



The 
Centre
your Community College
ANNUAL REPORT



20
20

Organisation STRUCTURE



Rob Carolane
BOARD CHAIR



Kirsten Williams
DEPUTY CHAIR



Dion Stevenson
TREASURER

*Our
Board
Members*



Carol Nolan



Eliza-Beth Brennan



Harry Westendorp



Linda Huzzey

Tamara Watson (*resigned May 2020*)

EXECUTIVE TEAM

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

FELICITY WILLIAMS

GENERAL MANAGER PROGRAMS AND SPORT NORTH EAST

KERRY STRAUCH

GENERAL MANAGER BUSINESS OPERATIONS

IAN PRENTICE (*RETIRED SEPTEMBER*) **CARL DURNIN** (*FROM JUNE*)

LEADERSHIP TEAM

TRAINING CONTRACTS AND V.E.T. NORTH

PROGRAM LEADER

SHAREE CASTAGNA

SOUTHERN REGION

PROGRAM LEADER

SIMEON ALEXANDROS

SPORT NORTH EAST

PROGRAM LEADER

TOM MITTEN (*PARENTAL LEAVE*)

TIM OLIVER (*FROM SEPTEMBER*)

LEARNER ENGAGEMENT

PROGRAM LEADER

COLETTE MCNEILL

QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE LEADER

MATHEW BYRN

FINDING STRENGTHS

PROGRAM MANAGER

KERRI BARNES

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

PROGRAM LEADER

ANDREA MATHESON

Staff

TENURE

15 YEARS

SHAREE CASTAGNA

JAN ROBINSON

10 YEARS

VICKI GRANT

5 YEARS

KERRY STRAUCH

MARGARET BRICKHILL



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Snapshot OF 2020



LEARNER ENGAGEMENT TEAM
SUPPORTED 226 LEARNERS

VOLUNTEER SKILLSBANK

Rebranded to **The Volunteer Centre** with a NEW Website



Voluntary uptake of our Finding Strengths program by people involved with Justice System

860

NEW CARPET
TILES LAID



44

LAPTOPS LOANED TO LEARNERS
FOR VIRTUAL STUDY



20

Virtual Pub
Quizzes
Held With Staff



44

VIRTUAL MORNING TEAS
HELD WITH STAFF

106

Active Community
Visitor Volunteers in 2020



74

Guided Conversations
regarding COVID held
with sporting clubs



SHEPPARTON
OFFICE OPENED



4 WEEKS
ONLY to Roll Out
VIRTUAL
CLASSROOM

REPORT

It's again a great pleasure to be able to present this Annual Report on the activities of The Centre during 2020.

2020 was a remarkable and challenging year that has demonstrated the strength and resilience of The Centre. It began with the severe impact on our communities from bushfires, followed by the impacts of COVID-19. We have emerged from 2020 in a financially sound position and continue stronger in our capacity to serve our community via our programs and courses.

The bushfires and COVID-19 both suppressed our enrolments and therefore income. Our staff did an excellent job in rapidly transitioning to providing an online delivery platform to enable ongoing learning. Despite these responses, we would have made a significant loss, or been forced to retrench staff without the support of State and Federal Government COVID-19 support programs.

We must not take for granted the way we have confronted the challenges thrown at the organisation. This response is a great credit to all who have made the necessary changes and adjustments to the different ways we have had to do business. We also thank Federal and State Governments for their financial support. It is not one thing or person that has led to our current strong position, it is a collective effort – congratulations everyone!

The role of The Centre in delivering programs throughout the Hume Region was reinforced by the opening of our campus in Shepparton this year. We now have a physical presence in Wangaratta, Seymour and Shepparton to support our network of partnerships with community-based providers throughout the region.

Two major state-wide awards were won by The Centre this year:

- Victorian Training Awards, Community Training Provider of the Year
- The Learn Local Pre-Accredited Pathway Award for 'Getting There', and also the People's Choice Award for this category.

These awards are an enormous credit to our executive and delivery teams.

During the second half of 2020, we developed our next strategic plan to guide us over the coming years - this will be finalised in early 2021. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partners, staff, executive and Board who have contributed to this vital piece of work. It is a pleasure to see the passion and commitment of everyone to our work at The Centre.

As mentioned earlier, the work we do is a collective effort. I would like to thank all our staff and volunteers who deliver our programs and provide a welcoming face to the organisation.

I would also like to thank our executive, led by Felicity Williams as Chief Executive Officer. Felicity, and General Managers Kerry Strauch, Ian Prentice (retired) and Carl Durbin have provided steady, committed, and inspiring leadership during this challenging year. The results of their work are detailed in this Annual Report.

Our Board welcomed Dion Stevenson (Treasurer) at the last AGM to serve alongside Kirsten Williams (Deputy Chair), Harry Westendorp, Carol Nolan, Eliza-Beth Brennan and Linda Huzzey. It has been a privilege to serve with these exceptional people. The Board continues to be served exceptionally well by Felicity. Her competence, passion and focus on the potential for The Centre has allowed the Board to do its job of strategic oversight and governance.

I will be stepping down from the Board at the 2021 AGM. I do so with confidence that the Board will do an excellent job as custodians of this vital organisation in its 60th year of operation and beyond.

Serving on The Centre Board has been a great honour. I have personally learnt a great deal working alongside my fellow Board members over the years. At times, there have been some very challenging issues to work through. Some of this has been really hard and the way forward unclear. By focusing on the future, our values and purpose, we have found our way through to our current position of strength and resilience. Thank you to everyone I have worked with.



ROB CAROLANE
BOARD CHAIR



Our board were thrilled to meet in person towards the end of 2020. Not featured Eliza-beth Brennan



CEO

REPORT

Well, I am not going to start this report with the name of that virus. And yes, it has been an unusual and challenging year! However...

The year 2020 heralded reason for celebration and reflection on where The Centre has come from and what a wonderful and well-respected organisation we now have. We won the Victorian Training Awards Community Training Provider of the Year 2020. The submission we wrote for this award is a stocktake of the extraordinary work our passionate and committed Leadership Team and staff have contributed to over the last six years in building and creating innovative programs and services that really do achieve positive outcomes with our learners and clients. We also were extremely proud to be a finalist in two categories of the Learn Local Awards - winning the Pre-accredited Pathway Award (and people's choice award) for our transformational program Getting There.

The year 2020 marks the conclusion of our 2018-2020 Strategic Plan. Looking back at our reporting against the Strategic Plan, I am very proud of what our staff and Leadership Team have achieved. In rebuilding The Centre within a social impact framework, we focused on two critical success factors.

Firstly, over a period of 18 months, our staff gathered to develop a narrative around how we wanted The Centre to look and feel. This resulted in the document called Our Culture, which contains the narrative of our aspirations of how we want to interact with each other, our learners, clients and our stakeholders. This document is held as a very special artefact that staff can relate to and clearly understand

ways that they can contribute to the cultural health of our organisation.

