

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 2024



DANDENONG COMMUNITY
& LEARNING CENTRE



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We respectfully acknowledge the Bunurong People of the South-Eastern Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land in which Dandenong Community & Learning Centre operates. We pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging and also to the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



BOARD OF GOVERNANCE REPORT

"Societal change often starts with small, intentional acts of kindness and consistency in our daily lives."

– Anonymous

This sentiment perfectly encapsulates the essence of our work at the Dandenong Community and Learning Center (DCLC). As we reflect on the past year, we are both inspired and proud of the remarkable strides DCLC has made in navigating significant challenges and advancing our mission.

Our unwavering commitment has been to equip and empower learners—helping them secure employment, pursue higher education, build confidence, and explore their creative talents. DCLC remains a vibrant hub where social connections are fostered, interactions are enriched, and positive energy is cultivated. In an era where loneliness is becoming increasingly prevalent, our Center stands as a sanctuary for individuals from diverse backgrounds to connect, build self-assurance, and contribute meaningfully to society.

Throughout the year, we have diligently refined our programs to better align with community needs. By assessing emerging demands for employment skills and educational pathways, we have tailored our offerings to ensure they provide substantial value to our students and support their engagement in both economic and social activities.

In our pursuit of financial sustainability, we have actively diversified our revenue streams through strategic grant funding. The Assisting Communities Direct Connections (ACDC) grant, for instance, enabled us to engage with households on mental health and wellbeing. The insights gained from these interactions have been instrumental in identifying new service opportunities and enhancing our programmatic offerings.

Additionally, the Family Learning Partnership (FLP) program has proven to be an innovative and impactful initiative. Designed to support the educational and social integration of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families, the program empowers parents with the tools and knowledge needed to support their children's education. This empowerment fosters significant positive changes within families and the broader community, addressing critical challenges such as language barriers, digital literacy, transportation issues, and cultural adjustment.

BOARD OF GOVERNANCE REPORT (CONT'D)

To our community - your support and engagement are vital to our success. Your participation in our programs and your commitment to our shared goals drive the positive change we see every day. As we move forward, we are excited to develop a social impact framework that will allow us to measure and track the changes resulting from our activities.

This framework will enhance our ability to engage with the community, make informed strategic decisions, and clearly communicate the positive outcomes of our work. We look forward to sharing the framework with the broader neighborhood sector, if adopted can demonstrate the powerful impact of collective efforts across community houses.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the entire DCLC team—teachers, administration and finance staff, volunteers, and student apprentices. Your dedication, compassion, and perseverance are the foundation of our success.

To Kathleen West, who resigned after ten years of exemplary service as Chair in September 2023, and to Leve Louis (Acting Secretary), who resigned from the board in June 2024, we express our heartfelt thanks. We appreciate their contributions and wish them all the best.

We warmly welcomed Suzelle Allet and Eloise Zoppos during the year and extend our best wishes to General Manager Merina Ashdown, who left DCLC to take on a new opportunity. We are grateful for her leadership and wish her continued success.

We acknowledge and thank the funding agencies, education and program partners, City of Greater Dandenong, peak bodies and community leaders for your continued support.

Together, we will continue to make meaningful progress, one intentional action at a time.



Niloo Amendra
Chairperson, on behalf of
the Board of Governance

MISSION

Improve people's lives by providing accessible, engaging, life-long learning opportunities that build skills and connect and strengthen our community.

PURPOSE

To empower individuals and the entire Dandenong community by providing a safe, welcoming space to connect, learn and belong. We're here to help people unlock their potential and grow their skills by accessing timely, authentic education, training and support. We stand for flourishing social prosperity, blossoming wellbeing and educational growth.





Strategic Goals

1 July 2023 - 30 June 2025

- 1) Provide learning opportunities that enable skills development and social engagement.**
- 2) Build sustainable growth that continues to meet community needs.**
- 3) Continue to grow our identity as a leading community and learning centre.**
- 4) Future proofing the organisation.**



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024

DCLC's mission is to support the community in their journey through learning, recreation and skill development by fostering opportunities for social connections, employment and growth.

Challenges Faced

DCLC faces several risk factors that could impact its future sustainability. The unpredictability of government funding, coupled with a reduction in ACFE program funding and rising operational costs, poses significant challenges for long-term financial forecasting. These factors are well recognised by the Board, highlighting the need for proactive strategies to navigate this evolving landscape with expanded service offerings, testing new service streams and diversifying the revenue portfolio.

