



EVENT REPORTING

Organisation: Mid Coast Renewal Committee/Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc.



Empowering our Communities



Date	Location	Type of event	People attended
April 20 – July 20	N/A	<i>DIY Kits, to assist residents during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown</i>	N/A

As the COVID-19 pandemic developed, we attempted to think on our feet and adapt however possible to continue to provide support.

A series of DIY kits were put together by local community members that residents could pick up contactless at the front desk of Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services. A support worker was seated a few metres behind the desk which meant that people could still have some socialisation while we could ‘check in’ on them without posing a health risk. Up to 20 of each kit were made to distribute.

- DIY Gardening kits by Taycee Jones
- Kids Art Packs by Taycee Jones
- Cross stitch kits by Taycee Jones
- Card making kits by Arona Gibbons (Gaia Natures Essentials)
- Bracelet-making for kids by Arona Gibbons (Gaia Natures Essentials)
- Finger puppet making by Arona Gibbons (Gaia Natures Essentials)
- Bath/Foot Soak kits by Julie Garlick (True Nature Therapies)
- Chest rub kits by Julie Garlick (True Nature Therapies)
- ‘Happy Days’ perfume roller kits by Julie Garlick (True Nature Therapies)

The kits and chats were well received!



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Date	Location	Type of event	People attended
21 st to 27 th September 2020	Various	Cooking workshops with The Wholesome Collective	6
	Bobin		5
	Elands		15
	Killabakh		14
	Wingham		15
	Nabiac		9
	Tinonee		9
	Biripi – Purfleet Johns River		15

- Provided interactive and relaxed, small group nutrition and cooking presentations within each community, with the aim to:
 - o Bring some joy into each community.
 - o Provide opportunity for social interaction and conversation.
 - o Use food to connect community members.
 - o Increase nutrition knowledge particularly around the area of gut health and mood/mental health.
 - o Enhance cooking skills to increase frequency of home cooking and enhance the ability to translate nutrition messages.
 - o Improve confidence around cooking and healthy eating.
 - o Make education practical via a cooking presentation using a menu that considered:
 - Those still living in caravans, tents and freight containers - utilising small bench spaces and considering limited cooking equipment and utensils.
 - Water conservation with minimal washing up required.
 - Utilising pantry staples and non-perishable food items such as canned legumes, frozen peas and tuna.
 - o Form positive attitudes toward healthy eating and trying new foods using taste testers from the cooking presentation.

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Date	Location	Type of event	People attended
December 5 th , 2020	Johns River	Mate Helping Mate Tour with John Harper	5
December 6 th , 2020	Wingham		5
December 7 th , 2020	Nabiac		10
December 9 th , 2020	Marlee		Up to 50
December 9 th , 2020	Kilabakh		Up to 100
December 11 th , 2020	Taree		6
December 12 th , 2020	Gloucester		Up to 60

In November of 2020, the MCRC organised a series of talks facilitated by John Harper from the “Mate Helping Mate” non-profit organisation, based in country NSW.

Mate Helping Mate helps provide a “guide to mental health and mateship in the Australian bush”.

The reason we were so interested in bringing John to our region was that the success of his program lies in his ability to RELATE with everyday folk using THEIR language, “from farmers, locals and health workers about what works (and what doesn’t)”. His focus encompasses the struggles that arise for men around mental health, especially during periods of prolonged drought in remote and rural communities.

John spent the week chatting about mental health, depression and anxiety with both our drought and fire-affected residents. We held workshops in several locations across the Manning Valley including Wingham, Killabakh, Marlee, Burrell Creek, Nabiac, Taree and Gloucester. Attendance varied at first, but as the word got around and John featured on NBN news halfway through the week, enquiries and attendance grew. We had especially strong numbers at Marlee, Killabakh and Gloucester (with thanks to Gloucester Rotary).

Attendee’s were a mixture of community leaders, hall committee reps, community members, teachers, retirees, farmers and “tradies”. We also had reps from MidCoast Council, Land Services, Service NSW, Manning Mental Health and Farmgate. These “leaders” are the ones who are accessed by and feed into our wider community, so by giving them strength and support we hope that they can offer the same to others. Once that support “filters out” the community becomes stronger.

The presentations included a series of hands-on, tactile “exercises” that helped put philosophy into practise. John helped give people simple ways to remember things that they could take home and apply to their own lives. We believe this experience could save local lives, with the suicide rates in rural and remote communities continuing to rise. Fire-related anxiety and stress continued into the next summer so having these discussions about how to move forward in a balanced, healthy way has been vital for many.

