



**BALLARAT
NEIGHBOURHOOD
CENTRE**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2023**



Contents



From the Chair.....	2
Our Vision & Values.....	4
Committee of Management.....	5
Executive Officer's Report.....	6
2021 Reflections.....	7
Treasurer's Report.....	12
Organisational Chart.....	12
Partners & Networks.....	13
BNC Stories.....	14



From the Chair

During 2022, the three Neighbourhood Houses managed by our Joint Committee of Management (the Committee) continued a trajectory of connecting with and reaching further into the communities that surround us and those we hope to serve. In an era of changing needs and priorities, we regard it as vital that we stay in touch and in step with our communities to deliver what is most important and relevant to them. Over the past few years, we've had to learn how to stay connected with our participants in new and different ways. Some of this has stayed on and allowed us to expand how we can deliver programs and outcomes.



Neighbourhood Houses must always strive to deliver service and value to their local communities. Therefore, as a Committee, we must constantly revisit our strategic objectives, to test them, modify them where needed and ensure that they remain relevant and support our Houses to achieve what they set out to do with each community cohort.

As part of this, our ongoing revision and refinement of our Policy and Procedure Manuals has taken several steps forward. This year we also embarked on a rewrite of the Memorandum of Understanding between our three Neighbourhood Houses. This is the legal document which allows the three houses to share a Committee and sets out the scope and responsibilities of the Houses and the Committee. Special thanks to our Secretary, Lisa Buckland, who was pivotal in this task.

Our Committee, too, has had some renewal. We bid a fond farewell to John Horley and we are excited to welcome aboard Laura Le Marshall.

John Horley felt it was time to step away and enjoy some well-earned extra free time. He has been a tireless contributor to our group and passionate advocate of the communities we serve. Of note has been his work on strategic direction and documentation. We thank John for his efforts and the enduring legacy he has helped to build.

Emily Brumby followed the call of opportunity away from Ballarat. Emily initially joined us as a community representative for the Ballarat East Neighbourhood House, vacating the Committee role to fulfill a work need for the same house. Thankfully, circumstances allowed her to re-join the Committee before ultimately leaving the region. Always a cheery contributor and sage voice for those we serve, Emily too will be missed but we are richer for her contributions.

With our numbers falling we were indeed fortunate to welcome Laura Le Marshall to our Committee. Laura brings a wealth of new skills and experience. She is already proving to be a strong contributor and as always, a new voice among us is a positive thing. We look forward to a long and fruitful relationship with Laura.

Chair's Report - continued

I would like to thank the current Committee members for their ongoing dedication and the remarkable value they bring to the table for our communities.

As ever, I will largely defer to our Executive Officer and Managers as those best-placed to reflect on the year that was for their Houses, but not before I spend a few words on each. I would also like to use this opportunity to extend the unstinting gratitude of the Committee to the executive and the teams at each of our houses. It is they who turn our strategic hopes into reality. Without their frugal creativity, skills, boundless energy, passion, and dedication, none of what the Houses achieve would be possible.

The Mothership that is The Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre (BNC), continues to grow its connections and services to the community in wonderful and creative ways. With several large, multi-year projects underway and in some cases, in delivery, BNC remains a wonderful hub of energy and activity and looks sure to do so into the foreseeable future.

The Ballarat East Neighbourhood House (BENH) is slowly maturing into a vital fixture and vibrant community hub for the communities in broader Ballarat East. We continue to be astounded by the way the team delivers as much as they do on a relatively shoestring budget. Matching its growing patronage, BENH has outgrown its modest footprint and begun to physically expand as well. We are confident that this trend is set to continue, which is wonderful news for the communities of broader Ballarat East.

The Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre (WNC) has some exciting prospects on the horizon. It is now certain that WNC will be taking on the role of Lead Tenant of the Wendouree Recreation Reserve Community Hub. This welcome expansion will mean WNC has new opportunities and spaces with which it can greatly expand its ability to work with and for those nearby communities. We are looking forward to some great stories for WNC in the coming year.

