



38th Annual Report Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc. 2019

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Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc.

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Our Vision

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

Our Mission

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

MVNS Activities Umbrella

Neighbourhood Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information & Referral<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocacy• Community Development• Resume writing.• Cheap use of phone, fax & computer.• Support for community members who need to talk• Promotion and assistance for community groups• Tax Help - July to Oct - free assistance with tax returns for low income earners• Groups and courses <p>Contact the staff and volunteers 6553 5121</p>	Catering for the Community at Bushlands – Bushland Tukka <p>Supporting community through a social enterprise cafe and catering.</p> <p>Resources, training and outreach service provision</p> <p>Contact Caron 65535121</p>	Garden Kitchen <p>A kitchen resource that provides support toward self-reliance to disadvantaged clients in a purposeful approach which provides a meal, advocacy, education and opportunities to commune.</p> <p>Contact Caron 6553 5121</p>	Manning Valley Cooperative Living Program <p>Financial assistance and case work for individuals & families in crisis.</p> <p>Available to all people living in the Manning Valley who are experiencing financial crisis and/or other misfortune or suffering which is contributing to poverty or helplessness.</p> <p>Contact 6553 5121</p>		Manning Cultural Connections Committee <p>To promote social inclusion and provide an engaging intercultural platform in the Manning Valley</p> <p>Contact Jane 65535121</p>	Manning Valley Community Gardens <p>Development and maintenance of a sustainable garden for the community by the community</p> <p>Contact 6553 5121</p>
	Manning Valley Women’s Group <p>Aims to promote, support and empower women in the community</p> <p>Contact Mary 6592 9315</p>	Cooperative Legal Service Delivery <p>Building cooperative & strategic networks of key legal services and community organisations</p> <p>Contact Jane Project Officer 6592 9315</p>	Manning Valley Interagency <p>Forum for government and non-government services to network and discuss local issues. Meets 1st Wednesday of each month in Taree.</p> <p>Contact Caron 6553 5121</p>	Community Safety Project Worker <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>Contact Fiona 0476 756 515</p>	Migrant Settlement Project Worker <p>Information & referral for migrants and NESB residents of the Mid North Coast.</p> <p>Contact Jane 6553 5121</p>	Wingham Akoostik Festival <p>Raising the cultural profile and diversity of this region and showcase local talent through music.</p> <p>Contact Donna 0417 570 359</p>
			Manning River Turtle Conservation Group <p>Aims to promote awareness of the Manning river Turtle as well as preserve their habitat for their ongoing survival.</p> <p>Contact Clare 0427 655 051</p>			

Chairperson's Report

This year has been, as usual, busy! We could have done with more time, more money and lots more rain! Thanks to the staff and volunteers we have met our requirements with the organisations that give us money and continued to support the community.

It was also a year of hard decisions. The committee and Caron came to the decision to close our social enterprise café, Bushland Tukka. We were unable to get a long-term lease on the property and we have been funding the café for the last 4 years from our reserves. The committee decided that without some certainty around the property or funding to develop the project it was no longer sustainable.

I would like to acknowledge the blood, sweat and tears that Caron has given to the project over the time the café has been running. I also want to acknowledge Jazz, Pat, Paul and the many volunteers involved over the years. I think that the café made a valuable contribution to the community and has been a valued part of the Bushland community. It will be missed.

Reports from MVNS Staff and Affiliated Organisations

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

Fiona's report for the Bushland: A Safer Community Project will be her last as the project finishes at the end of October 2019. We thank her for all her effort over the last 18 months working with the Bushland community. We are very fortunate to find a person like Fiona with energy and commitment.

We also have reports from two of the organisations we auspice. The Akoostik Music Festival and the Manning River Turtle Conservation Group. The Akoostik Music Festival was first held in 2007. It was a great success and has grown in size and ambition each year. We are happy to say that it has now 'grown up' and no longer will be under our umbrella for insurance and administration support.

Planning

The management committee met in May this year to look at our strategic priorities within the context of the Family and Community Services (FACS) reform and their new Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) program and evaluation framework. The focus was on exploring the current service delivery and which programs might need to change.

The management committee will be developing a strategic plan for the whole organization early in 2020.

Many thanks to our staff and volunteers!

Many, many thanks to all the volunteers who do the Monday lunch, work in the garden, answer the phones and take messages, pick up mail, bank, answer questions, collect bread, shop, listen, help people do their tax, assist people with emergency support. All and anything that needs doing!

