

CONNECTING
Neighbourhood Centres
OF BELLINGEN SHIRE

Based on Gumbaynggirr Country

**Neighbourhood Centres
of Bellingen Shire Inc**

Annual report

2021-2022



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OUR VISION AND VALUES

Our Vision

An inclusive, safe and connected community of resilient people.

Our Ethos – What Is Important To Us

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire understands that people do not have equal access to resources and that many people living in the Bellingen Shire face barriers to overcoming disadvantage. Yet we all have untapped strength, resilience and the potential to thrive. Our love of humanity and the planet drive a spirit of gratitude and generosity in all that we do. We are committed to our own organisational learning and the continual learning of the people we serve.

Our Values

Respect | for each other and ourselves

Integrity | having the courage of our convictions, being fair, honest and transparent

Compassion | caring for our community, the people we serve and ourselves

Inclusion | appreciating difference, being open, and fostering participation and belonging

Safety | safeguarding the security and wellbeing of our clients, the environment and ourselves

Community Driven | connected and responsive to local strengths, priorities and needs

Our Objectives

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc (NCoBS):

1. Operates across the community of the Bellingen Shire Local Government Area.
2. Seeks to strengthen community capacity and wellbeing through the provision of services, resources, activities and events which create connection between members of the community, provide opportunities for positive, empowering experiences and generate a stronger sense of community.
3. Seeks to support people in need through the provision of services, resources, information and referrals which strengthen personal wellbeing and assist individuals to increase control over their own lives.
4. Seeks to demonstrate good governance, risk management and compliance in accordance with this constitution and relevant legislation.
5. Is committed to providing safe and welcoming places where people can feel at ease, where services are offered in a manner free of discrimination or bias, and in a manner which is sensitive to the risks, circumstances and challenges faced by vulnerable members of the community.
6. Seeks to maximise the benefits it provides to the community through the establishment of constructive relationships with all stakeholders, including community, business, and government.

AGENDA

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc Annual General Meeting

Date: Friday 14th October 2022
Time: 12:00pm
Venue: Uniting Church meeting room, Hyde Street, Bellingen

1. Acknowledgement of Country
2. Chairperson's Welcome
3. Apologies
4. Acceptance of Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting
5. Chairperson's Report
6. Management Report
7. Service & Project Reports
8. Treasurer's Report
9. Auditor's Report & Audited Financial Statements
10. Election of Management Committee
11. Other Business
12. Close

Members and guests are invited to stay for a light lunch after the AGM

MINUTES

**Annual General Meeting (AGM) of
Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingin Shire Inc (NCoBS)
Held Friday 15th October 2021
at Bellingin Citizens Centre, Hyde Street Bellingin**

Members present: Kerry Child (Chair), Rosie Wickert, Luke Passfield, Steve Allan, Brian Francis, Bernadette Kelly, Annette Carse, John May, Gabrielle Drennan, Leanne Collier, Julie Warwick

Guests in attendance: Celeste Abell, Shareen Banner, Erika Munan, Julia Brown, Ellie Tree, Frances Witt

The Annual General Meeting was declared open at 10:45am

Acknowledgement of Country

The Chair opened the meeting and acknowledged that we are meeting on Gumbaynggirr land and paid respects to Elders, past, present and to emerging leaders.

Chairperson's welcome

The Chair welcomed members, staff, volunteers and guests to the 2021 Annual General Meeting and noted the challenges of meeting via Zoom as well as in person in the current circumstances.

Apologies

Members: Dianne Cork

Guests: Bruce Naylor

MOTION: That the apologies are accepted.

Moved: Leanne Collier 2nd: Kerry Child Carried

Welcome to Country

Frances Witt welcomed the meeting to Gumbaynggirr Country

Acceptance of the minutes of the 2020 AGM

MOTION: The minutes are accepted as an accurate record.

Moved: John May 2nd Kerry Child Carried

Chairperson's Report

The Chairperson spoke to her report in the 2021 Annual Report noting in particular, the successful amalgamation of the two Neighbourhood Centre organisations leading to the formation of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingin Shire Inc.

Management Report

Leanne Collier acknowledged that we are meeting on the traditional country of the Gumbaynggirr people.

Leanne spoke to the management report and noted the challenges of the previous year, not least the impact of floods, bushfires and the COVID pandemic. Throughout, service provision continued albeit not always face-to-face with staff and volunteers adapting and doing whatever possible to keep support services available for the community.

Leanne noted the adoption of the NCoBS Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024 and the progress towards its implementation.

The many and varied contributions and achievements of the staff and volunteers throughout the year were warmly acknowledged.

The ongoing space limitations of the organisation, especially for Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre, were noted as was Bellingen Shire Council's continued support through subsidised lease arrangements for the centres.

Leanne informed the meeting that she was leaving the position of General Manager in December and spoke of her gratitude and delight in working at the Neighbourhood Centres over the past 25 years in various roles and her continued connection as a life member.

The Chair moved a vote of thanks for Leanne's many contributions and assured the meeting that she won't be allowed to escape completely. Approved by acclamation.

Service and Project Reports

Celeste Abell - Suicide Prevention Project Coordinator; Ellie Tree – Youth and Family Wellbeing Worker; Julia Brown – Early Years Family Worker; Erika Munan – Coordinator of Dorrigo Youth Centre and Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre; and Frances Witt – Aboriginal Early Years Family Worker each spoke to their reports. The meeting expressed thanks for their achievements.

MOTION: That the Chairperson's report, the Management report and all service and project reports are accepted. Moved: Bernadette Kelly, 2nd Steve Allan Carried

Treasurer and Auditor Reports

Treasurer, Steve Allan reported on the sound financial position of NCoBS and extended thanks on behalf of the meeting to the staff of the organisation.

MOTION: The Treasurer's report, and the 2020-2021 Auditor's report be accepted; and that James Davis of HQB Accounting be re-appointed as Auditor for the 2022 financial year. Moved: Steve Allan, 2nd Kerry Child. Carried

Election of the Management Committee

With the agreement of those present, Leanne Collier was appointed as Returning Officer. Leanne thanked the outgoing committee members and moved to the election.

All committee positions were declared vacant.

The following written member nominations were received prior to the Annual General Meeting.

Office Bearer positions

Chairperson: Kerry Child nominated by R. Wickert and seconded by B. Kelly

Deputy Chairperson: no nominations received

Treasurer: Stephen Allan nominated by K. Child and seconded by R. Wickert

Secretary: Rosie Wickert nominated by B. Kelly and seconded by K. Child

Ordinary member positions

Bernadette Kelly nominated by R. Wickert and seconded by K. Child

Brian Francis nominated by B. Kelly and seconded by R. Wickert

With the number of written nominations received being fewer than the positions vacant, all nominees were declared duly elected.

With one office-bearer and three ordinary committee positions still vacant, the Returning Officer called for nominations from the floor.

Annette Carse was nominated by S. Allan, and this was seconded by B. Kelly. Annette accepted the nomination for an ordinary member position. John May was nominated by K. Child, and this was seconded by B. Kelly. John accepted the nomination for an ordinary member position.

Annette Carse and John May were declared duly elected as ordinary members of the Management Committee.

No other nominations from the floor were received. The position of Deputy Chairperson and one ordinary member position were declared casual vacancies.

The Returning Officer declared the election of the Management Committee closed, and handed the meeting over to Chairperson elect, Kerry Child.

Other Business

Leanne Collier thanked Assistant Manager, Celeste Abell for her help in collating the Annual Report.

Bernadette Kelly thanked the outgoing Management Committee.

The Chair thanked Luke Passfield for the past three years of his service on the committee and stated that he would be welcome back anytime. Endorsed with acclamation. Endorsed with acclamation.

The Annual General Meeting was declared closed at 12:30pm.



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

On behalf of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellinghen Shire Inc (NCoBS), I would like to welcome all members and guests to our Annual General Meeting.

I would like to acknowledge the Gumbaynggirr people, the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to their elders past and present and to emerging leaders.

As of 30th June 2022, there were 39 financial members and 3 life members.

We are finally coming out of a very challenging period for NCoBS and our community during this pandemic and hopefully it will make us more resilient. We need to support those who have found this extended period traumatic and isolating. It has been also very unsettling for staff, volunteers and Management Committee since Leanne resigned, and we appointed a new Manager. Unfortunately, this appointment did not work out due to unexpected personal circumstances. NCoBS was very lucky that Leanne agreed to step back into the role in the interim until we were able to readvertise for a new Manager.

Due to this unsettling period the Management Committee was unable to review the existing Strategic Plan 2021-2024, but that will be a top priority this financial year.

The launch of our new brand name "Connecting" was held on 18th February 2022 and was a success. Logo banners and paraphernalia have been distributed to our three Centres.

The Management Committee for 2021-2022 were:

Kerry Child – Chairperson	Bernadette Kelly
Annette Carse – Deputy Chair	Brian Francis
Rosie Wickert – Secretary	John May
Steve Allan – Treasurer	Eryn Thomas (from 30/6/22)

Our Neighbourhood Centres offer a range of services that include generalist counselling, Emergency Relief, Tax Help, Work Development Orders, Community Meals each fortnight, No Interest Loans, Computer Help, Internet & Printing. We also manage Bellinghen Nambucca Youth Services, Dorrigo Youth Centre, the Early Childhood Wellbeing and Development service, the Centrelink Agency in Bellinghen and auspice the Suicide Prevention Support groups in Dorrigo and Bellinghen, Urunga Men's Shed, the Shire CDAT and support Bello Pride Club.

Services are provided to our residents free of charge and have a combination of paid staff and volunteers that deliver them. We thank Council for their generous rental support as we would not be able to provide these services to our community without this. A thank you to our core funding body, NSW Communities and Justice for investing in our organisation.

But none of this could occur without the dedication and support of our staff, volunteers and Management Committee members who put our community first.

I look forward to the next 12 months working with you and our new Manager to further strengthen our organisation.

Kerry Child
Chairperson



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Dear Members, Staff, Volunteers and Guests, thank you for joining us today to celebrate the work and achievements of the year 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, throughout which the COVID-19 pandemic stayed front and centre for many months, and still lingers, and more flood events resulting in massive landslips and altered states of wellbeing and connection across community occurred.

Our 2022 Annual Report is a tribute to the excellent work of our wonderfully talented and committed team of employees, volunteers, committee members and community partners, all of whom we extend sincere thanks, gratitude and congratulations.

The Association

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellinghen Shire Inc (NCoBS) is a membership based not-for-profit amalgamated association incorporated in NSW and is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission. The association is the legal entity and employer.

Governance

The Management Committee is the governing body and major decision-maker in the organisation holding ultimate authority and accountability for ensuring that our association stays true to our vision and values, achieves its objectives, has the necessary resources to operating effectively, legally, and ethically.

Our Services and Projects

This year, Neighbourhood Centres of Bellinghen Shire Inc (NCoBS) programs and services included:

- Urunga, Dorrigo and Bellingen Neighbourhood Centres
- Services Australia Agency (Centrelink-Medicare-Child Support)
- Bellingen and Nambucca Youth Services
- Dorrigo Youth Centre
- Bellingen Shire No Interest Loans Scheme
- Early Childhood Wellbeing and Development – Bellingen Shire
- Community-based Suicide Prevention – Bellingen LGA
- Auspiced groups - Urunga Men's Shed, Bellingen Community Safe Space, Dorrigo Suicide Prevention Network, Bellingen Shire CDAT (Community Drug Action Team)

Our Team

Inspirational Volunteers

The involvement and constancy of community volunteers working in our organisation is greatly appreciated and valued. Governance of the organisation is undertaken by a voluntary management committee, and a team of very interesting people with a collective wealth of life experience, resourcefulness and care for community who volunteer at the Neighbourhood Centres, the Dorrigo Youth Centre, Urunga Men's Shed, the youth service and/or in connection with the Suicide Prevention Project.

Our wonderful volunteers are key to the organisation being able to offer so much more in community. Heartfelt thanks and gratitude to you all.



Employees

Neighbourhood Centres – Bellingen, Urunga and Dorrigo

- ★ May Smith, Coordinator – Bellingen and Urunga
- ★ Erika Munan, Coordinator – Dorrigo
- ★ Bruce Naylor, Community Development Worker
- ★ Evelyn Krosby, Community Directory project
- ★ Wendy Roberts, Cleaner
- ★ Wayne Graham, Lawn maintenance

Bellingen Services Australia (Centrelink) Agency

- ★ Julie Warwick, Administration Worker
- ★ Pauline Lewis, Administration Worker
- ★ Evelyn Krosby, Diane Adams – relief Administration Workers

Bellingen Shire No Interest Loans Scheme (BNILS)

- ★ Diane Adams – NILS Worker, Bellingen and Urunga
- ★ Leonie McDonald – NILS Worker, Dorrigo

Bellingen Nambucca Youth Services

- ★ Eliza Zanuso, Youth Caseworker
- ★ Ellie Tree, Youth and Family Wellbeing Caseworker
- ★ Erika Munan, Dorrigo Youth Centre Coordinator
- ★ Nicola Beckett, Dorrigo Youth Activities Worker

Bellingen Shire Youth Hub - by formal arrangement with Bellingen Shire Council

- ★ Myola Suffolk, Youth Hub Support Worker

Community-based Suicide Prevention – Bellingen Shire

- ★ Celeste Abell, Project Coordinator (to December 2021)

Early Childhood Wellbeing and Development – Bellingen Shire

- ★ Julia Brown, Early Years Family Worker
- ★ Frances Witt, Aboriginal Early Years Family Worker

Management and Administration

- ★ Shareen Banner, Accounts Officer
- ★ Diane Adams - Administration Assistant
- ★ Leanne Collier, General Manager (Mar 2016 to Feb 2022)
- ★ Celeste Abell, Assistant Manager (Aug to Oct 2021)
- ★ Garth Parkhill (Feb to June 2022)
- ★ Leanne Collier, Interim Manager (Jun to Oct 2022)

With Bellingen Nambucca Youth Services workers Ellie Tree about to commence 12-months maternity leave in late June 2022 and Eliza Zanuso, 6-months study leave in July 2022, recruitment of fixed-term replacement workers was undertaken in June 2022. Tyson Young and Skye Babula came on board in July 2022.

Continuity and resilience through COVID-19 and internal change

All NCoBS services and centres continued operations for most of the year, albeit at a reduced capacity at times. As government guidelines and orders relating to COVID-19 evolved, each neighbourhood centre organisation assessed their status as an essential service and deliberated about whether or to what extent lockdowns and restrictions applied.

The position that Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc took and the governance and management decisions made were informed by consultations with staff and volunteers, and the compulsory Public Health Orders, the organisation's work, health and safety obligation to volunteers and staff, our duty of care responsibility to clients and community and the evolving information and/or advice from Non-profit Law, Jobs Australia, the Australian Services Union, Safe Work Australia, Fair Work Australia, NCOSS and the NSW Department of Communities and Justice and lastly, in following the NSW Roadmap to Recovery orders.

Supply of personal protective equipment including disposable gloves and masks has been maintained along with hand sanitiser in all areas. Free rapid antigen tests received from the NSW Government for distribution through neighbourhood centres across the state to vulnerable community members at no cost, are still in plentiful supply at Bellingen, Urunga and Dorrigo centres.

In Bellingen, the Centrelink Agency remained open to the public throughout, Emergency Relief by appointment continued, the Cupboard of Plenty was kept stocked with supplies and the free fortnightly community meals shifted to takeaway. Across our services, connecting with parents, youth and community through online platforms increased significantly. The NCoBS team is to be commended for their commitment to maintaining service provision and project participation, directly or online, through the intensity of the pandemic and in the face of natural disasters that also impacted Bellingen Shire.

Although the neighbourhood centres and youth centre doors had to stay closed to the public at times and some of the staff requested or were required to work from home, our operations, communications and service support continued with clients and community thanks to the adaptability, commitment and resilience of our friendly, caring, competent, professional and dedicated team.

Significant internal change occurred with NCoBS management staffing in the last 12 months. General Manager, Leanne Collier, advised she could not continue in the role full-time due to personal and family health circumstances in April 2021. It was decided to trial a 2-day a week Assistant Manager position and reduce the General Manager hours to 3.5 days a week. Internal recruitment was undertaken and Celeste Abell, already employed by NCoBS as part-time Suicide Prevention Project Coordinator, was appointed as Assistant Manager.

Unfortunately, the arrangement did not appreciably reduce the workload for the General Manager. Leanne resigned in October 2021 giving 8-weeks' notice and would revert back to a 5-day working week through the period. The Assistant Manager position was discontinued with Celeste continuing in the role of coordinator of the Suicide Prevention Project.

Recruitment for a new full-time manager was outsourced to an external recruitment agency. Garth Parkhill commenced as Manager on 7 February 2022 and was welcomed with eager anticipation. Leanne finished on 18 February, the day of the Connecting brand launch.

Regrettably, unanticipated circumstances regularly impacted on the new Manager's availability to work on site and his capacity to fulfill the full position requirements, and Garth's employment with NCoBS ended in June 2022. Leanne Collier was asked to return as manager in an interim capacity while recruitment for a new manager is undertaken.

The fortitude and resilience of the management committee, the staff and volunteers were further tested by this situation. Everyone rallied; the backlog of management tasks and crucial youth service recruitment was completed, and regular, reliable client service provision and pro-active engagement and involvement in and with communities was maintained.

Systems Upgrades and Review

A *new data collection system* that is cloud-based and accessible by management, service staff and centre volunteers wherever they are based or working, was custom-built by Community Data Solutions. This was made possible through a grant of \$10,000 through the NSW Government's Social Sector Support Fund. The Client Relationship Information Management (CRIM) has streamlined data collection and reporting across the organisation. Access permission settings are in place to ensure access to client data is only available to the relevant staff who are providing the services. Staff underwent online training with the developers in March 2022 and the system went live.

Fireground Dorrigo undertook a Work Health & Safety (WHS) Management System Audit in September. Some of the recommendations arising from the audit are being implemented internally and others requiring more specialised knowledge and experience will be outsourced and implemented in 2022-2023.

Funding

Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) program

Extended TEI program funding for the Bellingen Nambucca Youth Services and the Early Childhood Wellbeing and Development – Bellingen Shire service from the NSW Government that is administered by the Department of Communities and Justice, was confirmed until June 2025. This came after a series of meetings with the DCJ Commissioning and Planning Officer (CPO), Tracy Kimber to work through a Service Development Planning process, which was completed and all proscribed actions required of NCoBS were undertaken and evidence of same, submitted to DCJ.

No Interest Loans scheme (NILs)

State government funding for NILs administered through NSW Fair Trading was confirmed until June 2023. Most of this funding (90%) is restricted to wages and on-costs for workers delivering NILs in community, at a minimum two days per week.

It was disappointing when Good Shepherd Microfinance advised in June 2021 that the \$5,000 per annum allocation of federal funding would not be paid to Bellingen Shire NILs in 2021-2022 because the number of loan applications processed by the service was not meeting targets. That the whole NILs network had had to adapt when COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions limited face-to-face appointments with clients was acknowledged by Good Shepherd state management in Sydney in ensuing discussions. However, the prevailing conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of bushfires and flood events in the Shire were not considered sufficient reason by GSM to change the decision to cut the funding.

Community-based Suicide Prevention Bellingen LGA

Healthy North Coast Ltd supplemented the funding for this project, which was part of the National Suicide Prevention Trial that was due to end on 30 June 2021. An additional \$101,000 for staffing and management of the project was received for the period July 2021 to June 2022.

The Trial was extended by the Federal Government in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in recognition of the increasing adverse impact of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of the Australian population.

Networking

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc understands the value of bringing community together to re-engage, support and empower. Management and staff consult, collaborate with other community and service organisations across the Bellingen Shire and participate in sector networks and interagencies. All are important to our work with clients and community and are forums for organisational, operational and community development and for peer support.

NCoBS was part of the Pandemic Response Group, initiated as the COVID-19 pandemic intensified, that was facilitated by Bellingen Shire Council and involved local GPs, pharmacies, the emerging Neighbourhood Care Network and representatives from service organisations and community organisations across the Shire.

Engaging, connecting and working closely with our professional and community networks are fundamental to our community development and capacity building work. Community Development Worker, Bruce Naylor, who recently left the employ of our organisation, strategically focused his work and alliances while working for NCoBS on being part of the evolving recovery and resilience movement gathering momentum in the aftermath of bushfires on the Plateau and then, COVID-19.

Over its 40+ years based in Bellingen and working across the Bellingen Shire, NCoBS has created, driven and supported a wealth of community development initiatives and provided responsive services for people from many walks of life. A linked and collaborative approach is fundamental to our ethos as an organisation, and essential to the way we work in and with community. Being seen, known and locally based goes a long way to building relationship and trust, which greatly influences people's readiness to engage, to participate in community endeavours that cultivate resilience. Our organisation is always open to more locally based, community-driven initiatives that are wholistically geared and adequately resourced.

Premises

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc acknowledges and appreciates the continued support of Bellingen Shire Council by way of subsidised premises for Bellingen and Urunga Neighbourhood Centres and the Dorrigo Youth Centre. Our youth caseworkers are located at the Bellingen Shire Youth Hub, in an office leased by NCoBS from Council for an annually indexed rent.

After feedback about limited accessibility and suitability of the youth centre location from residents, which served for a few months to provide neighbourhood services outreach in Dorrigo, a decision was made to lease a small premises at 65A Hickory Street for a neighbourhood centre shopfront in Dorrigo. This lease arrangement ends in May 2023. The location has been a success from the community's perspective. Whether it is possible to remain there will be reviewed by management in consultation with the centre workers and the Dorrigo community, as rental costs could be a significant financial constraint going forward.

Implementation of the 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan

The organisation focused on implementation of one of the five key strategic priorities of our 2021-2024 Strategic Plan - *Communicate with Clarity and Consistency to build Support and Engagement* - this year. Thanks go to Savvy Strategy Group, the company that worked with NCoBS to develop the strategic plan, for developing the consultancy brief for the project.

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc contracted Online StrategyLab consultant, Andrew Hickinbotham, to develop an agreed Communication Strategy in consultation with the project steering group of Management Committee members, Kerry Child and Rosie Wickert, former staff member, Celeste Abell as Assistant Manager, and the General Manager.

The contracted services involved the creation of a new brand, raising awareness of the brand and its values, and expanding the extent and modes of interaction between community and our organisation. The increase of two-way communication channels is seen as essential to adopting a proactive stance on behalf the community, identifying needs and articulating these to government and other providers of finance and grants, and the community itself.

Serendipitously, the organisation received confirmation that its application for \$20,000 through the NSW Government's Social Sector Transformation Fund roll-out, to invest in a custom-built client relationship information management system for NCoBS and a new, dynamic website, was successful in August 2021. Coordinating the development of the website was incorporated into the scope of work to be undertaken by Online StrategyLab. Andrew worked with us over eight months to roll-out the Communications Strategy to zhooosh up (make more exciting, lively, or attractive) the organisation's profile, public relations, and communications.

The aim was to develop a brand that is professional, friendly, and meaningful – a brand that symbolises our values and purpose, that is highly visual and easily recognisable. Volunteers, staff, and management committee members were asked for their suggestions for a brand name, logo and theme. After lots of discussion, the brand name CONNECTING was agreed. A verb may be unusual in the world of logo design and branding, yet it felt right.

We hit the jackpot with Kathryn James Design who 'got' the concept it was hoped would be captured in the new logo – something organic, community not corporate, reliable, and trustworthy, colourful, and distinctive in reflecting NCoBS' identity.

Although CONNECTING as our brand and logo was relatively new, it piqued people's interest, stimulated conversation and has been positively received; CONNECTING in action for our organisation is not new; it has long been integral to our work and encapsulates what we do and have done over many years through various forms of engagement and endeavour. Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc has strong and long-standing relationships in community created over 43+ years of locally based community development and service provision geared to connecting people and community; we are trusted and respected.