Lastly, I'd like to extend the gratitude of the Committee to all of our participants. The staff, the tutors, the volunteers, the clients, the interest and activity groups, the mentors, the helpers and pretty much anyone I've not yet mentioned who has passed through the doors of one of our Neighbourhood Houses. Thank you, you are the neighbourhood that makes what we do so rewarding.

Glen Crompton



Our Vision

resilient connected neighbourhoods

Our Mission

to enrich our community by providing opportunities to connect participate and learn

Our Values

We take a person-centred approach to:

- Equity: creating opportunities with fairness and consideration of each individual's needs.
- Empowerment: Enhancing individuals' capacity to have control of their own lives.
- Inclusion: Embracing diversity in a respectful, safe and welcoming environment.
- Collaboration: Working together to achieve common goals.



Our Commitment to the SDGs

We achieve 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goal targets in our work:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere (1.1, 1.5)
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (2.1.2)
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (3.4, 3.5)
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (5.1, 5.2, 5.5, 5.5.2)
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (8.3, 8.5, 8.6)
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries (10.2, 10.3)
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (11.7)
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (12.3, 12.5)
13. Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning (13.3)
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (16.1, 16.7)
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (Technology 17.8)

Note: many of the SDG's overlap, for example Goal 1 End Poverty and Goal 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth. Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre work with unemployed job seekers to help them find meaningful work. This will help them earn a decent living and improve their living conditions, moving them above the poverty line.





Committee of Management as at 31st December 2022

Thank you to our fabulous Committee of Management. Your ongoing support and leadership has helped BNC navigate the past three challenging Covid years to build a stronger, more resilient organisation.

A big thank you to John and Emily for your advice and contribution over many years. We wish you both all the best in the future and hope you stay in contact.

Last year we welcomed Laura to the Committee in a casual vacancy. Laura brings a wealth of knowledge in IT and marketing, we are looking forward to working with her.

Chair Glen Crompton

Secretary Lisa Buckland

Treasurer Jane Jens

General Members Cameron Duthie
Bradley Smith
Annie de Jong
Laura Le Marshall
Alan Labas

Executive Officer/ Public Officer Vicki Coltman

Committee Members who resigned during 2022 John Horley 25/05/2022
Emily Brumby 27/12/2022



From the EO



Neighbourhood houses have always played an important role in supporting communities in times of need, with 2022 being no different. A conservative estimate of how the community benefits from our work is demonstrated in our [2022 Community Value Report](#), which highlights for every dollar we receive of Neighbourhood House funding we generate over Thirty-Four dollars in Community Value or for every hour the house is in use \$1,238.11 in value is generated.

It is fair to say after two Covid impacted years, the Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre staff ended 2021 exhausted. A longer break saw everyone return for the new year refreshed, with high hopes for the new 'post Covid normal' and the return of all activities. Unfortunately, another wave of Covid late in term one impacted our staff and community, resulting in students enrolling in shorter courses; a lower overall annual delivery of adult education than planned; and stopped the weekly community lunches.

Despite this, our services and programs continued to grow as we identified and addressed gaps in local social capital, services and infrastructure. In early 2022, we introduced a Justice of the Peace service which was embraced by the community, expanding to 5 sessions across 4 days by the end of the year. Our Harmony week celebration broke records with 250+ attendees, we published our first Connecting Sebastopol newsletter and commenced work on the Spotlight on Sebastopol projects.

I am very fortunate to work with a dedicated and caring team who continue to support those most in need, especially helping long term unemployed clients and designing programs with pathways back to education or into employment for them. Staff and our wonderful volunteers helped older community members claim their power saving bonus, provided them with low cost meals and did welfare checks on those living alone.

Over the past few years the BNC flexible working arrangements have helped BNC team members support their own families. In 2022 we focused on our own mental health and well being: being kind to each other and looking after ourselves is now firmly embedded in the BNC culture.

Our work would not be possible without the full support of our Committee of Management, who lead the organisation with a clear strategy designed to be proactive and flexible ensuring we support community as and when they need it.

Finally, we have demonstrated once again it takes a village to survive a crisis. Coming to work everyday is both rewarding and motivating when surrounded by such a compassionate village.

