This year the inside was completed along with an improvement of the entrance to the building and extra security.





This year we received funds for many smaller projects. While they have all been interesting /fun with a community engagement focus, they have also required considerable resourcing either through volunteers or myself:

- **A Touch of the Brush – see separate report**
- **Be Connected** – a project that supports older people to develop their digital skills and confidence – thank you Angela for the many voluntary hours and patience!
- **Sing Your Age – see Bushland report**
- **Back to School** – a philanthropic project to support parents in financial difficulty to purchase appropriate resources to get their kids ready for school
- **Cultural Seeds** – aims to provide and/or expand creative opportunities for young people in Bushland. This year we ran a songwriting workshop and supported an Indigenous fashion parade. While we have tried to develop further opportunities, it has remained a difficult target group to engage.

### Bushland Voices



**Volunteers** – without our many volunteers we would not be able to deliver the spectrum of services and activities that we do. All of our volunteers contribute to our achievements in a variety of ways – gardeners, fundraisers, front office, chefs, performers and more! Thank you all very much.

We continue to have volunteers providing frontline client support for our **Emergency Relief** service and have been lucky to have Ruben and Elisha bringing their skills to this role.

We continued to auspace the **Akoostik Festival** which is going from strength to strength and making a name for itself in the Australian music festival culture as a tourist attraction.

This year we were asked to auspace a new project – the **Manning River Turtle Conservation Group** (MRTCG) which reflected our community development principles and aims to ensure the conservation of the endangered Manning River turtle. This is driven by a few, but passionate community members! (See separate report)

**Bushland Tukka Cafe** – see separate report.

All projects have their share of trials and tribulations. Many which make it difficult to progress worthwhile projects, some make us stronger!

### Challenges

As a small organisation we are constantly dealing with lack of resources. This includes IT and governance requirements. The reduction of red tape is a myth!

Obtaining adequate funding that allows for the employment of workers to develop and deliver a project is a major challenge. This particularly applies to the Bushland Enterprise project which is in need of extra planning and support to ensure that the initial aims and objectives continue to be met.

Our Settlement Services funding for our Migrant Settlement Project is currently at tender. The outcome of this tender will determine if we are refunded, the level of funding and the length of time we would be funded for. If successful, then the focus of



that funding will be specifically on delivering outcomes around English, Education and Employment. This will be a big shift from the current focus of community capacity building.

Similarly, the lack of finalisation around the FACS reform, especially target groups, makes it difficult to plan for the changes.

Emergency Relief funding has also come around for retender this year. For the previous three years we have been a part of a consortium with Bucketts Way and Forster Neighbourhood Centres. However, the funds that were received were minimal compared to previous years, making it difficult to meet the needs of the target group. We have applied individually in this round in an attempt to get more substantial funds.

Thanks again to the MVNS team for your support again this year! They continue to ensure that the wheels are turning through the good times and the bad!! Please read staff reports so you get an understanding of the amount of work they do. There is one team member who toils behind the scenes keeping everything oiled and steady but doesn't get to do a report that reflects the amount of work she does. She is the smiling, hardy, reliable front office administrator who not only deals with the needs of our clients, but also volunteers, staff and the hoards of others looking for a listening ear. Thank you Kerrie! You are a legend.

Thank you to our Chairperson Angela, who triples as a volunteer for our various projects! and Manager when required. Thank you again to the Management Committee.

*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 resourced through the hard work of volunteers and from fundraising by Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services.

### Key Achievements

The enterprise has entered its 5<sup>th</sup> year!

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. Jazz still heads the team of volunteers who continue to be our biggest resource. Thanks to the core volunteers Paul, Pat and Trish for their time and dedication this year. Volunteers continue to come and go, but without them the enterprise would not continue to grow. This includes the cooks, shoppers, deliverers, tea towel washers, gardeners, admin tasks etc. Thank you all.

This year saw the finalisation of the beautification project – painting inside (outside completed last year), security doors/windows, water tank, planter boxes, garden shed, and a mural on the back wall.

### Community Garden

Greg has done a great job this year in keeping the garden planted and maintained. Despite the dry weather the garden at the rear of the cafe is a lovely place to sit or wander.