Achievements

Despite the challenges significant progress was made during the year.

* Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) class hours delivered were 29,860 and 693 (4%) hours more than the prior year.

* Secured concession rebate of \$23,945.

* Successful in securing the grant for the the Family Learning Partnerships, a 2-year program focused on assisting CALD families to overcome barriers to participation in education and training.

*Insert % increase compared to prior year

Financial Summary

For the financial year 2023/2024, DCLC reported an income of \$773,046, which includes a prior year adjustment of \$112,075 and an operating surplus of \$128,172. The marginal decrease in Grant and Program incomes when compared to the prior year is due to the ending of the partnership with Cranbourne Primary School.

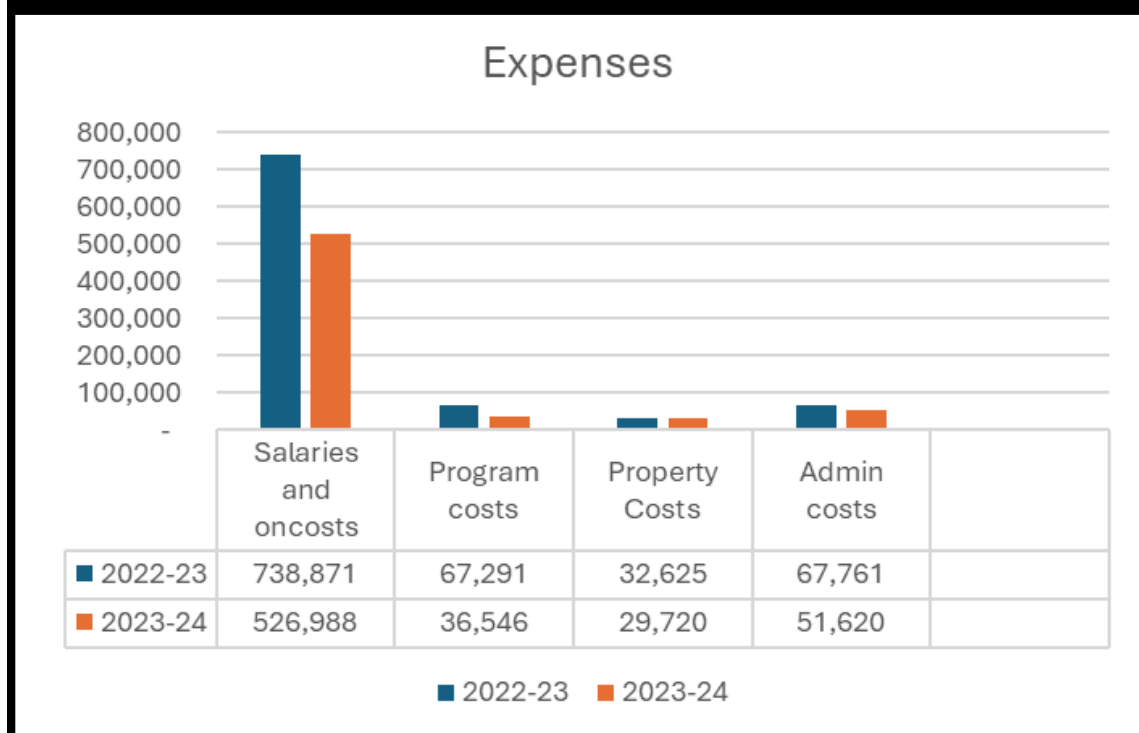
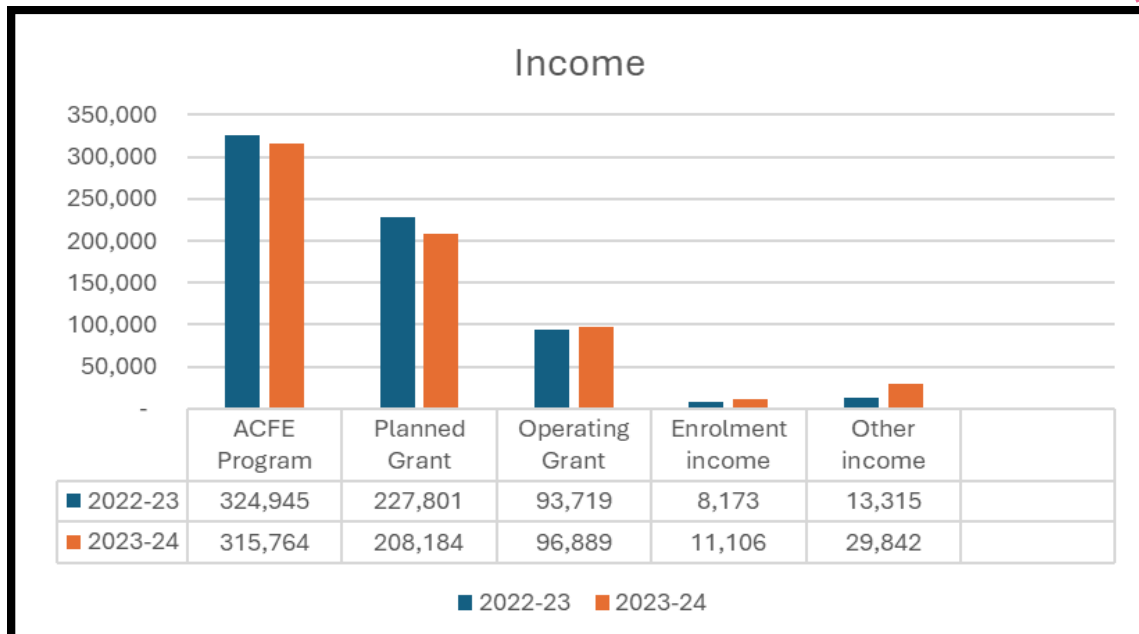
The ongoing review of costs, optimal utilisation of resources and focus on streamlining programs to meet minimum student numbers meant that the Centre was able to do more with the limited resources.

