

BELLAMBI NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2020

Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre

49a Cawley Road, Bellambi NSW 2518

Phone 42 853055

ABN 95927678440

board@bellambinc.org

Vision (Our hope for the future)

A place that supports the people within the community to make informed choices for their future and to connect people together to support each other to reach their full potential.

Mission (How does BNC contribute to the vision)

Be part of Collective Impact – bringing together people from different sectors to address complex social issues

Take affirmative action towards disadvantaged groups and people.

Be a safe place for people to learn, contribute, connect and play.

Values (How will we act)

Engage with community to assess our local community's needs and respond to them

Promote community-based decision making and planning

Improve the quality of our service

Act with honesty and integrity

Be fair and equitable

Encourage teamwork and co-operation to build strength

I am pleased and proud to present the 2020 Annual Report on behalf of the Board of Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre. What a year of unprecedented local, national and international challenges this has been. One thing that the fires and COVID reminded us of is that none of us are exempt from the impact of such events, the importance of being prepared, the importance of being flexible, the importance of remaining connected.

This time last year we were already seeing the devastation brought about from fires across the country. The intensity of the fires just worsened as we moved through summer. The

impact of the fires on many communities prompted us to look at how we would react if such an event happened in our local area. Being prepared - staff attended a workshop provided by Wollongong City Council and followed up with centre discussion and the writing of a Crisis Response Policy and Procedures for the centre.

In response to COVID the very next Policy we wrote was our Epidemic Pandemic Policy.

For Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre there are two words that come to mind relating to how the centre, and the local and extended community, reacted to changes brought about by COVID. **Generosity and kindness.** We saw so much extra support was given through donations of food and goods from both Community Groups and individuals. As well as simple things like phone calls to check in with people to see that all was okay.

COVID brought a whole different level of the need to be flexible and adapt to change. Things moved very fast in those first few weeks of the pandemic hitting Australia. With so much uncertainty around what was the right thing to do. The centre has remained closely connected with the latest advice from Department of Health and directions from Wollongong City Council doing all we need to keep the staff and community safe during this time. To help lift community morale, staff delivered what services we could with enthusiasm and vibrancy.

Our staff looked at new ways to do things. We were able to continue to offer essential services through “open window” and via phone for the entire COVID close down period. Staff ensured the issue of food security was addressed and hundreds of hampers, including take away meals, were made up and delivered to the community. There was an average of 400 meals a week distributed with the help of volunteers from April to September.

Social work services continued. The Centre remained connected to volunteers and community. The people we were able to help, extended beyond the core. We were unable to have volunteers in the centre due to the assessed risk to their health, but all this was achieved with just three part time staff.

The other focus was giving knowledge of information around restrictions and COVID safe practices. Training was provided to volunteers in preparation for the centre fully re-opening. The challenge to remain COVID Safe is now seen as part of everyday life in the centre.

With COVID Safety plans in place the centre has now re-opened its doors to volunteers being able to work in the centre with limited centre programs and also the return of some of our hirers.

The first centre program we have been able to welcome back is our Breakfast Program with a new look healthy menu for both breakfast and a packed lunch. This has been received with great enthusiasm from the children and tremendous feedback from parents and carers. In the first week we provided 50 children with breakfast and lunch. As at the 13th of November the total number provided was 233.

During COVID lock down BNC was able to support Shining Star Foundation by providing food and basic necessities for international students. We were also able to support Unanderra’s Community Centre and Need a Feed with meals during this time.

After a break during the COVID restriction, The Community Engagement Group has re gathered and look forward to continuing to make a solid contribution to the Centre and the greater Bellambi community.

The Board continued to meet monthly during the year by embracing ZOOM technology. Among other things did we took advantage of the time during COVID to review centre policy to ensure the documents were sustainable and up to date. We are pleased to say that all policy written in 2017 have now been reviewed. Thanks to all the work done by our staff, our policy document has now reached the level of being a truly liveable document within the centre.

The number of new people attending the centre reflects improvement in our communication. Our newsletter is distributed through 500 homes and 100 emails. Facebook connections have expanded and the note to “please share with friends, neighbours, school friends and family who are not on FB” has worked in getting messages to a greater number of people.