The remaining couple of additions as a result of the Housing funding were a garden shed and a water tank for the back area of the garden. (Which managed to fill up before the dry weather!).



**Sing Your Age- Bushland Voices:** This year we were successful in obtaining funds through the State Government to establish a community choir at the Hub. Ultimately the funds were to be utilised to engage older people to give them the opportunity to stay engaged and active in their communities. While this is only a 12-month project, it has been ably facilitated and promoted by Sandra Kwa resulting in approximately 15 regular members! While it has proved challenging to get a level of participation from within the Bushland community, it has provided an uplifting bonus every Friday for those who visit the Hub!



This year funding was received to: upgrade our office space at the Centre to make it more user friendly for both employees and community members; from the Commonwealth Bank for youth projects; from the Hunter Local Land Services to facilitate a community partnership with Sydney Botanical Gardens and provide an education presentation on Indigenous plants.

Multiple events were held at the Hub throughout the year. Most of them initiated and facilitated by MVNS. One of these was a family fun day which attracted approximately 100 community members.

We supported an Indigenous fashion parade earlier this year, put together by Trish Pearson with a great showcase at the Racecourse.

**Bushland Tukka:** While there continues to be a growth in turnover and an increase in customer numbers, sustainability will require more customers and other avenues to make it profitable. Catering has continued to be popular but once again, more resourcing is required to make this arm of the cafe a viable option.

### Challenges Encountered

We still struggle to get other services to see this space as not only a viable space to offer programs and services to meet the needs of the target groups living in this area, but also the value of this space.

The lack of funding to support the enterprise is frustrating. The difficulties in making the Cafe viable and profitable is time consuming. Marketing of the cafe also remains a big task for which qualified people are required.

Volunteer training, skills and capacity building is something that needs to be sourced.

### Future Plans

This year we need to make an all-out effort to address these challenges if the cafe is to continue into the future. While Chatham High school remains in the Centre facilitating their learning centre, we hope that we can work together to develop mutually beneficial initiatives that support the community.

*Caron Watkins*

**Manager**





## Migrant Settlement Project

*The Migrant Settlement project is funded through DSS and 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.*



### 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. Running group information sessions through the TAFE ESL classes continues to be an effective way to provide relevant settlement information and is also useful for building rapport, gaining referrals and promoting the service. This year information sessions have been run across all areas on women's health, recycling and healthy relationships.

Promotion of the service is ongoing and very important with the service covering such a large area and with a client group that is dispersed and often isolated. Social media with the Facebook page is proving to be a useful tool. While still building a following it has attracted some client inquiries over the year and is very good for promoting events and sharing information.

Promotion to services through attendance at network and interagency meetings is equally important to establishing and maintaining relationships for both delivering client services and capacity building projects. It is from these relationships that projects are able to be run in partnership which is a huge benefit as a sole worker. Other promotional activities include media articles, speaking at speed networking events and in November 2017 the service had a case study on 'MNC Youth Cultural Exchange Trip' included in the NSP Showcase promotional booklet.

Capacity building through the provision of community events and programs continues to be an important area of focus. Many of these activities have relied on working in partnership with other services increasing the workers capacity to deliver such projects. These activities include:

- Screening of 'Constance on the edge' in partnership with Great Lakes Rural Australians for Refugees (November 2017)







- Mid North Coast Cultural Youth Exchange Trip in Taree and Port Macquarie (September 2017) in partnership with Northern Settlement Services and Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre in Newcastle
- Multicultural Carers Day Taree (October 2017)
- Water Safety for Migrants on the Mid North Coast Project (December 2017 – June 2018)
- Taree Harmony Day event in partnership with Taree Library including a display, interactive map to highlight our diversity and screening of 'Constance on the Edge' (March 2018)
- Multicultural Women's Group commenced in June 2018, running fortnightly
- Refugee Week event in Port Macquarie: talk by Emmanuel Musoni on refugee resettlement in regional areas (June 2018)

Involvement with SSI and the NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP) continues to be a great benefit to the service. Being part of such a consortium brings access to the consortiums extensive knowledge, ideas and expertise in the settlement sector. Networking through various NSP meetings and training both face to face and via teleconferencing helps increase knowledge and build relationships with other members which is very beneficial being a sole worker in the area.

