



Mountain District LEARNING CENTRE

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2026

Director's Report

With the advent of winter it has been a real pleasure to walk through the gardens at the Centre. Luise has posted photos of the purple carpet the Australian Lilly Pilly has created adding a wonderful sense of magic to the garden. Adding to that the garden has just been planted up with winter vegies. Special mention too of the garden path centre piece, the mosaic pavers were made by the Craft n Grow group. Well done, they look great

Has anyone noticed that there are 4 small chickens in the coop? They are certainly enjoying scratching around in the autumn leaves and making little pleasure clucking noises.

MDLC conducted their AGM last month. We welcomed Pamela Anderson onto the Board and I know with Pamela's experience in the Neighbourhood House area she will be a great asset.

Carolyn Hirsh has been very busy over the last little while writing up the history of the Mountain District Women's Co-op now trading as Mountain District Learning Centre. While I have only seen snippets of the book I know it will be a great read, as the women who were so involved in starting it up were all so passionate about educating women and the flow on that has occurred has been phenomenal.

We will have a book launch for the book so keep your eyes and ears peeled.

Robyn Burke

Director

CONTENTS

Director's report	Page 1
News from the Office	Page 2
Cottage Program	Page 3
Reconnect Program	Page 3
The Avenue School	Page 4
Community Services Office	Page 5
Craft and Grow	Page 5
Monday Makers	Page 6
All Abilities Mixed Media	Page 6
Thursday Crafteria	Page 7
Nature Craft	Page 7
Hi-rise Community Garden	Page 8-10
Friendship Group	Page 11
Friendship Group Calendar	Page 12
Makers Market Flyer	Page 13
NGV Bus Trip Flyer	Page 14

Mountain District Learning Centre
13-15 The Avenue, Ferntree Gully Victoria 3156

Phone: (03) 9758 7859
Email: office@mdlc.org.au
Website: www.mdlc.com.au

News from the Office



Winter is well and truly here!

I hope you are keeping warm while you are reading this edition of our Member's Newsletter.

I recently attended the VALBEC (*Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council*) Conference held in Melbourne. It was inspiring to hear from many passionate practitioners who are working with people who need support to develop literacy and numeracy skills.

In Victoria there is still a substantial need for education for people who have learning gaps or who find they need higher levels of literacy to improve employability and to manage life.

According to VALBEC, statistics show that 15.5% of Victorian adults are struggling to read basic health information, instructions on food labels or complete standard employment applications. Around 30.8%, while able to read, often struggle with more complex, dense, or digital texts required for everyday administration and modern jobs.

Strangely while this need is apparent, a little-known fact is that the Adult Community Education (ACE) sector in Victoria is in decline. In 1986 there were 303 registered ACE providers. Currently, the Victorian Government's Learn Local website states

there are 190+ Learn Locals (ACE organisations) operating in Victoria.

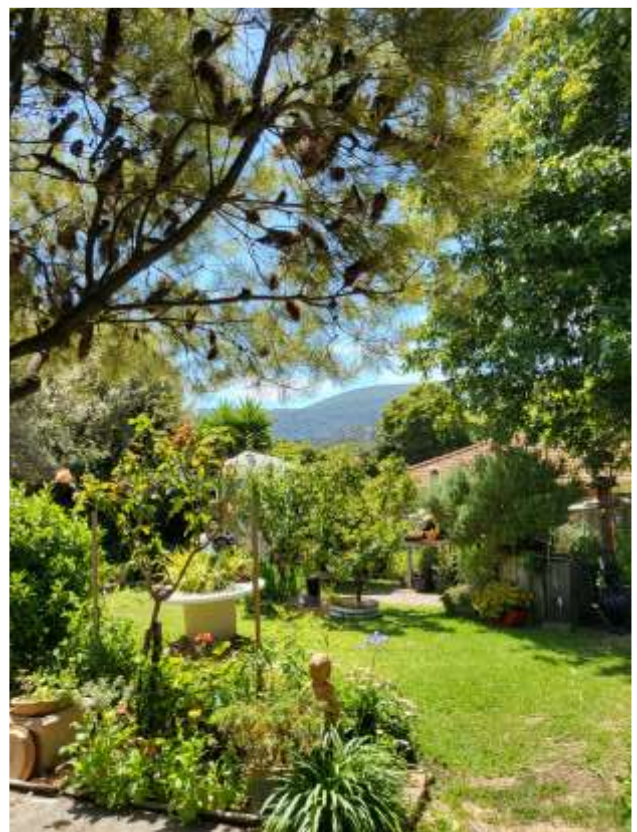
So, what's happening? The need is there but the solution is disappearing!

