

# Annual Report 2023



**Park Orchards  
Community House & Learning Centre**

## ***Our Vision***

***Strengthened Community Participation,  
Capability Enhancement and Wellbeing***

## ***Our Mission***

***To Provide Opportunities for Equitable  
Community Engagement Through  
Social, Recreational and Learning  
Activities***

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# Chairperson Report

This year we have witnessed significant achievements across various areas at Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre (POCH&LC) encompassing both new initiatives and those already established with accomplishments attributed to the unwavering dedication of our team and the steadfast support of our community members.

Our Community Centre plays a pivotal role in fostering social connections and engagement within our community, bringing people together in a warm, inclusive, and welcoming environment. Through inspiration and empowerment, we aim to cultivate a profound sense of belonging for all members. This is achieved through our diverse array of accredited training, pre-accredited training, community courses, clubs, and social events.

There have been recent developments within the community house, notably the downsizing of the library. Subsequently, this area underwent refurbishment and now serves as a more multi-function space for activities and training. Additionally, new tables and chairs were purchased to accommodate our immediate needs as well as those of our upcoming new building.

The Early Learning Centre (ELC) continues to enjoy popularity, evidenced by a significant increase in enrolments. Moreover, the school holiday program offered by our ELC has seen a surge in demand, prompting an extension of the days offered to accommodate the needs of our families. Thank you to our dedicated team of educators, whose commitment, passion, and tireless efforts in nurturing our youngest learners are truly commendable.

You may have observed that the childcare playground has undergone a redesign, resulting in a substantial enhancement for the children attending our Early Learning Centre. This redesign and construction were made possible through a generous grant from the Bendigo Bank Community Bank Warrandyte. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to them for their continuous support.

There was a substantial increase in the number of funded hours allocated to us by ACFE (Adult, Community, and Further Education). This funding enabled us to offer various educational and training opportunities to adults in the community, often focusing on areas such as literacy, numeracy, vocational skills, and personal development. The additional hours allowed us to deliver significantly more pre-accredited programs to more participants and to grow our partnerships.

Once again, our VET courses experienced a notable increase in popularity within the community. Feedback from participants remained consistently positive, emphasizing the valuable assistance and support offered by trainers, their expertise, and the advantages of small class sizes. With robust enrolments, we attained our highest number of funded enrolments since the establishment of the RTO (Registered Training Organisation).

Our community courses and activities boast a diverse range covering various subjects. It is noteworthy that many of these classes are promptly filled upon advertisement, attesting to their popularity and demand within our community. This year saw the introduction of day trips, commencing with the inaugural visit to Cranbourne Botanical Gardens. The outing proved immensely successful, drawing a significant number of new participants to the Community House. Their enthusiastic response has generated considerable anticipation for future outings.

Regarding our new building, we are currently awaiting advice from Manningham Council regarding its location, with several options under discussion. However, funding has emerged as a significant concern amidst prevailing economic challenges. Nonetheless, we remain optimistic about reaching a resolution in the near future.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my fellow board members for their unwavering enthusiasm, dedication, and professionalism. My heartfelt thanks extend to John, Deputy Chair; Mike, Treasurer; Sherry, Secretary; Meg, and Wendy. It is evident that each member of the board is wholeheartedly committed to our collective purpose and is instrumental in providing direction to support the endeavours of Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre.

We continuously welcome applications from individuals interested in joining our board. If you believe you have the passion and dedication to contribute to our community in this capacity, we encourage you to express your interest.

I would like to extend my gratitude to our administration team for their exceptional hard work and unwavering support over the past 12 months. Their dedication is evident in the professional manner in which they handle various situations every day. Their assistance consistently surpasses expectations. Additionally, I would like to express special thanks to our Executive Manager, Kelly, for her outstanding contributions since joining our team 12 months ago. In this relatively short time, Kelly has already made a profound impact on the organisation. Her strategic vision and proactive initiatives have been invaluable contributions, which continue to shape the success of our organisation.

Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre owes much of its efficiency and success to the invaluable support of our dedicated team of volunteers. I extend my sincere gratitude to each and every one of you for your unwavering commitment and contributions to our organisation

Heather Edmonds

**Chairperson**

# Treasurer Report

What an awesome turnaround for the finances in 2023.

As we are all aware, the Community House, like all businesses during and following the Covid pandemic, travelled a tough road in getting business back to 'normal'. For the two previous years, 2021 and 2022, we experienced financial losses. Throughout 2023 we saw a growing confidence in the community to get back to some normality, however, numbers enrolled for RTO, community and health and wellbeing courses were trading water with similar numbers enrolled as the year prior. Our Early Learning Centre continues to be a success providing a vital resource for local families.

Fees Income, which includes Childcare and Course fees, has steadily increased over the last three years. In fact, Childcare brought \$261,080 more than course fees in 2023. Grants from our partnering bodies has also increased, with some of these being for operating costs of the Community House, while other grant values are determined by numbers of participants attending courses.

The staff, under Kelly Cooper's leadership and management continue to adopt more aggressive advertising to a wider community, looked at strategies to optimise the number of RTO courses conducted over the whole year in house and as outreach programs, and looked at operational expenditure and practices to reduce costs.