Vicki Coltman





Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre 2022 Reflection

There was much celebration in the Centre in early 2023 when Our Kitchen Social Enterprise won the City of Ballarat Community Event of the Year for our work in 2022. Since inception, the social enterprise has developed into an integral part of the Centre, not only driving training and employment outcomes for participants, but changing lives through social connections, volunteering and community meals.

Visitation to the centre has grown significantly with community members regularly visiting us for help, classes and to attend events. Our Harmony Celebration in early 2022 saw a record crowd of 250 people and community lunches now attract 80-100 people each week.

Thank you to our wonderful volunteers, who help in all our programs and activities, making it possible for us to achieve so many wonderful outcomes for the community.

In 2022 we had:

- 1000+ visitors to the Centre in an average week
- 1624 activities, with 600 people in an average week participating
- 6 different types of volunteer roles: garden, office, social enterprise & classes
- 70+ organisational supporters, partners and sponsors of our programs
- 38 different organisations used the facility for meetings, training and activities
- Users hired 400 hours of facility hire in an average month
- 20 groups using a room in the Centre in an average month, 10 of these groups supported in some way by BNC



**79
volunteers**

**6791
volunteer
hours**

**35,000+
visitors**



Jobs Victoria Work & Learning Centre



In December, for the first time in 10 years we had to impose a waiting list for Work & Learning Centre (WLC) clients. This is driven by strong demand for the service and means the Ballarat WLC team having already achieved their four year KPI's prior to the contract ending in 2023. Low unemployment rates and high demand for staff, have helped clients quickly move into employment this year resulting in lower training outcomes.

Despite this, the team continue to help long term unemployed clients overcome significant barriers in their lives. Regular support includes help with resumes, education and training, job search, job applications, employment compliance (police checks, NDIS checks, key selection criteria) and career planning. This year we also received funding to add support for unemployed Carers. This pilot project with Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, looked at the barriers keeping Carers out of the workforce.

Achievements:

- Total active clients in system 649 * (Target 368)
- Total number of employment placements 449* (Target 225)
- Clients unemployed for >12 months (at intake) 33%
- Employment placements retained for 4 weeks 76%
- Employment placements retained for 26 weeks 47%
- Number of non-accredited training placements 393 (Target 223) (80% completion)
- Number of accredited training placements 94 (Target 82) (52% completion)

* since contract commenced 1st July 2019

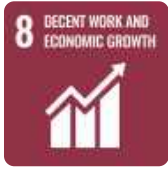


102
new
clients

110
employment
placements

50
training
placements





Learn Local Adult Education & Training

Classes started off well in Term 1, but were impacted by the Covid outbreak late in the term, with Term 2 enrolments dropping significantly. Despite this we still met all Department of Education delivery targets. We experienced a trend for students to enrol in our shorter classes causing a shortfall in total hours delivered. Interestingly, the number of students enrolled and participating in classes was similar to 2021 when we over delivered our training allocation.

Over the past few years we have also been tracking the nationalities of our students. Since the beginning of 2021, students from 55 countries have enrolled in our adult education classes. This diversity of nationalities highlights the multicultural nature of our students, helping us develop training to meet their needs, from English Language classes to help with being Work Ready for the Australian workplace.

We also added a series of Independent Living Courses to the training schedule in 2022. These courses are designed for people who have not looked after themselves before (youth, those with a disability, older community members).

Overall we achieved:

- 79% of total allocated hours or 14540 of 18358 hours*
- 97 courses were delivered from a bank of 27 unique courses
- 545 enrolments for 347 unique students
- Learners identified as 68% women, 1% gender neutral, 44% over 50 and 2% ATSI
- 20% of students were born overseas, coming from 33 different countries
- 23% of learners live outside of Ballarat, in 10 other Local Government Areas



**79%
hours
delivered***

**14540
student
contact
hours***

**545
course
enrolments**



Our Kitchen Social Enterprise



Early in 2023, the BNC team celebrated the Social Enterprise winning the City of Ballarat Community Event of the year for their 2022 work to reduce food waste and for connecting community members by providing community meals, and opportunities for volunteers and training for job seekers. This was great recognition for a program which has such an amazing positive impact on everyone involved.