Thank you to the staff Caron, Jane, Kerrie, Fiona and Jasmine who have kept the work moving forward, who did 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 attempt to provide support to Caron and guide the organization. We welcomed Susan



Ballard to the committee this year. Unfortunately, Craig Thompson, a long-term member resigned.

By the way, the water tanks are in and hooked up – just need water now!

You are all appreciated!

Angela Pink

Chairperson, Management Committee



Treasurer's Report

I am pleased to be able to present the Treasurer's report for 2018 – 2019.

Essential Assurance Service Pty Ltd 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 \$2,549.
- We received a grant for our emergency relief program - \$157,000 over 4.5 years.
- Interest on our term deposits was \$786.
- Migrant Settlement funding reduced by \$10,000.

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

Chairperson, Management Committee



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.

The transitioning process from Community Builders to a Targeted Earlier Intervention model (TEI) is now into its 6th year. Discussions appear to continue regarding flexibility for Neighbourhood Centres and how we can fit into the desired model. We had hoped that we would be fully compliant with the new model as of end of June 2019 but it now looks like it won't be until the beginning of the 2020 year due to difficulties with access to our new reporting system.

Outputs

This year we continue to meet our targets and find creative ways to address issues for our target groups.

In May we held a planning day to drill down to what our services might look like under the TEI model and what that might look like for us as a service. We have until June 2020 to test our plans at which time a recommissioning program will be completed and new contracts negotiated based on local priorities.

We continue to utilise social media to maintain a profile for our services while also delivering appropriate information to community members. Our website and Facebook pages are extremely well accessed.

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. Funding through the Federal Government's Be Connected program allowed us to provide basic assistance to older people in developing their IT capacity and skills. Thanks to Angela for facilitating this program.

We continued to convene the Manning Valley Interagency until the end of 2018 at which time Midcoast Council took over the facilitation.

We held a Conflict Resolution and Communication Training which we opened to other services with a total of 18 attendees. Much needed training by all accounts! This year we finalised our **Cultural Seeds project** funded by FRRR. It aimed to provide and/or expand creative opportunities for young people in Bushland. This year we provided \$5000 of funding to Midcoast Council MEC to bring the 360 Allstars to town. This also included workshops with local children, the performance and a large amount of free tickets.



This funding also funded our Safety Worker, Auntie Wilma (local elder) and myself to attend Armidale to visit an organisation called **Backtrack** to obtain an overview of the project and the possibility of raising awareness of similar issues in the Taree area and options for addressing them. After the visit we were also successful in running a number of screenings of the Backtrack Boys movie which was well received in both schools and the community. It has certainly raised their profile in this area.

The remainder of these funds allowed us to provide some sector training around youth engagement with **Peter Slattery**, a well-known educator in the youth sector. Approx. 40 workers attended a 2-day training program.

See other outputs included in **Bushland Enterprise report, Food from the Heart and Community Gardens.**

This year we continued to auspice the **Wingham Akoostik Festival** (see separate report). This year we also decided that this group were strongly supported by a steadfast committee and the community, and after 12 years of providing auspicings support they were well placed to continue as an incorporated group. We wish them well.

A Touch of the Brush – (funded by Regional Arts NSW) – a Circus performance originally to be held in the Wingham Brush and surrounds of the Manning River featuring stilt walkers and aerialists in Flying Fox and Manning River Turtle costumes and ground entertainment. While this project was reported on in the last annual report, the final show was delivered in October just after our AGM. While the performance itself was impacted by inclement weather, the show did go on! Many thanks to Wingham Brush School for their support in ensuring this happened.

Challenges

Data Collection – this year we needed to address data collection issues to ensure that our transition to a Federal system for our FACS funding would not be impacted by gaps in the collection process. We will adopt a system which will allow us to report all data for our main services through the one system. This provides funding bodies with their requirements, but also allows us to track data, and utilise the data for future programs and outcomes.

Our Settlement Services funding came around for retendering at the end of 2018. Once again, we were a part of the NSW Settlement Partnerships with Settlement Services International (SSI) as the lead agency. SSI themselves were undergoing major management and staffing changes. Ultimately the partnership was successful in the tender but funding was decreased considerably. The funding is very much client focused and delivering outcomes around English, Education and Employment for recently arrived migrants. This is a difficult shift for a worker in a widespread regional area where previously the focus has been on community capacity building. SSI continues to provide a range of support and a wealth of resources.

We also tendered for Emergency Relief funding this year in an attempt to regain some of the considerable funds we lost in the 2015 tender. While we did not get back to the level of funding we had previously, we did get a significant increase which has allowed us to provide a much more robust service.



