

# CONNECTING

*Neighbourhood Centres*  
OF BELLINGEN SHIRE



**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

## **Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc Based on Gumbaynggirr Country**

*Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc acknowledges the Gumbaynggirr People as the Traditional Custodians of Country of the region where we live and work, and we recognise their continued connection to the land and surrounding waters. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, to emerging leaders, and to all First Nations People.*

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## OUR VISION AND VALUES

### **Our Vision**

An inclusive, safe and connected community of resilient people.

### **Our Ethos – What Is Important To Us**

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire understands that people do not have equal access to resources and that many people living in the Bellingen Shire face barriers to overcoming disadvantage. Yet we all have untapped strength, resilience and the potential to thrive. Our love of humanity and the planet drive a spirit of gratitude and generosity in all that we do. We are committed to our own organisational learning and the continual learning of the people we serve.

### **Our Values**

*Respect* | for each other and ourselves

*Integrity* | having the courage of our convictions, being fair, honest and transparent

*Compassion* | caring for our community, the people we serve and ourselves

*Inclusion* | appreciating difference, being open, and fostering participation and belonging

*Safety* | safeguarding the security and wellbeing of our clients, the environment and ourselves

*Community Driven* | connected and responsive to local strengths, priorities and needs

### **Our Objectives**

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc (NCOBS):

1. Operates across the community of the Bellingen Shire Local Government Area.
2. Seeks to strengthen community capacity and wellbeing through the provision of services, resources, activities and events which create connection between members of the community, provide opportunities for positive, empowering experiences and generate a stronger sense of community.
3. Seeks to support people in need through the provision of services, resources, information and referrals which strengthen personal wellbeing and assist individuals to increase control over their own lives.
4. Seeks to demonstrate good governance, risk management and compliance in accordance with this constitution and relevant legislation.
5. Is committed to providing safe and welcoming places where people can feel at ease, where services are offered in a manner free of discrimination or bias, and in a manner which is sensitive to the risks, circumstances and challenges faced by vulnerable members of the community.
6. Seeks to maximise the benefits it provides to the community through the establishment of constructive relationships with all stakeholders, including community, business, and government.

# AGENDA

## Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc Annual General Meeting

**Date:** Friday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**Time:** 12:00pm

**Venue:** Bellingen Citizen's Centre, Hyde Street, Bellingen

1. Open meeting
2. Chairperson's Welcome
3. Apologies
4. Acceptance of Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting
5. Chairperson's Report
6. Management Report
7. Service & Project Reports
8. Financial Report
9. Auditor's Report & Audited Financial Statements
10. Election of Management Committee
11. Other Business
12. Close

*Members and guests are invited to stay for a light lunch after the AGM*

# MINUTES

**Annual General Meeting (AGM) of  
Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc (NCOBS)  
Held Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022  
at Uniting Church meeting room, Hyde Street, Bellingen**

**Members present:** Kerry Child (Chair), Rosie Wickert (Secretary), Stephen Allan (Treasurer) via Zoom, Brian Francis, Annette Carse, Leanne Collier, Julie Warwick, Donna Bailey, Dianne Cork, Diane Adams, Eryn Thomas, Karin Matejka

**Guests in attendance:** Roger Horton, Tyson Young

Chairperson, Kerry Child, declared the **Annual General Meeting open at 12:00pm**

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

The Chair acknowledged that we are meeting on Gumbaynggirr land and paid respects to Elders, past, present and to emerging leaders.

## **Chairperson's welcome**

The Chair welcomed members and guests to the 2022 Annual General Meeting

## **Apologies**

Members: Bernadette Kelly, Frances Fedora, May Smith

Staff: Shareen Banner, Shandra Coppard, Erika Munan, Julia Brown, Ellie Tree, Frances Witt, Skye Babula, Nicola Beckett

## **Acceptance of the minutes of previous AGM**

**MOTION:** The minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting are accepted as an accurate record.

**MOVED:** Kerry Child, 2<sup>nd</sup>: Leanne Collier                      Carried

## **Chairperson's Report**

Kerry Child spoke to her report and referred to the previous Annual Report noting in particular the importance of finding additional avenues of funding for the Neighbourhood Centres.

**MOTION:** The Chairperson's report be accepted. **MOVED:** Brian Francis, 2<sup>nd</sup>: Annette Carse  
Carried

## **Management Report**

Interim Manager, Leanne Collier spoke to the report including some of the highlights and challenges of the previous year, not least the impact of COVID-19 and recruitment of a new manager. Notwithstanding this, operations continued. She expressed appreciation and thanks to the Management Committee with particular note to the efforts of Chairperson, Kerry Child. Leanne acknowledged the constancy and commitment of the NCOBS staff and volunteer team and congratulated their achievements.

**MOTION:** The Manager's report be accepted. **MOVED:** Brian Francis, 2<sup>nd</sup>: Annette Carse  
Carried

## **Service and Project Reports tabled**

- Bellingen, Urunga and Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centres
- Emergency Relief
- Work Development Orders

*Service & Project reports (cont.)*

- Bellingen Shire No Interest Loans service
- Services Australia Agency
- Early Childhood Wellbeing and Development – Bellingen Shire
- Bellingen and Nambucca Youth Services
- Dorrigo Youth Centre
- Bellingen Shire CDAT
- Community-based Suicide Prevention – Bellingen LGA
- Urunga Men's Shed

**MOTION:** All service and project reports are accepted. **MOVED:** E. Thomas, 2<sup>nd</sup>: R. Wickert  
Carried

### **Treasurer's Report**

Steve Allan spoke to his report on the financial situation of NCOBS and put forward the Auditor's Report and audited financial statements for acceptance. Steve extended thanks on behalf of the meeting to the staff of the organisation.

**MOTION:** The Treasurer's report is accepted; the special purpose financial statements and Auditor's Report for 2021-22 are accepted; and that James Davis of HQB Accounting is re-appointed as Auditor for 2023-24. **MOVED:** Steve Allan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Kerry Child Carried

### **Election of the Management Committee**

With the agreement of those present, Leanne Collier was appointed as Returning Officer. She thanked the outgoing committee members for their contribution and moved to the election. All management committee positions were declared vacant.

The following written member nominations for were received prior to the Annual General Meeting.

#### *Office Bearer positions*

Chairperson: Kerry Child nominated by S. Allan and seconded L. Collier

Deputy Chairperson: Annette Carse nominated by K. Child and seconded by S. Allan

Secretary: Rosie Wickert nominated by K. Child and seconded by A. Carse.

Treasurer: no nominations received.

#### *Ordinary member positions*

Bernadette Kelly nominated by S. Allan and seconded by K. Child.

Brian Francis nominated by B. Kelly and seconded by S. Allan.

Stephen Allan nominated by L. Collier and seconded by K. Child.

Donna Bailey nominated by K. Child and seconded by D. Adams.

Eryn Thomas nominated by K. Child and seconded by A. Carse.

With the number of written nominations received being fewer than the positions vacant, all nominees were declared duly elected.

Nominations for the position of Treasurer were called for from the floor. No nominations were forthcoming. The position of Treasurer was noted as a casual vacancy.

The Returning Officer declared the election of the Management Committee closed, and handed the meeting over to Chairperson elect, Kerry Child.

### **Other Business**

Thanks to Leanne for coming back as interim manager. Welcome to incoming manager, Roger Horton.

**The Annual General Meeting was declared closed at 12:50pm.**



## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

On behalf of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellinghen Shire Inc (NCOBS), I would like to welcome all members and guests to our Annual General Meeting.

I would like to acknowledge the Gumbaynggirr people, the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to their elders' past, present and to emerging leaders.

As at 30th June 2023, there were 57 financial members and 2 Life members.

The year has certainly flown by, and I have to stop and process all that has occurred throughout this period. Firstly, I must thank Leanne Collier for once again ably stepping into the void of the Manager's position until we were able to readvertise, the position. We were very happy to be able to appoint Roger Horton as our new Manager on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022. This has been a very steep learning curve for him but one that he has competently filled.

Bellinghen Shire Council replaced our Bellinghen Centre roof and it revealed that our solar panels were not functioning to full capacity due to age. We were able to share the cost with Council to replace them with a 10Kw system. Hopefully this will now help offset our electricity costs.

NCOBS put in an application with the Cork Trust in Dorrigo to apply for funding to cover the rent for our Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre. We were successful and truly appreciate the support this has provided to our Dorrigo community.

Each of our three Centres are very busy with an enormous increase in demand for our assistance. The sharp increase in rents and the cost of living have attributed to this.

Ellie Tree whilst on parental leave initiated a YOUth Speak survey to identify values, aspirations, and issues of concern to our young people across the Shire. We thank her for this valuable document which will inform us on future directions.

On 31<sup>st</sup> October a professional Development Wellbeing Day was held for all staff and volunteers and was facilitated by Angie Derrett covering a range of topics about looking after yourself. I believe it was well received and an enjoyable experience.

May Smith and her band of volunteers held a trivia pursuit fundraiser on 29<sup>th</sup> April to raise much needed funds for our Emergency Relief program, which is not funded. A pleasant evening was had and I must thank everyone who helped by participating or organising it.

The Management Committee held a workshop on 10<sup>th</sup> February to update our Strategic Plan which will help to steer us in the right direction. I thank all who contributed ideas and helped to pull the document into shape as an Operational Plan.



Around Christmas last year Council approached NCOBS Inc asking whether we might be interested in taking over the running of the Bellingen Youth Hub. After many discussions between Council, our Management Committee and the Hub's Management Committee, it was decided that it would be a worthwhile venture.

Our Organisation has over 40 years' experience working within our communities and was well placed to carry on the excellent reputation of the Hub. An Agreement was signed on 1<sup>st</sup> September.

The Management Committee for 2022-2023 were:

Kerry Child – Chairperson	Bernadette Kelly
Annette Carse – Deputy Chair	Brian Francis
Rosie Wickert – Secretary	Donna Bailey
Steve Allan	Eryn Thomas

Our Neighbourhood Centres offer a range of services that include generalist counselling, Emergency Relief, Tax Help, Work Development Orders, Community Meals each fortnight, No Interest Loans, Computer Help, Internet & Printing, Bellingen Nambucca Youth Services, Dorrigo Youth Centre, Early Childhood Wellbeing Development.

We also manage the Centrelink Agency in Bellingen, auspice The Men's Shed, Bellingen Shire CDAT, and support Bello Be Young & Proud.

All services are provided to our residents free of charge and have a combination of paid staff and volunteers that deliver them. We thank Council for their generous rental support as we would not be able to provide these services to our community if we had to pay commercial rent. A thank you must also go to our funding body DCJ NSW for investing in our organisation.

But without our dedicated staff, volunteers and Management Committee members this Organisation would not flourish as we realise how important it is to advocate on behalf of our communities.

I look forward to the next 12 months working with you and Roger to further strengthen our organisation.

Kerry Child  
Chairperson



## MANAGER'S REPORT

Connecting Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire (NCOBS) is one of the 3 key local community organisations based in the Bellingen Shire.

Our trading name 'Connecting' is fundamental to the realisation of our vision of an inclusive and connected community of resilient people, and encompasses our values of:

- respect,
- integrity,
- compassion,
- inclusion,
- safety, and
- being community driven.

Our services & programs are geared towards supporting individuals & families within the Bellingen Shire who may find themselves in a vulnerable situation or experiencing disadvantages. These services and programs include:

- 3 Neighbourhood Centres – Dorrigo, Bellingen & Urunga
- Services Australia Agency (Centrelink-Medicare-Child Support)
- Bellingen-Nambucca Youth Services
- Dorrigo Youth Centre
- YOUth Speaks Project
- Bellingen Shire No Interest Loans Scheme
- Early Childhood Wellbeing and Development Service – Bellingen Shire
- Community-based Suicide Prevention Project – Bellingen LGA
- Auspiced groups:
  - Urunga Men's Shed,
  - Bellingen Community Safe Space (till Dec 2022)
  - Dorrigo Suicide Prevention Network (till Dec 2022),
  - Bellingen Shire Community Drug Action Team (CDAT) (in abeyance currently)

The past financial year has been one of re-consolidation across our Shire. Drought, fires, the COVID-19 pandemic, floods, now drought again, have left many people still feeling disconnected, and many of the community groups and activities that happened in our community slow to re-start, if at all. With the acknowledgement that these types of events will happen more due to climate change, Connecting NCOBS has been involved in actions to plan for these i.e., involvement in disaster preparation and recovery training days, and involvement in setting up the Bellingen Shire Community Resilience Committee.

Many people are also feeling the effects of the housing shortage, the massive rise in the cost of housing in the Shire (basically doubled in price in 5 years), the rising cost of living, and continuing low wages. This has led to an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness and working people on low incomes being unable to meet their financial costs.

One of our focuses has been to provide support to people experiencing homelessness and financial difficulties in the Bellingen Shire. This support and many other projects are undertaken by volunteers who give their time, energy and skills freely.

NCOBS has also run programs, facilitated the formation of groups and organised activities and events to help those people feeling disconnected. For example, the Suicide Prevention Project in the Shire led to the following:

- Seaboard:
  - Tides Are Turning Cultural Day
  - Community Art Project & Exhibition
  - Mental Health First Aid Training
  - C.A.L.M. Training
  - Older Person Mental Health First Aid Training
  - Urunga Community Information Day
- Bellingen:
  - Safe Space for people at risk
  - Red Dust Training
  - Community dinner with a panel of speakers
- Dorrigo
  - Community reflection benches
  - Training on suicide prevention for farmers
  - Older Person Mental Health First Aid
  - Various information material for distribution

We have regular community lunches at all three Neighbourhood Centres, where people can meet and share a meal, and we negotiate with people to run groups and services through our centres.

Over many years, in different and various guises, our organisation has led, inspired and embraced change. Our Strategic Plan is focussed on ensuring that our services, programs and activities are flexible to the changing needs of the Bellingen Shire, and in ensuring the security of NCOBS in the future – sourcing secure funding, consolidating services, increasing the capabilities of workers and developing systems that assist us to work better.

As a key community organisation in the Bellingen Shire, NCOBS was approached by people involved in the Bellingen Shire Youth Hub to take on responsibility for its management. These people approached us because they saw that our Vision and being community driven, meant that the Youth Hub would be kept as a Bellingen Shire-focussed community asset. Months of negotiations with Bellingen Shire Council has led to agreement that NCOBS, from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023, will take on management of the Youth Hub.

Our Vision of “..... a connected community of resilient people” means that we build relationships and work collaboratively with community members, groups, services, organisations, businesses, Council, government departments and others to support our community and its people. We would like to particularly thank:

- The Cork Charity for the donation for the rent for the Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre,
- Urunga Business and Community for their donation,
- The Dorrigo Oppy for their donation and support of the Dorrigo Youth Centre,
- Bellingen Shire Council for their support and for low and no rent premises
- The various government departments (NSW Communities and Justice, Services Australia, Fair Trading NSW, and others) that fund us; and
- other many other local businesses that donated prizes to various our fundraising activities.

Appreciation and thanks go to this year's Management Committee for its leadership and governance oversight. Special thanks to Chairperson, Kerry Child and Deputy Chairperson, Annette Carse who gave a lot of their time and effort in dealing with various matters relevant to Connecting.

Connecting could not do what it does without the excellent work of our wonderfully talented and committed team of employees, volunteers, committee members and community partners. We extend our sincere thanks, gratitude and congratulations to all these people.

However, special thanks go to our Team:

#### *Volunteers*

The work of volunteers in our organisation is greatly appreciated and valued - people who volunteer at the Neighbourhood Centres, the Dorrigo Youth Centre, Urunga Men's Shed, the youth service and/or in connection with the Suicide Prevention Project and the Community Drug Action Team.

#### *Employees*

Our paid employees are the backbone of the organisation – from supporting volunteers to providing services, they provide the base upon which everything is built:

##### *Neighbourhood Centres – Bellingen, Urunga and Dorrigo*

- ★ May Smith, Coordinator – Bellingen and Urunga
- ★ Erika Munan, Coordinator – Dorrigo
- ★ Leonie McDonald & Christine Wait, acting Coordinators – Dorrigo
- ★ Evelyn Krosby, Cleaner

##### *Bellingen Services Australia (Centrelink) Agency*

- ★ Julie Warwick, Administration Worker
- ★ Pauline Lewis, Administration Worker
- ★ Evelyn Krosby, Diane Adams – relief Administration Workers

##### *Bellingen Shire No Interest Loans Scheme*

- ★ Diane Adams – NILS Worker, Bellingen and Urunga
- ★ Leonie McDonald – NILS Worker, Dorrigo

##### *Bellingen-Nambucca Youth Services*

- ★ Eliza Zanuso, Youth Caseworker
- ★ Skye Babula, Youth Caseworker (Leave replacement)
- ★ Ellie Tree, Youth and Family Wellbeing Caseworker
- ★ Tyson Young, Youth and Family Wellbeing Caseworker (Leave replacement)
- ★ Erika Munan, Dorrigo Youth Centre Coordinator
- ★ Christine Wait & Leonie McDonald, Dorrigo Youth Centre Coordinators (acting)
- ★ Nicola Beckett, Dorrigo Youth Activities Worker

##### *Bellingen Shire Youth Hub - by formal arrangement with Bellingen Shire Council*

- ★ Myola Suffolk, Youth Hub Support Worker

##### *Early Childhood Wellbeing and Development – Bellingen Shire*

- ★ Julia Brown, Early Years Family Worker
- ★ Frances Witt, Aboriginal Early Years Family Worker

##### *Management and Administration*

- ★ Shareen Banner, Accounts Officer
- ★ Diane Adams - Administration Assistant
- ★ Leanne Collier, Interim Manager (Jun to Oct 2022)

## Community Acknowledgement of our NC Coordinators

CONGRATULATIONS to Erika Munan, (pictured right) Coordinator of Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre and Dorrigo Youth Centre, who was presented with the Oxley electorate Local Woman of the Year Award on 8 March 2023, International Women's Day.

The Bellingen Shire News was spot on, saying "*Erika Munan sure is adept at spinning plates. On the one hand, you can find her running the Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre – so already, a lady with a full schedule. But then, Erika is also the coordinator of the Dorrigo Youth Centre. It must be that brisk mountain air that keeps you moving.*"

<https://bellingshirenews.com/2023/02/01/community-corner-4>



and .....



CONGRATULATIONS to May Smith, (pictured left) Coordinator of Bellingen and Urunga Neighbourhood Centre, who was awarded with the 2022 Bellingen Shire Community Champion Award.

The heartfelt and perfect nomination for May read:

*"May is a kind, selfless woman who gives tirelessly of herself to our community. From facilitating the 'Bowl of Plenty' movement where locals in need can go to have a nutritious meal, to coordinating all manner of local support, May Smith is truly an Angel here on earth, in our own little town."*

The extent of the excellent work and impressive achievements and outcomes achieved by the NCOBS team this year are showcased in the service and project reports that follow.

*Roger Horton*

## NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES



Our Neighbourhood Centres offer a range of services and programs to support the community and especially individuals and families with complex support needs.

Our Neighbourhood Centres across the Shire are open to the public in:

Bellingen	Monday to Friday	9:30am to 3:30pm
Urunga	Monday to Thursday	9:30am to 2:30pm
Dorrigo	Wednesday & Thursday	9:30am to 2:00pm

Bellingen and Urunga Neighbourhood Centres are under the coordination of May Smith, and Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre was coordinated by Erika Munan until she went on extended leave in May 2023 with Leonie McDonald and Christine Wait stepping into the shared coordinator role for the time being.

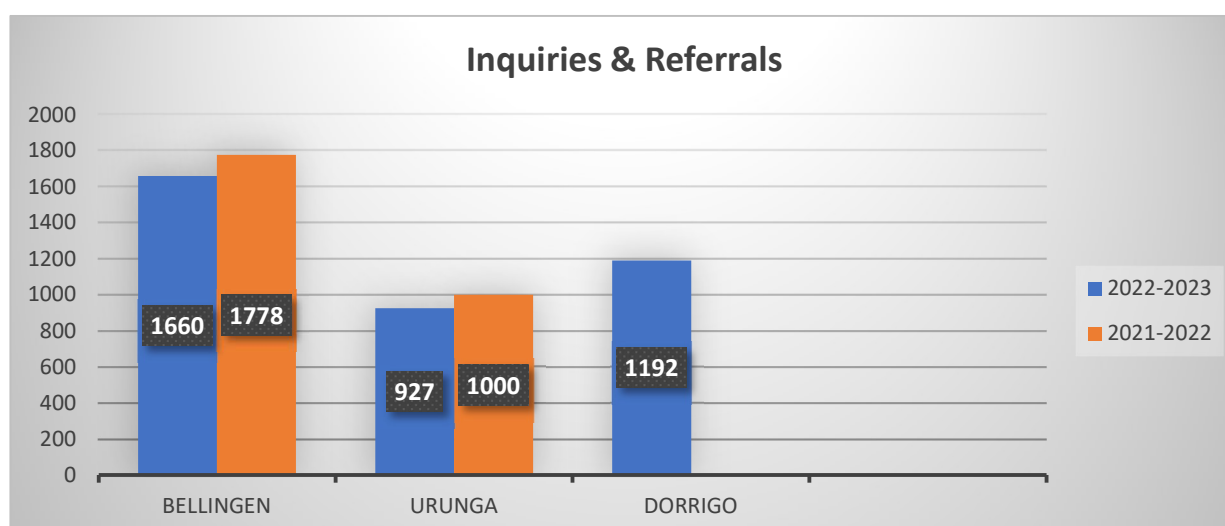
The Neighbourhood Centres assist many clients through a range of services and programs, and this is achieved through being very creative to stretch base funding as far as possible, supplemented by one-off grants and by working in partnerships. Our aim is to maximise opportunities for engagement, participation, inclusion and belonging for our clients and communities.

A hive of activity is found at the front desk at each Centre. The front desk is run by volunteers who give generously of their time. The Centres' reception is the first point of contact for all visitors and callers, people are greeted and welcomed, cuppas are offered, appointments are made, photocopying and laminating are provided and so much more.

The extent of core activities delivered by the Neighbourhood Centres in 2022/2023 is demonstrated in the following tables, charts and reflections.

### Reception data collection and statistics

The front desk volunteers record information about the number and nature of inquiries, basic demographics of people calling or visiting the Centres and the result of the inquiries.



## Information, Advice, Referral, Advocacy and Support

### **Bellingen and Urunga Neighbourhood Centres**

The **Generalist Counselling Service** continued this year thanks to the voluntary contribution of Donna Bailey at Bellingen and for a short time at Urunga, and Rory Hudson at Urunga.

**Tax Help** was available from July to September 2022 in Bellingen and Urunga. Tax Help volunteers are accredited by the ATO to assist low-income individuals. Our thanks to Diane Adams, for her time volunteered to assist others to complete their tax returns.