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We feel that by having these presentations before the end of 2020 it has given our region the best chances of remaining connected in times of ongoing drought, recurring bushfires and the social isolation struggles of the covid-19 pandemic.

You can find the news article about the tour here:

<https://www.greatlakesadvocate.com.au/story/7037631/mate-helping-mate-visits-bushfire-affected-communities/?cs=2726>

“United we stand – divided we fall”



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Date	Location	Type of event	People attended
Throughout 2020 and 2021	Wingham	<i>Craft afternoons with Jenny from Sweet Pea & Mumma</i>	Varying

Jenny has done a great job at offering different activities each month for the continuing craft group which is held at the Manning Valley Neighbourhood Centre in Wingham.

These events are held regularly each month at the Manning Valley Neighbourhood Centre, facilitated by Jennifer Dayment from “Sweet Pea & Mumma”. This regular event grew out of suggestions from residents who had attended other workshops and felt they would benefit from a regular, casual gathering where they could all engage in and share their love for art/craft.

This event has been well received, with the conversations being surprisingly open and cathartic. As most of the attendees were fire-affected their stories are shared openly and without judgement. Jennifer has provided a range of activities for them to engage with each month and they are also welcome to bring things from home to work on.

This group will continue for their own mental health and support.

We were lucky to have the Manning River Times cover some of what’s been happening in this story: <https://www.manningrivertimes.com.au/story/7036215/healing-through-craft/>



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Date	Location	Type of event	People attended
August 8 th , 2020	Dolly's Flat	'Under Fire' Pottery workshops with Steve from Dolly's Flat Pottery	9
August 10 th , 2020			10
August 23 rd , 2020			10
September 5 th , 2020			8
October 17 th , 2020			14
October 31 st , 2020			12
November 1 st , 2020			5
May 29 th , 2021			4
May 30 th , 2021			13

An incredibly successful workshop series was our Pottery classes for drought and fire affected residents with Steve Williams from Dolly's Flat Pottery. These workshops catered to both adults and children. The focus of these workshops has been creating nature-based pieces using local materials, as well as learning both traditional and non-traditional pottery techniques.

Feedback from the days has been overwhelmingly positive, with many participants stating that it was "exactly what I needed" and "it was so good to get away and not have to think about anything else for a few hours". They loved that it was nature based and that Steve uses his surroundings for inspiration.

Steve talked in-depth about the science behind firing the clay in the kiln and how when things are burnt to a certain temperature, what chemicals break down and what is left. His personal practise is fuelled by his fascination with wood ash, which is all that remains in the kiln after the firing process – it can't be burnt down any further. This interested a lot of the participants and gave them a new respect for the creative power of fire. Steve also allowed participants to return when firing their works, so that they could stay involved in the process of their creations. Each participant made four pieces during the first day, learning basic pottery skills as they went. They went on to create further and more detailed pieces when attending subsequent workshops. Many residents attended more than one workshop.

The final piece that participants created with Steve was a large pot for growing plants in - to symbolise the 'new growth' stage after fires.

A final exhibition of works has been discussed, and may be something we can coordinate later in the year.

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Date	Location	Type of event	People attended
May 29 th , 2021	Wingham	Community Mural workshops with Faith & Shane from Up & Up	Various
June 19 th , 2021			Various

We have been collaborating the idea of a community-driven mural with Faith and her team from “UP&UP”, an arts-based community organisation in Newcastle.

UP&UP specialise in working with local communities to bring to life their visions of what they represent and the common themes or motifs from their local areas. They work all around the countryside and are excited to bring a post fire vision of our Manning Valley to life.

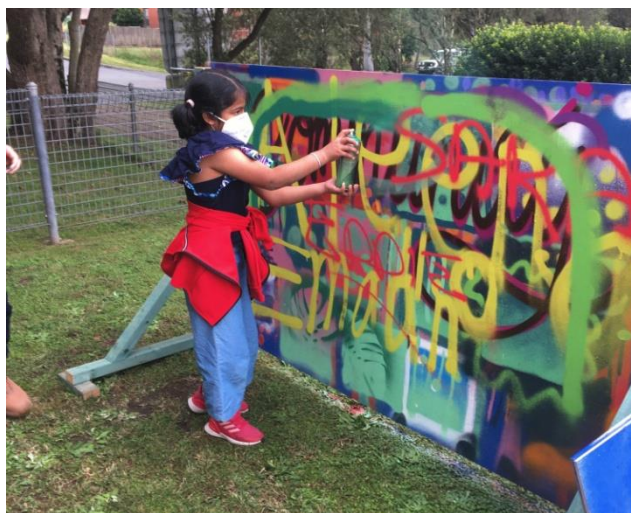
We ran a community workshop, which was later followed by the painting of the mural itself, which included community members also. The initial open workshop was a day for the community to come together and work on ideas for the larger mural while creating mini-murals of their own. In this way it was hands-on, engaging and skill building.

