



# Vermont South Community House

ABN 60 776 754 115

ARBN A0004301Z

## Strategic Plan 2010 - 2012



1 January 2010 - 31 December 2012

# executive summary

## Vermont South Community House - a proud past and a bright future

Strategic planning should be a means to deal constructively with change in a positive and beneficial way. Issues and concerns need to be examined carefully in the context of the local area with the aim of maintaining a community facility that is sustainable, vibrant, accessible and safe for all.

By beginning with a vision statement expressing the goal of what the Community House wants to be, our Strategic Plan builds on this vision with actions and ways to monitor outcomes.

A review of our previous Strategic Plan addressed:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to go?
- How do we get there, and
- How will we know when we get there?

Whilst our core values are still relevant and have been used to form the final plan for 2010 – 2012, recent findings produced four main themes for consideration:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Scope of Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase services for specific age groups</li> <li>- Think <b>beyond Government funding</b></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Growth</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The House must have a clear objective and strategy, <b>not growth for growth's sake</b></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>External Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase influence on politicians and policy</li> <li>- Partnerships...<b>explore further</b></li> <li>- A desire for the House to be courageous</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The House</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plan and prepare...<b>be proactive not reactive</b></li> <li>- Increase skills / ensure staff retention</li> <li>- Don't spread ourselves too thin</li> </ul>

By thinking ahead, Vermont South Community House can continue on the path to being a truly great community facility and a clear vision is fundamental to providing an overall blueprint for the House. The Committee of Management, staff, tutors, volunteers and participants of the House have been and are valued planning partners in helping to build a strong, supportive and practical community identity.

The Strategic Plan 2010 – 2012 and yearly operational plans will provide a course of action and a framework for determining priorities, developing workplans and setting budgets thus enabling the achievement of our vision....

**to be the heart of our community**



# sector principles

## Association of Neighbourhood Houses & Learning Centres (ANHLC) Neighbourhood House Sector Principles<sup>1</sup>

The ANHLC is the peak body for Victorian Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres. The philosophy of the Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centre sector is built upon ten principles as follows:

### *Community ownership:*

To set, manage and control the direction, resources, decision-making and processes of the Neighbourhood House or Centre in order that local volunteer members have a sense of ownership and intrinsic belonging.

### *Community participation:*

To recognise that everyone has a valuable contribution to make and to facilitate community members to join in at any level. Volunteers and community members are integral to the decision-making, evaluation, provision, participation and direction setting at all levels of the organisation.

### *Empowerment:*

To put into practice a process which respects, values and enhances people's ability to have control over their lives. This process encourages people to meet their needs and aspirations in a self aware and informed way which takes advantage of their skills, experience and potential.

### *Access and equity:*

To ensure fair and equitable access for *all* people. Striving to make accessible to individuals, groups and the community meaningful opportunities, programs, activities and services. To promote a fairer distribution of economic resources and power between people.

### *Life-Long learning:*

To build and support the personal skills, knowledge, abilities and resilience of people. To develop the health, wellbeing and connection of people and their families, through formal and informal pathways in education, employment and self-development.

### *Inclusion:*

To value the diverse contributions that people make and to be sensitive to their individual needs.

### *Networking:*

To link, form alliances, collaborate and work with individuals, groups, other agencies, government and business.

### *Advocacy:*

To act with and on behalf of community members to endeavour that their individual or group needs are met.

### *Self help:*

To come together in a supportive group environment to share information, knowledge, skills and life experience in order that each participant can reach their own personal goals.

### *Social action:*

To analyse internal and external factors that have an impact on the local community, and to transform relationships between individuals, groups and organisations and within the community through collective action.