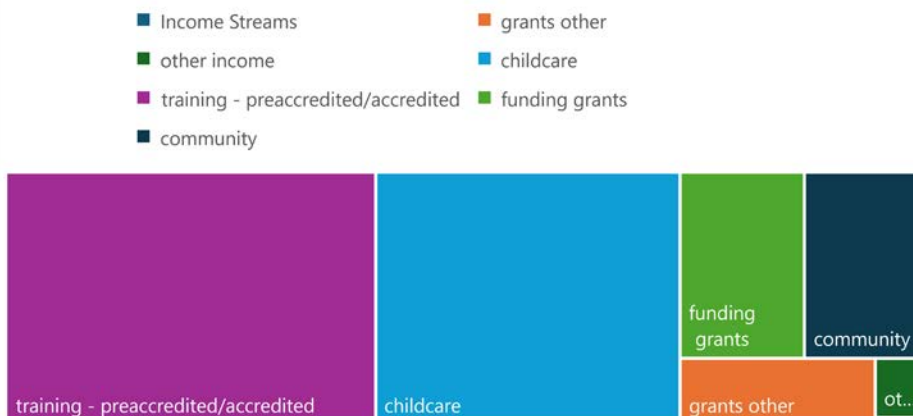
As can be seen in the below table, we are on the improve.

For this financial year, the Community House has ended the year with an operational profit of \$111,759, coming from a loss the previous year of \$68,446, this has been a great result, a credit to the team.

	2021	2022	2023
Fees Income	\$455,627	\$498,562	\$633,372
Grants Income	\$497,434	\$510,820	\$694,918
Donations and Fundraising	\$3,652	\$460	\$2,416
Interest Income	\$663	\$334	\$6,877
Job Keeper Income	\$33,750	\$0	\$0
Business Support Income	\$52,400	\$0	\$0
Other Income	\$14,433	\$6,622	\$10,300
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,057,959</b>	<b>\$1,016,798</b>	<b>\$1,347,883</b>

Thank you to the Park Orchards Community and my fellow Board Members for the opportunity to be Treasurer.

Income by Stream 2023



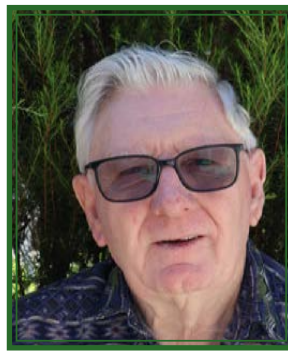
Mike Green  
**Treasurer**

# Board of Management



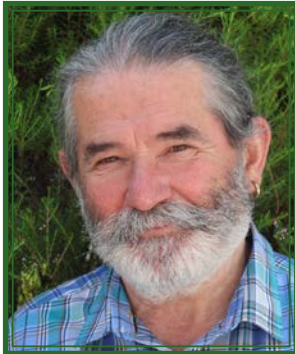
**Heather Edmonds**  
Chairperson

Heather's experience spans both the public and private sectors, bringing a diverse range of skills and knowledge to the table, with a particular focus on business management, human resources, and workplace health and safety.



**John Balshaw**  
Vice Chairperson

John has been a valuable member of the Board since 2014. With his extensive experience as a First Aid trainer, he brings a wealth of knowledge to the VET industry.



**Michael Green**  
Treasurer

Mike's membership on the Board since 2016 has been invaluable, drawing on his extensive expertise and experience as the Principal of Ringwood North Primary School for over four decades. His wealth of knowledge has proven to be a valuable asset to the Board.



**Sherry Hutton**  
Secretary

Sherry joined our Board in 2019, bringing with her a wealth of experience in the education sector. She has worked with a diverse range of learners, from primary school children to those in special education and preschoolers. Sherry worked as a Trainer in Early Childhood Education and Support, as well as a VET Co-ordinator.



**Meg Downie**  
General Board Member

Meg joined the Board in 2022, she has worked as a primary school teacher, as well as a sales representative. In addition, she served as a Manningham Councillor from 2008-2016. Meg continues to be a passionate advocate for lifelong learning and community engagement.



**Wendy Taylor**  
General Board Member

After immigrating to Australia from Scotland in 1975, Wendy was a primary school teacher for 40 years. Since retiring from teaching Wendy has volunteered on the phones at Lifeline to run suicide intervention workshops known as Assist and is a president of a Probus club. Welfare has always been important to her.

***Belonging - Promoting a Sense of Community  
Spirit and Acceptance***

***Integrity - Honest, Ethical and Committed***

***Diversity - Recognise the Value of the Unique  
Contribution of Each and Every Individual***

***Sustainability - Striving for Excellence,  
Environmental Awareness and Resilience***

***Respect - Having Respect for Ourselves, Our  
Participants and the Service We Offer***



# About us

Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre Incorporated is a vibrant community based organisation that provides quality community engagement through social, recreational and learning activities.

In 1978, a leisure time program was initiated by the Park Orchards School Council's community relations sub-committee, utilising the school art room. The program offered four courses in term 1, 1979, which were taught by local tutors, and this marked the beginning of Park Orchards Leisure Time Activities, or POLTA.

At the heart of our mission was the goal of creating an environment that supports lifelong learning for all members of our community. Park Orchards has a special character, often likened to a village within the city, and we recognise the importance of nurturing the growth of initiatives such as POLTA to maintain this unique identity. The achievements of POLTA were so significant that they ultimately paved the way for the establishment of the Community House in 1983, which has since become a hub for learning and community development at 572 Park Road, Park Orchards.