The social enterprise is slowly rebuilding after the Covid impacts of the last three years. The focus continues to be on workforce development training for our clients, and by the end of the year the return of weekly low cost community lunches. However, the catering element of the social enterprise has been slow to restart, primarily due to lower Cooking Up Jobs participants who train in the social enterprise.

The social enterprise team led by Chef David achieved:

- the return of 29 weekly community lunches, averaging 100 people and providing 25 take away meals each week
- the equivalent of \$10,000 of food vouchers donated to community members
- 5760kg of food rescued from landfill
- 1200kg of food donated to community members
- a kitchen hand trainee role for a year 10 student
- 38 volunteers who contributed 1500+ hours of support to the social enterprise



**5760kg food
rescued**

**3500+
meals**

**1500+ hours
volunteered**





Community Development

Our community development focus was back in the house with a range of services and activities designed to connect people and encourage them to participate. We started a new partnership with the City of Ballarat, where the four Ballarat Neighbourhood Houses help small community groups understand good governance and grant writing. This four year project has already achieved great results and is being managed by the Ballarat East Neighbourhood House. In 2022, we

- Delivered community events including a harmony week celebration, Voices of Victoria Listening Tour, International Women's Day morning tea, Seniors Month Sing Australia afternoon tea, Chatty Cafes, Carer's Mingle and Dementia Network morning tea, Law Week activities, Women's Health morning tea and attended the Volunteer Expo. (1150+ attendees and 71 volunteers)
- 163 hours of volunteer JP's provided 146 participants signatures on 1155 documents
- Held several working bees and harvest days in Our Community Garden
- Spotlight on Sebastopol Art projects included an Indigenous Artwork at the Centre in collaboration with Phoenix P12 Community College students and Raintree Artist.
- Supported 13 students completing their Certificate and Bachelor degree placement requirements
- Ran 11 Kidsafe 'Safe Seats, Safe Kids' program sessions (67 seats checked with only 17% fitted correctly)
- Supported Ballarat District Community Support Register participants
- Applied for 31 grants, with a 68% success rate
- Distributed the first Connecting Sebastopol Newsletter



163+
JP hours
volunteered

1150+
activity
participants

13
placement
students



From the Treasurer



For the 2022 year, Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre (BNC) had a net surplus of \$179,225 compared to \$84,305 in 2021.