### Key Achievements

The *Water Safety for Migrants on the Mid North Coast* project was the result of a number of years of applying for funding following the success of a pilot project in 2014. The program was delivered to 131 people on the Mid North Coast including 80 adults and 51 children. The program was broken into two components, swimming survival sessions followed by ocean awareness lessons. The program aimed to deliver a holistic (pool and beach) long term program that would provide participants the opportunity to learn sustainable water safety skills in pools, rivers and beaches. Children took part in intensive swimming lessons and adults took part in a 7-week swimming program followed by two beach sessions. Due to the time of year (too cold) not all participants were offered the beach sessions. There were 35 adults (56% uptake) and 14 children (67% uptake) who participated in the beach sessions.

While there were variations in the project delivery the evaluation showed the program achieved its objectives of:

- providing information and teaching participants a range of practical skills to keep them safe in the water.



- increased awareness of the migrant service, community participation, awareness of their local environment, personal confidence and social connection.
- for some people just learning to stand in the water was a big achievement. (Many people were very scared of the water before starting the program and were so happy when they overcame their fear and learnt not only swimming skills but enjoyed being in the water).
- increased confidence and enjoyment increasing active participation in the Australian lifestyle. (One lady from Holland had lived in Australia for 40 years and never learned to swim, she was very pleased she would now be able to go in the water with her grandchildren).

There were some challenges during the program including transport, attendance for some people but most significantly the worker time required to implement the program and reporting. I would like to thank Elisha Palmer who did an excellent job in her role as support worker and was well liked by the participants. There have already been a number of requests for the program to continue.

### Challenges

While worker capacity in a part-time position covering such a large geographical area has always been a challenge it has become more evident this year with increased pressure to deliver more client statistics and less importance placed on community development activities.

### Future Plans

The next 6 months will see the work plan roll over with services continuing as usual. The multicultural women's group which is just starting will be an area of focus as it establishes. The Cultures in the Manning Stories event planned for November will be an exciting variation of the festival, celebrating and highlighting multiculturalism in our community. It will also involve many local CALD residents including a number of our English students and members of the women's group.

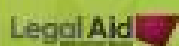
I would like to thank to the many partners who continue to be supportive and reliable year after year, our fabulous volunteers in the centre and committee members and Caron, Kerrie, Jas and Fiona who continue to provide much needed laughs and support.

*Jane O'Dwyer*

**Migrant Settlement Project Worker**



## Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) - Taree/Forster



### Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) Program

A partnership in legal service delivery



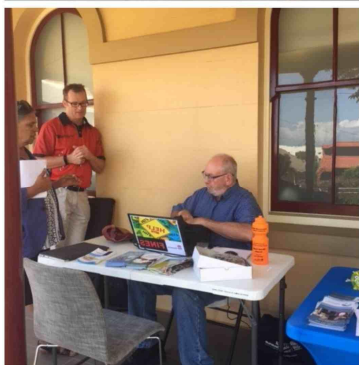
The CLSD project is a regionally based program to legal service delivery in NSW that aims to improve outcomes for economically and socially disadvantaged people by building cooperative and strategic networks of key legal services and community organisations.

### 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.



The CLSD project is funded through Legal Aid NSW and is a regional justice partnership of legal and non-legal services that aims to improve legal outcomes for economically and socially disadvantaged people. The partnership is guided by an action plan that provides a framework for priorities based on local unmet and emerging legal needs.

### Outputs

August saw the development of a new Action Plan (2017-2019) based on consultation with partners, other services and data from the Law and Justice Foundation and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This plan includes the following priorities:

1. Continued engagement with Aboriginal people.
2. Debt and financial hardship.
3. Enhanced legal services and legal awareness for young people.
4. Assistance, referrals and triage to appropriate services for people in our region.