In 1986, incorporation took place and since then, we have undergone three building extensions to accommodate our growing range of programs. We pride ourselves on offering a diverse array of courses and activities that cater to the interests and needs of our community, including further education, art and craft classes, after-school activities, health and fitness programs, self-development courses and early childhood education and care.

The name of our organisation has evolved over time. Initially known as POLTA, we later became Park Orchards Community House Inc., then Park Orchards Learning Centre Inc. later, we changed our name once again to Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre Inc. to better reflect the breadth of our programs, which include both education and community development initiatives.

Our Childcare Centre has earned a strong reputation in the local community for providing a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment where families can entrust their children while they work or study. In 2019, we constructed a purpose-built facility on the vacant land behind the community house, which was the result of years of hard work by our dedicated Staff and Board of Management. This purpose built facility provides the children with an enriched educational program, and has become a hub for community engagement and social interaction.

At Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre, we are a Registered Training Organisation that provides Vocational Education and Training to equip learners with the necessary skills for employment or further education.

Additionally, we offer pre-accredited courses that serve as a pathway to future opportunities.

Our organisation's strategic direction is determined and supported by a volunteer Board of Management, carefully selected from within our House membership, who provide expert governance and guidance.

Our team comprises a diverse group of professionals, including an Executive Manager, Assistant Manager, Finance Administrator, VET Co-ordinator, Community & ACFE Programs Co-ordinator, Administration and Programs Staff, Childcare Administrator, Early Childcare Co-ordinator and Early Childhood Educators.

We engage a highly skilled team of trainers who are passionate about sharing their knowledge and are dedicated to delivering high-quality programs to the community.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of Manningham City Council, who own the buildings in which we operate and provide us rooms at Domeney Recreation Centre to run our Nationally Recognised Training and Warrandyte South Hall for our health and wellbeing classes.

***“Strengthened Community Participation, Capability Enhancement and Wellbeing”***

# Manager Report

I look back at the 2022 Annual Report where I was looking forward to broadening peoples understanding of what can be found at Park Orchards and now 12 months later reflect on that statement and the impact that Park Orchards and our community have had on me.

Being a manager of a Neighbourhood House always has its highs and lows and of course everything in between and then adding to this me following the successful 10 year tenure from Pauline Fyffe. I have been so fortunate to be leading the Park Orchards Community House and Learning Centre team to end 2023 having built stronger connections to our community, providing valuable programs to support participants to enhance their health, wellbeing and social capital, enhancing the interpersonal qualities of our young children in our Early Learning Centre and providing accessible opportunities for students learning journeys with our pre-accredited and accredited courses.

We have been fortunate to have received some grants that have enabled us to deliver outcomes that supports this success, so I thank Bendigo Bank Community Investment Fund for the \$45,000 grant that we were able to install the new outdoor play space in our Early Learning Centre and Department Family, Fairness and Housing for the Pathways to Connection grant of \$60,000 which has welcomed and grown programs to our list. Without these financial resources, programs that we see to be vital for the delivery outcomes of our organisation cannot always happen.

Establishing free or low-cost programs to our already diverse list has seen the success of our first community outing visiting Cranbourne Botanical Gardens and the successful Scones Together. From day one this program has been strongly supported, bringing our over 50's cohort together and ending the year with 1122 serves of scones and tea over the 11 months that this program ran. The success of this is due to the volunteers that each month make these 2 hours so warm and inviting to all who attend.

While the team worked throughout the year at the 5 locations now needed for delivering our programs, we continued our attention to secure support for the new Community House building. The need for these new premises is becoming more prevalent as the current premises at 572 Park Road are showing strong signs of an ageing infrastructure. With limited space at the site, land with a steep slope that the building currently sits on, rooms that are not able to accommodate to the growing demands to our services, access limitations for wheelchairs or some mobility aids due to entry hall widths and accessing of amenities prevents us being able to always accommodate to participants needs. We have continued to seek financial support from State and Federal governments that are needed to deliver this project with an estimated build cost of \$4.5million, but with funding constraints in both their budgets we do not know when any money will be made available. Manningham City Council, who own the current premises, understand the importance of this infrastructure upgrade but themselves are unable to support this project financially in its entirety therefore leaving our centre to diversify our program delivery that works within the constraints of these logistics.

I would like to thank the amazing committee, staff, educators, trainers, volunteers, partner organisations and funding bodies that have supported the success of Park Orchards Community House and Learning Centre and all the that we do throughout 2023 and I look forward to delivering programs and services that continue to respond to the needs of our community in 2024.