We have also been refunded for our Legal Aid CLSD project (see separate report). Funds were increased for the first time in 8 years; however, it still remains a year to year contract.

The closure of the Bushland Tukka Cafe and information and referral Kiosk at Bushland Hub was not a decision made lightly and took many months of discussion before finalising our decision. Thanks to Milliways Consulting for putting together a viability report which allowed us to make the ultimate decision regarding this. Albeit it did not make it any easier.

Finally

None of this would happen without a strong team! I can't thank the staff enough for their support for me and for each other. Thanks also to Angela and the Committee for their support, especially through this difficult year. And without the many other volunteers (too many to name) we would not be able to achieve all of what we do. Our organisation might be small but we pack a punch!!

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.

August 2019 signified the 5th birthday for the Bushland Enterprise and Bushland Tukka Cafe. After undertaking a thorough viability report, MVNS regretfully decided to close the cafe as of 11th October 2019. We understand that this has huge implications for the Bushland community and also the many volunteers who were fundamental to the success of this venture. We are proud of what we have achieved over the past 5 years.

Key Achievements

Over 5 years ago, MVNS had the vision and took the initiative and the risks to turn an unused space into something that could be a community asset and a vehicle to support a community and attract funding for further projects.

One off funding from FACS allowed us to establish the cafe. MVNS continued to build on this with the development of the garden, renovation of the old supermarket with a view to making it a multipurpose community space (this never came to fruition due to issues with obtaining a lease), and over the last two years the beautification and security of the internal and external building, once again through funding from FACS. Apart from the funding and making our own financial contributions, MVNS, our volunteers and staff, have contributed thousands of hours in the development and maintenance of this building and surrounds.

We have self-funded the cafe for 4 out of 5 years at significant cost to ourselves. The legacy we leave to the Bushland community is a more connected and resourced community. We hope residents will continue to seek better services and that other services will see that there is a need to provide services through a place-based commitment. The changes we have made to the building itself are significant and we hope that it remains a community space for the community.

We continued to see the building of community ownership and an essence of belonging amongst those who saw the cafe as a community asset. This was complemented by the work of the Youth Worker through the Community Safety Project over the past 18 months.

We provided an information and referral hub to this community over the past 5 years which proved to be much needed. We will investigate ways in which we can continue to provide support to this community.

Over 6500 customers were served through the cafe this financial year and another 1700 customers received catering through 60 catering jobs.



Challenges Encountered

The biggest challenge we encountered was the inability to obtain a lease for the cafe, or to ascertain any vision from the owners regarding the use of the centre and the supermarket which we had wanted to utilise for the community as a youth and community space. This impacted on us in that we didn't have the capacity to plan, or apply for funding to ensure the sustainability of the initiatives that we had developed. This situation was unforeseen due to change in ownership of the building 3 years ago. It also limited our ability to develop and implement other community development initiatives and the cost involved with our continued presence became unsustainable.

An outreach presence continued to be difficult to build, partly due to the uncertainty around ownership, but also due to the location.

Once again, enormous thanks to Jazz for being such a legend ☺, and Pat and Paul for being so committed to the cafe over the last 5 years. Thanks to Angela for being the resolute shopper and stock controller for many years. Many other volunteers came and went and we thank them very much too. **Thank you all!**

Caron Watkins, Manager



Migrant Settlement Service

The Migrant Settlement Service aims to equip and empower humanitarian entrants, other eligible permanent migrants and their communities to address their settlement needs, in order to improve social participation, economic well-being, independence, personal well-being and community connectedness to all eligible clients in the Mid North Coast regions, including Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Taree, Forster and Gloucester. This is achieved through casework, 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:

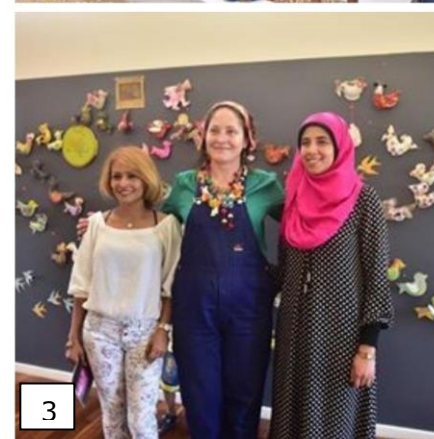
1. Provision of casework, information and referral to address settlement needs.
2. Conduct group information sessions.
3. Promotion and provision of service to local and outreach areas.
4. Provide community advocacy and developing and maintaining networks with agencies.
5. To support the multicultural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

Outputs

The service saw significant changes from 1 January 2019 with settlement services changing over from the Settlement Services Program (SSP) to the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program client services stream. This sees an increased focus on direct client services and client-based activities including group information sessions and client-based programs. Unfortunately, with this change funding was reduced across all settlement services nationally.