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

- Forster Naidoc Day Celebrations Legal Hub providing



information, advice and referral. Through a Law Society Grant (Law Week) 25 (\$1,000) free birth certificates were provided to Aboriginal people. (July 2017)

- Taree Naidoc Day Celebrations Legal Hub providing information, advice and referral. (July 2017)
- Legal Privilege and Report Writing CLE for workers delivered by Gilbert + Tobin. (November 2017)
- Saltwater women's camp Legal Hub and information sessions on 'Rent it keep it' and 'Care and protection.' (December 2017)
- Money worries/fines day at Purfleet and Bushland Taree. (December 2017)
- Money worries/fines day at Taree Court House including provision of free birth certificates for vulnerable people. (April 2018)
- Law Week Interactive Legal Panel event. (May 2018)
- CLSD Speaker sheet (finalised May 2018).
- Mid Coast Council Debts project commence in May and is ongoing.

#### **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.
- Ongoing promotion of all legal and financial outreach advice clinics.
- Ongoing attendance at network and interagency meetings to build and maintain networks in the legal and non-legal sector.
- Regular email distribution to CLSD partners and wider community services sector to share information on upcoming events, changes in the legal sector, service information and to raise the CLSD profile.

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

#### **Key Achievements – Unmet Legal Needs**

There are a number of unmet and/or ongoing legal issues that have regularly been identified during the year. These issues will continue to be discussed at regional meetings and where appropriate and possible projects will be developed to address them. These include:

1. A lack of drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.
2. Council debts being taken directly to court.
3. Racial discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, policing and the schooling system (expulsion and back to back suspensions).
4. Employment law, particularly for young people with under payment of wages and not being paid superannuation.
5. A lack of men's behaviour changes programs.
6. In matters of DFV, issues with AVO's including a lack of understanding conditions that impacts on compliance and the impact on the family unit.

#### **Challenges Encountered**

Following on from the MERIT submission last year we were advised Taree Court had been identified as a priority to run MERIT in the redesign with expectation this could happen in December 2017. Unfortunately following membership changes within the MERIT Redesign Committee and funding issues there have been no changes to the MERIT program at this time. We will continue to follow the redesign process.







As always time is an ongoing challenge being a one a day week position. There are more project ideas than it is possible to deliver, particularly with some of the larger projects. However, the partnership does an excellent job stepping up with the projects that are delivered.

### **Future Plans**

The coming year will see the continued implementation of the current action plan. This plan includes some substantial outcomes that require the development of working groups. Running 1 or 2 of the larger projects alongside some smaller projects will keep the partnership busy in the coming year.

I would like to thank the CLSD partners for their input and hard work that allow for all our projects to happen. Partner involvement and collaboration is the backbone of the CLSD.

*Jane O'Dwyer*

**Taree/Forster Regional Coordinator**





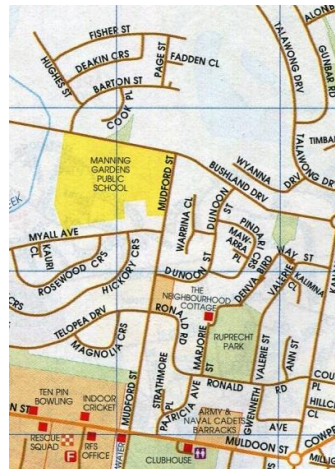
## Bushland: A Safer Community Project

The Bushland: A Safer Community Project (funded through Justice NSW) aims to build social cohesion and improve community safety in the Bushland area of Taree by partnering with the community to plan and deliver place-based multifaceted programs that reduce the level of malicious damage by young people and enhance the safety of the community.

### Key Objectives

The objectives of the project include:

1. Engagement with the community
2. Build a socially cohesive community
3. Engagement with other service providers for delivery of their safety programs
4. Engagement with the NSW Police
5. Design and delivery of community safety programs and set of initiatives with a focus on young people
6. Programs for school aged children established and delivered at the Bushland Hub
7. Improve community safety/wellbeing within the Bushland area of Taree
8. Reduced level of malicious damage by young people



### Outputs

In the 5 months since the commencement of the project on the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2018, the project officer has continued to engage and build collaborative working relationships with the Bushland community and external stakeholders. The focus of these interactions has been on validating knowledge of community safety issues, sharing project information and involving the community in the design and delivery of programs through the following initiatives:

- A community safety discussion (May 2018)
- An Elder's morning tea (June 2018)
- Paper and online surveying (Ongoing- commenced May 2018)
- A creative survey workshop at Chatham High School (August 2018)
- The establishment of Project Steering Committee comprised of residents, Elders, TIDE, NSW Police, Biripi and PCYC representatives
- The establishment of a pool of local volunteers

These events have also helped to raise the project profile and build on the work plan, communication plan and communication strategy which have been developed. Bushland: a safer community project has also been profiled in the Manning River Times, The Wingham Chronicle, The Bushland Community Hub Newsletter, on the new Bushland Hub Facebook page and during local guest speaking opportunities –all media opportunities which encourage involvement of the Bushland and broader Taree communities.

The Project Officer has successfully advocated for service providers engagement with the community and partnered with many, with the support of volunteers, to deliver community building initiatives and wellbeing services such as:



- MSS outreach family support worker stationed at Bushland Hub on Monday mornings (Commenced August 2018)
- A teen Pizza Making Class delivered by Bushland resident volunteer
- A Youth and Community Hub Day in partnership with MSS, Biripi, Uniting, HNE Youth Mental Health Outreach Project and MidCoast Council.
- NAIDOC Day celebrations in partnership with MidCoast Council and MSS.
- An International Youth Day Movie Arvo with assistance from MidCoast Council and YMCA (August 2018)



## Key Achievements

- The establishment of a Bushland: a safer community project steering committee comprised of residents, NSW Police, Biripi Aboriginal Elder's and representatives from local youth and Aboriginal Services has been a key achievement of this project. The commitment from NSW police to engage with the Bushland community in this way is fantastic and will hopefully facilitate positive community partnerships, increase trust and inform the design and delivery of safety programs. The founding of the steering committee is also significant as it is the first major step towards the establishment of a Community Safety Committee, a successful project handover and a safer community.
- The recruitment of a small group of dedicated and passionate volunteers
- The teen pizza making class which attracted some 'hard to reach' youth and
- The MidCoast Council Senior Asset Engineer assessing the lighting situation in the vicinity of the Bushland Hub as being unsatisfactory prompting hope that it will be improved.



## Challenges

A number of challenges have been identified in this project which will certainly factor into whether the project outcomes can be achieved.

- The difficulty in engaging teenage youth and the community more broadly remains an ongoing challenge compounded by the short-term nature of this project versus the necessary time required to build trust, relationships and community buy-in.
- Navigating protocols to work effectively with local stakeholders and limited access to the building in which it was anticipated the majority of the programs would be delivered out of, also factor in to whether the outcomes can be realised.
- The target group continues to fluctuate from being broader, 6-24 years old, to more specific, 13-18 years old. The challenge in engaging a diverse age group inclusive of



the difficult to engage 16-24-year-olds is that initiatives ultimately need to be duplicated and tailored to age specific groups to maximize effectiveness. There is no capacity to deliver initiatives in this fashion. This is constantly being weighed up against the gap in opportunities for the 13-18-year olds and the eagerness of the under 12's to participate. The need to confront stigma and perceived risk, reducing barriers for individuals and services to operate in this community has also been recognised.

- The final challenge has been identifying youth focused services that have the capacity to deliver safety programs in Bushland.

### Future Plans

The aim is to continue to advocate for other service providers to deliver their community safety programs in Bushland. Information resulting from formal and informal community consultations and ongoing bi-monthly steering committee meetings will continue to inform project development, design and delivery to address the priority safety issues identified. Increasing volunteer participation and skills building will be one of the main areas of focus, through programs such as train the trainer, as community ownership is a key factor in the success of this project.

Many thanks to the Bushland community members who have expressed their passion for change through the support of this project, the Elders, services, schools and police partners and MVNS staff for guidance, advice and assistance.

*Fiona Lee*

**Community Development Worker | Youth**



## 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 (2017/2018).

Total funding Provided	ER Assistance 2017/2018	Total client numbers	Total Monday lunches delivered
Department of Social Services <b>\$4,825 =</b> Fuel \$1,050 Food \$2,775 Food parcels \$1,000	ER Assistance provided (including foodbank and Second Bite)	1265	641 - average 58 clients per month (no lunches provided in January)
Telstra Vouchers <b>\$3,900</b>	Clients assisted via ER appointments	253	
Electricity Vouchers <b>\$35,550</b>	<i>New Clients</i>	145	
	<i>Existing Clients</i>	108	
<b>TOTAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED</b> <b>\$44,275</b>	No. of ER clients Unable to Assist	930 (Approx.)	