*The Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre sector works in a community development framework with a membership-based governance model. This builds social connections and networks that are based on trust, respect and reciprocal interaction – known as social capital.*

<sup>1</sup>The Vermont South Community House has adopted the ANHLC Sector Principles



# developing our community

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

*Vermont South Community House encourages community involvement and social inclusion by providing life-long learning opportunities and by empowering people to meet their needs and aspirations in a self aware and informed way. Vermont South Community House works towards building a socially connected, sustainable community by providing a place where people have a sense of ownership and intrinsic belonging, by recognising that people have a valuable contribution to make, by enhancing people's ability to have control over their lives and by promoting sustainable living practices.*

### Strategy:

- Develop programs/activities/services, which encourage community spirit and involvement
- Engage in activities which support charities and other benevolent organisations
- Develop strategies for supporting rural Houses whose communities have been affected by the drought/bush fires



## SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

*Since 1990 Vermont South Community House has been a role model for sustainable living practices including information sharing regarding environmental issues in Vermont South Community News, advocating for solar hot water installation and supporting the installation of water tanks by Council, purchasing energy efficient appliances and encouraging staff and participants to recycle paper and plastics and compost food scraps. In 2008 we were the winners of the City of Whitehorse Sustainable Community Award.*

### Strategy:

- Continue to act as a role model to the community in regards to sustainable living practices
- Continue to support the Vermont South Sustainability Street Hub
- Encourage and support local residents to adopt sustainable living practices by facilitating information sessions and links to appropriate organisations and resources



# delivering our programs

## ADULT PROGRAMS (SUBSIDISED)

*Demand remains strong for ESL, general preparatory, and vocational courses, but delivery has fallen as a result of funding cuts. New government vocational skills initiative may have potential to deliver more, vocationally oriented programs, but set up costs and associated risks are significant.*

### Strategy:

- Concentrate on what we know and do best, (ie ESL, and accredited and pre-accredited computer courses) in order to attract more students
- Identify new sources of funding
- Stay ahead of impending changes to regulations
- Seek opportunities for viable long-term partnering with organisations and businesses interested in securing training for their staff



## ADULT PROGRAMS (FEE FOR SERVICE)

*Demand for health related and general adult education and skill development courses has been increasing. We are not yet filling all available space, but staffing resources are being stretched.*

### Strategy:

- Continue to broaden and deepen our program with a view to increasing the number of people enrolled as well as their participation
- Provide the staffing necessary to develop and sustain a larger program
- Develop a better process to identify needs
- Revisit our approach to marketing to ensure we have maximum impact based on available resources



## CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

*Demand for Playgroups has been falling but demand for after school programs for primary school children and for children from LOTE groups has been increasing. There is a waiting list for Child Care, but delivery has remained constant (limited by licence conditions) and new regulations have added to the cost of delivery.*

### Strategy:

- Compensate for the fall in demand for Playgroups by increasing after-school programs for children with an educational content
- Extend Child Care by increasing the number of 3 YO groups as justified by demand
- Strengthen links with the Vermont South Maternal and Child Health Centre in order to provide a feeder into our children's programs
- Register the Studio as a Limited Hours Type 1 Licence



# resourcing our operations

## STAFFING

*The pressure for qualified staff in child care has increased due to new regulations. The adoption of new technology in the office and new approaches to the business of the House requires additional skills. Staffing levels need to reflect the work level associated with the increase in program delivery and compliance. Cost pressures mean we need to reduce waste and maximise efficiency.*

### Strategy:

- Promote and encourage professional development among staff, volunteers and tutors, especially qualifications for child care staff and additional skills for office staff
- Increase staff in the office as required to develop and support increased levels of program delivery
- Seek volunteers from Members and others, particularly for tasks outside the office

## TECHNOLOGY

*Our ICT facilities, both for teaching and administration, are generally up to date. Nevertheless, the rate of development in ICT – especially in software – is rapid.*

### Strategy:

- Endeavour to keep our ICT hardware and software up to date
- Identify opportunities to extend our use of ICT to enhance program delivery and administration



## FUNDING

*Course and activity fees, ACFE subsidies, Council and Government grants remain our major sources of income. In the last 12 months we have been successful in negotiating several one-off projects with service clubs, but we have no ongoing relationships with business (private or public) that support our programs.*

