

Neighbourhood Connect Inc

ANNUAL REPORT

Financial Year ended 30 June 2021




Because life is better when we belong

“The state of the nation starts in your street... Think about the kind of neighbourhood you’d like to live in and then start living as if it’s that kind of neighbourhood. Pretty soon it will be.”

– Hugh Mackay, Australia Reimagined

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Join us on social media:   

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Who are we

Neighbourhood Connect is a not-for-profit community organisation. We help people turn streets into communities and foster a national network of neighbourhood groups. We help people across Australia feel happier, safer and more supported by creating neighbourhoods where connecting with neighbours in real life is the norm.

Neighbourhood Connect facilitates the formation of neighbourhood groups. The neighbourhood group is the social infrastructure, or vehicle, which builds much needed social capital and social cohesion. Neighbourhood Connect is about creating a movement of connected neighbourhoods – that’s why we invite all sorts of neighbourhood groups that encourage community, sometimes in addition to a focus on sustainability, place-making, safety, gardening, addressing local issues, or something else, to be part of our Network.

Everyone benefits from community life – people feel happier when they are connected to those who live near them. People naturally help those they know. This can have benefits for the elderly, for people with disabilities and for people who are unwell. People feel safer when they know their neighbours are looking out for them. Research has proven that social connections improve wellbeing and sense of safety, and are an antidote to social isolation, loneliness, depression and anxiety.

We commenced in 2014, under the auspices of the Centre for Civil Society, a social innovation and public policy institute established in 2007 for the empowerment of ordinary people and strengthening of civil society. In 2018 we changed our name from The Street by Street Project to Neighbourhood Connect, incorporated, registered as a national community organisation and were granted charity status (Advancing Health).



VISION

Our vision is an Australia where everyone everywhere feels a sense of belonging, safety and support in their neighbourhood.



MISSION

Connecting neighbours to strengthen the social fabric of Australia’s neighbourhoods.



VALUES

Kindness, Inclusiveness, Sharing and Collaboration.

What we do



The Neighbourhood Connection process

These are the steps we take people through in starting up a neighbour group.





Irene Oppen
President

President's report



Willy Neighbours Group, Williamstown, Victoria, getting together on Neighbour Day

Against all the odds in a highly challenging external environment, Neighbourhood Connect has been the catalyst for 12 new neighbour groups, representing a 34% increase in the number of groups we have helped establish. We have now helped people in 47 neighbourhoods across all states and territories turn the streets around them into a supportive community. The number of people who benefit on an ongoing basis is in the thousands. Where there is a neighbours group, members automatically support one another. Janine, a lovely woman from New Zealand who is a member of my local neighbours group, which has been going for over five years now, lives on her own and lost her job in the first lockdown. She made a 'bubble' with another member, had a 'holiday' at a neighbours home when the neighbour went away, and said at the last face to face dinner: "You guys are my family. It would have been awful without your support." Our Neighbourhood Connect Network, which includes groups who started independently, has reached 76. This is the beginning of a connected neighbourhoods movement.

Over the last 12 months we have continued to offer fortnightly webinars open to all, where we give people an insight into the wonderful outcomes of neighbour groups and the tools and tips to get started. We recognised that residents often get the best outcomes when they have additional encouragement and support to work through the steps to bring neighbours together, so in response, we developed the Let's Get Neighbourly Training and Mentoring Program. With funding gained from several sources, we rolled it out for the first time in 2021 in areas across Victoria. Delivered over four months, this program provides inspiration, tools, skill development and support through an initial workshop and one to one mentoring as Connectors hold their first event. A second workshop equips Connectors to lead an ongoing informal neighbours group. Covid restrictions made this incredibly challenging, and we adapted by developing online options for our workshops and for connecting with neighbours, and by extending our support for longer so that face to face events could be held. Despite over 3000km between us, Maureen Maher and I co-facilitated many a zoom workshop. We truly are a national organisation. We are finding that while online connection is possible, it can't compare with real life connections.