The decline is largely due to stagnating government subsidies for adult education, rising operating costs and the diversion of funding into support for TAFE rather than for ACE providers.

Our work in adult education is essential in maintaining equity across society. Our peak bodies, Adult Community Education Victoria (ACEVic) and Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (NHVic) are working hard to advocate for the ACE sector, so we are able to maintain high quality community-based adult education in Victoria.

We are proud to be one of the 190 ACE providers, still here supporting our community in education and helping people reach their full potential in life and work.

Janet Claringbold - CEO



The Cottage Program Term 2, 2026

Term 2 has been another positive and productive period for students participating in the Cottage Program. Throughout the term, students continued to strengthen their confidence, independence and engagement through a combination of classroom learning, wellbeing activities and community-based experiences.

A highlight of the term was the range of excursions that provided valuable opportunities for students to connect their learning to real-world experiences. Students visited the Ian Potter Centre at Federation Square, where they explored Australian art and culture while engaging in discussions about creativity, identity and self-expression.

A visit to the Immigration Museum encouraged students to reflect on Australia's diverse cultural history and the stories of migration that have shaped our communities. Students also enjoyed an excursion to the Dandenong Ranges, participating in an Olinda bushwalk that promoted physical wellbeing, teamwork and an appreciation of the natural environment.

Alongside these experiences, staff continued to focus on supporting student wellbeing, positive relationships and engagement in learning. Students were encouraged to

develop healthy routines, build resilience and strengthen the personal and social skills that support success both within and beyond the program.

As part of our ongoing commitment to student engagement, we have reinforced the importance of regular attendance and clear communication regarding absences. Consistent attendance plays a significant role in supporting student learning, wellbeing and connection to the program.

We have also implemented a clear and consistent mobile phone routine during learning sessions to minimize distractions, support concentration and create a calm and productive learning environment for all students.

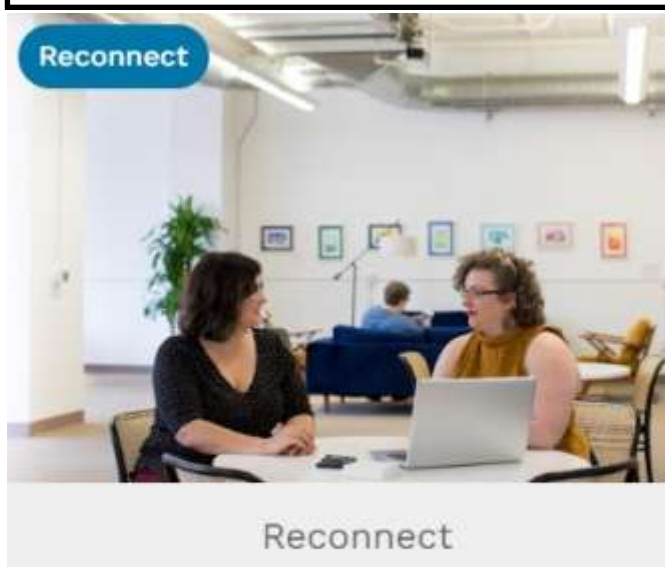
We are proud of the growth demonstrated by students throughout the term and appreciate the continued support of families, partner schools and the wider community.

We look forward to building on these achievements and providing further opportunities for learning, wellbeing and personal development throughout the remainder of the year.

Alison Percy

Education & Training Manager

Reconnect Program



We are now half way through the year and half way towards our targeted number of members of the community to support in 2026. Our Reconnect team are looking forward to what the second half of the year will bring and the opportunities that are yet to come.

Racheal Edwards

THE AVENUE SCHOOL

The Avenue School Continues to Thrive

The Avenue School has enjoyed a successful and exciting start to 2026, with students embracing new opportunities and continuing to make significant progress in both their learning and personal development.

Established to support young people who have experienced challenges in mainstream education, The Avenue School has seen growing engagement, improved confidence, and strong attendance as students connect with a supportive and personalised learning environment.

A major highlight of the year was the school's first-ever camp to The Ranch, which provided students with an opportunity to challenge themselves, build resilience, and strengthen friendships outside the classroom. The camp was an overwhelming success, with students participating in a range of outdoor activities and team-building experiences that encouraged personal growth and confidence.

Staff were particularly proud of the way students embraced new challenges and supported one another throughout the camp, creating lasting memories and reinforcing the strong sense of community that has become a hallmark of the school.

Excitement is also building as students prepare to commence work placements next week. The placements will provide valuable real-world experience, allowing students to explore career

pathways, develop workplace skills, and build confidence in professional environments. For many students, this will be their first experience in a workplace setting and an important step towards their future goals.

Principal Jarrid Bartle said the opportunities being offered this year reflect the school's commitment to preparing students for life beyond the classroom.