Interviews of our coordinator on ABC TV and radio regarding the impact of the reduction of Job Seeker payments gave the centre the chance to advocate for community as well as positive promotion of the work being done at the centre.

Another positive promotion for the centre was reaching the stage of being a Finalist in the Local Business Awards.

Early in the year two board members and staff met with Sarah Fitzgerald (from the Department of Communities and Justice – DCJ) to go through our program specification for Targeted Early Intervention (TEI) and agreed on what the centre’s targeted program activities would be. We are very pleased to have been given a funding agreement for this that will take us up to June 2025.

The changes brought about by TEI reforms highlighted the need for a qualified Social Worker to be working in the centre. A restructure to include this position took place over several months and we hope to complete the recruitment of a permanent part time Social Worker in the Centre by the end of this year. Our Coordinator’s and Social Worker’s positions are both funded by DCJ.

We continue to part of the “Our Place” (ISIT) Advisory Board with Maree Reay and Sand Hall representing Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to DCJ and Wollongong City Council for all the extra support and flexibility given during the COVID restrictions.

Thank you to our Centre staff Cath, Jen and Jan. We are so fortunate to have staff who so passionate about the work they do. They have to be commended for the positive approach they took with the challenges bought to us this year. They continue to empower community through sharing of services, goods and information, and genuine interest in safety and the improvements to people’s lives. A special thank to our coordinator Cath

who's constructive leadership during this period of uncertainty and change has been highly commendable.

Our book keeper, Siri Pastzor, who works with our Treasurer and Coordinator in meeting the bookkeeping needs of the Centre.

To our Volunteers for your understanding and flexibility during this year of constant change and for helping the staff to remain connected and reach out to community in need during COVID lock down. To every one of you, thank you for your time, passion and energy. You are a big part of what makes us proud of BNC and what makes the Centre a great place to be.

Finally I want to extend my gratitude to all current members of the Board. Blake, Lynne, Vicki, Sarah, Jono, Sand, Tracy and Samantha thank you for your generosity, commitment, expertise and time. Each member of the Board is very active in their support for the Bellambi Community. It continues to be a privilege to serve with a team that is responsive, respectful and outward thinking.

The Centre could not have achieved all we have over the last year without the tremendous team effort from all - volunteers, staff and Board.

In addition to these thanks I want to acknowledge:

- DCJ– Funding Community Building Partnership Program (Coordinators Position) and Child, Youth and Family Support Program (previously referred to as Early Intervention Placement and Prevention Program (EIPP Program).
- Wollongong City Council ongoing service support and capital works – kitchen renovation for 2020, COVID support and the Verge Garden.
- Autism Community Network – training of three volunteers as Support Leaders for Autism Community Network
- Community Industries Group – mentoring and training
- Ryan Park MP, the Member for Keira – continued support of the BNC Community through photo copying and organisation of a food drive through Bellambi Public School
- Illawarra Securities Investment Trust – Kitchen renovations
- Healthy Cities – BELLZA Program and Healthy Promotions Grant, Making Healthy Normal Grant.
- Bunnings Bellambi - continue to assist with items to support our garden planning. We have also been offered continuous fundraising opportunities Bunnings BBQ's in 2021.
- Head Space – involvement in Community Engagement Group, and Mental Health Working Party
- Need a Feed – provision of additional items for community such as furniture, utensils, school items, clothes, shoes, Blankets etc.
- Good Will Only – take away meals during COVID
- New Life Christian Church – donations of food and necessities
- Pace farms – donations of eggs
- C3 Church Thirroul – donation of food and other necessities
- Ability Options – involvement in resources for Community Engagement Group

- Clubs NSW for funding for the Breakfast Program and Community Lunch – Woonona Bulli RSL, Collegians and Wests Illawarra and Dapto Leagues
- Corrimal Lions Club for ongoing support with donation of \$2000 for use in our Community Garden
- Kiama Community College – free training courses end of 2019, 2020 courses cancelled due to COVID
- First Step Needle Exchange–
- Bonno’s Pizzeria as our major prize sponsor for Bingo
- Bakers Delight donation of fresh bread for use in Centre programs and to give free to community members through the donations hub.
- Ozharvest for supply of fresh fruit and vegetables to give to community
- Woolworths donations for community
- Corrimal Chamber of Commerce Paul Boulwood

We are so grateful for the opportunity to work in collaboration with all these organisations. Without them we could not provide and continue to improve the services offered for the community.