Kelly Cooper  
**Executive Manager**



# Staff



**Kelly Cooper**  
Executive Manager



**Lydia Denman**  
Assistant Manager



**Margie Beck**  
Finance Officer



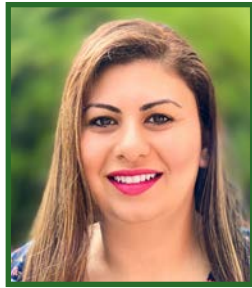
**Stephanie Hurley**  
Finance Officer



**Cathryn Harris**  
VET Co-ordinator



**Jess Ali**  
Administration and  
Program Support



**Eveit Salib**  
Community Program  
Coordinator



**Melody Solomons**  
Community Program  
Coordinator



**Robyn Sheridan**  
Childcare Administrator &  
Early Childhood Educator



**Hilary Ramadge**  
Early Childhood  
Co-ordinator



**Sarah Wild**  
Assistant Coordinator/  
Early Childhood Educator



**Kumin Davis**  
Early Childhood Educator



**Sarisse Van Gorp**  
Early Childhood Educator



**Micaelia Doolan**  
Early Childhood Educator



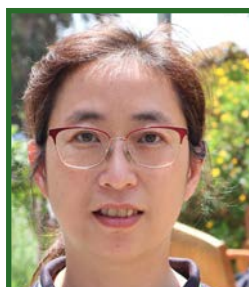
**Harpinder Chand**  
Early Childhood Educator



**Karen (Hui) Ye**  
Early Childhood Educator



**Debbie Bambridge**  
Early Childhood Educator



**Wenyue Liu**  
Early Childhood Educator



**Anna Lugt**  
Early Childhood Educator



**Bushra Essop  
Mahomed**  
Early Childhood Educator

# Creative Writing

*Describe the seasons as if they were people*

*Summer implies a bright personality, someone who is positive and creative, someone who is reborn.*

*Someone with a bright smile, someone who wears bright clothes maybe yellow.*

*Possibly someone from the 60s named after the summer of love, inspired by the Beatles.*

*Winter implies a gentle person who is softly spoken, someone who sheds themselves of their problems, or someone with a cold heart like the snow queen.*

*Spring implies someone with a spring in their step or maybe someone mechanical like inspector Gadget, rebirth, or somebody who is partial to flowers.*

*Autumn leaves falling off trees, somebody in the process of change it could imply the onset of depression.*

*A time for reflection.*

*By Joel Barraud*

# Vocational Education & Training

2023 has been a very successful year in the RTO at Park Orchards Community House. We launched two new Upgrade programs which proved to be very popular for industry groups and our public courses were very well attended. We continued with our same scope of registration in 2023 with the only change the addition of the TAE40122 updated course. With strong enrolments across our qualifications and a team of dedicated staff, we were able to meet our Skills First contract requirements easily, commencing our highest number of funded enrolments since the RTO gained a Skills First contract, even surpassing pre-covid commencement numbers.

We had three wonderful graduation celebrations where we gathered to acknowledge the hard work of both the students and trainers throughout the courses. These were our first graduations since 2019 and were a wonderful reminder of the joys and successes of what we do and how it impacts the lives of our students. The year itself was very encouraging with lots of new enrolments and enthusiastic students.

Our programs in 2023 have been supported by both the government funded Reconnect program offering student support including fee and resource support, and ACFE funded Study Skills sessions.

We delivered seven programs and 15 individual upgrades:

TAE40116 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment FULL course

- 2-Day time courses (March and October)

CHC30221 Certificate III in School Based Education Support

- 3- day time courses over the year (February, April and July)

CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care

- 1-day time course (February)

CHC50121 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care

- 1-day time course (February)

UPGRADE PROGRAM- CHC30221 Certificate III in School Based Education Support

- 4 full completions

UPGRADE PROGRAM- TAE40116 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment FULL course

- 11 full completions

In 2023 we commissioned the development of new School Based Education Support assessment resources to support our growing intakes. These were developed over the 2023 year and the July Education Support intake were able to benefit from the new resources. This success is due to the hard work and dedication of our Education Support trainer Ann-Maree Thompson, who is a publisher in her own right. Ann-Maree's drive to improve the students learning and assessment experience has been largely rewarding for both the students and the delivering trainers. It was a huge investment for the organisation but is a clear improvement for the students.

In 2023 we offered upgrade programs in both TAE40116 and CHC30121. The CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care was a very important upgrade program to deliver and will continue in 2024. It allowed Childcare Educators currently working in the industry to upgrade to the latest certificate III qualification, thus allowing them to continue their study into the CHC50121 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care. A change to the CHC50121 entry requirements means a significant portion of Certification III educators in industry are not no longer eligible to enrol in the diploma as their Certificate III is outdated. This upgrade programs allows students to upgrade to the latest qualification and then move into the diploma. These were very successfully taken up and supported by our industry connections and helped those students enrolling fill the gap to be able to progress their qualifications.

In 2023 we continued our fantastic relationship with trainers Ann-Maree Thompson, Karina Griffiths, Anne Butler, Sarah Kinder and Karen McGown. We were also lucky to welcome Jacinta Buhagiar and Bushra Essop Mohamed into our Early Childhood training team. The 2023 trainers have displayed dedication and renewed enthusiasm for our cohort of students and the lives they are changing. To work as a community RTO Trainer and Assessor is a hard and often time-consuming job, often building close relationships with the small groups we deliver to. Park Orchards Community House trainers are constantly bettering their tools and teaching skills to better serve their students. They are truly amazing.

We said goodbye to the amazing Manpreet Kaur Dhillon and Simon Walkden who supported our Early Childhood department in 2022.

In 2023 our trainers enjoyed professional develop activities at the Vet Development Centre (VDC), Pines Learning and Cire Learning Hub.