Secondly, I believe it is our approach to understanding the crucial role education and learning in the wider sense of the word plays as a social determinant of health that sets us apart. It is through this deep understanding of the needs of our learners and clients that has ensured we create programs and support responses that not only helps us to successfully engage more deeply with our learners and clients, but also helps our partners achieve their outcomes.

The Centre is unique within the Learn Local sector in that we now deliver programs to eleven local government areas. Our focus is always on developing a deep relationship with one or more local partners whenever we enter a new location to ensure we are grounded in the community and understand local community needs. This also ensures that we underpin lack of provision and do not duplicate programs and services.

An important part of our role within our region is to build capability and capacity of smaller Learn Local and neighbourhood houses to expand delivery of courses and programs within their communities to reduce key-organisational dependency on The Centre across the region. We completed a Capacity and Innovation Fund project in 2020 to do just that with Learn Locals throughout Mitchell Shire. This has resulted in a partnership with PRACE and neighbourhood houses throughout the shire to collaborate in delivering a range of programs that meet the needs of

PICTURED ABOVE: From left to right, Sam Mayhew, Felicity Williams, Dr Paul Philips and Jacqui Ford at Weston College, UK.

residents as well as local industry.

Our approach to continuous improvement and ensuring quality of education, programs and care is enacted through our enhanced Continuous Improvement Group (CIG) structure. The work of CIG is now assisted by four committees, with membership including members of staff. The committees are: Training and Assessment; Quality of Education, Programs and Care; Procedures and Forms; and Data, Privacy and Records Management. Our CIG is a critical success factor and through this approach, this group is now doing the work it was set up for. That is, understanding our dimensions of quality, measuring how we ensure quality and outcomes, and supporting our understanding of that information to continually improve what we do with our learners, clients and stakeholders.

As demonstrated by the stories and descriptions of our programs and services contained in this report, there is no doubt that our vision of an organisation that empowers individuals to unlock their potential through participation, connections, pathways and learning is being realised each day. Our Finding Strengths program is a great example of this. In delivering this program, we have developed a deep and collaborative relationship with the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS). While, this program has been impacted by COVID restrictions, including the DJCS shutting its doors and minimising contact with clients, the Finding Strengths team have been incredibly resourceful and innovative in maintaining connection with this difficult to reach cohort. A highlight has been the development of the transformational pre-accredited course I Am by one of our psychologists.

Based on Gray Poehnell's hope-filled goal and culturally sensitive careers aspiration setting concepts, and positive psychology, I Am has proven to be an extraordinary watershed for offenders. Those who have completed it have a new view of self and have re-framed their desire to take action in their lives and effect positive change. The Finding Strengths team is undertaking ground-breaking work with these adults to understand any learning difficulty that has prevented them from achieving in the school system and sustaining employment. I am pleased to say that the team are achieving wonderful employment outcomes with many of these participants and this program is truly changing lives.

Importantly, The Centre is now in a financially resilient position with solid cash reserves and we have continued to achieve an operational profit. Our revenue streams, particularly Skills First, was impacted by COVID restrictions. However, the Department of Education and Training provided all Learn Local providers with top-up of funding based on normal delivery patterns. We thank the Department for this vital support. We also thank the Federal Government for its support through Job Keeper. There is no doubt that these two sources of additional funding ensured we kept all staff employed. Our profit result is relatively high at 12.9% of revenue, \$716,060. This profit is attributable to the Skills First top-up. We recognise that 2021 will be a recovery year and the 2020 result will support that.

Our course delivery was impacted by COVID restrictions, particularly our Certificates I in Transition Education and Work Education with clients of disability services having

to isolate at home. However, our team did continue one program in partnership with Villa Maria Catholic Homes (Wangaratta) through a blended model of virtual classroom and, when able, face-to-face classes. This is an example of the creative thinking our Northern Vocational Education and Training Program Leader, Sharee Castagna, brings to the table. She worked closely with Villa Maria's support workers and their client's carers to scaffold learners with a cognitive disability to be able to cope with and thrive within the virtual classroom.

Upon my return from an overseas fellowship tour in March 2020, I wondered what state we would be in with the rapidly changing COVID landscape in Victoria. I was extremely pleased with the way our VET and Quality, Design and Development teams worked very efficiently, collaboratively and effectively to get our virtual classroom in place within weeks. This occurred over the first holiday break ensuring that learners could continue their classes in the first week back. We ensured all learners were supported to access the platform with IT support, training and with a loan device if they didn't have one. All of our trainers received professional development and coaching from two lead trainers, Lyndal Perry and Kerry Wevers, to help them successfully deliver classes virtually, and to think of and implement interactive and engaging activities with learners individually and in groups. For some learners, particularly those doing Foundation courses, attendance has never been better. Many of our Foundation course learners have conditions like anxiety, which makes attending face-to-face classes challenging, particularly during the first few weeks. Our virtual classroom, or B3, is here to stay. It provides us with another dimension in our ability to engage learners with barriers.

The Sport North East (SNE) team also continued their work despite COVID shutting down the sport and recreation communities. Through our Regional Sport Victoria network, SNE participated in undertaking deep conversations with sporting and recreation clubs to understand their challenges and what support they believe they would need coming out of COVID. The results of these guided conversations carried out throughout regional Victoria by the nine regional sports assemblies has provided rich insights into the challenges our regional sport sector is facing, particularly shortage of volunteers.

I loved hearing throughout the year how our Community Programs continued their initiatives despite COVID. Particularly, how they found inventive ways for our community visitors to continue the invaluable connection they have with an older person in an aged care facility. Letters, cakes, phone calls, video calls were just a few ways these wonderful people reached out to their isolated older friend and reassured them that they were not forgotten.

Another highlight of 2020 was the commencement of refurbishing our Chisholm St campus. Our ability to do this has been supported by the profits we have earned over the past four years supporting deliberate decisions that ensure we invest in our facilities and organisational development for the benefit of our learners, clients, staff and communities. This has included new carpet, painting and furniture in classrooms and office areas. This work will continue in 2021,

and following a dismal period during lock-down, we have all welcomed returning to our new fresh colours and refreshed environment.

I want to thank our staff for enthusiastically and compassionately supporting each other through 2020. Working from home was a challenge, particularly in maintaining collegiality and connection with each other. Our Leadership Team worked hard to connect with each member of their teams regularly, if not daily. And, many staff members stepped up and took the lead in arranging ways

for us to get together, chat and support each other's health and wellbeing. I must say, it was a highlight of the year to see so many faces at our Christmas party lunch. It was a wonderful couple of hours with much laughter and joy. I was fortunate to be able to fulfill most of my planned International Specialist Skills Institute Fellowship before the world went mad as a result of COVID. I spent a week in Rome and two weeks in the UK visiting colleges and talking to researchers and policy influencers regarding best practice in supporting learners with special education needs. I am particularly interested in supporting adult learners with learning difficulties that have prevented them from achieving academically or sustaining employment because the condition has remained unmanaged. The adult community education sector can play a vital role in changing the lives of these adults by proactively identifying learning difficulties and responding with adult teaching principles that accommodate and help individuals to manage these conditions. A highlight of my trip was my visit to Weston College in Weston Super-Mare. CEO, Dr Paul Philips' approach to ensuring his college supported special education needs or SEN really resonated with me. He has put SEN at the heart of his organisation – good practice for SEN learners is good practice for all.

