

We would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people, who are the traditional custodians of this land.

**RESERVOIR NEIGHBOURHOOD
HOUSE ANNUAL REPORT**

2016-17



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Reservoir Neighbourhood House



Chair's Report

On behalf of the Board of Management, I am proud to present the Reservoir Neighbourhood House Annual Report 2016 – 2017.

It's been a busy and exciting year at the House this year! I encourage you to take the time to read about the many programs and activities we have delivered to our community during this time.

Our aim is to enhance the health, wellbeing and employment prospects of our local community. We have experienced growing community engagement with the House over the year, and are very pleased to be known as a place where local residents can come to participate in a range of activities, seek information and practical support to access other local services they need, and interact with others in a safe and welcoming environment. More and more residents are seeing Reservoir Neighbourhood House as a one stop shop where they can get a range of supports all in one place. An important focus of the House over the last year has been to expand the food relief options we can offer those who use the House, in response to our increasing awareness of food insecurity for many in our community.

We have been able to achieve this through partnerships and support from a range of local organisations who see the value in our work. This year, in addition to our monthly community lunches, we have been able to offer weekly food hampers, hot meal provision and as needed, a community pantry filled with non-perishables twice weekly (just outside our front door), a weekly 'drop in' lunch day, free bread and rolls twice weekly, and a monthly pick up of a significant quantity of fresh fruit and vegetables for distribution.

We hope to investigate ways to also increase sustainable food options and programs to our community in the coming year.

The RNH Board and Executive Officer have undertaken a range of activities over the year to seek additional funding support for the House to enable us to better meet the needs of our community. These have included grant applications, and a range of advocacy activities. Some community members joined in these activities too – thanks to all who signed a petition to the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council of Victoria for additional funding!

We are thrilled that Darebin City Council has advised us that they would provide us with an increase to the portion of our funds that they provide. We are very grateful for their ongoing support.

This past year saw some changes in our Board membership. We have farewelled Joy Stevenson, Jian Xiao and Donna Swan, all of whom have made significant and valuable contributions to the governance of the organisation. We also have welcomed new member Luci Russell, adding to the diverse mix of skills, experience and expertise held by our Board.

The Board would like to acknowledge and thank RNH's dedicated and skilled staff and volunteers, who under the leadership of Executive Officer, Angie Davidson-Slater, have worked hard to make this such a successful year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our community, our organisational partners and our funders, all of whom provide invaluable support to Reservoir Neighbourhood House, through funding support, partnerships, and sharing your knowledge, time and skills. Thank you for making sure that the programs and activities we provide are effective, and meet the needs of our diverse community.

I hope you enjoy reading this annual report and look forward to your ongoing support in the upcoming year!

Kristine Olaris

Chair, Board of Management



A message from the Executive Officer

This year has been a rollercoaster of learnings, inspiration, laughter and heartache. As the person responsible for representing and leading this organisation, I have questioned myself many times over the past 12 months, wondering whether I am making the right decisions, representing the community correctly, making a difference, doing the right work, if there's a better, smarter way of working? It's been an especially tough year for many in our community. We lost a couple of dear and valued community members to long term illness and we are seeing more and more people struggling to meet some of the most basic of needs.

This has lead us to have some serious discussions with our community and partners to come up with a plan, a way forward to do the best we can in advocating, resourcing, educating and directly supporting people not only when in crisis, but the prevention and response before crisis hits. Our strategic plan mirrors the work we are focussing on with our community. Community development programs related to food security, health, improved family relationships and increasing circles of connection have been at the fore for us this year. This type of work makes the day to day connections carried out within a Neighbourhood House difficult to define and rarely understood in its entirety by those looking in.

Recently, while picking up some materials for the Neighbourhood House from a warehouse miles away, I met a woman who said her mum had started up a Neighbourhood House over 30yrs ago. Based in a housing estate, it started as a Women's group and grew to become a Neighbourhood House. She recalled the trips they use to take to Ardmona in Shepparton to buy cheap tins of food and other goods that they would then use to raise money for families to go to the beach on camps. She said she had such fond memories of this time.