The service has continued to provide direct settlement services to clients through the provision of information, referral and casework assisting clients to be independent, integrate into the community and develop a sense of belonging. Group information sessions in partnership with TAFE ESL classes continue to be an effective avenue to provide settlement information and build rapport.

Ongoing promotion of the service is important to reach a dispersed and often isolated client group. Formal and informal attendance at the TAFE ESL classes and the Migrant Support Mid North Coast Facebook page continue to be effective tools for sharing information and connecting with the target group. Promotion to services through network and interagency meetings is important to establishing and maintaining relationships for both delivering client services and partnership



activities. The NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP) continues to be beneficial with meetings and training both face to face and via teleconferencing helping to increase knowledge and build relationships with other members.

With the introduction of the SETS program community development activities are no longer a focus of the service. However, given the effectiveness of community development activities the service has continued to deliver community and client-based activities through sourcing partnerships and funding opportunities.

These include:

- August 2018: portraits were taken of 12 ESL students for the Manning Migrants public art project by Ronnie Grammatica as part of the Cultures in the Manning Stories event.
- 10 November 2018: Cultures in the Manning Stories event was held in partnership with the Manning Regional Art Gallery. Included the Manning Migrants project launch and Birds of a Feather exhibition (Multicultural Women's Group).
- 29 and 30 November 2018: Mid North Coast Cultural Youth Exchange Trip in Taree, Port Macquarie and Wauchope in partnership with Northern Settlement Services and Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre in Newcastle.
- February 2019: Notification of successful application for Fostering Integration Grants (\$49,610) saw the commencement of organisation of 2 employment focused programs for migrant women, *Learn How to Run Your Own Food Stall* (partnership with TAFE NSW, Taree campus) and *Introduction to Individual Support* (partnership with MNC Community College). Programs will commence July 2019.
- 7 March 2019: Building Cross Cultural Connections Women's Week event in partnership with the Manning Regional Art Gallery (funding from FACS grant).
- April – June 2019: Water safety program ran as part of the community capacity building funding stream.
- May 2019: Language Café focusing on conversational English and social integration commenced in Forster through NSP Settlement Innovation Funds.
- Ongoing: Multicultural Women's Group ran fortnightly from July – December 2018 alternating between Taree Library and the Gallery working with Sam Everett. Following a successful application through Multicultural NSW Diversity Grant (\$5,000) the group re-started in May 2019 in partnership with the Gallery and Mission Australia who are funding a worker to provide children's activities. The art-based group runs fortnightly during school terms focusing on social integration and conversational English.



4



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Key Achievements

The key achievement this year has been the continuation of core client services and delivery of so many community capacity activities and programs during a time of change and reduced funding. It is only through a commitment to providing such beneficial and quality services, innovative thinking and supportive management that this has been possible.

Challenges

Worker capacity in a part-time role has always been a challenge covering such a large geographical area. This will be further challenged with a reduction of funding and the absorption of interpreting costs under SETS resulting in reduced worker hours. However, with a commitment to continuing to provide quality services to the target group the service will continue to explore additional resources including external funding and partnerships opportunities.

Future Plans

Having had 6 months to implement and adjust to the new SETS program the service will be focusing on providing core services and continue to seek additional resources for client-based programs. It is an exciting time with the Fostering Integration Grants program running from July 2019 into February 2020, the continuation of the Multicultural Women's Group and a focus on the newly established Language Café.

I would like to thank the many partners who continue to be supportive, collaborative and reliable year after year, NSP colleagues, our fabulous volunteers in the centre, Language Café volunteers Keri and Bettina and committee members and Caron, Kerrie, Jazz and Fiona who continue to provide much needed laughs and support.

Jane O'Dwyer

Migrant Settlement Project Worker





11



12



13

Photos

1-3

10 November 2018: Cultures in the Manning Stories event was held in partnership with the Manning Regional Art Gallery. Included the Manning Migrants project launch and Birds of a Feather exhibition (Multicultural Women's Group).

- (1) Manning Migrants project launch - Dina
- (2) Artist talk
- (3) Birds of a Feather exhibition (Multicultural Women's Group) - Nisha, Sam Everett and Mais

4-5

29 and 30 November 2018: Mid North Coast Cultural Youth Exchange Trip in Taree, Port Macquarie and Wauchope in partnership with Northern Settlement Services and Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre in Newcastle.