CONNECTING is fundamental to the realisation of our vision of an inclusive and connected community of resilient people and encompasses our values of Respect, Integrity, Compassion, Inclusion, Safety, and being Community Driven.

The official launch of our new brand **CONNECTING** was held in Bellingen's Maam Gaduying (Meeting Place) Park on Friday 18 February 2022.

Coinciding with the CONNECTING brand launch was the new www.connecting.org.au website going live. Web developer, Carly Franklin from Jump Swim Draw and photographer, Jay Black worked with Andrew to make this happen. Some of the staff underwent content management and website maintenance training with Carly; the intention is for NCoBS to keep the website updated and content current.



A delicious end to the launch event was the cutting of the magnificent celebration cake made by Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre volunteer, Christine Wait. Appreciative eating of cake, buzzing conversation and lots of connecting ensued!

Our CONNECTING brand is proudly displayed on and in our centres with signs and flags, at community activities and events on table coverings and pull-up banners, features on new flyers, brochures, business cards, name tags and calico tote bags, and is embedded in the new website and on our social media pages ... and included throughout this report.

Looking Forward

It is heartening to know that the needs, wants and hopes of communities in rural and regional areas of NSW are gaining more attention of the leaders, policy and decision makers within government and more broadly. May this continue, gain momentum and be equitable.

Further implementation of the priorities of our Strategic Plan, securing other sources of funding for current operations and new projects, and internal systems review and development are key priorities for 2022-2023. It is hoped that the Dorrigo Youth Recreational Precinct project for which funding has been sought will come to fruition. This is a true-blue local youth and community driven initiative.

Reflecting back over the past year to inform the annual report is a generally uplifting and a powerful reminder of the resourcefulness and dedication of all within our organisation to bring about positive change for individuals and with our community, I am reminded of this quote from Margaret Mead (*right*).



Over many years, in different and various guises, our organisation has led, inspired and embraced and undergone change and development.

Every year, community engagement activities linked to our neighbourhood centres and our services have worked to advance the community awareness of who we are and what we do and to cultivate more partnerships to enhance promotion and delivery of programs, services and opportunities.

Our services and programs will continue to focus on working together to achieve best outcomes for children, youth, families and communities of the Bellingen Shire. Outcomes are underpinned by social justice principles such as fair and equitable access to resources that help meet people's needs, and of inclusion and participation thereby building connection, relationship, resilience and belonging.

Appreciation and thanks go to this year's Management Committee for its leadership and governance oversight. The changing management situation presented some challenges for the committee. Special thanks to Chairperson, Kerry Child who gave a lot of her time and a steadfast approach in dealing with circumstances that were not straight-forward.

Roger Horton is the incoming Manager of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc. A warm welcome to Roger and we wish him good health, fulfillment in working for our organisation and with our community, and success in this leadership role.

Much gratitude and thanks to the wonderful NCoBS staff and volunteers. The extent of the excellent work and impressive achievements and outcomes achieved by the team this year are showcased in the service and project reports that follow.

Yours in community
Leanne Collier

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES REPORT



The Neighbourhood Centres offer a range of services and programs to support the community and especially individuals and families who are experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

During 2021-2022, for the most part, except where COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions required closure or reduced availability, the Neighbourhood Centres across the Shire were open to the public as follows:

- Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre - Monday to Friday 9:30am to 3:30pm
- Urunga Neighbourhood Centre - Monday to Thursday 9:30am to 2:30pm
- Dorrigo - Wednesday & Thursday 9:30am to 2:00pm

The Neighbourhood Centres offer a range of assistance and support programs to help people in our communities to find the help they want, and this is achieved through being considered and creative to stretch funding as far as possible and by working in partnerships. Our aim is to maximise opportunities for inclusion and participation for clients and community members to facilitate stronger connections and belonging in community.

A hive of activity is found at the front desk at each Centre. The reception area is the first point of contact and where all the telephone calls are received, people are greeted and welcomed, appointments are made, faxing, photocopying, laminating and binding is provided, and clients are assisted with telephone calls, referrals, and computer/internet use. The front desk is staffed by volunteers who give generously to assist the clients and the staff at the Centres.

The volunteers and staff offer a broad range of information. Through their efforts, visitors, calls and clients receive information, referral options and supports in the right direction towards resolving their circumstances and issues, and to build resilience for their future.

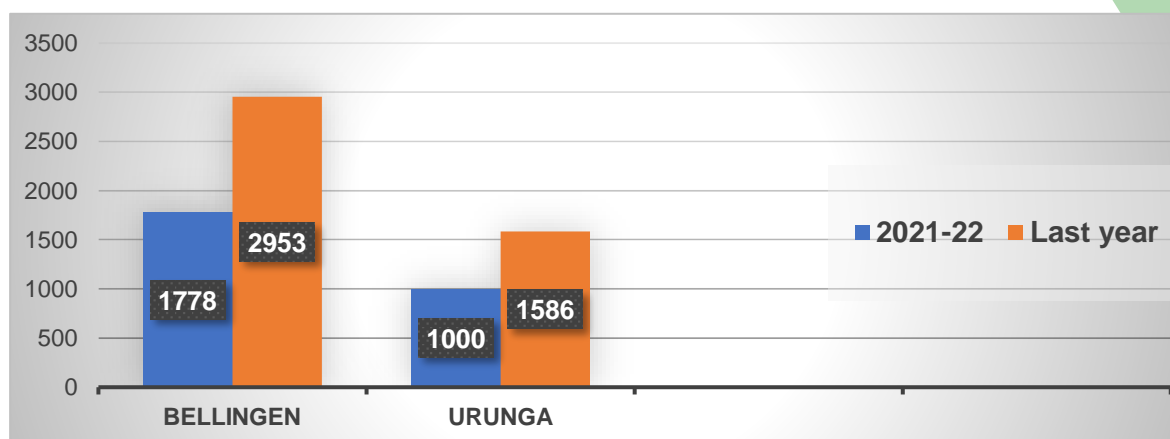
Due to identified COVID-19 risks and the government restrictions, it was necessary to send our volunteers home and to close the Centres for a while. Staff were still available to assist people in need and communications were maintained, mostly by phone, email, social media and online platforms. In October 2021, volunteers numbers were very limited and not all staff could come to work until restrictions were lifted and the centres could fully reopen in December.

Reception data collection and statistics

Our data collection tool changed from CSM Flex to an integrated Client Relationship Information Management system for the whole organisation. The volunteers enter data about the nature of the inquiries received, how many people contacted the Centres and accessed our services. The following statistics exclude appointments made and services or activities provided, which are recorded separately by staff.

The level of activities delivered by the Neighbourhood Centres in 2021-2022 is demonstrated in the following tables, charts and reflections.

This chart indicates a much lower number of **inquiries** than last year and that is because of COVID-19 related closures, lockdowns and restrictions.



Internal Referral Services and Activities

The free **Generalist Counselling Service** was available again throughout the year, thanks to Donna Bailey continuing to provide counselling sessions by appointment.

Free **Tax Help** was available again from July to September in Bellingen and Urunga. Tax Help volunteers are accredited by the ATO to assist low-income individuals. Our thanks to Diane Adams, for her time volunteering in Bellingen and Urunga to assist others to complete their tax returns.

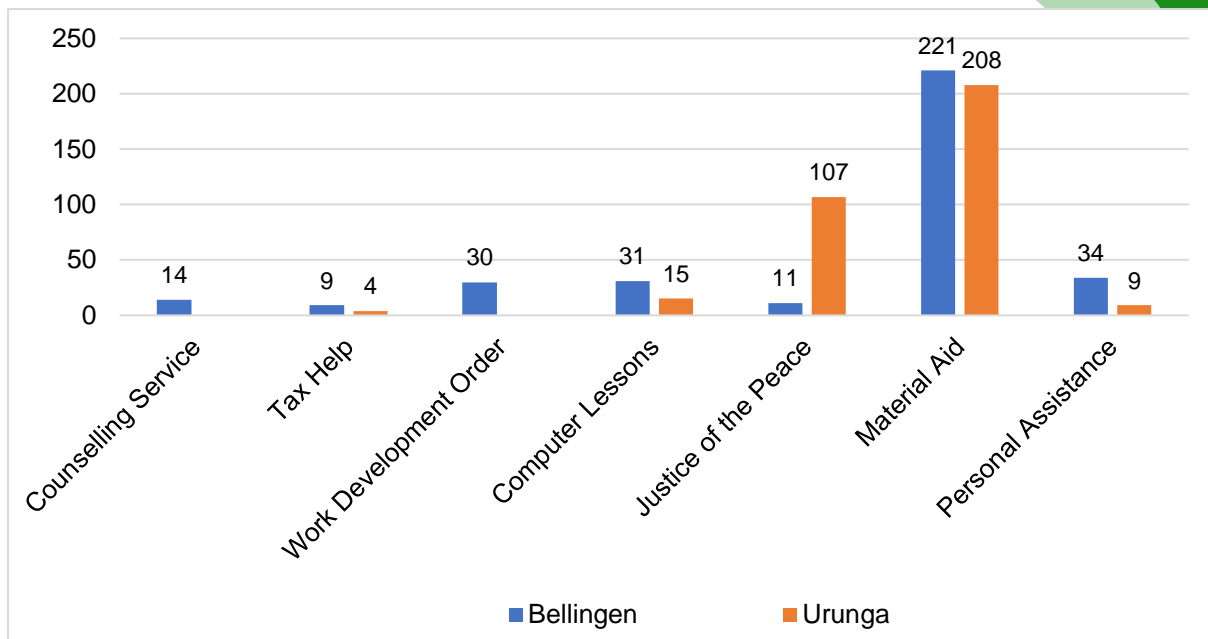
Computer and mobile phone lessons are provided by volunteer tutors. This year, at Bellingen, Joe Schwaiger who has a broad knowledge of computers, iPhones and tablets, provided one-on-one lessons with people who needed help with their devices. In Urunga, there was no designated tutor available and volunteers with the knowledge were able to help community members with IT inquiries.

Work Development Orders (WDO) are a way of doing voluntary work or engaging in therapeutic or social activities to “work-off” state debt fines. Volunteer workers, Gabrielle (Gab) Drennan and Diane Adams both delivered excellent service for WDO clients.

A **Justice of Peace** was available at Urunga on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Residents are very grateful to have this service readily accessible at the Centre provided by one of our volunteers. Thank you, Arlene! Diane Adams is now a qualified JP too and is available whenever she is working at the Bellingen and Urunga Centres.

Material aid: Frozen meals, food, clothes, hygiene products and other donated items are available for people in need. People do not need to make an appointment to receive this assistance. Staff and volunteers at the Centre can provide this anytime in opening hours.

Personal Support: Sometimes we need to spend a lot of time supporting a client. Some need help with filling out applications and forms, creating accounts on websites like myGov and Services NSW and always with someone who listens. Those occasions are reported under Personal Support in our data collection system.



Note: Counselling and WDO services were only available at Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre

The facilities (room hire) at Bellingen (BNC) are used regularly for a number of programs including computer lessons, Work Development Orders, the free Counselling Service, Tax Help, No Interest Loan Service (NILS) and Emergency Relief, and at Urunga (UNC) by the Early Years Family Workers, for support group meetings and community workshops. Offices and meeting rooms are also hired out to other organisations that provide outreach including Mission Australia Housing and the Mid North Coast Financial Counselling service.

Workshops and Events

Due to ongoing restrictions and personal health concerns relating to COVID 19, not as many events or activities went ahead this year.

First Aid Course in Thora

This First Aid course, provided for free through Pulsestart, is designed to be run in communities more than half an hour's travel away from the nearest Hospital. The aim is that residents in outlying communities of the Shire are confident and able to apply first aid while waiting for an ambulance.

20 community members attended.

The feedback was very positive with participants reporting that they were able to learn/refresh first aid skills and knowledge and felt more confident to help, if needed.

BNC promoted this course and arranged the catering. Everyone loved the food! Local chef, Monica, provided take away meals in line with COVID restrictions and that was very much appreciated.



Other Activities



Cupboard of Plenty

The cupboard of plenty project at Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre is now 6 years old. The original cupboard was past repair and the great guys at Urunga Men's Shed built us a new Cupboard. Thank you! The cupboard of plenty is well used. It still gets filled up and gets emptied quite quickly.

We encountered the problem of some people leaving things beside the cupboard which are dirty or broken, which makes the area look messy and it falls to the staff and volunteers to clean up. New signage is up and hopefully that will help in solving the problem.

Over a year, a lot of people stop by the cupboard to make use of it and others to discuss it. A lot of positive comments are heard, and the cupboard has certainly helped a lot of people through difficult times.

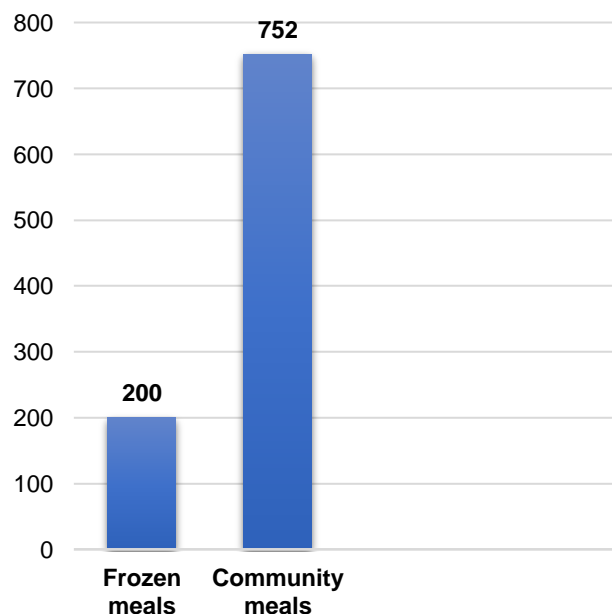
Bowl of Plenty

The Bowl of Plenty community meal is still going strong. A delicious and wholesome 2-course lunch is served every 2nd and 4th Wednesday at the Citizen's Centre room next door to us in Bellingen and at Urunga Neighbourhood Centre on the first Wednesday of each month.

There are always volunteers who are happy to help. A big thank you to Alison, Wayne, Gayle, Laura and Frances who are there every time to set up, greet, serve and wash dishes, and the cooks: Mitch, Anne, Yamuna, Evelyn and Donna.

When lockdowns were in place, the bowl of plenty still happened, providing take-away meals instead of the usual sit-down meal.

Overall, the numbers of meals provided did drop compared to last year because of the impact of COVID precautions, restrictions and lockdowns. A big thank you and our appreciation to Oz Harvest whose volunteers deliver the veggies, fruit and other goods every week to Urunga and Bellingen, to Urunga Country Oven Bakery and the Swiss Patisserie in Bellingen for donations of fresh bread for every community meal and the Lions Club for the donation of their sausages, to the community donors who help financially and with food supplies, and to our dedicated volunteer cooks who provide such delicious and nutritious meals for the community lunches.



Every other week, there are more volunteers cooking meals to be divided up and put into the freezer so there is a supply of healthy meals available most of the time.

Thank you all so much.

Share the Dignity

Every April and August, Share the Dignity asks the public to donate pads and tampons to collection points throughout the country. At the end of the month, thousands of packets of sanitary products are delivered to their partner charities, including our Neighbourhood Centres. In the month of November, Share the Dignity runs the “It’s In the Bag” campaign when people donate a bag full of personal care products and gifts. The bags are then delivered to charities in December.



Share the Dignity ‘shero’, Di Ginis coordinates the campaigns in Bellingen Shire and delivers the period products and bags to the Centres for us to provide to girls and women in our communities.



Return and Earn

Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre has a donation button on the return and earn machine in Bellingen. People who bring back their bottles can choose to donate their earnings to BNC. The donations received are for the emergency relief service provided for residents in our community. This year, the funds raised helped the Centre provide food, fuel and pharmacy vouchers to community members in need. We received \$1,572! Thanks to all in community who donated.

Backpack beds

Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre is one of over 800 partner agencies of Backpack Beds for Homeless Australia (BBHA). Due to the increased demand for the backpack beds across Australia during the COVID pandemic and the worsening housing crisis that resulted in more people becoming homeless, BBHA supplies ran out last year and were unavailable for a long time because of import shipping COVID restrictions.

While not as waterproof or protective as the backpack bed, BNC bought fleece sleeping bags instead to give to people sleeping rough. BNC is able to purchase these supplies with funds collected in the five donation boxes that are placed in different shops around Bellingen. The backpack beds cost \$110 each and are back in supply.

Food Hampers at Christmas

25 Christmas hampers were purchased through the Lifehouse Pantry and provided to individuals and families in need through the neighbourhood centres in Dorrigo, Bellingen and Urunga. This year people had the choice of vegetarian and non-vegetarian hampers.

Newsletter

The BNC quarterly newsletter has morphed into a newsletter for the whole organisation. Julie Warwick enjoys putting the newsletter together ready to send out each quarter. Print copies of the newsletter are available at the libraries and other community places across the Shire and an e-newsletter version also goes out via Mailchimp to members.

Facebook

Bellingen, Dorrigo and Urunga Neighbourhood Centres have active Facebook pages, which we regularly use to inform the community of news, updates, activities, events and to call out for new volunteers and specific donations of items needed by clients.

Volunteer meetings

Bi-monthly volunteer meetings were held throughout the year. A time to all to get together is important because volunteers work on different days and may not have the opportunity to get to know each other otherwise. The volunteer meetings are a forum for team building, learning, information sharing, discussing good vibrations and challenges, and a time to celebrate birthdays.

Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre (DNC)

The Neighbourhood Centre in Dorrigo opened its doors at 65A Hickory Street in July 2021 as an extension of Connecting Neighbourhood Centres service provision to the entire Shire. Coordinator, Erika Munan is ably assisted by regular volunteers, Leonie, Christine and Kat.

A street stall in front of the centre as part of the Made in Dorrigo market on 10th July, invited a walk-through and conversation with residents about the centre and what it would offer. There were many positive comments about a main street neighbourhood centre presence in Dorrigo.



Services Provided at DNC

EAPA (Energy Accounts Payment Assistance) scheme to assist the community who are experiencing financial difficulties and unable to pay bills. The long, wet summer in Dorrigo extended to cold winters and while firewood is scarce, heating has been the number one culprit for rising living costs.

Emergency Relief (ER) by way of material aid and personal support. The small supply of fuel vouchers for the local service station for which there was high demand soon ran out. There are Bellingen Fuel Stop vouchers available, which is helpful for Plateau residents who have enough fuel to get them down the mountain, stop in Bellingen to get fuel then continue on their journey to the coast. A more cost-effective solution, especially for those who don't have enough fuel or need to go down the mountain, should be in place soon. Shop Local vouchers that can be used at the local supermarkets and other Dorrigo stores are also available. As the budget allows, a supply of nappies, canned food, feminine hygiene products, camp stoves, camp blankets and tarps are purchased and kept on hand at DNC.

No Interest Loans (NILs) worker, Diane Adams was outreaching from Bellingen to offer NILs appointments until Leonie McDonald completed her training. Since April 2022, Leonie has been providing the service at Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre by appointment fortnightly on Thursdays 9:30am-12:30pm.



Other assistance provided in Dorrigo includes information and referral for free Tax Help for low-income earners, generalist counselling and to other agencies for assistance including St. Vincent De Paul, Legal Aid and Financial Counselling. The centre is also a collection point for the DV Safe Phones program. Free internet access is available as are office equipment services including printing, scanning and laminating for a nominal fee. Neighbourhood Centres across NSW also have supplies of free Rapid Antigen Tests available for vulnerable members of the community.

WDO (Work Development Order) is also available, by appointment.

Left: Rodney the rooster, renowned Dorrigo local, connecting at Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre

Reception Data Collection And Statistics

Volunteers and staff have been able to enter data about the nature of enquiries and keep track of people contacting and assessing the services that DNC offers through the new data collection tool introduced this year. Despite periods through the year that the Centre could not open due to natural disasters and COVID-19 restrictions, 379 occasions of service to visitors and callers to Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre were recorded in 2021-2022.

Training / Workshops

Training and professional development workshops available to Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre staff and volunteers this year include:

- Data Exchange (DEX) service data reporting online training
- Client Relationship Information Management system online training
- Video filming for website workshop
- Work Development Orders (WDO) host training
- CPR and First Aid
- 2-day DV Alert workshop

Social Media

Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre actively uses Facebook to regularly inform the community about news, updates, share posters or other events and as a call-out for volunteers or donations. DNC manages to post notices most weeks. We see engagements from between 36 and 130 people for various topics.

Volunteer Meetings

The first Wednesday of the Month has been allocated, with attendance face-to-face or mixed mediums online and in person. All Dorrigo volunteers and workers attend, when possible, from 9am to 10am and the Centre opens a little later on those days. Everyone checks in, discusses work health safety, exchange information, and inform of work procedure changes. It's a valuable time for the DNC team to gather.

Overview

It has been a busy first year for Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre up on the beautiful Plateau. Interruptions to centre opening due to natural disaster events have been able to be managed as we have an all-Dorrigo team. During COVID-19 we were fortunate to be able to open a majority of the time, albeit on skeleton staff/volunteers to be available for our most vulnerable. In December 2021, when Public Health Orders were lifted, the centre was back to full operational numbers. Face masks and hand sanitisers for clients, visitors, volunteers and staff are always on hand. With other NCoBS staff members coming up the mountain to attend the Neighbourhood Centre on Wednesdays and Thursdays, a good range of expertise and assistance can be provided. The staff always make sure the centre is able to maximise connections, discretion and assistance to provide an inclusive and safe space, engagement and belonging for the community.

Projects

1. Dorrigo Neighbourhood Meal planned on a quarterly seasonal basis. Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre is planning a community meal similar to the Bowl of Plenty community meals in Urunga and Bellingen, although for Dorrigo, a slightly different tack was taken. A seasonal Connecting Dorrigo Neighbourhood Meal will be held quarterly. The first is planned for 28th July 2022. Every part of the inaugural community meal in Dorrigo including the cost of the venue is kindly being donated by Dorrigo businesses and people. The Centre is working closely with Dorrigo organisations, in particular the Dorrigo Community Gardens and the Dorrigo Youth Centre on this venture. The Dorrigo Support Centre plans to make the community neighbourhood meal one of their regular outings for seniors. This kind of support and community cooperation is the fruit of relationship building by Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre for the past 24 months.
2. Pantry - planning for freezer storage
3. Provide fuel vouchers from a supplier in Dorrigo
4. To open additional days to be able to service a wider community



Community Engagement, Activities and Connections

Bellingen Shire Interagency

The Bellingen Interagency has continued to grow and proves to be a good strategy for positioning Connecting as a leading voice amongst the other community service agencies working in the shire. This year, seeking to reinvigorate the interagency and make it more useful to the members, interagency convenor Bruce Naylor:

- Continued rotating the meeting to each town in turn, Bellingen Urunga and Dorrigo, on a bimonthly cycle
- Undertook more pro-active engagement with local community groups and service organisations to increase their attendance, to allow the agencies to cultivate practical grassroots connections and to hear the needs of the community from the community.
- Set a theme for each meeting to collaborate on some of the thornier problems all are experiencing.

Themes explored in the last year included:

- What does a resilient Bellingen Shire look like?
- Introduction to the Neighbourhood Care Network
- Suicide prevention initiatives in Bellingen Shire
- “How do we make progress on rent stress and homelessness?”
- “Community Gardens as sites of community engagement and community action for your organisation” with presentations from Dorrigo Community Nursery, Northbank Community Garden and Dorrigo Bush Tucker Community Garden
- The Big Squeeze - a perfect storm of rising rents, soaring prices, interest rate rises and energy insecurity? How can we work together to alleviate this.

This thematic approach reflected the alliances that Bruce cultivated in his role with our organisation and his other work in community. Attendances at the Interagency more than doubled from around 10 per meeting in 2021 to well over 20 per meeting in 2022.