### Strategy:

- Explore opportunities for further developing our partnership with Council
- Seek out key partnerships with businesses that are prepared to fund or partly fund our programs

## RESOURCES

*We have invested considerable resources to ensure we have the facilities and equipment to deliver our programs and community strengthening outcomes.*

### Strategy:

- Develop cost savings through improved efficiencies
- Endeavour to keep our furniture and equipment up to date and relevant
- Generate additional revenue to support the purchase of items identified in our capital works budget
- Work with service clubs and other organisations and individuals to assist with the maintenance of the facilities outside that provided by Council

# ensuring our future

## MEMBERSHIP

*A membership program has just begun. We have a long way to go, but It's a promising start.*

### Strategy:

- Continue with the membership drive in order to increase membership on an annual basis

## COMMITTEE

*We manage, every year, to put together a committee and to persuade committee members to fill the four office-bearer positions, but only just. Governance has become more complex and the skills and knowledge required by committee members is increasing.*

### Strategy:

- Identify people with the necessary skills to join the Committee of Management
- Further develop the skills of existing committee members

## EXTERNAL RELATIONS

*We have good relationships with relevant government bodies, with peak and sister organisations in our own sector, schools, councillors and politicians, and – increasingly – with several service clubs in the municipality.*

### Strategy:

- Strengthen existing and develop new external relationships, including relationships with educational bodies and community organisations outside our sector
- Develop relationships with key managers in the public, private and community sector with the aim of making them potential partners in course delivery



# a proud history

On 26 March 1976 a public meeting was held at the Vermont South Special School to inform local residents of the proposed primary school and to outline Nunawading Council's vision for community facilities for Vermont South. It was decided at this meeting to form the Vermont South Planning Group, whereby members would have input into the design of the primary school and how the school could be used by the community.

At the inaugural meeting of the planning group held on 14 April 1976 members discussed how they could keep local residents informed of any developments. It was decided to form a sub-committee to investigate producing a regular community newsletter. A second sub-committee was formed to investigate a temporary community facility while the school was being built.

It was confirmed at the next meeting held on 6 May 1976 that Council would provide the paper for the newsletter, volunteers would be in charge of the production and distribution and that it would be printed at the Special School. It is amazing to think that the newsletter is still going strong today and is delivered by some of the original people. (Council stopped providing paper at amalgamation time).

A member of the planning group tabled a report at the meeting held on 1 July 1976, which outlined guidelines for the development of the Vermont South Community Association, and suggested principles for improved welfare and educational facilities and the development of special interest groups in Vermont South. At the September meeting it was decided to call a special meeting to discuss the formation of this Association, as outlined at the July meeting.

Prior to the meeting of 6 October 1976 the Council informed the Vermont South Planning Group of their decision to purchase the house at 557 Burwood Highway in Vermont South because it was positioned too close to the highway, which was about to be upgraded. This house could then be used for community activities. A sub-committee was formed recommending that a Committee be formed with members being drawn from the house users. This newly formed committee took possession of the house on the 8 October 1976.

Working bees were held in preparation for the House's open days on 30 and 31 October 1976 and by early November the House had been used by a Youth Group, the Interim School Committee, a Coffee Morning, a Women's Group, Macramé and Stitchery classes. The first Playgroups commenced November 1976.

The Vermont South Planning Group held its final meeting on 3 February 1977, while the first meeting of the Vermont South Community Association was held 24 March 1977. The first Community House Committee was a Sub-Committee of the Association.

Activities steadily increased at the Community House with a number being conducted at Livingstone Primary School. Many of those activities still continue today, including Basket Weaving with Jean Stone, who first started teaching Pottery at the House in 1979.

The first Community Development Worker commenced in January 1980 and was employed for 12 hours per week by the Community House and the Vermont South Community Association. A number of other Community Development Workers were employed until Margaret Banks, being the 6<sup>th</sup> appointment, was employed in September 1984 and remained at the House for the next 17 years until September 2001.