They returned in June to complete the mural, to create this on three large timber panels. The team then worked on a final design drawn from the inspirations of the workshops. Unfortunately the rain prevented it from being finalised and we are awaiting its return.

The final mural will have: One with colours and shapes representing fire (triangular forms, oranges and reds). The middle one is a large fig tree representing the Fig's that are symbolic of our valley - the symbol of continuity, strength and weathering the storms as such. The fig also represents community which is the base that you come back to for support during times of disaster, and ‘Endurance’ would be the Fig. The final panel is water and rivers, and there are parts of the river system that run through all three panels to connect them together.



Empowering our Communities



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Date	Location	Type of event	People attended
January 13 th , 2021	Elands	<i>Elands Kids Connect Community Days – Drumming, Pottery and Circus</i>	<i>Up to 30 at each event</i>
January 20 th , 2021			
January 27 th , 2021			

We were approached by Manning Mental Health Services about working together on an event for kids to be held in the school holiday period in the Elands/Bobin communities.

A mental health worker had been liaising with the community about the help that's needed and how they could get children and young teens interested in attending. "Kids Connect" was the answer – a series of workshops including fun activities while also having a casual eye on any mental health issues raised. We assisted with funding for both the catering and activities planned. From all reports, it was a hugely successful sequence of workshops.

Here is some of the feedback from the groups who attended;

"The kids enjoyed themselves, and all delighted in the wonderful catered morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea... We also had many conversations with locals who stopped in, on how to support our community at Elands, and brainstorming ideas on how to develop things further, with a Grant writing workshop being held in Elands. Special appreciation to the workshop facilitators who were amazing!"

A positive for all who attended were the relationships that were formed and new ideas which would ensure that the community stayed together and did activities such as these in the future. The facilitators for the workshops were chosen to give the children a range of different, engaging activities to try. They did pottery with Steve (Dollys Flat Studio), music with Chris (Circle of Drums) and Circus Arts with Kath and Jill (Circartus).



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Date	Location	Type of event	People attended
May to July 2020	Online & Wingham	<i>Painting Art Kits</i>	20
		<i>Painting Workshop with Donna Rankin from Heart to Heart</i>	10

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a painting kit was determined to be the most effective way to try and kick-start the creative component of our program. This allowed us to try and get some creative activities underway even if we could not get participants together in person.

Twenty of these were put together by Donna Rankin from Heart to Heart. All were collected by residents and utilised during those uncertain months as a welcome distraction and artistic outlet. A private Facebook group was created for participants, with video tutorials. This allowed the participants to still have some social contact during COVID-19, and to also follow along and ask questions of Donna where needed.

These kits were then followed up with a face-to-face workshop with Donna once restrictions had eased. Participants brought along their kits and their painting, no matter where they are up to in the process, and received personalised support from Donna and her team. This was also a great opportunity for them to socialise and engage with others in their community who are doing the same project as them.

Participants painted Van Gogh Sunflowers.



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Date	Location	Type of event	People attended
Various- monthly from May 2020 to June 2021	Wingham	Book Club with Kylie from Taree Literary Institute	10

The idea for the Book Club was well supported by the board of the Taree Literary Institute and they were happy to use their premises free of charge to hold a monthly meet up. The first book for the August meet-up was "Tuesdays with Morrie", 10 copies were purchased with PHN funding.

The book club encouraged socialisation, contemplation of life's larger mysteries, and was a re-integration for some who had experienced the fires and were only just coming back into the community actively following their own personal mental health challenges. There was a great deal of chatting about triggers, especially when seeing things on TV. This served as an informal method of counselling and peer support, as they all have a shared experience of the fires, even if some were not as "directly" affected as others.

NEW BOOK CLUB

@TAREE LITERARY INSTITUTE

You are invited to join us for morning tea and a chat every month. The next months are...

