

42nd Annual Report 2023 Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc.



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Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc.

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Our Vision

Strong and resilient communities where individuals, families and communities have increased capability, interconnections and partnerships

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.



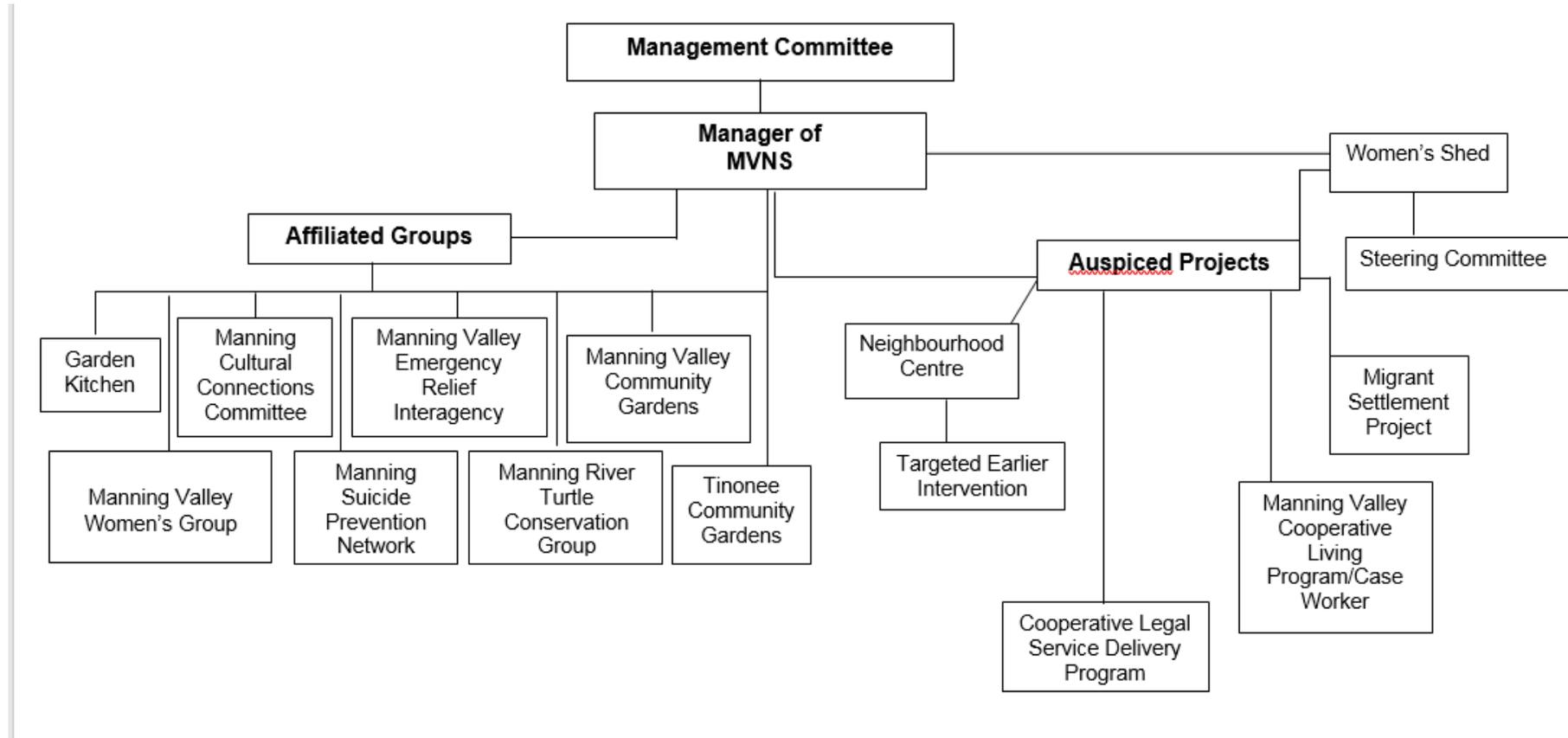
MVNS Activities Umbrella

This will help you understand what we do and where you fit in.

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| <p>Neighbourhood Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information & Referral • Advocacy • Community Development • Resume writing. • Cheap use of phone, fax & computer. • Support for community members who need to talk • Promotion and assistance for community groups • Tax Help - July to Oct - free assistance with tax returns for low-income earners • Groups and courses <p>Contact the staff and volunteers 6553 5121</p> | <p>Women Kind Collective</p> <p>Develop a space where rural women impacted by the bushfires can come together to access support, share stories, share skills, develop new skills, access resources, and ultimately reduce women's sense of isolation through tested recovery and resilience programs.</p> <p>Contact Kate 0422 652108</p> | <p>Garden Kitchen</p> <p>A kitchen resource that provides support toward self-reliance to disadvantaged clients in a purposeful approach providing a meal, advocacy, education and opportunities to commune.</p> <p>Contact 6553 5121</p> | <p>Manning Valley Cooperative Living Program</p> <p>Financial assistance and case work for individuals & families in crisis. Available to all people living in the Manning Valley who are experiencing financial crisis and/or other misfortune or suffering which is contributing to poverty or helplessness.</p> <p>Contact 6553 5121</p> | <p>Child Youth and Family Engagement</p> <p>Funded through the Department of Communities and Justice under their Targeted Earlier Intervention Program. It aims to target children, young people, families and communities who are experiencing, or at risk of, vulnerability. With a focus on early help and support, the objective of the TEI program is to provide targeted services at the point where they can have the most impact.</p> <p>Contact Hanna 0460 031 307</p> | <p>Old Courthouse Community Gardens</p> <p>Development and maintenance of a sustainable garden for the community by the community</p> <p>Contact 6553 5121</p> |
| | <p>Tinonee Community Gardens</p> <p>Facebook page tinoneecommunitygarden@gmail.com</p> | <p>Cooperative Legal service Delivery</p> <p>Building cooperative & strategic networks of key legal services and community organisations</p> <p>Contact Jane Project Officer 6553 5121</p> | <p>Manning Suicide Prevention Network</p> <p>Aims to provide information in respect to mental health support services in our community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the incidence of suicide in our community • Provide education to the community on how they can help within their own family and friendship groups • Advocate to improve services and improve ease of access to services • Coordinate local events to promote suicide awareness and share relevant information <p>Contact Gemma 0477 213 611</p> | <p>Manning Cultural Connections Committee</p> <p>To promote social inclusion and provide an engaging intercultural platform in the Manning Valley</p> | <p>Manning River Turtle Conservation Group</p> <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> |
| | | | | <p>Migrant Settlement Project Worker</p> <p>Information & referral for migrants and NESB residents of the Mid North Coast.</p> <p>Contact Jane 6553 5121</p> | |