- (4) Taree High School
- (5) Wauchope High School

6-7

7 March 2019: Building Cross Cultural Connections Women's Week event in partnership with the Manning Regional Art Gallery (funding from FACS grant).

- (6) Aboriginal dot painting with Aunty Pam Saunders
- (7) Sundus demonstrating how to make naan bread

8-10

Multicultural Women's Group -eco dying with Jana Pearceova

11-12

Group Information Sessions

- (11) Port Macquarie TAFE ESL class - Multicultural NSW Interpreter Scholarship session
- (12) Port Macquarie TAFE ESL class - Fire safety and 000

13

February 2019: Notification of successful application for Fostering Integration grant



Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) - Taree/Forster



The Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) program partnership is one of 12 regional justice partnerships in NSW that aim to improve legal outcomes for socially and economically disadvantaged people. The partnership is guided by an action plan that provides a framework for priorities based on local unmet and emerging legal needs.

Taree Forster region priorities:

1. Improved engagement with Aboriginal communities.
2. Improved access to legal information and legal services for Aboriginal people, people with a disability and socially and economically disadvantaged people.
3. Assisting people in financial hardship.
4. Keep community workers up to date with changes to the law.

Outputs

Throughout 2018-19 the CLSD partnership has delivered projects in line with the current Action Plan (2017-19) and identified ongoing, unmet and emerging legal needs of the Taree and Forster communities.

The priorities of the current Action Plan are:

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:

- Taree Naidoc Day Celebrations Legal Hub providing information, advice and referral. (July 2018)
- Taree Law Check Up event (October 2018)
- Forster Wills Clinic for Aboriginal people in partnership with Gilbert + Tobin (November 2018)
- Free legal help day at Forster Court House (covering both Forster and Taree list days) including provision of free birth certificates for vulnerable people (February 2019)
- Mid Coast Council hardship policy project is ongoing
- Taree Police Powers: rights and responsibilities community information session planning commenced in December 2018 including consultation process with the Aboriginal community including an Elders morning tea (December 2018)



Other activities included:

- 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. Outreach services are also provided by the ROCP in Gloucester and Taree.

Ongoing, Unmet and Emerging Legal Needs

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

- Council debts being taken directly to court and unfair application of hardship policy throughout the Mid Coast Council area is ongoing.
- Debt related issues more generally including bankruptcy, pay day lenders, high electricity bills continues to be ongoing.
- Debt due to unpaid fines through Revenue NSW including Victims Restitution debts.
- Racial discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, policing and the schooling system (expulsion and back to back suspensions). This is ongoing from the previous year, particularly in the area of policing.
- Employment law, particularly for young people with under payment of wages and not being paid superannuation.

Challenges Encountered

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

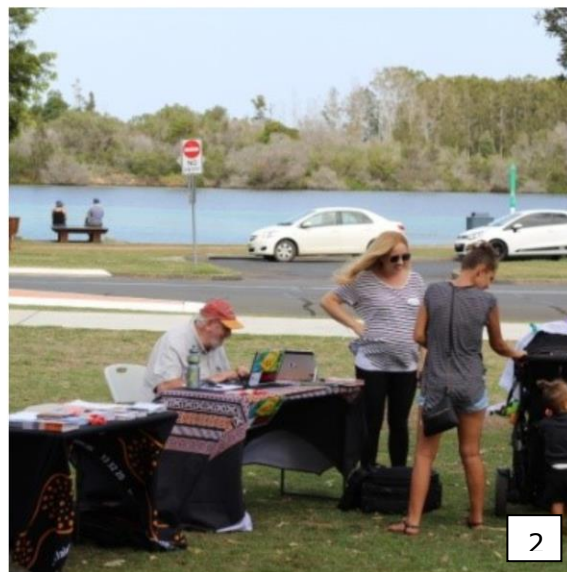
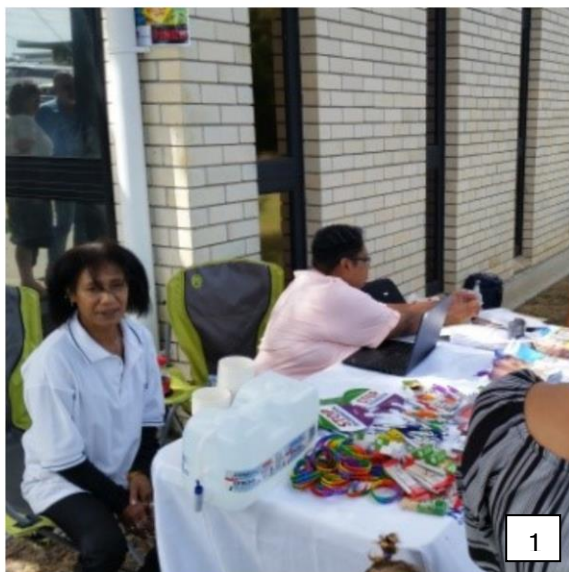
The coming year will see the development of a new action plan which will no doubt see some priorities continuing and some new priorities added. The issue of racial discrimination has been a point of discussion at regional meetings for two years now and will remain an area of focus.