A big thank you to our ER volunteers this year – Ruben and Elisha. It has been a difficult undertaking to determine the best way to deliver a service with extremely limited funding. This is reflected in that we assisted 253 clients out of 1580 requests. Kerrie, as our front office person carries the impact of these enquiries and the assessments that often get carried out before being able to determine whether assistance can (or is available) be provided due to a more necessarily stringent assessment process.

This does not mean that we don't provide other ways of assisting clients where possible – our Secondbite program fills a big need along with our Monday lunches, and often generous food donations from the community.

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



## Food from the Heart

### 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. As with many of our programs, it relies on volunteers to ensure it remains functional and sustainable. This last 12 months Ken has been our very reliable and amenable volunteer who picks up and delivers bread and vegies 3 days a week.



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.

As noted above, over 1000 community members accessed this service this year. Secondbite produce is also used for Monday "Food from the Heart" kitchen lunches.

### Monday lunches

This program also commenced in 2012. Once again it is an unfunded project and relies on volunteers. When planets align – we are able to run this project with extremely minimal monetary requirements. Volunteers are encouraged to incorporate produce from the Manning Valley Community Gardens Project and Secondbite food-rescue. A team of voluntary chefs have delivered over 600 meals this year!

Thank you, Kim, again to Ken! the Seventh Day Adventist crew and Lei Wah who comes in especially to cook up excess garden produce. The meals are very much appreciated and are also packaged and frozen for clients to take home during the week when necessary.

### Work for the Dole, and Work & Development Orders (WDO)

People who are required to participate in mutual obligation or are finding it difficult to pay off their fines with the State Debt Recovery Office due to financial difficulties have the opportunity to participate in volunteer activities facilitated by MVNS.

### 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.

Volunteers necessarily come and go, and we often experience feast or famine. However, it is very rare that we are not able to meet the needs of any client at any particular point in time.





## 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.

The Manning Valley Community Gardens garden continues to provide an avenue of engagement for community members, clients and other volunteers who wish to contribute something to their community. Big thanks this last year go to Glenn and the 2 Di's for all their hard work and fundraising.

### Quigong and Garden Seeds

This year we have seen a developing face of the front garden! Di ran regular Wednesday morning markets with sales of plants and bric-a-brac and Kim has been providing the relaxing Quigong energy in the front garden which helps to soothe numerous souls! Funds raised go towards the day to day needs of the 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 4! 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, composting and reducing waste.

### Facebook

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

### 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 were donated to raise funds for the garden.



### HCCU Grant

This year has seen us receive a \$3,000 grant from HCCU. Along with a co contribution from funds raised we will install 2 large water tanks in our garden and purchase new signage. Ultimately, we want to reduce our water usage in the garden as much as possible and this year has certainly reminded us of how important something like water

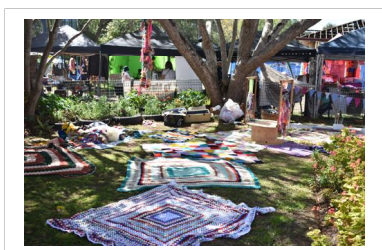


tanks can be for a community garden. While they are yet to be purchased and installed, sadly, they would still remain empty. However, we will get this underway as soon as possible.

### 'Groovin in the Garden' fundraiser

While this fundraiser was established to raise funds for the gardens, it has now reached its third year and has also created a more public profile and provides exposure for the gardens to the community. In turn, this leads to more energy and support towards the Neighbourhood Centre and the amazing projects we facilitate.