Harvest of Plenty

Along with other community stakeholders, the neighbourhood centres represented by Bruce Naylor participated at a workshop to develop the Bellingen Shire Community Climate Change Action Plan. As part of the process, a food resilience proposal called the Harvest of Plenty was suggested.

Rationale:

The Neighbourhood Centres play a connective role in responding to crises such as fire, flood and pandemics, during the event and more importantly in the recovery phase. The Centres are a natural partner in disaster resilience initiatives being located in the three main towns. Another wet summer is ahead.

With premises in each town and workers that travel between them, Connecting Neighbourhood Centres remain uniquely positioned to continue their material aid distribution role in the responding and recovery phases of a future disaster.

The idea manifesting is to practise sharing in peaceful times so that in an emergency, the community knows who and where to turn to, to offer or to receive assistance. With already established sharing programs, the Cupboard of Plenty and the Bowl of Plenty, an outline of complimentary small projects around food have been proposed, including:

- Cook What You Got: budget cooking skills classes focused on using what is seasonal and cheap.
- Share the Jam: intergenerational food preserving skills share events
- Fruit squad: picking local fruit and nuts in exchange for produce - learn pruning skills.

The next stage is to fully cost and plan the various parts of the project ensuring there is capacity to integrate this program into the current workload of TEI Neighbourhood Centre staff.

Healthy Bellingen – Accidental Counsellor workshops

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire was the auspice for this project made possible with funding through the Bushfire Disaster Recovery And Resilience Program Assist And Empower Grant Fund, administered by Bellingen Shire Council. Local community member, Bethany Hetherington was the volunteer coordinator for the project.

Three one-day Accidental Counsellor workshops were delivered by Lifeline North Coast from the 8th to 10th December 2021 at Urunga (14 attendees), in Dorrigo (9 attendees) and in Bellingen (25 attendees). COVID safe practices were adhered to; and cultural safety, interpersonal safety and self-care were discussed at the commencement of each session.

Bethany reported that *“The training was targeted to community members who would like to be able to safely and effectively support friends, family, colleagues, and strangers who are in distress or experiencing a crisis. The workshops provided the basic skills required to enable the ‘accidental counsellor’ to immediately support and assist using the ‘Recognise, Respond, Refer’ model.”*

Outcomes achieved by the project, included:

- An interactive day of reflective and hands-on training, enabling participants to be available to assist others in crisis in a safe and effective manner, whilst acknowledging they are lay people and understanding when to refer to professional support.
- The skills learned in the Accidental Counsellor course may be applied in many contexts, with skills in active listening, calming, and effective, safe questioning shared. Participants also learned how to ask openly but sensitively about suicide risk and respond safely whatever the answer.
- The community were able to access Accidental Counsellor Foundations psychological training which usually costs over \$250 per person for just \$15, ensuring accessibility for many community members.

People’s Library: Voices of the Community 2021

For the second year running, Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire was the auspice for a grant from Bellingen Shire Council for the project, again coordinated by Simona Galimberti from the Voice Within.

Simona describes the People’s Library as *“A project aimed to reduce social isolation and create connectedness via storytelling, during the unprecedented event such as COVID-19, was achieved. We were able to continue and adapt to the times where enough people were able to attend, connect and engage.”*

In 2021, there were two events and two workshops - for Urunga in May and for Dorrigo in July, whilst mask mandates were in place for indoor events. Bellingen was postponed to May 2022, as people did not want to gather. It was best to wait for all to ease, and it did in 2022, where the last event in Bellingen was held in May. There were 11 at the workshop and 10 at the event, so worth the wait. The general feeling to hold connection via oral storytelling was well-received by all those who took part.

Simona reported *“The overall feedback received from all workshops/events participants was extremely positive, and people felt inspired listening to the stories shared. People did not want to leave after the events!”*

Connecting with Bellingen Shire Council

The Neighbourhood Centres continued to cultivate connections with Bellingen Shire Council, particularly the Community Wellbeing and Resilience teams. This has included management and staff collaborating with Council and community leaders on the:

- Pandemic Response Group
- Bellingen Shire Flood Recovery committee
- Community Asset Mapping project
- My Community Directory project
- BSC Black Summer funding proposal
- Bellingen Shire Community Climate Action Plan

Neighbourhood Centres of Belling Shire Inc continues to be a consultation and participation partner when Council reviews and develops community plans. It is important that the relationship stays transparent and mutually beneficial, and that NCoBS representations and involvement align with the fulfillment of our organisation's work in and with community.

Being an informed and authentic voice of the community

When lockdowns came in again on 14th August 2021, it became apparent that a town hall style consultation was not going to happen any time soon. It was proposed that this was a good chance to experiment with some online methods.

Community Consultation round 1: Online questionnaires - a small series of open-ended questions using a Survey Monkey tool distributed through Facebook was piloted. Framed around RUOK? Day on Sept 9th, simple open questions were used. There was an excellent uptake with 34 responses. The answers were collated, and the neighbourhood centres gave feedback to the community through an animated video created in Doodly and distributed through our local Facebook groups. Watch it on this link if you missed it video <https://fb.watch/fENapkftkv/>

Community Consultation round 2: Listening posts in October in Mental Health Month
The online survey was followed up with face-to-face street stalls during October Mental Health Month. Bruce Naylor for Connecting Neighbourhood Centres and Adi Moir, Acting Community Wellbeing Planning Officer at Belling Shire Council held these in Urunga, Belling and Dorrigo over three consecutive Thursdays.

It became clear that using an overt survey tool wasn't going to work in a street stall setting around the theme of Mental Health, for privacy sake and because of stigma felt surrounding mental health issues. There was a great deal of private suffering and anxiety in the community and more resources are needed to adequately and appropriately assist community members to access any help that is needed to support themselves and each other through difficult times.

Neighbourhood Centre Week 9th to 15th May 2022

"Building resilience by bringing people together"

In an effort to break the insularity that had built up during COVID, in May 2022, a street stall and BBQ were held outside the Belling and Urunga centres to celebrate Neighbourhood Centre Week.

The result was very gratifying with youth, people experiencing homelessness, locals and tourists stopping in for a chat, for information, and for a sausage sandwich.

The smell of local butcher sausages and onions may have been the deciding factor!

Over 50 people were served at Belling where it was a fine day, and 40 people at Urunga, which was fantastic given the intermittent rain.



Volunteers Week 16th to 22nd May 2022

“Better Together”

Bruce Naylor worked along with Jocelyn Box, Council’s Resilience Officer and Adi Moir to run three stalls to celebrate volunteers in Urunga, Bellingen and Dorrigo, with local volunteer organisations within the towns connecting in. This listening post approach worked well for this community engagement activity for Volunteers Week. This opportunity was also used to launch the new Connecting volunteers video on Facebook.

Seniors Week

Community development worker, Bruce was invited to be a guest speaker at the Seniors Week celebration and lunch at Mylestom in March 2022. He spoke on digital scams and promoted the upcoming Scams workshop at Urunga Neighbourhood Centre; and stayed for the day to promote the services our organisation offers.

Digital Connectedness

Neighbourhood centres have traditionally played a role to help people interface with technology such as printers, faxes, computers and IT devices. The mobile device has become a key portal in people’s lives and digital illiteracy, especially for seniors, is a factor contributing to social isolation. Along with the many benefits, conveniences and frustrations of digital technologies there are also risks. Seniors are increasingly being targeted by digital scams.

In a follow up to the popular series of workshops “High Tea with My Device” that were run in 2021, it was decided to offer a workshop session on online scams in Urunga and Dorrigo.

Angie Derrett, (*standing in the photo above*) a skilled trainer and facilitator with a broad knowledge of online safety and security, was engaged to run the two-hour workshops. Turnout was excellent with 10 registrations for Urunga and 25 people attending in Dorrigo. The Dorrigo session attendance exceeded expectations and points to the progress made by Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre in becoming a recognised and valued part of the community.



NAIDOC Day 2022

This year, NCoBS was delighted to be involved in hosting the first NAIDOC event in 3 years. Bruce worked to support Aboriginal Early Years Family Worker, Frances Witt and Lachlan Skinner from One Mob Radio to organise a family fun day in Urunga for NAIDOC Week.

We partnered with Bellingen Shire Council, Urunga Library, One Mob Radio, Landcare, Bellingen High School Aboriginal Dance troupe, Nathan Brennan, Kauri Munro Greentree, Interrelate, Rob Canning and Margaret Witt and Aunty Jenny Skinner to offer a great day of cultural connections and activities with a massive attendance - sausages sizzled all day!



Facebook and Social Media

The completion of the branding and the setup of the Connecting Neighbourhood Centres Facebook pages simplified and enhanced communication with the community. The regularity of posting achieved by the coordinators and the community development worker saw significant growth in the reach and number of followers of each page.

Emergency Relief

Emergency relief was offered throughout the whole year when the centre was open.

The Emergency relief program has only limited funding. We only can offer a very small amount for Food, Fuel or Pharmacy vouchers, and rely on donations and fundraising to be able to offer this financial assistance.

Our ER relief fundraiser was:

- The donation button on the Return and Earn machine.

Donations received:

- Community members (goods and financial)
- Blue Sky community (gift cards and vouchers for Woolworth and Coles)
- Red Cross (financial)
- TAFE (baked goods)
- Oz Harvest (food)

Thank you!

The Centres continues to assist with power bills through the NSW Government's EAPA (Electricity Accounts Payment Assistance) scheme.

Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre coordinated the distribution of loaded Visa and EFTPOS cards and Coles and Woolworths supermarket vouchers allocated for the Bellingen Shire by Blue Sky Community Services after funding from the NSW Government was received to support people having to isolate because of COVID-19.

There are frozen meals available most of the time to be heated by the Centre for people who have not eaten and are hungry now and also for individuals and families to take home. The Bowl of Plenty community meal is available twice a month in Bellingen and once a month in Urunga; phone cards are available and community members continue to donate goods.

Share the Dignity personal care supplies and bags, Backpack Beds (out of stock by the suppliers for most of the year) and the Cupboard of Plenty pantry are other projects to try to address the gaps. In the last few months of 2021 – 2022, the cost of living has risen further (Energy, Fuel, Food, Rent) and we saw a big increase in people needing assistance.

Emergency Relief assistance in the form of vouchers to local shops and outlets and help with electricity bills through EAPA was again provided this year. The figures below do not include other material aid provided, which is reflected in the activity statistics.

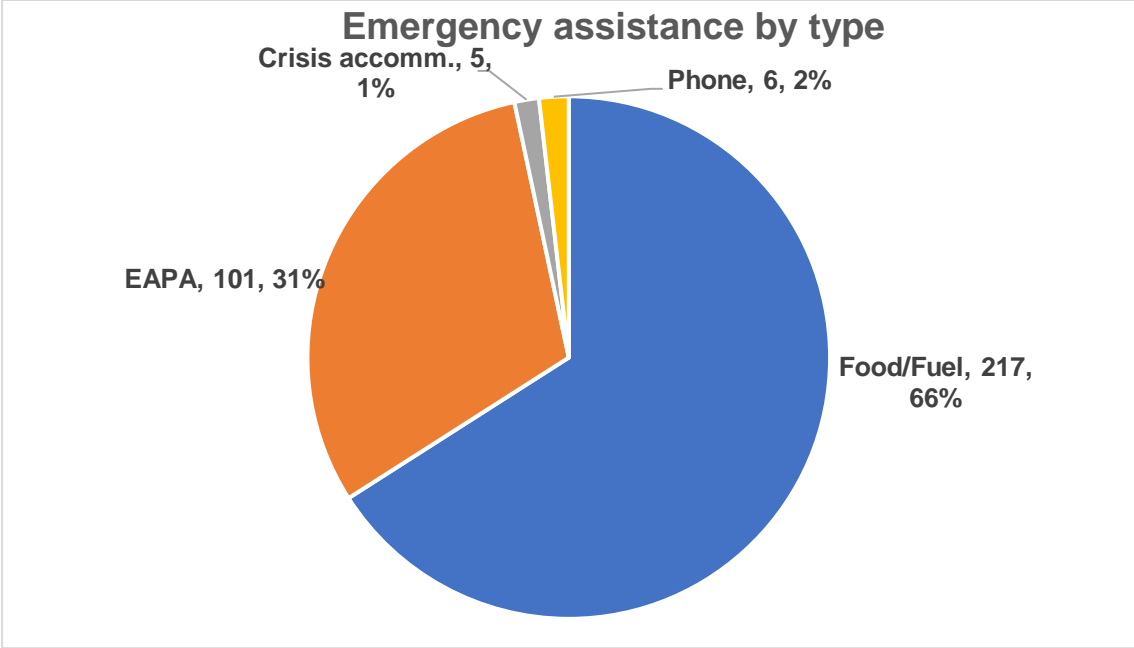
	Bellingen	Dorrigo	Urunga	Total
2020-2021				197
2021-2022	228	53	48	329

The need for assistance was 67% higher than in 2020-2021. This is partly because Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre opened in July 2021 and also provides emergency relief, and because more people in community were struggling financially due to COVID related health, employment, income and/or housing pressures impacting individuals and families.

The system used by the centres to collect client and service data collection changed in March 2022 and a breakdown of assistance into categories is not available for the full year. Emergency relief is given for food, groceries and fuel by voucher or Shop Local gift card and through the EAPA scheme.

Crisis accommodation assistance, which is mostly a few days camping at Bellingen showgrounds and on rare occasions, a night at the Diggers Tavern when funds allow and if available. As a one-off measure, disaster relief vouchers were available for people affected by the flood and people isolating at home because of COVID.

Phone bill vouchers were not available from this year. Centre staff continue to provide support and speak with phone companies and other suppliers on behalf of clients experiencing hardship with bills.



The number of homeless people seeking help from the Neighbourhood Centres has grown in the last year. We worked with more people experiencing long-term homelessness. Their needs are complex, which has proven challenging for centre staff and volunteers. We do what we can to assist them and make referrals to specialist services, but this is not always straight-forward.

Help to pay electricity bills is irrelevant to people who are homeless, so we help by giving practical resources like food supplies and cooked meals, clothing, hygiene products and when available, swags and bedding.

Sadly, helping people and families who are homeless and those in rental crisis into temporary accommodation, let alone affordable rental housing, gets more difficult every year as it is in many regional areas.

There is some hope though for older, single women with what is happening at the old Bellorana buildings in Watson Street:

RFBI (Royal Freemasons & Benevolent Institution) recently signed contracts with both the State and Federal governments to supply Affordable Housing to single women aged over 55 that are at risk of homelessness. As an immediate response to helping these women, RFBI will be making available two of its existing premises as shared accommodation for six months whilst the affordable housing buildings are being constructed. Our goal is to support older people in need of housing to receive quality, affordable housing, as quickly as possible.

(excerpt from the Affordable Housing info pack)

Many thanks to Emergency Relief volunteers Evelyn, Rochelle, Diane, Leonie and Helen for their help and support with providing this essential service this year.

It has always been true that because of the involvement of community volunteers, so much more can be achieved and offered by our organisation, with and for our community.

Work and Development Orders

The year ended 30 June 2022 marks a decade of the successful delivery of the Work and Development Orders program across the Bellingen Shire. The Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre became an approved sponsor organisation shortly after the scheme commenced permanent operation. Although based in Bellingen, clients are also referred through both Urunga and Dorrigo neighbourhood centres, and an out-reach service is available.

To be eligible for a WDO, individuals must provide documentation to show that they meet one of the following criteria:

- Financial Hardship
- Mental Illness
- Cognitive Impairment or Intellectual Disability
- Serious Addiction to Drugs, Alcohol or Substances
- Homelessness

In 2021/2022, despite COVID-19's continuing impacts on clients and staff:

- 36 WDOs with a total dollar value of \$ 25,710 were opened; 33 were closed as successfully completed, with \$ 23,243 in WDO credits applied.
- Only 3 cases were closed as non-compliant, and
- 7 WDOs with an original dollar value of \$5,690 remained active on 30 June 2022.

Where a person has a fine debt remaining after closure of a WDO, they are encouraged to make arrangements with Revenue NSW to satisfy that debt. Otherwise, Revenue NSW may recommence enforcement action under the *Fines Act 1996* to recover the debt.

The Centre can assist clients who are unable both to continue with a WDO activity and to pay their fine debt, by advocating on their behalf that the outstanding debt be written off, where there is evidence of exceptional circumstances. For example, in the past year, we succeed in having the total fine debt in excess of \$2,000 written off for a young woman who had a long history of mental illness, homelessness, and lack of family support (also because of mental r

In other cases, clients who have mental health problems and are known to local mental health workers patients who have fine debts, are referred. Where those patients are receiving treatment and assistance through those services (as in or outpatients) they are able to access WDOs and are able to cut their debts out that way.

As a WDO sponsor, the organisation is responsible for:

- assessing client eligibility to undertake a WDO,
- obtaining and keeping proof of client eligibility,
- submitting individual client WDO applications and monthly activity reports to Revenue NSW via the self-service portal,
- maintaining records of activities and client attendance,
- identifying and managing any conflicts of interest,
- providing information for program audit activities by Revenue NSW on request.

Several local non-profit organisations collaborate with the neighbourhood centres to provide opportunities for unpaid work for WDO clients. Additionally, local psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers see clients under the mental illness criteria. This year has seen a greater number of clients who are receiving mental health treatment, which seems to reflect the incidence in the general community.

Since the centre began administering Work and Development Orders in 2012 and as of 30 June 2021, more than 485 client WDO applications have been submitted and of those:

- 466 WDOs have been closed with a total dollar value of more than \$402,163
- 12 WDOs were closed uncompleted with a total outstanding dollar value of about \$56,534; and
- 3 WDOs opened during the year and under review, remain open and active.

The WDO work is done by a volunteer case manager, Gabrielle Drennan. During the COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions face-to-face interviews for WDOs were suspended. However, we adapted the way the service was delivered and worked remotely to maintain service delivery. Those arrangements continued into the year now being reported on.

Connecting Neighbourhood Centres Volunteer Program



THANK YOU to all our wonderful volunteers!

At Bellingen: Evelyn Krosby, Maryanne Murray, Joe Schwaiger, Donna Bailey, Diane Adams, Gabrielle Drennan, Laura Lopez Sepulveda, Shandra Copparo, Andrew Stockley (Relief), Rochelle Donaldson (Relief) and Mirella Gleeson, who completed a student placement at the Centre and stayed on as a regular volunteer.

At Urunga: Arlene Ryan, Sandy Jenkins, Craig Cummings, Rozalie Vardo, Helen Pearsall and Heather Blair.

At Dorrigo: Leonie McDonald, Christine Wait and Kathy Arimado

Your many hours of service and great help to the staff and the many people accessing the Neighbourhood Centres for information, services and support, are greatly appreciated.

May Smith – Coordinator Bellingen and Urunga Neighbourhood Centres

Erika Munan – Coordinator, Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre

Bruce Naylor – Community Development Worker



NO INTEREST LOANS

Bellingen Shire No Interest Loans (BNILs) has gone along at a steady pace this year.

NILs Loans Worker, Diane Adams, provided the scheme in Bellingen, Urunga and Dorrigo for the first part of the year with assistance from volunteer, Leonie McDonald from Dorrigo. Leonie then completed her NILs training and is providing the service in Dorrigo and Diane covers the Bellingen and Urunga areas.

NILs in Dorrigo has had increased interest with up to 20 enquiries since the beginning of the year. Information, flyers and business cards were distributed throughout the Dorrigo community. Local businesses are on board, and other local charities and organisations are very pleased that NILs has a worker based in Dorrigo and for outlying areas of the Plateau. Many people have popped into Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre where Leonie is based, for information about NILs and some successful loan applications have been achieved.

BNILs acquired a grant from Good Shepherd Microfinance to promote the scheme across the Shire. Three flag signs (1 for each centre) and business cards were purchased and money for fuel costs to distribute across the business community. New flyers were printed and promotion by email to local schools and preschools is being undertaken to let the wider community know about NILs and the Neighbourhood Centres in the Bellingen Shire.

Funding for the scheme through NSW Fair Trading was extended for another year to June 2023. Supplementary funding from Good Shepherd ceased because the target of 10 approved loans per month was not able to be achieved.

Overall, enquiry numbers are up a little from last financial year, with most received in July, September, October and May. COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns throughout our area continued to take a toll on client enquiry numbers, which were similar to last financial year.

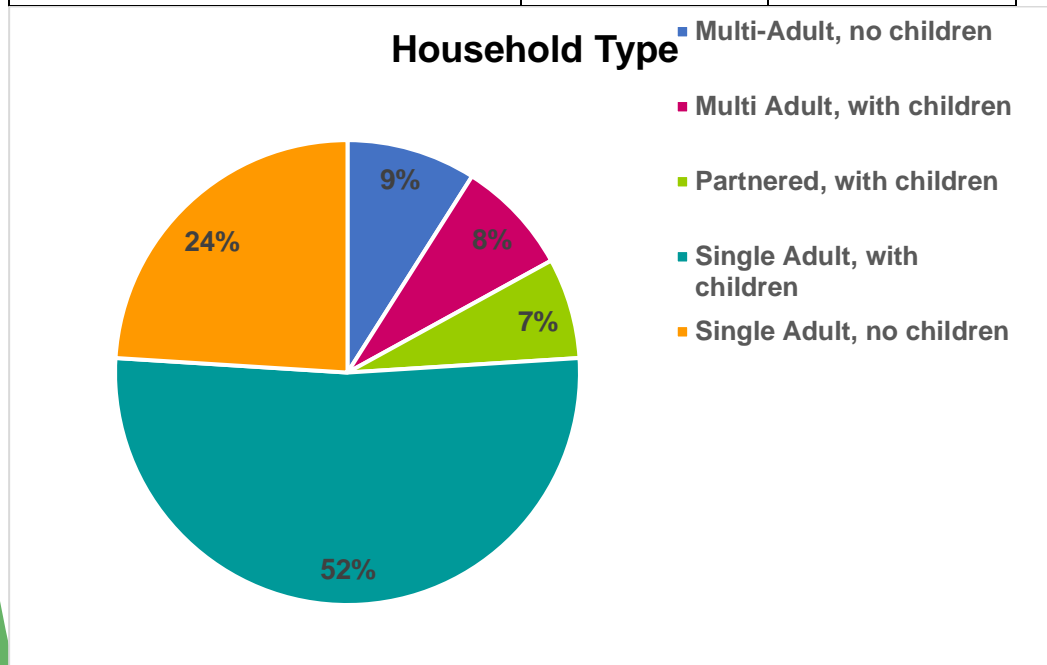
Enquiries			
Month	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
July	11	6	10
August	12	6	5
September	12	5	9
October	8	7	17
November	15	8	6
December	6	5	2
January	8	5	4
February	14	10	9
March	17	15	6
April	5	5	4
May	5	5	8
June	7	8	7
	120	85	87

Demographics of enquiries from July 2021 to June 2022 (87 enquiries)

Current data reports from Good Shepherd Microfinance only include demographic data for those applicants where a loan has been approved. The NILS App (the application in which loans are submitted) is not a data base so BNILS collates basic demographic data for all enquiries, loan applications and also loans that did not go ahead, which gives a more accurate view of the extent of the reach of BNILS as a Client Service Provider.

Enquiries by Postcode

	2020 – 2021	2021 – 2022
2453, Dorrigo	7	12
2454, Bellingen Valley	47	39
2455, Urunga / Seaboard area	12	12
Outlying areas	17	1



The majority of enquiries come from single adults with children and without children.