MVNS Organisational Chart and Overview





Chairperson's Report

It has been awhile but for the year 2023 we can report that MVNS "has had a good year".

MVNS has delivered a range of programs, projects and information sharing to our local community and they have been well received by the community. The programs/projects have been varied to meet the needs of the diverse community we live in. Some examples are ; - Volunteer Fest, The Belonging Project (Migrant Support) Good Food, Good Cents!, Job ready workshops, Free Barista training, Holiday Art workshops, Youth Mowing Mob and many more, some of which are reported in the other reports in this document.

We have had a major push for Management Committee recruitment this year.

Make a difference Volunteer your time!

It is not too late to volunteer even to be a Board member.

In the year ahead we will face many challenges especially with the rise in cost of living impacting everyone in the community. Programs like Food from the Heart will need to be well supported,

We are able to do what we do because of the tireless work of the Manager, the staff and the Volunteers. Thank you.

Also without our keen, small and committed Management Committee (The BOARD) we would not be able to provide a SAFE, STABLE and TRUSTED service.

Susan Ballard

Chairperson, Management Committee





Treasurer's Report

Tim

Treasurer, Management Committee



Manager's Report

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc.

MVNS has continued to fulfil its' mission this year; empowering individuals and communities through community development and direct service delivery.

A year of review! This year we reviewed our mission in keeping with our broad focus on the community while also ensuring we remain committed to meeting the outcomes of our funding bodies.

Our new vision: Strong and resilient communities where individuals, families and communities have increased capability, interconnections and partnerships

With funding from DCJ we were able to engage SEFA to:

1. *Confirm and review the evidence-base for MVNS' broad scope of programs*
2. *Clarify the impact delivered by MVNS based on stakeholder interviews and Board and staff insights to develop an overarching **Theory of Change***
3. *Review and develop an accessible and user-friendly **Outcomes Measurement Framework** for the organisation to measure how it delivers against intended social outcomes.*
4. *Work through a strategic-planning approach identifying key risks, opportunities and recommendations.*

We reviewed our Volunteer and Management Committee recruitment processes, and our Management Committee governance and risks. We continue to work through the risks in an ever-changing funding environment and with increased expectations from funding bodies around appropriate governance.

We continue to be a major provider of information, advocacy and referral for a broad range of community members.

We have had our first full year of TEI service delivery without being impacted by disasters which has given us more scope to find our niche and develop continuity of services.

As mentioned in last year's report, we have established the Women Kind Collective in Wingham with government funding taking us through until March 24. This project has been overwhelmingly taken up and supported by the community. The challenge now is to look at sustainability going forward.

Our website and Facebook pages received a much-needed overhaul this year. Take a look!

This year we received a donation from the Commonwealth Bank for being voted as the best local community service! Recognition is great!



TARGETED EARLIER INTERVENTION

Outputs

Community Connections - In the past 12 months we have met the requirements for delivery of various activities and events to support and engage with our target groups. We have especially focussed on increasing social and community inclusion and other activities that increase community connections. Thanks to these activities we have enhanced our service profile and partnerships.

These activities/events have included:

- Participation and provision of activities at the Bushland Tenants Christmas party
- Women's' Shed opening event
- Partnered in Child Protection Week and Homelessness week activities
- Providing activities at the First Steps Count opening event
- Participated in a Strengthening Communities Day held by Child Care Services Taree and District

Community Centres - As usual our information, referral and advice component of our contract was more than met with approx. 4500 clients assisted. This is approx. four times more than our contracting requirements. We also had approx. 500 instances of provision of client support through providing access to our infrastructure by other services e.g. AA, Dept Education, Art Gallery, Chess Connect, Mission Australia, Financial Counselling, Craft Groups etc.

We are grateful to all of our volunteers. Without them we would not be able to continue to provide wider community support.

Community Support – See TEI worker report for Community Support outcomes.

Outcomes

While the capacity of our data collection system has limitations in reporting significant and meaningful outcomes, we do know that our activities and programs are providing an impact for participants. We are also sitting at around a 90% satisfaction rate recorded by participants who undertake our activities.

Our reach to our target groups has been significant. Our engagement of Aboriginal communities is at approximately 50% of voluntary engagement.