Irene Oppen
President

President's report cont.

We continue to foster relationships with like-minded organisations to share our experience of creating neighbourhood connections and seek collaborations to build social capital and wellbeing, and reduce social isolation, loneliness, depression and anxiety. We have a leadership role with the Friendship Alliance and good links with Neighbour Day, Ending Loneliness Together, Grow, many neighbourhood houses and other community building organisations.

At the outset of the year, the Board reviewed our progress and developed a new Strategic Plan for 2020 to 2022. Securing resources is critical to achieving our goals. Our committed grants team has succeeded in bringing in funds for several Let's Get Neighbourly programs. This represents a massive four fold increase in income from the previous year! The critical need for core funding remains. We are very appreciative of funding from Victoria Health (Reimagining Health Grant), the City of Port Phillip, the City of Casey, the City of Maroondah, the City of Mandurah, the City of Fremantle, the City of Warrnambool, the City of Hume and the Williamstown Community and Education Centre.

In past years we did our evaluation in-house so we are fortunate this year to have formed a partnership with the Research School of Psychology, Australian National University for independent evaluation of the impact of neighbour groups and our work. This will build more robust evidence of our impact. We wish to thank Olivia Evans, Post Doctoral Researcher, and Tegan Cruwys, Associate Professor, for contributing pro-bono for the first six months of this project.

A huge thank you to the Board and the Project Team for all their work, passion and dedication in contributing to a connected neighbourhoods movement. We have the answer to improved quality of life, social support, sense of safety and a proven way to lessen loneliness, depression and anxiety - now the challenge is to roll this out across Australia.



Let's Get Neighbourly Casey participants

Our impact

There has been steady growth in the number of neighbour groups. The majority of neighbourhood groups have been in Victoria, followed by Western Australia. The vast majority are in urban areas. Each neighbourhood group has its own flavour, shaped by its members. Most groups have a regular social gathering at a local venue, park or home. This ranges from every three weeks to every quarter.