Our financial position as of June 30, 2024, includes cash at the bank amounting to \$574,962 and net equity of \$474,387.

Looking Ahead

Improving the financial stability of DCLC remains a strategic priority. We are committed to diversifying and stabilising the Centre's revenue streams through grants, partnerships, and the development of new income sources. These efforts will not only strengthen our financial foundation but also enhance our program offerings, allowing us to expand our reach and increase our impact in the community.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW (CONT'D)



OPERATIONAL REVIEW

This past year has been marked by significant achievements and strides towards ensuring the sustainability and financial security of the Dandenong Community and Learning Centre. Our collective efforts have positioned the Centre for a steadfast and promising future.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Financial Sustainability : Collaborated with the Board of Directors and Finance Officer to identify and implement new revenue streams and cost-saving measures.

Successfully secured grants and funding opportunities, enhancing our financial resilience.

Introduced programs and services to attract a broader community base, increasing participation and revenue.

Innovative Initiatives : Developed community partnerships with local businesses and organisations, fostering a network of support and shared resources.

Implemented energy-efficient practices and sustainable technologies within the Centre, reducing operational costs and promoting environmental responsibility.

Community Engagement and Programs

Expanded our community outreach efforts, engaging with various cultural and interest groups to ensure inclusivity and relevance in our programs. Introduced new workshops and activities focused on digital literacy and vocational training, addressing the evolving needs of our community. Enhanced our volunteer program, increasing community involvement from both volunteers and student placements and support for our community initiatives.

Infrastructure and Facilities

Invested in modern equipment and technology to support our educational programs. Improved accessibility features to ensure our Centre is inclusive for individuals with disabilities.

Staff and Volunteer Development

Provision of free professional development programs for staff and volunteers, fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Implemented new training modules focused on the learner and program delivery.

OPERATIONAL REVIEW

(CONT'D)

DIVERSIFICATION OF FUNDING

Grants and Funding: Secured grants and funding, significantly contributing to our financial stability.

Secured COVID-19 grants from the Department of Health, providing the opportunity to work alongside the South Eastern Public Health Unit and facilitate discussions, workshops, and education sessions across the City of Greater Dandenong to convey key health messaging to the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community about protection and safety against COVID-19.

This was a successful grant with a significant community impact, involving partnerships with Foundation House, Headspace, Monash Health, La Trobe Health Services, and Dandenong City Council.

Diversified funding by securing the Assisting Communities Direct Connections (ACDC) grant through Community Mental Health Australia.

This project made a substantial impact across the City of Greater Dandenong, with proactive conversations about mental health and wellbeing.