Challenges

Challenges remain significant in this funding environment. Funding is barely keeping up with covering increases in CPI and award increases. We continue to battle the competing needs of meeting funding body requirements while also meeting the needs of many community members who no longer fit within our 'target groups'. It has become beyond our capacity to continue to self-fund services for community members outside of this scope. Having said that we continue to look at other means of doing this.





Future Plans

We will continue to look at avenues for developing the capacity of MVNS to meet demands including the capacity of the Board. We will also continue to look at appropriate funding avenues that meet the needs of our communities.

Finally

The AGM always seems to come around quickly and take us by surprise. This year is no different.

Keeping up with everything happening here at MVNS is at times a challenge in itself! Thank you to our many volunteers who support us every day. (mentioned in separate reports).

Thank you to Kerrie, Arwen, Katherine and Ann for maintaining their sanity and keeping the front office operating regardless of what each day throws at them. There is never a dull moment!!

Thank you to Jane, Hanna, Stacey and Kate who are also constantly under the pump and keeping up with the everyday demands of their positions.

Thank you to the Management Committee who also have the challenge of ensuring MVNS is viable and current in an increasingly unpredictable environment.

Caron Watkins

Manager



Migrant Settlement Service

The Migrant Settlement Service (MSS) 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

- SETS - Settlement Engagement and Transition Support
- DHA - Department of Home Affairs
- NSP - NSW Settlement Partnership

Description

The Migrant Settlement Service (MSS) aims to equip and empower humanitarian entrants, other eligible permanent migrants, and their communities to address their settlement needs, 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, advocacy, and referral to address settlement needs.
2. Conduct group information sessions for multicultural residents.
3. Promotion and provision of service to local and outreach areas.
4. Provide community advocacy and develop and maintain networks with agencies.

Outputs

The 2022-2023 period is part of the 2022-2024 Activity Work Plan. It saw an increase in KPIs despite experiencing a small funding reduction.

Client work: Referrals have picked up in the second half of the year following a decline during and following the peak COVID period. All KPIs were exceeded.

Domestic and family violence: This part of the plan saw a significant increase in KPIs. Group work was added, this was delivered through the SIF Self-Defence program and was made possible due to SIF funding which for the first time was substantial enough (\$3,000) to run a program. One session was run with two more to be run next year. See key achievements below. The DFV component also includes pre- and post-intervention casework, development, and distribution of resources, and stakeholder engagement including services. Engagement with the multicultural community remains a priority and



primarily takes place through proactive outreaches to TAFE English classes and the delivery of Health Relationships talks.

Group work: Activities included cultural art activities in Taree with 2 x lino printing workshops at the gallery including TAFE students and the broader multicultural community. At Port Macquarie TAFE Gilbert + Tobin law firm delivered an online presentation on Wills with plans to run another on Enduring Guardianship and Power of Attorney next year. The Volunteer Conversational English Program continues to run supporting people one on one. While this year there were only two clients accessing the program, both young people benefitted from the service. A big thank you to our volunteers. The Multicultural Youth Exchange Trip in partnership with Mosaic, Newcastle Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre, and our partnering schools was able to run again. See key achievements below.

Stakeholder engagement: I continue to attend interagency and networking meetings where possible including MVI, open days, Child Protection Week Teddy Bears Picnic, Human Rights community event (GLRAR), Mid Coast DV Monitoring Committee, taking on the role of secretary. In addition, I have met twice with MNC Regional Development Australia regarding 491 skilled visa holders, one being an online meet and greet. This cohort are potential clients coming to the area.

Training: Online training continues to offer opportunities to access specialised training in areas including DFV, overseas skills and qualifications recognition, DEX, and child safety.

NSP: As part of the NSP I participated in the data working group, SETS CoP, DFV CoP, and DFV Peer Support and attended quarterly, regional, and managers NSP meetings.

Key Achievements

- **SIF Self-Defence Program:** This program aims to give migrant women practical skills to keep them safe and build confidence. Participants were from Taree, Kempsey, and Port Macquarie TAFE English classes and were supported by the English teacher and me. Delivered by the Port Macquarie Kumiai Ryu Martial Arts Centre, the program was professional, and participants felt comfortable. The program was successful with some students overcoming fears from past experiences and everyone felt empowered and had fun while learning.
- **Multicultural Youth Exchange Trip:** With 20 students all up, for the first time four students and a worker from Armidale attended with the other sixteen from Newcastle. Another first was the trip was a 2-day trip, this was made possible through Mosaic securing funding through the COMPACT grant. The extra day allowed students to both relax and do more. The trip included visits to CSU for a 'nursing experience,' the Koala Hospital, Surf Life Saving and Port Macquarie and Taree High Schools. The trip is currently being planned for November 2023.
- **Belonging Project:** In response to a decrease in referrals over the past two years I applied for funding through Multicultural NSW to deliver a community development program with the aim of raising the service profile. In partnership with the Manning Regional Art Gallery, we were successful in gaining \$20,000 to deliver The Belonging Project. Planning was undertaken from January to June 2023, with delivery from July to December 2023. The project aims to build community connections and will include targeted cultural workshops for migrants and First Nations people, cultural walks open to all the community, and finish with a shared long lunch for workshop participants.