Type of Accommodation/Households

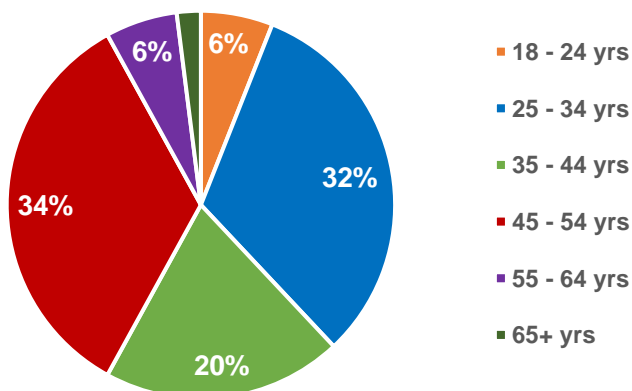
Type of Accommodation	2020-2021	2021-2022
Private rental	45	25
Public rental	10	13
Owner occupied	14	11
Boarding/Family/Friends	9	5
Homeless/Crisis Accommodation	2	4
Multiple Occupancy	0	3
Farm lease/Campervan	0	3
Land Council	1	0
Unknown	6	15

County of Birth	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Australia	99	72	55
Canada	0	0	2
New Zealand	5	1	3
United Kingdom	4	3	4
Germany	3	2	2
Netherlands	5	2	1
Poland	0	1	0
South Africa	0	1	0
Switzerland	0	0	1
Unknown	1	3	19
Total	117	85	87

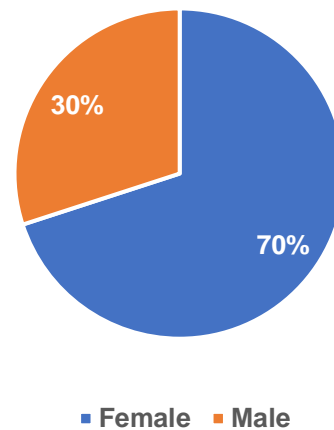
Australian citizen breakdown of numbers for 2021-2022

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	17
Non-Australian and Torres Strait Islander	43
Unknown or not applicable	18

By Age Group



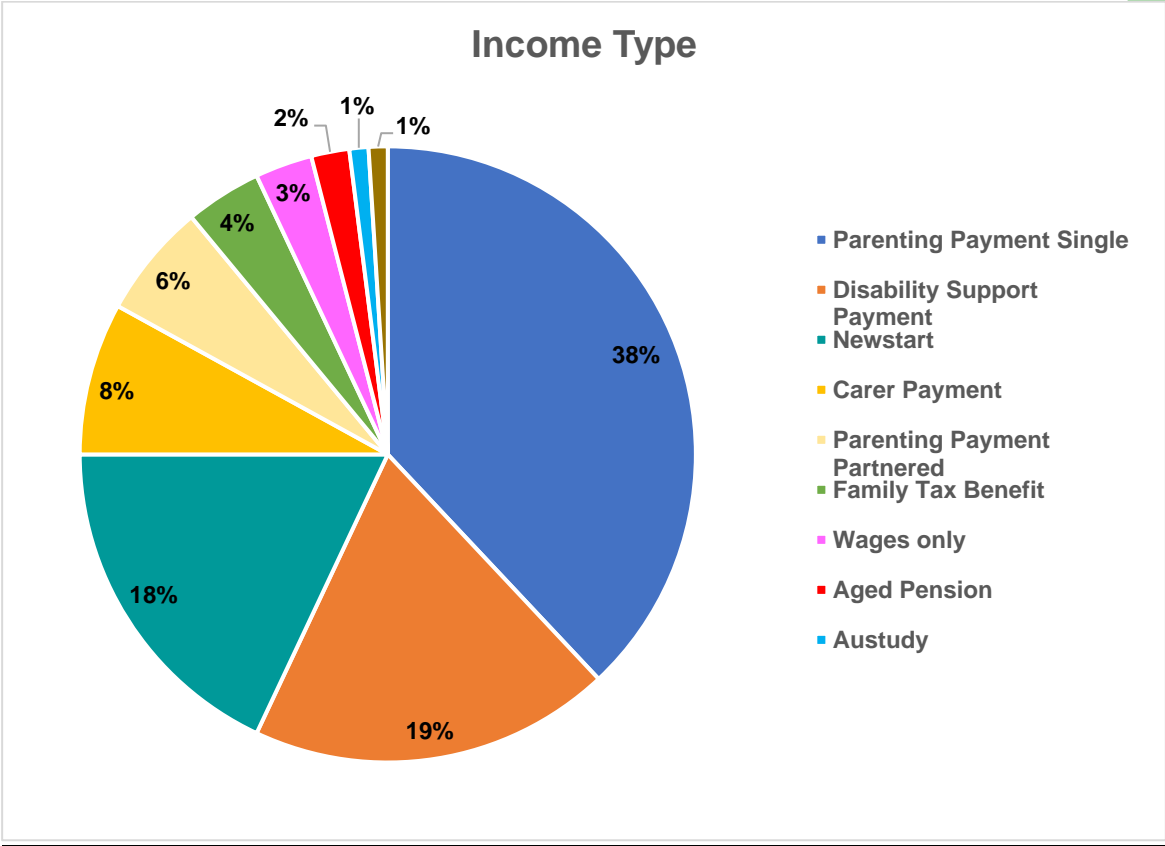
By Gender



Source of Income

Main Source of Income	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Disability Support Pension	32	24	16
Jobseeker/Newstart	30	23	14
Parenting Payment	21	15	8
Aged Pension	14	9	7
Carer Pension	5	1	7
Wages	16	2	4
Youth Allowance	0	2	0
Other	3	12	2

Disability Support Payment followed by Jobseeker, Aged Pension then Parenting Payment are the main sources of income for people coming through the NILs program. 'Other' relates to 21 people putting in paperwork for an application but not going ahead with a loan.



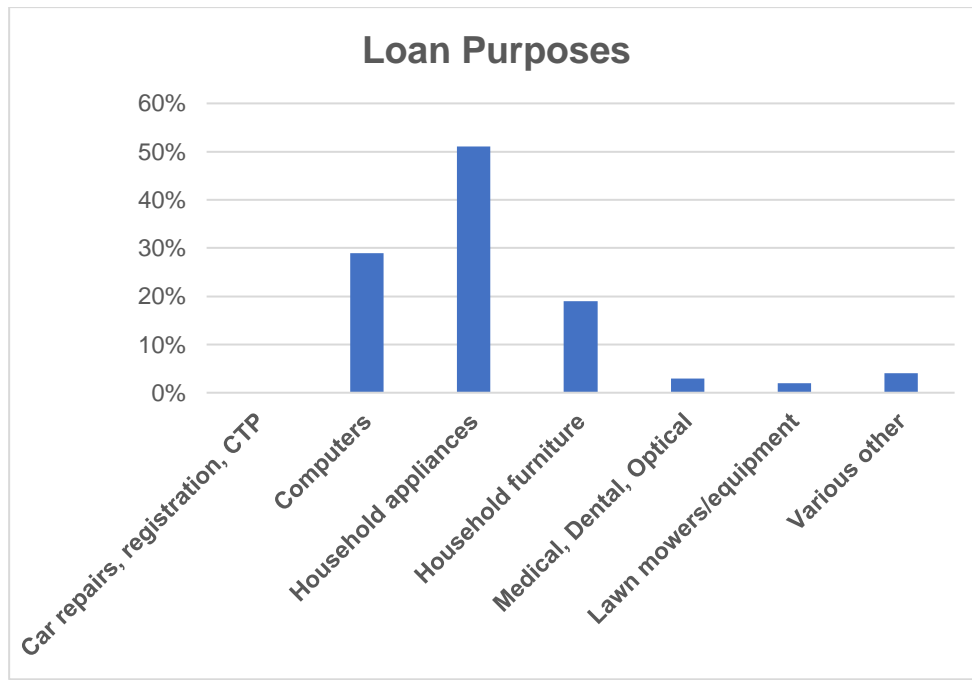
Approved loans 2021-2022

Approved loan numbers have had a slight increase this year compared to last financial year despite the lower number of enquiries.

Approved Loans	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
July	9	1	0
August	8	7	1
September	5	4	5
October	5	4	5
November	7	5	5
December	10	5	3
January	3	2	0
February	5	2	6
March	7	3	6
April	6	1	3
May	2	1	6
June	3	1	2
	70	37	42

Loan Purpose for July 2021 to June 2022

Car repairs and vehicle registration/CTP insurance were the most purchased items this year, there has been help with relocation costs, adult education costs and household furniture and equipment (Other 13%)



Some NILs applications do not translate into an approved loan (40)

Did not proceed reason being:

- 8 - withdrew
- 1 - item was not eligible
- 9 - funded elsewhere
- 8 - did not respond to calls or messages
- 7 - referred to another NILS provider or Step Up
- 7 - unable to gather information required

Diane Adams and Leonie McDonald
Bellingen Shire NILs Loan Workers

BELLINGEN SERVICES AUSTRALIA AGENCY

(Centrelink - Medicare - Child Support - Australian Hearing)



Australian Government
Services Australia



ANNUAL REPORT

BELLINGEN – SERVICES AUSTRALIA AGENCY

(Centrelink - Medicare - Child Support - Australian Hearing)

The Bellinghen, Services Australia Agency, also known as the Bellinghen Centrelink Agency, is managed by Neighbourhood Centres of Bellinghen Shire Inc on a yearly contract basis.

Opening hours are 9:30 am to 12:30 pm and 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm Monday to Friday. The Agency is located in the Council Grounds at Hyde St Bellinghen, in the same premises as Bellinghen Neighbourhood Centre.

Specified Personnel (Permanent Part-time) Julie Warwick: Monday to Wednesday
Pauline Lewis: Thursday and Friday

Relief Personnel: Evelyn Krosby and Diane Adams. We farewelled relief worker, Maureen Ely-Round who moved overseas to be closer to family.

The permanent and relief Agency staff are a great asset to the organisation and work well with one another to ensure all workdays are covered and a high standard of service provision.

Updates

- Services Australia visited Bellinghen on 21st & 22nd April 2022 to deliver Emergency Flood Relief & subsequent information to our community & surrounds.
- Services NSW has also been visiting our town/area regularly with the last visit in the 2022 financial year being the 5th of April.
- Operational procedures regarding COVID-19 pandemic were relaxed somewhat however social distancing, sanitising & mask wearing when in close proximity with others, continues to be encouraged.
- Jaye Percy from Charlestown continued in his role as Programme Officer & Community Engagement Officer working Monday to Wednesday however can be contacted any workday if the need arises.
- The biannual Agency Reviews were conducted via phone due to COVID restrictions on 24th Aug 2021 & 10th March 2022, each time with satisfactory outcomes.
- Late June, a Services Australia contract for the Agency was offered and accepted for a further 12-month period.

Training

Agencies gained access to the new online training package (which is regularly updated). It is now a contractual requirement that all staff review and complete the Agent training modules at least every twelve months (usually within 3 months of the contract renewal – late September).

Services

The Bellingen Agency provides essential services, mostly relating to Centrelink and Medicare, and also other general information & referrals.

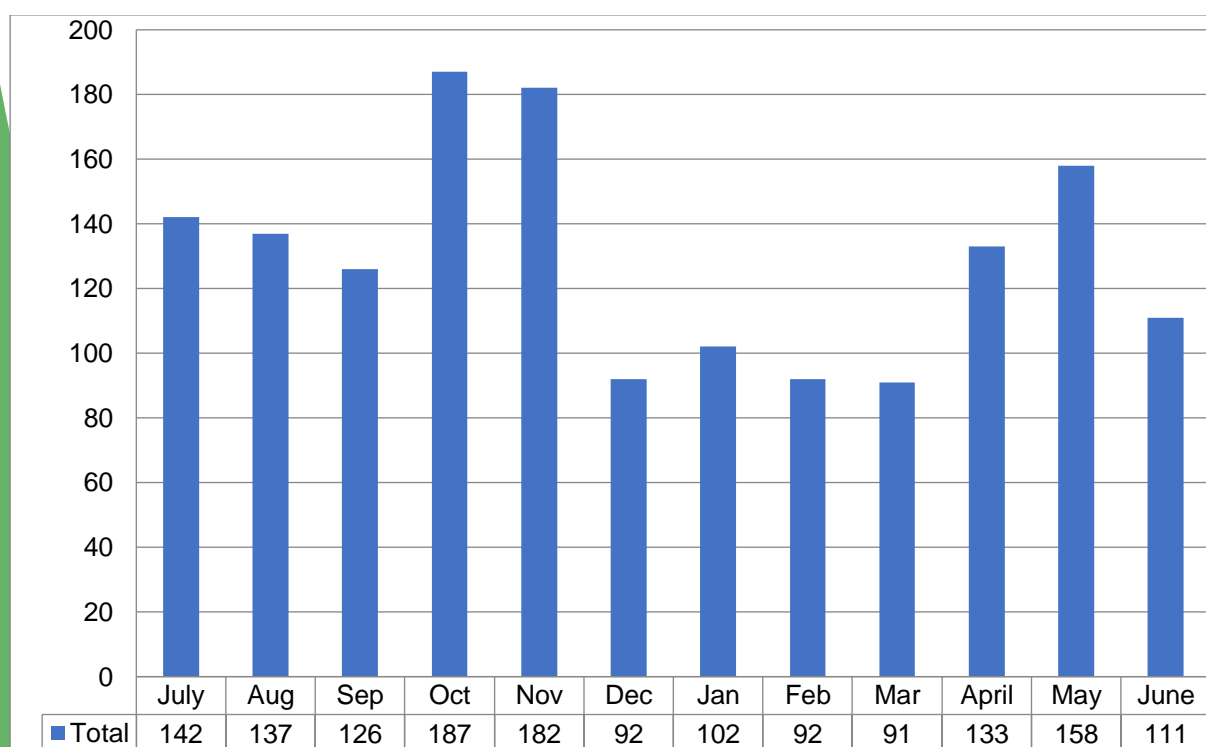
In the **2021 - 2022** financial year, a total **3633 services** were provided to **1553 clients**. Compared to the previous year, the number of clients seeking services and assistance decreased by 36; however, the number of services provided increased by 414. Whilst the COVID pandemic may have reduced the number of clients accessing the agency in person during the year, the amount of services per person significantly increased.

With residents being able to access and utilise these services locally, our agency customers are saved the trip into Coffs Harbour and back (**70.4 kms** from the Bellingen agency to the Centrelink office in Coffs Harbour), which equates to a total of **109,865 kilometres** of travel not required. This offers financial relief from increasing fuel costs for people attending to Services Australia matters; and is equivalent to approximately **27,332.8 kg (27.4 tonnes)** of greenhouse gas emissions.

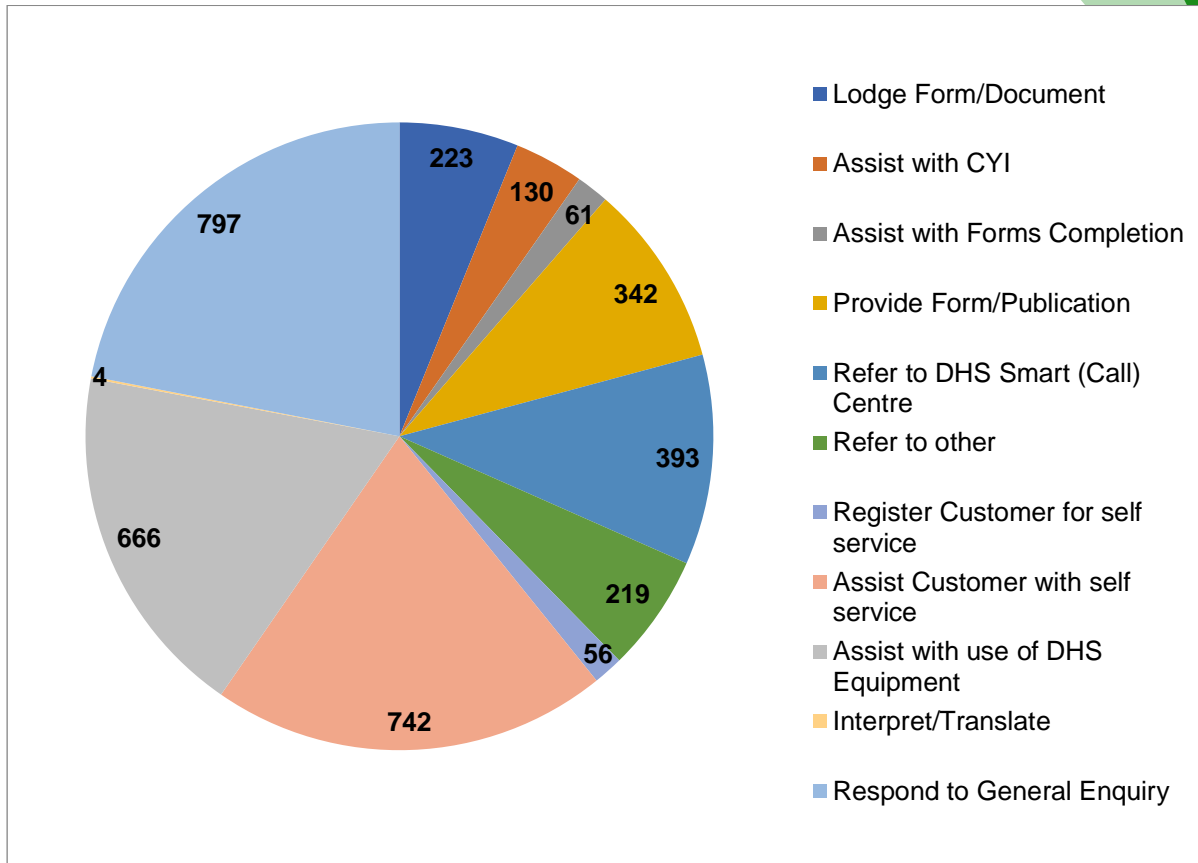
Statistics

The agency averaged 129.4 clients per month (a **minimal 3 per month decrease from last year**) and 302.75 services per month (**34.5 per month increase on the previous year**). The following chart shows a monthly breakdown of clients visiting the Bellingen Agency.

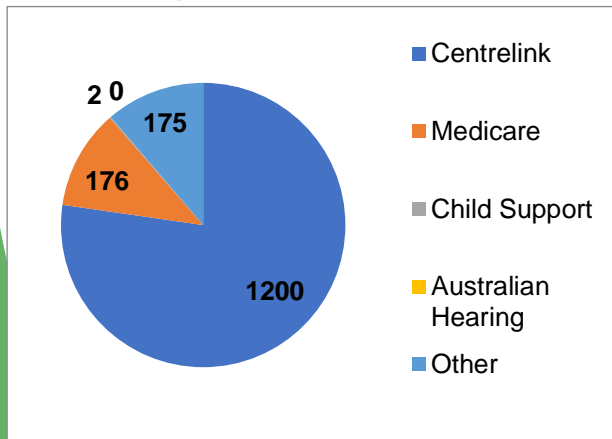
Services Australia Agency Monthly Customer Breakdown 2021 – 2022



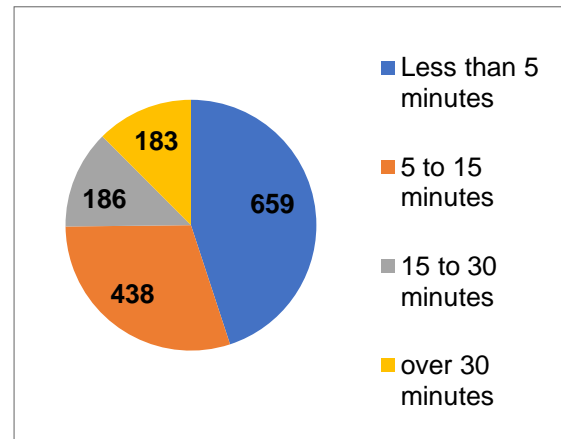
Breakdown of Bellingen Services Australia Agency services provided in 2021-2022



Departments serviced



Time taken with each client



Conclusion

The Bellingen Services Australia Agency continues to be a vital service for Shire residents. There are many elderly, disabled and disadvantaged folk, young and old, who are unable to travel into the regional customer service centres at Coffs Harbour and Nambucca, or who are without reliable internet connection at home to access online services. Customers regularly comment on how much they appreciate having the Agency in town as well as the prompt, friendly & efficient service that is offered. Over the past 20 years, the Agency has provided occasions of service to approximately 120,000 clients.

EARLY CHILDHOOD WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT



The Early Childhood Wellbeing & Development service has just concluded its first full year of service (since its beginning in March 2021). Funded under the NSW Government's Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) program through NSW Communities and Justice, this service focuses on children from birth up to pre-school age who are at risk of vulnerability, and their parents and families.

Our service works with families to connect them up with practical help, services and support they seek for themselves and their children, especially families who are isolated by disadvantage or by lack of access to transport, local family and friend networks, early childhood facilities and activities, public health services and so on.

The Team

Frances Witt is the Indigenous Early Years Family Worker based in Urunga, and Julia Brown is the Early Years Family Worker based in Urunga and outreaching to Dorrigo. Both Frances and Julia have continued working together with local families to plan and co-design various avenues to provide access to what is most needed for children, parents, and families in the early childhood years.

Julia and Frances collaborated and worked together on several projects and events and carried out some events and workshops individually in their designated communities.

In July 2021, Julia shared a stall at the Made in Dorrigo market with NCoBS team members May Smith, Erika Munan and Leanne Collier outside the new Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre, connecting with community members to chat about the Early Childhood service and offered a story book "Swoosh, Glide and Rule number 5" to children about online safety published by the e-safety commissioner.

Julia continued attending community playgroups in Dorrigo and Bellingen as regularly as COVID-19 restrictions would allow to foster ongoing building of relationships with families in the Shire, and connected with the preschool, the public school and the high school, the Child & Family Health nurse, and the Library in Dorrigo to share information about the service and to promote upcoming child and family workshops and activities.

When the Bellingen Shire was under COVID-19 stay-at-home orders from 14 August until 11 September then restrictions were introduced in October for those not yet full vaccinated, service delivery was affected and adapted accordingly. Through the latter part of 2021, Julia and Frances focused on connecting and communicating with parents, families and the community about how the service can help them access what they need for good health and wellbeing, and also the cultural connections they want for their children. They also completed an online Circle of Security Facilitator course, and later a Bringing Up Great Kids course, to add to their family support toolkit and professional development.

After a lull in program and activity roll-out, due to severe weather events and COVID-19 restrictions and also the typical slowness of the new year and the summer school holidays, February 2022 saw a renewed energy emerging with the Early Childhood Service. Frances and Julia brainstormed how to deliver the events and classes that had been planned and postponed in 2021; how to move forward with offering a Supported Playgroup in Urunga and rolling out the Circle of Security Parenting program to TEI families across the Shire.

On top of the group activities and events that have been run in partnership with other organisations, services and professionals including One Mob Radio, CPR Kids, Rob Canning, two local Dorrigo physiotherapists, and workshop facilitator Angie Derrett from Viribus Consultancy, assistance and support was provided through one-to-one work with families.

The focus has been on a whole of family approach to parenting and encouraging families to stay connected to what keeps them strong and resilient. Practical assistance was provided in the form of Christmas hampers to families in need, baby items, groceries, gift cards for petrol and other needs, and referrals to other organisations such as Lifetime Connect, Interrelate, the Child & Family Health Nurses and Northcott/NDIS.

Highlights

Circle of Security Parenting Groups February – April 2022

In February 2022, Julia and Frances co-facilitated their first two Circle of Security Parenting groups to families in the Bellingen Shire. One program was held in Urunga at the Neighbourhood Centre with one parent (who needed a more focused approach), and the other in Bellingen at the Youth Hub with five parents.

The Circle of Security is designed to help parents and caregivers develop specific relationship capacities. It enhances the bond and sense of security for both the parent/carers and the child by giving parents a guide to better understand their child's needs and by building confidence in responding to their child's emotional needs. The program invites parents to think about their own experience of being parented and how that impacts their parenting. The group provided a safe environment where parents could focus on their strengths, share their struggles and benefit from the experience of meeting with other local parents/carers.