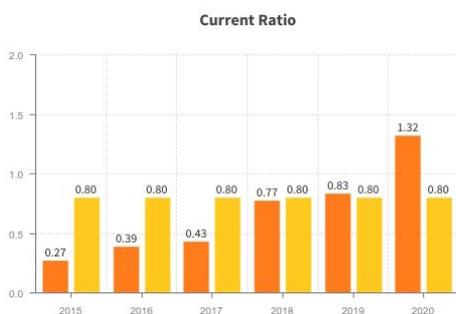
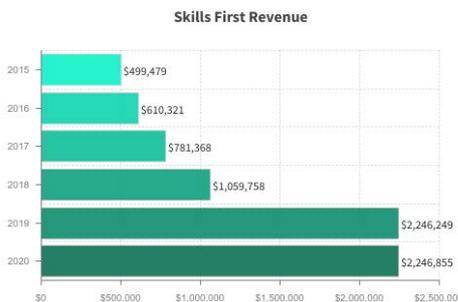
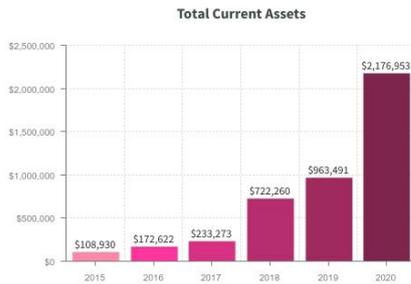
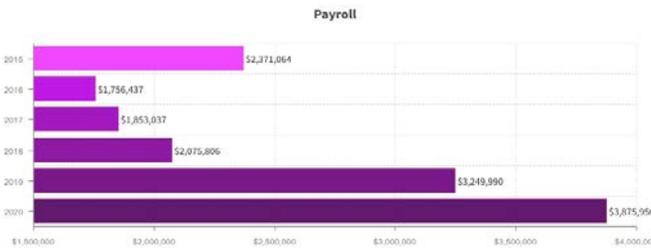
Thanks must go to Ian Prentice who retired in June. Ian took on the role of General Manager – Business Operations in September 2018 and made a significant contribution to improving our financial management, reporting and human resources management. We wish Ian and his wife, Ruth, well and look forward to receiving postcards as they travel around Australia.

I could not fulfill my role without the unwavering support of Kerry Strauch, General Manager of Programs and Sport North East, and Carl Durnin, who joined us in June 2020 taking on Ian's role. I thank Kerry, Ian and Carl for their constant and well-considered contribution to decision making and consideration of our strategic context. The Executive Team with the support of our Program Leaders, forming the Leadership Team, provide strong leadership for the organisation. Together our Leadership Team members are creative and innovative. They are dedicated to identifying and meeting the needs of our learners and clients and responding with programs and services that do change lives and achieve positive impacts. Thank you also to our wonderful and amazing staff. Without their passion, ideas, insights and dedication to achieving great outcomes with our learners, clients and stakeholders, we would not be where we are today.

Last but not least, I wish to thank our Board for their guidance and support. Our Board Chair, Rob Carolane, has been by my side for a number of years now. He has announced that he is stepping down from the Board after being involved for 13 years. I will miss the wonderful conversations we have had through our CEO-Chair relationship and thank him for generously sharing his wisdom and care.



FELICITY WILLIAMS
CEO





WINNER COMMUNITY TRAINING PROVIDER OF THE YEAR 2020



WINNER & PEOPLE CHOICE AWARDS
PRE-ACCREDITED PATHWAY PROGRAM
AWARD for Getting There

FINALIST COLLABORATION AWARD for
Pathways 2 Possibilities in partnership
with Open Door Neighbourhood House

Our 2020 AWARDS

Announced by the Deputy Chair of Adult, Community and Further Education Board (ACFE), Raoul Wainwright, The Centre was awarded the Victorian Training Award for Community Training Provider of the Year 2020 in late November. The Victorian Training Awards recognise and honour the outstanding achievements of individuals and organisations in the wider Victorian TAFE and training sector.

Here's what they said about us . . .

The Centre for Continuing Education Inc. (The Centre), rose like a phoenix from the ashes of complete governance and financial failure. From 2015 it was restored to a thriving not-for-profit training provider employing more than 70 people.

As a Learn Local community education college, it largely services those who experience barriers to social and economic participation in the Hume region. Whether they're empowering women to safely take control of their financial affairs, administering family therapy or supporting offenders to understand and manage their learning disorders, The Centre for Continuing Education is constructing the road towards a safer, happier life.

program introduced in 2017 and was designed for job seekers and people with significant challenges such as recovering from drug and alcohol addiction, facing homelessness or family violence, or being long-term unemployed. At its core, it assists learners to understand themselves in relation to the world around them and learners develop the core or transferable work skills most employers now require. The majority of graduates from the course have achieved employment or moved on to further education.

We are thrilled that Getting There has been recognised as a leading program in the State through the Learn Local awards. The Centre was also a finalist in the Victorian Collaboration Award in partnership with Open Door Neighbourhood House for our Pathways 2 Possibilities program. The Centre congratulates Cloverdale Community Centre on winning this award for their collaboration with Gordon TAFE.

We are immensely proud of these achievements. The Victorian Training Award Community Provider of the Year Award is the culmination of six years of hard work by our wonderful and passionate people.

Announced by the Hon. Gayle Tierney, Minister for Skills and Training, The Centre was also awarded the Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Pathway Program Award 2020 for Getting There, and named the People's Choice Award winner for this category.

Held annually by the ACFE Board, the Learn Local Awards provide a unique opportunity to honour the Learn Local sector and highlight the success of learners and the training providers who support them.

Delivered through Certificates I and II in General Education for Adults (CGEA), Getting There is a transformational



Sharee Castagna Program Leader Training Programs and VET North, Loretta Waters Executive Officer of Open Door Neighbourhood House and Felicity Williams CEO of the Centre developed the 'Pathways



Our Year IN COVID

The Centre commenced 2020 with a steady stream of referrals. But like everyone, the advent of COVID had a huge impact on our services – particularly in our Southern Region, with Mitchell Shire being included in Melbourne’s Stage 4 hard lockdown.

In response to COVID restrictions in April, The Centre quickly shifted our traditional face-to-face training delivery into a ‘virtual’ classroom. Fortunately, our Design and Development team had been researching online platforms for virtual classroom capability for the six months prior as a way to increase accessibility for learners who, for a range of reasons, found it difficult to attend face-to-face classes.

However, like many other businesses, coronavirus hastened our plans and we moved very quickly to make this option available to all learners at the beginning of term 2 in response to COVID restrictions. With an incredible amount of work from very passionate staff we managed a turnaround of four weeks from project start to project launch.