**Computer lessons** are provided by volunteer tutors. This year, at the Bellingen centre, Joe Schwaiger who has a broad knowledge with computers, iPhone and tablets, provided one-on-one lessons with people who needed help with their devices. In Urunga, there is no designated tutor so volunteers who have the knowledge helped our community members with IT inquiries.

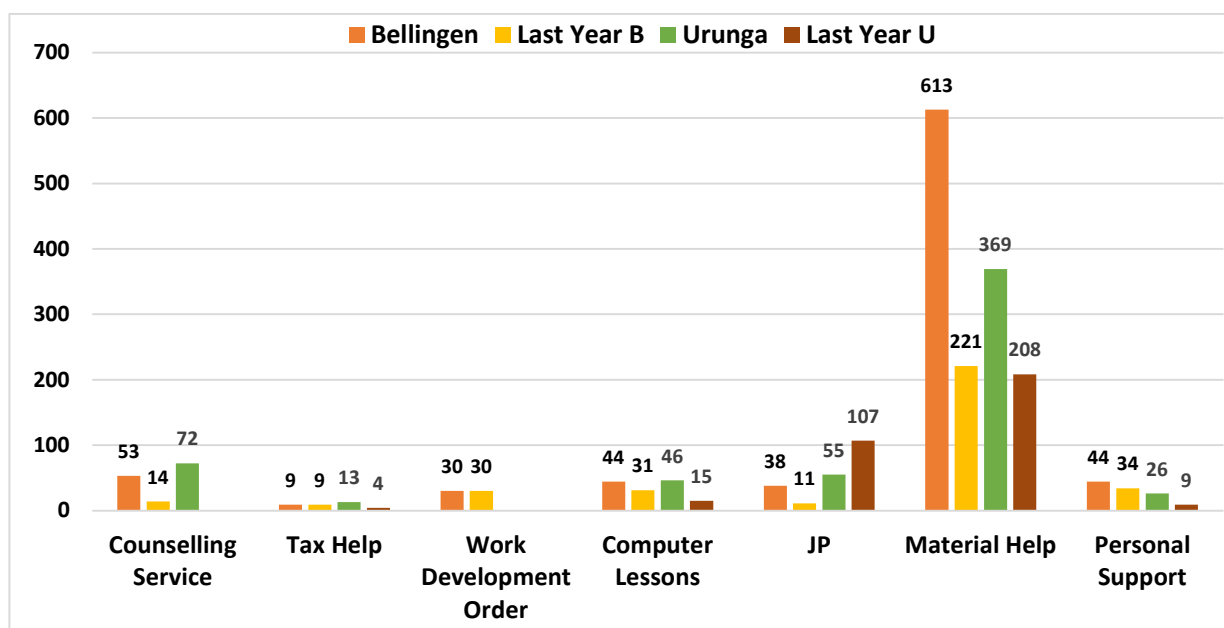
**Work Development Orders (WDO)** are a way of doing voluntary work or engaging in therapeutic or social activities to “work-off” state debt fines. Volunteer worker Gabrielle (Gab) Drennan delivered an excellent service for WDO clients.

A **Justice of Peace** was available at Urunga on Tuesday and Thursday and in Bellingen on Wednesday and Thursday. Residents are very grateful to have this service provided locally. Thank you to our volunteers, Diane and Arlene, both registered JPs!

**Material help:** Frozen meals, food, clothes, hygiene and personal care products and other donated items are available to people in need. No appointment is necessary to receive this assistance.

**Personal support:** Some clients need one-on-one help with filling out applications and forms, creating accounts to access websites like myGov and Services NSW and oftentimes, someone who will listen.

The following data about clients, individual appointments and support provided, and activities attended are recorded separately by staff and only accessible by authorised workers.



*Note: WDO service was only available at Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre*

**The facilities** (room hire) at Bellingen and Urunga centres are used for several programs including computer lessons, Work Development Orders, the free Counselling Service, Tax Help, No Interest Loan Service (NILS) and Emergency Relief.

Offices and meeting rooms at the centres are also hired out to other organisations to provide outreach in the Bellingen Shire, and in Urunga the big meeting room is hired out to community groups for activities, meetings and workshops.

## Promotion, Networking and Connecting

### Wills Week – April 2023



In partnership with Copeland Estates Legal, Bellingen and Urunga Neighbourhood Centres were a part of Wills Week this year. People can book an appointment with a solicitor and pay a greatly reduced price to have a new simple Will prepared or to update their existing one. The fees raised are donated in full to the Westpac Rescue Helicopter service. Del Copeland kindly donated her time to assist 8 local people to prepare a will. We hope to work together with the organisers again in Wills Week 2024.

### Bishop Druitt College (BDC) Playgroup

Through the year on Wednesdays from 9am to 10.30am, BDC ran a playgroup at the Urunga Neighbourhood Centre premises. Normally it is held in the fenced backyard unless weather is bad when the activity moves inside. The BDC facilitators have use of the plentiful toys and equipment that our organisation has in storage. The playgroup aims to provide a base for families and caregivers connect and support each other and offers a safe space for children to take part in fun activities.

### Newsletter

The Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre newsletter has morphed into a newsletter for the whole organisation. Staff member, Julie Warwick enjoys putting the information together in hard-copy and e-newsletter formats ready to send out each quarter. Print copies of the newsletter are available at the libraries and other community places across the Shire and the e-newsletter version goes out via Mailchimp to NCOBS' members.

### Facebook

Bellingen, Dorrigo and Urunga Neighbourhood Centres have active Facebook pages, which we regularly use to inform the community of news, updates, activities, events and to call out for specific donations of items needed by clients and for new volunteers.

### Volunteer meetings

Bi-monthly volunteer meetings were held throughout the year. A time to all to get together is important because volunteers work on different days and may not have the opportunity to get to know each other otherwise. The volunteer meetings are a forum for team building, learning, information sharing, discussing good vibrations and challenges, and a time to celebrate birthdays.

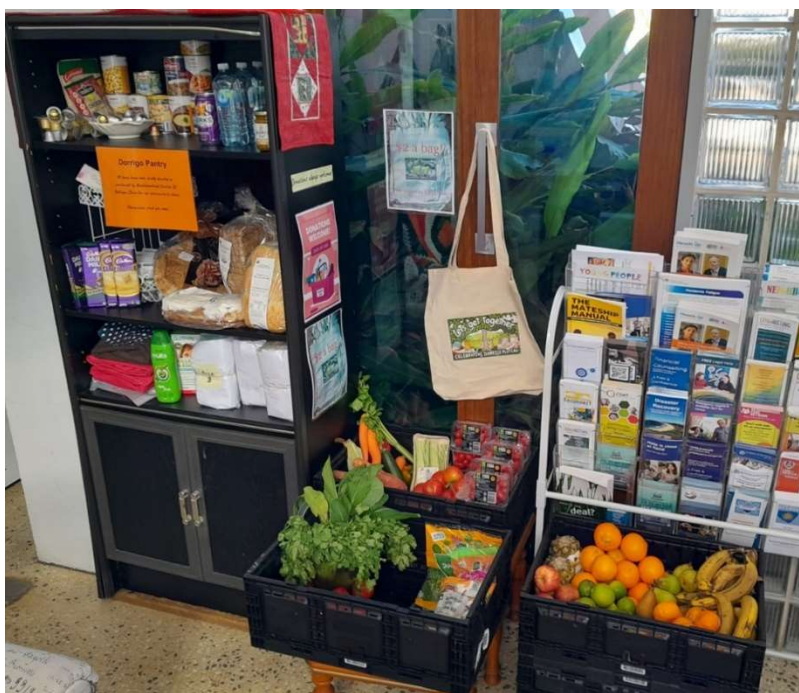
### Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre

Connecting community to the help they need is key to Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre's purpose and continues to be of huge benefit to all those who seek us out - if the neighbourhood centre can't help directly, we can point people in the direction of those who can. The Centre maintains a variety of pamphlets, brochures and other information on various topics including community transport, support services, counselling etc., along with the services we provide at all centres. as with contact details of any interest or further specialist information.



It a small, dedicated team at the neighbourhood centre in Dorrigo, which is proving to be a vital service to the community. There is always more to do than the allocated time allows, and the Centre would like to open more often.

Special mention to all the volunteers who assist with the running of the centre and events, such as our Neighbourhood Meal, fundraisers and behind the scenes. Our centre would not run without them. The team generally has a Centre catch up once a month to check in, to discuss any concerns, future ideas, events, and goals. We offer a food pantry with goods from OzHarvest, locally donated goods, frozen foods and meals, dry foods and fresh produce.



### Collaboration with Local Stakeholders

Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre (DNC) has an extremely good relationship with many local community groups, businesses and other NFP organisations. Donations are received from local groups, businesses and other not-for-profit organisations in the form of goods and funds.

The Centre works closely with as many of the local charities, businesses, support groups and community activities as possible including The Oppy, Dorrigo Support Centre, Vinnies, Dorrigo Library and the Chamber of Commerce liaising regularly about dates for programs, meals and crossover events. Many local groups have members pop in to keep us up to date with their events etc., and we have a great rapport with all.

Dorrigo Hardware Store often provides supplies at cost price, Dorrigo Butcher always gives a discount for fundraising events, and Dorrigo IGA and Dorrigo SPAR supermarkets have donated goods.

The local Coffee Club donates goods for our dry food pantry and the Deer Vale Hall committee donate regularly - handmade items, purchased good and quality second hand goods also.

Dandarrga Landcare, The Oppy, Vinnies, and multiple community members check in regularly to see if any assistance is needed with anything. The Shop Local Cards are a huge success with many businesses in Dorrigo on board.

A shout out to Coffs Harbour OzHarvest which provides a food rescue allocation for Dorrigo every week; the produce and goods available in our food pantry are greatly appreciated by our local community. Produce is also used in our Neighbourhood Meals, at the Youthie for meals twice a week for up to 20 young people, and any excess is taken to Dandarrga Landcare for their 'Free Food Friday'.

Coordinator, Erika Munan started extended travel leave on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023 and experienced volunteers, Leonie McDonald and Christine Wait were employed as acting coordinators of Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre for 12 months.

## Community Engagement and Social Participation

### Thrive festival

On the 4th of March we had an information stall at the 'THRIVE' festival and also the bowl of plenty cooked up a storm for the community to share. There were just over 30 meals given out and \$140 in donations received. Thank you to volunteers, Mitch, Clair and Brenda.



### Trivia Night

What a fun and successful fundraiser it was! All the tables were booked with around 100 people attending. Volunteer, Kathy was the organiser and did lots of work and an outstanding job! Most of the volunteers from Urunga helped on the night, which was great. Michael, our placement student, also did the donation runs in Bello and Urunga beforehand. Leanne was the MC for the evening. Kathy created a dessert box with different kinds of homemade sweet treats for each person. An amazing \$2000 was raised. We hope to make this a yearly event!



## Community Support and Participation



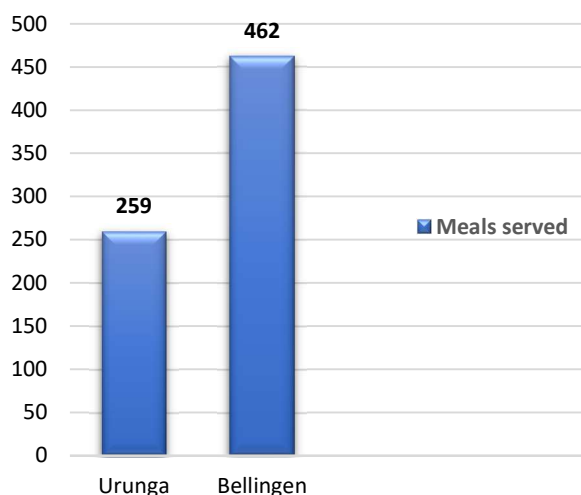
### Cupboard of Plenty

The cupboard of plenty project at Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre is now 7 years old. The cupboard of plenty is well used. It still gets filled up as supplies are available and gets emptied quite quickly. Over the year, a lot of people stop by the cupboard to discuss it and/or make use of it. A lot of great comments about it are heard including parents explaining why and who it is for to their children. The cupboard has certainly helped a lot of people through difficult times.

### Bowl of Plenty

The Bowl of Plenty is still going strong. The community meal is every 2nd and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday at the Citizen's Centre room next door to us in Bellingen and at Urunga Neighbourhood Centre on the first Wednesday each month.

There are volunteers happy to help, when needed at the community meals. A big thank you to Evelyn, Laura, Jilly, Frances, Coleen, Kathy and Cindy who are there every time to set up, greet, serve and washing dishes, and the cooks: Evelyn, Donna, Mitch, Claire and other community members.



Big thanks and our appreciation to Oz Harvest whose volunteers deliver the veggies, fruit and other goods every week to Urunga and Bellingen; to Urunga Country Oven Bakery and the Swiss Patisserie in Bellingen for donations of fresh bread for every community meal; to the donors who help financially and with food supplies; and to our dedicated volunteer cooks who provide such delicious and nutritious meals for the community lunches.

Every other week, volunteers are still cooking meals to be divided up and frozen, so there is a supply of tasty, nutritious meals is available most of the time to take away.

***Thank you all so much.***

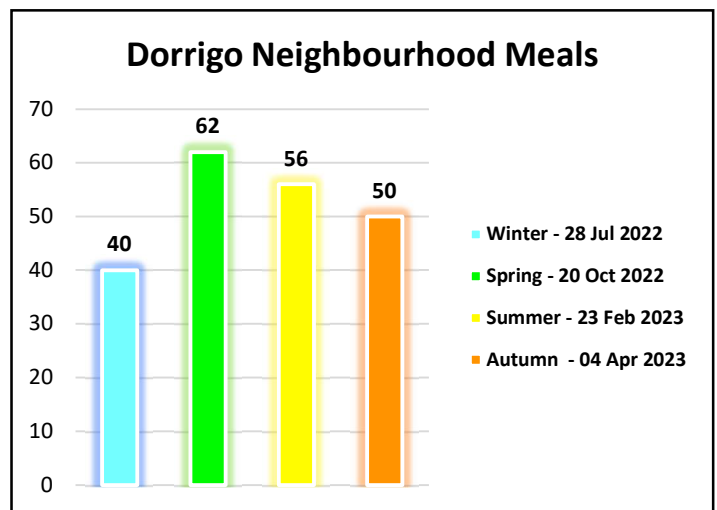
### Dorrigo Neighbourhood Meal

The first of four seasonal Dorrigo Neighbourhood Meals provided was held in July 2022. Erika Munan reported *“Connecting Dorrigo hosted its inaugural community meal on July 28th at 12pm. [The] ... Neighbourhood Centres already have community meals in Urunga and Bellingen, and our aim is to establish a unique complimentary meal event in Dorrigo that gives residents a chance to gather, that is also for the long-term sustainability of the community. We are committed to welcoming all walks of life on the Plateau and hope to share with everyone that this is a great chance to break bread with other community members. ... Local venue, The Never Never Mind was selected to kick off the Dorrigo Neighbourhood Meal, courtesy of Dandarrga Landcare and Dorrigo Seed Savers, who are big supporters of seasonal meals, shared by locals. We also reached out to the community and were so pleased to be able to include local providers Plateau Farms, as well as the Dorrigo Butcher, Dorrigo Bakery, IGA Dorrigo and Dorrigo Youth Centre. Polly from Sunshine at Hickory’s generously donated her time, supplies and expertise in preparing this seasons’ simple but yummy meals of beautiful savoury mince, amazing dhal, rice and bread.*

We enjoyed 34 bookings and several more people who saw our signs and were welcomed to join in. Uncle Allan Phillips gave a moving welcome and acknowledgement of Country, and a short blessing from another local before we all tucked into our meals. After our meals, everyone washed up their own bowls and utensils and settled into coffee, tea and assorted biscuits, enjoying the fire and the music put on by Avril, Ian and friends. Lunch-goers were also gifted spinach seed packets, courtesy of Dorrigo Community Nursery.” Source: <https://bellingshirenews.com/2022/08/03/dorrigo-neighbourhood-meal-launched/>



All four seasonal community meals this financial year were a great success, with staff, volunteers, community members, businesses and local charities all pitching in with donations of produce, time and funding for venue hire, cooking, serving and cleaning up. Some amazing local youth attend as volunteers regularly, along with other awesome volunteers, to help serve, clear and mingle with the community. The community really got behind Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre in this connecting venture and everyone’s assistance and support is greatly appreciated.



## Advocacy and Support

### Share the Dignity

Our Neighbourhood Centres are a receiving charity of Share the Dignity. Twice a year the public is asked to donate menstruation products at collection points throughout the country. Also, throughout November, Share the Dignity runs the “It’s In the Bag” campaign when people donate a handbag or similar filled with sanitary and personal care products for charities to give out in December. Local ‘shero’, Di Ginis coordinates the collection and distribution of Share the Dignity donations in our area. Hundreds of the donated period products and gifted bags were given out for girls and women by the neighbourhood centres of Bellingen Shire this year.



## DV Safe phones

The three Centres are collection point for DV Safe phones. All mobile phones donated are sent away to be refurbished. Each phone comes with a \$10 credit SIM card and some accessories. NCOBS in turn receives a supply of the refurbished mobile phones for the neighbourhood centres to give to people experiencing and/or fleeing domestic violence.

## Backpack Bed for Homeless



More fleece sleeping bags were bought to give to people sleeping rough during winter. We were able to purchase these basic supplies with money collected in the five donation boxes that are placed in different shops around Bellingen. The amount raised this year was \$700.

**SLEEP SAFE** The neighbourhood centres received pillowcases, fitted sheets and towels from Sleep Safe to give to homeless people. Sleep Safe partners with Sheridan Australia to create sleep kits for people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness, to provide some basic comforts that many take for granted.



## Return and Earn

Until late last year, the neighbourhood centres had a donation button on the return and earn machine in Bellingen. The company then changed to an app to record bottle deposits made and the donate button on the machine was discontinued. Laminated cards with NCOBS designated barcode were made at BNC then posted on the machine and given out to community members in the hope that donations would still be received. This helped a little although there was a big decrease in donations compared to last year. However, the \$636.90 received helped the Centre provide food, fuel and pharmacy vouchers to more community members in need this year. We are grateful to all in community who donated.

## Connecting Neighbourhood Centres Volunteer Program

It has always been true that because of the involvement of community volunteers, so much more is able to be achieved and offered by our organisation. Volunteering is a very *connecting* and worthwhile endeavour. Our volunteer program is an opportunity for residents to stay connected to their community, to participate collectively and to participate socially. Volunteering also builds individual knowledge, skills, confidence and wellbeing. Some volunteers want to develop skills and experience that could help them on a pathway to employment while others have retired from the workforce. All enjoy being part of a team and giving back to their community.

## Viva las Volunteers!

**THANK YOU** to our all of our wonderful Neighbourhood Centre volunteers; your time, talents and commitment are greatly appreciated.

**At Bellingen:** Evelyn Krosby, Brenda Sheely, Andrew Oliver, Joe Schwaiger, Jilly Norris, Donna Bailey, Diane Adams, Gabrielle Drennan, Laura Lopez Sepulveda, Shandra Copparo and Mirella Gleeson.

**At Urunga:** Arlene Ryan, Sandy Jenkins, Kathy Jeanes, Craig Cummings, Helen Pearsall, Rhonda Newman, Heather Blair, Rory Hude and placement students, Michael White and Kaz.

**At Dorrigo:** Robyn Davison, Leonie McDonald, Katherine Arimado and Christine Wait.



All have given many hours of their time and have been a great help to the staff and to many people accessing the Neighbourhood Centre for information, services and support. In May 2023 during National Volunteer Week, every volunteer received a local gift card, a small token of big thanks and our huge appreciation for their contribution to the neighbourhood centres of Bellingen Shire.

## Emergency Relief

The Emergency relief program has only limited funding. We rely primarily on donations and fundraising to be able to provide this program.

Our ER relief fundraisers in 2022 – 2023 were:

- The donation button on the return and earn machine.
- Trivia Night
- A GoFundMe page for each centre was created to seek donations for the Emergency Relief service. So far, \$335 in donations have been received. The campaign is still active.

Donations received:

- Community members (goods and financial)
- Blue Sky Community Services (gift cards and supermarket vouchers)
- The Oppy Dorrigo (financial)
- Hyde's Creek Rural Fire Service
- Lions Club Urunga
- Oz Harvest (food)

## Thank you to all who gave!

NCOBS is also registered with GIVIT and with Good 360, both online donation exchanges that receive financial donations and/or surplus goods that are available at low-cost to non-profit organisations.

Because of financial constraints, the Neighbourhood Centres can offer only limited amounts for Food, Fuel or Pharmacy vouchers. Help with electricity bills is another form of assistance through the Energy Account Payment Assistance (EAPA) scheme.

In 2022, Blue Sky Community Services provided the neighbourhood centres with an allocation for the Bellingen Shire from a NSW disaster relief grant. Visa and eftpos gift cards were available for a time to residents affected by the floods and/or isolating at home because of COVID.