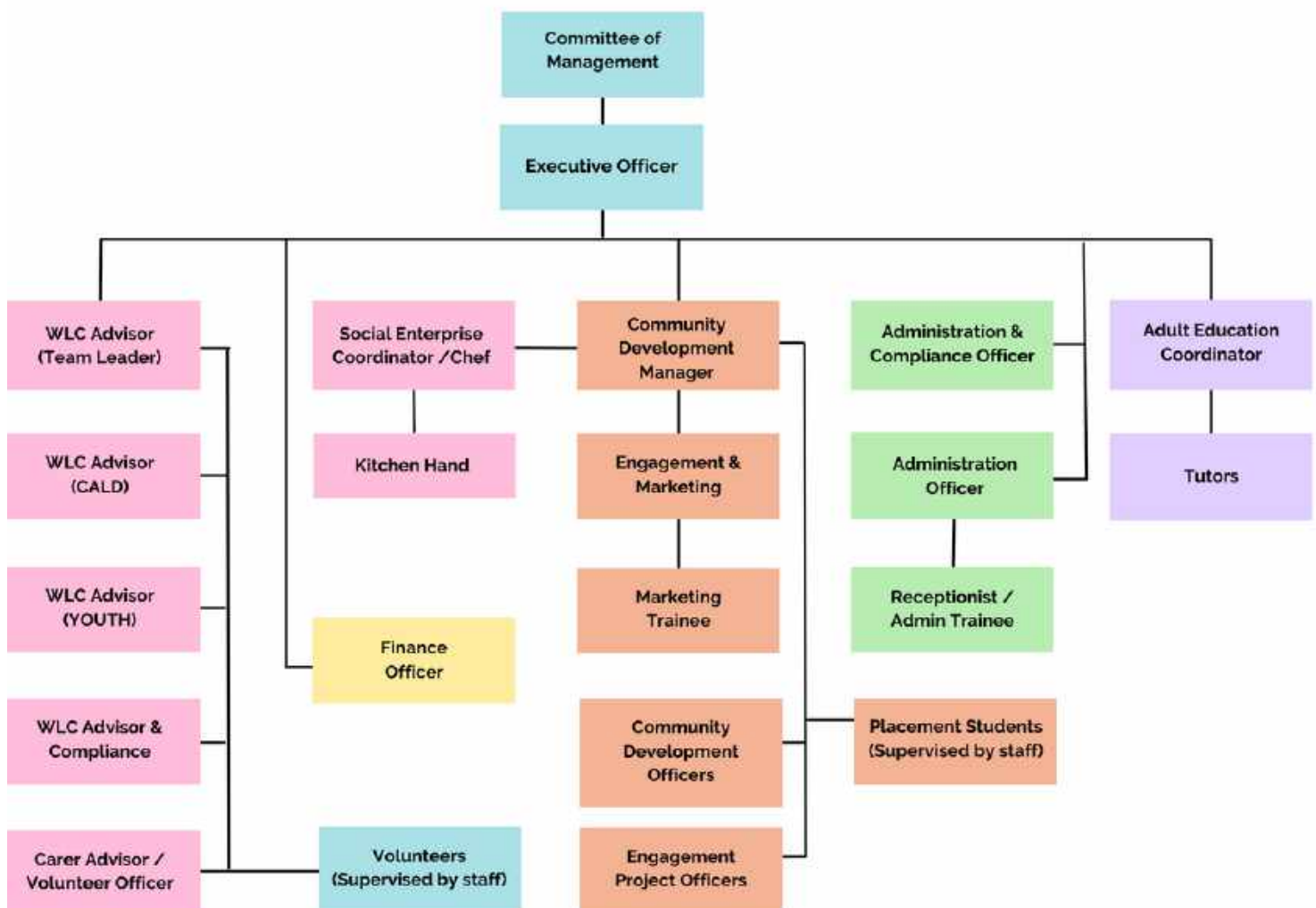
This resulted in increase of total member's funds to \$547,369. Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre received \$194,346 in ACFE Grants and \$1,128,296 in Government Grants.

In summary, Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre is delivering more programs and reaching more people in the community as demonstrated by the strong growth in 2022 year.

A full copy of the 2022 Financial Statements can be downloaded from the Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre website or contact the Executive Officer for a copy.

Jane Jens

Organisational Chart





Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre Partners and Networks

A very special thank you to our major funding partners for their continued support.

- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Department of Education & Training
- Department of Jobs, Precincts & Regions
- Jobs Victoria & Working for Victoria
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Phoenix P12 Community College
- City of Ballarat & Regional Development Victoria
- Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre, Ballarat North Neighbourhood House & Ballarat East Neighbourhood House

Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre staff convene the following networks:

- Delacombe Chairs Forum
- Jobs Victoria Work & Learning Centre Local Advisory Panel
- Connecting Sebastopol

Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre staff are members of the following networks:

- Central Highlands Association of Neighbourhood Houses Committee
- Neighbourhood Houses Victoria Board
- City of Ballarat Safety Committee
- Social Inclusion Network
- Food Access Network
- Ballarat Youth Services Network
- Spotlight on Sebastopol Committee
- BRMC Education & Employment Working Group
- DET South Western Victoria Regional Engagement Forum
- Volunteer Coordinators Network
- CORE Alliance
- Work & Learning Centre Network
- Social Enterprise Victoria Network
- Ballarat 4 Kids
- Ballarat Local Jobs Program

To support our community we rely on many people and organisations to help us with not only the big things but also the little things our community needs. Last year was no exception and we are grateful to everyone who helps us to support our community.



Education for everyone: Mary*



Mary enrolled in our Intermediate Computer course early in 2022 and decided to enrol in Become Work Ready in Term 3. This eight week course funded by the Department of Education is designed to help participants gain the skills and confidence they need to find employment.