All of the attendees enjoyed the sessions immensely and found the content very helpful, and the discussion and peer support therapeutic.

Feedback received from the Urunga group participant, Emily (single mother of 3): *"The Circle of Security Parenting program has completely changed the way I approach parenting my children and makes me look at other significant relationships in my life differently too. I use skills that I have learnt from Circle every single day, it's been an invaluable tool for improving the relationship between myself and my children. Frances and Julia provide a safe and inviting atmosphere which welcomes you to share experiences and learn in a loving environment."*

Sara, one of the Bellingen group participants, a mother of two, gave the following feedback: *"Thanks so much Julia and Frances, we all loved it, and highly recommend anyone interested to come along!"*



**CPR & First Aid for Babies and Children Classes
Bellingen 18 February & Dorrigo 19 February 2022**

In response to a locally identified need to provide opportunities for parents and caregivers to learn life skills and participate in health and wellbeing activities, Julia partnered with CPR Kids to offer two Baby & Child CPR & First Aid Classes to parents and caregivers in the Shire, after the success of the previously held class on June 10th in Dorrigo. A Dorrigo weekend offering was specifically requested for working parents to be able to attend. We added on to that a Friday offering in Bellingen due to high interest for this class from the Bellingen community. This event was a great way for parents in Dorrigo to develop connections and participate socially in their community. 9 Parents participated in Bellingen, and 8 parents in Dorrigo. Onsite childminding was provided at both locations with many taking advantage of this offering so they could attend and be fully present.



CPR KIDS Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc
would like to invite you to an exclusive class.

This invaluable session will leave you feeling confident to recognise & respond when a baby or child needs CPR, and how to respond to the most common First Aid situations involving babies and children.

CPR Kids expert paediatric nurses will share their knowledge and experience, leaving you confident to help a child in an emergency situation.

BELLINGEN	DORRIGO
Friday 18 February 2022 2-5pm	Saturday 19 February 2022 10-1pm
Bello Youth Hub 2 William St, Bellingen	Dorrigo Support Centre 50 Hickory St, Dorrigo

The class was facilitated by an specialist paediatric nurse, Angelique, who travelled from Armidale to deliver the educational sessions to the groups.

The parent's learning focused on a wide range of safety knowledge and skills, including CPR for babies and children aged 0-8 years, first aid, drowning response, choking, burns, head injuries, poisons, febrile convulsions, limb injuries, bites & stings and allergic reactions.



Angelique shared her years of experience in a wide range of situations, and the attendees had lots of hands-on practice during the class. The group had the opportunity to put theory into practice on the life-like baby and child CPR manikins, which was fun for all.



Dorrigo Mum's Night Out - 24 February 2022

In the process of talking with parents in Dorrigo about their current needs in early parenthood, Julia received feedback for a need for parent & child-friendly opportunities to be active to support their physical and mental health. Julia collaborated with two local Dorrigo physiotherapists, Jessica Langham and Rachel Taylor, who are young mothers themselves and have expertise in parent education around common physio-related concerns for parents with young children, to plan a night for Mums to come and socialise together and receive some education to assist their mental and physical wellbeing and self-empowerment.

The Mum's Night Out was initially planned for August 2021. COVID-19 restrictions necessitated the date being put back twice.

Early Childhood Wellbeing & Development Service invites you to:

DORRIGO MUM'S NIGHT OUT!

A covid-safe evening for parents

- Enjoy a Pizza Dinner with other local Mums of bubs & young children
- Free Q&A with 2 local Physiotherapists (only silly question is the one you didn't ask!)
- Receive tips & tricks on your own self-care and your little one's wellbeing
- Find out about our upcoming Active Classes for Mums and their little ones in Dorrigo
- Breastfeeding & Babes-in-Arms welcome!
- Limited childminding available- MUST register

Places are limited! - to register your interest, text or call Julia at 0439 908 046

New Date!
Thursday 24th February
5-7pm
At the Never Never Mind

Neighbourhood Centres of Balligen Share Inc

... A FREE night of fun, sharing & info for parents of kids 0-5yrs. Come and socialise with other Mums and chat with Dorrigo Physiotherapists- Jess & Rachel!

The evening finally went on 24 February 2022 with Julia, Jess and Rachel co-hosting the 2-hour parent education session with Dorrigo Mums.

The physiotherapists led the evening, sharing health and wellbeing info, tips and hints related to early childhood, childbirth and post-partum and new parent concerns.

The topics covered included pelvic floor, diastasis, paediatric motor development, how to get/be active with babies, preventing and managing pain with breastfeeding positions, the importance of regaining core strength after birth and how this relates to other body areas of pain like spinal pain, activity and exercise tips, and tricks and how to prevent injury. Attendees had an opportunity to ask questions and have their individual concerns addressed by a physio.

The education component was offered within the context of a fun social evening, a "Mum's Night Out" which included dinner at the Never Mind in Dorrigo. Nine mothers registered although only six could attend due in large to the heavy rain and storms that night. Fostering social connectedness and receiving peer support whilst receiving education by two local health professionals around their physical health were the main purposes of the event.

All of the attendees responded to a post-event survey after the event with half indicating that the event had a significant positive effect on their mental wellbeing and the other three respondents stating a large, a moderate and a slight positive effect on their mental wellbeing. One respondent said, "It was a very relaxed evening in an awesome location" and another commented, "Primarily the effect was social but I did learn something!"

Parents responded that the event helped them to feel moderately to significantly more connected to their community, and five of the 6 respondents agreed that having local events like this, that they can socially participate in, supports them in their parenting. Half of attendees reported feeling significantly more empowered as a parent to support their own and their children's wellbeing from the peer support they received from the physiotherapists and the other parents, while the other half reported feeling moderately more empowered.

Lastly, parents were asked what the best thing was about attending the Mum's Night Out.

"I learnt new things for myself and my children, and I even booked an appointment with the Physio."

"Being surrounded by other Mums and knowing you are not alone."

"Meeting with other Mums and also with our community physiotherapists and able to ask questions and socialise."

"Socialising and meeting new people."

"Great relaxing, informative night. Would be great if this was open to more mothers with different aged children, particularly those with school-aged children."

"Being in a social situation with other women in my position. It really helps you feel a little less on your own."

Physio-led Parent & Bub Active Classes in Dorrigo – 22 March to 21 April 2022

DORRIGO
"MUM & BUB" (0-5YRS)
ACTIVE CLASSES!
~ ALL ABILITIES WELCOME ~
Led by local Physiotherapists Rach Taylor & Jess Langham
* **Tuesdays 9:30-10:30am** SDA Church Hall
* **Thursdays 4:00- 5:00pm** Community Hall
* bring a water bottle, mats provided
* **LIMITED PLACES! TO REGISTER YOUR SPOT, TEXT JULIA ON: 0439 908 046**
* **ON-SITE CHILDMINDING AVAILABLE-MUST REGISTER**

As a follow-on, a series of Physio-led active classes were also planned to help parents focus on common problem areas using targeted exercises that can negatively affect new parents, particularly mothers.

Given the lack of affordable, accessible opportunities for parents of young children and babies in Dorrigo to participate in exercise classes and other physical activities, Julie organised 10 Physio-led active classes for parents which were free, child-friendly and offered childminding onsite, if needed.





The priority was to offer a series of classes that parents could come to and participate with their babies and/or have their older children looked after, so they could fully engage in a physio-led class. 14 mothers registered for the classes, and most opted in for child-minding. Attendance at each class ranged from 3 to 8 mothers with up to 13 children being minded while their mothers enjoyed the class.

8 participants responded to post-class survey. Most attendees reported feeling significantly more connected to their community having attended the classes. 70% of the respondents replied that participating in the classes helped to moderately to significantly improve their PHYSICAL HEALTH. Over 85% of respondents reported a moderate to significant improvement in their MENTAL HEALTH As a result of participating in these active classes.

The question was asked, ***What was your favourite/most beneficial thing about the style of these classes?*** They responded:

- *“I got a real workout, the social aspect was lovely. I didn’t have my kids with me but it was so nice to know they would have been welcomed, Rachel the instructor was amazing and supportive!”*
- *“The variety and ability to change up or down depending on level. I also like the differences between the two physios.”*
- *“The fact that I could concentrate on my exercises without worrying if my little one was a) bothering anyone or b) destroying anything.”*
- *“It was awesome to be able to take the kids and to be around other Mums. The physios being Mums was also amazing because they both know how it is to exercise with kids.”*
- *“The inclusion of children of all ages. It took the pressure off us mothers so we could be with our kids and also doing something beneficial for ourselves.”*
- *“Being able to bring my children, having activities for the children, and learning new exercises based on my fitness level.”*
- *“It was so easy to actually get some exercise done when there is childcare with it.”*
- *“Having the expert instruction.”*

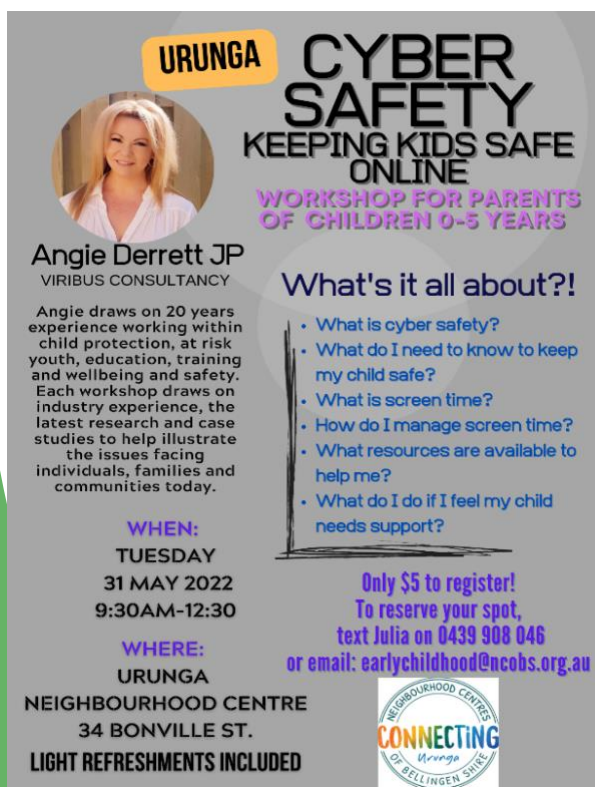
A sign of the success of these classes was 100% of respondents indicated that they would be interested in participating in a similar cost-subsidised physio-led group exercise program in the future, run in Dorrigo during the school term. Parent and child-friendly physical activity opportunities is an expressed need in the early childhood community in Dorrigo. Another term of these classes being held again in Dorrigo in early 2023 are in discussion. Providing this opportunity for parents to engage in this area of their wellbeing will no doubt have ongoing positive effects for themselves and their children.

Urunga Cyber Safety: Keeping Kids 0-5yrs Safe Online workshop – 31 May 2022

In our discussions this year with many of the parents, there was a genuine concern and desire for education in the area of cyber safety. Online safety is a child protection issue.

This is the first generation of parents who are dealing with technology such as smart phones and iPads in the hands of their children, and access often starts from a very young age. There is a growing need for parental education around how to keep children safe in this online realm.

Cyber Safety workshop facilitator, Angie Derrett tailored a workshop for Urunga parents of children 0-5yrs to cover topics including cyber and social media usage in children, content, accessibility & sharing information, age-appropriate social media use, the implications of screen time, role modelling online behaviours and what parents can do if they are concerned about their child.



The flyer is for a 'URUNGA CYBER SAFETY' workshop. It features a photo of Angie Derrett JP, a woman with blonde hair. The text on the flyer includes: 'URUNGA CYBER SAFETY KEEPING KIDS SAFE ONLINE WORKSHOP FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN 0-5 YEARS', 'Angie Derrett JP VIRIBUS CONSULTANCY', 'Angie draws on 20 years experience working within child protection, at risk youth, education, training and wellbeing and safety. Each workshop draws on industry experience, the latest research and case studies to help illustrate the issues facing individuals, families and communities today.', 'What's it all about?!' followed by a list of questions: 'What is cyber safety?', 'What do I need to know to keep my child safe?', 'What is screen time?', 'How do I manage screen time?', 'What resources are available to help me?', and 'What do I do if I feel my child needs support?'. It also states 'Only \$5 to register! To reserve your spot, text Julia on 0439 908 046 or email: earlychildhood@ncobs.org.au'. The event details are: 'WHEN: TUESDAY 31 MAY 2022 9:30AM-12:30' and 'WHERE: URUNGA NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE 34 BONVILLE ST. LIGHT REFRESHMENTS INCLUDED'. There is a logo for 'NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES CONNECTING Urunga OF BELLINGEN SLINK'.

The workshop was promoted widely online on different community pages and with printed flyers around the community. Printed pamphlets were provided and handed out to all parents at the Urunga2 Community Preschool, the pamphlet appeared in the primary school newsletter, in the local library and cafes.

Despite the extent of the event promotion, three parents registered and participated in the workshop. All three participants were extremely happy with the workshop, and one commented that this workshop should be available to all parents, perhaps through the primary school. In fact, the attendees enjoyed the session so much, all three stayed behind to chat further to Angie about their online experiences with their children and with more questions they had about the workshop content.

The feedback received on the day was all extremely positive. It was disappointing that more parents didn't take advantage of this wonderful community education opportunity. The workshop name and flyer are being re-designed before the subsequent workshops in Bellingen and Dorrigo to be held in August 2022.

*Julia Brown
Early Years Family Wellbeing Worker*

National Child Protection Week 5 - 11 September 2021

"Every child, in every community, needs a fair go"



National Child Protection Week is an annual event founded on the principle that protecting children is everyone's business.

Julia and Frances joined up with Youth and Family Wellbeing Worker, Ellie Tree to create an A-Z Wellbeing Walk activity for the parents, carers and little people across the Shire to encourage them to get outside and spend time together in the fresh air and connect with Country. The aim was awareness raising and empowering the community to work together support families to prevent neglect and harm towards children and importantly to ensure their well-being and safety.

The activity was easy walking exercise following the alphabet letters posted on trees along the walk, some of which had short activities on mindfulness and body movement and some knowledge about Gumbaynggirr country and people, and their care and custodianship of the land.

This small activity followed the public health orders i.e., it was not in an enclosed space, people were reminded to social distance and have a mask with them, and the letters were spaced to discourage gathering.

The A-Z activity was set up in each town. It started in Dorrigo at the log park, in Bellingen near Kombu and at Urunga near the boardwalk. There was a QR code at the start and end of each walk for a short survey for parents of children and youth in the Shire asking how we can support our community to make sure every family and child has what they need to thrive.



One primary measure of family engagement with this activity was the number of sticks collected along the pathway that each and every person who participated would leave on the pile at the end of the path that they followed.

Left: An indicator of how many families walked the Urunga path!!

Supported Playgroup

The Supported Playgroup at Urunga got off to a slow start, but it was not long after that parent and child numbers began to increase each week.

The aim of the Playgroup is to support children, parents and caregivers with children 0 – 5yrs of age during the first 2000 days of their life when children are most vulnerable during their growth and development stages.

GIINAGAY - HELLO AND WELCOME

New!!

EARLY CHILDHOOD PARENTING SUPPORT PLAYGROUP IN URUNGA

A friendly, safe and supportive space for parents with babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers to meet other families to share, play, learn and support each other.

Learning through play, art, crafts and story telling
Information, guest speakers and peer support

At Urunga Neighbourhood Centre
On FRIDAYS
STARTS Friday 25th February 2022
From 10 am to 12 noon

Come along for a Yarn and some fun playing and learning with the kids.

For information about joining call Frances on 0439 929 569 or Julia on 0439 908 046
Wednesday to Friday 9am to 3:30pm

CONNECTING

Flags: Australian, Aboriginal, and Rainbow

Images: Children playing, a parent and child, and a group of people.



Supported Playgroup – Brunch 6th May 2022

The Supported Playgroup numbers were slowly increasing as we were in Autumn and after the holiday break the team thought a nice way to welcome the families back would be to provide a BBQ brunch for them.

The aim was to reach out to more families in our Local Government Area, especially in Urunga to bring families together for a cultural social morning out with activities to support their young children's primary socialisation needs; and to share information with parents and caregivers about the Early Childhood Wellbeing service and the Urunga Neighbourhood Centre including what is available to assist and support them.

Purpose

Develop Community Connections

- Indigenous Social Participation
- Community Engagement
- Social Participation

Link up with members of the Gumbaynggirr nation community and provide social, and cultural activities Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and families.





Supported Playgroup is the ideal space for young bubs 0-5yrs with their parents and caregivers to take advantage of the opportunity to share a nutritious and healthy mid-morning brunch. The early years of a child's growth and development are supported by healthy food and healthy drink choices that provide good nutrition. Frances and Julia met these needs by way of a healthy BBQ brunch.

Outcome

Observed

When children played with others their social skills were enhanced.

Children, connecting with other children at the playgroup supported their confidence, motor skills, education, growth, and development skills.

Mr Robert Canning was invited to showcase Gumbaynggirr Culture and share his cultural music instruments the Clapping Sticks and Didgeridoo. The beats kept children, dads, mums and bubs swaying to the tunes.



Self-Care Day - 16th February 2022

Self-Care Day was a day set aside specially parents and primary caregivers. The event was held at Urunga Neighbourhood Centre in partnership with Sonia's Catering Service, Angela Witt Kulture Soaps and Christine Dargen Hair Cuts.

The aim of the day was to enhance connections between local families with babies and little children. Parents and Caregivers were invited along and were provided with an opportunity for rejuvenation with some pampering, peer support and chatting about self-care.

This activity provided an opportunity for Gumbaynggirr parents and caregivers to feel connected and comfortable together with the broader community; and helped in making social and community connections and the sharing of ideas about their hopes and needs for their families.



NAIDOC Week 2022 in Urunga

In June 2022, Aboriginal Early Years Family Worker, Frances Witt and Bruce Naylor, former Community Development Worker with the neighbourhood centres engaged in partnership planning with One Mob Radio's Lachlan Skinner to create a space for a NAIDOC celebration event in Urunga on 4th July for the Aboriginal community and inclusive of the wider population across the Shire from Dorrigo, Bellingen to Urunga.

NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia in the first week of July each year to celebrate and recognise the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people encompassing the land and surrounding seas. NAIDOC Week is an opportunity for all Australians to learn about First Nations cultures and histories and participate in celebrations of the oldest, continuous living cultures on earth. (<https://www.naidoc.org.au/>)

This was an excellent opportunity to work together on Country to celebrate NAIDOC for the first time in two years in an event led by and run by community.

Bellingen Shire Council, Interrelate, and Bellingen High School and local community members were approached to contribute to the event.

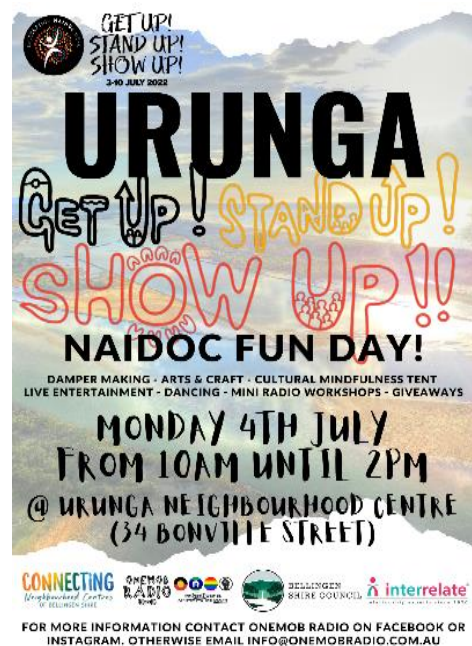
The event program included:

- ♥ Welcome to Country by Aunty Frances Witt
- ♥ MCs – Malakai Boland, Bellingen High School and Lachie Skinner, One Mob Radio
- ♥ Smoking and didgeridoo acknowledgement to country ceremony by Rob Canning
- ♥ Bellingen High School Aboriginal Dance Group
- ♥ Entertainment by Kauri Munro Greentree
- ♥ Cultural Mindfulness Tent with Interrelate
- ♥ One Mob Radio mini radio workshops
- ♥ Woolworths provided a fruit and bottled water
- ♥ Damper making with Aunty Jenny Skinner
- ♥ Margaret Witt, a Urunga traditional custodian, held space for a 'Sea of Hands' mural painting artwork to be created as a symbol of reconciliation.

One Mob Radio created the poster, which was put up around the community, distributed through our service and community networks, and broadcast on social media, local radio and One Mob Radio.

Purpose

- Recognise the significance of culture and identity in a safe space for Aboriginal children, youth and families
- Work in partnership and contribute resources, time and staff to co-organise a community event
- Increase participation of Aboriginal and other families in their local community.
- Offer social activities that support increased sense of belonging to community and opportunities to participate
- Aboriginal family and community engagement and empowerment
- Indigenous and community connecting at a local cultural event





Welcome to Country, speeches and a smoking ceremony commenced the 'Get Up, Stand Up and Show Up' 2022 NAIDOC celebration. There was the joyful laughter and play of children, a buzz of friendly conversation, soulful music from Kauri and a delicious BBQ lunch and cool water to quench thirsts and fresh fruit to feast on.

Aunty Jenny demonstrated damper cooking with the young people and shared the damper around to all. All attending were specially invited to participate in the 'Sea of Hands' art mural activity.

All of the activities linked up local Aboriginal children, youth, families and community and the broader community, with a focus on wellbeing, inclusion and resilience and aligned with the Targeted Earlier Intervention program activities for which the neighbourhood centres and the early childhood service are funded.



Outcome

Observed

NAIDOC 2022 was a day of celebration. Gumbaynggirr First Nation People gathered in a space on their land. In that space that was provided we felt safe to be who we are culturally.

One family that had been separated for over a decade came together and reunited in celebration. That family being mine.



Goals Achieved:

- Indigenous Social Participation
- Family Social Participation
- Community Connection
- Cultural Education & Inclusion

Looking back over the annual year 2021 – 2022, the Early Childhood Wellbeing and Development team and the staff and volunteers of the Urunga Neighbourhood Centre have diligently committed their time and energy to keeping the doors open and continuing to assist and support families, parents and caregivers, the homeless and the community.

We all travelled as safely as possible through the dreaded COVID 19 pandemic, went through lock down, and we made it out the other side keen to get back into community and continue to support children and families through the early years.

I am happy to be a part of a superb team.

*Frances Witt,
Aboriginal Early Years Family Worker*



Gumbaynggirr



BELLINGEN NAMBUCCA YOUTH SERVICES

CONNECTING Youth



Who we are

Bellingen Nambucca Youth Services (BNYS) is a core program of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc. We are a Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) funded targeted earlier intervention (TEI) youth and family service.

The service extends across a large area including Bellingen and Nambucca LGAs and is funded to provide targeted individual support to young people aged 12-18 years and their families, including referrals, advice, advocacy and a range of psycho-social supports which is the majority of our service provision.

BNYS also delivers social participation programs with youth including in-school and out of school groups and programs as well as community advocacy and support.

Our professional practice is underpinned by a holistic, flexible, strengths based, trauma informed and client centred practice, as well as the social model of disability and recovery models. The service seeks to generate outcomes through 'practice-based evidence' because it is understood that the people and communities BNYS works with are complex and unique and a 'one size fits all' approach isn't suited to a non-clinical community-based context. In our groups and programs, empowerment is considered by centring the autonomy and decision making of clients, who are invited to guide us in how to best support our community.

How does BNYS meet service funding agreement?

As stated in previous reports, the service has consistently performed above indicative targets set by the funder, DCJ. The service reports data and statistics back to DCJ to provide evidence of meeting the funding agreement requirements. In the last six months of the reporting year, the system that BNYS staff use to enter statistical data transitioned to a Client Relationship Information Management system, an online system built for Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc. This enabled staff to continue to report the service functions and to move away from paper-based case management to an integrated digital system.