She told me that nobody had any money so the Neighbourhood House (her mum as the Manager) use to make sure that families could not only stock up their food cupboards, but have access to fun, valued activities. Things like movie nights with lolly bags and free workshops put on by others to build skills and community connections. The more she talked the more I felt inspired, re-invigorated. I also wanted to cry. This woman, as a child had been deeply impacted upon by the care and involvement of her local Neighbourhood House community and over 30 years later, talked to me about it like it was yesterday.

This conversation not only reminded me of why I work in a Neighbourhood House, but also of the difficulties that Neighbourhood House's, past, present and future continue to face. Our communities need spaces and places to connect, feel welcome and supported to be part of something bigger. How do we explain to funders that outcomes cannot necessarily be measured by traditional means? How do we capture and understand the true picture of Neighbourhood Houses and their importance in connecting, building and shaping community life? It's not often we have the opportunity to meet someone, many years later, after they have moved (or we as staff have moved on) to hear of the longer term impact that a local, little organisation such as a Neighbourhood House has had/or still has on life, memories and the heart.

So I say to all those who work at a Neighbourhood House, be confident, be strong, be adventurous in your leadership and trust that your community knows best. Working side by side and in partnership with your community, you will make the right decisions, you will work to your full potential and you will make a difference in building a community with a voice, who know what they want their community life to look like and will work together to make that happen.

As Dr Suess once said, 'Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment, until it becomes a memory.'

Angie Davidson-Slater

Executive Officer



Support

This year RNH has been working on building a stronger strategy in regards to food access and food security for our community. Whether that be in the form of fresh, frozen, hot meals or non-perishables.

We have aspirations of becoming a central key food support organisation for the Reservoir area and are in discussions with Foodbank as to how we can partner to make this happen and what this might look

like. There are many options for us. We are currently listening to suggestions, talking with other key local agencies and community members investigating these options and discussing what is possible.



According to Darebin City Council's 2015 Food and Nutrition Survey Report, 25.2% of people living in East Reservoir and surrounding areas had 'run out of food and not had enough money to buy more' as opposed to other areas in Darebin who did not experience the same disadvantage. Barriers in getting food home as well as difficulty getting to the store are higher in East Reservoir than all other suburbs in Darebin due to factors such as transport and mobility issues. 21.5% of people from East Reservoir also reported accessing food relief in the form of vouchers and/or free cooked meals.

With disadvantage can come distress. Many people accessing the Neighbourhood House are experiencing a range of stressful and challenging barriers to their wellbeing. Survey Information conducted at RNH tells us;

- 35% of people accessing the House identify as having a mental health issue
- 20% have experienced family violence
- 20% experience job uncertainty/unemployment
- 17% have/are experiencing abuse and
- 15% have/are experiencing homelessness or tenancy issues.

Thanks to support from grants, Foodbank, Secondbite and our community, we have been able to provide the following range of food support;

- Food hampers on a weekly basis
- Hot meal provision as needed
- Permanent community pantry filled with non-perishables twice weekly
- Weekly 'drop in' lunch day
- Free bread and rolls twice weekly
- Sit down monthly community lunch
- Once a month, 60kgs of fresh fruit and vegetables are distributed to community members who are experiencing financial hardship.



Little Free Library



Inspired by the movement across the globe to have free little library's in all suburbs, the Reservoir community got together and helped us to build 3 of these precious boxes. One for Watsonia Neighbourhood House, Greenhills Neighbourhood House and a little one for us.

These free little library's are there to encourage people to read more, share more books and pass on knowledge to others.

Work for the Dole – Garden Project

Thanks to Matchworks, Sarina Russo and RNH working together, we were lucky enough to be given the opportunity to be a host site for a wonderful garden project involving 30 people across 6 months at the House. This meant we were able to get some great backyard landscaping done for our community to enjoy in the warmer months! Thanks to such great staff working for us, Reservoir Neighbourhood House was thrilled to be the host site for supervisor of the year!

Hearts in Mind

Hearts in Mind Project has had a full and exciting 12 months. Hearts in Mind continues to be a unique project in exploring new ways to engage women who care for family members with a long term disability or additional needs. The Mindful Art Project (MAP) and Mindful Wellbeing for Carers Course have enabled our women carers to engage in creative activities and learn new skills they may not have otherwise made time for in their busy lives. Among these are print making, yoga, creative writing and meditation. Along with our groups, we have seen many women attend our office seeking advice and referrals for counselling, advocacy services and other support.