2020 Centre Programs

Centre Volunteers Program continues to develop with 38 people signed up to volunteer, 23 of those being currently active. Ongoing volunteer training continues with the focus over the last two month being on COVID Safe Practices and new procedures for the front office and all other centre programs. It has been great to see more job placements and acceptance of volunteering opportunities with other services from people involved in this program

Community Lunch – We moved to distributing free take away meals during COVID restrictions. We acknowledge the importance of Community lunch as it was often seen as the highlight of the week in the Centre bringing together people from all areas of Bellambi and beyond to share a meal, celebrate and enjoy the company of others. Pending where NSW sits with COVID safety we will work towards reintroducing Community Lunch during 2021

Breakfast program – This much needed program continues to give local children a great start to the day with the opportunity to have a free nutritious breakfast and be provided with school lunch in a safe and enjoyable environment.

The Donation Hub - Is a service that provides the community with cheap and/or free food. Ozharvest deliveries mean we have a healthy supply of fruit and veg provided free to the community. Bakers Delight also support this by supplying us with free bread. Ozharvest deliveries have also allow us to develop a stock pile of non-perishable items for clients in need of welfare/food assistance.

Community Garden – Provides a space for our volunteers and community to care for our vegetable garden or just hang out. We are looking forward to harvesting our crops early next year and incorporate produce in our Breakfast Program and cooking for Community Lunch.

Work Development Orders – are supported in the centre under the same structure as our volunteer program. This year we had 4 graduates who volunteered in the centre to pay off fines. The participants were engaged in their roles, made new friendships and 3 continue to be volunteers.

Computers for Seniors – This program had 2-3 participants for 2 days per week up until March. We will in future offer structured computer courses for all ages supported by Kiama Community College.

Community Craft – Craft to return.This group encourages people to engage in a wide range of low or no cost craft ideas, providing a space for social interaction, skills development, sharing ideas and fun.

Community Outreach and Referral Services

In 2020, despite Covid, we enjoyed ongoing mutual and more fruitful contact with Illawarra Family Referral Service; Wollongong Women’s Information Service (WWIS); Brighter Futures; Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation; Illawarra Drug and Alcohol Service; Supported Accommodation & Homelessness Services Shoalhaven Illawarra (SASSHI); Focus Connect – Illawarra and Macarthur; West Street Centre; Need a Feed; Department of Housing NSW; Wollongong Homeless Hub; First Step Program; ACON; Illawarra, Shoalhaven LHD Caddyshack project and the Department of Communities & Justice.

Further, successful referrals were made to Rape Crisis Line; ACON, Violence, Abuse and Neglect NSW (VAN Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS); Illawarra Area Health Mental Health Service; Step Up – Warilla Baptist Care; Bulli Community Centre – NILS program; Flourish; Lifeline NSW; Corrective Services NSW – Shine for Kids Program; Drug and Alcohol Community Youth Team; Watershed; HIV Prevention (ACON), Bellambi Public School Aboriginal Education Officer; Caddyshack; Northcott; Illawarra Advocacy; Anglicare, Baby CHAIN; ADHC (Ageing Disability and Home Care) and Centrelink.

First Step Needle Exchange – This program is supported by the Port Kembla Hospital and remained available to community throughout 2020

BELLZA’s- this term we have been able to rehost the BELLZA program which aims to implement, monitor and evaluate the impacts of play based activity for 9-12 year olds in the Bellambi community. Bellza is sponsored by Healthy Cities Illawarra in partnership with Big Fat Smile.

Homeless Hub Outdoor Markets Store – returning soon

The centre is currently working on COVID Safety Plans with Outreach Services that hire spaces in the centre including Barnardo’s Playgroup, Big Fat Smile and Legal Aid, with the hope for their safe return during 2021.