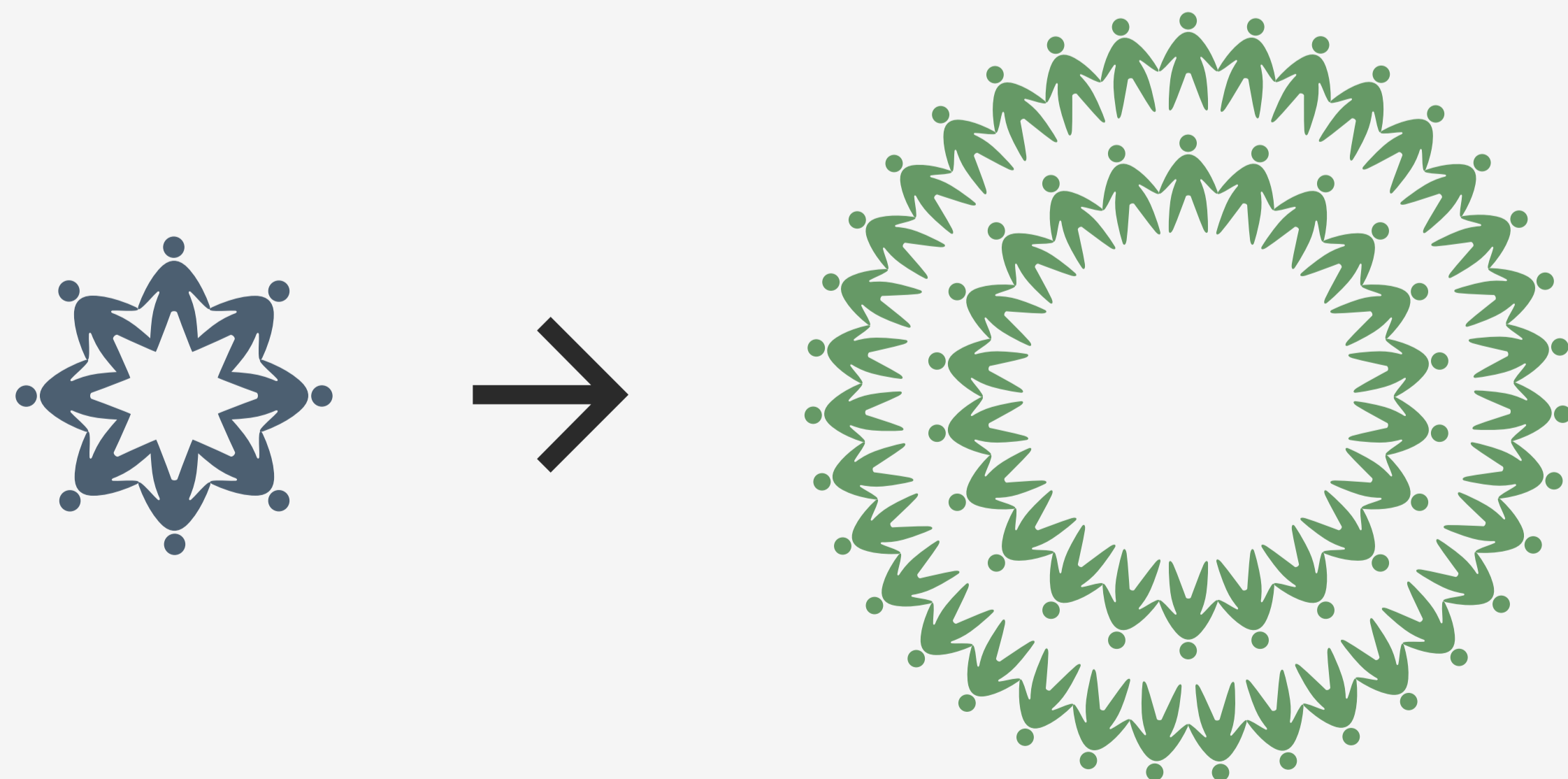


“I am mightily impressed with the Neighbourhood Connect initiative – it’s a particularly good example of the positive action that can be taken to deal with the malaise of social fragmentation, isolation, loneliness and anxiety.”

– Hugh Mackay, AO – Social Researcher and Author

The majority of Connectors have told us that they would not have started a neighbour group without support from Neighbourhood Connect.

12 groups formed in 2020–2021, with an estimate of over 300 members, adding to the thousands of people benefiting from groups started in previous years.



76 groups in the Neighbourhood Connect Network (2014 – 2021).

47 groups initiated with our support (2014 – 2021).

Over 200 people participated in our Neighbourhood Connector training program, in person or online in 2020–21.

Our impact



Creating social capital and a sense of community, belonging and trust



Increasing social support (the result of people helping one another)



Improving happiness and wellbeing



Increasing engagement in the local community and in local issues



Decreasing loneliness and social isolation



Increased utilisation of local businesses

The benefits



Strong bonds are formed between neighbours:

Many friendships have been made by adults and kids, improving social life and limiting loneliness and social isolation.



More people are reaching out to those in need:

Neighbours are helping the more vulnerable members of their group, especially those who are elderly, have a disability, are ill or have lost a loved one. Providing a helping hand can range from providing practical help like meals and produce, lifts, fixing things to emotional support like providing company and a sense of security to others.



More involvement in the community

People are getting more involved in the community and being healthier by exercising together and sharing recipes and produce.

To read more about our impact go to <https://www.neighbourhoodconnect.org.au/our-impact/>

Stories from the Neighbourhood

The strength of the Neighbourhood connect model is evident in the stories of the people and neighbourhoods across Australia who have made a start. What begins with a simple local gathering to meet friendly faces, can blossom into a long-term neighbour group with strong relationships, trust, fun and social and emotional support. Here are just a few.