T Our People Connectors knocked on 2,814 doors and engaged with 1,206 people, achieving phenomenal outcomes.

Obtained the Family Learning Partnerships Grant from Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE), initiating a Parenting Educational and Improvement program aimed at supporting CALD parents in reconnecting and rebuilding positive relationships with their children.

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

While we have made substantial progress, we recognise the need to remain adaptable and proactive in the face of ongoing challenges. Key areas of focus for the coming year include:

- Enhancing our digital infrastructure to support hybrid and online learning models.
- Strengthening our community partnerships to foster a collaborative approach to community development.
- Continuing to explore innovative funding opportunities to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

EDUCATION REPORT

In the financial year 2023-2024, Dandenong Community and Learning Centre aligned its educational offerings with the approved Adult Community Further Education (ACFE) classes to ensure coherence with ACFE's future delivery and design. This strategic alignment enabled our teachers to leverage the ACFE curriculum, which provided comprehensive lesson plans and supportive materials that enhanced the effectiveness of our classes.

NEW INITIATIVES

Pottery Classes: Introduced in the community shed, these classes received positive feedback from participants, fostering creativity and community engagement.

Pre-Employment Classes: Aimed at equipping learners with the necessary skills to secure employment, these classes addressed critical areas such as resume writing, interview techniques, and job search strategies.

Community Classes: Various community-centric classes were implemented to address specific needs, promoting inclusiveness and social cohesion.

Digital Classes: New digital literacy classes were designed to cater to different levels of learners, ensuring everyone, regardless of their prior knowledge, could benefit from our programs.

Community Response:

Our focus was to respond effectively to the evolving needs of the community. On average, we ran **28 classes per term**, demonstrating the community's strong interest and engagement in our offerings. Referrals primarily came through word of mouth, indicating a high level of satisfaction among participants.

PARTNERSHIPS

Disability Organisations: Continued collaboration with organizations such as The Bridge, Grow2Be and Burke & Beyond helped us tailor our classes to be inclusive and supportive of individuals with disabilities.

Local Primary Schools and Churches: We maintained and strengthened our relationships with local primary schools and churches, including Dandenong West Primary School, Cranbourne Primary School Hub and Enjoy Church. These partnerships facilitated the introduction of new aged care classes, as well as English and digital literacy classes, extending our reach to younger CALD learners and their families.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Dandenong Community and Learning Centre prides itself on its innovative approach to education. By continuously assessing community needs and gaps, we refined our classes.

CONCLUSION

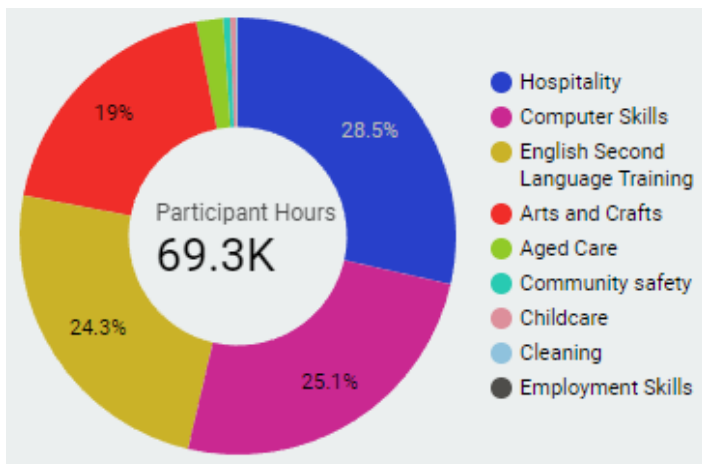
FY 2023-2024 was a year of innovation and community engagement for Dandenong Community and Learning Centre. We look forward to continuing this journey, further expanding our offerings, and strengthening our community ties to ensure we meet the educational needs of our diverse community.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