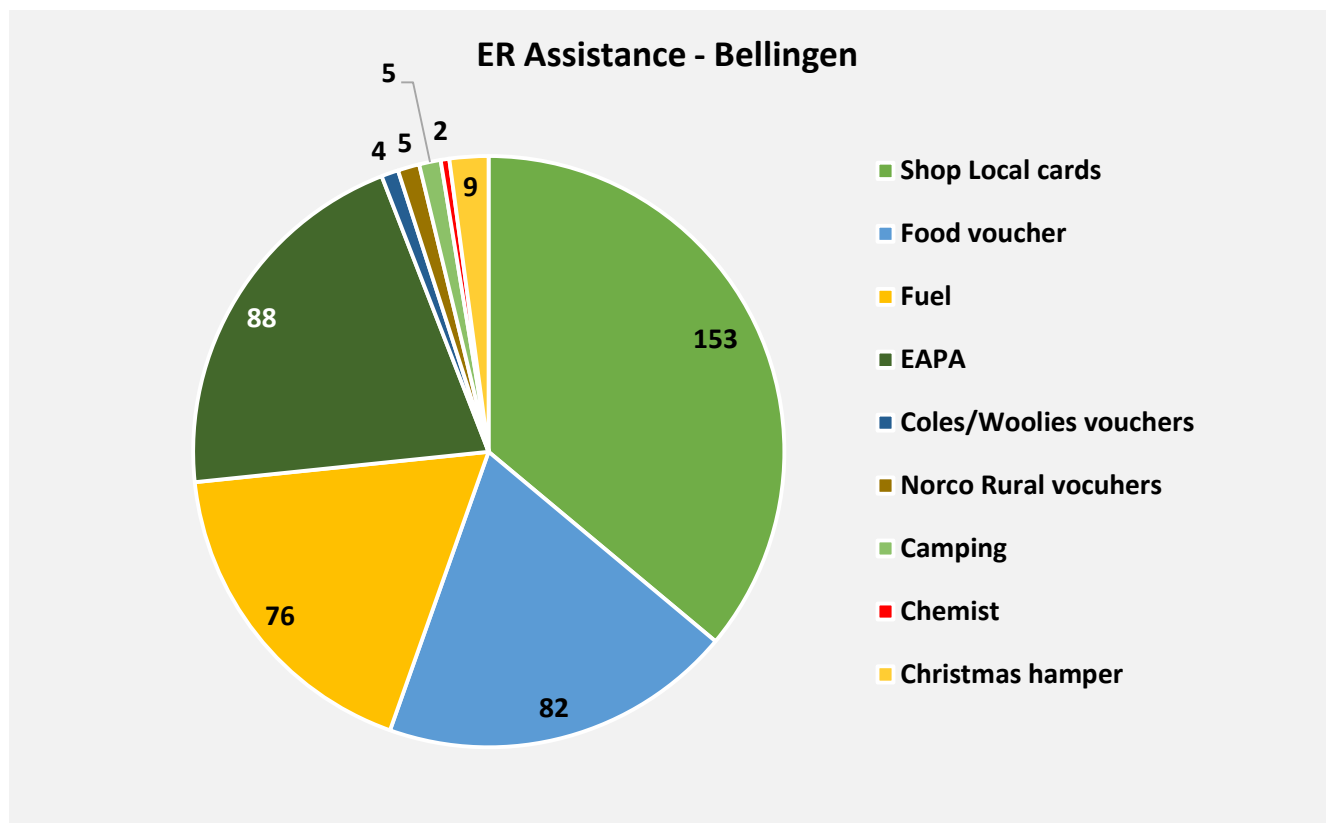
While available, the NORCO Rural vouchers, which we received through GIVIT after the bushfires and floods, and the disaster relief cards also helped to supplement our limited emergency relief resources.

Emergency relief assistance given in 2022-2023 as vouchers, shop local cards and EAPA is shown in the table below. These figures do not include material help given, numbers for which are included in the Internal Referral and Activities statistics.

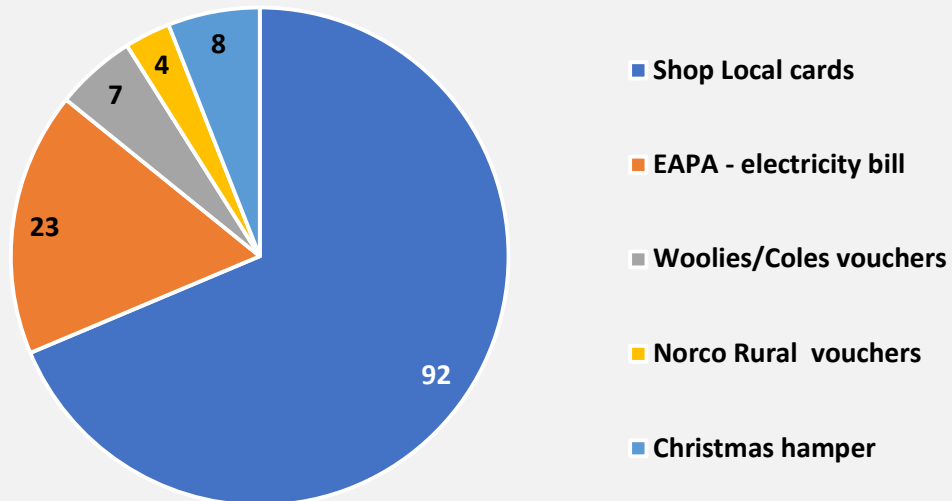
	Bellingen	Urunga	Total	Increase in total demand from previous year
<b>2020-2021</b>			<b>197</b>	
<b>2021-2022</b>	228	48	<b>276</b>	40.0%
<b>2022-2023</b>	415	127	<b>540</b>	95.65%

*Note: Comparable figures for Dorrigo are not available*

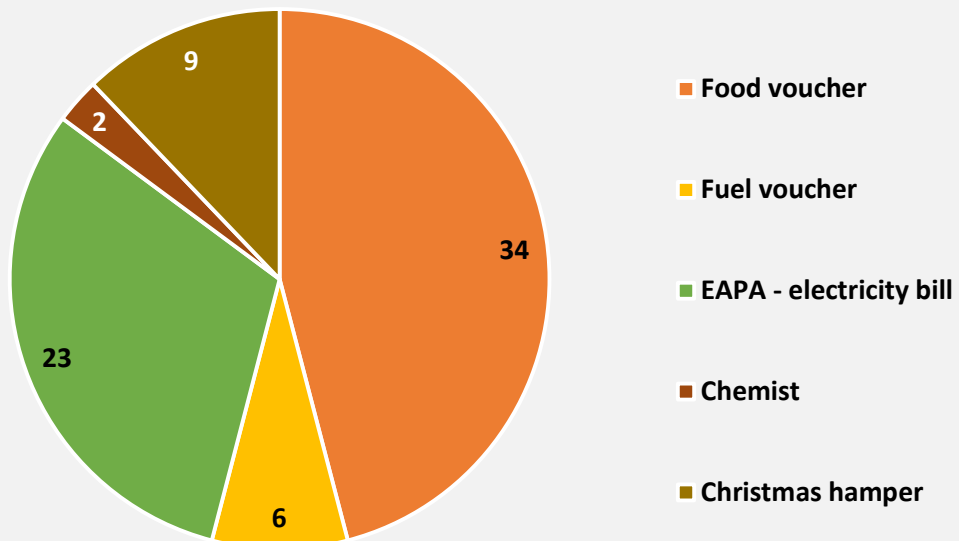
As can be seen, the demand for assistance has almost doubled from the previous year. Knowing that basic living costs were most likely going to keep going up and considering the rental crisis being experienced, NCOBS made a sound decision to invest some of the one-off Social Sector Support Fund grant to purchase a bulk lot of Bellingen Shire Shop Local Cards of varying value for the three neighbourhood centres to eke out over the year for emergency relief. This way, local businesses were supported too. Without this contingency, the neighbourhood centres could not have assisted as many residents in need of basic living cost relief.



### ER Assistance - Urunga



### ER Assistance - Dorrigo



The number of people experiencing homelessness and seeking help from the Neighbourhood Centres grew again in the last year. We are seeing more long-term homelessness; the needs are complex and support options are limited. It can be quite challenging for the staff working to assist and support some clients, many of whom need intensive targeted support, which is well outside of the neighbourhood centres' capacity and capability. Referral options are often either not available or not taken up by clients.

Electricity bill assistance is irrelevant to people who are homeless, so we help by giving out other resources like food supplies and cooked meals, clothing, hygiene products and when available, swags and bedding. Sadly, helping people and families who are homeless and those in rental crisis into temporary accommodation, let alone finding affordable rental housing, was almost impossible this year as it is in many regional areas and across Australia.

Sincere thanks to emergency relief workers: Evelyn, Brenda, Leonie and May for their commitment to providing this essential service this year.





More than a decade has passed since the Neighbourhood Centre commenced the successful delivery of the Work and Development Orders program across the Bellingen Shire. The WDO scheme offers eligible persons various pathways to cut out a fine debt in lieu of payment.

The Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre became an approved sponsor organisation shortly after the scheme commenced permanent operation. Although based in Bellingen, clients are also referred through both Urunga and Dorrigo neighbourhood centres, and an out-reach service is available. The WDO work is done by a volunteer case manager.

Successful applicants for a WDO must provide documentation to show that they meet one of the following criteria:

- Acute financial hardship
- Mental Illness
- Cognitive Impairment or Intellectual Disability
- Serious Addiction to Drugs, Alcohol or Substances
- Homelessness

During 2022-2023 we saw a downturn in the number of applicants for WDOs, but:

- 19 WDOs were opened; 33 were closed as successfully completed, with \$18,620 in WDO credits applied;
- 1 was closed to enable the opening of an order with a different sponsor;
- 2 were closed as non-compliant; and
- 3 WDOs with an original dollar value of \$2,836 remained active at 30 June 2023, and have since been successfully completed.

Where a person has a fine debt remaining after closure of a WDO, they are encouraged to make arrangements with Revenue NSW to satisfy that debt, generally by setting up a payment plan. Otherwise, Revenue NSW may recommence enforcement action under the *Fines Act 1996* to recover the debt.

The Neighbourhood Centre can assist clients who are unable both to continue with a WDO activity and to pay their fine debt, by advocating on their behalf that the outstanding debt be written off, where there is evidence of exceptional circumstances.

In other cases, clients who have mental health problems and are known to local mental health workers patients who have fine debts, are referred. Where those patients are receiving treatment and assistance through those services (as in or outpatients) they are able to access WDOs and are able to cut their debts out that way.

As a WDO sponsor, the Centre is responsible for:

- assessing client eligibility to undertake a WDO,
- obtaining and keeping proof of client eligibility,
- submitting individual client WDO applications and monthly activity reports to Revenue NSW via the self-service portal,
- maintaining records of activities and client attendance,
- identifying and managing any conflicts of interest,
- providing information for program audit activities by Revenue NSW on request

Several local non-profit organisations collaborate with BNC to provide opportunities for unpaid work for WDO clients. A key aspect of the program is that the activity which cuts out the fine debt is arranged by the client (that is approaching the charity shop, for example to arrange their unpaid work).

Additionally, local psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers see clients under the mental illness criteria. This year has seen a greater number of clients who are receiving mental health treatment, which seems to reflect the incidence in the general community.

Since Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre began administering Work and Development Orders in 2012 and as of 30 June 2023, more than 500 WDO applications with a total dollar value in excess of \$458.697 have been granted to Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire.

## BELLINGEN SHIRE NO INTEREST LOANS



The No Interest Loans (NILs) service based at Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre and covering the Valley and Seaboard areas, has been going at a steady pace this year with Diane Adams continuing in the role of Loans Worker for the two areas.

Leonie McDonald is based in Dorrigo on a Thursday and reports that “NILs in Dorrigo is proving to be of great interest. We have had up to 20 enquiries since the beginning of the year. Many people have popped in for some information regarding NILs. Although there is a high rate of no shows for appointments and repeat appointments after a no show too, there has been successful loan applications too. Information, flyers and business cards have been distributed throughout the community. Local businesses are on board, and other local charities and not-for-profits are very pleased this program is available locally and for outlying areas.”

Funding for Bellingen Shire NILs to employ workers for a total of two days per week comes from NSW Fair Trading. The current funding agreement was extended to for another year to June 2024.

This year, a small grant from Good Shepherd Microfinance was received to purchase two new mobile phones on 12-month pre-paid plans and a set of headphones for each worker. Diane and Leonie hadn't realised what a great benefit both would be to their work and are glad to have them.

Promotion of NILs continues with printed flyers and emails sent to schools and preschools in the Shire to let the wider community know about the program. The table below shows that overall, NILs enquiries have increased by almost 22% from last financial year with July, September, November, January, March and April being our better months with enquiry numbers down slightly in August, October, December, February, May and June.

NILs Enquiries			
Month	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
July	6	10	9
August	6	5	8
September	5	9	9
October	7	17	7
November	8	6	17
December	5	2	4
January	5	4	9
February	10	9	8
March	15	6	9
April	5	4	10
May	5	8	8
June	8	7	8
	<b>85</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>106</b>

Current NILs data reports from Good Shepherd Microfinance only include demographic data for those applicants where a loan has been approved. The NILS App, the application in which loan applications are submitted, is not a database.

In order to monitor and determine the extent of the reach of Bellingen Shire NILs funded as a Client Service Provider, the NILs Workers record demographic data of all enquiries and loan applications that did not go ahead as well as the approved loans in the organisation's secure client relationship and information management system.

**Comparative demographics of people enquiring about NILs**

	2021-2022	2022-2023
<b>Total Enquiries</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Postcode</b>		
2453 Dorrigo	12	4
2454 Bellingen	39	54
2455 Urunga	12	38
Coffs Harbour	1	2
Did not say/ask	23	8
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	61	70
Male	26	36
<b>County of Birth</b>		
Australia	55	85
Canada	2	0
New Zealand	3	2
United Kingdom	4	5
Germany	2	2
Netherlands	1	1
Poland	0	0
South Africa	0	1
Switzerland	1	0
Spain	0	1
Not recorded	19	9
<b>Main Source of Income</b>		
Disability Support Pension	16	17
Jobseeker Payment	14	29
Parenting Payment	8	12
Aged Pension	7	8
Carer Pension	7	0
Wages	4	9
Youth Allowance	0	1
Other / Did not say	29	30
<b>Type of Accommodation</b>		
Private Rental	25	50
Public Rental	13	11
Owner Occupied	11	10
Boarding/Family/Friends	5	7
Homeless/Crisis Accommod.	4	6
Multiply Occupancy	3	2
Farm Lease/Campervan	3	4
Other/Not Stated	21	16

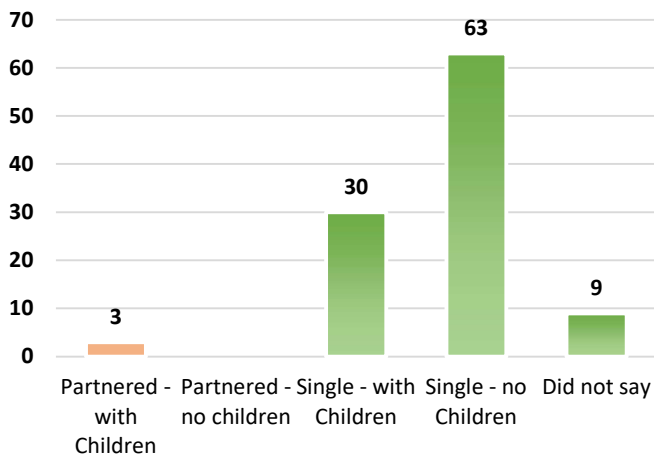
Of the 85 people born in Australia enquiring about a no interest loan this year:

- 17 (20%) identified themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 43 (50.6%) identified as not being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 18 (29.4%) preferred not to answer this question

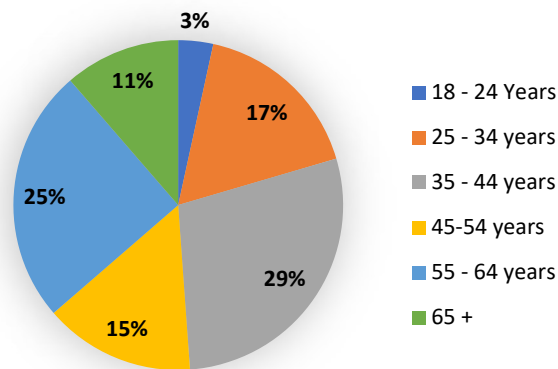
Jobseeker Payment followed by the Disability Support Pension, then Parenting Payment are the main sources of income for people enquiring about a No Interest Loan. 'Other' includes 21 applicants lodging an enquiry form and the loan interview not going ahead.

Below is a graph showing the break-up of Household Types of people applying for NILS Loans during the financial year. Most enquiries came from single parents with and without children.

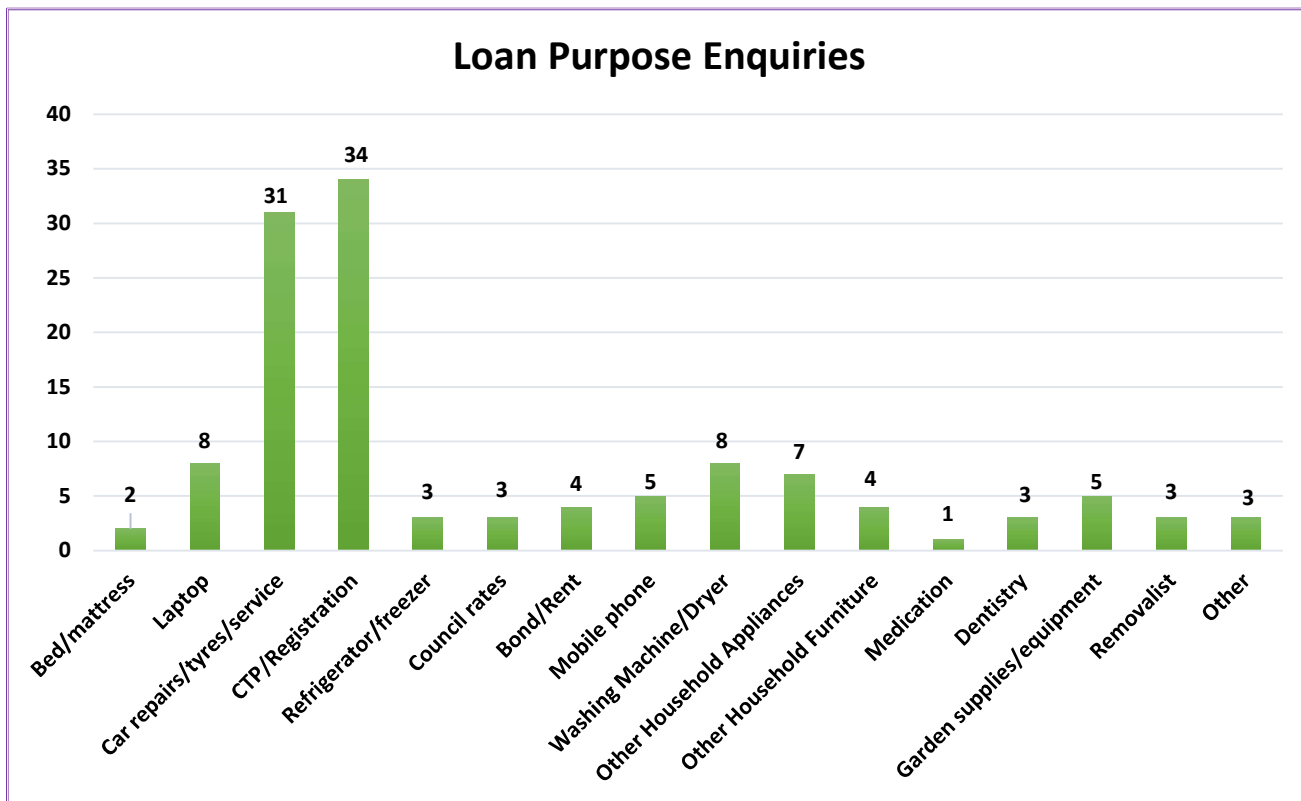
### Household Type



### % Applicants by Age Group



### Loan Purpose for July 2022 to June 2023



Over half (52.4%) of loan purpose enquiries were for car repairs and to pay car registration and/or CTP insurance. The expansion of allowable No Interest Loan purposes beyond whitegoods, household furniture and medical equipment over time to include car expenses was significant for individuals and families in rural areas where access to affordable public transport is limited. Private transport is essential for getting to work, to education, to appointments and connecting in community. 23.4% were for household appliances, furniture and garden equipment, 10.5% for computer/IT devices, 5.7% for rates and bond or rent, 3.2% for health costs and 4.8% for other purposes including relocation costs and TAFE fees.

### **Approved loans 2022-2023**

The number of approved loans has increased this financial year. Even though we have had the enquiries to get an approved loan has proved challenging for us and the clients.

<b>Approved Loans</b>			
	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>
July	1	0	3
August	7	1	1
September	4	5	6
October	4	5	2
November	5	5	6
December	5	3	8
January	2	0	1
February	2	6	7
March	3	6	3
April	1	3	6
May	1	6	9
June	1	2	7
	<b>37</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>59</b>

### **Enquiries that did not translate to an active No Interest Loan**

Did not proceed reasons being:

- 4 loan applications were approved but the clients decided not to go ahead
- 10 applicants found funding elsewhere after applying
- 3 clients did not attend the loan application interview
- 14 people did not respond to calls from the NILs worker to arrange an interview
- 3 clients were unable to gather the necessary information for a loan application
- 1 person was referred to a NILs provider closer to where they lived
- 12 enquiries were referred to the NILs4VEHICLES program

Overall, of the 106 NILs enquiries received in 2022-2023, 14 enquiries (13.2%) resulted in successful loan applications not going ahead at the clients' request, 20 enquiries (18.9%) did not progress to a loan interview or loan application with Bellingen NILs and 13 enquiries (12.3%) were referred to other NILs providers/products that our service does not process.

The very positive outcome is that 59 enquiries (55.7%) resulted in a loan application being submitted and approved and a No Interest Loan Agreement being entered into with the client. More residents in the Bellingen Shire are choosing NILs, which offers people on low incomes, safe and affordable access to credit where they only pay the amount borrowed, nothing more.

# BELLINGEN SERVICES AUSTRALIA AGENCY

(Centrelink - Medicare - Child Support - Australian Hearing)



The Bellingen Services Australia Agency, also known as the Bellingen Centrelink Agency, is operated by the Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc, on a yearly contract basis.

Opening hours are 9:30am to 12:30pm and 1:00pm to 3:30pm Monday to Friday. The Agency is located in Maam Gaduying Park (Council Grounds) in Hyde St Bellingen, in the same premises as the Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre.

**Specified Personnel** (Permanent Part-time) are Julie Warwick: Monday to Wednesday.  
Pauline Lewis: Thursday and Friday.

**Relief Personnel:** Evelyn Krosby & Diane Adams

## Updates

- In late June 2022, the contract for the agency was received and agreed by Neighbourhood Centres Inc of Bellingen Shire Inc for a further 12-month period.
- Kasey Brand (also of Charlestown) took over the role of Senior Agent Coordinator from Jaye Percy for the National Agents and Access Point Team in late September 2022.
- The Biannual Agent Reviews were conducted in person this financial year on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2022 by a Coffs Harbour Services Australia staff member and on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2023 by Kasey Brand. The outcome of both reviews were very positive.
- The Services Australia Mobile Unit/Truck visited Dorrigo on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2022, Bellingen on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2022 and again on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2023 in Dorrigo and in Bellingen on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2023.
- The Services NSW Mobile Unit/Truck continues to visit Bellingen & Dorrigo on a bimonthly basis. The last time within this financial year being Wednesday the 26<sup>th</sup> of April in Bellingen.

## Training

- The online training package, (which is regularly updated at any given time) is a contractual requirement for all staff to review and complete the Agent training modules at least every twelve months (usually within 3 months of the contract renewal i.e. by late September).
- Julie & Pauline have both undertaken Child Protection & Mandatory Reporting Modules though the NSW Department of Communities and Justice online Thrive training. Associated online workshops are optional and yet to be completed.

## Services

Bellingen Services Australia Agency provides essential services to residents of Bellingen Shire and visitors to the area, mostly relating to Centrelink & Medicare as well as many other general questions & referrals.