Multicultural Youth Exchange Trip:
Coastal walk with Port Macquarie High School – talk Surf
Life Saving Australia



Multicultural Youth Exchange Trip:
Coastal walk with Port Macquarie High School



Lino printing



Multicultural Youth Exchange Trip:
Learning about First Nations Cultural with
Uncle Russ – Taree High School



Multicultural Youth Exchange Trip:
Student conversations - Taree High School



Multicultural Youth Exchange Trip:
Learning about First Nations dance - Taree High School





Challenges

As always worker capacity in a part-time role continues to be the biggest challenge covering such a large geographical area. At the time of writing this report, there has been an increase in client work which has been difficult to fit within the hours.

Future

The coming year will see the announcement of the tender for the SETS program. It will also see the 5-year eligibility criteria increased; at this stage, no details have been announced.

I would like to thank the partners who continue to be supportive, collaborative, and reliable year after year, NSP colleagues, our fabulous volunteers, committee members, and Caron, Kerrie, Arwen, Stacey, Hanna, and Kate.

Jane O'Dwyer

Migrant Settlement Project Worker



Targeted Earlier Intervention Program 2022/2023

The Manning Valley Neighbourhood Centre receives funding through the NSW Department of Communities and Justice – Targeted Earlier Intervention Program (TEI).

TEI aims to 'improve the wellbeing of children, young people and families at a population level and requires flexible and responsive systems that are equipped to respond effectively and early to emerging issues and challenges.

Target groups are:

- 0-5 year olds
- Young parents
- Young people
- Aboriginal communities

2022/2023 has proven to be a busy, productive and overall, very successful year for the TEI program. A wide variety of programs and workshops have been delivered to the various target groups and strong connections have been made with other service providers in the local community services sector. The majority of programs delivered have been well-attended and feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive.

Throughout the past 12 months, there has also been a purposeful and focused effort put into raising community and service provider awareness about the programs and support that MVNS can offer our community in the area of TEI.

The work put into engaging with community and delivering high quality, flexible and needs-based programs was recognized by our funding body-DCJ this year, when they approved an extension of the TEI contract for MVNS for a further two years. This contract extension will allow MVNS to continue to build on existing programs that we are already delivering as well as establish and implement additional programs to reach even more community members that fall into our target groups.

The following is a summary of the programs and workshops that have been delivered over the past 12 months under the TEI program.

0-5 Year Olds & Young Parents:

- Social Playgroup at MVNS
- Monthly "Pop-up" Playgroup at Mt George Community Hall
- Garden Nature-play session in partnership with Mid Coast Libraries
- What's Cooking with Kids program delivered at First Steps Count Child and Community Centre
- Children's holiday activities delivered at First Steps Count Child and Community Centre





Young People:

- Youth Mowing Mob skills development program
- 2BOB Youth Radio program in partnership with 2BOB Radio Station
- Good Food Good Cents cooking and nutrition program
- Job Ready workshops focusing on resumes, cover letters and job interview skills
- Introduction to Barista Skills workshops
- CALD support and skill development group in partnership with Wingham High School
- School holiday activity workshops
- Real Talk – see more information below

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People:

- Good Food Good Cents cooking and nutrition program
- What's Cooking for Kids program delivered at Biripi playgroup
- School holiday activities and art workshops

Real Talk – funded by Primary Health Network – facilitated by Kate Darnell and Brendan Parker

Real Talk was a program created to meet the needs of young people aged 16-24 with the aim of fostering connections in real and meaningful ways. The program uses fun and engaging “Old School” activities such as Table Tennis, Card Games, Story Telling and of course a shared love of SNACKS focus on Building Connections, Collaboration, Enhancing Empathy and Understanding, Active Listening and Non-Verbal Communication, conflict resolution and building trust and utilized reflection and questioning skills.

In August 2023, three young adults joined the facilitators for the six week program in Taree with two regular participants enjoying the program over four weeks in Wingham.

Despite the small uptake each young person shared positive feedback sharing that they gained new skills and confidence in communication, felt safe and listened too and enjoyed developing meaning connection through conversation.

It's excellent to see Real Talk making a positive impact on the young people. With continued dedication, the program has the potential to grow and benefit even more individuals in the Manning Valley. Real Talk will be delivering two more 6 weeks programs are in Taree and in Wingham this year.





In addition to these programs, throughout the past 12 months I have attended and provided information and activities at several community events including: Are U OK Day, Child Protection Week, Home in Place Tenants Christmas event, First Steps Count Child and Community Centre official opening event and Safeguarding Families Family Fun Day.

I have also regularly attended the Youth Strategic meetings held at Mid Coast Council, had networking meetings with numerous local community service providers, delivered a talk at Taree TAFE Campus about MVNS to the Community Services class and attended the 2023 FAMS Conference in Sydney.



It has been an incredibly positive, busy and productive first 12 months in this position at MVNS and I am looking forward to another 12 months of delivering high quality, diverse and engaging programs that address the needs and challenges of our community.

Hanna Deer

**Child Youth and Family Engagement Worker
Targeted Earlier Intervention Program**



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

The 2022-23 the CLSD partnership has delivered projects in line with the 2021-2023 Action Plan and identified ongoing, unmet, and emerging legal needs of the Taree and Forster communities. A new action plan will be developed in August 2023.

The priorities of the current Action Plan are:

1. Working together effectively to help priority client groups.
2. Tackling fine debt in the region
3. Supporting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
4. CLE and outreach events
5. Ongoing project areas (community days, birth certificate days etc.)