During the second half of the year, a La Trobe University social work student placement facilitated the creation of a much needed evaluation tool. As such, we are now able to refer to our own data when assessing programs and applying for funding. The project continues to rely on grants and donations and we're very thankful for much needed funding which has come from the following sources this year:

- Darebin City Council Community Grants - \$3,000
- Preston Connected Communities - \$3,000
- Nelson Alexander Foundation Day Grant - \$ 15,000
- Stronger Communities Program - \$5,000

In the coming year we look forward to expanding our digital focus with a stronger on-line presence. The ongoing positive feedback remains encouraging and we are confident to continue delivering innovative programs for women who are carers, so they will engage with life and look after their own wellbeing.



- The end of year gathering is a chance for participants and facilitators to catch up Cheryl from Preston Connected Communities with Georgina, Lisa and Angie.
- Unboxing! Our MAP workbook was made possible with a grant from Preston Connected Communities and the work of RMIT graduate students in the Editing and Publishing Department.

Extra Support and Services available at the House;

Free Tax help from Australian Taxation Office

Free Legal advice from Darebin Community Legal

PRACE – Reconnect program for young people up to 25yrs old

Northern Support Services – specifically for people with disability

Mission Australia – supporting people with mental health issues as part of their PHAMS program.

Community Development

Last year we held a consultation with our community to discuss what events people would like us to be involved in. In partnership with community members the following events evolved;

- **Eid celebration**

This was our first time celebrating this important holiday marking the end of Ramadan. We had so much fun! With a suburb cook showing us how it's done we were able to hold a free community lunch focussed on learning all about what Eid means and why it is celebrated.

- **End of Year Event**

Developed, planned and run by community volunteers, partners and RNH staff, this festival celebrates cultural cohesion and neighbourhood connection. Held in the TW Andrews's Reserve, the park across the road from the Neighbourhood House in the heart of East Reservoir, it's an event not to be missed! This event couldn't be possible without funding from the Multicultural Commission of Victoria and Darebin City Council with support on the day from these organisations.



- **Women's Health Day (WHD)**

With over 100 women in attendance, this day brings local women together to learn new skills, celebrate unity and build on knowledge of services and support should you or someone you know be experiencing crisis. Each week for 8 weeks women from our local community come together to discuss the aims and objectives of the event. By trialling activities, discussing budgets and considering cultural similarities and differences, the working group decide all aspects of the event. Activities, food, raffles, goody bags and music make this day one to remember!



- **Kite Festival**

This festival, organised by Darebin City Council has been running for a number of years. Each year the Darebin Neighbourhood House network attend and run a stall on behalf of all of Houses in this network. This year, Reservoir was chosen by the network to represent Neighbourhood Houses. We had so much fun! Our activity this year; emergency contact safety bracelets for children. These bracelets are beaded by the children and include a designated emergency contact number within the design. It was well received. We were so busy the time just flew by!



- **9 Community Craft Markets**

Our craft circle group planned and delivered on 9 craft markets this year held at the Neighbourhood House during each community lunch. The group hand make all items as part of their weekly craft sessions. This group has been running for over 4 years and we feel lucky to have them at the House.



Our Community Petition to Parliament

This year with the support of our community, we presented a petition to two of our local Members for Parliament, Hon. Robin Scott and Hon. Jenny Mikakos. As we are only funded to be open 20hrs per week through the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as part of the Neighbourhood House Coordination program (NHCP), the petition was to increase these hours to full time; up to 40hrs per week. This would enable us to be open Mon to Fri with an increase in our Community Development and Engagement capacity.

We would like to say Thank You! to the 500 + people and organisations from our community who supported us to advocate for this to happen and within such a short 2 week timeframe.

Our advocacy work is not over, our community has spoken and we will continue on our path to equality! Watch this space!