In the **2022 - 2023** financial year, the agency provided services for **1396 clients**, (a decrease of **157** on the previous year), and with a total **2433 services** provided (a decrease of **1200** from the previous year).

In summary, the number of clients visiting the agency per year has only dropped minimally from the previous financial year, however the number of services provided (on paper) has dropped considerably. This is a direct result of Services Australia changing the formatting of their daily statistics sheet, which now does not record general inquiries or referrals to their Services Australia offices & other departments, organisations & businesses. These clients are recorded as “Other” although the way the agency may assist them is not always captured.

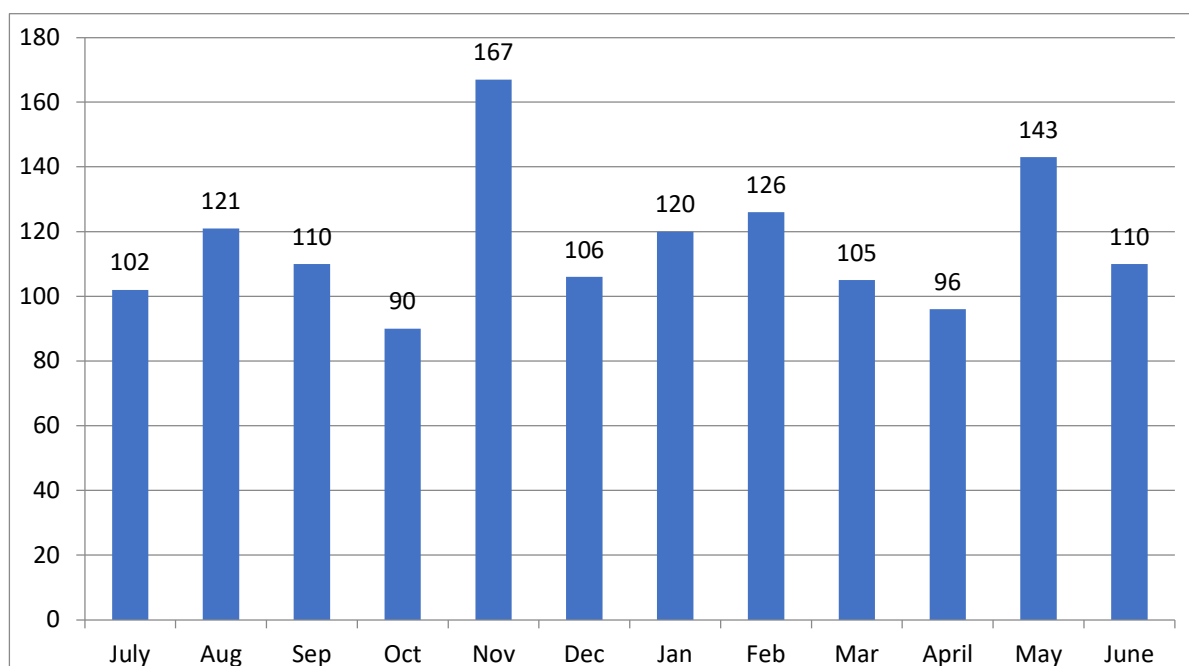
Examples of “Other” & “Referrals” include NCOBS services such as Emergency Relief, No Interest Loans, Work Development Orders, Community Meal and Cupboard of Plenty, and other outreach services. External referrals are made to Services NSW, Housing, the NDIS, Self-Employment Assistance (formerly the NEIS Program), Employment, Education & Training, Aged Care, free Dental Clinic, Health services, Financial and Taxation services, etc.

## Yearly Statistics

The agency averaged **116.3** clients per month (**13.1 per month decrease on the previous year**) and **202.75** services per month (**100 per month decrease on the previous year**).

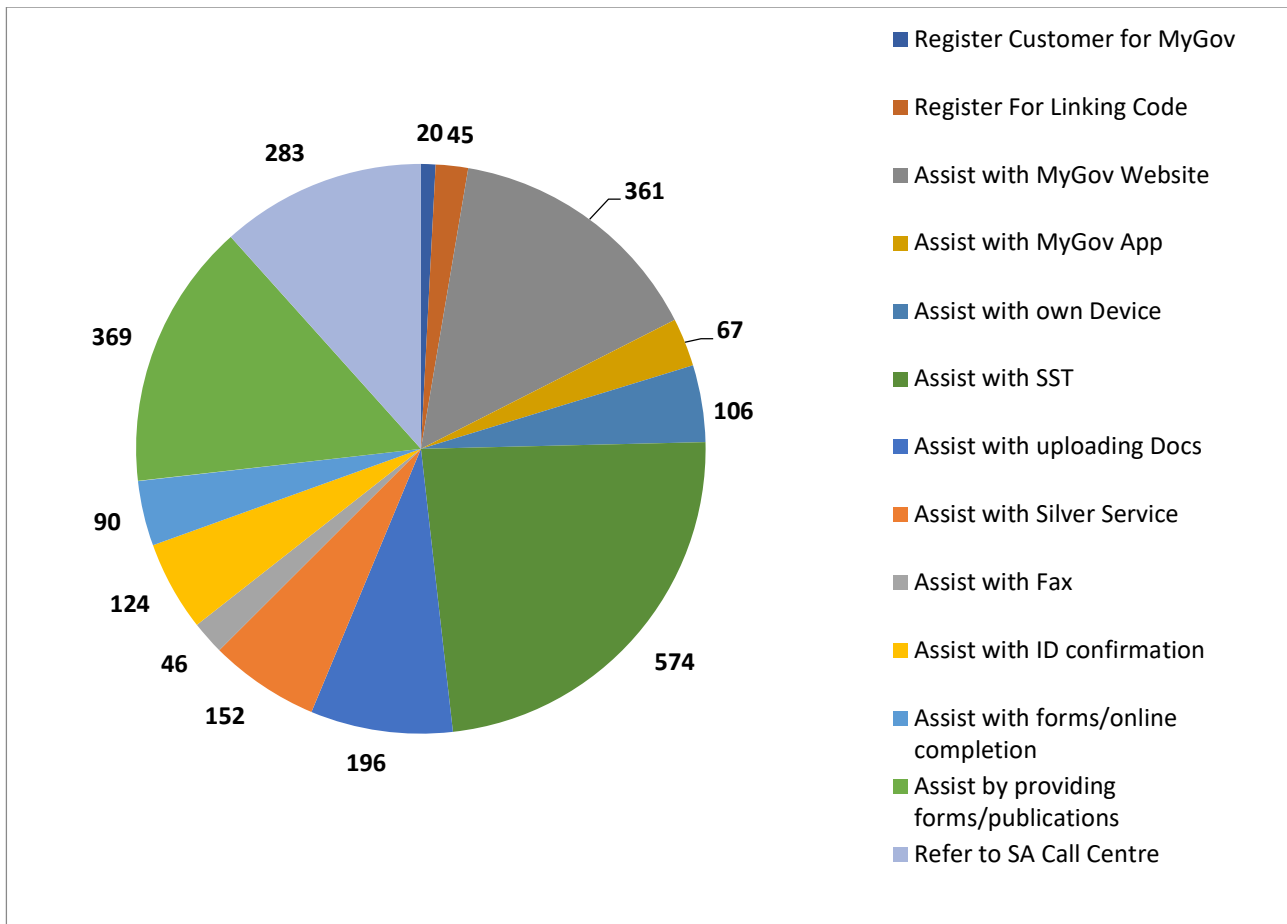
The following graphs show the monthly breakdown of clients visiting the agency and the yearly services provided, November being our busiest month & October being our quietest month.

## Services Australia Agency Monthly Customer Breakdown 2022 – 2023

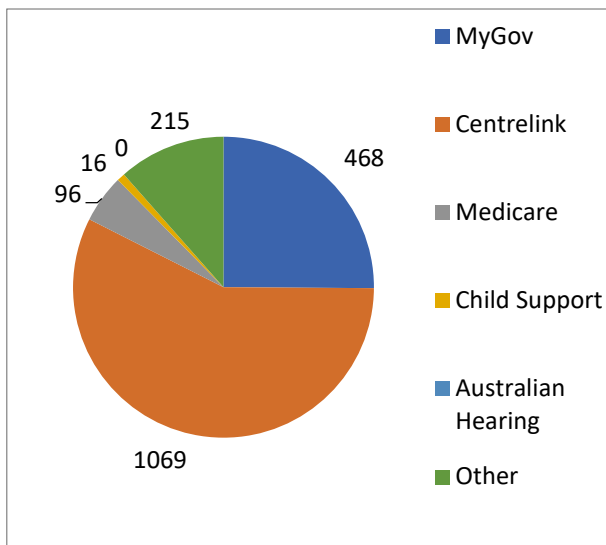




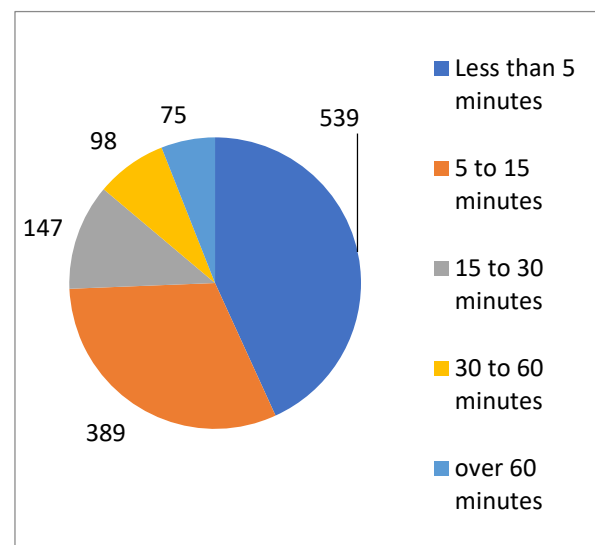
## Services Australia Agency Services Yearly Breakdown 2022 – 2023



### Departments serviced



### Time taken for each client



With customers being able to access information and services locally, they are potentially saved a trip into Coffs Harbour and back (**70.4 km's** from the Bellingen agency to Services Australia in Coffs Harbour) and thus cut out **98,278.4kms** of travel occurring which is big saving of time and fuel costs for individuals. This amount of travel is equivalent to approximately **24,569.6 kg (24.5 tonnes)** of greenhouse gas emissions so an environmental saving too.

## Customer Case Stories from Agent, Julie

24/4/2023

*A young person came in with dad to iron out issues around his Job Seeker application being rejected due to supporting documents supposedly not being submitted, confusion around bank accounts and corresponding numbers etc. Bellinghen Agent, Julie called Silver Service and spent an hour or more helping to sort out the bank accounts and corresponding numbers. The customer was advised to re-submit bank details dated back to the original claim in January up to the current date .... the documents were obtained and uploaded. A note was made on the customer's file that once this was done the claim was to be reviewed. The client came back into the agency on the 15<sup>th</sup> May to say he still hadn't heard anything regarding his claim. Julie again phoned Silver Service around 2pm and went through the whole bank account scenario again ... finally got through it all but not before the customer left at 3:50pm. On Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May, the young person came in to say he had finally received word that he would receive his first payment the next day. He expressed immense gratitude & thankfulness for the help given to him by the Bellinghen Agency.*

16/5/2023

*A young man came into the Agency late in the afternoon to have a statement faxed through regarding a Mod R form and associated tax return for a unit he once lived in. The fax number showed as 'busy', so he left and came back the next day, and tried 3 more times to send the fax .... 'busy' again each time. Bellinghen Agent, Julie called Silver Service to ask if the incorrect details in the background on his file could be amended. After much to-ing & fro-ing the source of why this issue had happened in the first place was discovered. The outcome was that an under-payment of almost \$3000 had created over time and the customer was told he was going to receive this in a lump sum payment into his account the next day. He left a very thankful & excited person indeed after having been through some difficult past few years.*

12/07/2023

*An elderly lady came into the Bellinghen Agency to update her assets online and then to print out a Centrelink Income Statement. She couldn't remember her username or password. After several failed attempts, Bellinghen Agent, Julie organised to have her email released from her account to create a new MyGov account then link her Centrelink account up to this. To do this she needed to have access to her emails to proceed in creating a new MyGov account & this became the next challenge. An entire afternoon (2.5 hours) was spent sitting with the lady & helping by calling the online hotline for the release of the email account, helping her access her emails on her Tablet device, gathering financial updates from different banks, navigating the Centrelink site to enter updates then printing out the information required and making several referrals to other departments. It was a complex & involved case to sort out however in the end everything got done before closing time and the lady was very happy with the outcome. The lady came in the following week to ask Julie to help her to put her Gmail account on her smart phone; Julie referred her to the neighbourhood centre next door as Joe, the computer whiz was volunteering there that day .....and Joe managed successfully to do as the lady asked.*

### Conclusion

The Bellinghen Services Australia Agency provides a vital service to the wide community of Bellinghen Shire. There are many elderly or disabled and (more than ever) disadvantaged folk, young and old who are unable to travel into the local offices at Coffs Harbour and Nambucca, or who are without internet connection at home.

Customers regularly comment on how appreciative they are to have the agency in town as well as the prompt, friendly and efficient service that is on offer. As appointments are now mostly required to visit the Service Australia service centres and are made via the Call/Smart Centres (not an easy feat) it is even more vital our agency remains open and accessible within our shire community!

Over the past 20 years, the Bellinghen Services Australia (Centrelink) Agency has given service to over 120,000 clients. Thank you to all the staff for the excellent work they do in servicing both our local community and visitors. Both the permanent and relief staff are a great asset to the organisation and work cooperatively to ensure all workdays are covered so the Agency is open to the public.

# EARLY CHILDHOOD WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT



The Early Childhood Wellbeing & Development service has just concluded its second full year of service (since its beginning in March 2021). Funded under the NSW Government's Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) program through NSW Communities and Justice, this service focuses on children from birth up to pre-school age who are at risk of vulnerability, and their parents and families.

Our service works with families to connect them up with practical help, services and support they seek for themselves and their children, especially families who are isolated by disadvantage or by lack of access to transport, local family and friend networks, early childhood facilities and activities, public health services and so on.

## **The Team**

Frances Witt is the Indigenous Early Years Family Worker based in Urunga, and Julia Brown is the Early Years Family Worker based in Urunga and outreaching to Dorrigo. Both Frances and Julia have continued working together with local families to plan and co-design various avenues to provide access to what is most needed for children, parents, and families in the early childhood years.

Julia and Frances collaborated and worked together on several groups and events and carried out some events and workshops individually in their designated communities. A joint endeavour achieved by both Frances and Julia was a Dorrigo offering of the Circle of Security Parenting Program in late 2022. This was a springboard for Julia to build her one-on-one support work with local Dorrigo families.

Julia's weekly presence in Dorrigo became even more consistent in early 2023 with the launch of the Dorrigo Supported Mother's Group, which enabled several of the clients to gather socially, and receive support, information, advice and referrals to other local services and organisations. Mentoring and peer support relationships amongst the mother's group attendees naturally flowed as young, new mothers mixed with older, more experienced Mothers.

Julia stayed connected with the preschool, the public school and the high school, the Child & Family Health nurse, the Dorrigo Support Centre and the Library to share information about the service and to promote upcoming child and family workshops and activities. Individual catch ups outside of the mother's group with clients also continued steadily in Dorrigo, Repton and Bellingen where Julia provided individualised support to keep parents and their children connected to what keeps them strong and resilient.

Practical assistance was provided to clients in the form of Christmas hampers to families in need, baby items, groceries, Bellingen Shire Shop Local gift cards for petrol and other needs. Also provided was, transport to and from appointments, employment assistance, and referrals to other organisations such as Tresillian, Interrelate Family services, the local Child & Family Health Nurses, Northcott/NDIS, Smart Recovery Support Groups and NSW Victims Support Scheme and local counsellors.

The progress of the Aboriginal Early Childhood Wellbeing program has been fair in terms of what could be delivered and realistically what outcomes are desired by Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) service delivery. As the TEI Aboriginal Early Years worker, Frances had identified that the TEI space challenges Aboriginal clients and is looking further at what the barriers are for local families and how the service can adapt or introduce to encourage more Aboriginal clients to participate in activities that she and Julia co-host in the Bellingen Shire.

## Highlights

FRIDAYS 10am-12 noon at Urunga Neighbourhood Centre



The Supported Playgroup in Urunga continued to grow from its inception in early 2022 and attracted regular and new families each week. A new playgroup assistant, Sharon was brought on in July 2022 and was a tremendous asset to the Early Childhood team, as her help allowed Julia & Frances to be more available to connect and chat with the parents and children.

From July to December 2022, 52 parents, grandparents and/or carers attended the Urunga supported playgroup bringing along 70 children aged 0-5 years old. Children gained social skills and used their imagination as they played together with toys, in the sandpit, on climbing structures or bikes and with water play. Playgroup assistant Sharon led various art and craft activities like boomerang painting, tie-dyeing shirts, and painting using a number of different mediums and tools, like canvas painting and using toothbrushes as paintbrushes. Children and adults explored their creativity together and enjoyed the social and sensory experiences in a safe and supported environment.

A big overhaul of the toy & equipment storage shed at UNC was carried out by Julia and Sharon in the latter months of 2022. Resources from previous years were sorted, cleaned and reorganised, benefitting the service with a new, more workable storage space for playgroup equipment and supplies.



From March to June 2023 Frances continued running the playgroup solo as Julia took on running a Supported Mother's Group in Dorrigo. In this period, 20 parents/grandparents/carers attended the playgroup bringing along 26 children aged 0-5years. Of the 40 families attending the Urunga Supported Playgroup throughout the year, 10 parents or grandparent primary carers and 13 young children/grandchildren were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, two grandparent primary carers had a diagnosed disability, and three parents were culturally and linguistically diverse.





*Supported*  
**PLAYGROUP**



## Connecting Community – Social and Cultural Participation

### July 2022

The 'Get Up, Stand Up and Show Up' NAIDOC celebration held on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022 was co-organised by One Mob Radio, our Early Childhood Wellbeing Development service, Urunga Neighbourhood Centre and Bellingen Shire Council, and was held across the Urunga Neighbourhood Centre backyard and out front of the Urunga Library. MCs were Gumbaynggirr men, Malakai Boland and Lachie Skinner. Frances was invited to perform the Welcome to Country at the commencement of the day, which was followed by a smoking and didgeridoo acknowledgement to country ceremony.

Traditional cultural dance was performed by the Bellingen High School Aboriginal Dance Group, there was a cultural mindfulness tent with Interrelate, damper making with Aunty Jenny and mini radio workshops

with Noelz Skinner from One Mob Radio.

All attending were invited to participate in the 'Sea of Hands' art mural activity and

leave their handprint in the paint.



Throughout the day, there was the joyful laughter and play of children, a buzz of friendly conversation, soulful music from Kauri and a delicious BBQ lunch and cool water to quench thirsts and fresh fruit to feast on. All of the activities linked up local Aboriginal children, youth, families and community and the broader community, with a focus on wellbeing, inclusion and resilience and aligned with the funded program activities of the early childhood service.



## September 2022

Frances and Julia went along to the Bularra Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation event showcasing Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Culture on our Gumbaynggirr land beside the beautiful Bucca Bucca (Nambucca) river. They connected with Aboriginal families and community members, helped out at some of the children's activities, and networked with early years and family support colleagues from organisations based in the Nambucca Valley, which outreach into the Bellingen Shire.

## October 2022

Yarrawarra Gumbaynggirr woman, Lilly Clegg facilitated a lovely Aboriginal Cultural Weaving workshop with 10 participants, including some of our Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal clients. Cultural strengths and resilience are demonstrated through the art, skill, and knowledge of weaving with natural fibres sourced from the land and water's edge. Aboriginal stories and songs were shared through this space.

## November 2022

Frances Witt attended Cultural Safety Training for workers in Health, Social and Community services co-hosted by Bularra Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation (BMNAC) and Healthy North Coast NSW at Aanuka Beach Resort, Coffs Harbour. The training was delivered face-to-face by BMNAC executive officer, Troy Robinson and co-facilitator Nathan Brennan. The aim was to deliver Aboriginal Cultural Safety training with health practitioners, allied health, and community workers focusing on how to be culturally appropriate and sensitive to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people. The training is an educational tool for workers to explore how attitudes and values can influence perceptions, assumptions, and behaviours in an everyday work setting. During the workshop, Troy and Nathan shared some of their life experiences of being siblings and sons of stolen generation parents.

After the workshop, the attendees went to Sealy Lookout to participate in a smoking ceremony and story-sharing told by Troy. Following this was a walk across to the Skywalk where Troy and Nathan shared local Dreamtime stories with the group about Mutton Bird Island and the Southern Island in the Coffs Harbour Bay (Jetty). Frances noted that *"The Cultural Safety Training design and delivery was truly a safe place for the novice in the field of the Healthcare Sciences and Community Services to learn about cultural competency and safety."*

## June 2023

### NAIDOC Week: *For Our Elders*

In June 2023, Aboriginal Early Years Family Worker, Frances Witt has been engaged in partnership planning with One Mob Radio's Lachlan Skinner to create a NAIDOC celebration event to be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July in Urunga for the Aboriginal community and inclusive of the wider population across the Bellingen Shire. The Early Childhood service will be hosting a BBQ lunch then an 'Art and Storytime' activity in the afternoon for young children who, with their parents and other family members, get to create and share a story.

A wonderful gathering yesterday at the Urunga Neighbourhood Centre of Parents and Caregivers weaving in the present moment. A big thank you to all for participating and making new connections with one another.

A big shout out to Lilly Clegg for sharing her amazing Aboriginal cultural knowledge and skills. Yaarri yarranang. (Bye for now).





## Taming Technology Parent Workshops August 9 & 10 2022

Many parents Julia conversed with in the Shire expressed a genuine concern and desire for support and education in the area of cyber safety. Parents expressed the need for help in managing their children's device use and wanted to know how to keep their children safe in this online realm. Online safety is indeed a child protection issue, as children are accessing this technology younger and younger.

Julia consulted with workshop facilitator, Angie Derrett, who tailored a workshop for parents of children 0-5yrs in the Bellingen Shire to cover topics including cyber and social media usage in children, content, accessibility & sharing information, age-appropriate social media use, the implications of screen time, role modelling online behaviours and what parents can do if concerned about their child.