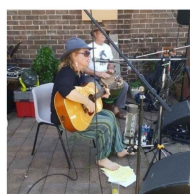
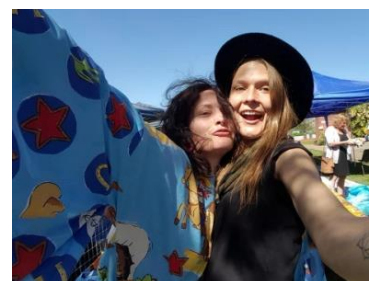
Thanks to Chelsea for the commitment she continues to have for the garden by coordinating this. Thank you also to the amazing team of volunteers who come together to support it. Everyone from musicians to cooks to stall holders.



### Thank you!

- The fantastic and numerous volunteers.
- Thank you to the multiple members of community for all of their donations of soil, plants books and more!

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



## A Touch of the Brush

A Touch of the Brush (funded by Regional Arts NSW): a Circus Performance to be held in the Wingham Brush and surrounds on The Manning River. The 'Brush' is a significant environmental and tourism icon and home to The Grey Headed Flying Fox. An 'on dusk' performance installation as the foxes fly out will feature: an aerial performance in the rainforest trees, launching of an endangered local reptile stilt costume (Manning River Turtle), a guest appearance of the Grey Headed Flying Fox stilt troupe and ground entertainment involving adagio, character work and circus skills. All to be accompanied by a sound-scape by a local artist.

The project will be delivered via installations on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> October 2018. Circartus is the artistic body responsible for the undertakings of this project. The project will also utilise the experience of various professionals to develop and deliver the project.

An initial revise of the original project outline at the beginning of the year checked all partners and collaborators were committed to the original project concept. With continued support and commitment from the nominated artists, National Parks, Wingham Brush Primary School and the Circartus students and families, the project got underway.

Cast members were recruited from a pool of Circartus performance troupe programs and other students; a costume working group was established along with a makeup artistry team. Training commenced for the aerials and creative development work started with stilt walkers and the ground cast - a total cast of 35.

The first artist residency to support this project was Eva Fernandez, who delivered the Manning River Turtle prototype and facilitated a training session with the costume creators who would continue on to create the remaining 4 costumes. Whilst Eva was here she ran a workshop on movement and performance skills for all the stilt walkers.





The stilt cast are a combination of experienced and “budding” rovers on stilts, so there have been many hours of training involved to facilitate the groups of ‘characters’. The Native Blue Banded Bees are all new to this character. The Flying Foxes are guided by one very experienced walker, and the others have been trained and recruited through a project in collaboration with Wingham High School Wakul Gudida program. This has involved visiting Wingham High school every Friday during the program to train and teach the aboriginal boy students to stilt walk. 4 out of 6 of these students have opted to be a flying fox in A Touch of the Brush.

The cast chosen to be Manning River Turtles have had a challenge on their hands! Learning to stilt walk with hand crutches as well as being on 1 metre high stilts, but all is proceeding well and they await the addition of their shell!

The second artist in residence was with Kate Reid, aerialist and rigger. This first visit involved working with the Director/Trainer to plan the aerial apparatus to use in the installation, create these apparatus, assess the site and to work with the aerialist cast on aerial and performance skills. Her second visit will be to work alongside aerialists and the Director to finalise routines.

In May, National Parks withdrew their approval for us to deliver the project in Wingham Brush Nature Reserve due to pressure from some members of the community. An alternate site has been arranged. They are still supportive of the project and will be involved on the weekend of the performance.

The next chapter will involve developing the Sound scape (music) and choreographing all the characters together into the one performance.

*Jill Watkins*

**Director – Circartus**



## 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 mission of the Wingham Akoostik Music Festival committee is to deliver a diverse music festival that promotes the strong artistic culture of our regional community and attracts visitors to the Manning Valley on the NSW Mid Coast.



Our purpose is to create a three-day family-orientated music festival showcasing local and regional talent, providing a cultural focus, driving sustainability initiatives, and delivering social and economic benefits to the community.

It is the role of the committee to engage with the arts community, the local business chamber, the Wingham Action Group, the Local Council Tourism Manager, the Mayor, high school teachers and students, market stall operators and musicians

to deliver a professional and inspiring annual event to encourage festival audiences to return every year.