Cathryn Harris  
**VET Co-ordinator**



# Early Learning Centre

***Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul. - Friedrich Froebel***

Our Early Learning Centre (Hilary's House) provides a safe, nurturing environment for 23 children aged six weeks to six years. Our accessible, affordable services include the childcare subsidy (CCS), reducing families' out-of-pocket expenses for quality childcare.

Our highly qualified educators, including Sarah ZIC, Kumin, Sarisse, Micaelia, Harpinder, Karen, Wenyue, Debbie, Anna, and Bushra, dedicate themselves to the wellbeing and development of every child in our ELC. Their exceptional work enriches our program, and we're grateful to have them on our team.

Our educators create a nurturing environment where diverse identities and skills are valued and our play-based program aligns with learning outcomes and offers diverse indoor/outdoor activities for rich learning experiences.

Our program provided rich and diverse learning experiences throughout the year.

## TERM 1

- Chinese New Year: We were very excited to provide the children with the opportunity to engage in a small group dumpling workshop as part of our planned educational program, incorporating cultural celebrations for Chinese New Year.
- "Shrove Tuesday" - Pancake Day: Pancakes were enjoyed for morning tea. Our educators value creating learning experiences that incorporate the art of cooking and provide opportunities for learning about different foods, enhancing cultural awareness.
- Celebrating Nature Play Week: Let children celebrate nature! The children made lots of mud cupcakes and created a bush nature picture collage while exploring our outdoor environment.

## TERM 2

- Decorate a biscuit morning: We recognise that many important people contribute love, care, and support to the children in our service. We welcomed grandparents, partners, aunts, uncles, mothers, and fathers to our ELC.
- National Families Week: "Living Real Dreaming Big" music incursion with Anne and Kevin: Learning about different types of musical instruments, songs, and dancing.
- Reconciliation Week: "Be a Voice for Generations" Acknowledgement of Country – the children enjoyed listening to traditional Dreamtime stories such as "How the Birds Got Their Colours" and participated in a range of art activities inspired by Aboriginal art.
- World Music Day: The children listened to music and songs from around the world while making rain shakers.

## TERM 3

- NAIDOC Week: Theme: "For Our Elders" We have been engaging our children and educators in various experiences and activities to raise awareness and educate about the culture, history, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Through art, storytelling, and music, we acknowledge the land, sky, water, friends, and ourselves. (Acknowledgment of Country)
- Pyjama Day: Raising funds for children living in foster care, we enjoyed wearing our favourite PJs to childcare, all in support of a worthy cause.
- Dental Health Week: Theme: "My Bright Smile" Activities focused on dental health care and hygiene for our teeth.

## TERM 4

- Special Guests: We welcomed special guests to pop in and have a photo taken with their loved ones and decorate a picture frame during this week.
- Childhood Educators Day: We thanked educators for their amazing care with decorated hearts and appreciation messages from families on a wall.



- **World Space Week:** Our educators planned fun space-themed activities for children, including sensory play and out-of-this-world art projects including a solar system display.
- **Nutrition Week:** During mealtimes, we engaged in conversations about nutritious food, encouraging children to make healthy choices and fostering a positive relationship with eating.
- **Children's Week:** Children have the right to relax, play, and take part in activities they enjoy. Family Fun Night marked the Grand Opening of our new outdoor play space, featuring face painting, animal interactions, and exploring our new playground.
- **Grandparents' Day:** We welcomed all grandparents and special persons into our ELC to spend time with their loved ones.
- **Diwali Festival:** Children explored colours, created Rangoli with coloured rice powder, and enjoyed Indian dress-up with bindis, bangles, saris, and kurtas. Activities included sharing Diwali stories and teaching an Indian dance.
- **National Recycling Week:** The children learned how materials can be reused for arts and crafts
- **Incursion:** We partnered with our Early Childhood Education and Care students to provide hands-on cultural learning experiences for our children, emphasizing the importance of First Nations peoples' cultures. Students focused on storytelling, sensory play, music, and movement activities.
- **Christmas Cooking Workshops** ran for 5 weeks, offering children hands-on cooking sessions to create gingerbread houses and enjoy making healthy Christmas snacks.

We strongly support our partnerships with:

- Park Orchards Primary School: Monthly Storytime excursion at the library
- Early Childhood Education and Care students from our Registered Training Organisation

Thank you to Robyn, for your dedication to childcare administration/early childhood education. Your efficient management is greatly appreciated. Thank you everyone for your continued support of our ELC to our dedicated team, management and to the board of governance we appreciate your support and guidance.

We value families' input and encourage engagement for quality improvement, welcoming regular feedback.

Watching every child grow and develop is truly an amazing experience.