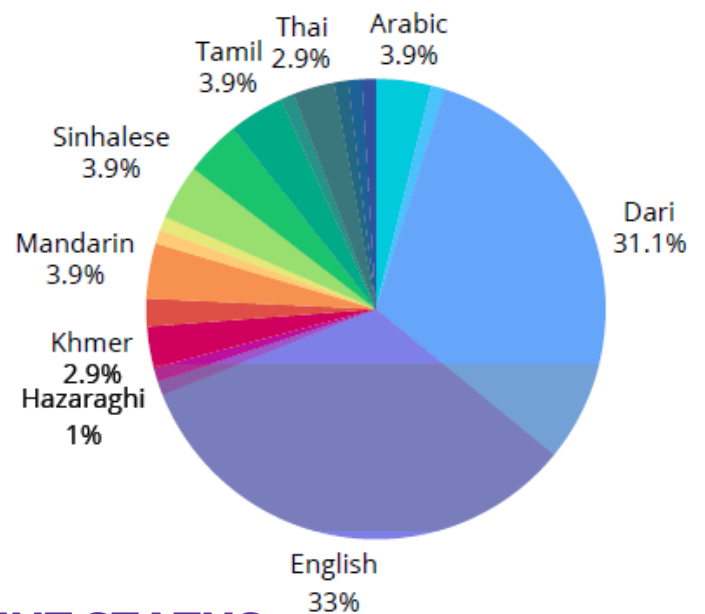
We extend our gratitude to our dedicated teachers, supportive partners, and enthusiastic learners. Together, we have made significant strides in learn local community education and empowerment.

PROGRAM, SERVICES AND STATISTICS

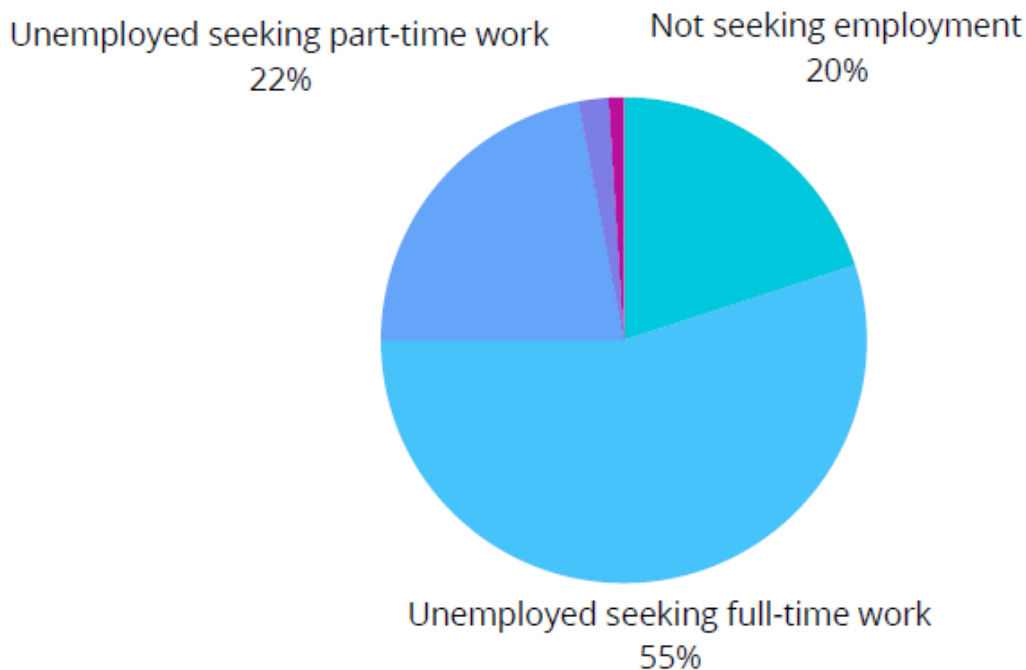
PARTICIPATION BY PROGRAM



LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND



EMPLOYMENT STATUS



FAMILY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP (FLP) PROJECT

The **Parenting Educational and Improvement Program (PEIP)** for CALD Families delivered by Dandenong Community and Learning Centre (DCLC) is an innovative initiative designed to support the educational and social integration of the CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) families in Dandenong.



This program addresses critical challenges faced by non-English speaking parents and their children, including language barriers, digital literacy, transportation issues, and cultural adjustment. Through community building activities and culturally sensitive support services, the program fosters a sense of belonging and promotes the overall well-being of participating families.

The PEIP program provides targeted support for parents through various focused workshops enabling them to assist their children with schoolwork, understand school communications, and engage with teachers confidently. Through the workshops and continuous assessment, the changes in children's attitudes towards learning, school attendance, and participation in extracurricular activities, reflecting their re-engagement with the educational process will be addressed and measured.