Mary had been out of the workforce for twelve years whilst raising a child. She was keen to find a part time position in administration work. The Jobs Victoria Work and Learning Centre Advisor assisted Mary to update her resume and she applied for a part time position in administration at a local general practice surgery.

In week three of the Become Work Ready program, Mary shared the exciting news that she had secured an interview with the surgery, but was very nervous about the process. To help her, the class conducted mock interviews in that day's session with participants and the tutor giving feedback and support to each other.

Mary and the tutor also had a follow up one on one session in order to polish up her responses to specific questions.

The Become Work Ready tutor received an email from Mary three days later to let her know that she was offered the job. She said that she felt confident during the interview process due to the practice that she did during the work ready session.

* name changed & photos not related to story



Gardening together creates community: Annie



Annie and her husband moved to a retirement village in Sebastopol to be closer to family. Annie didn't have many connections in Ballarat, and started walking daily to keep active. Late in 2021, Annie passed by Our Garden at Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre noticed it wasn't in the best of states (after COVID lockdowns), and there was a volunteer working in the space. She chatted with the volunteer and realised this was something she could help with, that would enable her to be active outdoors and meet people in the community. She signed up the same day.

Over the course of 2022, Annie attended every Wednesday Gardening Group she could. A great contributor to the restoration of Our Garden, Annie enjoyed the opportunity to get active with digging out the veggie beds, creating new soil and compost, clearing vegetation and planting new plants. She loved being engaged in something outdoors, with fresh air, sunshine and wind, but also making new friendships and enjoying the social side of working together, discussing personal experiences and perspectives on current events.

As well as physical health aspects, Annie realised the mental health benefits of being involved in Our Garden. Being a part of a gardening group meant not only was Annie gardening, but she was creating social connections, learning new things and developing confidence to take risks and experiment. She loved the ideas and approach introduced by the garden facilitator and began to think about gardening differently than she had before. Annie hadn't been an overly interested in gardening before joining the Wednesday Garden Group, but soon she took her experience back to her retirement village and began to motivate other people to get gardening in their shared community, setting up compost, creating garden beds and landscaping spaces where people can enjoy the outdoors together.

Annie's experience highlights how volunteering at BNC supports individuals to achieve what they want to achieve, and has a wider impact of our community and environment we live in.

Thank you Annie!





Overcoming the barriers: Joan*

Joan (21 years) was a participant in the Work Ready Youth program in March 2022, she had been unemployed since 2019 after completing high school. When she started the program, Joan was filled with anxiety and missed the first day due to nerves. Joan is on the autism spectrum and suffers from generalised anxiety disorder.

After a few days of being in a small group, Joan began to relax and found herself enjoying coming to the course. Joan made close friendships with several participants in the course and overcame her initial shyness to become the coordinator of our Wordle competition and referee of our bocce tournament.

Joan explored various careers through peer discussion, career quizzes and online job searching. The barriers she faced were significant: limited transport options, a learning disability, low confidence and self-belief, mental health issues, low income and being responsible for younger siblings. These barriers made it difficult for her to pursue her goal of becoming a librarian and she wanted to find an alternative career path.

In the Work Ready program Joan found hope, she made friends and found people who cared about her and could help her. Joan began to explore the courses offered by BNC. After completing the Work Ready program, she enrolled in the Sewing for Beginners course.

Joan became a client of the Jobs Victoria Work and Learning Centre where she worked with the workforce development advisor to apply for jobs and investigate further study. After applying for countless jobs, Joan was offered a trial as a room attendant for a local hotel, then part time employment. When the WLC advisor called Joan to inquire how her first week on the job went, she was really enjoying the job, the routine and processes aligned with her skills and the extra income allowed her to begin saving for a car.

These outcomes were a result of Joan pushing herself out of her very established comfort zone. Joan believes the welcoming and non-judgemental atmosphere of the Neighbourhood Centre allowed her to build her confidence in a supportive environment. She is well on the way to building a bright future for herself.

* name changed & photo not related to story





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