Our trainers used the holiday break to ‘train-up’ in the new technology. This included building their skills in interacting with and supporting learners in an online space. During this period, we also worked to ensure our learners were supported in the transition to online learning. To keep the familiar as much as possible, we provided all learners with textbooks and paper learning resources. We made laptops and iPads available on loan to learners who couldn’t access the virtual classroom because they didn’t have a computer or because their children were using the family computer to do their online learning. The Centre’s virtual classroom isn’t just lessons delivered via zoom. Our B3 is a stand-alone platform that encourages collaboration and engagement between our trainers and our learners. It has been well received by those who moved across to this virtual space in 2020.

Our virtual classroom is simple to use, even for those new to online environments and with beginner skills in technology. It can be accessed via all devices, including desktop or laptop computers, a smart phone or tablet. Classrooms are fully interactive with breakout rooms, polls, and many other features to make learning interesting, engaging and fun



“Lyndal Perry Lead Trainer (Getting There and Transition and Work Education kept her virtual classes vibrant and fun by dressing up in a variety of fun outfits.”

Our Learner Engagement Officers (LEOs) were integral in providing ongoing support for learners, helping them embrace the technology and make it work for them. Our LEOs were also there to support our learners to address any other issues they experienced during the lockdown period that were a barrier to them continuing their learning journey. Paying attention to supporting and addressing learners’ other challenges was key to our learner retention during this period.

Learners across our full range of courses and programs embraced the change to online learning, strongly supported by our trainers who retained the spirit of face-to-face classes as much as possible. Our dedicated, flexible and adventurous learners included those with cognitive disabilities, job seekers, people with a disability, and those seeking to change careers.

Moving our courses online to the 'VIRTUAL CLASSROOM'

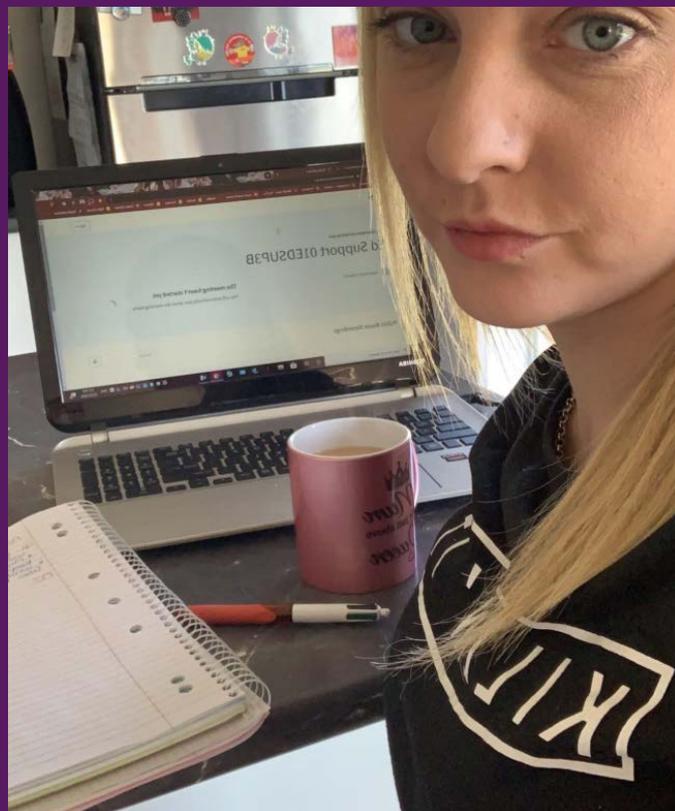
OUR LEARNINGS

COVID restrictions saw mandatory government requirements to engage with education removed for the majority of our Getting There jobseeker learners. With these learners no longer needing to meet the requirement of attending class, we expected to see a drop in engagement, particularly with the added challenges of moving to an online learning environment.

To our surprise, we found that many of our more vulnerable learners preferred the new online environment. They were engaging more with their trainer and their education, attendance rates in some cases were higher than normal, and we had learners requesting further study activities and even fast-tracking their way through their course.

For those dealing with high anxiety and other mental health and life barriers, removing the need to attend class in person, and having a screen between them and their trainer and classmates made it easier to engage and connect. Classes were able to be delivered in shorter time frames, with more one-on-one interaction for learners with trainer.

Ultimately, we see the online (or virtual) classroom as an extra tool - improving our ability to engage with our learners and with our communities. It will continue to sit alongside our traditional course delivery as we move beyond COVID. It enables access for learners who may be physically isolated (through COVID, or from isolated rural communities) to engage in education and interact with peers without having to travel. It can also be used as an initial engagement tool to gradually introduce learners who are anxious about mixing with people into the face-to-face classroom and make learning accessible for those whose working hours that mean they cannot access class times.



I have noticed that our students are embracing the opportunity to work in a way which is most suitable for their individual situation. Rather than needing to sit in a typical classroom from 9-3, they are now able to work on their course content when it most suits them. This enables them to time their course work and interactions around their other life commitments.

This flexibility in learning and ability to interact with trainers has broken down communication barriers in a positive way. Our learners are reaching out and taking advantage of the more personalised access to their trainer and are thriving because of it.



From Our Getting There Trainer

Some Highlights From 2020

The Centre supported our industry partners in responding to crucial staff training needs. Throughout November and December, our Southern Region team partnered with NEXUS Health in Seymour to provide 'Deliver Medications' training online, and supported simulated workplace practice to 58 Personal Care staff.

Our Northern Region team worked closely with learners in Wangaratta and surrounds with a cognitive disability, through our tri-partnership with Open Door Neighborhood House and Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH). Connecting with support staff and the families of learners to ensure learning could continue – providing a point of stability in a world turned COVID upside-down. Our inspiring Transition Education and Work Education learners were supported to communicate online, undertake projects with their families and learn independence and core work skills during the lockdown periods.

VET

STATISTICS

DATA 2020 SKILLS FIRST FUNDED

	2020
Total Commencements	361
Individual Learners	256
Age 15-25	73
Age 26-64	182
Age 65+	1
Male	75
Female	181
Unidentified Sex	0
Employed	90
Unemployed	166
No Disability	183
With Disability	73

2019 FFS SHORT COURSE

Total Commencements	880
Individual Learners	793
Age 15-25	116
Age 26-64	639
Age 65+	38
Male	468
Female	324
Prefer not to state gender	1
Employed	720
Unemployed	73



Vocational Education & TRAINING FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

BUILDING SKILLS FOR LIFE & WORK

22301VIC CERTIFICATE I IN TRANSITION EDUCATION
& 22302VIC CERTIFICATE I IN WORK EDUCATION

Learners who completed the Certificate I in Transition Education and Certificate I in Work Education at The Centre in 2020 worked to improve their social and independent living skills and developed confidence to take the next step on their personal development journey, including into meaningful employment.

The 'Transition Education' component of this course continued with our cohorts from Wangaratta and Benalla as a combined virtual classroom. With the support from their families, these learners were able to continue their studies, providing a sense of routine during an otherwise stressful time. Work packs were delivered to learners with activities to complete while at home. One such project was a cooking task, where learners were provided with a recipe

Learner Story

"I studied Trans Ed at The Centre. I made friends and I liked lots of stuff and enjoyed the experience of the whole course. Lyndal was my trainer, she made the course fun and I made friends during the course. I have finished the first part of the course, I am now doing Work Ed."



and ingredients from which they then cooked a meal to enjoy with their families. This process was documented with photos that were then submitted to their trainer.