We collaborated with North Dandenong Neighbourhood House (NDNH) to create a sustainable and supportive environment for the CALD community within the greater Dandenong area. The partnership allowed us to tap into NDNH's established relationships within the community, which increased trust and participation in our programs.

The Homework Club assists school-aged children from these communities with their academic needs, particularly in subjects such as Mathematics. Additionally, we have collaborated with Monash University to design, develop and deliver a product using Artificial Intelligence (AI), with focus on the Human Computer Interaction (HCI) aspect that will benefit the CALD community.

This initiative is already seeing positive results, with improved and greater engagement in schoolwork among the participating students.



ACDC PROJECT



Assisting Communities through Direct Connection (ACDC) was a project of Community Mental Health Australia.

The ACDC project offered an innovative, proactive outreach approach to linking people with services and assessing community needs. Rather than waiting for people to present to services and ask for help, the ACDC project reached people by knocking on the doors of householders and offering information about supports and services. Householders were also asked to complete a survey, with the findings analysed and presented by the Centre for Social Impact, The University of Western Australia.

Dandenong was one of 27 sites across Australia visited by People Connectors (trained staff knocking on the doors of householders). The ACDC project **partnered with Dandenong Community Learning Centre** to deliver this door-knocking initiative.

A total of 2,814 doors were knocked on by the People Connectors and 1,206 people engaged with a People Connector. In addition, 294 householders responded to a survey about mental health needs and access to services in their community.

19% REPORTED HAVING OR LIVING WITH A MENTAL ISSUE.

19% REPORTED RECEIVING HELP FOR THEIR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING FROM A PROFESSIONAL OR SERVICE IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS.

33% WANTED TO SEEK HELP IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS.

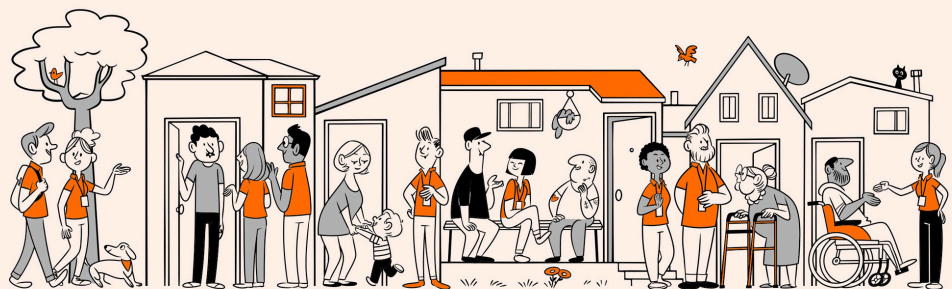
24% REPORTED THAT THEY WOULD BENEFIT FROM MORE SUPPORT FOR THEIR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING.

51% DID NOT GET THE CARE THEY NEEDED

www.acdc.org.au

WELLNESS. DELIVERED.

We deliver free information about mental health to your front door.



COMMUNITY SHED

Tim Chen



On Mondays, a group of students come from The Bridge Cranbourne to participate in woodwork classes in our woodworking shed. They are special needs students and have been in the classes for quite some time.

The projects are simple & functional, and the required pieces of timber are pre-cut by the teacher. Some of the past projects are: boot racks, wooden toy helicopters, tit-tat game boards, serviette holders, pencil holders and bird houses.

Tuesday and Thursday classes, learners are from Grow2Be which is another organisation providing training to special needs students for eventually finding employment.

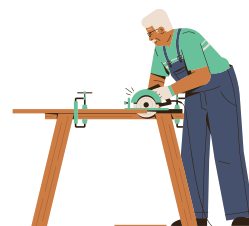
The learners in Thursday classes are more capable in terms of mental and physical capabilities. Thus, they are able to use hand tools and safe power tools such a band saw and belt sander with supervision from the teacher.



In addition to Grow2Be, we have two individual learners from the local community who likes to make wooden pens using the woodturning lathe, he has made quite a number of pens over time.

Wednesday class is a special – women only woodworking class. Many of the ladies are retired senior citizens and joined to have creative and social interactions with friends. Thus the ambience in the class is always filled with happiness, creative discussions, positive energy & encouragements.

Feedback from the learners plus carers, everyone has gained experience and the shed has become part of their lifestyle.