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





Photos

- (1) Free legal help day at Forster Court House (covering both Forster and Taree list days) including provision of free birth certificates for vulnerable people (February 2019). Felicity Huntington (Anti-discrimination board) and Lucinda Blair (BDM).
- (2) Terry Cook (Revenue NSW) and Kirsty Harrison (Legal Aid NSW)
- (3) CLSD partners – Legal Aid, Hunter Community Legal Centre, Anti-discrimination Board, Legal Aid NSW, Revenue NSW, Fair Trading NSW and Births Deaths and Marriages.



Bushland: A Safer Community Project

The Bushland: a safer community project ran from April 2018 to October 2019. It aimed 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

Over the 18-month duration of the project, the project officer successfully advocated for service providers engagement with the community. Partnerships were established with many and with the support of volunteers; community building initiatives and wellbeing services were delivered. These include:

- Fortnightly Friday Youth drop-in with safe transport home
- Regular school holiday events in partnership with numerous local services
- 10-week beauty program for teenage Bushland girls
- Regular community safety meetings
- Elder's morning teas
- Sector development opportunities including a 2-day workshop 'engaging disengaged young people' and multiple community screenings of BackTrack Boys
- 2-day open visit to BackTrack Youth works, Armidale with Biripi Elder and steering committee member Aunty Wilma Morcombe
- 360 AllStar radical urban circus workshops for Bushland youth at Taree High, Chatham High and Bushland Hub in partnership with the Manning Entertainment Centre. 100 free tickets to the show were distributed to Bushland families
- Weekly MSS outreach family support worker at Bushland Hub
- Paper and online surveying validating safety concerns
- The establishment of Project Steering Committee comprised of residents, Elders, TIDE, NSW Police, Biripi, MidCoast Council and PCYC representatives
- The establishment of a pool of volunteers
- CLSD project partner for the Police Powers- your rights and responsibilities community information session
- Advocated for the Bushland community through attendance at the Youth Strategic meetings and during the development of MidCoast Council's youth strategic plan



- MSS delivered Bringing Up Great Kids for Aboriginal Families program
- MidCoast Council/Essential Energy installed two street lights near the Mudford and Dunoon Street intersection; a site identified by the community as being unsafe

Key Achievements

The 10 week after school beauty program for teenage girls from Bushland *All Dolled Up* aimed to give participants a positive outlook in life and provide a direction for the future. It was highly successful, with attendance, community and service provider engagement targets exceeded. Brittany Cochrane, a 21-year-old Biripi woman, was employed in late 2018 as a project support worker and was the key driver of this program. Brittany provided a clear and deep understanding of the complex problem of engaging a hard to reach cohort- with great results!

In addition to this, the project officers established solid relationships with community stakeholders, other service providers and many more young people. They became embedded in the community and successfully worked to ensure that the community was actively involved in the design and delivery of project activities.

Being dedicated workers in Bushland, operating from a community development framework (as opposed to case management/service delivery), enabled the project officers to also actively advocate for the Bushland community. By creating sector development opportunities and increasing the awareness of youth who are having a hard time, they helped to create a vision of what is possible in this community.

Challenges

Despite the Bushland Hub providing an ideal foundation for a range of community activities, the challenges around establishing a permanent place-based safe gathering space were numerous and prohibitive. The project officer researched the feasibility of alternative locations. However, while local parklands were used for some activities, no safe or suitable permanent space for the project safety programs was identified.

A further challenge in getting safety programs delivered to youth in Bushland included identifying services that had the motivation and capacity to deliver place-based programs. Of the programs that were identified, most were only offered during school hours (also working hours) and therefore delivered in schools, located outside Bushland.

Many thanks go to the Bushland community members, Elders, services and schools who have expressed their passion for change through the support of this project. Thanks also goes to MVNS staff and the project steering committee members for integral guidance, advice and assistance.

Fiona Lee

Community Development Worker | Youth

Images of project initiatives



Manning Valley Cooperative Living Program (MVCLP)

(Incorporates Food from the Heart and Manning Valley Community Gardens)

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 (2018/2019).