Online, the learners were incredibly supportive of each other and worked closely with their fellow learners to socialise and engage at the end of each section. Keeping this social connection was a very important part of maintaining the group feel and supported learning social skills, in spite of COVID isolation. Another important part of their course was working with their trainer to set their goals for their learning – whether that be to continue on to further study, enter the workforce or commence volunteering.

“The course has given our clients real life skills, with them evolving from an adult-led student mindset to a more independent, life-ready outlook. There is a strong emphasis on repetition for long term learning, and also trying multiple approaches to accessing information. This course been an invaluable addition to our day programs for young adults transitioning to supported independence.”

Disability Services Provider Story

welcoming, and supportive learning environment that supports learners to develop their skills at their own pace and experience projects that interest and challenge them.

The demand for strong enterprise or core work skills in job candidates is vital for job seekers. These are the transferable skills all employers are seeking in employees. In fact, up to 75% of employers seek these skills above industry skills. Having strong literacy, numeracy and communication skills is also essential in the workforce. Every job requires these abilities at some level. These skills are further embedded through the group and individual projects learners complete during their course.

Learner Story

“I was recommended to do this course through my job provider MADEC. I learnt how to apply for a job and to make resumes. I enjoyed making power points and how to use the computer and I also learnt how to research for things and found that beneficial. I also think that the computer stuff that I covered in the course would help when joining the workforce. I finished the course in October 2020, and I have gained new employment, but I am wanting to do further studies.”

GETTING THERE

22472VIC & 22473VIC CERTIFICATES I & II IN GENERAL EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

Our award-winning program, Getting There, is an engaging and supportive learning and education program that helps learners to gain the confidence and skills needed to apply for and gain employment, or go onto further education.

Delivered through Certificate I and Certificate II in General Education for Adults, The Centre provides a warm,

Our focus is on ensuring learners emerge from this course with language around these skills – particularly the core work skills. We help learners to be able to talk about and clearly demonstrate the skills they have acquired. This includes building confidence to convey this to prospective employers through their resume, during interviews and when cold calling on prospective employers.

The power of Getting There is that it is a whole-of-person program that builds self-awareness and supports goal setting and aspiration.



Industry

QUALIFICATIONS

We delivered Certificate III and IV qualifications in aged care, disability and education support throughout our region, including in Baranduda, Benalla, Broadford, Chiltern, Flowerdale, Mansfield, Seymour and Wangaratta - through face-to-face classes when not restricted by COVID, and when necessary through our virtual classroom – B3.

All of these qualifications require mandatory work placement. We thank our many partner employers for supporting this vital element of our learner's journey towards being truly work-ready.

HELPING LEARNERS ACHIEVE

(TEACHER'S AIDE)

CHC30213 CERTIFICATE III IN EDUCATION SUPPORT

Teacher's Aides play a key role in the classroom supporting children who have difficulties with learning. They make a real difference, helping children enjoy their learning, and grow in confidence as they achieve along with their classmates. Teacher's Aides have been even more important during COVID, as children have faced the challenges of lockdown and isolation.

"I enjoyed learning with the trainer and found that the way she explained the topics we studied made it less daunting than if we were to go through the units by ourselves. This alone made you want to go to class."

There were other students that got placement at the same school I did. I was very lucky that I got to work during COVID, where I was employed by the school five days a week in term 4. It was great to keep in touch with the other students at school as well as during our group discussions online."

Learner Story

"I was interested in a career where I could work with children and have the flexibility to support my own children in their studies. I had wanted to work in this field for a long time and decided to take up the opportunity during COVID in 2020.

As a part of this course, we do placement within a school, but before I could even commence my placement the school had offered me paid work. I really enjoyed the virtual classroom environment and being able to brainstorm and bounce ideas around with the other students and the trainer in my class."

Employer Story

Following very positive feedback from Tallarook Primary School Principal on the quality of the learning demonstrated by The Centre's learners, two learners from The Centre's Seymour Education Support course were offered employment. The school followed this up with a request to be a 'recommended potential employer' for future Education Support learners from The Centre.

Learner Story



AGEING, HOME AND COMMUNITY

CHC33015 CERTIFICATE III IN INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT (AGEING, HOME AND COMMUNITY)

Our Certificate III in Individual Support qualification is operated in two different models. The first model combines classes →conducted in our classroom as well as classes onsite within an aged care facility. This ensures that learners become thoroughly familiar with the work environment within an aged care facility prior to employment. Members of the facility's leadership team are involved as guest speakers throughout the course to assist the learners understand employer expectations, requirements of the industry and how to be effective, respectful and caring personal care workers. This model results in strong employment outcomes – often with the host facility.

Leamer Story

"I heard of The Centre through a recommendation from a friend. I have always wanted to work with the elderly. It's been a while since I've been in fulltime work as I was a stay-at-home mum. I have enjoyed getting to know the skills of the trade and I feel that every part of this course will prepare me for entering the workforce.

I was lucky enough to be offered employment from the employer where I completed my placement. I finished my course mid-2020 and I am still employed in the field at the employer where I completed my placement."

In our other locations, we have run our Certificate III in Individual Support followed by our Certificate IV in Disability. The combination of these two qualifications has allowed learners to gain skills across the entire spectrum of community health as it relates to aged and disability care. This combination provides more diverse opportunities for employment. Our learners develop invaluable community sector links with training being provided in the classroom and onsite within partner organisations.

Mandatory work placement through our partner facilities is also a leading factor in employment success following graduation.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Working with people with a disability

CHC43115 CERTIFICATE IV IN DISABILITY

During this course, learners master working effectively and respectfully with people living with disabilities and how to meet their individual care needs. While some learners undertake this qualification on its own, including existing workers through our flexible work-place model, this qualification is an ideal study pathway for learners graduating from our Certificate III in Individual Support. Learners are able to credit some units from the Certificate III into the Certificate IV.

Leamer Story

"I chose to study this course to T for my role working with a variety of clients in Residential Housing. I found the Certificate IV in Disability course is a lot broader and covered the requirements for my job, than the other course I was studying in Child Youth and Intervention.

I chose to study with The Centre as I had completed my First Aid certificate here previously and I found that the structure of this course with smaller classes and a more flexible timetable was a better fit for me."





Learning Engagement & SUPPORT TEAM

The Learner Engagement Team comprises Learner Engagement Officers (LEO) who provide support to learners in our courses throughout the Hume region. This was challenging during COVID restrictions, with many learners and clients feeling isolated, fearful and anxious about their health and safety, and the future. Unable to meet with learners and clients face-to-face, our LEOS met the increased demand for support with phone consultations and via zoom where possible. They also assisted our learners in adjusting to online learning and juggling this with supervision of children doing home schooling.