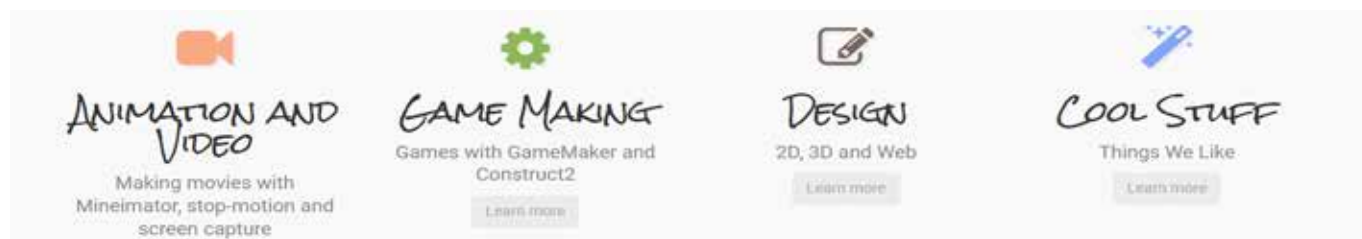
Professional Development Training

Each year staff work together to identify training opportunities relevant to our work. This year, we were able to attend:

- Recognise and respond to family violence through Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria
- Annual 2 day conference for Neighbourhood Houses in Victoria
- Grant writing workshop held with OurCommunity
- 'Let's talk about grief' workshop sponsored by Melbourne City Mission



The Reservoir Lab



The Lab www.thelab.org.au is a growing network of technology clubs for 10 to 16 year-old young people diagnosed with High Functioning Autism who enjoy working with computers. The Lab offers mentoring by technology professionals in areas such as programming, 3D, digital design and gaming.

The Lab's approach is unstructured and does not have expectations of specific education or technology outcomes. By pairing young people who have High Functioning Autism with tutors who have technical expertise in areas of mutual interest, The Lab seeks to improve the wellbeing and life prospects of young people who are often highly skilled but whose condition can lead them to fall through gaps in the mainstream education system.

RNH has 2 classes held on a Saturday involving over 20 families. It's one of our favourite programs to run and will continue to grow thanks to the wonderful support it receives from families, volunteers, staff and mentors.

Cert II – Creative Arts for Indigenous young people/transgender (CQ Uni)



RNH was lucky enough to work with a University again this year. Central Queensland University (CQU) gave us the opportunity to work in partnership to deliver locally a fully sponsored Certificate II in Visual Arts for Indigenous young people and/or transgender youth. Delivered at the Pavilion School in Preston, the course has involved weekly classes of hands-on art and technology as well as some online learning. On completion of the course in middle of September, students will have the opportunity to either continue further study, training or employment.

Grants

Each year staff and volunteers work very hard to have programs funded at the House and we are grateful for all that we have received. For 2016/17, RNH was successful in accessing 16 grants in total. Grants help us to deliver directly on our strategic plan and are key in RNH's engagement and service provision.

A total of \$211 322 was received in grants this financial year.

Our Volunteers and Partner Organisations

We'd like to thank the following organisations for their support this year

Food for the Soul, Watsonia NH, Bakers Delight Rosanna, Preston Rotary, Freemason's Ancient York Lodge in Preston, Lions Club of Reservoir, Foodbank, Your Community Health, Darebin City Council, Grill'd Preston, Victorian Racing Club, Pinch-a-poo, SecondBite and Darebin Neighbourhood House Network.



Our Wonderful Students and Volunteers

This year RNH hosted 4 students. Two of these students supported Research and Evaluation projects looking into membership models for Houses as well as designing evaluation tools for improved reporting specifically targeting the Hearts In Mind project.

The contribution volunteers and students make to our organisation is invaluable. No matter how big or small the commitment, it has a direct major impact on our ability to continue to thrive as a successful organisation.

I would like to say a special **THANK YOU** to the following people who continue to give as much support for us as they can on an operational level.

Vicki, Gerry, Rachel, Kerry, Antonietta, Jan, Omar, Daniel, Kathy, Rick, James, Brendan, Pennie, Corina, Caroline, Cass, Jen, Walter, Peter, Sam, Mel, Troy, Mikaela, Katelyn, Sarah, Sakvan, Niama, Lisa, Lee, Georgina, Joel, Mel, Howard, Lee, Dale, Luigi, Manuela, Renata, Elisabeth, Merle, Nadimah, Hayley, Kristine, Stefan, Luci, Donna, Jacqueline, Felicity, Jonathon, Tonia, Verna, Hayley, Dawn, Jiselle, Helen, Li and Cynthia.