In August 2022, as a follow on from our previously held "Cyber Safety for Parents of 0-5yrs" Urunga workshop, two more workshops were offered in Bellingen and Dorrigo for our early childhood parent and carer communities there. The workshop name was

**TAMING TECHNOLOGY PARENT WORKSHOP**  
PARENTING YOUR "DIGITAL NATIVE" CHILD 0-5 YEARS

**BELLINGEN**  
TUES 9 AUGUST  
9:30AM-12:30  
BELLINGEN YOUTH HUB

**DORRIGO**  
WED 10 AUGUST  
10AM-1PM  
NEVER NEVER MIND

**WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?**

- HOW TO KEEP YOUR CHILD "CYBER-SAFE"
- IMPLICATIONS OF, AND MANAGING "SCREEN TIME"
- THE BRAIN SCIENCE BEHIND "TECHNOLOGY TANTRUMS"
- CONTENT, ACCESSIBILITY AND SHARING INFO ONLINE
- SETTING UP YOUR CHILD FOR TECH SUCCESS
- PLUS OTHER RESOURCES TO HELP YOU!

OUR PRESENTER ANJIE DERRETT DRAWS ON 20 YEARS EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH CHILD PROTECTION, AT-RISK YOUTH EDUCATION, WELLBEING AND SAFETY. HER WORKSHOPS DRAW ON INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE, THE LATEST RESEARCH AND CASE STUDIES TO HELP ILLUSTRATE THE ISSUES FACING INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES TODAY.

**\$5 TO REGISTER - INCLUDES LUNCH!**  
LIMITED PLACES! TO RESERVE YOUR PLACE  
TEXT OR CALL JULIA ON: 0439 908 046 OR  
EMAIL: EARLYCHILDHOOD@NCOBS.ORG.AU

Childminding is available - must pre-register

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE  
**CONNECTING**



rebranded from "Cyber Safety" to "Taming Technology" Parent Workshop and Julia promoted the new flyers in the Bellingen and Dorrigo communities, local preschools, libraries, shops, and on the Early Childhood service's Facebook page, which was shared to local information social media pages.

Childminding was offered to make the workshop more accessible for parents, and a beautiful healthy lunch was catered for attendees.

10 parents attended across both locations and 7 children were minded onsite during the workshops. All parents expressed how relevant and helpful the content was in helping them understand the unknown dangers and important considerations for device use and screentime management in their families.

Extra resources and ongoing email support were offered to families by the workshop presenter, Angie.

## Circle of Security Parenting 8-week Program (Urunga & Dorrigo) September - November 2022

The Circle of Security Parenting (COSP) program is designed to help parents and caregivers develop specific relationship capacities. It enhances the bond and sense of security for both the parent/carers and the child by giving parents a guide to better understand their child's needs and by building confidence in responding to their child's emotional needs. The program invites parents to think about their own experience of being parented and how that impacts their parenting.



Free 8 week group for parents/caregivers of children 4mo - 5 years. Starting 15 September 2022

*Dorrigo*  
Circle of Security Parenting Group

Thursdays 10:30am-12  
Babes-in-arms welcome. Please enquire about childminding.

Contact Julia to register:  
text: 0439 908 046 or email:  
earlychildhood@ncobs.org.au

During the months of September through November 2022 Julia and Frances facilitated two Circle of Security Parenting programs over eight weeks in the Shire.

One program was held in Urunga on a Wednesday morning at the Urunga Neighbourhood Centre, with 8 parents registered, four of whom attended consistently. The second group was held at the Dorrigo Youth Centre on a Thursday morning with 7 parents registered and again with four attending consistently.

Both groups got off to a good start with the attendees participating in discussion time with so much enthusiasm and holding a

genuine interest in the subject matter. These groups provided a safe environment where parents could focus on their strengths, share their struggles and benefit from the experience of meeting with other local parents/carers.

A summary of the feedback received at the last session of the program via a survey is outlined below:

All survey respondents cited that attending the COSP program had positive effects on both the mental health of them, and their children, and all agreed that this was due to support from the facilitators and peer support from other parents. 4 out of the 5 respondents agreed that learning new parenting concepts and skills and feeling more empowered in their parenting had positive effects on their mental health. 3 out of 5 respondents stated that taking time out for themselves and creating new or continuing social connections also had a positive effect on their mental health. All respondents would recommend this program to other parents/caregivers.

When asked how participating in the Circle of Security Parenting program and implementing its concepts has positive effects on their children's mental health, they reported:

- *"This program built my resilience back up and I'm sure it will help build my child's resilience. It gave me more awareness of my thoughts and feelings & how that impacts my parenting."*
- *"When I can be stronger and kinder, I see the kid's reaction and it's positive."*
- *"I feel like I'm going to be more in tune with my child's needs moving forward."*
- *"I can help my kids learn positive ways to deal with different situations."*
- *"I think about my children's needs more and how I can fill their cup more."*

## National Child Protection Week Celebration, Urunga September 2022

To celebrate National Child Protection Week, Julia and Frances hosted a family event at the Urunga Neighbourhood Centre: a Family First Kids Fun Day! A few local support services were invited along to set up an information stall, including Lifetime Connect, Tresillian, and Northcott Early Childhood Early Intervention (NDIS).

The children enjoyed having their faces painted by Playgroup Assistant, Sharon and making fun badges while their parents and carers chatted with service providers and each other. The BBQ brunch pleased the 20+ local Urunga parents and children who attended.



Urunga Supported Playgroup Invites you to:

**Family First Kids Fun Day!**

Free Face Painting and BBQ Brunch

**FRIDAY, 2 SEPT 2022 ~ 10 AM-12 NOON**  
URUNGA NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

In celebration of **National Child Protection Week**

Every child, in every community, needs a fair go.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES  
**CONNECTING**  
Urunga  
OF BELLINGHUE SLIPE

Conversations throughout the morning centred on the importance of strong and supportive communities in improving the outcomes for all Australian children and young people, and how deep connection to culture can keep Indigenous children safe and supported. A children's activity booklet created by NAPCAN was handed out to all children at the end of the celebration, which highlighted this year's theme:

***"Every child, in every community, needs a fair go".***



## Dorrigo Supported Mother's Group

In February 2023 Julia launched a new Supported Mothers Group in Dorrigo, due to the increasing number of Julia's one-on-one support clients and her time limitations to see them all individually.

A Mother's Group was a way to gather multiple clients and their children together for social participation, community connections, to receive mentor and peer support from other Mums and community members and to receive parent education via guest speakers on topics that families were interested in.



Julia brought a variety of short parent education sessions to the Dorrigo Mothers Group attendees. Over the first half of 2023, the group has become a lovely, cohesive gathering with lots of new friendships and connections being made each week. From February to June 2023, 123 attendees (parents, carers and children 0-5yrs) took part in Mother's Group over 16 sessions.



In the early weeks after the formation of the group, attendees were invited to come up with a unique name for the group and submit their suggestions for a vote. Dozens of names were submitted, and first prize went to Emily with the highest voted name: "MUM-STERS LEAGUE" (pic with her son and prize to the left). Julia created a new Dorrigo Mum-sters League Facebook group connected to our "Early Childhood Service – Bellingen Shire" Facebook page, to communicate to Dorrigo Mums about local happenings and any relevant Mother's Group info.

In March 2023, two guest speakers were invited to Mother's Group: NCOBS volunteer Robyn Davison spoke about her experience with "Resiliency in Parenting" and later in the month midwife, Monica Carlon from Tresillian joined us for Baby Advice & Parenting Tips!



**Baby Advice & Parenting Tips!**

Ask a Tresillian nurse a question about your baby/toddler!  
Next Thurs 23 March at Mother's Group!

10:30am - 12 noon  
@ Dorrigo Youth Centre.  
Please text Julia your intent to attend:  
**0439 908 046**



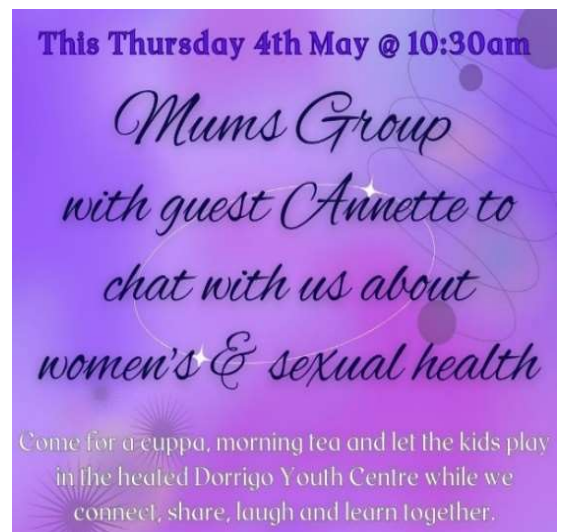
In April, the group welcomed Jacq & Skye from Warrina Family and Domestic Violence Support service for a chat about "Respectful Relationships".

Donna Bailey also joined us in April to facilitate a gentle discussion around Mental Health and Self-Care during early Motherhood.



During the month of May, nurse Annette Heather from NSW Health and her colleague Mila came to chat to the women about women's health topics such as cervical screening tests, STI testing, contraception advice, sexual health advice and gynaecological concerns and checking for breast lumps.

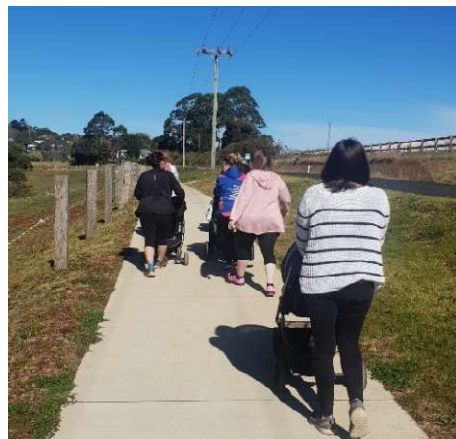
As the mothers listened to these short sessions, their children played and enjoyed healthy fruit, vegetables and snacks.



The month of May also brought a new experience for Mother's Group - we met at the local park to celebrate a birthday in the group. The children had lots of fun in the sunshine at the playground, and the parents enjoyed a lovely catch up and birthday cake.



In June, the group welcomed Libby Crispin and Helen from Mission Australia who let the families know about the support they offer Carers of someone experiencing mental health challenges. Later in June the Mums and Bubs enjoyed a "Walk and Talk" from Dorrigo town to Dangar Falls. The children said hello to the cows and horses and their mothers enjoyed the exercise and chats amongst themselves.



To conclude the Mother's Group gatherings in June, two new Warrina Family and Domestic Violence Specialist workers, Noura and Cassie, attended for a conversation with families around setting boundaries, how to help a friend experiencing family or domestic violence, and how to self-refer to Warrina for help.



Of the 16 Supported Mother's Group sessions held throughout the first half of 2023, the group welcomed 7 guest speakers who brought yarning circle opportunities for parents/caregivers to learn from child health and family wellbeing service providers and from community mentors sharing with them, and also from each other. Parent attendees reported feeling more connected to their community, more connected to each other, improved mental health and they appreciated learning about different support services across the LGA that could help them in their parenting journey.

The Mum-sters League group on Thursdays has proven to be an effective referral pathway for several parents looking for additional specialised parenting support. The group is an effective avenue to help facilitate the engagement of TEI early years children with a safe, local social outlet and with free and structured indoor/outdoor activities that encourages play with each other and with their parent/caregiver.

### **Case Studies - Targeted Support**

Julia had the opportunity to build relationships with several families this 2022-2023 year in the Dorrigo, Deer Vale, Repton, and Bellingen areas. Julia shared current information, advice and relevant referrals with the parents and caregivers to empower them in decision-making about their own and their child's health and wellbeing. Advocacy and support with engaging with external support services was offered and help given with problem-solving issues and overcoming barriers to accessing the help families wanted. Early Childhood Wellbeing was able to gather clients into social networks to make new supportive connections in their community.

Some highlights from the year include:

- ❖ *Julia connected with a Mum of 3 who had recently moved to Dorrigo from the central coast to escape an abusive relationship with the father of her toddler daughter. Julia invited this Mum to the supported Mother's group where she and her toddler daughter were able to make some new friends and sit in on some supportive parent education sessions. Julia also connected her with Northcott to apply for NDIS funding to support her son who struggles with ADHD and other behavioural problems.*

- ❖ *In December 2022, Julia supported a young, isolated, first time Mum struggling with depression and anxiety to attend a local “Creative Recovery Workshop” with her young baby at the Dorrigo Community Centre. Facilitated by Registered Arts Therapist Marg Coutts, the workshop supported participants to express themselves through creativity to help them relax and process feelings. Through different painting, drawing and movement activities, Julia’s client enjoyed creating in ways that helped her connect with a sense of wellbeing and supported her emotional health. This young Dorrigo Mum expressed how grateful she was to be supported by Julia to get out of the house with her young baby to attend a community workshop that gave her additional tools to be able to manage her mental health challenges.*
- ❖ *A big win for a client, a Dorrigo single mother of 3 who was receiving support through the Early Childhood Service to find childcare for her youngest daughter (2yrs) in Bellingen so she could attend a new job there. This client was driving her daughter 3 days a week from home in Dorrigo to the only available day-care she could find in Coffs, then driving back to Bellingen for work, before driving back to Coffs to collect her baby at the end of the day, and finally returning home to Dorrigo. Julia was told about a small number of unadvertised spots available for vulnerable families at Dawn Song day-care in Bellingen at a Child and Family Interagency meeting and connected this Mum to the right people to secure a place for her daughter in care much closer to home. Both Mum and her toddler were extremely happy and relieved with the new care arrangement!*
- ❖ *Julia has made steady strides with a Deer Vale client, who had a rocky start when her firstborn son was born while her and her partner were struggling with an opioid dependence. Soon after their baby was born both parents started on the methodone program, along with her partner’s father who also lives with them in Deer Vale. Through regular check-ins and attendance at the supported mother’s group in Dorrigo, this young Mum has made some new supportive friendships with other local Mums and has been connected in with Vinnies, a Women’s Health nurse and Tresillian for baby care support. Julia provided regular transport for her so she could support her struggling family with discounted groceries from the Oppy, vouchers for the Dorrigo Butcher’s and also Pam’s Fruit and Veg. As she lives far from her own family, this client is always so thankful for the social time and peer support she receives from other parents when she can come into Dorrigo town for the weekly Mother’s Group with her baby son.*
- ❖ *Through an ongoing supportive relationship between Julia and another Dorrigo single mother of two struggling through a rocky separation and divorce, Julia was able to assist her to apply online for 22 free counselling sessions through NSW Victim’s Support Scheme. Her application was approved and she has begun seeing a therapist regularly and engaging in EMDR and art therapy that she would have otherwise been unable to afford. Through regular check-ins with Julia, this Mum has felt supported through a big life transition time and had an emotional outlet to speak and reflect on her mental health and parenting challenges.*
- ❖ *Several client families attended the Dorrigo Neighbourhood Centre in December 2022 to collect a Christmas Food hamper for their family, and more were delivered to client family homes.*





In reflecting on the 2022-2023 year of the Early Childhood Wellbeing and Development Service, Julia shares, *“It has been one of high energy, big heart and wonderful outcomes for the children and families involved in our beautiful Bellingen Shire. This crucial work could not have been carried out without the open-hearted support from my colleague, Frances Witt, NCOBS management, staff and volunteers, all of whom I am so honoured to work and collaborate with in supporting our Shire’s precious children and their families.”*



# BELLINGEN NAMBUCCA YOUTH SERVICES

## CONNECTING Youth



*Nambucca High students, BecomingU workers and BNYS whipping up a community BBQ*

### WHO WE ARE

Bellingen Nambucca Youth Services is a core program of Connecting Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingin Shire. We are a Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) funded targeted early intervention youth and family service. We provide services across three program activities which cover social activities, youth programs, peer support groups, one off supports, advocacy and ongoing case management. Our target client group is young people with known risks aged 12-18 and their families.

Our professional practice is underpinned by a holistic, flexible, strengths based, trauma informed and client centred practice. The staff work collaboratively with the community and consider evidence informed practice in program development. The team believes in generating outcomes through 'practice-based evidence' as opposed to 'evidence-based practice' because the workers understand that the people they work with and the communities they work in are complex and unique and a 'one size fits all' approach isn't appropriate in a community-based context. In BNYS groups and programs, staff consider empowerment by centring the autonomy, and decision making of the clients, and invite them to guide the service in how it can best support our community.

## How do we meet our funding agreements?

Our service continues to perform above targets that are set by our funding body covering three program areas including:

- Community Centre's - Social participation includes community events, after school, one off and in school youth programs delivered in partnership with BNYS.
- Community Support - Advocacy Support one off types of support and brief intervention.
- Targeted Support - our ongoing case management which is 85% of BNYS services involves working one on one with young people and/or their parents providing information, advice, referral, family capacity building, education, and skills training.

The service has transitioned to using 'community data solutions' software, a client relationship information management system, which enables staff to record client data and program information, upload documents and generate referrals. The system generates a statistics report on the broad range of service activities that are then uploaded to the Data Exchange for access by DCJ.

## TEI Transition Process

At the time of this report, BNYS has now successfully transitioned service provision to 50-60% Nambucca LGA and have moved through a review process. BNYS did not receive additional funding to cover the Nambucca Valley, so this involved a significant reduction of presence, programs and individual support in Bellingen shire. At the time of writing this report, the gap has not been filled by another service provider although Bellingen Youth Hub have been impacted in terms of responding to drop in and referrals that might have usually been passed onto BNYS.

## Staff Changes

The last 12 months have been a significant period of staff changes for BNYS. In late June 2022 Ellie Tree took maternity leave, followed by Eliza Zanuso taking unpaid study leave to complete the final clinical placement for MASW. During this period BNYS was supported by Skye Babula and Tyson Young. As we came into 2023 Eliza Zanuso returned to her role and Tyson Young resigned from his role. Most recently we are happy to welcome Kylie Selig, who has lots of experience with at risk young people as well as linkages within the local community.

## TEI Program Community Strengthening Stream: Community Centres

### Summary: One off programs and events

#### July 2022

BNYS workers, Tyson Young and Skye Babula:

- supported Dorrigo Youth Hub's Winter Holiday 2022 Activities Laser Tag Day in Coffs Harbour
- attended Bellingen Youth Hub's Games at the Park day
- attended Dorrigo Youthie and Bellingen Youth Hubs Laser Tag and games days with attendance of around twenty young people.

#### August 2022

- Tyson Young attended Gen Health's event at Nambucca Youthie during the school holidays. The day was filled with LGBTIQ+ support services
- Tyson Young and Skye Babula attended Bellingen Youth Hub's Games at the Park activity
- Skye assisted Youth workers from The Buttery with the Youth Safe Space at the Bellingen River Sounds Festival

### *August 2022 (cont)*

- Tyson Young and Skye Babula attended Bellinghen High School's Wear It Purple Day lunch. We took games and activities (e.g. Giant Jenga) and created a presence for BNYS. There was a BBQ, small stalls to purchase badges and stickers, live singing from young people and supportive discussions.

### **August to December 2022**

- Tyson Young and Skye Babula provided support fortnightly Bellinghen High School Rainbow Club LGBT+ peer support group.

### **October 2022**

- Tyson Young and Skye Babula collaborated with Bellinghen High School to deliver a Wellbeing Festival, running over a full day. It involved workshops across an array of skills and activities including rap writing, indigenous games and culture, yoga, hairdressing, car maintenance just to name a few. This was a whole school event involving over 520 young people.

### **October - December 2022**

- Tyson Young partnered with Kane Gois from Connective Fitness Macksville and delivered a youth fitness program in Bellinghen and Dorrigo High Schools. They delivered weekly sessions over 8 weeks working to engage at risk young people, educate them about fitness, healthy habits and making better decisions. Local businesses donate healthy food choices for the attendees.



*Dorrigo High Students - Fitness Program*

### **December 2022**

- Eliza Zanuso and Tyson Young supported Dorrigo High School in a showing of Embrace Kids, a film addressing body image issues and body positivity. After the film screening, BNYS workers supported debrief sessions with young people.
- BNYS worker Tyson young coordinated a group of young people from Urunga to go on a Canoe Day with the aim to teach them about teamwork, with twelve young people attending.

### January 2023

- Brush & Brunch Holiday Program partnership Eliza Zanuso facilitated partnership with UnitingCare BecomingU program to deliver the School Holiday Brush and Brunch Program at Nambucca heads TAFE engaging young youth leaders from Uniting's BecomingU Leadership Program.



*Brush & Brunch artworks - school holiday program partnership BNYS and BecomingU*

### April 2023

- BNYS Supported the Bellingen Youth hub to hold two events during Youth Week, fishing & paddle boarding with a Free BBQ held by Lions Club in Urunga as well as Hula hoop making, Jewellery making and traditional weaving, held by Aunty Frances a local Gumbaynggirr elder. In addition, a Skate Jam held at the Bellingen skate park, there was a great attendance and lots of mini competitions and community engagement through a range of activities, including but not limited to; Skate coaching, 3;3 basketball, Tie dying, resin jewellery making, a caricature artist, BBQ, and a chill tent. Approx. 150 people attended and participated, it was a very successful event with a lot of positive feedback from all those who attended.
- Kylie Selig supported the YOUth Speak forum held in Bellingen, where 200 young people were invited to come and share their concerns and ideas for the Bellingen Shire in regard to youth issues and community engagement.

### May 2023

- Meeting with Ellie Sneddon from NSW to support Pride Club peer mentors to do PEEP mentor training as part of the PASH annual conference in Coffs Harbour.
- Healthy Relationships Program (focus on image-based abuse) at Macksville High in partnership with BecomingU, delivery of eight sessions over 2 days for all of year 9 and 10 (total 90-110 students). Young people engaged in the sessions, asking questions and many of the lads that attended the sessions at Macksville High were grateful and saw it as us looking out for them, which was positive.



## Summary: Ongoing Programs

### **Bellingen LGBT+ Pride Group - monthly**

Bellingen LGBT+ Peer support group has continued to run monthly meetings over the last 12 months with attendance from around 12-15 young people from both Bellingin and Nambucca LGA's. The group aims to create a felt sense of collective safety, and foster peer connectedness through games, discussions and shared meals. Pride Club has ongoing support from Peer mentors Morgan and Evan Cooper (both completing Certificate in Community Services and Sarah Brownlow (completing their nursing degree). Our peer mentors are young adults with lived experience of growing up Queer regionally. They receive ongoing supervision and support from Eliza Zanuso and contribute to planning and facilitation of Pride Club as well as visit school-based LGBT+ groups. Thank you to Tyson Young who guided the group until late 2022 while Eliza Zanuso was on study leave.



### **Nambucca Queer Group - in partnership with PHN Genhealth**

Eliza Zanuso has been collaborating with Nambucca Youthie and Genhealth to deliver monthly LGBT+ peer support program in Nambucca in partnership with youth workers from Genhealth. Due to decommissioning of Genhealth, our service will be taking over as lead organisation for this program. A handover meeting with Genhealth and Headspace was held on May 31st.

### **Dorrigo Youthie Drop In - semi regularly**

The reduction of BNYS workers' presence in support of Dorrigo Drop In has been impacted by the service transition into the Nambucca Valley. BNYS continue to touch base with the Dorrigo Youth Centre coordinator.