The 2022-23 period has been busy with no restrictions on holding events in the community. Regular attendance, input and involvement from partners has allowed for the delivery of several projects across the region including:

- 6th July 2022 – Taree Naidoc Community Day CLSD Legal Hub.
- August 2022 - CLSD participated in Homelessness Week BBQs across the Mid Coast in Wingham and Legal Aid attended Taree and Forster to assist with fines issues.
- 25th & 26th August 2022 – Indigenous Wills Clinic in Forster in partnership with G+T– 12 wills completed plus 1 other issue followed up.
- 9th September 2022 – birth certificate and fines day at Tuncurry at The Loop in partnership with Legal Aid (Port Macquarie & WDO team), Revenue NSW, Forster Neighbourhood Centre, and Homebase. Applications taken - 36, and several advices were given and a number of fines were addressed.
- 20th October 2022 - Judge Skinner hosted a meeting to discuss the workings of the Children's Court and hear feedback from community and workers experiences.



- December 2022 - CLE for community workers on new consent laws delivered by Women's Legal Service in Port Macquarie (1/12/22) and Taree (2/12/22).
- 6th May 2023 – CLE on coercive control for community workers in Taree delivered by MNCLC and Police. Well attended with 50 workers and will be delivered in Port Macquarie due to demand.
- June 2023 - Social media tiles project to raise awareness on getting legal advice before court electing. Development was through consultation with relevant partners and the Legal Aid media department.
- June 2023 - Explored funding opportunities to run a mentoring project for youth to address fines through WDO mentoring activity. This will be ongoing into 2023-24.

Other activities included:

- Guide to Free Legal Services – regularly updated throughout the year. Last updated May 2023.
- Homelessness and housing are a standard item at quarterly meetings and worker attends the Homelessness Interagency regularly.
- Distribution of Legal Topics for Older People Diaries in Taree and Forster in December 2022.
- 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.

It has taken some time for all in-person outreach legal advice clinics to be up and running following on from Covid. Advice is still available via phone. All in-person clinics are expected to be operating early in the 2023-24 period.

Ongoing, Unmet and Emerging Legal Needs

There are several legal issues that have regularly been identified during the year, these are not new and have been on the CLSD radar previously and will likely follow on into the new Action Plan.

These include:

1. Fines and debt are ongoing issues coupled with low awareness and participation in the WDO program by organisations and community members.
2. Housing affordability and vulnerability, particularly those in short-term and temporary accommodation and increasingly those in long-term rentals. Increasing rents, low rent stock and no-grounds eviction laws continue to leave renters vulnerable to financial stress and housing insecurity.
3. Domestic and family violence is an ongoing issue in the community.
4. Increasing financial stress with the cost-of-living crisis with increases in rents and interest rates leading to debt, rental arrears, food insecurity and general stress.

Challenges Encountered

With no restrictions to hosting in-person meetings and running and attending community events, this has allowed for the delivery of several worthwhile projects. It has also increased the capacity to network with partners and other service providers outside of the CLSD partnership. This really has left the main challenge being one of capacity as there is always a need or demand for more than can be achieved within the one day a week limit.



Future

The 2023-2025 Action Plan will be developed at the August 2023 meeting and will guide future projects which no doubt will include the legal needs already noted above.

I would like to thank Kate, Winnie, and Seema for their ongoing support and the CLSD partners for their input and hard work that allow for our projects to happen. Partner involvement and collaboration is at the heart of the CLSD program.

Jayne O'Dwyer



Coercive Control CLE Taree, May 2023



Birth certificate and fines day in Tuncurry, Sept 2022



Homelessness Week BBQ and Services Wingham, August 2022



Coercive Control CLE Taree, May 2023



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.

It's time for the Government to start looking at new structures for providing assistance to people experiencing financial crisis. Thankfully there 'appears' to be a review taking place around Emergency Relief support. For every client that we assist and for every \$20 provided there is excessive paperwork and bureaucratic processes to follow. It remains an essential service that is not funded well enough to provide a paid worker. We continue to rely on and be grateful to the amazing volunteer efforts of Anne to ensure that clients are provided with maximum support and dignity in an ongoing and increasingly fragile economy for many, many people.

As this report is based on the financial year we are yet to see what impacts the current economic situation will have on our ER service in coming months.

A restructure of our assessment process has seen Ann assessing the bulk of clients and also delivering assistance based on this. This has freed Kerrie up significantly. Thank you Ann (and Jeffrey – our latest volunteer addition for client support)! This year approx. 1400 people were assessed with only 340 receiving assistance due to eligibility/availability. This process continues to be a large commitment.

As always, these numbers don't include the support provided through various other supports totalling at least another 2500. This is mostly face to face at the front counter. Thank to Kerrie, Arwen and office volunteers.

Just as a point of comparison, this financial year (2022 – 2023) we have dropped back to funding of \$39,000 compared to the previous year of a total of \$103,000 primarily due to the funding reduction based on disaster and Covid top ups received since 2020.

We have been lucky in the last couple of years to have received top up ER support from the Hunter based Samaritans. Without this, our \$39,000pa would not stretch far at all, especially as we are second only to the Salvation Army as the main ER provider in our area. Samaritans provided another \$20,000 toward the end of the FY, most of which has been carried forward into 2023/2024 FY.

We are definitely seeing the realities and significance of the 'increased cost of living' and the impacts on our communities. We are seeing more and more reliance on the minimal



support we can provide through our SecondBite service with demand for this food increasing by hundreds in the past 12 months.