Treasurer's Report

This financial year has seen a number of financial challenges for our House, with two of our large funded projects ending and a long-term room hire arrangement finishing up. The House has responded by thinking creatively about how to team up with network partners to continue running its full range of community projects for less, and by reducing internal costs where possible. We've also lobbied the Victorian Government to address some historical inequities in our funding model, and we've had some wins with smaller grants and support from Darebin City Council to install a new alarm system.



As a result of the reduction in income this financial year, we've had to make some adjustments in order to safeguard the House and keep it viable for the future. This has meant reducing our staff numbers by two, resulting in a lower payroll bill (but a similar 63% payroll to revenue ratio). Of course this has been hard for everyone. We miss our valued colleagues and the House's remaining staff are now working harder than ever. But it's also been necessary because the House has to cover rising wage costs and our core funding only covers 20 hours of coordination time per week.

You'll also notice that this Annual Report isn't as slickly produced as last year's. This is because we've tried to save money wherever possible at every stage, from printing and design costs to staff doing cleaning work.

The good news is that our cash holdings are now a healthy \$153,000. We're 'cash flow positive' for the 2016-2017 financial year, and our net current Assets and Liabilities figure is now a healthy \$60,608, slightly up on last year. This means that we now have a buffer that will help us weather the deficit we anticipate for the following financial year as our two major projects finish.

Other changes will also help us reduce our anticipated deficit. We've secured a new room hiring arrangement and responded to bad debt issues generated by former room hirers by moving to a prepaid room hire system. This should result in an improvement in room hire figures for the next financial year.

We're also actively promoting our spaces to others who may want to hire them. As part of that, we successfully took part in the annual City of Darebin budget allocation process, applying for the installation of a new electronic access system for the House that will allow us to more closely monitor who is using the building and when. This will help us make sure that all room hire is paid for, and that we don't pay for extra heating, cooling and other room related costs than we need to - these costs can quickly add up.

Also on that theme, we've been successful in having solar panels installed as part of a Department of Infrastructure grant from David Feeney MP, and support from the City of Darebin. This will help to reduce our energy costs and give us some much needed power savings.

Lastly, the House Executive Officer and Board Chair have been actively lobbying Victorian government MPs for a more equitable coordination funding arrangement. Currently the House receives 20 hours per week of coordination funding, whereas most other Houses in the region receive 40 hours. This anomaly is historical and nobody seems to know the reason. The House's lobbying efforts to date have included a community petition with 500 signatures as well as visits to a number of State Ministers of Parliament, with more activity planned.

Stefan Schutt

Treasurer, Board of Management



Financial Summary

The following information is an overview of the finances of Reservoir Neighbourhood House and should be read in conjunction with the Reservoir Neighbourhood House's Financial Statements for Year Ending 30 June 2017 and their accompanying notes (available at www.reservoirnh.org.au). RNH prepares the financial statements in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards as outlined in the Independent Auditor's Report.

Financial Overview

	2017 \$	2016 \$
Summary Income Statement		
<i>Income</i>		
Grants	251,099	274,323
Other	50,691	93,485
Total Income	301,790	367,808
<i>Expenditure</i>		
Employment Expenses	212,802	248,104
Other	96,546	120,674
Total Expenditure	309,348	368,778
Operating Profit/(Loss)	-7,558	-970
Summary Balance Sheet		
Cash	151,938	150,415
Receivables	15,889	54,490
Property, Plant & Equipment	7,194	7,346
Total Assets	175,021	212,251
Payables	27,049	62,262
Provisions	18,588	31,512
Income in Advance	70,847	52,382
Total Liabilities	116,484	146,156
NET ASSETS	58,537	66,095

For more information see Reservoir Neighbourhood House Treasurer's Report on the previous page along with detailed information available on our website www.reservoirnh.org.au

Our Purpose and Values



The Reservoir Neighbourhood House provides a safe and welcoming community space that promotes the prosperity and wellbeing of local residents.

We bring people together to develop and encourage employment prospects, support health and wellbeing, and enhance belonging.

We work towards the alleviation and prevention of poverty.

We specifically target isolation, illness and disability, and unemployment/under-employment.





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HOUSE**

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