### **Dorrigo Youth Centre volunteer training**

In May 2023, Eliza Zanuso put together a short training workshop and facilitated this for Dorrigo Youth Centre volunteers which included the important aspects of the role and responsibilities and some helpful information about engaging with young people, as well as managing conflict and difficult behaviours.

*"Thanks so much for the session yesterday. It was interesting, informative and there was lots of practical content that will help us in our roles". - Amanda - drop in volunteer.*

## **Lovebites - Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Education**

BNYS has a long history of collaborating with NSW Health, local high schools and other agencies to ensure delivery of the Lovebites program in the area. Eliza Zanuso is a lead Facilitator actively supporting new trained workers to build their confidence to deliver this program.

In November 2022, BNYS worked alongside Interrelate, La Casa Youth Services and Nambucca High Schools to deliver Lovebites to their Year 10 cohort. The program was delivered over one day, with pizza making at the end. The day-long program serviced 54 young people.

BNYS partnered with BlueSky to deliver the Lovebites program at Dorrigo High School. NSW Police attended to answer questions from the young people. The program was delivered to their year 10 students with 23 in attendance.

In 2023 Lovebites will run after July, details of which will be included in next year's annual report.

## **TEI Program Community Strengthening stream**

### **Summary: Provide Community Support**

The community support service activity of our funding includes all of the one-off work that the service does, which includes one-off sessions offering advice, referrals, and advocacy. This often includes work supporting parents to find the right service, or for example explaining mental health care plans, referrals to trans affirming doctors, supporting applications for public housing or Centrelink and a range of other things that do not require ongoing case management, but nevertheless this capacity to provide brief intervention is of great value to clients.

## **TEI Program Wellbeing and Safety stream**

### **Summary: Provide Targeted Support**

A crucial aspect of the role at BNYS is the capacity to build trusting professional relationships with the young people and families we service. Young people are a population group in society with unique needs, challenges and strengths.

BNYS Caseworkers generally aim to service eight clients within their contracted three-day week. Due to increased demand through transitioning to Nambucca Valley this has grown to around 12-18 young people and/or parents on caseload.

The presenting issues for which staff provide targeted support, include:

- Substance misuse (cannabis, nicotine, vapes)
- Family breakdown
- Anxiety and Depression
- Domestic family violence
- School refusal
- Social isolation
- Trauma, lack of regulation and associated behaviours (panic disorders, aggression, self-harm, suicidality, dissociation etc).
- Neurodivergence which includes autism, ADHD etc (issues include lack of support, lack of diagnosis, lack of access to specialist care and medication)
- Chronic health issues (menstrual disorders, chronic pain disorders, long covid, lack of access to GPs with many clinics privatising)

## Case example - Angela from Nambucca High School by Youth Caseworker, Eliza Zanuso

Angela\* (not her real name) has consented to her de-identified story.

*I was referred a young person when we first began working in Nambucca LGA. Angela was 14 at the time, indigenous, disengaging from school and struggling with panic attacks as a result of her assault. The referral was from the NSW Health Sexual Assault Counselling Service (SAS) in Coffs harbour. The SAS counsellors could see that she was struggling but she would barely make eye contact let alone talk.*

*The school counsellor that she disclosed the assault to had not been transparent about the process of reporting which has created a lot of mistrust for Angela of 'helping people'. At BNYS, we have always very sensitively managed mandatory reports, maximising the client's autonomy and choice as much as possible. Angela described 'helping professionals' as 'f-ing lying dogs' on more than one occasion.*

*Through direct practice that wove together humour, centring Angela's voice, being cognisant of her trauma I slowly began to build trust. I draw on polyvagal principles of neurobiological direct intervention which creates a 'felt sense' of relational safety (an approach championed by the Australian Childhood Foundation). For many of our clients, emotional neglect has been normal so it can be very new to have someone be willing to 'tune' into what it is life for them in their world. At first, I started with really short frequent sessions where I did most of the talking giving her a bit of info about who I am and what I do and why I do it. Through an integrated approach I began to very, very slowly break down the many barriers of suspicion, isolation and disconnection. As her story began to unfold it was clear that she was suffering from profound depression which ran in her family, PTSD, untreated chronic health concerns. She actually felt completely hopeless about her life, barely attending school.*

*Through our sessions we began to explore her inner world, and build tools, skills and resources to help her navigate these challenges. I have supported her on and off for different reasons which include both generalist counselling and practical goals such as engaging with a therapist, doctors, specialists, Learner driver programs and other external supports. After two years of 'on and off' work through BNYS case management she recently she disclosed that her mother and father are heavy drinkers and often become angry and emotionally abusive in the evenings. Although externally I didn't show it, internally I was a little surprised. I had asked many times about her family life and 'the emotional temperature at home' and she shrugged and said it was fine. I had wondered about why she was always so dismissive of including her parents in our work, so it all made a bit more sense. Whilst I do have parents on my caseload that are engaged in help seeking, this can often be the case.*

*It took almost two years for her to feel there was enough safety to disclose this important piece of information that has so profoundly impacted her self-worth, confidence, emotional wellbeing and sense of stability in the world. The first time she remembers feeling 'big feelings' about their drinking, she was around six years old. The CDC-Kaiser Permanente adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study is one of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect.*

*The ACE study has highlighted that persistent substance abuse can undermine a child's sense of internal and external safety, stability, and bonding. This case study highlights the nature of working with vulnerable and at-risk young people and their families in our community is long term relational work. An enormous strength of BNYS has been our longstanding presence in the community, reputation and consistent commitment to high quality practice. Despite these barriers, this young person has been accepted into a degree in regional Queensland in 2024 and will graduate high school in 2023, a huge achievement.*



## Meetings and Staff Development

BNYS staff routinely coordinate and attend informal meetings with school leadership, school counsellors, school support officers, WHIN nurses and other agencies such as Interrelate, Headspace, Reconnect, Lifetime Connect etc. This enables BNYS workers to work more collaboratively across the region using a partnership approach.

Some of the regular meetings and inter agencies BNYS staff attend include:

- Bellingen Shire Interagency
- Nambucca Valley Youth Interagency
- Child & Family Interagency meetings

Eliza Zanuso received ongoing bi-monthly supervision with Barbara Schmidt (Mental Health Social worker/Victim Services Counsellor) via Zoom.

### July 2022

- Tyson Young attended and completed senior facilitator training for the Lovebites program

### August 2022

- Tyson Young attended a meeting at Dorrigo High School with the school psychologist, Tony.
- Skye Babula attended online training in Trauma Informed Care
- Skye attended Statement in Accidental Counselling online training

### January 2023

- Eliza presented at the Macksville Rotary meeting to introduce Bellingen Nambucca Youth Services (BNYS) and to liaise with a range of community stakeholders.

### February 2023

- Eliza Zanuso coordinated and facilitated a meeting between BNYS and Lifetime Connect Family Support Workers and Reconnect workers at the Bellingen Youth Hub to discuss collaboration and working together across the Bellingen and Nambucca LGAs.
- After 1.5 years working to engage Macksville High School, Eliza finally met with Macksville High Principal Sheree Burnham to discuss one off programs relating to harm minimisation safe sexting, save a mate, and polyvagal informed stress management.

### March 2023

- Eliza attended a five-day intensive in Brisbane from 7th-12th March in the Neuro Affective Relational Model (two days covered as NCOBS work days) and Eliza covering transport, accommodation and cost of training. Eliza has been committed to a two-year professional development in the Neuro Affective relational model developed by clinical psychologist Dr Aline La Pierre. This training is particularly useful for BNYS clients as it focuses on early developmental trauma, which is common in our case cohort. The psycho-educative and self-regulation piece of this work can be particularly helpful in building understanding and resilience, and in reducing shame in young people and their families.

# DORRIGO YOUTH CENTRE

Welcome!! The colourful and cheerfully decorated Youth Space is a great place for young people to come to. The Youth Centre (Youthie) has a long history in Dorrigo and is largely supported by community members volunteering their time and by generous donations from local organisations and people in community. It is centrally located, behind the Dorrigo Community Centre located on Hickory Street.

The space has a kitchenette for preparing healthy meals, a pool table, a piano, guitars and ukuleles, free Wi-Fi, a projector for movies plus board games, Jenga and weighted toys. There are also outdoor games and music and creative programs.

The Centre has three equipped office rooms for youth services and other practitioners to use, and available for hire for organisations and community groups at a greatly reduced rate. The Youth Space area including kitchenette is also available for hire by small groups or art/music/book clubs. A selection of pre-loved teen clothing is available for sale and all proceeds go towards the upkeep of the Youth Space. Dorrigo Youth Centre supports inclusive interaction in a safe, healthy environment.

Our opening hours for youth drop-in are 3pm - 5pm Wednesday and Thursday. One Friday a month during the warmer season, we endeavour to have Friday Night Social which is a drop-in from 3.30pm - 7.30pm with a pizza dinner and music, dancing, singing or pool competitions.

A variety of pamphlets and information on various topics is readily available, as are contact details of any interest or further specialist information. There are couches and spaces for relaxing and chatting and playing games. There is a garden outside, with vegies and flowers, and a sun platform to hang out on. When the centre is open, two experienced adults are present. Throughout the year there are programmes run for high school aged youth and there are also a range of other programmes in place.

## Dorrigo Youth Transport Initiative



Funding to achieve an outcome of providing transport to benefit youth on the Dorrigo Plateau and especially young people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, isolation, and/or other vulnerabilities, was received in late 2019. The launch of the initiative did not go ahead in the December because of the bushfires across the Dorrigo Plateau. Plans were made to start providing bus transport in early 2020 to take young people home after Wednesday and Thursday afternoon drop-in at Dorrigo Youth Centre ... but then the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

The funder, Transport for NSW, has understood the challenges faced and extended the project period several times. Our project was by no means the only one affected; the COVID situation impacted several other of their regional and rural transport initiatives.

As the figures in the table below show, the Youthie made up for lost time in 2022 – 2023 though with numerous excellent activities and excursions being run, especially during school holidays.

<b>Dorrigo Youth Transport Initiative</b>	<b>Jan '20 – Jun '22 (30 months)</b>	<b>Jul '22 – Jun '23 (12 months)</b>	<b>Project Total to date</b>
Number of times a service was provided	17 return trips	12 return trips	29 return trips
Total number of passengers	108	244	352
Total number of kilometres travelled	2,018km	1,509km	3,527km

## When there's a bus, they're away!

### *Dorrigo Rangers*

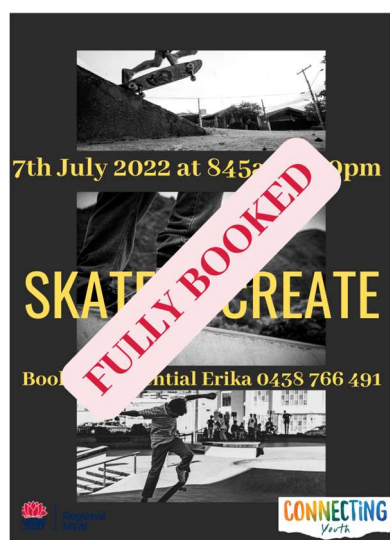
Seventeen young people and coaches from the Dorrigo Rangers rugby under 12s and under 15s teams utilised the bus to travel the 100-kilometre Dorrigo-Urunga-Dorrigo round trip to train with the Urunga teams during the playing season from July to August 2022 (when the season finishes). The Dorrigo players and coaches gained so much from this opportunity. Much more positive peer engagement and connection between the Dorrigo and Urunga youth, and more scope for the Dorrigo players to develop their skills and teamwork and to hone their rugby game play. Additional to the practice sessions at Urunga, was the opportunity for the Dorrigo youth teams to travel to Grafton for a special rugby day because the Youth Transport Initiative was able to provide the return trip bus transport.

### *Dorrigo High School*

On Monday 27 March, Dorrigo High School utilised the Dorrigo Youth Transport Initiative to put on two buses to transport over 100 students on wellbeing excursions at no cost to families: the girls went to Coffs Harbour Adventure Centre and the boys to Cascade Environment Centre.

## Programs and Events

### July 2022



### **Skate & Create, Woolgoolga**

This was part of the Dorrigo Skate Park Upgrade project. Seven young people were offered a place in this activity. Kim West, youth AOD worker from The Buttery and Erika travelled with them to a daylong workshop in Woolgoolga. The youth learnt new tricks and had the opportunity to build a skateboard. Conversations around drug and alcohol use were had and about the upcoming project to improve the Dorrigo Skate Park.

### **Wrights Lookout/Cascade Hike**

Although the weather wasn't the perfect warm and sunny day that was hoped for, we were lucky. It was snowing in Guyra the day of the hike! If the temperature had been a few degrees cooler or windier, the wind-chill factor could have reduced it to near zero. Thinking ahead, Nicola made sure a tub-full of extra woollen tops, jackets, beanies and gloves were on board so everyone was toasty. The 7-km hike was challenging, and also incredibly fulfilling. 16 young people attended, had tasty baguettes from a cafe in Dorrigo and then hot chocolates at the Ebor hotel to thaw their freezing fingers. Teamwork was essential on this trip and a few more volunteers would have been beneficial.

### **LASER TAG, Heritage Park Dorrigo**

This was an incredibly successful event, with great feedback from the Dorrigo community, and was particularly popular with the younger age group. At special request, the age group was extended from 8 -12 years (i.e. grades 3-6 in upper primary school), to include 7-year-olds. This wasn't a problem, except that a few of this younger age group who had their turn in the morning wanted to play again with the older kids in the afternoon! There was at least 44 participants in the morning, who each played two 10-minute laser tag games. The afternoon session had at least 24 participants; mainly the 12–15 years age group and a few of the 16+ years cohort. We partnered with Bello Youth Hub to share the cost of the laser tag equipment hire and additional insurance for the under 12's to be able to play. Many members of the Dorrigo community helped out; Rotary kindly donated their incredibly well-fitted-out barbecue trailer for a sausage sizzle lunch. Community member Hugh Fathers generously volunteered his time to cook. Over 100 people were fed, with 130 sausages and 8 loaves of bread consumed.

August 2022

## CYBER WELL-BEING / RELATIONSHIPS AND THE LAW



**CYBER WELL-BEING & HAPPINESS**  
What's it all about?!

- What is cyber safety?
- What do I need to know to keep myself safe?
- What is screen time?
- How do I manage screen time?
- What resources are available to help me?
- What do I do if I feel my I need support?

**JOIN US FOR A CHAT!**  
*Good vibes*

Angie draws on 20 years experience working within child protection, at risk youth, education, training and wellbeing and safety. Each workshop draws on industry experience, the latest research and case studies to help illustrate the issues facing individuals, families and communities today.

**YOUTH 12-18 years and/or parents**  
3-5pm Wednesday 10th August  
**FREE!**  
A Refreshment Fee Provided...  
Dorrigo Youth Centre

**CONNECTING Youth**

ERIKA 0435 766 491 or dorrigo youth@ncobs.org.au



**RELATIONSHIPS AND THE LAW**  
Want to know more about your rights?  
For **YOUTH 12-18 years**  
Join us and speaker **Angie Derrett**

**Time: 3-5pm**  
**Date: Thursday 11th August**  
**At: Dorrigo Youth Centre**  
Contact: Erika 0435 766 491

- Introduction to Law
- Your Rights
- Personal Boundaries
- Consent Considerations
- Power Imbalance
- Sexting and Consequences
- Help and Support

**FREE OF CHARGE!**  
Afternoon Tea provided

Angie draws on 20 years experience working within child protection, at risk youth, education, training and wellbeing and safety. Each workshop draws on industry experience, the latest research and case studies to help illustrate the issues facing individuals, families and communities today.

**CONNECTING Youth**

Angie Derrett, an experienced and highly qualified trainer, tutor and presenter in matters relating to cyber security, self-development, leadership, child protection, youth justice, community services, youth work and the criminal justice system. 16 young people and 9 adults attended the workshops.

September – October 2022

### DORRIGO YOUTH CAFÉ

For the *Let's Get Together Picnic* (hosted by Dorrigo Suicide Prevention Network) on Sunday 11 September at the Dorrigo Showgrounds, the youth centre participated as the Dorrigo Youth Café. In preparation for the event, Erika held two workshops with the youth:

1. Menu planning and marketing – young people from the High School accompanied by student support officer Amber walked across to the Youthie and together we researched mocktails, how to plan menus and rosters.
2. Purchasing and preparation – buying the ingredients and other items locally, preparing them (slicing, syrups etc) and confirmation of work rosters.

On the day of the event, 14 youth worked shifts (under the watchful gaze of Youth Activity Worker, Nicola Beckett) and made delicious mocktails and served them to picnic goers. A donation for the drinks was asked and \$228.95 was raised. The young people excelled themselves in all areas including making sure the kitchen and serving area were left clean and tidy! This project was assisted with ingredients and other goods with funds from the Bellingen Shire Community Drug Action Team.

### SPRING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

**Family Meal** – After discussion with the young people, they realised we are all so diverse in background and upbringing so devised a Family Meal for a school holiday activity. On Thursday 29 September, each person prepared a meal from their culture of origin. Six young people and 3 adults all ate together. Meals included: Tandoori Chicken (Indian), Soy Beef (Taiwan), Leche Flan (Philippines) and Sausage and Sauerkraut (Germany).

**Surfing and Surf Safety Awareness** – Surfing had been on the wish list for a while. With nothing similar available on the Seaboard at the time and the surf schools around Coffs Harbour booked out for the school holidays, Woolgoolga beach was the destination on 5 October for a day excursion for 14 young people from Dorrigo accompanied by Youth Activities Worker, Nicola and a Youthie volunteer. All participated in a surf safety awareness workshop followed by surfing lessons with a fish and chip lunch in-between. It was a great day enjoyed by all.

### Dorrigo Folk and Bluegrass Festival

Dorrigo youth contributed to this great local festival held from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2022; some of them helped prepared the backdrop for the Megan Hall event and two young people assisted musician Joe Newton to run the Free Mic event over the 3 days.

## YOUth Speak Survey

Dorrigo Youthie coordinator, Erika Munan was involved in the development of the YOUth Speak Survey, coordinated by Ellie Tree for NCOBS. Services and organisations that work with/support young people aged 12-24 years were invited to review the survey questions and provide feedback and suggest any changes or additional questions. The survey was undertaken with Bellingen Shire young people with the aim of identifying the values, aspirations, and issues of concern for local youth. When the survey went live, between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> October, young people who attended Dorrigo Youthie drop-in had the opportunity to complete the survey using centre laptops and staff work phones.

## **November – December 2022**

Youth numbers across November and the two weeks in December that the youth centre was open were between 13 to 18 young people at each drop-in session, including the Final Day feast on 17th December. Some planning for 2023 was undertaken to look at what activities and opening hours would be possible during the school holidays as funds had run out to employ the Youth Activity Worker, Nicola. Thankfully, a summer school holidays grant came in from the Regional NSW Office of Youth to run three activities for Dorrigo youth and Nicola was able to continue for another month. One of these activities was the excursion to Treetops Adventure Park, which was held before the end of the calendar year.

## **January 2023**

### Cultural Trip to Port Macquarie



13 youth from the Dorrigo area and two from Bellingen travelled with Youthie staff, Erika and Nicola by bus to Port Macquarie.



Highlights were:

- Visiting the Koala Shop followed by spotting koalas throughout the town  
*Comment on the day: "Koalas are cheesy but some of these are for a good cause"*
- Going to the break wall to check out and discuss the graffiti art  
*Comment on the day: "It's only art if it's in an art gallery" 🤔*
- Seeing the Dobell art exhibition at the Glasshouse Museum
- Bubble tea and Japanese food

## **February 2023**

### Mocktails for Seniors Week

The Dorrigo Youth Café crew created and served up mocktails for Seniors Week in Dorrigo. A matinee of the movie *Elvis* was being shown for the seniors at the Old Gazette Theatre. The crew prepared the food and drinks ready to be served after the movie. Their efforts were very well received: "Nice to see the young people being so happy.", and the youth enjoyed catering and being involved: "Nice to see the oldies having such a great time." "Can we do more helping stuff like this?"

### **Dorrigo Youth Bus - Rugby Gala Day**

The Youthie coordinated bus transport for Dorrigo and Ebor youth to participate in the Rugby Gala Day on 18 February 2023 in Crescent Head. Here is some feedback from the Rangers: *“Congratulations to the U16s girls and boys Dorrigo Rangers teams. Some of these kids haven’t been on the paddock in 3yrs, but they held their own playing with mates and in home colours at last!!! 2 from 3 wins for the U16 boys and the U16s girls came away with 2 from 3 wins as well. ... Thank you to Erika Dorrigo Youthie for all your hard work and dedication that helps these kids achieve these goals. ... Thank you to all the parents, some leaving home at 4:30am just to get these kids to the bus.”*

### **March 2023**

### **Summer Camp - CASCADE NATIONAL PARK**

On 11 March, 12 young people (8 female and 4 male) travelled with three supervisors to Cascade Environmental Education Centre for our postponed “Summer Camp”. Homemade muffins were ready for us on arrival at 11am and the group was introduced to the site and the house rules. Everyone found a bunk in the female and male dorm rooms then there were games of handball and attempts at the climbing block.

The next day was pretty drizzly. Breakfast was bacon and egg rolls and then some free time to chill out before everyone decided that it was time to do something. Some tried out their survival skills by getting a fire going with wet wood in order to make the s’mores we hadn’t made the night before. The more indoor-inclined baked muffins for morning tea. The weather brightened so it time to get out into the sunshine – and pick some flowers on the way to see what was left of the Cascade Town Hall and timber mill. The path was so overgrown, and we didn’t make it much past here. A major lesson learnt by the young people over these two days was how to deal with leeches on mass without screeching and panicking. They loved being able to just hang out with different friends out of school hours, and especially overnight, which gave them the opportunity to get to know some people better.



## April 2023

### YOUTH WEEK

#### **Bellingen Canoeing excursion**

Attended by 19 youth from four schools and accompanied by youth activity worker Nicola Beckett and volunteer Brendan Mckevvit, the starting point of the adventure was the Bellinger River at Lavenders Bridge. From 11am to 1pm, the group paddled from there to Bellingen Canoe Adventures at Fernmount where they feasted on roast chicken and bread rolls with salad and icy cups in the garden.



#### **YOUth Speak Forum**

On April 27th, over 150 young people from across the Bellingen Shire took the stage at the YOUth Forum, organised by the Neighbourhood Centre of Bellingen Shire Inc to share their perspectives, identify challenges and work towards actionable solutions for the future.