Homelessness continues to increase with current local services overwhelmed with referrals.

The following table provides a summary of numbers of clients accessing MVCLP service over the last twelve months (2022/2023) in comparison to the previous 12 months:

last twelve months (2022/2023) in comparison to the previous 12 months:

| Total funding Provided 2022/2023 | ER Assistance 2022/2023 | Total client numbers 2022/2023 | Total funding provided 2021/2022 | Total client numbers 2021/2022 |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| Department of Social Services Fuel \$10,640 Food \$22,565 Food parcels \$1,840 Medicine \$135 Misc \$3,745 Other \$440 TOTAL = \$39,505 | ER Assistance provided (no. of clients) <i>Instances of assistance</i> <i>Aboriginal/ATSI clients</i> <i>Women</i> <i>26-55 yo</i> No. of ER clients Unable to Assist | 340 830 56% 65% 70% | Department of Social Services Fuel \$14,800 Food \$37,500 Food parcels \$2,970 Medicine \$590 Telephone \$400 Other \$16,849 TOTAL = \$73,109 | 620 1138 |
| Second Bite | | Stopped counting! Estimate 4000 | Second Bite | |
| Electricity Vouchers = \$30,500 | Assistance provided Instances | 86 clients 86 instances | Electricity Vouchers = \$29,520 | 89 clients 99 instances |
| TOTAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED \$70,005 | Significant decrease in numbers of clients and \$ due to funding decrease | | TOTAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED \$102,629 | An increase of approx 51% in value compared to 2019/2020 |

GIVIT, Foodbank and recently the Rapid Relief Team continue to top up our capacity to stretch our funds further. As do other local (and sometimes non-local) philanthropic people and organisations. Once again, we were also able to provide Target vouchers from FRRR to provide support for resources/clothing etc for children returning to school.

We also top up our emergency support with garden produce; and RSPCA donations for the furry side of emergency relief.



Food from the Heart

Secondbite Food-rescue program

Our 'help yourself' set up for our SecondBite access point is mostly working well. However, the demand has increased to such an extent that we are unable to monitor to ensure there is an even distribution amongst those attending. It also means we don't get an accurate measurement of numbers of people accessing it. A conservative estimate is around 4000 this year. It continues to grow as many people use it to reduce their weekly shopping costs.



Tim and Bruce are our very hardworking volunteers who continue to pick up from Coles in Wingham. There is never any certainty as to how much produce will be available.

We have also been offered other options of pallets of pantry items but our storage is limited so we are often unable to accept.

Meals

With the decline of COVID (which resulted in us losing our core volunteers for the Monday lunches) we have resurrected this service by providing frozen meals. Wendy is our new volunteer cooking up wonderfully mouth-watering stuff every Wednesday.

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. We now have a new name and logo. Old Courthouse Community Gardens!



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

Donations for plants continue to be our main source of fund raising.

Thank you to the garden volunteers. Wendy, Cam and Allan who continue to plant, grow and weed amongst all of the other challenges with watering systems and anything else thrown our way!

Caron Watkins

Manager



Tinonee Community Garden

What a year of huge productivity for Tinonee Community Garden (TCG).

We have seen the gardens being created on site at Horace Dean Memorial Park with much excitement and positive feedback from the broader community. The process of planting the seed with the community and MidCoast council was a lengthy germination however, we are now harvesting the rewards/produce, we can wonder through the native garden and can now sitting with a clear view of the river.

The dedication of a small working party, engagement of community members and auspice by Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services has made this possible.

The Federal grant from the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program of \$20,000 enabled speedy progress once we started with materials being purchased and paid construction of 4 wicking beds, artwork, and manufacture of the sign. (The budget can be viewed upon request). The Grant was administered by Midcoast Council.

Some of the main events / stages we have gone through this least 12 months have included:

- Identified that there was now a need for regular monthly meetings open to all interested community members. At the first open invitation meeting on 4th August 2022 there was the Formation of smaller working parties
 - a. Construction Group – for raised wicking beds
 - b. Plant Group – for all plants, seedlings
 - c. Social Group – for refreshments at working bees and planning any social gatherings
 - d. Riverbank Regeneration / Landcare Group
- Council approved suppliers were approached for quotes and supply of garden materials and plants.
- Administrative task were completed with the creation of TCG
- Membership Charter / Code of Conduct / Working Bee sign in sheets.
- **Construction of Garden's began with initial working bee on 9th September 2022 creating a no dig native garden.**
- **The first planting was on 11th October 2022 with the Native Garden bed and the planting of 5 citrus trees**
- Radio interviews with 2Bob
- Article in Manning River Times



- OHS - 4 members undertook MidCoast Council Safety Induction and helped to identify risk hazards
- Collaboration with Tinonee Public School – students growing seedlings for garden beds
- Donation from the Tinonee Memorial School of Arts Hall for \$100 (this is being used to purchase plants for the Cottage Garden which will surround the historic May Bush that already exists in the park)
- The TCG membership on Facebook voted for which tree to place behind the cement bench as a shade tree. A Golden Penda was the winner and has been planted.
- The garden now consists of:
 - a. Raised garden bed
 - b. Citrus Orchard
 - c. Native Garden bed
 - d. Cottage Garden around the Maybush
 - e. 4 wicking beds for vegetables
 - f. Compost Bin with garden around it
- Bush regeneration of the Riverbank has begun with removal of Lantana.



TCG membership is at 35 members that are registered to attend working bees.