Hilary Ramadge  
**Early Childhood Co-ordinator**



***“I can’t speak highly enough of Hilary and her amazing team at the local neighbourhood house childcare. From the moment we enrolled our daughter, we knew she was in caring and capable hands.***

***The environment they’ve created is nurturing, stimulating, and safe, making it easy for us to entrust her care to them each day. The attention to detail, personalised care, and genuine love for the children shine through in every interaction. Our daughter has thrived under their care, developing both socially and emotionally. We are so grateful to Hilary and the team for their dedication and commitment to providing exceptional childcare. Highly recommend!”***

***"Our daughter has been attending the Park Orchards ELC now for over a year and my wife and I could not be more impressed with the team. Our daughter always looks forward to days at the centre, and the education and genuine care the team show towards her is truly a beautiful thing.***

***The team are passionate about what they do and this shines through. From an admin and communication perspective, they have also been tremendous. We couldn't be happier with our decision to send our daughter to Park Orchards ELC."***



***“Since our first visit to the centre I knew I was going to leave my daughter in good hands. Hilary and the team were so welcoming, the centre was spacious and set up beautifully, with great outdoor areas for the kids.***

***The transition was great. It didn’t take long for our daughter to settle and it was all because of the loving care Hilary and the team gave to her and for the peace of mind they gave to us. She loves going to “Hilary’s house to see her little friends and also the educators. She speaks about them all regularly when we are at home.***

***The office staff, in particularly Robyn, have also been so helpful and understanding.***

***THANK YOU to all the team at Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre”***

# Playground Upgrade

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Bendigo Bank Community Investment Grant for their invaluable support in granting funds for the much-needed update of our Early Learning Centre playground. Your generosity was not just a financial contribution but a commitment to the well-being and development of the children in our care. With this grant, we were able to create a safer, more inclusive, and stimulating outdoor space where children could learn, play, and grow.

The impact of your contribution went far beyond the physical transformation of our playground. A well-designed and equipped playground fosters social interaction, physical activity, and cognitive development, laying the foundation for a lifetime of learning and healthy living. Thank you, Bendigo Bank, for partnering with us in creating a brighter and more enriching experience for the children in our community.



Proudly supported by

Community Bank  
Warrandyte

 **Bendigo Bank**

Many Thanks to Bendigo Bank and Greenscene Environmental Solutions

# Playground Opening and Children's Week

The children eagerly awaited the completion of the playground at our Early Learning Centre (ELC), a project they had watched unfold over the past few months. Every day, they peered through the windows, marvelling at the construction progress with wide-eyed wonder. The children were bursting with excitement as they stepped out into the playground, eager to delve into the adventures that awaited in the newly constructed space.



The construction completion coincided with Children's Week and our Family Fun Night, where families were warmly invited to join in the official opening of the playground. The festivities included a delightful array of entertainment, from the cuddly creatures in the petting zoo to the creative designs at the face painting station, and a tantalising sausage sizzle courtesy of the Park Orchards Lions Club. Adding to the excitement, local police proudly displayed their patrol cars, while the evening was sweetly topped off with a visit from the ice cream van. It was a heartwarming celebration for our community, spreading smiles and emphasising the joy of childhood and the spirit of togetherness.



# Pre-accredited Training - ACFE (Learn Local)

*Pre-accredited training provides opportunities for adult learners in Victoria to gain the educational capacity and core skills they need for study, work and life.*

In 2023, we expanded our ACFE course range and experienced a successful increase in enrolments and reported hours. Additionally, we maintained strong partnerships and established new ones, enabling us to offer training directly to areas of need in our community.

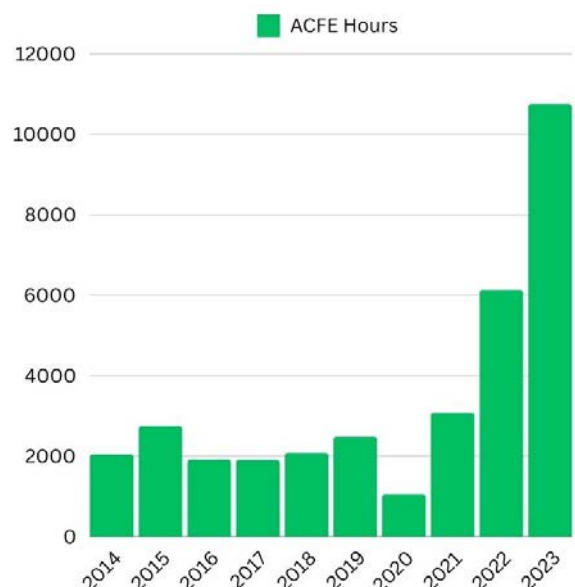
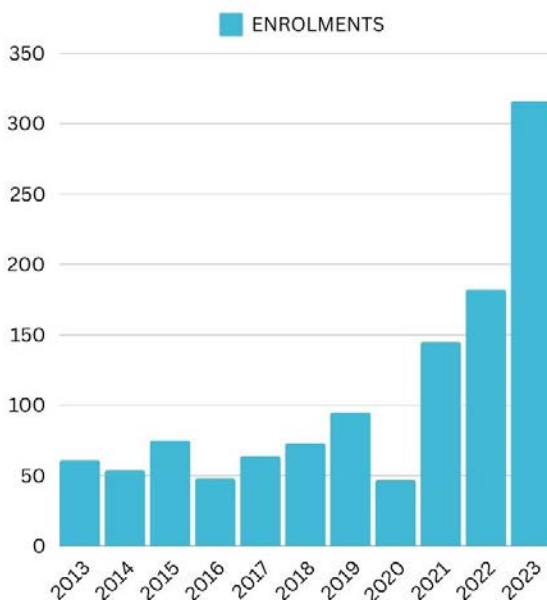
We continued the successful strategy initiated in 2022 of actively promoting all our courses each term increasing their frequency. This proactive approach enabled us to consistently offer additional ACFE (Adult, Community, and Further Education) hours every term, prompting us to seek further funding throughout the year.