Croydon South Neighbourhood Group

Richard from Croydon, Victoria, joined the Let's Get Neighbourly Maroondah Training and Mentoring Program and started the Croydon South Neighbours Group. Since April 2021, he has made a big impact in his neighbourhood: "We've had two social gatherings and a weekly walking group has started. I painted a gnome for the group and did up a cabinet to create a little library. Neighbours are enjoying our roaming garden gnome and our book exchange. In all, a great result, with the most important part being that neighbours getting to know one another."

Richard's enthusiasm is a key driver in developing the group and he has already noted some great outcomes and benefits for his community. "We are exchanging food and ideas. As relationships build more activities will happen. As you build a community, people feel less isolated."



Hilton Heights Neighbour Group, Hilton, WA.

Hilton Heights Neighbour Group has been established since 2014 and the group has organised a host of events over the years, from Christmas drinks, to cake bake-offs, litter clean-ups and garden walks. This year, with the approaching winter Solstice, neighbours mobilised to spruce up the laneways, bring musical neighbours together, booked a food truck, set up a fire pit and delivered a wonderful Winter Solstice Laneway Lounge event. The event attracted dozens who wandered in from surrounding streets to soak up the atmosphere, meet friendly faces around the fire and enjoy great music.

Co-connector of the group Maureen Maher says the strong relationships forged over the years have really strengthened the sense of community. "There is a great sense of trust and a real willingness to make our neighbourhood a creative and welcoming place for all. It's our home."



Stories from the Neighbourhood cont.

| Wannynne Street Mates, Mandurah, WA

Following a Let's Get Neighbourly Workshop, Dennis and Juliet got inspired to bring their neighbours together for the first time for Mother's Day, in May 2021. Dennis and Juliet say they had a lot of fun.

"We had 13 households represented. We started the gathering at 2pm and ended around 6pm when the mosquitos began to attack. We had signs on three roads to drive slowly. We shared BBQ, baked cakes, snacks and chatted into the day, just getting to know each other. It's winter now and we have planned to sit around a pit fire for the next gathering. It was a beautiful atmosphere with the young and the elderly. The stories came out of everyone, on health, jobs, pets, kids, houses, travel, fishing, food and just lots of fun. Thank you to the Shire and Neighbourhood Connect for the opportunity of reaching out and creating friends in the neighbourhood."



| Gladys Grove Neighbours Group, Croydon, Victoria

Inspired by all she learned at the Maroondah Training and Mentoring Program, Marta started the Gladys Grove Neighbours Group in May 2021. This is her description of their first event: "We held a gathering at the reserve in our street and met some very lovely people that we have never seen before. I only received 3-4 RSVP, but at the end 29 adults and 8 kids turned up. Everyone seemed to enjoy the day, they did not want to go home. I planned it for 1.5 hours long and it went for 3 hours! I think the game of 'what we have in common?' was really good, it indicated what activities we are willing to do. We talked about a street library, puzzle swap, playdate and a cultural themed dinner night."

Since then plans have been tossed around for a Christmas event, historical walks and people with kids getting together.

Marta says there have been lots of benefits already. "Since our first event there's been more hellos, more sharing, a more friendly attitude. Neighbours are putting out lemons to give away – this didn't happen before. One neighbour is now regularly checking in on a man in his eighties, just to make sure he's ok. ...now there's more connection and more helping one another out, the general feeling on the street is better. It feels friendlier and safer."



Let's Get Neighbourly

Training and Mentoring Program

With the generous support of our funders, we launched the Let's Get Neighbourly Program and have been able to take people on the journey of becoming a Connector and starting a Neighbour Group. The program has five stages:



Workshop participants at Frasers Landing Community, Mandurah WA.

- 1 Promotion to invite people to become Connectors.
- 2 Workshop (in person or online) to give people the tools, inspiration, skills and confidence to organise an event with their neighbours (with the aim of starting a neighbour group).
- 3 Mentoring as each person holds their first event.
- 4 Workshop to give Connectors the tips and skills to lead an ongoing neighbours group.
- 5 Sharing stories of the new neighbour groups, evaluation and reporting.