Total Funding Provided	ER Assistance 2017/2018	Total client numbers	Total Monday lunches delivered
Department of Social Services \$15,828 = Fuel \$4,075 Food \$5,755 Food parcels \$3,600 Other \$1,211 Lunches \$1,187	ER Assistance provided Second Bite <i>New Clients</i> <i>Existing Clients</i> No. of ER clients Unable to Assist	216 1238 137 79 2000 (approx.)	406 - average 37 clients per month (no lunches provided in January)
Telstra Vouchers \$1,100			
Electricity Vouchers \$29,900			
TOTAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED \$46,828			

A big thank you to our ER volunteers this year – Ruben, Ann and Cheryl. And without Kerrie we wouldn't be able to maintain this service as the criteria can be extremely unwieldy in determining eligibility. This year we were successful in recovering some of the funding that we lost at the last tender in 2015. However, this didn't kick in until January 2019. However, the number of clients we are unable to assist still remains extremely high.

This is reflected in that we assisted 253 clients out of 2,450 requests. 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. We also top this up with garden produce and RSPCA donations for the furry side of emergency relief.



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, assisted by Bruce, has been our reliable 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 1,300 community members accessed this service this year. Approximately 6,000 kilos of edible food was saved from landfill through MVNS! 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. One day a month is sponsored by the Tuesday Women's Craft group which is much appreciated. 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 400 meals this year! Thank you, Kim, again to Ken, Julie and Ann, Rebecca and the Seventh Day Adventist crew, with Lei Wah and Cheryl topping up our freezer take aways as required. 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.

Funding for this program is completely supported by donations and sale of books and other bits and pieces.

Manning Valley Community Gardens

The Manning Valley Community Gardens garden continues to provide an avenue for engagement for community members, clients and other volunteers who wish to contribute something to their community.



HCCU Grant

We have finally installed 2 water tanks! Thanks to Renata and David who did the ground work for this! Thanks to Gary for getting the pump sorted. We now need some rain to reduce the burden of using town water in this extremely dry weather.

'Groovin in the Garden' Fundraiser

Thanks again to Chelsea for pulling together this fundraiser in September 2018. Thank you to the many others who once again volunteered their time to help with this and raised funds for 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.

Midcoast Compost Crusade

This is an initiative of Midcoast Council and Midwaste to encourage households to reduce the amount of kitchen scraps from going to landfill by bringing them to our garden and depositing them in established compost bins. In turn we can use this compost to fertilise our garden. Thanks to Peter who has taken over the management of this which has seen a large increase in the amount of scraps being deposited.



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 ☺

Thank you's

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.



Manning River Turtle Conservation Group

Key Objectives

- Promote awareness of the turtle, and assist to reduce the threats to its survival
- To assist research into populations, threats and future conservation strategies

Key Activities

- Manning River Turtle Workshop - organised by the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) under the Save Our Species (SOS) banner, this two-day event was held in Wingham and included presentations by leading university researchers, PhD students, ecologists, Local Land Services (LLS), Midcoast Council, local farmers, Forestry Corporation, and educators. It was well attended by the public. The second day consisted of workshops to establish an action plan to conserve the Manning River turtle (MRT).
- 2019 Winter Solstice Lantern Walk was successful, with more than 200 people bringing lanterns to walk through Wingham Brush and up to Central Park, to raise awareness of the MRT through this free event. A new major lantern was created by the community through the Makers Way.



Local artist Gemma Cross has created more felted turtles and also a felted figurine named the Maiden of the Manning, which she kindly donated to the Killabakh Day in the Country raffle. Local group the Wingham Spinners and Craft Group assisted in making crocheted MRT emerging from eggs, which sold well at the Lantern Parade.

Primary school interest in the MRT has increased, with Tinonee Public School holding a Kidpreneur Day to make MRT themed games and activities, which raised more than \$700 for our group. Old Bar Primary requested our involvement so we taught a lesson about the MRT to Year 3/4. The Manning River Turtle Conservation Group (MRTCG) held stalls at this year's EnviroFair as well as the Old Bar Festival.

From the Manning River Turtle Workshop, it was suggested that a Working Group be established for ongoing communication between researchers, land managers and Midcoast Council, to aid a coordinated approach. The MRTCG is represented in this group





alongside LLS, TIDE, Manning Landcare and OEH (now Department of Primary Industries and Environment - DPIE). We continue to collaborate with landholders and DPIE to assist ecologists to access parts of the river where research can be conducted into the population.