Learner Story

A learner studying in Certificate III in Education Support was on the brink of withdrawing from her course due to lack of a laptop and ill health. A LEO visited her in hospital, delivering a laptop so that she could continue her course. This learner was able to continue her learning while in hospital through The Centre's B3 online class.

Our Learner Engagement Team continued to distribute care packages of groceries, disposable nappies and personal care goods to clients and learners in the Wangaratta area through The Centre's relationship with FoodShare. We also worked with Upper Murray Family Care to distribute donated Christmas gifts to vulnerable families in the Wangaratta region and Mitchell Shire.

STRENGTHENING FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Face-to-face delivery of this important family communication program had to be suspended during the 2020 COVID lockdowns. We kept in contact with parents who had registered for the course via phone, posting cards, recipes and activities for children.

Flexibility was key in 2020. We conducted a condensed program in the last couple of months of the year through Baranduda Primary School. We also piloted one program online as part of the Barwon Youth Child and Family online pilot. Feedback was very positive. This opens up options for participation by families from isolated rural areas in the future.

Bon Voyage RECONNECT 2018-20

We finalised our 2018-20 Reconnect program in December 2020. Through this program, we worked with 153 people to address complex barriers (which often included multiple health and well-being conditions) that prevent them from successfully engaging in formal education and training.

They were supported prior to formal enrolment, during their learning programs and afterwards as they moved into further education or employment.

Learner Story #1

D was a Reconnect participant in her late 40s and has experienced significant loss and trauma in her life resulting in emotional and mental health issues (including depression and anxiety). She also had very low literacy and numeracy skills.

When she started her Getting There course she did not feel confident or hopeful that she would be able to complete the course. Working with her LEO, D was supported to explore her options and identify goals. With COVID restrictions coming in, she was provided with a loan laptop and supported by her LEO and trainer to develop the skills she needed to commence her course online.

D's LEO worked with The Centre's Volunteer Skillsbank to find a volunteer to provide more support with online learning. Despite these challenges, D stated, "there's no way I'm pulling out, I'm finishing this course NO MATTER WHAT!!"

Learner Story #2

M is a 17 year-old male who commenced as a Reconnect participant late 2019. He had been involved with the Youth Justice system for three years and was living in youth residential care. A learning disability, anger issues, ADHD, mental health issues and strong dyslexia had resulted in feeling he would never be able to succeed in learning.

With support from his LEO, he completed his Youth Justice order, changed his social group, ceased substance abuse and started to develop confidence. Working with his LEO, he set strong, clear and achievable education goals to gain his Certificates I and II in General Education for Adults and then complete a hospitality course. He enrolled in the 2020 Getting There program where his LEO and the trainer supported him to develop a learning plan to ensure he would succeed.

This included workbooks in a font that assists people with dyslexia, providing a special font for his online component of the course and organising some additional short one-on-one lessons as needed. There were some difficult moments and frustrations, but M has done a complete turn-around thanks to his hard work and the support of his LEO and other workers.



Anne Pennington

AWARD

The Centre's Anne Pennington Award is celebrated each year during Adult Learners Week to honour the memory of former Centre staff Anne Pennington who passed away in 2004.

Individuals are nominated for the award based on their enjoyment of, and engagement with learning, as well as development of knowledge and skills, care and encouragement of others, persistence and teamwork. Individuals are eligible to be nominated from any of The Centre's learning or volunteering programs.

This year the Anne Pennington Award looked a little different to years of past, with the awards ceremony held online via Zoom in light of the COVID restrictions.

With students nominated across our programs and various regions, the successful recipient was

Wendy commenced study as a starting point to re-join the workforce. Wendy saw herself with a career in the aged care sector, but it did not take long before she discovered a love for learning and subsequently enrolled in the Cert IV in

Disability. Wendy has helped others in the class, (especially those with English as their third or fourth language) by initiating discussion groups and explaining content where it was needed. In the age of COVID and home schooling, Wendy did not miss a class, virtual or in person.

She took every opportunity offered - attending extra study groups, getting together with other learners to work together and calling on the trainer when needed. She was always the first to submit assessments and decided to go to Benalla for placement as it was available sooner than placement in Mansfield. She has truly demonstrated her commitment to, and engagement with learning.

Wendy received a framed certificate and a monetary prize, donated by Anne's parents the late Mr and Mrs. Stan Docker. She is also included into the perpetual Anne Pennington Awards book which is on display at The Centre in Wangaratta.



Finding STRENGTHS



Throughout 2020 the Finding Strengths project was rolled out across the Hume region. For The Centre, this special project is a first and we eagerly anticipated the outcomes that were ahead, believing we had co-developed a program that would see tangible, sustainable outcomes for one of our most vulnerable cohorts. Working closely with our major partner the Department of Justice and Community Safety, La Trobe University and our funding provider – Department of Social Services’ Try Test Learn fund, we managed to navigate through some of the challenges that presented in 2020 and continued to work to forge strong partnerships and work collaboratively to deliver some encouraging and exciting results.

and numeracy. We made use of the first COVID lockdown by developing I am.

I am is based on Gray Poehnell’s career integrity approach that supports ongoing, sensitive and hope-filled career and employment conversations with each individual. It was specifically designed to be delivered from a positive psychology perspective. The conversations are based on who they are and uses culturally sensitive methodology, supporting participants to develop greater self-awareness, identify and explore their strengths, natural skills, values and beliefs, to examine current choices and lifestyle and explore and create new pathways to achieve goals. The



Early in the year as Corrections Victoria closed its doors due to the COVID pandemic, we set about creating ways for our cohort to still participate in a COVID-safe manner. IT packs were loaned to our participants to enable them to access the Centre’s virtual classroom, and Team-viewer allowed us to remotely access devices to support participants to navigate their way around the laptop. And so, remote interaction and learning was implemented. For some, this was the first time they had access to a computer and the internet and a whole new world had opened up to them.

course develops job exploration, life-long learning, work search, work maintenance and self-management skills. Most importantly, it assists each learner to realign their lives towards positive change and action.

It quickly became apparent that some of our participants would require intense support, particularly with literacy

I am was well received by our participants, and engagement was extraordinary, opening the door for clinical work to commence. For some participants it is the first ‘course’ they had ever completed successfully.

As lockdown restricted us from delivering clinical assessments face-to-face, our Finding Strengths clinicians created a professional development unit for our trainers called The Successful Classroom. This aimed to educate

trainers on how to work with difficult behaviours that may be evident in learners with potential learning difficulties and foster a safe learning environment. Our trainers saw this unit as adding real value to their practice individually and as a team. We were beginning to see some real positives of the lockdown with the quality of programs being produced.

COVID restrictions meant we were unable to work from Corrections Victoria as planned, so The Centre sought an office in Shepparton to work from. We began seeking referrals from Alcohol and Other Drug service providers, and new partnerships were developed. Referrals from these agencies commenced, which strengthened our

position in the community and has given more scope, making us better placed to meet the community need for education in disadvantaged cohorts with many barriers.