Attendance at Working bees varies. Our largest turnout was 22 and the smallest was 5. We consistently have 8 adults and up to 5 children all pending tasks to be completed and availability of members.

Our Facebook page followers have grown to 227.



Looking to the future

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services auspice enabled us to move forward with support while we learned about creating a community group.

We are grateful for this support and following the recent letter suggesting small groups become incorporated we have made the decision to incorporate TCG.

Our intention is to continue applying for grants to enhance TCG and 'one day' have all ability access and a toilet located in the garden/ park.

In the meantime, we will keep planting seeds, keep nurturing their growth and that of our community connections. We hope to harvest yummy food, beautiful flowers and wonderful friendships.



Please come by and have a look at the beauty, productivity and community connection that we have created in this shared recreation space overlooking the mighty Manning River.

Debbie Scarfe

Working Party Member, Tinonee Community Garden



This is a sneak peek at the Sign which is currently under construction and will be unveiled at our official opening in November (date to be confirmed).



Women Kind Collective Project

Women Kind Collective

WKC has quickly become a safe community space for women and non-binary people of the Manning Valley. This inclusive space has become paramount in delivering community support as well as opportunities to connect, share skills, create, learn – empower and be empowered.

WKC has hosted many successful community events, appealing to a wide range of people; from children and retired women to all ages in between – many women and non-binary people have been involved and are included in this growing community space.

WKC was launched in August 2022 with funding from the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (DISER). The grant is currently funding the operation of the WKC until 31 March 2024. Over the course of the year WKC has had hundreds of women and non-binary people walk through the doors to attend community events, weekly programs, and private bookings. Feedback has been positive with consistent reports (through formal and informal feedback) showing an increased social connection, feelings of support and community cohesion.



Many women have also report decreased levels of isolation, increased levels of inclusion and empowerment and decreased levels of social anxiety by attending the space. A handful of vulnerable local women also make use of the drop-in days, to be provided with a safe space to sit and chat for a while. Some of these women have recently joined WKC as volunteers and now help with door greeting, cleaning and have even started to help to facilitate events.

WKC has an engaged and hard-working steering committee and a growing volunteer base, made up of people who choose to tirelessly give back to our inclusive space and community. WKC has fostered something that provides special meaning and purpose for members of entire Manning Valley; it has become a

special and nurturing place for so many and truly gives back to the community and individuals in unique and quite touching ways.

Community engagement and attendance via regular drop-in days at WKC has certainly highlighted just how much the Manning Valley has needed a Women’s Shed – a space first and foremost for the support of Bush Fire effected women, non-binary people and their families.

The recent SEFA External Evaluation articulated: *Women and non-binary people at the WKC feel safe, fostering social inclusion and connectivity. – there is an increased sense of belonging, which is important after the trauma of the natural disasters – women feel nurtured – women are encouraged to share their skills, which builds confidence and self-esteem – there is an increase in mental health/wellbeing – activity on the main street has ripple effects, even for other businesses.*



Programs and offerings that have been delivered throughout the year include:

- Art and Colour Mixing
- Auslan Chat Group
- Biggest Morning Tea
- Breath and Sound Workshop
- Bullet Journalling
- Bush Fire Preparedness
- Camera Skills
- Children’s Woodwork Workshops
- Christmas Craft and Gatherings
- Fementing Food Workshop
- Free Counselling
- Free Wellness Talk - Life Style Rituals
- Halloween Party
- Healing and Rejuvenation
- Indigenous Art Workshop
- International Women’s Day Event
- Jewellery Event
- Kid’s Paint and Plant
- Kid’s Tye Dye Workshops
- Kids Dance Parties
- Kids Facetime Art Program
- Kids Pokemon Card Trading Day
- Ladies Trivia Night
- Lantern Making
- Learn to Crochet
- Love, Peace, and Harmony Meditation
- Macramé Workshops
- Manifesting Workshops
- Movement Classes



- Mums and Kids Create a Canvas Art Workshop
- Natural Medicine Workshop
- Needle Felting Classes
- Parent Information Classes
- Performance Space
- Puppets for Planet
- Resin Workshops
- Rise Sister Rise Program
- Supported Playgroup
- The Book was Better Book club
- Weave to Heal
- Women Rewilding – Day Retreats
- Women’s Circles
- Wonderful Wands Workshop
- Wood Fire Pottery Workshop (Elands)



Community Services and Outreach

WKC has been fortunate to host many community service groups in varying capacities. Groups that have utilised our space include -

- Blooming Surprise – Crochet Group (Weekly)
- Karitane – Parenting Information Classes (Occasional)
- Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services (Regularly for various youth and community programs)
- Manning Valley Indigenous Services – Art Cuppa and Yarn (Weekly)
- Mid North Coast ReCommunity Project (Occasional)
- Samaritans – Good Start Supported Playgroup (Monthly)

Private Bookings

WKC has had some regular bookings from a local craft group, a spiritual group, and the local home school community. Community members have also hired the space for private gatherings, children’s parties, group demonstrations and classes.

Partnerships

Positive partnerships with Mid Coast Council have seen a kids dance party held during Youth Week and 3 x Bushfire Preparedness Clinics held within the WKC space. February saw a successful partnership for Seniors Week with Mid Coast Libraries wherein we organised a local op shop tour and repurposing clothing workshop.

Mid Coast Council provided funds for the Kid’s Paint and Plant activity hosted by one of our Volunteers this September, they will also collaborate in supporting us in hosting the Connect Morning Tea this October and a Christmas “Gratitude” Gathering in December.