Along with entertainment and displays, the Festival also offers a variety of innovative workshops. These workshops enhance the event; broadening skills, encouraging creativity, inspiring upcoming artists and leaving a legacy within the community

Since 2007 the Wingham Akoostik Festival has been auspiced by Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services and with that foundation of support has been successful year after year in attracting funding through grants and sponsorships to deliver the festival to an ever-increasing audience, attracting high caliber artists.







The table below shows the size and scope of what the festival has delivered to the community via the auspice of MVNS. The information tabled tracks the growth from a one-day event in 2007, to a two-day event in 2008, and a three-day event in 2013. The interaction with the community for fostering and supporting the event inspires the committee members year after year and continues to engage them in delivering this community event.

Year	Month	Event/Activity/Production	External Individuals Involved (not listed as Applicants on this form), and the Role they Played	External Organisations or Companies Involved
2007	October	Inaugural One day Wingham Akoostik Festival	Kevin Bennett - headline performer plus 10 local musical artists	Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services, Wingham Chamber of Commerce
2008	October	Two Day Wingham Akoostik Music Festival	Joe Robinson, Felicity Urquhardt, Jig Zag, The Flood and 27 other bands and artists	as above plus 10 local business sponsors

2013	October	Three Day Wingham Akoostik Music Festival	Jenny Morris, Wendy Matthews, Bill Chambers and 30 other artists	Australia Council for the Arts, Regional Arts, Destination NSW , Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services and 15 local business sponsors
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2017	October	Three Day Wingham Akoostik Music Festival	Russell Morris, Kasey Chambers, Ella Hooper, and 36 other artists and performers	Destination NSW, Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services and 15 local business sponsors
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The Wingham Akoostik Festival committee thanks MVNS for the ongoing support and credibility provided to our event via your support and backing of our committee in creating and delivering the festival each year.

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

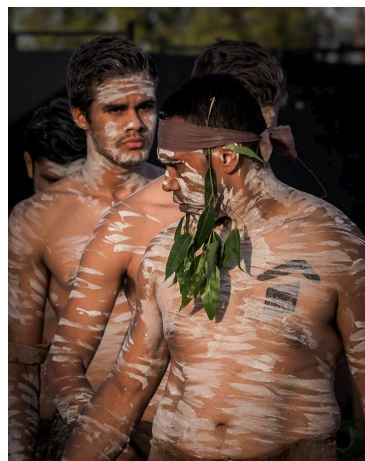
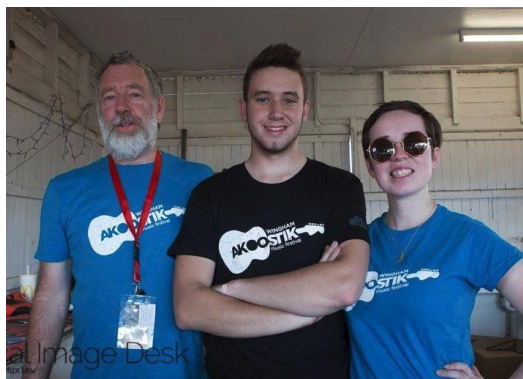


Photo credits: Merryl Kemp Photography, Rose E Smith Photography and Carl Muxlow



## 2018 Special Thanks

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### 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
- Manning River Men's Shed
- Manning River Times
- Judy Peach
- Prime News
- Wingham Chronicle
- MidCoast Council – Russell Ingram
- Mid Coast Council – Stefanie Garland
- 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
- North Coast Area Health Service
- North Coast Institute TAFE (Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Taree and Tuncurry)
- Rudi's Meats
- Manning Regional Art Gallery
- Swags for the Homeless
- Taree PCYC
- Wingham High School
- Wingham Brush Primary School
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### Funding Bodies

Special thanks also to our funding bodies:

- **NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS)**
- **NSW Department of Community Services (Housing)**
- **Justice NSW**
- **Legal Aid NSW**
- **Department of Social Services**
- **Settlement Services International**
- **Regional Arts NSW**
- **Funding for Regional Renewal (FRRR)**
- **Australian National Choral Association**
- **Energy NSW – EAPS vouchers**
- **Telstra**, through the Telstra Bill Assistance Certificate (TBAC) Program

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





## Appendix A: 2017 - 2018 Financial Reports

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Please see attachments.