The MRTCG continues to work with Tim Faulkner from the Australian Reptile Park and Devil Ark. He came to talk to students of Tinonee Public School, as well as ManningNet (a business group for women of the Manning Valley) where he discussed the plight of the turtle and other Australian endangered species.

MRTCG also assisted with the Project Loggerhead Turtle Day with local high school students, to highlight the importance of clean waterways for our freshwater and sea turtles.

Members of MRTCG remain grateful for the support of MVNS and Wingham Chamber of Commerce, to enable the ongoing success of the Lantern Parade, which is fast becoming a popular annual event for many families.

Claire Rourke

MRTCG Committee Member



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.

Since 2007 the Wingham Akoostik Festival has been auspiced by Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services. From 1st July 2019 the Festival will be its own incorporated entity and operate under its own constitution. It is with the utmost gratitude that the Akoostik festival formally acknowledges Caron Watkins for her invaluable support in auspicing the event for 12 years.

The Akoostik organisers and Queen St Hall proprietors jointly launched the first Acoustic Fringe Mini Festival alongside the main Akoostik Festival, which took place at 25 Queen St, near the Town Hall, just a short walk or shuttle bus trip from the showground.

The Akoostik Art of Recycling was launched in 2018 with local artists creating appealing visual art from recycled materials. The art created was displayed across the festival weekend, and transformed the main festival pavilion to an active art gallery, complete with students and artists working together to creating the art in. The audience wandered, watched and lingered in the 'gallery' to see the space transform from junk to art.



One of our committee members, engaged local sponsors to source and fund a shade structure. This is now added to our assets for future Akoostik festivals, and creates the opportunity of hiring the shade structure to other events, providing an additional income stream.

We are very proud of it, and were very excited to present it to the community. Committee members working together for many weeks to cut fabric, tie knots and create it from scratch was a great team building exercise!



Key Outcomes:

- Work experience for youth volunteers. The festival provides an experience that can assist with career decisions. High school event students from prior years are currently in paid work with Paradyme, the stage company who provide lighting, PA and stages for the Akoostik event.
- Contributes to a well organised event. Many of the adult volunteers have been involved for 4-5 years, they are now being placed in the same area each year and building experience in their chosen area. For example, Artist Gate, Artist Merchandise and Main Gate Entry, will be staffed by the same volunteers each year. This builds knowledge and ownership of the role.

In 2018, the committee received Federal Building Better Regions Funds (BBRF) to provide a new website, a business/marketing consultant to develop a succession plan and formalize role development for committee members, and a site risk assessor to attend



the festival to identify hazards and potential impacts and to provide solutions to those identified issues.

Our event in 2018 was cut short by one day due to an unsafe site created by a major storm that hit on Saturday night just prior to the major act, Diesel took the stage. The committee was required to follow its safety training, being guided by a risk assessor and the SES, and lodging an insurance claim to be compensated for ticket refunds. The response from festival attendees was very reassuring with many opting to not take refunds, which we saw as a huge vote of appreciation for what we do and a respectful level of gratitude from our ticket holders.

The festival would not have passed its initial planning stages in 2007 without Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services support. The committee would not have been successful in accessing grants and funding over the years without the administrative background and audited accounts of MVNS, this would have severely limited our growth and reputation. MVNS has provided the support for our growth and for allowing us to achieve our goals year after year.

We give our sincere thanks for the support during our initial years and the guidance in our formative years.

MVNS has successfully launched the festival and grown this event for the community, providing social and economic benefit to the Manning Valley, and we are grateful.

Donna Ballard

Festival Coordinator on behalf of Festival Committee and volunteers



2019 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
- Manning River Times
- Judy Peach
- Prime News
- Wingham Chronicle
- Hunter New England Area Health Service
- Uniting Church Wingham
- Midcoast Council
- Northern Settlement Services team
- Pauline Smith - MNC Financial Counsellor
- MNC Community Legal Centre
- SecondBite Food Rescue Program in partnership with Coles Wingham
- St Vincent de Paul Wingham
- Interrelate Taree and Port Macquarie
- North Coast Institute TAFE (Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Taree and Tuncurry)
- Rudi's Meats
- Manning Regional Art Gallery
- Swags for the Homeless
- Tuesday Craft Group ladies
- Mission Australia – Communities for Children
- Legal Aid MNC
- Uniting

Funding Bodies

Special thanks also to our funding bodies:

- **NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS)**
- Justice NSW
- Legal Aid NSW
- **Department of Social Services**
- **Settlement Services International**
- **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: 2018 – 2019 Financial Reports

Please see attachments.