"Our students continue to demonstrate courage, resilience, and determination every day. The success of our first camp and the enthusiasm surrounding upcoming work placements highlight just how far many of our young people have come. We are incredibly proud of their growth and excited to see them continue to thrive."

As The Avenue School moves through the remainder of 2026, staff, students, and families are looking forward to further opportunities that support learning, wellbeing, and successful pathways into employment, training, and further education.

With a strong sense of community and a focus on individual success, The Avenue School continues to provide students with the support they need to build confidence, reconnect with education, and create positive futures.

Jarrid Bartle - Principal



News From the Community Services Office

The Social Support Program enjoyed strong client attendance. As usual, the Friendship Group continues to go from strength to strength, with participants genuinely enjoying the sense of connection, inclusion, and shared experience it provides. It's been very encouraging to see the group grow not just in numbers, but in enthusiasm and engagement, with members forming meaningful friendships and looking forward to each gathering. All other groups continued to enjoy being arty, crafty, green thumbs in the garden, learning new skills, making new friends and engaging in many other social opportunities. Big thanks to our staff Lynn, Sharon, Deb, Luise, Monique, Melissa and Henk for their endless creativity and kind enthusiasm. Also, a special mention to Gwen and Peter who are our **AMAZING volunteers** in the Women On The Move Group: this group just wouldn't be the successful and

well attended group as it is right now. **THANK YOU** both, you are very very appreciated.

A quick mention and special shout out to our super excellent Leisure tutors Susan and Roy who have been a fixture about the MDLC landscape for many many years as the Gentle Exercise for Over 55's and Tai Chi tutors. These two groups also continue to attract and enjoy full class numbers on a regular basis, and member feedback is always so very positive and grateful. **THANK YOU** Susan and Roy for the fantastic work that you do. We appreciate you both!!!

Rachel – Community Services Manager

Craft and Grow



Colour paper wind catchers & painted rocks for the new frog pond area. Chinese New Year, the year of the Fire horse was celebrated by decorating and potting jade plants, and gifted oranges for good luck.

Beautiful sunny days were spent in the garden planting autumn/winter vegetables, an old wheelbarrow was planted with herbs and flowers with the help of a special visit from Jane Edmanson. We've also been making decorative pavers, that will be used in the main garden walkway. To finish up, we had an incredible visit to Werribee Mansion, we explored the stunning gardens, roses and ate lunch on the lawn.

Luise – Group Leader

Monday Makers

So far, we've had lots of fun diving into our love for mixed media with projects such as a heart shaped hot air balloon and a busted canvas. Everyone is making choices for themselves and stepping out of their comfort zones, challenging themselves to create something varied from the class example.

I am so proud of how far they have all come and the way they discuss colours and composition with each other. We worked with various cardstock making some more intricate projects, namely a pop out album and four compartment Easter gift box. We chatted over some treats at the last session and discussed upcoming projects.

Lynn – Group Leader



Thursday All Abilities Mixed Media



A big warm welcome to a new class member, Panav, and he is enjoying coming along! Lots of varied projects including a painted wine bottle vase, round board wall hanging, sea inspired bottle, fabric wall hanging and a pocket organiser.

For Valentine's Day we made a heart decoupage trinket plate and did some cards to give to loved ones. We have done lots of Easter craft, namely a rabbit wine bottle topper (super cute), an Easter table decoration and a chocolate block wallet box.

In our usual fashion, we celebrated Easter with a party which is always a huge highlight for all!!

Lynn – Group Leader

Nature Craft

This year, we celebrated Chinese New Year by creating paper flower decorations to hang, while participants shared how they celebrate the occasion with their families.

We also engaged in a variety of creative activities throughout the year. The group made succulent echidna planters for the garden, which was an enjoyable and hands-on experience. Participants created rag wreaths using assorted materials and explored painting on an unusual medium: tree bark, which provided a unique artistic experience.

Additional activities included making table centrepieces and completing button craft projects. For Easter, participants created a bunny plaque, as well as an envelope containing a felt bunny and a gift bag filled with foam eggs.

Sharon -Group Leader



Thursday Crafteria



Everyone was excited to get back to craft and catch up with their friends. A big warm welcome to Emma our new class member, and she is really enjoying crafting along with the other ladies!

We've all been busy making mini albums, assorted cards, a beaded alphabet letter board, material/wool bottle, jeans jar and a pocket organiser.

For Easter we made a chocolate block wallet and a paper mache rabbit. As always, we celebrated Easter with a delicious afternoon tea it's always a hit!!!!