Throughout the past 12 months, we have seen some very positive results from some of our participants and are looking forward to the next six months of this pilot project. We have had some great learnings to take forward and are enjoying working closely with and continue to build strong partnerships with community agencies and government departments to achieve results that in some cases are lifechanging.

S was introduced to the Finding Strengths Project through his Community Corrections Service (CCS) case manager and one of the project's Learner Engagement Officers (LEO). The LEO contacted S to discuss the benefits of the program and how it could support him to utilise key strengths and build employability skills and educational opportunities. Prior to engaging in the Finding Strengths Project, S experienced extreme hardship stemming from a low level of educational attainment, AOD use and questionable lifestyle choices. He recognised these issues had caused him to feel a sense of worthlessness. When Finding Strengths contacted S, he viewed it as an opportunity to identify and repair many of the values he struggled to foster earlier in life.

During the program, the LEO and S were able to develop a deeper understanding of his skills, knowledge and aptitudes. The LEO provided S with weekly support and worked on building learning, employment and personal plans tailored to S's needs. S also utilised the support of the program's clinicians, meeting with a speech pathologist to build on various skills S wanted to develop in order to engage in employment or education. S is now in the process of exiting the program having built his skills and obtaining full-time employment in a field he and the LEO felt suited his skillset. S recognises the role the Finding Strengths team played in assisting him reaching this outcome and believes the project helped to "change his life".

Learner story

J was referred to the program by his CCS case manager. He was immediately interested in the program when the LEO contacted him offering support to identify, develop and foster areas that were important to achieving his goals. J experienced difficulty during school, finding it difficult to socialise, which resulted in him "hanging with the wrong crowd". This led him to a lifestyle of alcohol and drug abuse and involvement with the legal system, leaving him lacking in self-confidence and self-esteem.

Upon entering the program, the LEO and J completed assessments based on his educational history and employment readiness. J confided in the LEO that he believed that he had a learning disability. The LEO was able to link J to the program's clinicians to assist in identifying possible barriers.

J built a support system within the program and used assistance in building employability skills, while also identifying employment possibilities. He gained full-time employment in an industry that utilises the skills and strengths the program helped him to find.

J currently remains engaged in the program and continues to work closely with the LEO to develop job maintenance skills and explore possibilities around enrolling in a course that will help him achieve his ultimate goals. J credits the Finding Strengths Project with providing him with opportunities he never saw coming.

Learner story

Feedback

"I got excited about completing something, I didn't think I could". *Anonymous*

"I became more self-aware and it was good to have the activities to reflect and remind me. I have gained a lot from this. I am has allowed for me to make some positive changes". *Anonymous*

"This course is going to change people's individual worlds – people are more likely to choose to be involved when it is about them. I would recommend to others, especially those who feel like they've been beaten down in life. This course has done wonders for me". *Anonymous*

| PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FROM IAM



Sport **NORTH EAST**



On January 2, 2020 Alpine, Towong and The Rural City of Wangaratta local government areas were included as part of Victoria's state of disaster. "780,000 hectares had burnt including 100,000 hectares near Corryong in the North East and fifty fires were burning across the state." (Andrew Crisp - Emergency Management Commissioner 2020) North East Victoria experienced very hot weather and endured prolonged periods of smoke haze, disrupting whole communities and every sporting organisation in our region. It wasn't until 27 February that all significant fires in Victoria were declared contained.

Communities came together and sporting club members rallied opening their facilities and their hearts to help in any way they could.

Sport took a back seat for a period as communities dealt with the immediate impact of the fires. But just as clubs were emerging from the bushfire disaster, a new challenge loomed - COVID 19 arrived and the sporting landscape in 2020 was like no other seen before.

On 23 March, a State of Emergency was declared with all community sport, social sport and active recreation suspended.

Sport North East moved quickly to support clubs through this difficult period, becoming a one-stop resource for sport specific information and tools to manage through the COVID 19 crisis.

Supporting an initiative led by Regional Sport Victoria, Sport North East conducted one-on-one 'Guided Conversations' with local sporting clubs establishing a comprehensive data set demonstrating that the physical, social, and mental wellbeing of members and communities was of paramount importance to regional Victorians.

Phase 1

Phase 1 of data gathering in April and May collected 'immediate responses to the global pandemic'. Health concerns of members and communities were top of mind, along with the financial impact on clubs with the loss of their season(s), and uncertainty around the timelines for a safe return to play as pandemic fluctuated in response to outbreaks and clusters.

Sport North East assisted clubs to prepare and submit grant applications during late May, as Return to Play Guidelines were released, along with Community Sport Sector Short-term Survival Packages.

As grant funding rounds to support community sporting organisations were announced by government, local governments and a range of other organisations, Sport North East promoted grant information and assisted clubs and associations with their grant applications. An unprecedented volume of grant approvals to clubs across sporting codes in the North East were received in 2020.



Phase 2

Phase 2 of 'Guided Conversations' ran through June into mid-July and was 'future focused'. A range of clubs moved to engaging their members and supporters virtually, conducting on-line group chats, using Zoom for virtual training sessions and committee meetings. Some clubs got busy reviewing policies and procedures while other clubs went into what was best described as a holding pattern.

1 June saw the resumption of non-contact training for a range of sports and many of the Guided Conversations highlighted concerns about compliance with COVID Safety Plans as play resumed. Volunteer fatigue was emerging as a product of uncertainty and continuing concern for the health and wellbeing of members.

Sport North East ran online workshops in Alcohol Management, Child Safety and Gender Equity for clubs

From An Idea Great Things Grow

PICKLEBALL

Launching in June 2019 with just four players, the Wangaratta Pickleball Club Inc grew from strength to strength in 2020, boasting 25 members and a further 50 regular players by December 2020 and over 200 followers on their Facebook page.

Club President Bryan Wilson and his committee worked closely with the team at Sport North East in 2020 co-designing programs supporting this growth.

"Sport North East provide practical ideas and support, helping to secure grants and develop programs to spread the news about pickleball in Wangaratta and beyond. All sporting clubs from any code can call the team at Sport North East to help their club prosper."

| Bryan Wilson – Pickleball Club President



FACEBOOK
WEBSITE

| @sportnortheast
| www.sportnortheast.com.au

that were keen to build expertise and capability, while also delivering Great Game podcasts and an Essence of Coaching podcast featuring two local sports coaches.

On-line work outs and challenges became popular and Sport North East got busy. The team created an Active at Home web site for less active members of our community, with a separate section for the 55+ segment. Other online campaigns were Active April, 30 Days A Yogi (Yoga), Tour De NEVic (Cycling), Wall Volley Challenge (Tennis) and SPORTOBERVic (Outdoor Activities). These challenges had an audience reach in excess of 10,000 across our region.

Finally, in early December guidelines eased allowing for the return of all sport and active recreation activities operating under COVID Safe Plans.