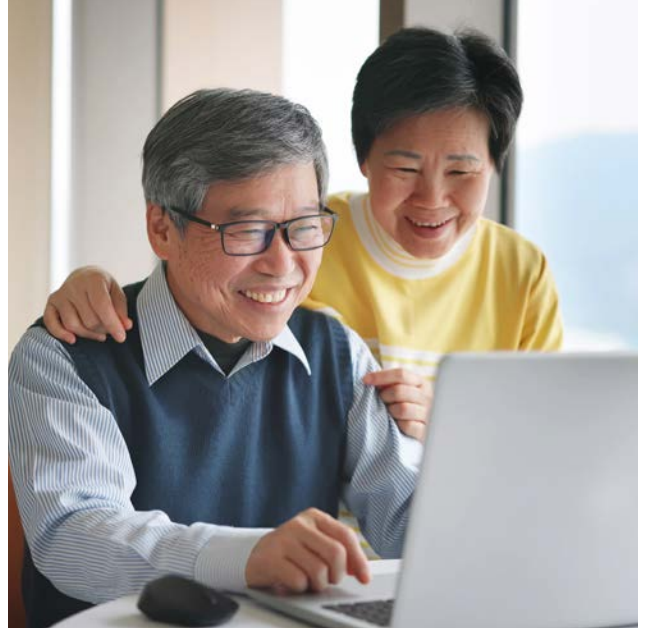
We had a highly successful year with a wider variety of courses being delivered. A highlight once again was our popular floristry classes, offered at two different levels. Additionally, we introduced Mental Health Peer Support, Learn to Start Your Own Business, and English classes. Our existing courses in Xero, Creative Arts, and Digital Literacy also ran successfully throughout the year.

Thanks to our collaborative efforts with partner organisations, we saw a significant increase in student enrolments across the ACFE programs, particularly in our classes catering to all abilities and English literacy.

2023 has been our most successful year with ACFE programs, we surpassed our allocated funded hours and received and delivered 10,750 hours in total, an increase in hours of 75% from 2022, and a 73% increase on 2022's participant enrolments.

Melody Solomons  
**Community Program Co-ordinator**





# Scones Together



Scones Together is a program developed in early 2023 to respond to the growing needs in our community for social connection from a vision of local community members Tristen Haigh and Vickie Redfern.

Partnering with Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre provided the funding security through local council and in February 2023 the first Scones Together program was held lead by Tristen and Vickie and a team of volunteers supporting the monthly program delivery.

All participants enjoy on a monthly basis scones, jam and cream with a warm cup of tea or coffee while enjoying local artist playing music or hearing from guest speakers on topics of relevance.

The initial cohort that Scones Together targets are our aging and isolated. What has come from it is the diverse group, husband & wives, mothers, and daughters and now we have the intergenerational with the inclusion of secondary level students supporting the volunteers to serve the participants from Donvale Christian College. Through local government funding, and responding to the needs of our community, the delivery of Scones Together provides the participants with a program that responds to their health and wellbeing needs while also providing the volunteers who lead these monthly sessions knowledge that their contribution is making a difference to our community members.

We now have a waitlist of people who want to attend this program with over 110 registered with up to 80 participants attending each session.

Scones Together is a program that gives the participants a space to feel respected, valued, and integrated into the community. It empowers the individual to have a shared experience and form friendships that have grown outside of the program.





# Robyn Murray Award

## Exemplifying Inclusive Practice

Robyn was a shining light in the Neighbourhood House sector. Her beautiful smile, kind heart, strong values and commitment to social justice endeared her to everyone who met her. Her strong advocacy work for inclusive practice across many sectors has been commended and this Robyn Murray Memorial Award recognises those nominated with the same passion and commitment as Robyn to support equal opportunity for all regardless of ability.



The CHAOS Network established the memorial awards in 2011 and has recognised the work of both individuals, Community Houses and Centres and partner organisations. A heartfelt congratulations is due to this year's award winners - Tristen Haigh and Vickie Redfern of Scones Together, along with their dedicated team of volunteers, and Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre.



# Community

2023 year was filled with excitement and productivity for our community programs. With a wide range of both established and new offerings, including term-based courses, workshops, and free clubs, there was something for everyone to enjoy.

Some of the standout moments of the year were our large community events, such as the lively International Women’s Day celebrations in March, the popular monthly Scones Together afternoon teas, and the introduction of fun community outings. We were thrilled to see over 1200 enrolments in our community space alone, showing just how much our programs resonated with our community.

Creative workshops were a big hit among community members. Participants had the chance to explore various crafts, from making Amigurumi soft toys to mastering watercolour painting and creating their own perfumes. They also dabbled in candle making, soap making, and culinary arts like baking sourdough bread and making chocolate. These workshops not only taught new skills but also provided a wonderful opportunity for friends to come together and learn in a fun environment.

Improving the community’s knowledge was another important focus for us last year. We hosted educational programs on CFA Fire Safety Essentials session and our Be Connected Cyber Safe education session to help members stay informed and safe online.

Our commitment to offering FREE Clubs continued in 2023. Community members had the chance to join various groups such as the Monthly social walking group, Weekly Walkers Group, Photography Club, Genealogy Club, Book Club, and Garden Club, all completely free of charge with most meeting on a weekly basis.