Feedback on the Program

“Thank you Maureen and Irene for the informative online workshop that you ran last week. It left me on a high and really pumped to do something locally in my neighbourhood! Many thanks for all the resources and organisational ideas too. Without them, it wouldn't be as organised and you've basically thought of everything, so thank you for taking the hard work out of it.”

-Paula, Let's Get Neighbourly Casey participant, Vic.

“It's a well thought out program and has been really valuable; it is a catalyst for people to act by providing verbal and material support also. I appreciated Irene's professionalism, passion and follow through. Thanks Irene for your help; ideas and positivity.”

-Terry, Ringwood North Neighbours Group, Vic

“Thank you for everyone's support. I loved this little sharing/ supporting group where we could share our concerns. Irene was an amazing support all the way. I appreciated the very personal support. Keep doing it - it's needed everywhere.”

-Marta, Gladys Grove Neighbours Group, Croydon, Vic

Our People

Board members



Irene Oppen | BA MSWAP – President from 22/2/21 (general member before then)

Irene is a passionate advocate, project manager, change manager, manager of social and multicultural services, capacity builder, trainer, community development worker, researcher and mediator. She is a consultant to the not-for-profit sector and government (Oppportunity Consulting) and has over 30 years experience in managing services and projects. Irene is passionate about re-creating the benefits of connected neighbourhoods across Australia. Irene is the National Manager of Neighbourhood Connect Inc as well as a Connector for the Green Knoll Neighbourhood Connect Group in Melbourne.

Contact: Irene@NeighbourhoodConnect.org.au

Cameron Thomson | BA MBA – President to 22 /2/21

Cameron has worked for over 15 years at Board/Executive level in strategy, operations and corporate development roles across Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Americas, most recently in the professional services sector. He has significant experience in successfully developing and implementing strategic plans, growing operational capability and delivering change. Cameron passionately believes in the importance of strong connections in our local communities and the positive impact that this has on our health and well-being.



Joshua Parrott | ADCSA AMICDA – Treasurer

With experience at a number of wealth management firms in Melbourne, Josh brings expertise in finance and wealth management. Josh is RG146 qualified and is currently furthering his education in the areas of finance and accounting. Josh has worked with Neighbourhood Connect for over 2 years and established a neighbourhood group in Highton, Victoria.

Giselle Schmid | BA MBA – Vice President

Giselle is an experienced community development leadership professional, working with community-minded individuals and community groups to strategically develop new programs, community connections and volunteer teams. Giselle is the Manager for a not-for-profit community development organisation and leads a local neighbourhood group.



Scott Mullins | BA – Secretary

Scott is a change-making brand communications specialist with a passion for building accessible, inclusive and values-led brands. A father-of-two, Scott has more than 12 years experience in journalism and not-for-profit brand, communications, PR, marketing and content across multiple territories. He is currently Brand Manager at Australia's blood cancer charity, the Leukaemia Foundation.

Gabriella | Board Member

Gabriella has experience in the HR and Governance field, and loves bringing this experience to the not-for-profit side. She is experienced in creating operational efficiencies, identifying and actioning strategic priorities and developing sustainable, inclusive and positive organisational cultures. Gabriella is a strong advocate for voluntary work and connection, understanding that we all have a role to play in community which is why Neighbourhood Connect is such a great initiative



Amanda Kemperman | BSW MBA (in progress) – Board Member until March 2021

Over 20 years experience in social work and community development practice and leadership in both Government and Non-Government organisations. Passionate about creative solutions to complex social issues, invested in working collaboratively with diverse people and visioning a world where everyone has opportunities to thrive.

National project team

“Thank you for all my experiences with Neighbourhood Connect and for letting me be a part of such a great organisation, and for being my referee. My experiences with Neighbourhood Connect really helped me to realise what sort of career I would like to pursue and to secure my new job. I would absolutely recommend getting involved, the experience has honestly been invaluable.”