Kicking Goals

 <p>RCoW BUSINESS & COMMUNITY RECOVERY GRANT \$3,500 for Wangaratta Battle of the Businesses tournament</p>	 <p>VICHEALTH REIMAGINING HEALTH GRANT \$10,000 for equipment, T-shirts & prizes for a Battle of the Schools tournament between 3 secondary schools</p>
 <p>SPORT & RECREATION VICTORIA COMMUNITY SPORT SECTOR \$1,000 short-term survival package Round 1</p>	 <p>SPORT & RECREATION VICTORIA COMMUNITY SPORT SECTOR \$500 short-term survival package Round 2</p>
 <p>25 MEMBERS & ANOTHER 50 REGULAR PLAYERS</p>	 <p>210 FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS</p>

Pickleball president was one of two representatives from the North East for the Regional Sport Victoria 'Future of Community Sport' workshop



Betty Harper (middle seated) is a resident of our **Community Visitors Scheme (CVS)**
Also Pictured L - R : Sandi Beel of Rangeview Nursing Home, Nanette Collins Project Officer Community Programs, Kathy Dodgshun CVS Visitor with her son Xavier.

Community PROGRAMS

CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

Community Programs has continued to support and engage our volunteers in a year like no other. We ensured everything was available digitally and supported our volunteers through new virtual means, whilst moving to phone and postal support for those volunteers uncomfortable with online technology.

The long-lasting effects of COVID have impacted the Volunteering sector markedly; however, we have seen great strength and commitment from those in our communities wishing to support one another during these times, and remarkably creativity and innovative ways of continuing to volunteer during COVID restrictions.



LET'S GET DIGITAL Program

Late in 2020, we secured funding through Volunteering Victoria to support our local communities through the immediate issues brought on by COVID.

Our revamped Digital Literacy program will be available in early 2021 to support local Volunteer Involving Organisations and Sporting Clubs in Wangaratta, Towong and Alpine local government areas build vital knowledge and skills to connect with their members and thrive in the virtual environment we have been forced to work in. The aim of this program is that more volunteers will be able to engage with and support their communities moving forward.

THE VOLUNTEER CENTRE Program

We relaunched this program with a new name and a new website for our Volunteer Management program. Previously Volunteer Skillsbank, the new and improved Volunteer Centre has reinvigorated how we support people to be actively involved in volunteering in their communities. This has also included updating our volunteer training, offering monthly in person and online contacts from mid-2020, to meet the needs of our communities.



www.volunteercentre.com.au

DO CARE Program

Similar to the Community Visitors Scheme, the Do Care program volunteers support Wangaratta residents within their own homes to stay connected.

COMMUNITY VISITORS SCHEME *Program*

Community Visiting programs aim to benefit volunteers and aged residents within the Hume community, through providing an opportunity of friendship and companionship. This year our volunteers rose to the COVID challenge - switching to letter writing, phone calls, video calls and much more to ensure our elderly and isolated members of the community were not forgotten.

Some of our volunteers went above and beyond to connect with their residents – standing in gardens to talk through windows, creating a book exchange with personalised notes, singing to residents outside their facility window and dropping off meals, to name a few.



Our Community Programs team went out to spread the word about our programs across the region.

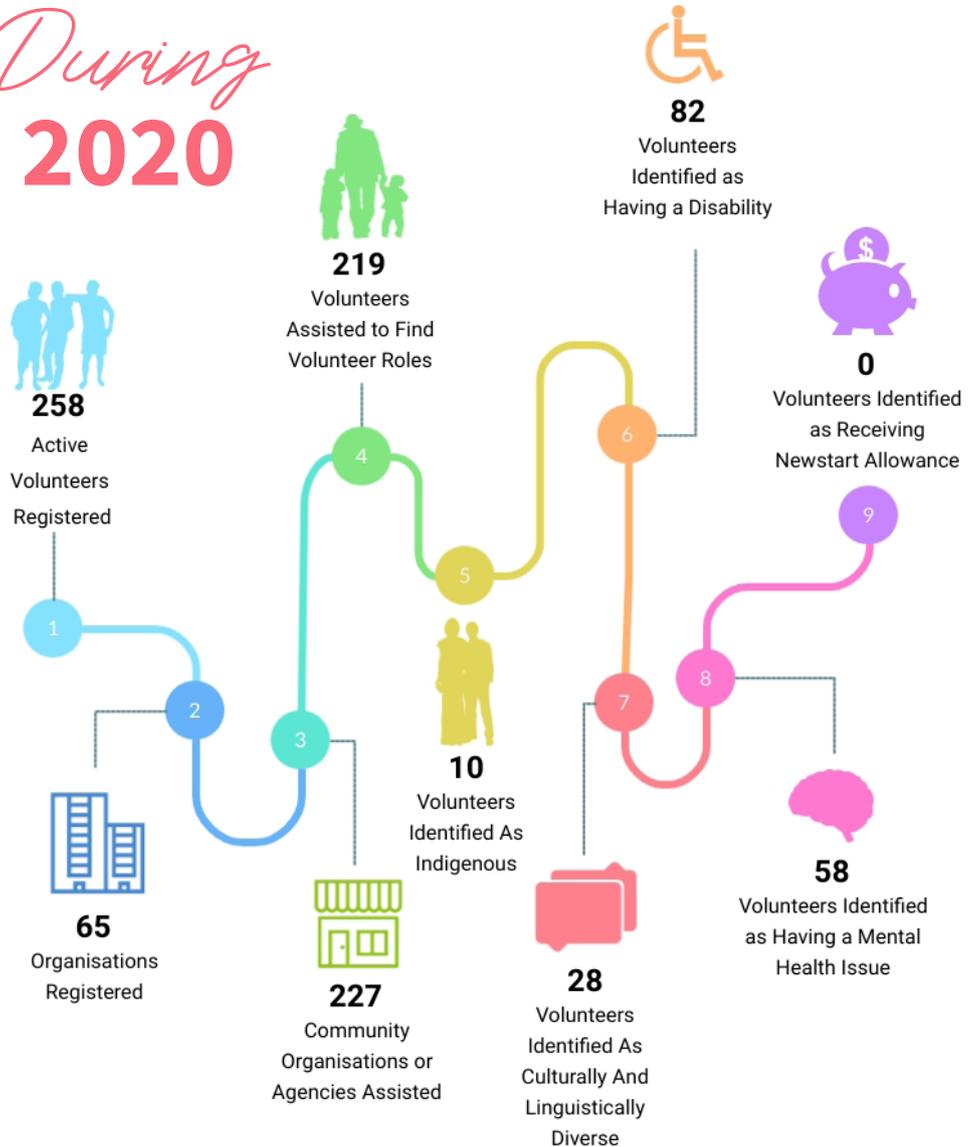
Highlights

100
Visitors Visited

102
Residents

1,704
Visits Made, Across
19 Towns In
The Hume Region

During
2020



WANGARATTA
17 Chisholm Street,
Wangaratta VIC 3677

SEYMOUR
3 Wallis Street,
Seymour VIC 3660

BENALLA
Barc Avenue,
Benalla 3672

SHEPPARTON
9-11 Fraser Street,
Shepparton 3630

Incorporated Association A0001858K
ABN 22 135 103 997
Registered Training Organisation TOID 4172
Adult Community Further Education Provider
Registered Provider of VCAL
The Centre is a Child Safe Organisation




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