## May 2023

#### **Legally Blonde**

A group of local young people got to enjoy the musical Legally Blonde at The Hoskins Centre (after bubble tea and massive Parmi's and burgers). This was another Dorrigo Natural Highs project activity. Thank you to the community for their support and financial donations, which have made it possible to run these activities and others that aim to introduce other options for Dorrigo young people. Feedback from this activity was outstanding, with all in agreement that it was a fantastic night and similar outings have been requested for the future.



## Drop-in

Drop-in continues to grow in popularity. There is healthy food, free Wi-Fi and good music. The furniture is often moved around to create different spaces for the needs of different groups. Bean bags, which the young people love to use outdoors, were donated by community members.

At the Youthie, a steady stream of attendees continues with between 15 and 20 young people on both days. General demographic is more boys than girls. The younger cohort between ages 12-14 are regulars and there has been a few walk-ins from home-schooling backgrounds.



Erika's last drop-in session at the Youthie before going on extended leave was in early May. Many young people and other locals were there to say farewell and wish her well. In her stead, Christine Wait and Leonie McDonald are sharing the coordinator role. The Youthie team and young people create healthy meals together (which often leads to conversations about well-being), help with homework, play music and refer to youth workers and other agencies as required or requested.

## Collaborations with Local Stakeholders

Dorrigo Youth Centre has an extremely good relationship with many local community groups, businesses and other not-for-profit organisations. A local community member tends the Youthie garden on a weekly basis, which in turn has allowed for produce from the garden to be used in meals and also to be harvested by the community for home use.

The Youth Centre receives great community support with cash donations, food gift vouchers and other extras. The year rounded off with a generous financial donation from John and Laurell at the Lifesprings Oppy. This along with all other assistance and support received is always for the benefit of our amazing young people of the Dorrigo Plateau.



Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc presents

## The YOUth Speak Project

Connecting Youth



Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc (NCOBS) manages the Bellingen Nambucca Youth Service and Dorrigo Youth Centre in the Bellingen Shire, with support from Targeted Earlier Intervention funding through the NSW Department of Communities and Justice. Together with support from Bellingen Shire Council, these services are the only youth-focussed services on the ground in the Shire.

### **Background**

With no funding Shire-wide for youth engagement or community development, and the services having a limited capacity and a main focus on case-management and targeted support, NCOBS commenced a passion project - the YOUth Speak Project.

Purposefully designed to bridge the gap between young people and their communities, igniting a powerful force for change. Rooted in the belief that the voices and talents of our youth possess immense potential, this visionary initiative is designed to enhance the capacities and skills of young people while fostering a deep sense of connection to their surrounding world.

At its core, the YOUth Speak Project serves as a dynamic process where young individuals can amplify their voices, cultivate their talents and harness their collective strength. Recognising the vital role youth play in shaping our future, this model empowers and upskills a generation that is often overlooked or underestimated.

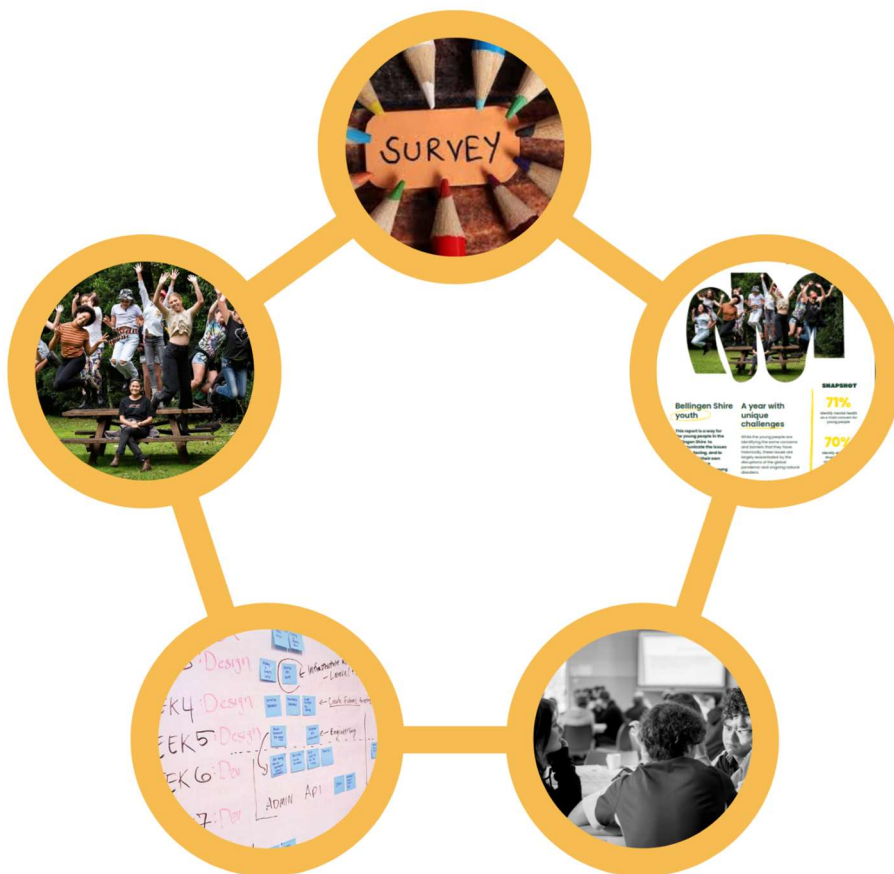
By creating meaningful opportunities for engagement, collaboration, and growth, the YOUth Speak Project acts as a catalyst for personal and community transformation. Through surveys, forums, workshops and hands-on initiatives, our youth are equipped with invaluable skills, nurturing their ability to express themselves, lead, and make a lasting impact.

NCOBS has created a versatile model that will allow for annual repetition for comparison and enhancement. A process that ensures young people can engage at any stage in the process and supports community connections, skill-building, empowerment, and youth-led projects that focus on turning issues into opportunities.

### The Model

Each component of the YOUth Speak Project will be further broken down in this section of the report. The diagram below is a high-level overview of the flow of deliverables.

Annual Youth Survey > YOUth Speak Report > YOUth Speak Forum > Planning Sessions for Project Pitches > Community Commitment to Support Youth-Led Projects > Annual Youth Survey to allow for response comparison, project updates and new engagement.



### The Survey

The YOUth Speak Survey aimed to identify the values, aspirations and issues of concern to young people. The survey was developed by the Connecting Youth team at NCOBS together with other local youth focused organisations to strengthen our capacity to support and advocate for young people in the Shire.

The survey collected valuable socio-demographic data, and sought to capture the views, and perspectives of young people on a broad range of topics. The topics covered by the survey include education and employment, perceived barriers to achieving post-school plans, participation in community activities, young peoples' voices within their community, general wellbeing, values and concerns, preferred ways of communicating, and feelings about the future.

A significant section of the survey also explored young peoples' ideas for youth led projects and sought commitment from young people to be involved in planning a youth forum to help progress youth led ideas with support from the community.

Young people were comprehensively engaged through diverse channels and networks including schools, tertiary education, community, business and sporting groups as well as through agencies delivering youth services in the Shire.

With a significant response rate of 6.2%, compared to the average response rate of the National Annual Youth Survey of .7%, the survey captured a large representation of youth in the Shire.

### **The Report**

The report was created to communicate the results from the survey, to help youth services and organisations set their strategic direction for the future, and to provide a high-quality youth engagement document for the purposes of securing grants for youth programs/events/infrastructure to ensure informed decision making, particularly given tight grant timeframes. The report is available on NCOBS website.

Following the completion of the report, NCOBS were successful in using the document to apply for a grant to continue the project through the Department of Regional NSW - Office of Regional Youth.

### **The Forum**

The 23 young people were contacted who indicated in the YOUth Speak Survey that they wished to be involved in organising a future forum. After much deliberation on locations, dates, times and mediums of communication, it was decided that to allow for as much flexibility and youth engagement as possible, it would be arranged as a continuous discussion via a WhatsApp group.

With all of the young people engaging in some way with the process and making decisions, there were 7 outstanding young people who had considerable input on the day. One young person went above and beyond, taking the lead on responsibility for risk assessments, and managing logistics around what would be included in the goodie bags on the day. The young person then attended the forum, choosing to be a facilitator rather than a participant and has been provided with a letter of recommendation by the Project Manager for their outstanding work, dedication and leadership, which was instrumental in the success of the forum.

The forum was held on April 27th, 2023 and was well attended with over 150 young people aged mostly between 12 and 17 from across the Shire and beyond LGA boundaries showed up to share their perspectives, identify challenges and work towards actionable solutions for the future, building upon the results from the YOUth Speak Survey.

With the support of Bellingen Shire Council, Bellingen Youth Hub, Dorrigo Youth Centre, Bellingen High School, Chrysalis Steiner School Bellingen, Dorrigo High School, OzGreen and staff from the Office of Regional Youth, the forum was a huge success.

The day began with 5 of the youngest members of the Budaabang Bari Dance Group from Bellingen High School performing two incredible dances to open the event, setting a positive and energetic tone for the day.



*Pictured: Bellingen High School's Budaabang Bari Dance Group*

The dancers got together before the forum and created a new dance entirely to reflect what the day was about. The dance told a story about 5 friends that were asked to stand up and speak about the importance of having a voice in their community, but they were too nervous to speak, so they worked together. As one, they found the courage to speak, and lifted each other up through culture and stood strong and proud together to share their truth.

With each table seating between 8 and 12 young people, the youth were eager to see what we had in store for the day. The initial model we determined for the Forum was that scribes and facilitators would come from the services who are funded to provide support to our youth. However, after deep reflection regarding the uncertainty of service funding and the rapid turnover rate of workers in the youth sector, we determined that a better way to proceed would be to engage with leaders in our community instead.

This way, we were fostering a real time connection between community members who have a passion to see our young people thrive and who are in leadership roles within the community to really express to our young people how important their voices are.

Facilitators and scribes included school staff and supports from all three high schools, board members from our local Chambers of Commerce, Bellingen Shire Council's General Manager, Acting General Manager of Corporate and Community, Wellbeing coordinator, Mayor and a Councillor, staff from the Office of Regional Youth, Gotcha4life representative, Landcare NSW representative, Regional Development Australia's CEO, NCOBS Manager and staff, P&C volunteers and other community members.

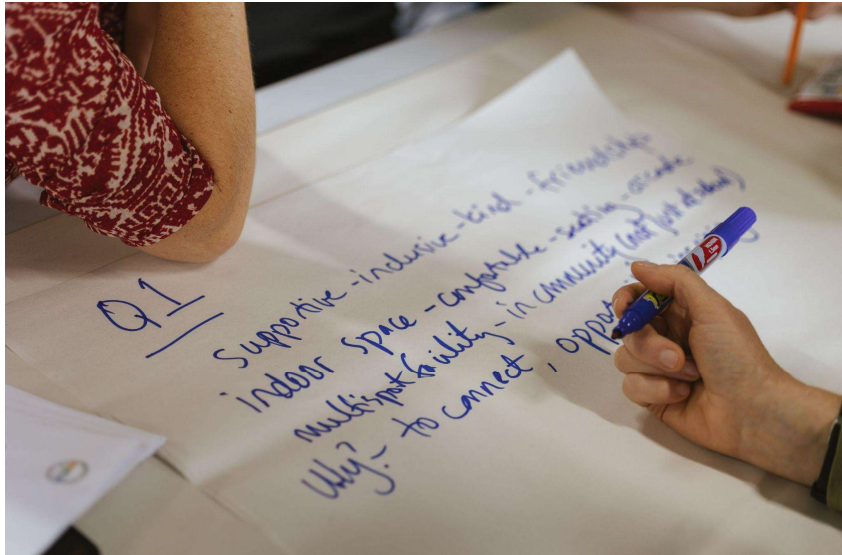
Facilitators and scribes guided the young people through a guided process with 10 open-ended questions derived from the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation led by a youth worker from OzGreen and an Office of Regional Youth staff member.



*Pictured: Steve Allan, Mayor of Bellingham Shire Council, one of the facilitators*

The questions were:

1. What kind of a community do you want?
2. Given what we just said, what are the two or three most important issues when it comes to the community?
3. What concerns do you have about this issue? Why?
4. How do the issues we're talking about affect you personally?
5. When you think about these things, how do you feel about what's going on?
6. What do you think is keeping us from making the progress we want?
7. Thinking back over the conversation, what groups or individuals would you trust to take action on these things?
8. Thinking back over the conversation, what groups or individuals would you trust to take action on these things?
9. If we came back together in 6-12 months, what might you see that would tell you that the things we talked about were starting to happen?
10. Now that we've talked about this issue a bit, what questions do you have about it?



Below is a list of words that the young people most commonly used to describe the kind of community they want to live in:

- Accessible
- Connected
- Environmental
- Inclusive
- Fun
- Resourced (this response encompasses all other responses relating to infrastructure /services /programs for youth).
- Respectful
- Safe



The top concerns raised by the young people have been compiled into three topics.

### **Isolation**

Transport  
Internet/Phone  
Lack of inclusion

### **Alcohol and Drugs**

Vaping, weed and alcohol  
Peer pressure  
Adults enabling  
Easily accessible  
Not enough education

### **Safety**

Harassment  
Bullying (in person and online)  
Antisocial behaviour  
Vandalism  
Environmental concerns



The second part of the day summarised the key priorities and opportunities. Facilitators brought together feedback from the previous session and groups discussed strategies and actions to formulate ideas and plans.

Projects they were keen to discuss being involved in actioning included:

### **TRANSPORT**

Reopen the train lines  
Shuttle buses around the Shire  
Less potholes  
More footpaths for riding/walking  
Youbers (Youth Ubers)

### **SAFER MORE INCLUSIVE SPACES**

More youth festivals and events  
More infrastructure (better skate parks, pump tracks, half courts, undercover seating places, BMX tracks, graffiti walls)

### **PROGRAMS**

Life skills, AOD education programs for adults and youth, how to make change in our community (environmental change and social change), how to talk to the Government to influence change.

These projects were considered and further narrowed down during the project-based learning sessions following the forum. At the end of the day, the young people were prize-motivated to fill out an evaluation form on how they felt about the day and feedback for future Forums.

## Key Findings:

- 97% of the young people said the topics covered over the day were relevant to them.
- 98% said the facilitators/scribes were helpful in leading the conversation.
- 92% said they felt inspired to join us to help them form youth-led projects to make change in their communities.

Suggestions on improvements included having a bigger venue, spending time outside, having less repetitive questions, more snacks, more engaging activities and icebreakers, more opportunity to share with the whole group, and the ability to move around to share ideas and meet other young people from different parts of the Shire. These suggestions will be taken on board during the planning stages of the next annual YOUth Speak Forum.

## The Project Planning

Following the forum, we held a number of planning sessions across each of our schools and youth hubs. The young people had full flexibility and support to continue on with the themes identified to pick their own project to lead to improve the outcomes for young people in the community. Youth workers, in a mentoring capacity, held a strong focus on critical thinking and problem-solving, reflection and iteration, empathy and stakeholder analysis, incorporating design thinking principles into the project plan and the development of the project plan for each of the projects the young people chose to create and lead.

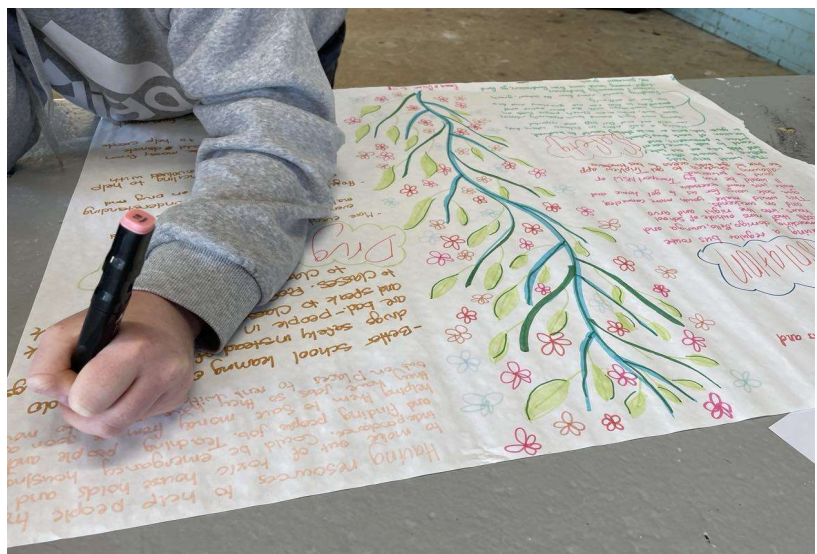
Following the project plan sessions, we had planned a camp to support the young people to learn presentation and pitch skills, as well as team building skills and community capacity building. The majority of the young people who committed and formed their own projects could not/did not want to attend a camp for various reasons and decided that instead the funding for the camp should be used to fully fund the youth-led project that will see the greatest impact on the community. The Office of Regional Youth approved the variation. The projects are outlined below.

## Project Plans

The project planning sessions were held over a number of days with support from youth hub staff, wellbeing teams, executives and teachers at both Bellingden and Dorriggo High Schools.

The first part of each day began with a reflection of the process so far, outcomes discussed and broad discussions on passions and group formation for projects. The second sessions saw the youth choosing one of their ideas and forming their pitches. Groups provided detailed youth impact canvases under headings of Project mission, vision, overview, problem statement, people that will benefit, organisations who need to be involved, challenges, and lastly, if they would like to be involved in the project beyond the day.

Overall, the project planning sessions resulted in seven projects being led by 48 young people from across the Bellingden Shire, ages 12-17.





A further project planning session was held with all groups to support them to create Canva Slides and PowerPoint Presentations, and to run through commentary in perfecting their pitches to community organisations to seek support to help them lead their projects to fruition.

### **Dorrigo High School Community Presentation Day**

On Monday 16th October, Dorrigo High School hosted a lunchtime community information session to allow the young people to pitch their project to the community to seek commitment to help them lead their projects to fruition. The day was well attended with parents and community representatives from Dorrigo Landcare, Dorrigo Local Aboriginal Land Council, Dorrigo CWA, Dorrigo Rotary, Bellingen Shire Council, NCOBS, Dorrigo Museum, Rugby, Dorrigo National Parks and Wildlife Services among others.

The event was catered by the Dorrigo High School P&C who are donating remaining proceeds to allow an end of year school wellbeing day at Boambee Bay Reserve for all Dorrigo High School students.



There were four projects:

- Dorrigo Youth Night, which intends to host a local fun event in Dorrigo for young people from across the Shire.
- Ramp Up, a group of young people who are keen to reignite community focus on advocating for skate park upgrades
- Mission Rec Keys For Free, which is a group of young people aiming to secure funds to allow young people to use the Rec cost free to increase focus on wellbeing and fitness for youth on the Plateau
- Sporting Wellbeing Gala Day, which aims to host an inaugural competitive day between our two local public high schools bringing in local businesses and services, with proceeds of the days to go towards the winning school to fund wellbeing initiatives and school upgrades.

### **Bellingen High School Community Presentation Day**


Bellingen High School's community presentation day is scheduled for November 16th, with three strong projects ready to hit the ears of the community to seek support. Here is a sneak preview:



Excitingly, one of the projects, The Drug Education Project, has been fully funded and is set to come to our local high schools on October 23rd and 24th, with sessions held throughout the day for students and evening sessions for parents.

The young people's main goal was to provide support for parents and carers to help them have the tools they need to communicate effectively with young people about alcohol and drugs and risk-taking behaviours.

This includes funding to purchase 100 copies of Paul Dillon's book "Teenagers, Alcohol and Drugs, what your kids really want and need to know about Alcohol and Drugs" to circulate through our schools and local libraries for parents to borrow.

<p><b>P.E.P</b> <b>PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM</b></p> <p><b>WHAT IS P.E.P?</b></p> <p>P.E.P is a youth led initiative designed to educate carers on how to approach the topic of alcohol and drugs with their kids.</p> <p><b>OUR VISION</b></p> <p>Our vision is to create a safer, more comfortable environment for young people to discuss these topics with their parents and make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.</p>	<p><b>ADDRESSING THE ISSUE</b></p> <p>The problem we aim to address is the tension, misunderstanding and miscommunication between young people and their carers involving drug and alcohol use. We have observed that there is a tension between parents and youth involving drugs and alcohol which strains the relationship, leading to rebellion and unsafe behaviour's.</p> <p>this problem has significant negative impact on both youth who lack emotional, moral and general support from parents who fell disconnected from youth and need support themselves to work out the best way to support children</p>	<p><b>OUR MISSION</b></p> <p>Our mission is to empower parents with the knowledge and skills to have open and honest conversations with their children about drugs and alcohol, and to give young people the power of knowledge to make informed decisions.</p> 
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## 2nd Bellingen Shire YOUth Speak Project Survey

The second shire-wide YOUth Speak Survey has been released and is accumulating responses over the month of October. We look forward to digging deep into results from the survey and being able to compare between responses from 12 months ago, particularly those provided by young people who engaged further with the YOUth Speak Project through the YOUth Speak Forum and Youth led projects.

# COMMUNITY BASED SUICIDE PREVENTION – BELLINGEN SHIRE

The National Suicide Prevention Trial started in 2016 across Australia. The Trial was meant to run for three years. The Bellingen Shire joined the North Coast Trial Site much later than most other sites in November 2019. Due to COVID restrictions impacting the delivery of community initiatives across all 12 national sites, the Trial was extended to June 2022. The North Coast Trial Site funder, Healthy North Coast Ltd (HNC) offered Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc (NCOBS) an additional six months to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 to fully complete the Project activities.

The focus of this additional time was to engage a contractor to finish the work of the Project, particularly to deliver the Seaboard Suicide Prevention Initiative (SSPI) as well as working with the Bellingen Community Suicide Support group and Dorrigo Suicide Prevention Network to assist with wrapping up all activities and completing an evaluation of the Project.

Lauren Mills came on board in September 2022 with a ready-to-go schedule of activities she had developed in line with the Project Activity Plan approved by the funder. Lauren had established relationship already with both the Dorrigo and Bellingen groups through her part time employment as Education and Training coordinator for the Family and Carers Mental Health program that operates across Gumbaynggirr Country. This contract position was an opportunity for Lauren to draw on these relationships and continue to build on them to see the success of the Project for the community and strengthen its capacity for suicide prevention.

The first SSPI event was held on 24 October 2022. Planned as a free outdoor event to be held on the Urunga foreshores, *Tides are Turning* due to wet weather was moved to Bellingen Showgrounds. This deadly event ran from 10am to 2pm and was an opportunity for community to celebrate Gumbaynggirr and First Nations Peoples and their culture, learn from them and foster pathways to support and inclusivity.

*Tides are Turning* was developed after consultation with local elders of the Gumbaynggirr Nation of Bellingen Shire and had great outputs that targeted breaking down racism and generalisations about our First Nations communities.