Encouraging movement and well-being was also a priority, as we delivered over 15 health and fitness programs every week. From high-intensity workouts like Pilates, Belly dancing, Strength and NIA dance to more calming practices such as Yoga and Tai Chi, there was something for everyone to enjoy and benefit from.

Lastly, our large community events played a significant role in bringing people together. Whether it was the International Women’s Day Celebration, Community Bus Trips, Neighbourhood Houses Week, or the monthly Scones Together gatherings, these events provided valuable opportunities for community members to connect, share stories, and spend quality time with each other, staff, and special guests.

Melody Solomons  
**Community Program Co-ordinator**





# Vale Marta Salamon



Marta was a highly respected and celebrated botanical and natural history artist. From 2013 onward, she taught Nature in Art at our centre.

Throughout the years, countless students had the privilege of learning alongside her, soaking in her passion for the natural world.

As an artist, teacher, and friend, Marta's kindness and creativity knew no bounds, touching countless hearts.

On Wednesday, February 28, 2024, Marta peacefully passed away at sunrise, surrounded by love, flowers, and cherished memories.

Her contributions to our Nature in Art program, our centre, and our community are immeasurable.

While Marta will be deeply missed, her legacy of beautiful artworks will forever inspire us.

# Nature in Art



***Our Centre has a wonderful reputation for the study of Natural History Art. Each week over 80 students participate in our many classes specific to this beautiful form of art.***

Established in 1996 at Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre, by Terry Napier, the Nature in Art group is dedicated to the study of natural history illustration and painting. Working on a diverse range of subjects, its members' principle aim is to gain knowledge and understanding of a subject's physical characteristics through close observation and to capture the detail in a pleasing, graphic way. This combines scientific accuracy with artistic vision and allows different students to paint with varying levels of detail.

Nature in Art covers an extensive range of subjects: flowers, insects and animals. Under the guidance and encouragement of the teachers, students learn to see things in a new, more complex way and their paintings emerge into beautiful works of art.

Some of our 80 students have been involved in our Nature in Art program for over two decades and our community of artists includes the renowned botanical and natural history artists and tutors Terry Napier, David Reynolds, Marta Salamon (2013 - 2024) and Peta Harrington.

Terry Napier was awarded the Celia Rosser Medal in 2010. He has paintings in the State Collection, the Cranbourne Collection at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Melbourne and also The Gardens of Government House Florilegium held in the State Library Melbourne.

He is represented in the Australian collection in the Inaugural International Botanical Exhibition 2018.

David is an experienced botanical and natural history artist. His background is in commercial art, graphic design, photography and multimedia. He describes his style as 'Accurate Realism' and is always looking to portray his botanical and wildlife subjects with the most accurate detail possible yet doing it in a 'painterly' way honouring the watercolour medium.

Peta Harrington has always enjoyed different forms of art since a young age. Peta has been a student of Terry Napier's for over twenty years and since commencing the Nature in Art classes has developed a love of painting, particularly the level of detail presented in nature. Peta has been teaching Nature in Art since 2019.

Marta Salamon's work is represented in the State Collection in Melbourne and in the Sutton Collection in New York as well as in private collections around Australia. Marta was a finalist in the Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize and the Museum of South Australia and has also contributed to the "Florilegium" publication of the Sydney Botanic Gardens. In 2016 Marta was awarded a Celia Rosser Medal at the Melbourne Bi-Annual Royal Botanic Gardens Exhibition.





# Community Garden

***“I’m buried in the garden and now while the earth is still wet after the long rains the days are precious and work too good to miss. What it is to be a gardener!***

***Sunday Reed***

Another year has passed with a mild, dry summer and a cooler, wet early Autumn. Lately, although we have had higher temperatures, the mornings have been cold and damp.

Food crops have not always been great but the passion fruit vine has been admired and fruit enjoyed by all! The renovated vegetable bin has been great, growing corn, zucchini and beans. The upper bin has been glowing with the beautiful, long lived, dahlias under planted with carrots!

The paving and steps in the garden are waiting to be relaid which will allow students, members and community to enjoy the space, using the benches and table especially purchased for the garden and are valuable spaces for our community to enjoy while at the centre.

The volunteers enjoy engaging with students, members and visitors, answering their questions and hearing their positive comments on the garden.

Thank you to our volunteers; Alby Boccalatte, Rhona Diviney, Janice Clarke, and Geoff Hipwell for continuing to take care of this important part of our centre.

We gratefully acknowledge funding and support from:

### Manningham City Council

Manningham City Council, not only for the fiscal support but also for the continuing support from council officers.

We also value and appreciate the support given to us by our Councillors.



### Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

We are grateful for the financial support offered by the Victorian Government through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing who value the work we do as a Neighbourhood House.



### Department of Job, Skills, Industry and Regions

The Department of Education and Training offers support through the Adult Community & Further Education program, and 'Skills First'.



### Neighbourhood Houses Victoria

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria offers support through Professional Development, Human Resource advice and with regional collaboration on projects.



### Warrandyte Community Bank Branch of Bendigo Bank

The Warrandyte Community Bank Branch of Bendigo Bank offers support through their Community Investment Program.



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