TEI Transition Process

At the time of the last Annual Report, the service was beginning the transition to extend coverage to Nambucca Valley (except Bowraville) as well as the Bellingen Shire. A service delivery target of 60% Bellingen Shire and 40% Nambucca LGA was set by the end of 2021. The expansion was without additional funding; meaning that existing service provision in Bellingen LGA was and will continue to be reduced, without another service to fill the gap.

The service footprint expansion was a staged approach and included an extensive mapping process which enabled BNYS to get to know key stakeholders and identify service gaps and needs within the Nambucca Valley communities. This document was shared with other agencies in the region and has proven a valuable resource. BNYS identified 17 other services providing support to young people in the Nambucca Shire. Building collaborative professional relationships with schools, and other services is an ongoing process.

In the service mapping report, key stakeholders identified that they determined the main concern and service gap in the Nambucca Valley for young people was case management. Knowing this, BNYS workers, Ellie Tree and Eliza Zanuso liaised well, and frequently, with Nambucca High School, the Nambucca Valley Christian Community school, Macksville High School, Uniting, the Nambucca Youthie, and other services providing support in the Nambucca LGA to provide case management, crisis response, community events, and group engagement activities and programs.

It is important to note that since this report, other services have integrated into the Nambucca Valley community including:

- WHIN (wellbeing and health in-reach nurse) at Macksville High School, whose role is to similar to a student support officer in building partnerships between community, schools and services and is intended to be the first point of contact for determining appropriate referrals for any young people at the school.
- Two youth and family workers employed by Lifetime Connect and funded for similar roles (TEI) as BNYS but only working within the Nambucca Shire.

Service Delivery

Our core work consists of:

Targeted Support, which accounts for around 85% of service provision and includes:

- Information, referral and advice
- Intake, assessment and management of new referrals
- Targeted individual support with young people and their families including but not limited to, counselling, family capacity building, suicide and at-risk behaviours intervention and targeted psycho-social supports.
- Psycho education and skills training
- Mentoring and peer support

Community Centre - Social participation

- Delivery of school-based programs including Drug and Alcohol harm minimisation programs, Love Bites lead facilitation, and targeted groups for identified issues such as anxiety etc.
- Delivery of Pride Club - monthly LGBT+ youth support group
- Occasional support to drop-in programs in Bellingden, Dorrigo and Nambucca.
- Occasional support and partnership with Uniting's Becoming U programs in Nambucca.
- Support to Nambucca based LGBT+ youth support group
- Support to grassroots, youth led groups such as an anti-weight discrimination group.

Community Support - Advocacy & Support

- This includes a range of one off supports and advocacy provided for young people and parents.
- This might include referrals, advocacy support, and other kinds of brief interventions that occur outside of the case management framework.

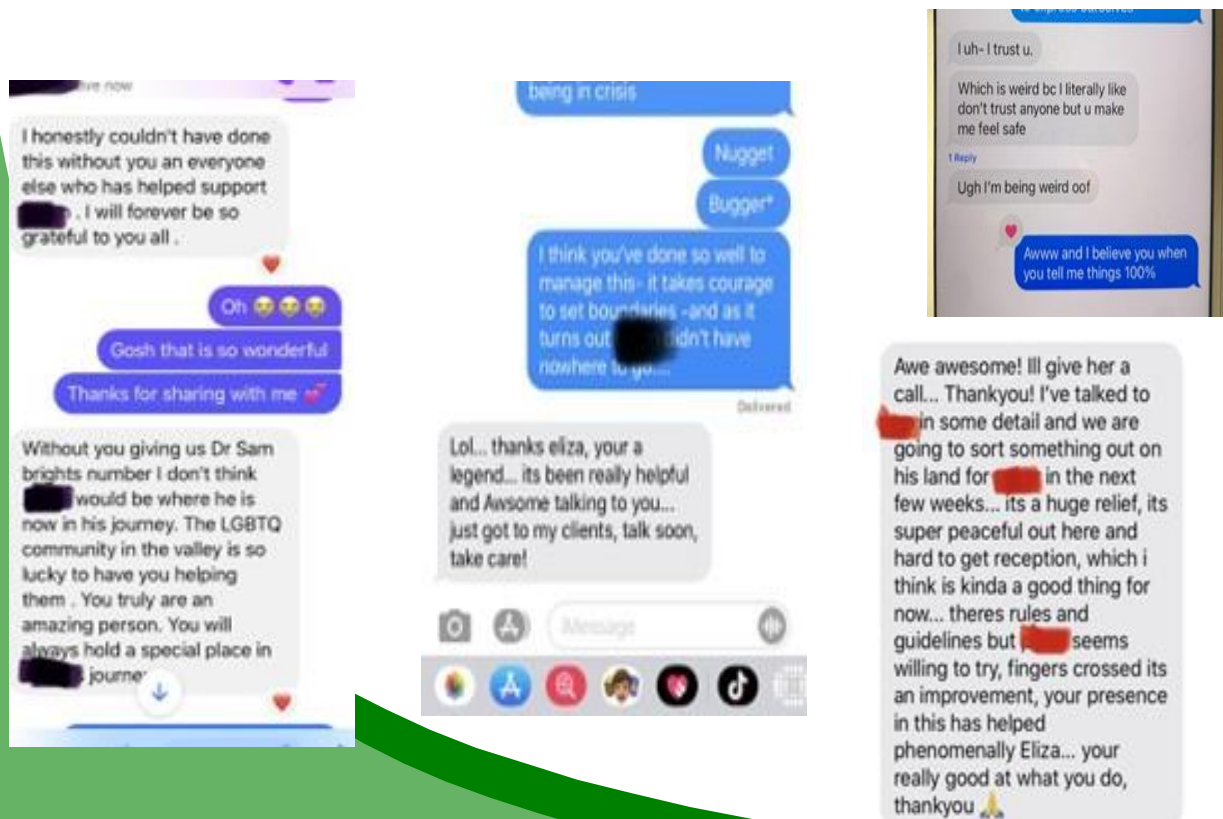
Feedback for targeted support service provision

Some qualitative data from individual cases that provides a snapshot into the impact and benefit of the services that the youth and family caseworkers provide follows. This feedback is often private and informal, yet very important. Clients have given approval for this data to be included, albeit with identifying information removed.

Feedback for Youth Caseworker, Eliza Zanuso

Bellingden

29/09/2021 – *"I really appreciate your support around boundaries, I didn't really know how to do that before. And if I am honest I think I have enabled her drug use."*



Feedback for Youth and Family Wellbeing Worker, Ellie Tree

*“Hi Ellie, I just wanted to wish you all the best with the impending arrival of your newest family member, and to say thank you. I know that we are still coping with really challenging times with *Justine* right now, but I am so grateful for the work you’ve done with her and I’ve always been able to tell the days when she has seen you because she is always happier and more confident in herself. Please let us know when you return!”*

COVID-19 Crisis

The lockdown in August 2021 in particular was a challenging time for our service as we didn’t have the possibility to engage with our clients while they were at school. Despite the ongoing setbacks of the pandemic, met this challenge with innovation, by offering either telehealth appointments or encourage young people and families to have ‘walk and talk’ sessions where the worker would call them and be walking while having the session via phone.

A few clients reflected the contact and encouragement to get out and exercise was really beneficial. Caseworkers also met with some of the harder to engage clients outside in public, whilst adhering to public health mandates such as wearing masks and social distancing.

There was also pressure at this time to transition into Nambucca LGA, which the service managed to do against all the odds, despite having to cancel a number of programs, or offering programs as hybrid online events. The long-term involvement of youth caseworker, Eliza Zanuso and the consistency of our service over the years went a long way in enabling the transition into Nambucca Valley within a short timeframe alongside the restrictions imposed by mandates.

Towards the end of the year as vaccines became available, BNYS workers were keen to receive our full schedule of COVID-19 vaccinations. We believe strongly in population and public health and that vaccinations are an important step to be taken in protecting ourselves and the community whilst doing important frontline work with vulnerable people. Following the high vaccination rates in community, this led to more freedoms, as restrictions slowly eased coming into the New Year.

Whilst the workers have transitioned mostly back to face-to-face practice, managing COVID risks through consistent hygiene practices, particularly for employees and clients who were at a higher health risk remains important to BNYS and is an ongoing conversation with clients.

Programs and Events

Nambucca ‘Meet and Greet’ - Pizza in the Park

In August 2021, as the service began to engage with Nambucca Valley High School around referrals and solidifying a presence of BNYS in Nambucca, BNYS hosted a pizza in the park afternoon across the road from the school as the school day ended. We provided free pizza, exchanged professional social media accounts with young people and told them a bit about our service and what we were doing in Nambucca.

Bello Arty Session

In August 2021, with support from the Bellingin Youth Hub, BNYS hosted an arty session facilitated by a local art teacher who was due to start hosting classes for youth in the hub after restrictions eased. A week prior to the art zoom, the restrictions eased, allowing us to have some young people join us in person for our sessions. Items were purchased from Weave Bellingin, with a 10% discount.

The art program saw success with people from Bellingin, Dorrigo, Macksville and Urunga joining in person and on zoom. One young person from Macksville had never engaged with the service before, and this provided a warm opportunity to meet the youth workers and resulted in a slow but gradual rapport.



Dorrigo Youthie Cooking Session

At the end of September 2021, Youth Worker Ellie Tree, and Dorrigo Youthie Coordinator, Erika Munan, played some games and went for a walk with some young people to the local Dorrigo IGA to purchase some items to make pizzas.

All young people engaged well with icebreakers we used to get to know each other, and the pizzas made it a comfortable session.

Crisis Response – Nambucca Valley Christian Community School

BNYS was able to respond to a crisis at Nambucca Valley Christian Community School, which felt inadequately resourced to respond, after a very distressing critical incident between two students. Eliza and Ellie held group and individual sessions at the school on separate occasions to assist the school community to process the shock and anxiety and to make referrals where necessary.

The School Wellbeing Team and Leadership, and parents were enormously grateful and impressed by this response and intervention work. Some of the feedback is below:

Student feedback:

- *It was really helpful*
- *Eliza was a good listener, the sessions were actually really calming*
- *I liked the toys because they helped in talking*
- *Eliza was inclusive*

Teacher feedback:

- *I think it went really well in supporting the students.*
- *You created a safe space for them to speak which would make them more likely to reach out for more support if needed.*

At the time, BNYS sought collaboration with GenHealth (Headspace), but they were unable to provide resources at such short notice. This is a great example of the adaptive, responsive and flexible capacity of our service and the difference we can make.

First Aid For Teens Dorrigo

Alongside Dorrigo Youth Centre, BNYS supported a Red Cross Certificate for teens. The certification was linked to the young people's USI's (Unique Student Identifier) which could then be included in resumes etc.



Nine young people attended. This included a community lunch and debriefing around learning. This was a great opportunity to build rapport with BNYS staff. This has been identified by parents and young people across the Bellingen Shire as something they would like offered more frequently for young people.

National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence

Ellie Tree, along with Connecting Neighbourhood Centres worker Myola Suffolk, attended Bellingen High Schools NDAABV day. This was a great way to re-engage with the young people who aren't currently using the hub and therefore aren't as exposed to seeing what support services are available to them in their local area. We engaged in activities of face painting and hair colour spraying and donated toward the fantastic amount of \$750 raised to go to Vouch For Lismore - a campaign aimed at raising funds for vouchers to be purchased and donated within the local flood impacted areas in the Northern Rivers to support stimulation of the local economy.

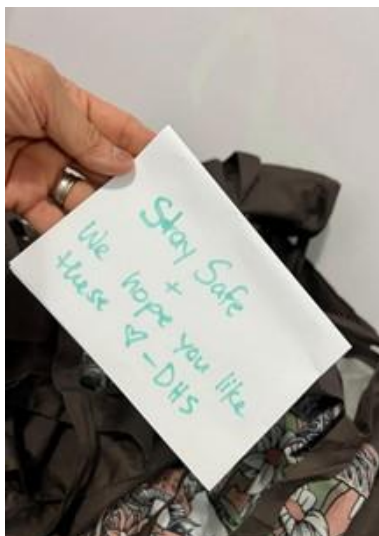
Youth Week Collaboration

Ellie Tree submitted a Youth Week grant submission with the Bello Youth Hub along with others for activities that young people could participate in over the April autumn holidays and during youth week. One of the activities in particular that BNYS took the lead on was undertaken with support from Bellingen High School, Dorrigo High School, Erika Munan from the Dorrigo Youthie & Neighbourhood Centre.

Ellie and Magda Pomroy (Student Support Officer at Bellingen High School) purchased essential and self-care items enough to make 100 care packs. Items were then split in half and taken to Dorrigo and Bellingen High schools where our Shire's young people picked and packed their own care packs to donate to a student peer from a flood impacted high school in the Northern Rivers area, along with a small letter of kindness and support from themselves.

The pick and pack days were held at Bellingen and Dorrigo High schools and were a huge success not only in packing the care packages. We had discussions around resilience, disaster recovery, connected communities, empathy and support. Students were encouraged to come along to the Dorrigo youth space in the school holidays to engage with other youth week activities including one that was a direct flow on from the pick and pack days, which was a treat yourself night in.

The pamper packs were delivered to The Richmond Secondary College (TRSC) in Lismore. The students were delighted to receive the pamper packs and the messages of care, support and hope from the Bellingen and Dorrigo High students and all involved.



Chris Hutton, Student Support Officer pictured below (left) receiving packs from Bruce Naylor, NCoBS Community Development Worker, included the following in the TRSC newsletter:

Care Packages - Thank You

❤️ *The students at [Bellingen High School](#) and [Dorrigo High School](#), joined by other youth in the Bellingen Shire spent considerable time preparing dignity and care packages for TRSC for students in need.*

😊 *This was a practical manifestation for their desire to care for students their own age going through the trauma of the impact of the devastating floods that impacted the Northern Rivers.*

🍪 *Every package is unique and individual, made by an individual student with a lovely handwritten message of hope. They contain a range of self-items and luxuries to help everyone feel the love.*

👏 *With over 100 care packages created, it was a big project, with many hands involved. The youth workers of Bellingen Shire Youth Services supported the students with logistics and staff from the Connecting Neighbourhood Centres provided the transport to Lismore.*



The Dorrigo Girls Night In was facilitated by Erika Munan, the coordinator of the Dorrigo Youthie, volunteer Leonie, and Ellie Tree. 10 young people attended. Ellie, Erika and Leonie cooked a warm meal of Mexican beans and rice (Erika's specialty) to make poke bowls which were well received, with some young people (and youth workers) having seconds.

A pamper table was set up, where the workers and young people gave hand massages, painted nails, wore face masks, and relaxed and had a check-in. More pamper packs were wrapped for donation to Northern Rivers flood impacted students.



Lovebites - Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Education Program

Lovebites is a Respectful Relationships Education Program for young people aged between 15 and 17 years of age. BNYS was lucky between lockdowns to deliver the Lovebites program to years 11 and 12 at Nambucca High in May 2021 and at Bellingen High in June 2021.

BNYS staff were joined by NSW police, Juvenile Justice and DOCS caseworkers, and Interrelate to deliver this important program. The young people engaged well with the content, and this resulted in two new referrals for the service.



BNYS facilitated Lovebites again at Bellingen High in May 2022, with four sessions in total, and attendance of 82 Year 10 students over two days. Alongside Bellingen High School SSO Magda Pomroy, Head of Wellbeing Paul Pomroy, Ellie Tree, Kim West from the Buttery and Jack Archibald from Interrelate were involved. Both Ellie and Eliza completed updated Lovebites training for the new content in June 2022.

Community engagement – Nambucca High InspireU Film Event

Eliza Zanuso attended the InspireU film event where she met with services and young people and watched an amazing series of locally made films. This was a great opportunity to build rapport with teachers, local services and young people in Nambucca LGA.

Mentoring Sessions – Nambucca Youth Advisory Council - BecomingU

In June 2022 Eliza Zanuso and Dean Besley from Bello Youth Hub met with the Nambucca Youth Advisory Council and ran a number of short mentoring sessions to support young people helping influence positive change in their communities.

Nambucca MentorU Basketball Games

Eliza supported two hard to reach and at-risk Nambucca clients to participate in the MentorU Basketball games. This was a great opportunity to build rapport and connection with young people experiencing complex trauma and significant mistrust of adults.



Pride Club

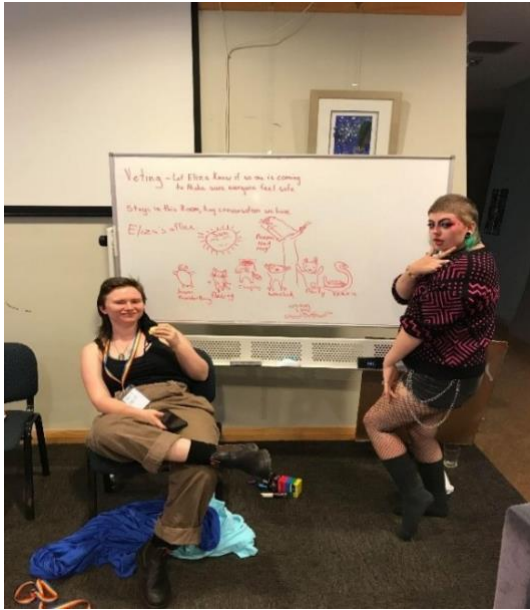
During July- November of 2021 Pride Club our monthly LGBT+ peer support group adapted to being online by having a weekly informal chat group check in led by older mentors and supervised by BNYS staff. The additional wave of vaccine regulations made it challenging to run face to face sessions. In December we managed a final face to face meeting right before the break. This was an opportunity to discuss the structure and what they would like to see more of in 2022. They were happy to continue on with a slightly split structure into 2022. Some other suggestions for programming going forward, included:

- Safe Sex/Consent workshop with Dragan Zan Wright again
- ASIST/Mental Health First Aid etc in the latter half of 2022. The over 16's are keen to do some more formalised training like this
- More discussion around Gender Dysphoria
- Op Shop day collaborating with the other groups



The last 12 months has also been a process of growth and change with a new wave of young people, older crew becoming mentors and shifts in the structure of the group. At times, there were around 25 young people attending Pride Club, monthly numbers of participants fluctuate between 12 and 18 young people. This indicates that the demand for the kind of support is growing. The change process involved critical dialogue with senior clinicians, family members of young people, and most importantly, young people themselves. This led to a change in structure to ensure support is given to the mixed age groups and needs of the group. Once face-to-face gatherings re-commenced, Pride Club has enjoyed some wonderful guests including Sexual Health Nurse Annette Heather, Annabelle Thoener (ACON), as well as Independent political candidate Carolyn Heise.

Mentoring the next generation of youth workers...



At the start of 2022, volunteers Mirella and Michelle stepped out of their roles supporting the group. We were delighted to welcome two long serving members of Pride Club, Keziah Whitepeak and Morgan Cooper to step into a volunteer peer mentoring role.

Through BNYS, Keziah is also a Peer Support worker at Headspace, and Morgan is also combining their lived experience with Autism to complete TAFE studies and offer NDIS support with local families. Eliza liaised with Headspace to accept Keziah to support Pride Club as part of their role with Headspace Coffs Harbour.

The 'Local Queer' Podcast Project

The 'The Local Queer' Podcast is a Pride Club offshoot project co-funded by Bent in Bellingen, Healthy Communities Mid North Coast 'Youth Well' program, and the Bello Youth Hub.

NCoBS agreed to engage Eliza Zanuso in a contractor role out of the Youth Well funds to coordinate this project in collaboration with the youth participants. Lizzie Rutten from Grow the Music and Stu Marks are helping to deliver this project.



The Podcast project has included participatory and experiential youth development including production team meetings, skills building workshops, experiential learning activities, and practice sessions in the studio.

At the end of June 2022, 8 episodes had been recorded, an editing day is in planning and discussions are underway for the project launch later in the year.



Special Queer Sexual Health workshop for youth aged 16+

BNYS worked in partnership with Momentum Blue Sky's group 'Be Young and Proud' to deliver a special workshop requested by young people about consent and staying safe in the queer scene. Some over 16's Pride Club members joined members from the Be Young and Proud group for a special event on June 18th. Dragan Zan Wright, trans identified advocate, speaker and therapist delivered an amazing discussion on consent and relationship safety.

Save a Mate - Harm minimisation program Nambucca High School + Bellingen High School 2021-2022

The youth service and The Buttery's Alcohol & Other Drugs worker, Kim West, worked collaboratively with Nambucca High and Bellingen High to deliver four days of drug and alcohol harm minimisation training with young people. The sessions in Nambucca happened in December 2021 and at Bellingen High school in May 2022.

Harm minimisation is an approach in professional youth services that aims to reduce the negative health, social and economic consequences of alcohol and other drug use on both individuals and the community as a whole. It is important to note that harm-minimisation is the basis of the World Health Organisation's policy in relation to alcohol and other drugs and has guided Australia's National Drug Strategy since its inception in 1985.

It is also understood that from research into adolescence that whilst 'some experimentation' is normal for youth, experiences of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) put vulnerable young people at a higher risk of negative outcomes.

When students were asked if they felt more confident in their knowledge of risks around partying after the workshops, *63.89% responded with 'heaps more confident', 36% responded with 'a fair bit more confident' and 0% responded with 'not much'*

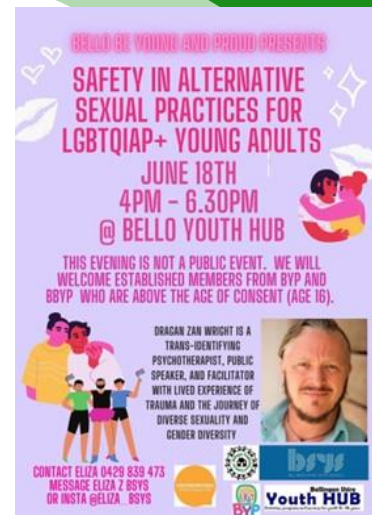
Anti-weight Discrimination group - Nambucca Macksville

Eliza supported a small group of young people who live in larger bodies and have experienced weight discrimination whilst accessing medical services.

Based on participatory youth practice, and empowerment models, the young people have been key in decision making.

The process involved liaising with a local weight inclusive dietician Rebecca May, as well as HAES (Health At Every Size) Australia to draft a letter that includes anonymous personal experiences, the latest research on weight inclusive practice and why these social norms are harmful.

There has been conversation about sending the letter to the relevant bodies relating to Doctors and mapping those in the future, but for now the focus will be to GP clinics across the Mid North Coast.



An extract from the letter:

This letter is written in collaboration with youth who experience weight-based discrimination and fat phobia whilst accessing medical care. The intention of this letter is to inform and create open reflective dialogue. We are aware that our medical professionals have worked exceptionally hard, particularly post pandemic. The intention is to communicate the lived experience of these forms of (often unintentional) discrimination and put forward suggestions for a shift in attitude and practice. The hope is that Health professionals who come into contact with larger bodied people will consider some of the recommendations for improvement in services. "Diet culture is a system of beliefs that: worships thinness and equates it to health, promotes weight loss as a means of attaining higher status, demonises certain ways of eating while elevating others, and oppresses people who don't match up with its supposed picture of health. (Christy Harrison)"

Our experiences of weight stigmatisation...

"At eight years old, a dietician shamed my body and made me believe I would become bedridden due to my body size. I have been on forced diets since I was a child, which included weight watchers and protein shakes. At age sixteen I was told to lose 60kg in three months, which would mean my health professional is asking me to develop an eating disorder. This was after I had been on medication that caused me to gain weight".

This is a time limited group that will conclude in July 2022. The group has met three times for around an hour or two for short periods to prepare letters and discuss next steps. The group is also connected online and there are really positive outcomes observed in terms of the young people feeling a sense of empowerment, healing around experiences of discrimination as well as building positive social connections.