-Sam Grounds, former Grants Researcher and Writer

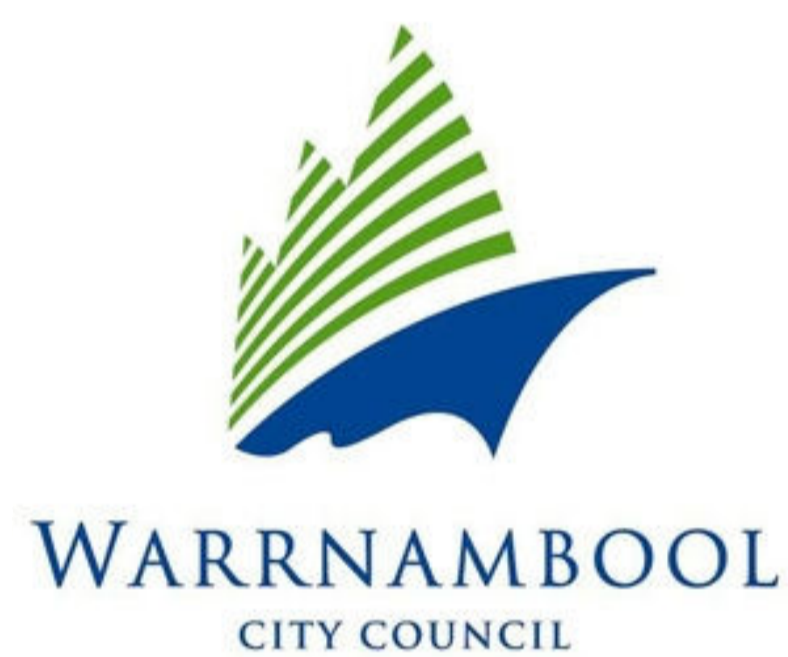
Our organisation is voluntarily run, so we rely on a dedicated group of people from all around Australia to support our growth. A big thanks to these people who supported us in the last 12 months.

Irene Oppen National Manager, Facilitator and Mentor	Maureen Maher Communications Manager, WA Coordinator, Facilitator and Mentor	Funding Research Team
Alieca Tam Desktop publishing	Sushma Hegde Team Coordinator	Lauren Jenkinson (Leader)
Grace Villarino Website Design	Matt Kuter Chief IT Problem Solver	Arpitha Shivakumar
Sean Egan Volunteer Recruitment Coordinator		Farzana Mirdadi
		Juliana Manoz
		Maika Vicente Navarro
		Morne Sgammini
		Pritesh Suvarna
		Saumya Vig
		Shenhav Nave
		Sushma Hegde
Promotion Team	Facilitators and Advisors	Grant Writing Team
Kathleen Wesley	Jus Simpson	Gabriella
Nicole Taylor	Danny Davis	Amanda Kemperman
Pallavi Mathur	Ernest Stabek	Lauren Jenkinson
Shenhav Nave	Colin Craggs	Maureen Maher
Tonya Greenidge		Sam Grounds
Vandana Rathore	Connector support	Mat Volpato
Jane Figgis	Joseph Furolo	Sarah Waters
	Maika Vicente Navarro	

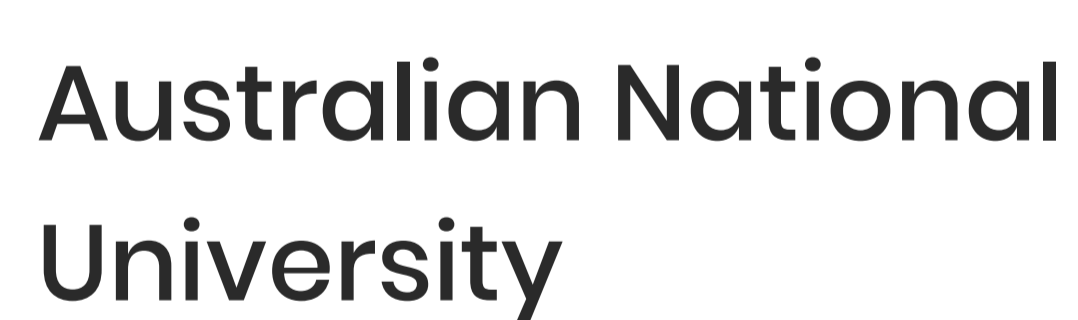
Supporters

We are very grateful for the support provided from the following organisations...