COMMUNITY GARDEN STORY

Jenny McCabe



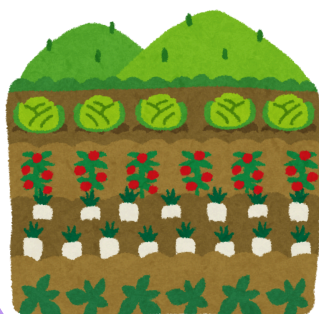
We have two Community Garden plots with plans to provide fresh vegetables and fruit for our weekly community lunch which is held on Tuesdays.

We practice sustainability in the community garden, by using water from the rain water storage tank, placing mulch on the garden beds from material collected, and suitable kitchen waste is taken to our compost bin.

Future planning for our garden will include re-doing the water drip feed around the garden plus raising the current garden beds to more of a manageable height.

We provide a safe environment for all ages who come to visit the Dandenong Community Garden, where people from different background cultures use the garden as a meeting place to exchange ideas.

We have a visiting group to our garden which provides a quiet space to sit and enjoy. The group currently have 3 community garden plots which they work in during their weekly visit.



DIGITAL LITERACY

Rod Bryson



At the start of 2024 our digital literacy computer programs commenced with good student numbers in level 1 beginner's classes and level 2 advanced classes. We made some changes to the digital literacy computer course content, which gave the students more exposure to the technological electronic world of today.

Both computer classes have been very popular, maintaining a steady number of students throughout each term. The level 1 beginner's computer course is designed as an introduction in the use of computers and related software packages, where potential students require no prior knowledge to enrol. Level 2 advanced computer course, caters for students that have completed level 1 and is an ideal course for new students who have gained some computer experience elsewhere.

There have been many success stories as learners give feedback of how they enjoyed the relaxing atmosphere of the classroom and our respective teaching styles.

Many of the learners have been successful in finding employment.



TODAY A READER
TOMORROW A LEADER

LEARNER STORIES



I faced challenges with basic computer skills and was unsure about using software programs or downloading applications onto my mobile phone.

However, I gradually overcame these obstacles with the invaluable support and guidance from my computer teacher. This experience not only improved my technical skills but also sparked a deeper interest in the field of computing, shaping my approach to technology and problem-solving.

As I developed my computer skills, my confidence grew significantly.

The computer class was a transformative experience, providing me with essential technical skills and a deeper understanding of computing. Beyond the technical aspects, the positive social interactions with my classmates enriched my learning experience. Engaging with fellow students created a collaborative and supportive environment that enhanced my overall educational journey.

The challenges I faced and overcame during this course have equipped me with the confidence and skills needed for future endeavors. This experience has improved my technical abilities and prepared me for continued growth in the digital world.

Daniella Hardouin

COMMUNITY PHOTOS



COMMUNITY PHOTOS CONTINUED



OUR TEAM

BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

Niloo Amendra (Chairperson)
Nirangeni Jeyapalan (Board Member)
Eloise Zoppos (Secretary)
Garry Porter (Board Member)
Michael Hillier (Board Member)
Suzelle Allet (Board Member)

MANAGEMENT

Merina Ashdown (Former Manager)
Stephanie Joseph (New Centre
Manager)

FINANCE

Girija Nedumaran (Finance Officer)

ADMINISTRATION

Sheela Nair (Administration Officer)

TEACHERS

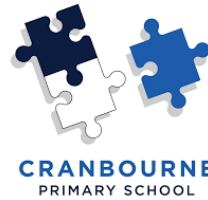
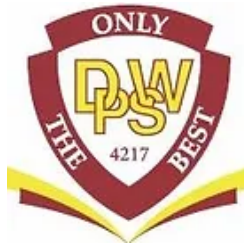
Devi Torpy
Anusua Ghosh
Rod Bryson
Tim Heng Cheng
Sheela Nair
Anisha Shaik
Yasmin Rahman
Seetha Subasinghe

VOLUNTEERS

Robyn Fricsons
Mona Elzomor
Lucky Lamprell
Shaista Veremeenco
Howard Chan
Branka Loukas
Jenny McCabe
Myhoung Nguyen
Zahra Sheyk
Riley Herring



OUR PARTNERS





Thank you for joining us to build an **inclusive community** that supports people to make **positive changes in their lives!**



Neighbourhood
Houses Victoria™

DANDENONG COMMUNITY
& LEARNING CENTRE

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