Outreach

WKC endeavors to connect with fire effected community members who may not have easy/regular access to Wingham. Outreach events this year which supported community connection and engagement beyond our physical space have included -



- Attending Cooperbrook Girls "Girls Night" to promote and initiate community collaboration (attended by over 80 people)
- Attending Volunteer Fest
- Holding at Stall at the Back to Mt Goerge Billy Cart Festival where we promoted the WKC Stall, connected with the community, organized surveys, and fostered further community support and engagement.
- Sponsoring Elands Pottery through financially supporting with catering and a Lantern Class this September.
- Supporting Mt George Community Lantern Making in March 2023.



Fundraisers and Community Events

Our fundraising events have been aimed at creating sustainability and raising community awareness. The WKC Ladies Trivia Night in June was a popular event, which raised a little under \$1000. Our Markets, WKC Store Items (including our new WKC TSHIRTS) have also been able to make a small regular contribution to WKC.

In August MSR Entertainment and Bent Food hosted Aine Tyrrell and raised \$164 for the WKC.

Additionally, we have recently invited people to "Sponsor" WKC, 12 people have generously donated \$60 as a "Six Month Sponsorship from September 2023 until March 2024"

Upcoming fundraising events also include - Palm Reading and Paint, Sip and Snack as well as further markets which will continue to raise awareness, provide support, promote WKC and raise additional funds.

Markets

WKC has hosted many markets and fairs to support our bush fire effected women, community, and businesses. These successful events foster inclusivity, community and connection and have included the Makers and Creators Markets, Spiritual Fair and Markets, Xmas in July Markets. We will also be hosting the Xmas Twilight markets in December.





The WKC Store

A \$1000 community Aus-post grant supported the opening of the WKC Store. The store first opened in July showcasing donated items that were shared with all proceeds going back to WKC; since then, we have appointed a volunteer Store Coordinator, who has welcomed ten local (and bushfire effected) women businesses into the space. The shop has seen a more constant stream of people coming in to browse the stall which has been making regular weekly sales.

The Grant was specifically used to purchase shelving, a large "OPEN" sign and the set-up cost of our fundraising TSHIRTS too. The TSHIRTS have been particularly popular.

Final Statement

Since its inception in August 2022, WKC has emerged as a haven for women and non-binary individuals in the Manning Valley, embodying inclusivity, support, and empowerment.

The impact of WKC on our community is palpable. Through a diverse array of activities and programs, our WKC Store, Drop-In Days and Community Engagement, we have witnessed a surge in social connections, heightened feelings of support, and a newfound sense of belonging among participants. Vulnerable and fire effected individuals have found solace within our walls, and in turn, have become valued contributors to our collective mission.

The recently conducted SEFA External Evaluation serves as a testament to the profound effects of WKC. It has reinforced that within our space, individuals experience a heightened sense of safety, belonging, and increased well-being. Activities such as skill-sharing and creative expression as well as opportunities to volunteer and give back to WKC have all contributed to boosted confidence and self-esteem.

Kate Darnell

Coordinator of the Women Kind Collective



Volunteer Fest

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services hosted "Volunteer Fest" on Saturday 16/09/23 and was able to showcase an array of creative markets, music and especially celebrate volunteer and community groups who each have missions to give back and make the Manning Valley and Mid North Coast an incredible place to be!

Funded by the Foundation of Rural & Regional Renewal the whole purpose of the event was to bring our community together while sharing more about the wonderful things our volunteer groups are doing!

Held in the Community Gardens at the Old Courthouse in Wingham, 2BOB Community Radio were there doing a live broadcast while representatives from QUOTA, U3A, Junior Landcare, Manning Valley Turtle Group, Wingham's Booming Surprise Group, The Women Kind Collective, Lions Club, Rotary, CWA, Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services, ReCommunity Mid North Coast and Karitane all came out to spread the word and shine a spotlight on the support and services they have to offer.

The event that hosted local markets and musicians too was enjoyed by many and will hopefully entice more people to get involved with a community group that aligns with their own passion and purpose.

Pictured Below: Wingham CWA, Creative Workshop hosted by Paula Christensen, 2BOB and Arwen O'Keefe from MVNS.



2023/2023 Special Thanks

Volunteers & Supporters

- Our FANTASTIC volunteers - office, Women Kind Collective, garden, Garden Kitchen, Second Bite, Tax Help, and Management Committee
- Rhonda Futterleib – Essential Accounting Services
- Wingham RSPCA
- Judy Peach – Milliways Consulting
- Midcoast Council
- 2 BOB Radio
- Faith Family Church – Jenny Brewer and Tim Willis
- SecondBite Food Rescue Program in partnership with Coles Wingham
- North Coast Institute TAFE (Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Taree and Tuncurry)
- Manning Regional Art Gallery
- Wingham Rotary
- Correctional Services Taree
- SEFA
- Oz Harvest
- Foodbank
- Second Bite
- Rapid Relief Team
- Wingham Rotary
- QUOTA Taree
- Wingham CWA
- Anglican Parish of Taree
- Samaritans Hunter

Funding Bodies

Special thanks also to our funding bodies:

- NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)
- Legal Aid NSW
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Human Services
- Settlement Services International
- Energy NSW – EAPS vouchers
- Primary Health Network
- Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
- Matana Foundation
- Australia Post

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





Appendix A: 2022-2023 Financial Reports

Please see attachments.