Support to Bellingen LGBTQIA+ Parent Night Q & A June 21st

Eliza Zanuso attended the Q & A session at Bellingen High Library that was facilitated by SSO (Student Support Officer) Magda Pomroy and comprised a panel of parents, young people and professionals to discuss best ways for parents to support their diverse young people.

The event was a great success with around 50 parents in attendance and was a very good opportunity for building relationship with families and awareness raising in community.

Support to emerging Nambucca LGBT+ Youth Group

The Nambucca LGBT+ Youth Group has re-established itself through leadership and support from Youth worker Madelyn Cartner from GenHealth (Headspace). Eliza Zanuso has been supporting this program and supporting clients from Nambucca LGA to attend. Madelyn has reflected that it has been really helpful to share resources and to have the skills and experience of someone who has extensive work in this space. This program occurs on the third Monday of the month from 3.30pm - 5pm at Nambucca Youth Centre.

Service collaboration and engagement

BNYS workers are in regular attendance at the following networks and meetings:

- Community Drug Action Team (CDAT) meetings
- Nambucca LGA Youth Interagency
- Bellingen Nambucca Child & Family Interagency
- Bellingen Shire Interagency

Staff training and development

12th & 13th July 2021

Ellie Tree attended Love Bites Training at the C.ex in Coffs Harbour.

9th August 2021

Ellie Tree and Eliza Zanuso attended a vaping information session online which outlined current challenges, new incoming laws regarding purchase and sale of nicotine vapes, and current research results on health outcomes and significant health concerns of vaping.

August 14th - 17th UNE Master Social Work Intensive

Eliza participated in an intensive as part of her Master of Social Work, which NCoBS supported her to attend as a professional development relating to her work as a Youth Caseworker. The intensive was part of unit "Social Work Interventions" which was a four-day online event that required Eliza to practice real time using different types of models and interventions in different practice scenarios. Some of the interventions involved included strengths bases, critical social work, narrative, trauma informed and solution focused therapy. It was a great process of refining some existing knowledge and practice skills with input and instruction from the senior clinician lecturer.

Orygen training "Working with Young People with Autism & Co-morbid Mental Health Issues - Nov 10th and 11th, 2021

Eliza attended this training, which involved understanding autism spectrum disorder (ASD) including psychiatric co-morbidities, assessment, referral, support services, ways for working with young people as well as some of the challenges for young people with autism in Australia. The second day focused on how to respond appropriately to certain behaviours as well as interventions, which was incredibly helpful. There were group sessions with other practitioners working through case studies that highlighted what to look out for.

Interestingly obsessive-compulsive disorder and social anxiety are sometimes misdiagnosed as ASD and vice versa, and females are much better at 'masking' to a point that many don't get diagnosed until they are adults.

6th January 2022

Ellie attended a sex, tech and teens webinar that provided current up to date support pathways and current concerns with young people engaging in sexual activities, and using online platforms as a means of data, image and video sharing.

8th March 2022

Ellie Tree completed ACON training - Trans Vitality - Trans Affirming Practice

28th April 2022

Ellie Tree completed the No Scaredy Cats training, an anxiety training program scientifically proven to help support parents to help their children and teens break free from anxiety.

DEX to CRIM

In early 2022, the service transitioned from recording data directly into DEX (Data Exchange) over to a new client relationship information management (CRIM) tool. Ellie and Eliza participated in online training sessions provided by the system developers, Community Data Solutions, along with other staff and volunteers. We then worked together to troubleshoot issues and transfer the direct service work and reporting requirements into the new system. As well as client data, case notes, documents, client appointments and external referrals can all be stored in the new system and that is saving a lot of time and streamlining data collection, storage and retrieval.

Eliza Zanuso, Youth Caseworker

Ellie Tree, Youth and Family Wellbeing Worker

DORRIGO YOUTH CENTRE

WELCOME TO DORRIGO YOUTH CENTRE!

The colourful and cheerfully decorated Youth Space is a great spot for young people to come to. Dorrigo Youth Centre has a long history in Dorrigo and largely supported by volunteers, community members and organisations by donating time and generous donations. It is centrally located, behind the community centre which is located on 36 Hickory Street. It has a kitchenette for preparing healthy meals, a pool table, piano, guitars, ukuleles, free wifi, projector and laptop for movies and music, plus board games, Jenga and weighted toys.

We have outdoor games and also music and creative programs. The Centre has three equipped office rooms for youth services and medical practitioners to use, and available for rental for organisations and groups at a greatly reduced rate. The Youth Space area and its kitchenette area is also available for hire by small groups or art/music/book clubs. A selection of pre-loved teen clothing is available for sale and all proceeds go towards the upkeep of the Youth Space.

Dorrigo Youth Space supports inclusive interaction in a safe, healthy environment. Opening hours are Wednesday and Thursday for youth drop-in, 3pm to 5pm.

One Friday a month during the warmer season, the centre endeavours to have Friday Night Social which is a drop-in from 330pm - 730pm and we have a pizza dinner with music, dancing, singing or pool competitions.

A variety of pamphlets and information on various topics, from assisted housing to drug information is readily available, as with contact details of any interest or further specialist information. There are couches and spaces for relaxing and chatting or playing games. A laptop, printer and paper are available for research or study work. There is a garden outside, with veggies and flowers, and a sun platform to hang out on. At all times, there are two qualified adults present and often a Youth Services person to assist with any questions. Throughout the year there are programmes run for high school aged persons and the Youth Space also has a range of all-ages programmes in place.

COVID-19 saw a break from drop-in and face to face activities due to various Public Health Orders and their restrictions. We communicated with young people via social media platforms to stay in touch.

Dorrigo Youth Transport Initiative

Finally! We are able to report that the youth bus transport project has been back up and running for the last six months of 2022.

Some background: Funding to achieve an aim of providing transport to benefit youth on the Dorrigo Plateau and especially young people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, isolation, and/or other vulnerabilities, significantly stalled was received in late 2019. The bus transport project launch planned for December 2019 did not go ahead because of the bushfires across the Dorrigo Plateau. Then, the local and only petrol station in Dorrigo closed for five months for renovations.

The alternative given for re-fuelling the Council's Dorrigo community bus (a requirement each time it was used) was to re-fuel in Bellingen. This would have meant a 65km round trip on top of the distance travelled by the bus to take the young people home. An alternative was in discussion with Council when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Consequently, the youth transport went on hold until August 2021 because the Youth Centre drop-in had to close and there was no call for the bus to take young people out of Dorrigo to other locations.

When COVID constraints lifted, DYC could again offer the youth bus transport again. The project is now making progress in achieving its aims for the benefit of youth on the Dorrigo Plateau, and we are confident it will continue to do so.

Bus transport was provided to take Dorrigo youth out of their local area during the autumn school holidays. 18 young people went on an excursion on 16th April to Armidale and return, and another 12 young people went on an excursion on 21st April 2022 to Coffs Harbour and return. There was also increased interest from local groups wanting to transport youth from Dorrigo Plateau to sports and community activities in other areas of the shire.

	Dec 2019 to Oct 2021	Nov 2021 to Jun 2022
Number of times a service was provided	4	11
Total number of passengers	49	95
Total number of kilometres travelled	266	1,003

Transport for NSW extended the term of the funding to 30 June 2023 due to the extenuating circumstances. This has given more time and opportunity to achieve the outcomes of the project, that is, to have reduced the barrier of little to no transport for youth in the rural communities across the Plateau so they have better access to local and out-of-area activities and excursions that get them out and about, active and connecting with opportunities to support their wellbeing and development and interacting with peers and community.

Activities and achievements for the reporting period

With the donation of \$1,500 from the Red Cross and further assistance by way of cash donation from Dorrigo locals, Laurel and John Woolhouse, the Youth Centre was able to start off ukulele lessons as well as drum lessons.

Ukulele was taught by Dorrigo locals, Vicki Billing and Selena Bryce, and Luke Rhodes brought his drums up on Thursdays. Young people were loaned brand new ukuleles and drumsticks purchased with the money. They and the parent/carer entered into a written agreement with their instruments. A positive aspect of the ukulele lessons was that young people who aren't normally friendly with each other, were able to put aside most grievances and come together to play music.



Winter Break – Youth Movie & Treetops Excursion – July 2021

With additional Winter holiday funding received from the Office of Regional Youth, two events were held during term 2 school holidays. Despite being notoriously difficult to engage young people in the school holidays, 25 youth attended the Youth Movie Night (7th July) and 16 went on the Treetops Excursion (8th July).

Youth Movie Night: This was held at the Never Mind community space in Dorrigo. Everyone was punctual, enjoyed the movie and kept a social distance respectfully with no fuss, masks were worn except when eating or drinking.



Feedback from the young people included: “Can we have more movie nights?” “I would gladly pay to see more of these” “Lucky for the fire so it’s really comfy and warm, well done and thank you.” (this from a 13-year-old!)



Treetops Excursion: there was three definite friendship groups /cliques at the start of the bus trip. By the time the youth all hit the hardest level, the teamwork was apparent. Very caring and supportive behaviour modelled across the 11–14-year-old cohort. “the RED Zipline across was the best!” The Treetops Excursion utilised the Dorrigo Youth Bus funding to transport the young people and accompanying adults.

This excursion is in line with a series of events being run by the Dorrigo Youth Natural Highs project.

The Natural Highs project empowers youth to discover their own natural high, to develop skills and courage to live well.

It is a project where they enter into various activities with the aim of preventing misuse of alcohol and other drugs and other risk-taking behaviours, by exploring alternative energetic and adrenalin activities.



The youth centre was also pleased to be able to open two additional days – 2 Fridays – as requested by the youth.

4th & 8th August 2021 - Basic Barista Course

5 young people from Dorrigo attended this 2-day workshop. They were taught the origins of coffee and then worked using the coffee machine in the Youth Space. Funds for materials and trainer were paid for by Wesley Housing.

A follow-up workshop was to take place in a local café, but COVID-19 Public Health orders meant that had to be cancelled.

The young people have since moved on and out of the Shire so were unable to complete the second part of the training, which was to be practical placement in local cafés.

The Youth Centre is looking to revisit this programme now that the uncertainty around events is diminished due to no more COVID constraints.



In preparation for another Basic Barista course and a Safe Food Handling course, NCoBS purchased some new equipment for the Youth Centre: new stove, microwave, coffee machine, milkshake maker and a soda stream machine. All will be instrumental for various fund-raising activities and trainings for future Youth Café events. The young people organise, coordinate and manage stalls to sell items for fund-raising and to reinforce upskilling.

The **Safe Food Handling course** had to be postponed due to COVID-19 complications.

26th September 2021 - WALK 'Cathedral Rocks Walk'

This successful event saw 18 youth travel to and from Dorrigo to climb Cathedral Rocks.

First Aid for Teens – 20th January 2022

The course was run by the Coffs Coast Community College at the Dorrigo Youth Centre with 13 young people attending. They were supported by Youth and Family Wellbeing Worker, Ellie Tree, and food was funded by Bellingen Shire CDAT. Young people were issued a basic First Aid certificate on the day.

Photography Workshop – 27th January 2022

11 young people attended this workshop. The Dorrigo Youth Bus transported them to and from the event at the Dorrigo Rainforest Centre. The event from 10am to 3pm was run by Lou Walpole supported by Erika Munan.

Different techniques of photography in nature were explored and then selected a theme for the photo, for example, Resilient, Strong, Brave etc. The young people learned how to edit, how to select the best image and how to explain the photo to an observer.

This project culminated in a mini exhibition at Dorrigo Photography on Hickory Street from 30 March to 13 April. National Parks supported the event by providing pizza lunch and soft drinks.

Feedback included:

Louise as a trainer/facilitator? Experienced and good at explaining things

Erika as coordinator? 10/10

The Bus & Food? Bus good & food yum

What went well? Taking pictures

What didn't? Why? Nothing - all good

How could be better next time? Demonstrate appropriate and effective lighting in the rainforest

What was your favourite part? All - especially the pizza

"Louise is great, and I would rate Erika a 10. The food was delicious. It went well, had a great time with the girls. Inform us when we have to be at the bus stop. My favourite part was taking portrait photos of each other."

Experience Week – 23rd & 24th February 2022

We were unable to host the usual Youth Centre Experience Day in 2021 due to various health orders so instead of the youth centre hosted a week of events to welcome newcomers and specifically new Year 7 students at the local High School. DYC hosted a welcome back BBQ and got well over 18 young people attending. The activities were supported by volunteers, Nicola and NCoBS staff.

The much-anticipated Pool Tournament was a riveting play off between eight competitors. Mike R was the support volunteer.

FRESH Photography Pop-Up Mini Exhibition – 30th March 2022

This exhibition was the end product of the photographic workshop for youth conducted in January 2022. 12 photos were unveiled at the opening, which was attended by approximately 30 members of the community.

Feedback: + *Feel so proud* + *Learning so much about how to talk to grow ups*
+ *I'm an artist with 'works'* + *Would love to make a book*

Northern Rivers Pamper Packs (Youth Week Activity) – 31st March 2022



Youth Activities Worker, Nicola Beckett and DYC Coordinator, Erika Munan, were welcomed to the special assembly for the Student Representative Council awards morning at the Dorrigo High School. They spoke about this initiative between Bellingen High School and Bellingen Nambucca Youth Services.



This was followed by a lunchtime activity where 40 Dorrigo High boys and girls filled bags with goodies that Bellingen and Urunga youth, including socks, headphones, toiletries etc. The Dorrigo young people added personal notes and drawings of encouragement. Feedback included:

+ *Hope they love the things*
+ *Damn; to lose everything is really crap*
+ *This stuff is great, hope they enjoy*

Dangar Falls & Roller-skating – 13th April 2022

11 young people travelled on the Dorrigo Youth Bus to Armidale. Two young people met them there for the roller-skating. Supervisors were volunteers, Nicola and Ralf.

Feedback: Positives - *'loved the waterfall'*, *'very proud first timers learning to skate confidently'*, *'hanging with friends'*, *'seeing friends'*. Minuses - *rain, long journey, falling over, DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE.*

Autumn Stand Up Paddle boarding – 21st April 2022

15 young people went by Dorrigo Youth Bus to Boambee Creek Reserve, accompanied by the Youth Activities Worker, Nicola and volunteer, George.

Positives: + *the food* + *kayaking* + *rope swing* + *swimming*. Minus was capsizing!

Dorrigo Girls Night In (Youth Week Activity) – 22nd April 2022

As a thank you for the pamper pack making event, a Girls Night In was hosted at Dorrigo Youth Centre where we made food, packed up more parcels with personalised notes and had a casual check-in conversation with the young women. Erika Munan and Ellie Tree were then treated to a mini pamper session where the girls did their nails and applied some skin care products.



Feedback: + *Want more night events*
+ *Want more girl events*
- *Why no boys? They did packs too.*

Drop-in

Drop-in continues to grow in popularity. Tasty, healthy food is made with the young people, free Wi-Fi and good music is available. Furniture has been moved around to create different spaces for the needs of different groups of young people. We liaise with the local high school through the EI Pulse platform to stay across the wellbeing of the young people.

A strong and regular number of youth attend; numbers sit an average of 13 young people on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. General demographic is more boys than girls.

Dorrigo Youth Centre is welcoming more of the younger cohort between ages 12-14, and there are more young people walk-ins from home-schooling backgrounds. Despite a drop off in numbers due to organised sports starting back up (Rugby and football are on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons at the sport and recreation ovals), there is still a steady stream of young people coming through the door to get changed for work or to have a bite before training.

Collaborations with Local stakeholders

Collaboration with Dorrigo High School this year was made more difficult with COVID-19 restrictions. Youth caseworkers, Eliza and Ellie and Dorrigo Youth Centre coordinator, Erika met up with new Student Support Officer, Amber Fitzpatrick, to make contact and introduce our services. Regular news from Dorrigo Youth Centre to all teachers and school staff will be published in the school newsletter, every month. This shows the youth centre's willingness and commitment to the student body and the greater school community, a 'as well as, and not instead of' approach.

Need for Assistance

Assistance with organising school holiday activities, excursions and extended drop-ins was needed by coordinator, Erika. It is not always possible to have the Bellingen Nambucca Youth Services workers present during discussion at the youth centre and to be available to speak to individual youth about upcoming events, so the role of a Dorrigo Youth Activities Worker position was formulated.

With some one-off funds available to June 2022, NCoBS offered Nicola Beckett fixed term employment in this role. Nicola brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience working with young people, about the outdoors and her love of nature. An extension of Nicola's employment for another six months was confirmed in June. With Nicola continuing in the role until the end of December, Dorrigo Youth Centre is planning for more activities and/or excursions for local youth in the spring and summer school holidays.

Training & Meetings attended

2021

Interagency meeting – 16th June, Dorrigo

CDAT Northern forum – 8th July, Online

CDAT meeting – 22nd July, Urunga

Domestic Violence workshop – Lifeline, Coffs Harbour

Public town meeting – Dorrigo Chamber of Commerce

2022

CDAT Meeting – 12th January 2022

Client Relationship Information Management system Training – 31st January, 1st & 2nd February

Talking to Teens, Pete Slattery – 5th April 2022

First Aid - April 2022 (Nicola Beckett)

Erika Munan
Coordinator



COMMUNITY DRUG ACTION TEAM (CDAT)



Our vision is a world free of addiction

Our mission is to build safe and healthy communities by reducing the impact of substance misuse on individuals, families, carers and communities.

Since 1999, Community Drug Action Teams (CDATs) across NSW have been building safe, healthy and resilient communities through preventing, responding and reducing health, social and economic harms related to drug and alcohol use.

Bellingen Shire CDAT is now in its 3rd year of auspice by Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc (NCoBS).

The CDAT has 12 members, two of whom are youth. Other members are representatives from youth services, neighbourhood centres, Dorrigo Library, alcohol and other drug services, NSW Police Crime Prevention, and local community members.

CDAT Meetings are held every two months, taking turns being held in Urunga, Dorrigo and Bellingen. COVID-19 has not been kind with regard these meetings, with agencies having different guidelines for attending face-to-face meetings. Zoom proved to be a somewhat useful way to attend meetings and topics or requests were raised via email and sent to members.

The CDAT endeavours to support events around the Bellingen Shire with emphasis on:

Raising awareness - greater community awareness of the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs can prevent uptake, delay first use, and reduce harmful levels of use

Removing risk factors

Stemming the proliferation of alcohol supply and limiting the availability of other drugs in the community reduces the risk of harms, particularly in vulnerable populations

Increasing protective factors

Increasing social engagement, family connectedness and access to healthy activities will help reduce the demand for alcohol and other drugs in the community.

Funding

Bellingen Shire CDAT applied for and received funding from Odyssey House/The Buttery to deliver activities identified to address alcohol and drug prevention and harm minimisation i.e.

Activity #1 *Movie Night 2022*

Activity #2 *Girls Day Out*

Activity #3 *AOD event in schools*

Activity #4 *Community BBQ and Planning for Calendar/Photo Book*

'Much has been said in the past year on the effect of COVID-19 on our health service, our communities, and ultimately the way we live our lives. We acknowledge the challenges of the global pandemic; however, we also want to ensure that we didn't lose sight of the great achievements that occurred outside of the confines of COVID-19' - Odyssey House 2022

Marketing/Promotional items

The CDAT decided that it needed to have marketing materials made and available to take to events and festivals, to strike up a conversation about Alcohol and Other Drugs. Banners, postcards, t-shirts and phone wallets were purchased.



CDAT Family Movie Night – Dorrigo, 27th May 2022 3pm to 8pm



Bellinghen Shire CDAT delivered a gala alcohol-free event in Dorrigo. This included a movie for young people, a live band and food trucks. Inclement weather threatened to cancel the event, but the team pushed through to provide an opportunity for community and families to connect in a social activity having been through fires, floods and pandemic, which had further isolated this small rural community.

In short, Friday 27th May proved to be a wonderful community and information event with around 170 people attending. Dorrigo turned on a clear, sunny day and a spectacular sunset.

Service providers were invited to mingle with the people who attended; informal conversations were had regarding services and supports available to community and printed information was provided.

The sweet and savoury food trucks were very popular, as were the snacks, soft drinks and Zero alcohol bar. Alcohol-free wine was available to provide a sense of occasion. It was agreed to hand out vouchers for the food trucks, which was very well received.



Increased awareness

In the lead up to the event, promotions included posters in Dorrigo and surrounds as well in the valley and seaboard areas. 500 posters were inserted in the local Don Dorrigo Gazette newspaper. Social media was also a big part of the promotions with workers, community members and the food trucks sharing the event post.

The crew wore the new CDAT team shirts to be easily identifiable in the crowd. Participants were given a phone wallet, after completing a roving survey, and in that time, discussion about alternative options to alcohol and other drugs were talked about. Informative postcards were printed with standard drinks measurements - - not many people knew them! and that instigated conversations around awareness of alcohol consumed. Almost every conversation was steered towards awareness and how to seek help.

We managed to get some people to complete a brief survey and to recruit 4 new CDAT members including two youth. Participants were some demographic questions and what they liked about the event so far and whether the event had increased their awareness of Alcohol and Other Drugs and if they knew where to get help - most answered 'Yes'.



Survey responses:

Age group		Lives	What did you enjoy the most?
12-24	Female	Dorrigo	The food
12-24	Male	Dorrigo	Food music the whole thing
12-24	Female	Dorrigo	Food
12-24	Female	Ebor	Mad chats
12-24	Female	Megan	Get to talk to people and socialise
12-24	Female	Dorrigo	Mad vibe
25-50	Female	Dorrigo	Connecting community
25-50	Male	Dorrigo	Food
50-80	Male	Dorrigo	Catching up with community, seeing youth out having fun
25-50	Female	Dorrigo	Alcohol free wine
25-50	Female	Dorrigo	Half community with children are here
25-50	Female	Dorrigo	Don't have to cook
25-50	Female	Nth Dorrigo	Like seeing all the people out socialising
25-50	Female	Dorrigo	Community coming together
25-50	Female	Nth Dorrigo	Bringing everyone together
25-50	Female	Dorrigo	That its free
25-50	Male	Dorrigo	I like that its not all in one room, there is space to move

Feedback received on social media from some of the community members who attended:

RH

Erika, her team, CDAT and Councillor & Youth Worker Ellie Tree a BIG THANK YOU. What a beautiful evening at Dorrigo Showground as the sun set on a fine day with lots of families enjoying the entertainment, fantastic food and drinks. Yes, I was pleased to see the range of Zero alcohol drinks there on the evening. Alcoholism is one of the biggest drug problems in Rural Australia & for years it has slipped under the radar. Glad this is being taken seriously in Bellingen Shire. Well Done!

SH

Congratulations

Erika, CDAT, Dorrigo Youthie and all involved - a fantastic turnout. Well organised, great food and drink (surprising 0 delights) and a lot of happy, energetic and enthusiastic beings making us older people feel a little less mobile, but no less appreciative 😊. Great event

SM

An absolutely amazing night! Thank you so much 😊

LW

Was such a great event! Congrats to everyone and thanks Erika for all your great work ❤️❤️

AJ

Thanks **Erika Dorrigo Youthie** and team!! What you guys do for Dorrigo is unbelievable xx

Events attended by CDAT representatives

- ❖ Regional Forum 26th May 2022
- ❖ State Conference 27th to 28th June 2022

Projects supported by Bellingen Shire CDAT

Dorrigo Youth Centre	Basic Barista – food and catering
Bellingen Community Suicide Support	Bellingen Safe Space – purchase of iPad
Dorrigo Youth Café	Let's Get Together Picnic – ingredients for youth café mocktails
Dorrigo High School	Dorrigo Young Women's Wellbeing Day – single day event (Years 7 – 12) to promote wellbeing and facilitate engagement with services.
Dorrigo Suicide Prevention Network	Banners

*Erika Munan
CDAT Chairperson*

COMMUNITY BASED SUICIDE PREVENTION

The National Suicide Prevention Trial started in 2016 in 12 specific sites across Australia. The Trial was meant to run for three years to pilot the LifeSpan model, an evidence-based systems approach to suicide prevention, developed by the Black Dog Institute. This means it involves a whole of community approach to addressing mental health and suicidality in our communities, and that it has been tried and tested to be effective.