On 15 March 1985 our application for Incorporation was approved and in July of that year a competition was held to design a logo for the Community House.



# a proud history

By early 1985 it was evident that the premises at 557 Burwood Highway would no longer be suitable and in March a submission to Nunawading Council for a purpose designed House was made. The new Community House at Karobran Drive was opened on 21 June 1987.

The Vermont South Community Association disbanded in December 1987, having achieved its purpose of establishing a Community House in Vermont South. The Community House Committee recognised the importance of the newsletter and agreed to take over the production and distribution.

Since re-locating to Karobran Drive, the House has been able to expand, as we have not being confined by our physical boundaries, as other Houses are.

In December 1989 the extension to the Office and the original Creche were opened and in February 1990 the extension, named the Banks Room, was officially opened. The next extension, the Studio was opened in October 1993, the Creche was extended in 1996, and the large garage was converted into the Workshop over January 1998 and subsequently extended in September 2000. We converted the Meeting Room into a Computer Lab during the Christmas holidays, with the first computer classes held in our own facilities in February 2001.

In September 2001, Administration Officer, Jenni Bramham was appointed to the position of Manager and has continued to ensure the Community House remains the heart of the community.

A Fairy Garden at the rear of the property was constructed for the Creche children to explore and enjoy, with the opening celebrated in June 2005 with a fairy party where children dressed up and enjoyed a range of fairy cakes and treats. During 2005 a mural on the outside wall of the Workshop was painted by children in the After School Art class under the instruction of Office Assistant, Rebecca Chilinski.

The Community House conducts a large art and craft program and an Art and Craft Exhibition has been held every second year since 2003. This has been a wonderful opportunity for our very talented students and tutors to display and sell their work.

The mosaic murals “The Four Seasons” unveiled in November 2006 and “The Joy of Life” unveiled in June 2007 were joint projects between the Community House, Nunawading Community Hostel, Livingstone Primary School and the Vermont South Special School.

Extensions to the Community House, which were funded by the City of Whitehorse included a new Computer Lab, adult’s and children’s toilets as well as renovations to the Office. The work commenced early 2006 and was officially opened during the House’s 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations in October of that year. The Vermont South Toy Library, which operates from the Community House celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday with a children’s party in March 2009.

Vermont South Community House was the winner of the Whitehorse Sustainable Community Award in 2008. The award recognised the Community House for its efforts in building socially connected communities and demonstrating leadership in sustainable practices.

A very successful Health and Wellbeing Expo was held in November 2008 where local, state and national organisations presented talks on a range of health related topics.

In June 2009 a kitchen garden was constructed in the Creche playground in partnership with Council and members of the Vermont South Sustainability Street Hub. The Creche children will grow seeds, plant seedlings and tend to the garden and will enjoy fresh and healthy produce such as lettuces, strawberries, carrots, radishes and potatoes.



# community & participant demographics

## Community Demographics:

Vermont South is an established residential area, bounded by the proposed Healesville Freeway reservation in the north, Dandenong Creek in the east, Highbury Road in the south, and Springvale Road in the west. Vermont South is named for its location south of Vermont, which is believed to be named after a town in County Limerick, Ireland. Settlement of the area dates from the 1850s, with land used mainly for timber-getting, farming and orchards. The area remained largely rural until the post-war years, due to its relative isolation from the railway line. Vermont South was the last area to be suburbanised in the City of Whitehorse. Significant development occurred from the 1960s, with rapid growth during the 1970s. The population has declined slightly since the early 1990s, a result of little change in dwelling stock and a decline in the average number of persons living in each dwelling.