- 16th September 2020
From 10-11am
- 14th October 2020
From 10-11am

Meetings are held at
Taree Literary Institute
129 Victoria St, Taree
Ph: 65524361



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Date	Location	Type of event	People attended
June 26 th , 2020	Wingham	<i>Slow Stitch Workshop with Arona Gibbons</i>	3

This was facilitated by local sewer Arona Gibbons at the MVNC.

Feedback from this workshop was that they would find a regular “Art & Craft afternoon” helpful, where they could either complete a set project or bring something from home to do.

Craft afternoons with Jenny is what eventuated from this.



FRI 26/06
SLOW STITCH

KITS PROVIDED

If you would like to enjoy an informal afternoon learning the basics of slow stitching and creating your own piece to take home, please register with us via mvns@mvns.org.au or call us on 65535121. Kids above the age of 5 are welcome to participate and create their own slow stitch piece as well.



Learn the basics of
slow stitching

All material, thread
and supplies are
provided

LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
PROVIDED

From 1 – 4 pm

MUST REGISTER

*Limited to 20
participants

EVENT HELD AT

MANNING VALLEY
NEIGHBOURHOOD
SERVICES
(OLD COURT HOUSE)
4 Farquar St
Wingham

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Date	Location	Type of event	People attended
September 19 th , 2020	Wingham	<i>Needle Felting Workshop with Gemma from Scraps of Happiness</i>	10

Gemma's workshop was successful in offering another type of activity, which appealed to a different audience. Participants made an Australian creature. Doing so served as a way of reconnecting participants to nature and what was lost during the drought and bushfires. The art of Needle work itself is linked to mindfulness and is a calming activity. Like so many of these activities, this one also provided a safe space to share those stories informally.



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Date	Location	Type of event	People attended
<i>To be completed</i>	<i>Elands</i>	<i>Elands Sensory Garden</i>	<i>N/A</i>

This project is a partnership with Newcastle University and out(fit). This project has not been completed but we were given permission to fund this project from these funds as a partnership. Elands was cut off for months after the fires, and again after the floods. It is a community that is quite isolated and fractured. There is a community hall that is often the go to for when there is an emergency. The overall project aims to have an outdoor community kitchen and upgrade the entire space to better cope with community events and collaboration.

Description of project:

out(fit) would like to partner with Elands Community Health Centre to assist them in spending the grant money to create an all ages landscaped space on their property. There are currently no provisions for children and youth at Elands Community Health Centre, and they wish to address this by creating a Sensory Garden and outdoor kitchen, for both young and old.

out(fit) will follow the process below to ensure that Elands Community Health Centre achieve their desired outcomes:

- 1/ Initial meeting and consultation with Elands Community Health Centre core team/ committee. - Develop an understanding of the initial ideas for the centre; centre landscape improvements, initial brief development, develop a plan for hosting a facilitated community consultation event.
- 2/ out(fit) to co-host and facilitate a Community Consultation Event at Elands Community Health Centre - An event that is inclusive of all user groups, including users from other community spaces in Elands (such as Little Plains Hall, Elands Hall etc), where we host a creative vision lab, using modelling and visual communication tools to develop a cohesive design brief.
- 3/ out(fit) Design Team create a concept plan which addresses the needs outlined in the brief - This plan is considered an initial conceptual “masterplan” showing all of the design moves needed on the site to fulfill the needs that were identified at the Vision Lab. The masterplan will indicate design elements that will require additional funding (to be sourced), however the plan will be staged by level of priority.
 - This concept plan is shared with interested community members, who give feedback on the design. The design is updated to address this feedback.
- 4/ Project Planning for Construction - Detailed designs are created from which we can create cost estimates, material quantities can be calculated, shared with tradespeople etc
 - A detailed budget is created for the Stage 1 plans. A strategy is implemented for approaching additional material and labour sponsors to partner with the project.

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- Advertising within the Elands community, and within out(fit)'s volunteer network to recruit volunteers to help build Stage 1.
 - Materials are ordered and delivery co-ordinated.
 - Dates are set for working bees, project leaders allocated
- 5/ Working Bee - out(fit) and community volunteers come together, are allocated tasks based on their skill sets, experience and fields of interest.
- Tools and materials distributed and teams led to complete various sections of the work.
 - Caterers provide refreshments for volunteer workers.
- 6/ Feedback
- out(fit) collect feedback on the process from both Elands community members and student volunteers on the process and the end result, to better assist us in providing quality services in the future.
 - out(fit) take a series of professional photographs for our documentation, media and to share with community stake holders for their own promotional and engagement needs.