Garrangali an 11-piece NE Arnhem Land band on tour visited to teach dances

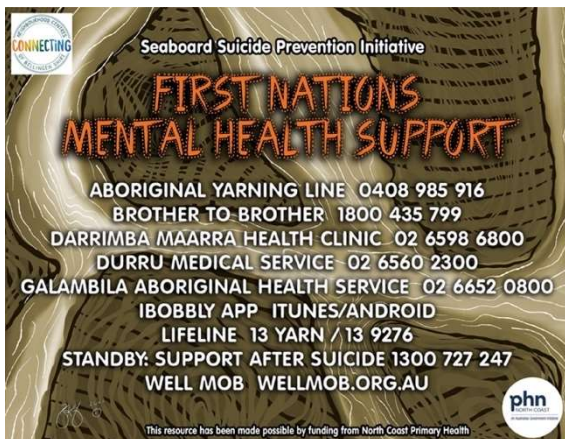
(returning after 20 years when their uncles bought and shared culture on Gumbaynggirr land to elders). Other local Gumbaynggirr legends of music were invited to play. This event, a celebration of Gumbaynggirr culture, was well attended by First Nations stakeholders and the broader Bellingen Shire community; over 150 members of community participated. Many elders were engaged and spoke of their struggles and success with mental health issues. All artists who participated expressed the respect and safety they felt for being a part of the event.





There was great music, some fantastic workshops to join in on, including a weaving workshop, story tent, Goori face painting tent, damper making workshop, and an art activity. Dance workshops were on a big scale with the crowd coming together to learn dance moves! One Mob Radio ran workshops, and a free community healthy lunch was prepared and served up by a team of terrific volunteers.

Services and organisations were encouraged to come down and join in the celebration of Gumbaynggirr and First Nations culture, language and the beautiful people of this Gumbaynggirr Nation by participating in the workshops, learning from one another and building relationships.



A First Nations mental health support magnet resource (pictured left) was designed featuring artwork by local Gumbaynggirr artist Bernard Kelly Edwards, and displays local and national hotline numbers. This magnet was distributed at the *Tides are Turning* event and broadly across the region to services that First Nations people access.

Next up was the Healthy Mind Healthy Communities art exhibition “Art Miinggiya” (in your heart), art workshop and competition, which saw over 100 entries from Bellingen Shire residents expressing themselves through visual arts, reflecting on mental health, recovery, and mindfulness and the heart.

The free art workshop in Urunga for adults (over 18 years only), was held on 6<sup>th</sup> November, bringing together 20 emerging artists from the Shire. Esteemed Gumbaynggirr artists Aunty Annalisa Wilson and Aunty Beryl Wilson led the workshop that connected artists reflecting on mental health mindfulness and recovery, sharing skills for resilience.

Urunga Community Connections was held in Urunga Library park, bringing over 20 mental health services, that do not have offices in the area but are paid to service our community, together for the community to meet service providers and learn what services are available to them. This event was attended well by the community, and a request for similar events all over the shire was noted. Community Connections bags were printed with the winning artwork from the Healthy Minds Healthy Communities art exhibition and these along with mental health hotline number magnets were distributed across the Seaboard and Bellingen Shire communities.



(Left) The “Art Miinggiya” exhibition winning artwork by Sharon Fitzpatrick



Above from left: Counsellor & NCOBS member, Donna Bailey, Seaboard Suicide Prevention Initiative coordinator, Lauren Mills, and Sharon Fitzpatrick with a bag featuring her winning artwork

### **Dorrigo Suicide Prevention Network**

*“We believe in Suicide Prevention through **Connection** to people and services. We work to raise **Awareness** of the importance of mental health within our community.”*

In June 2022, the Dorrigo Suicide Prevention Network (DSPN) had requested continued auspice of the group by NCOBS from July to December 2022, which was agreed. A key focus for DSPN was to deliver the second community ‘Let’s Get Together’ event that had to be postponed in April due to road closures.

### **Information resources**

DPSN is a group of volunteers who worked mainly on information acquiring and sharing in the form of flyers, magnets, youth cards and resource bags that were distributed widely across the Dorrigo Plateau area and throughout other areas of the Bellingen Shire. Each flyer covered a certain aspect of Mental Health Wellbeing connected to suicide prevention and associated self-care for family, friends and relatives as well as people with lived experience of suicide. A youth wallet card relevant to youth covering peer to peer issues from identity to eating disorders to respect and suicide related counselling was developed in consultation with young people and families, youth workers and youth service and mental health organisations.

### **‘Let’s Get Together’ community event**

In September 2022, to bring all this information together and to offer community members access to local services, DPSN held a ‘Let’s Get Together and Celebrate Dorrigo Plateau’ picnic at the Dorrigo Showgrounds. This was a free event open to the entire community with a variety of music and entertainment. Around 200 people attended.

A panel of people with specialist knowledge in mental health awareness and suicide prevention and lived experience of both were asked related prepared questions and impromptu questions from people attending on the day. Panel members were available afterwards to speak with community members on an individual basis. Information stalls from services allowed community to learn where to go locally for additional support. Care packs were given out with local service information, DSPN flyers and magnets (and some fun stuff) to read and digest in their own time. 15 local services provided information and/or attended on the day.

The year rounded out with a course in Dorrigo on Older Person Mental Health First Aid facilitated by Betty Kitchener and a course in Ulong on Mental Health First Aid. Both were well attended with 12 people at each course on both days.

DSPN helped resource and run "Under The Tree", an event organised by the Dorrigo Lifespings Church, Combined Church Council of Dorrigo, Vinnies and Rotary Club Dorrigo. This event provided gifts for marginalised community members, those displaced, homeless or fallen on hard times. A delicious morning tea was also supplied. 120 adults and children benefitted from the "Under The Tree".

DSPN also contributed towards the Christmas lunch at St Stephens Hall, Dorrigo. Members also helped out on the day. The lunch is a non-denominational event hosted by Vinnies and volunteers each year. People who attend are community members who are alone without family or friends at Christmas. Patrons came from the boundaries and beyond of the Bellingen Shire Council - Dundurrabin, Hernani, Ebor, Cascade, Megan and North Dorrigo, Bostobrick and Dorrigo. We catered for 60 people.

As well as the organised mental health and suicide prevention activities and event completion, DSPN distributed localised access support information through the local newspaper, the Dorrigo post and in strategic locations in towns and villages of the Plateau every two months in 2023 with different messages and information going out to keep as many people as possible informed and in touch.



**Bellingen Community Suicide Support (BCSS):** *Honouring the insight and perspective of people with a Lived Experience of suicide.*

Bellingen Community Suicide Support (BCSS) was founded by volunteers, Michelle Levy, Rosa Mauvra and Kim West with assistance and guidance from Project Coordinator, Celeste Abell until she left the position in December 2021.

A Safe Space room at Oak Street in Bellingen was established by Bellingen Community Suicide Support (BCSS). The space opened when volunteers were available allowing community members and service providers to drop in and obtain support and referral.

BCSS kept in touch with the community through regular posts on their Facebook page and use of Facebook Messenger to encourage young people to contact BCSS, in particular younger men, who may otherwise may not reach out. This allowed BCSS to offer information or with consent refer the young person on to local services for further support. From July to September 2022, the Safe Space room in Bellingen was open to the community on Monday afternoons at least monthly. Lack of community volunteers in Bellingen, not being able to sustain participation meant the Bellingen Safe Space had a hard time opening its doors on allotted times, due to needing two Safe Space workers to open. From October to December, with only one BCSS member remaining, the Safe Space closed.

Suicide Prevention Project contractor, Lauren Mills, worked with volunteer, Michelle to plan and deliver a cultural program in Bellingen for community members and local service providers, and a dinner event in Bellingen to celebrate and close out the Project.

## Community Workshop



***“When the dust has settled on our lives, all we get to keep and take with us is our dignity, our integrity and the love and respect we shared with people” Tom Powell (Founder - Red Dust Healing)***

30 community members attended the Red Dust Healing workshop. To date this highly recommended program, has been delivered to over 17,000 people in over 400 communities Australia wide & internationally. This was the first time it would be run in the Bellingen Shire. Though the program comes from an Aboriginal perspective, Uncle Tom makes it clear that it is not just for Aboriginal people, it is for all people. Red Dust Healing is a self-evaluating awareness program derived from an ancient Aboriginal perspective that helps individuals deal with the hurt, anger, grief, loss, and issues in their lives. Feedback from participants was very positive and with many requests for Red Dust Healing to be run again in the Shire if possible.

## Community Gathering

The ‘Celebrating Our Networks’ community dinner was held in December 2022 at the Bellingen Showgrounds. The evening was a celebration of the excellent work of all the people, groups and organisations involved in the Community-based Suicide Prevention Project in the Bellingen Shire. By all accounts, it was an incredible night with 110 people attending. Community enjoyed give a ways of self-care bags and t-shirts printed with the BCSS logo and phrase ‘Let’s start a conversation’ to help support continued awareness of suicide and suicide prevention, reducing stigma and promoting good self-care practice in the community. The event began with Welcome to Country by Aunty Frances. Following was a discussion panel who spoke about their work in suicide prevention locally. The night concluded with a community dinner and entertainment provided by two local musical acts.



Many people gave positive feedback on how the great the night was - *“It felt safe, inclusive and joyful”*.

Throughout this Community-based Suicide Prevention – Bellingen Shire project there was effective collaboration between people, organisations and stakeholders. That led to greater community engagement, raised the profile of suicide prevention literacy and language usage, and allowed for more comfortable conversations between individuals, families and in community about suicide prevention. Clear referral pathways between services were defined and utilised allowing greater support for community members experiencing suicidality or seeking support for their family members or friends.

## URUNGA MEN'S SHED

As outlined in the 2022 Annual Report, the members of the Urunga Men's Shed management committee elected at the 2021 AGM had remained unchanged until voting at this year's 2023 AGM. Voting at this meeting resulted in the election of the following members:

Manager	Barry Locke
Secretary	Brian Francis
Workshop Manager	Steve Roberts
Training and Safety Officer (WHS)	Steve Roberts
Committee Members	Kelvin Carter
	Rex Anthony
	John Widerberg
	Bill Cain
	Alan Baldwinson
	Frank Young
	Harry Martin
	John Shipman

Currently there are 23 financial Shed members. The Shed welcomes the following new members, David Bray, Victor Cork and Frank Young joining during the year.

Attendance remains at an average of 7 – 9 members each working day i.e., Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings and for special times and periods as necessary or when required. Membership of the Shed is free, however compulsory payment of individual insurance will be \$30.00 per person this year due to the rising cost charged by the insurance companies.

The Urunga Markets Stall provides a regular income for the Shed and while we welcome the donations for smaller items made or repaired for the general public or businesses, the following represents major works for larger and on-going work over the last year, some examples include: Large Outside Dining Table for Anchor's Wharf, renovation of Dining Room Chairs for Diggers Tavern, and a Special Community Notice Board for the Chamber of Commerce, which all help to keep the Shed viable.

The Shed acknowledges and sincerely thanks Neil Cole (Pier Hotel) for a donation of \$927.00 to be used for equipment upgrades and Shed Member, Pete Bennetts for a donation of \$500. Significant upgrades were made to worn and outdated hand and electrical tools from public and business donations throughout the year.

The Men's Shed is still auspiced by the Urunga branch of NCOBS, and the Shed is appreciative of the contribution by the staff and their interest in our 'Shed'.

The Committee continues to acknowledge and appreciate the time and effort put into running the Shed by the Manager, Barry Locke, in maintaining the high standard it continually holds in the community.

***From the Urunga Men's Shed Management Committee***



# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc (NCOBS) ended the financial year with a net operating deficit of -\$30,693 and a cash at bank balance of \$409,355.

## Income

### *Funding & Grants*

Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc acknowledges service funding from:

- NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)
  - Base funding plus indexation through the TEI Program for:
    - Bellingen and Nambucca Youth Services - \$220,613
    - Early Childhood Wellbeing and Development service - \$123,386
    - Bellingen and Urunga Neighbourhood Centres - \$185,029
- NSW Fair Trading for the No Interest Loans Scheme (BNILS) – \$38,048

And grants funding from:

- Good Shepherd Microfinance for BNILS - \$1,113
- Mid North Coast Local Health District Youth Well Fund - \$2,750
- Odyssey House/The Buttery funding for Bellingen Shire CDAT - \$5,963
- Regional Youth for the YOUth Speaks project - \$38,950
- Good Things Foundation - \$2,500

### *Contract income*

- Services Australia for the *Centrelink-Medicare-Child Support Agency* - \$64,034

*Other income received included:* bank interest \$4,304, donations \$32,632, membership fees \$736, recoupments \$99,699, room hire \$6,266, and sales, services and activities income \$6,434.

## Expenditure

\$775,536 for employee wage and on-costs, travel, external supervision support, and training accounted for 66.2% of total expenditure this financial year.

The remaining 33.8% of total expenditure was for:

- Direct service provision - \$202,460 (14.9%)
- Management and auspice - \$101,383 (8.66%)
- Operating overheads \$119,889 (10.24%).

Grant funds acquitted this year:

- Community-based Suicide Prevention – Bellingen LGA project
- Social Sector Support Fund one-off grant
- Social Sector Transformation Fund one-off grant

The Management Committee confirms that employee entitlements for annual leave accrued but not yet taken and for long service leave due on 30 June 2023 have been provisioned.

The Management Committee endorses the Auditor's opinion that the special purpose financial statements fairly represent the financial position of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc as of 30 June 2023.

Thank you to staff members, Shareen Banner and Diane Adams, who perform the financial accounting and administration assistance at NCOBS, and to Roger Horton for financial management. Thanks too, to James Davis and HQB Accountants for independent audit services provided.

**NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC**

**ABN: 46 636 213 835**

**SPECIAL PURPOSE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023**

**NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC**  
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**  
**AS AT 30 JUNE 2023**

<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>NOTE</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
		<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	409,355	611,559
Trade Debtors		-	35
Other Assets		800	15,699
Other Debtors		-	-
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>410,155</b>	<b>627,294</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Plant & Equipment		115,981	105,984
Accumulated Depreciation		(85,498)	(79,742)
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>30,483</b>	<b>26,243</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>440,638</b>	<b>653,537</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Trade Creditors		18,709	14,500
Grants Received in Advance		35,182	241,305
GST Payable		13,633	13,703
PAYG Tax Payable		8,451	11,151
Superannuation Payable		15,013	14,277
Employee Provisions		74,829	54,191
Security deposits held		70	-
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>165,886</b>	<b>349,126</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Employee Provisions		19,815	18,782
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>19,815</b>	<b>18,782</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>185,701</b>	<b>367,908</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>254,936</b>	<b>285,629</b>
<b>MEMBERS FUNDS</b>			
Opening Retained Earnings		285,629	403,171
Current Year Surplus		(30,693)	(117,543)
<b>TOTAL MEMBERS FUNDS</b>		<b>254,936</b>	<b>285,629</b>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

**NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC**  
**STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME**  
**FOR THE PERIOD 1 JULY 2022 TO 30 JUNE 2023**

	2023	2022
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
Grants	885,758	818,921
Fees	2,344	410
Sales and Services	4,090	4,488
Auspice Levies	102,155	110,029
Room Hire	6,266	-
Membership Fees	736	582
Interest Received	4,304	-
Donations	32,632	19,139
Sundry Other Income	0.07	78,558
Recoupments	101,813	-
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>1,140,098</b>	<b>1,032,128</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Audit & Accountancy Fees	6,108	1,091
Auspice Fees	101,139	110,029
Advertising & Donations	2,527	18,781
Annual & Long Service Leave Expense	29,891	11,375
Bank Charges	507	315
Board/ Governance expenses	243	-
Cleaning Expenses	2,741	336
Client Support Services	149,707	41,602
Community Activities & Events	-	56,608
Computer Expenses	26,735	28,905
Consultancy Expenses	36,464	24,607
Consumables	-	7,542
Depreciation	5,757	8,236
Donations	2,560	4,010
Electricity	-	5,579
Employment support and supervision cost	3,511	-
Equipment Hire	1,742	871
Equipment Purchase	7,235	-
Fees & Permits	281	-
Fundraising Expenses	341	3,560
General Expenses	-	2,344
Health & Safety	188	-
Insurance	11,380	8,453
Meeting & Other Board Expenses	643	1,982
Membership fees paid	1,095	-
Postage & Stationery	6,593	6,681
Publications & Resources	7,096	668
Recruitment Expenses	80	-
Rent	21,882	18,304
Repairs & Maintenance	4,051	3,096
S&W Workers' Compensation Insurance	-	-
Security expenses	187	-
Small Plant & Equipment	803	8,172
Staff Expenses	971	19,084
Sundry expenses	720	-
Superannuation Contributions	64,624	61,087
Telephone & Internet	12,410	12,349
Training & Development	1,414	-
Travel & Accommodation	227	-
Utilities	7,462	-
Volunteer Expenses	2,804	12,662
Wages	631,394	658,467
Workers Compensation	17,274	12,872
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>1,170,791</b>	<b>1,149,670</b>
<b>Net Operating Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>(30,693)</b>	<b>(117,543)</b>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

**NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC**  
**STATEMENT OF CASHFLOWS**  
**AS AT 30 JUNE 2023**

		2023	2022
		\$	\$
	<b>NOTE</b>		
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>			
Receipts from customers		1,048,021	1,155,271
Payments to suppliers and employees		(1,240,228)	(1,212,998)
Interest received		-	-
Net cash provided by operating activities	5	<u>(192,207)</u>	<u>(57,727)</u>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		(9,997)	(11,586)
Proceeds from disposal of investments		-	-
Net cash (used in) investing activities		<u>(9,997)</u>	<u>(11,586)</u>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>			
Other cash items from financing activities		-	-
Net cash from financing activities		-	-
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held		(202,204)	(69,313)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		611,559	680,871
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year		<u>409,355</u>	<u>611,558</u>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

**NOTE 1: BASIS OF PREPARATION**

This financial report is a special purpose financial report prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*. The Committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity.

The financial report has been prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historical costs and does not take into account changing money values or, except where specifically stated, current valuations of non-current assets.

**NOTE 2: SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES**

The following significant accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless otherwise stated, have been

**a. Income Tax**

The organisation is exempt from Income Tax under current Legislation.

**b. Property, Plant & Equipment (PPE)**

Property, plant and equipment are carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation.

The depreciable amount of all PPE is depreciated over the useful lives of the assets to the Association commencing from

**c. Impairment of Assets**

At the end of each reporting period, the Association reviews the carrying values of its tangible and intangible assets to

**d. Employee Benefits**

Provision is made for the Association's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered by employees to the

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

**NOTE 2: SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES (Continued)**

**e. Provisions**

Provisions are recognized when the Association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for

**f. Cash and Cash Equivalents**

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, and other short-term highly liquid

**g. Revenue and Other Income**

Revenue is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable after taking into account any discounts

Interest revenue is recognized using the effective interest rate method, which for floating rate financial assets is the rate

Grant and donation income is recognized when the entity obtains control over the funds, which is generally at the time of

All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST) where applicable.

**h. Goods and Services Tax (GST)**

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognized net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is

**j. Comparative Figures**

When required by Accounting Standards, comparative figures have been adjusted to conform to changes in presentation for the current financial year.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
<b>NOTE 3: CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS</b>		
Operating Account	152,573	609,081
Debit Mastercards	2	18
BNHC Front office Float	10	10
BNHC - Petty Cash	91	47
BSYS - Petty Cash	30	30
NCoBS debit card account	1,980	1,979
NCoBS Term Deposit	254,304	-
DYC - Petty Cash	38	38
UNC - Petty Cash	30	59
UNC - Petty Cash (Men's Shed)	227	227
UNC Float account	20	20
DNC Petty cash Acct	50	50
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	409,355	611,559
	<hr/>	<hr/>

**NOTE 4: CASH FLOW INFORMATION**

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
<b>Reconciliation of result for the year to cashflows from operating activities:</b>		
Profit (loss) for the year	(30,693)	(117,543)
Cash flows excluded from profit attributable to operating activities		
Non-cash flows in profit:		
- depreciation	5,757	8,236
Changes in assets and liabilities:		
- (increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	36	130
- (increase)/decrease in other assets	14,899	19,490
- increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	2,245	(6,251)
- increase/(decrease) in income in advance	(206,123)	36,247
- increase/(decrease) in employee and other provisions	21,672	1,964
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	<b>(192,207)</b>	<b>(57,727)</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>



NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC

CERTIFICATE BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

I, Kerry Child of 423 Hydcs Creek Road  
Bellingen, New South Wales, and

I, Rosie Wickert of 17 River St  
Repton, New South Wales

certify that:

- a) We attended the annual general meeting of the association held on \_\_\_\_\_
- b) The annual financial statements for the period ended 30 June 2023 were submitted to the members of the association at

Kerry Child

(Committee Member)

Rosie Wickert

(Committee Member)

**NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INC**

**STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should

In the opinion of the Committee the financial report as set out:

1. Presents fairly the financial position of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Incorporated as at 30 June 2023 and
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:

President

David

Treasurer

David

Dated

31/10/23



Tel: (02) 6652 2333

13 - 15 Park Avenue  
(PO Box 919)  
Coffs Harbour NSW 2450

enquiries@hqb.com.au  
[www.hqb.com.au](http://www.hqb.com.au)

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT  
TO THE MEMBERS OF  
NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES OF BELLINGEN SHIRE INCORPORATED

## Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

### Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Incorporated ('the association'), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023, statement of comprehensive income and statement of cashflows for the period then ended, a summary of significant accounting policies, other explanatory notes and the statement by members of the committee.

In our opinion the financial report is in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:

- a) presenting fairly the financial position of Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Incorporated as at 30 June 2023, and its financial performance for the period then ended;
- b) complying with the accounting policies as described in Note 1 to the financial report.

### Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report is free from material misstatement. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibility* section of our report. We are independent of the Association in accordance with ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's *APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### Emphasis of Matter – Basis of Accounting and Restriction on Distribution and Use

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report is prepared to assist the members of the committee in fulfilling their governance obligations. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our report is intended solely for the Association and should not be distributed to or used by any other parties. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

### Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The committee of the association are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report and has determined that the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, which form part of the financial report, are consistent with the financial reporting requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009*, and are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The committee's responsibility also includes establishing and maintaining such internal control as the committee determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the committee is responsible for assessing the Association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis

of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Association or cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

### **Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report**

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report.

The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control.

The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the committee, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We conclude on the appropriateness of the committee's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Association's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Association to cease to continue as a going concern.

We evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the committee regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

HQB Accountants Auditors Advisors



James Davis  
Partner

13-15 Park Avenue  
Coffs Harbour  
Dated: 31.10.2023