The estimated population of Vermont South based on the 2006 census was 11,558, with an almost 50% split between males and females. The age structure of a population is usually indicative of an area's era of settlement and provides key insights into the level of demand for services and facilities (as most services and facilities are age-specific). 20.9% of the population was aged between 0 and 17, 19.8% aged 18 - 34, 38.2% aged 35 - 59 and 21.1% aged 60 and over. Vermont South is not expected to have an increase in the 0 - 4 age group as the area has been through its early development phase. The most significant concentration of early retiree and retiree age groups in 2006 was in Vermont South, Burwood East and Vermont. Almost all areas are expected to have an increase in the population aged 75 and above, with the most significant gains expected in Vermont South, Burwood East and Forest Hill, based on the ageing of these areas. Nearly all areas are expected to have an increase in the early retiree and retiree age groups, consistent with the ageing of the population.

Most areas in the City of Whitehorse are anticipated to have a decline in the number of couples with children between 2001 and 2021, most notably in Vermont South and Blackburn South. Areas in the east of the City such as Vermont, Vermont South and Burwood East are expected to experience a net migration loss in the early part of the forecast period as children leave home to establish new households elsewhere. Box Hill is expected to experience the largest amount of new residential development over the forecast period, followed by Burwood East, Mitcham, Burwood, Forest Hill and Vermont South. This development will generally take the form of medium density development and development of former non-residential uses.

Population characteristics indicate that 63% of the population of Vermont South (7,279 people) were born in Australia and 33.4% (3,865 people) were born overseas, an increase of 174 people since the 2001 census. Of the people born overseas, 26.6% were from a Non-English Speaking background compared with 22.7% for the City of Whitehorse. The dominant non-English speaking country of birth in Vermont South was Malaysia, where 3.1% of the population, or 355 people, were born.

*Information taken from the City of Whitehorse Community Profile and Population and Household Forecasts*

## Participation Demographics:

In 2009 43% of our participants were aged between 45 and 64, with 85% of this cohort being females. The next highest cohort were people over the age of 65 (19%), followed by people 26 - 44 (17%) and children 5 and under (14%). These statistics match the overall demographic data of the area with that of being an aging population. Participation in the Community House by young people is low with only 5% for children aged 6 - 12 years, 1% for the 13 - 18 year old cohort and 2% for the 19 - 25 year old cohort, providing opportunities for exploring ways in which to engage adolescents and young adults in the Community House. With 23% of all total participants in all of our classes and activities being male, and only 18% in our adult classes being male there are again opportunities for developing activities and programs which encourage men to participate.

# current and future programs

Vermont South Community House currently provides a diverse range of quality and affordable courses and activities for people of all ages and from a broad section of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and abilities. As a registered training organisation with provision to deliver accredited training, it is our plan to continue to develop courses relevant to the needs of the community.

Classes and groups are designed to encourage community based learning and support in a friendly and welcoming environment. Through participation at the Community House people can build social connections and networks and develop a sense of community spirit. Participation in vocationally focused courses provides opportunities for people to enhance their skills and employment outcomes.

Current range of programs:

- Art and Craft classes  
*including Cake Decorating, Calligraphy, Leadlighting, Oil Painting & Water Colour Painting*
- Child Care  
*Creche and Occasional Care*
- Children's Programs and Activities  
*including after school activities, Japanese Youchien, Playgroups, Toy Library*
- Computer Classes  
*including accredited training, Email & the Internet, Intro to Computers, MYOB & Vinyl to CD*
- General Interest Classes  
*including cooking classes, creative writing, guitar & interior decorating*
- Health, Fitness and Wellbeing Classes  
*including Ballroom Dancing, Healthy Bones, Pilates, Stress Management & Yoga*
- Language Classes  
*including English as a Second Language, French, Hindi & Italian*

We have a commitment to introduce interesting and relevant courses to our extensive program each term. Our annual survey, which is distributed to the 4,000 homes in Vermont South and within the Community House in October, the survey on our website and in our term program, are valuable tools for providing information on our current and future programs as well as the demographics of current and potential participants. Course proposals sent to us by prospective tutors, which sit within our program philosophy, are another means of sourcing new programs and tutors. We endeavour to keep abreast of current issues and trends by offering relevant and topical courses to our expanding program.



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Neighbourhood Houses  
The heart of our community