Board Plans and Priorities 2020

Continue work on Strategic priorities

- A safe and welcoming place that enhances community spirit and celebrates the positive.
- A service that supports building strong connections within community, between community and services, and between services and services
- A Board and staff that focus on sustainability through proactive decision-making and innovations that will minimize negative impact and maintain a balance between ecological resilience, economic stability, and cultural vibrancy.
- A service that addresses social sustainability within the community by cultivating local talents and skills, and by empowering people in their own and their communities decision making.

Review Strategic Objectives Early 2021

- Objective 1** A well-maintained facility that is safe and accessible and suits the current & future needs of the community.
- Objective 2** Provide and encourage volunteering within the community.
- Objective 3** Celebrate our community through a program of festivals, events and activities which focus around cultural sustainability.
- Objective 4** Increase community activities, groups and services that support financial sustainability and help strengthen individuals and the community.
- Objective 5** Provide effective information and referrals.

Also Including

- Implement DEX reporting systems.
- Engage in consultative process with our indigenous community towards developing a Reconciliation Plan the Centre
- Continued to have two Board members sitting on Community Engagement Group and among other needs that arise during the year, supporting the group in their request to get more “guest speakers” along to the group to talk about issues of importance to community.
- Seek support for major works at the centre (replacement of perimeter fence)
- Taking into account any potential COVID restrictions, supporting staff to continue to work towards safely welcoming Community back in the centre and supporting changes within programs.
- To support the Mental Health and Wellbeing Working Party supporting the sale of the art work donated by Julie Edwards to support work with this group.

As we now return to “COVID normal” the staff and Board are reflecting on what we have learnt during this period. We are looking at what is important to retain and how we can do

better. We look forward to 2021 as a time for strengthen the new and old connections we have made, hoping to welcome community and programs back into the centre and continue to improve our services. Considering the challenges faced by all this year I feel incredibly proud of what BNC and the Bellambi Community have been able to achieve during 2020.

Thanks to our Members, Staff, Volunteers for your ongoing support and wishing everyone a safe and peaceful holiday season.



Maree Reay
President of the Board of Management,
Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre



ABOUT BELLAMBI NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre has been part of the Bellambi community for 40 years. The strategic direction and governance of the Centre is guided by an elected Management Board made up of volunteers with relevant skills and experience. The Board focusses on the governance of the Centre, including the budgets, risk assessments, sustainability of the service, employment of staff, policy development and opportunities associated with BNC operations.

The Board established a Community Engagement Group at the beginning of 2018. This group is made up of any interested community members, two Board representatives and the Centre coordinator. The original purpose of the group was to act as a conduit between Board and Community. The group

The day-to-day operations of BNC is led by the Centre Coordinator. The Coordinator reports directly to the Boards and works with the other staff, volunteers, community and outreach services to offer a wide range of programs and activities catering for everyone from families, young children, youth through to seniors. The target group is as determined by our funding from Department of Community and Justice. The coordinator is responsible for support and supervision of all Centre staff and volunteers. Centre staff and volunteers report directly to the coordinator,

The building is owned by Wollongong Council who license the management of the building to BNC. This allows us to provide our own activities and services, as well as offering space for other community services to hire. Rooms can also be hired by the general community for activities and events.

We have two permanent part time staff employed at the Centre under DCJ funding, our coordinator and a Social Worker. We also employ a permanent part time cleaner.

All our activities are supported by the efforts of a highly generous volunteer group who engage in our Volunteer Program.

2019 Board Members

President:	Maree Reay
Vice President:	Blake Osmond
Secretary:	Lynne Hutton
Treasurer:	Vicki Owers
Board Members:	Sarah Crawford
	Tracy Venaglia
	Sand Hall
	Jono Ireland
	Samantha Lukey

Bellambi Neighbourhood Staff

Coordinator	Cath Daly	Position funded by Department of Community and Justice
Social Worker	Jen Mitchellson	Position funded by Department of Community and Justice
Cleaner	Jan Tresider	Portions from Centre Programs and Hirers
Bookkeeper	And Siri	Portions from DCJ Funding and Centre Programs