The Bellingen Shire joined the North Coast Trial Site later than most others in November 2019. The Trial was meant to finish up in June 2020 but due to COVID restrictions impacting the delivery of community initiatives across all sites, the Trial was extended till June 2022.

The extension of the National Suicide Prevention Trial saw the funder, Healthy North Coast Ltd (HNC) offer Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc (NCoBS) a further 12 months to complete the Project. This was wonderful news for the Shire and employee, Celeste Abell was pleased to be continuing as Project Coordinator.

Scheduled contract activities and reporting had been completed with the expectation that the Project would finish up in June 2021 so a revision of the Sustainability Plan and updating the Activity Action Plans was required.

Coordinator, Celeste, prioritised:

1. Regular meetings with the Bellingen and Dorrigo project groups to assist each to finalise an auspice request to Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc and gradually stepping back and handing over the coordinator role to the group members.
2. Working closely with the Bellingen group on planning for the safe space including the lease and set up of a room, securing honorariums and external supervision support for the group volunteers, and negotiating funding from the local CDAT for extra resources.
3. Contributing to the evaluation report for the National Suicide Prevention Trial
4. Implementation of the Seaboard Suicide Prevention Initiative (SSPI), focusing on delivering suicide prevention activity along the seaboard of the Bellingen Shire. In July 2021, this element of the Project was still in development phase. A key aim was collaboration with local Gumbaynggirr community members in various ways and with others to plan and deliver:
 - Community engagement activity through artwork
 - Raising community awareness about how to support people who are struggling,
 - Building and healing community connections through a cultural camp
 - Sharing of resources and offering warm referrals to professional supports, to encourage help-seeking behaviour

With the Action Plan for the Seaboard Suicide Prevention Initiative approved by HNC, planning for the roll out of activities was started. Unfortunately, most activities could not go ahead mostly due to COVID-19 restrictions. Rescheduling of the activities was incomplete when Celeste left the organisation in December 2021.

Recruitment for the coordinator position was on hold until internal matters relating to management were resolved in June 2022. Healthy North Coast Ltd then agreed to a further extension of the Project to 31 December 2022. The Management Committee has decided to engage a contractor in 2022 to finish the work of the Project.



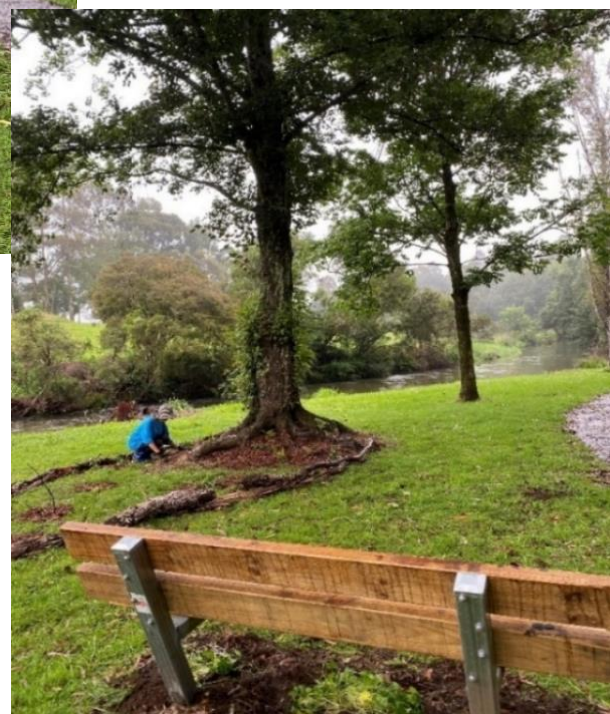
Dorrigo Suicide Prevention Network

*"We believe in Suicide Prevention through **Connection** to people and services. We work to raise **Awareness** of the importance of mental health within our community."*

In anticipation of the Suicide Prevention Project coming finishing at the end of June 2021, DSPN requested to come under the auspices of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc for 12 months, which was agreed by the Management Committee and the auspice agreement was signed.

Throughout the year, DSPN continued to be pro-active in implementing project activities and events despite the disruptions and postponements due to COVID-19 and major landslips caused by the floods in March and April 2022, which closed the Waterfall Way restricting access to and from Dorrigo.

Contemplation Benches and Native Planting: Further planning by DSPN resulted in the location of the Contemplation Bench and Wellbeing Walk being finalised. Partnerships with the local Land Care, the Dorrigo Youth Centre, and local craftspeople brought this to fruition. The benches are placed along the Bielsdown River, between Ash Street and Waterfall Way.



The intention is to encourage community members to take a seat, take a moment, soak up the beauty around them and if they wanted, to share it with someone. DSPN's rationale is that people's wellbeing is influenced by their surroundings and to have such incredible natural beauty, so easily accessible to locals and visitors, is a gift. The message to locals is *"when you have a moment, have a walk, take a seat and enjoy."*

DV Safe Phones



Dorrigo Suicide Prevention Network also linked into the DV Safe Phones program, which collects old mobile phones then repurposes and gifts them to people experiencing domestic violence via registered charities, safe houses and authorities serving this vulnerable community. The Safe Phones are then provided as part of an individual's 'safe' or 'escape' plan' offering a lifeline to call for help when it is needed most. (Source: <https://dvsafephone.org/>)

DSPN distributed the DV Safe Phone collection boxes across Bellingren Shire, including the neighbourhood centres, for community members to donate their old/out of date mobile phones, with or without a charger. The donated phones are collected regularly and posted to DV Safe Phones for refurbishing. DSPN also set up Team Dorrigo on the DV Safe Phone website where anyone can go online to make a financial donation at <https://dvsafephone.org/teamdorrigo>

Let's Get Together community event

Working closely with the committee of the Dorrigo Suicide Prevention Committee, Bruce Naylor was asked to help develop a "You Can Ask That" panel discussion on mental health and suicide prevention for the Picnic. Potential speakers were approached, and an amazing panel was lined up.

Unfortunately, flooding caused major landslips on the Waterfall Way effectively cutting off access up and down the mountain and the Picnic had to be postponed.

As well as the organised activity completion and event planning, DSPN distributed localised access support information through the local newspaper, the Don Dorrigo Gazette and the Dorrigo Post and in strategic locations in towns and villages of the Plateau. DSPN has hosted more suicide prevention workshops and other ways for community to engage in these important conversations.

As well as delivering the community Let's Get Together' event that had to be postponed in April, DSPN has plans to run more community engagement and capacity building activities, community identified workshops, and calls to action in the coming months.

Longevity is key in determining evidence of change across a community. The members of the Dorrigo Suicide Prevention Network have a vested commitment in driving activity in their communities into the future. Dedicated to creating more awareness around mental health and suicidality, this group will keep the suicide prevention momentum that has been built and developed during the National Suicide Prevention Trial, going forward. They will harness this momentum to continue breaking down stigmatising attitudes, reducing isolation and keep encouraging help-seeking behaviour amongst their communities across the Plateau.





Bellinghen Community Suicide Support (BCSS): *Honouring the insight and perspective of people with a Lived Experience of suicide.*

Bellinghen Community Suicide Support (BCSS) was being implemented with continuing support from Celeste. BCSS founding volunteers, Michelle Levy, Rosa Mauvra and Kim West wanted to open a Safe Space in community.

A lived experience of suicide is someone who has had thoughts of suicide themselves, has supported someone through a suicidal crisis or has been bereaved by suicide. BCSS members bring both personal and professional experience and have attended suicide prevention trainings through the Project.

From July to December 2021, the BCSS members worked with Celeste towards opening a fortnightly peer-supported safe space for people within the Shire to go for themselves, or for someone they care about; and to deliver other community engagement and capacity building activities to address identified community needs as they arise.

A request to NCoBS for the Bellinghen Community Safe Space project to operate under the auspices of the organisation was agreed by the management committee, and the auspice agreement was formalised in September 2021 after a period of negotiation.

NCoBS also agreed to enter into a 12-month lease of the front room in the Old Council Chambers at 1A Oak Street, Bellinghen for BCSS to establish a Community Safe Space. The founding volunteers of BCSS made a commitment to make this happen, and HCN approved an amount of the funding for this purpose. Coordinator, Celeste advocated for a honorarium to be paid to the core members during the establishment period, in recognition of the amount of voluntary time and involvement that each would commit during initial development, and for external professional supervision support and training for the core members.

At the behest of the BCSS members, NCoBS also agreed to a hire arrangement for the room to provide an office space for AOD worker, Kim West, for the 12-month period. Revenue raised through this arrangement and other fee-paying activities, will be used by BCSS for its work after the HNC Suicide Prevention Project ends.

In the latter months of 2021 and early 2022, BCSS worked on setting up the Safe Space. It was planned to initially open on Mondays 3-6pm, during school terms and there was discussion about other activities that could be delivered there during other times of the week.

In February 2022, intentions were to promote and open up the Safe Space to the community. Unfortunately, COVID-19 concerns and personal circumstances for the members intervened and as of 30 June 2022, the Safe Space was yet to fully open.

BCSS members continued with planning to run a number of community engagement and capacity building activities. With the lease for the Oak Street room due to expire in August 2022, BCSS is also looking into options for retaining use of the space or securing another venue to realise the aim of a Bellinghen Safe Space as soon as possible and in order to continue beyond the end of the Community-based Suicide Prevention project.

*Leanne Collier
Interim Manager*

URUNGA MEN'S SHED

As outlined in the 2021 Annual Report, the members of the Urunga Men's Shed management committee elected at the 2020 AGM have remained unchanged until voting at the annual general meeting held on 28th September 2022, which was chaired by Barry Locke and Brian Frances. Voting at this meeting resulted in the election of the following members:

Manager	Barry Locke
Secretary	Brian Francis
Workshop Manager	Steve Roberts
Training and Safety Officer (WHS)	Steve Roberts
Committee Members	Kelvin Carter
	Rex Anthony
	John Widerberg
	Bill Cain

Currently there are 20 financial Shed members with the loss or retirement of Gordon Egan (founding member), Bryan Hardman, Keith Winkler, Fred Marsden and Robin Randall over the year. The Shed welcomes the following new members, John Shipman, Kevin Carr, Darrell Davis, Dick McColl and Paul Reilly joining during the year.

Attendance remains at an average of 7 – 9 members each working day i.e., Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings and for special times and periods as necessary or when required. Membership of the Shed is free, however payment of individual insurance at \$25.00 per person per year is compulsory.

The Urunga Markets stall provides a regular income for the Shed and while we welcome the donations for smaller items made or repaired for the general public or businesses, the following represents major works for larger and on-going work over the last year which keeps the Shed viable:

- Frame for fridge and food cupboard – Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre
- Chest of drawers – Private
- Basic framework for various products – Michelle
- Tabletops – Ocean View Hotel
- Window frames – Private
- Tables and bookshelves – Freedom School
- Planter boxes – Chamber of Commerce Urunga
- Mobile seats and gas bottle covers – Embers Restaurant
- Fire engine seat – Preschool Urunga
- Chair repairs – CWA
- Sign – SES
- Garden and toolboxes

The Shed acknowledges and sincerely thanks Urunga Probus Club for the donation of \$1,786.48.

Significant purchases were made of equipment during the year in the form of a Toy Wheel Cutter, Belt Sander and Vacuum Cleaner for workshop use.

In May, the Shed directed a donation of \$500 from its funds to 'Food Truckies for Community Assistance' to assist victims of flood and national disasters.

The Urunga Men's Shed is still auspiced by Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc and the Shed is appreciative of the contribution by the staff and in particular Leanne and Shareen, and Urunga centre volunteer Arlene who has recently left the organisation.

The Committee continues to acknowledge and appreciate the time and effort put into running the Shed by the Manager, Barry Locke, in maintaining the high standard it holds in the community.

From the Urunga Men's Shed Management Committee

TREASURER'S REPORT

For the period July 2021 to June 2022

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc (NCoBS) ended the financial year with a cash at bank balance of \$611,559 and a net operating deficit of (\$117,543) as of 30 June 2022.

A total of \$243,179.05 in end of financial year surpluses was written back to the balance sheet as a liability under Grants Received in Advance on 30 June 2022. This is because some service or project funding that NCoBS manages or funds raised by community groups that we auspice, have to be kept separate. If there are any of these funds unspent at the end of the financial year, the organisation sets them aside in the accounting system. Come 1st July, the funds are then carried forward as opening balances to be spent in the new financial year.

A breakdown of the current year quarantined surpluses to be carried forward is as follows:

- Community-based Suicide Prevention – Bellingen LGA project funding
 - Community action plan implementation - \$82,669.24
 - Staffing and management - \$49,259.26
- Dorrigo Youth Transport Initiative - \$21,913.10
- Social Sector Support Fund one-off grant - \$56,139.07
- Social Sector Transformation Fund one-off grant - \$14,357.76
- Bellingen Shire CDAT - \$9,317.98
- Urunga Men's Shed - \$9,522.64

\$40,000 of NCoBS retained earnings was allocated by the Management Committee this year and spent on contracting and implementation costs for the Communications Strategy and Plan, a key strategy direction in NCoBS 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan.

Income

Funding

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc acknowledges service and project funding from:

- NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)
 - Base funding plus indexation through the TEI Program for:
 - Bellingen and Nambucca Youth Services - \$209,111.50
 - Early Childhood Wellbeing and Development service - \$116,953.45
 - Bellingen and Urunga Neighbourhood Centres - \$175,382.55
- TEI funding for all three services was confirmed as recurrent to 30 June 2025, subject to satisfactory contracted service delivery and outcomes being achieved.*
- One-off funding through the Social Sector Support Fund - \$130,449
 - One-off funding through the Social Sector Transformation Fund - \$27,000
 - NSW Fair Trading for the Bellingen No Interest Loans Scheme – \$36,064.85
 - Good Shepherd Microfinance for NILs promotions - \$707.71
 - Healthy North Coast Limited to extend the Community-based Suicide Prevention – Bellingen LGA project - \$101,000
 - Mid North Coast Local Health District Youth Well Fund - \$2,750
 - Odyssey House/The Buttery funding for Bellingen Shire CDAT - \$5,509.09
 - Bellingen Shire Council:
 - Community Support Fund for The People's Library project - \$2,199
 - My Community Directory project - \$5,000

Contract fees

- Services Australia for the Centrelink-Medicare-Child Support Agency - \$63,041

Other income received this year includes:

- Donations received:
 - Dorrigo Youth Centre - \$4,282
 - NCoBS - \$4,380
 - Neighbourhood Centres - \$2,822
 - Urunga Men's Shed - \$7,656
- Membership fees - \$582
- Other income, fees and charges - \$3,748
- Recoupments - \$69,364 reimbursement of wages and on-costs paid by NCoBS for Bellingen Shire Youth Hub support worker by arrangement with Bellingen Shire Council
- Room Hire - \$5,827
- Sales, services and activities income - \$4,519

Expenditure

\$743,801 for employee wage and on-costs, travel, external support and supervision, and training accounted for 64.7% of total expenditure this financial year.

Other expenditure included:

- Administration, auspice and governance - \$113,417
- Advertising, promotion & publications - \$19,449
- Client support services and activities - \$118,414
- Consultant/contractor fees - \$24,607
- Donations paid - \$4,010
- Equipment purchase/hire - \$8,953
- Fundraising expenses - \$3,560
- Operating overheads:
 - Computer expenses - \$28,905
 - Depreciation - \$8,326
 - Electricity, Phone & Internet - \$17,928
 - General expenses - \$2,344
 - Insurance - \$8,453
 - Postage & Stationery - \$6,681
 - Rent - \$18,304
 - Repairs and maintenance - \$3,432
 - Staff expenses - \$19,084

Further increases to operational overheads including insurance, electricity, phone and maintenance costs in 2022-2023 are anticipated. Running costs for our organisation and operations and further cost-saving measures in this area are being reviewed. It will be a priority to explore more income opportunities across the organisation and through new projects.

The Management Committee endorses the Auditor's opinion that the special purpose financial statements fairly represent the financial position of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc as of 30 June 2022.

Thank you to staff members, Shareen Banner and Diane Adams, who perform the financial account-keeping and administration assistance at NCoBS, and to Leanne Collier for her budget and financial management this year. Thanks too to James Davis from HQB Accountants for independent audit services provided.

Stephen Allan
Treasurer

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC

ABN: 46 636 213 835

**SPECIAL PURPOSE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2022**

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 30 JUNE 2022

ASSETS	NOTE	2022	2021
		\$	\$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	611,559	680,871
Trade Debtors		35	165
Other Assets		15,699	35,189
Other Debtors		-	-
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		627,294	716,225
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Plant & Equipment		105,984	94,561
Accumulated Depreciation		(79,742)	(71,669)
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		26,243	22,892
TOTAL ASSETS		653,537	739,117
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade Creditors		14,500	27,316
Grants Received in Advance		241,305	205,058
GST Payable		13,703	8,013
PAYG Tax Payable		11,151	9,608
Superannuation Payable		14,277	14,943
Employee Provisions		54,190	55,529
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		349,126	320,467
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Employee Provisions		18,782	15,479
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		18,782	15,479
TOTAL LIABILITIES		367,908	335,946
NET ASSETS		285,629	403,171
MEMBERS FUNDS			
Opening Retained Earnings		403,171	345,789
Current Year Surplus		(117,543)	57,382
TOTAL MEMBERS FUNDS		285,629	403,171

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
FOR THE PERIOD 1 JULY 2021 TO 30 JUNE 2022

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
INCOME		
Grants	818,921	888,778
Fees	410	356
Sales and Services	4,488	2,001
Auspice Levies	110,029	104,700
Membership Fees	582	327
Interest Received	0	2,989
Donations	19,139	10,602
Government Stimulus	-	-
Sundry Other Income	78,558	65,184
TOTAL INCOME	1,032,128	1,074,936
EXPENDITURE		
Audit & Accountancy Fees	1,091	6,547
Auspice Fees	110,029	104,450
Advertising & Donations	18,781	5,308
Annual & Long Service Leave Expense	11,375	18,781
Bank Charges	315	287
Cleaning Expenses	336	3,962
Client Support Services	41,602	23,423
Community Activities & Events	56,608	82,644
Computer Expenses	28,905	15,155
Consultancy Expenses	24,607	909
Consumables	7,542	4,759
Depreciation	8,236	11,046
Donations	4,010	2,700
Electricity	5,579	4,891
Equipment Hire	871	1,742
Fundraising Expenses	3,560	0
General Expenses	2,344	4,751
Insurance	8,453	7,564
Meeting & Other Board Expenses	1,982	2,667
Postage & Stationery	6,681	6,224
Publications & Resources	668	6,472
Rent	18,304	8,194
Repairs & Maintenance	3,096	1,681
Small Plant & Equipment	8,172	10,680
Staff Expenses	19,084	11,349
Superannuation Contributions	61,087	50,645
Telephone & Internet	12,349	14,926
Training & Development	0	30,680
Travel & Accommodation	0	3,771
Volunteer Expenses	12,662	1,470
Wages	658,467	558,226
Workers Compensation	12,872	11,647
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,149,670	1,017,554
Net Operating Surplus	(117,543)	57,382

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC
STATEMENT OF CASHFLOWS
AS AT 30 JUNE 2022

		2022	2021
		\$	\$
	NOTE		
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from customers		1,155,271	1,250,947
Payments to suppliers and employees		(1,212,998)	(1,081,000)
Interest received		0	2,989
Net cash provided by operating activities	5	<u>(57,727)</u>	<u>172,936</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		(11,586)	(6,727)
Proceeds from disposal of investments		0	20.00
Net cash (used in) investing activities		<u>(11,586)</u>	<u>(6,707)</u>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held		(69,313)	166,229
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		680,871	514,642
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year		<u><u>611,558</u></u>	<u><u>680,871</u></u>

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2022

NOTE 2: SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES (Continued)

e. Provisions

Provisions are recognized when the Association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured. Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period.

f. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.

g. Revenue and Other Income

Revenue is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable after taking into account any discounts and rebates allowed. For this purpose, deferred consideration is not discounted to present values when recognizing revenue.

Interest revenue is recognized using the effective interest rate method, which for floating rate financial assets is the rate inherent in the instrument.

Grant and donation income is recognized when the entity obtains control over the funds, which is generally at the time of receipt.

All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST) where applicable.

h. Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognized net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included with other receivables or payables in the statement of financial position.

j. Comparative Figures

When required by Accounting Standards, comparative figures have been adjusted to conform to changes in presentation for the current financial year.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
NOTE 3: CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS		
Operating Account	609,081	677,144
Debit Mastercards	1,997	3,283
BNHC - Petty Cash	57	49
BSYS - Petty Cash	30	30
DYC - Petty Cash	38	40
UNC - Petty Cash	129	98
UNC - Petty Cash (Men's Shed)	227	227
	<u>611,559</u>	<u>680,871</u>

NOTE 4: CASH FLOW INFORMATION

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Reconciliation of result for the year to cashflows from operating activities:		
Profit (loss) for the year	(117,543)	54,591
Cash flows excluded from profit attributable to operating activities		
Non-cash flows in profit:		
- depreciation	8,236	11,046
Changes in assets and liabilities:		
- (increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	130	1,153
- (increase)/decrease in other assets	19,490	50,954
- increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	(6,251)	26,049
- increase/(decrease) in income in advance	36,247	35,000
- increase/(decrease) in employee and other provisions	1,964	(5,857)
	<u>(57,727)</u>	<u>172,936</u>

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC

CERTIFICATE BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

I, Kerry Child of 423 Hydes Creek Road
I, Bellingen, New South Wales, and
New South Wales

certify that: ROSIE WICKERT 17 RIVER CT, REPTON, 2454
a) We attended the annual general meeting of the association held on 14th October 2022

b) The annual financial statements for the period ended 30 June 2022 were submitted to the members of the association at the annual general meeting

K Child

(Committee Member)

Rose Wickert

(Committee Member)

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC

STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the Committee the financial report as set out:

1. Presents fairly the financial position of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Incorporated as at 30 June 2022 and its performance for the period ended on that date in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Incorporated will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:

President

.....
[Signature]

Treasurer

.....
[Signature]

Dated

.....
7/10/22

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
TO THE MEMBERS OF
NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INCORPORATED

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Incorporated ('the association'), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022, statement of comprehensive income and statement of cashflows for the period then ended, a summary of significant accounting policies, other explanatory notes and the statement by members of the committee.

In our opinion the financial report is in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:

- a) presenting fairly the financial position of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Incorporated as at 30 June 2022, and its financial performance for the period then ended;
- b) complying with the accounting policies as described in Note 1 to the financial report.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report is free from material misstatement. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibility* section of our report. We are independent of the Association in accordance with ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's *APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matter – Basis of Accounting and Restriction on Distribution and Use

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report is prepared to assist the members of the committee in fulfilling their governance obligations. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our report is intended solely for the Association and should not be distributed to or used by any other parties. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The committee of the association are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report and has determined that the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, which form part of the financial report, are consistent with the financial reporting requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009*, and are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The committee's responsibility also includes establishing and maintaining such internal control as the committee determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the committee is responsible for assessing the Association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis

of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Association or cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report.

The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control.

The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the committee, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We conclude on the appropriateness of the committee's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Association's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Association to cease to continue as a going concern.

We evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the committee regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

HQB Accountants Auditors Advisors



James Davis
Partner

13-15 Park Avenue
Coffs Harbour
Dated:

10 October 2022