Funders



Pro Bono Support



Balaclava Neighbours Group

Our Finances

Treasurer's Report

While the 2021 financial year presented significant challenges for Neighbourhood Connect, with the impact of the pandemic directly affecting operating activities, the organisation was still successful in obtaining grant funding from local government and other sources. Neighbourhood Connect achieved a four fold increase in income over the previous financial year and these funds helped the organisation expand the Let's Get Neighbourly Program.

It is the view of the Treasurer that the organisation is well positioned for the future and that the risks associated with insolvency have been appropriately mitigated.



Joshua Parrott
ADCSA AMICDA
Treasurer

As President of Neighbourhood Connect, Irene Oppen declares that in my opinion:

- there are reasonable grounds to believe that the registered entity can pay all of its debts, as and when they become due and payable; and
- the financial statements and notes satisfy the requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012;
- the financial statements and notes fairly present the registered entity's financial position as at 30 June 2021 and its performance for the year ended on that date.

Signed in accordance with subsection 60.15(2) of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Regulation 2013.



Irene Oppen
BA MSWAP
President

Dated this 14th day of September 2021

Financial Reports

Neighbourhood Connect Inc. is incorporated in Victoria (A0104326V) and is an Australian Registered Business (ARBN 629 671 389) and an ACNC approved Charity (ABN 61477565710)

Statement of Comprehensive Income

Income		2020 - 2021 \$	2019 - 2020 \$
Grants	City of Mandurah	3,300	5,800
	City of Fremantle	3,000	-
	City of Hume	4,990	-
	City of Maroondah	4,990	-
	City of Port Phillip	9,000	-
	Vic Health - Reimagining Health	10,000	-
Contracted Services	City of Casey	7,500	-
	City of Maroondah	8,000	-
	City of Warrnambool	3,000	-
	Williamstown Community and Education Centre	5,000	-
	Other	200	-
Donations		120	5,890
Bank Interest		21	29
Other income		230	-
TOTAL INCOME		59,451	11,719

Financial Reports cont.

Statement of Comprehensive Income

Expenses	2020 - 2021 \$	2019 - 2020 \$
Program Delivery - Consultancy Fees	40,822	3,300
Program Delivery - Other Expenses	649	-
Social Media*	149	370
IT & Supplies	231	18
Administration	-	65
Memberships	161	-
Insurance	750	561
Incorporation Fees	-	409
Other Expenses	245	-
TOTAL EXPENSES	42,762	4,723
SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	16,689	6,996

Statement of Financial Position

Assets	30 June 2021 \$	30 June 2020 \$
Total cash at bank	23,815	7,059
Total Assets	23,815	7,059
Liabilities	-	-
Total Liabilities	-	-
Total Retained Earnings	23,815	7,059
TOTAL EQUITY	23,815	7,059

Note: Cash balance at 30 June 2020 \$7,125.57

Get involved

Become connected

“This is making the neighbourhood a lot friendlier. We’ve had great feedback with neighbours saying isn’t it nice to interact and find common interests. We’re now sharing – a neighbour brought us a bunch of produce and we dropped lemons over to them with a note saying we are so lucky to have people like you as neighbours.”

–Terry and Kathy, Kubba Rd Neighbours Group, Ringwood North, Victoria



Hilton Heights Neighbours group WA, Christmas drinks in the park



Start connecting in
your neighbourhood
with our support



Share your stories
of neighbourhood
connection with us



Volunteer on our
National Project
Team



Support us with financial
or in-kind resources so
we can expand

 www.neighbourhoodconnect.org.au

 hello@neighbourhoodconnect.com.au

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