Lynn and Sharon – Group Leaders

Hi-rise Community Garden

Summer in the Hi Rise Community Garden is always a busy one, watering, mulching, picking delicious produce ranging from basil, rosemary, raspberries, zucchini, rocoto chillies and for the first time turban squash / pumpkin.

We are trialing a new seed planting method with great results. The Seed Snail method involves planting seeds in the top of a rolled “snail” made up of an outer layer of garden felt, soil bag, or even bubble wrap sandwich with damp seed raising mix. This method produces a stronger root system, and is space saving.

In our trail snails we planted coriander, spring onion and silver beet, all seeds sprouted within record time, and we have healthy seedlings to plant in the coming weeks.

One of our ongoing projects is updating the main garden walkway. The garden volunteers moved hundreds of rocks from the centre path to the new frog pond near the agapanthus. Next step will be to concrete the centre circle in readiness for some beautiful mosaic pavers that the Craft n Grow group have been making.

Luise and the Garden Volunteers



Hi-rise Community Garden continued



Hi-rise Community Garden continued



Friendship Group

Friendship Group resumed in 2026 with plenty of the usual chatter and laughter, as there was so much to catch up on since we were last together in December. Tyrone, our placement student, introduced the group to a fun activity called Candy Pong, a twist on traditional beer pong. Prizes included a selection of chocolates and candies, which added to the excitement. By mid February, the group enjoyed a double themed session held on the same day. We celebrated Chinese New Year, the Year of the Horse, by sharing fortune cookies and enjoying the fun and laughter as messages were read aloud. These ranged from words of wisdom to predictions and light-hearted one liners. This was followed by Shrove Tuesday, celebrated on a Wednesday, where everyone enjoyed pancakes with a variety of delicious toppings.

The Friendship Group also enjoyed our first excursion for the year with a visit to the Dorset Gardens Hotel to see a Paul McCartney tribute show. The performance had toes tapping and a few hips swaying. Following the show, we moved to the bistro for a delicious lunch. The day was such a success that we are already planning a return visit to see the Tina Turner tribute. The group came together to celebrate Irish culture on Saint Patrick's Day. Activities were selected at random from our green hat and were either answered or performed, resulting in plenty of laughter and enjoyment for everyone.

The Friendship Group was also privileged to be invited by the students of MDLC to attend a number of afternoon teas as part of their certificate completion. The students beautifully presented the tables with tablecloths and fresh flowers and served a selection of sandwiches, dips, fruit and vegetable platters, along with hot and cold drinks. All dietary needs were thoughtfully considered. We were very spoilt, and these were truly lovely afternoons enjoyed by all.

Deb and Rachel – Group Leaders





Activities Calendar – July to December 2026

July



1st – BYO Trick...OR...BYO Treat!!
 8th – Talk about Sleep & Fatigue
 15th – Poffertjes Day & bring your fav recipe for the Fship group recipe book
 22nd – Celebrity Heads
 29th – Scottish Day at the Friendship Grp

August



5th – Chair Yoga
 12th – AC/DC Music Trivia
 19th – Game of Knowledge with Lisa
 26th – Lunch with friends – Venue TBA



September



2nd – Fathers Day
 Afternoon Tea
 9th – R U Ok Day & Welcome to Spring!
 16th – Spring Fling – share your seeds & cuttings with the Friendship Group
 23rd – Grand Final Footy & Meat Pie Day! Wear your team colours.
 30th – Never Ever Have I Ever Game

October



7th – Senses overload at Friendship Group!
 14th – Make a Kokedama with Rachel
 21st – Lunch with Friends – Venue TBA
 28th – Melbourne Cup Day – Wear a fancy hat!



November



4th – Board Games
 11th – Show N Tell
 18th – Music Trivia with Wil & friends
 25th – Christmas Crafts with Lynn



December



2nd – More Christmas Crafts!
 9th – Christmas Lunch in the Oak Tree Den - Bring a \$5 KK Gift.

Thanks everyone for a GREAT year of fun and laughter! See you in 2027!!

*Disclaimer: "Activities are subject to change without notice"



Mountain District
LEARNING CENTRE

MAKERS MARKET

DISCOVER SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY

SATURDAY 28TH NOVEMBER 2026

10AM – 2PM | 13–15 THE AVENUE, FERNTREE GULLY



Acoustic Live
Music



Choose from a wide
selection of gifts



Meet the
Makers

SUPPORT LOCAL. BUY HANDMADE. GIVE FROM THE HEART.



**PROUDLY
SPONSORED BY**

Ferntree Gully and Rowville
Community Bank® branches  **Bendigo Bank**

Art — exhibi- tion



Bus Trip

**Tuesday
21st July**



Mountain District
LEARNING CENTRE



Join us on a bus trip to visit the
National Gallery Of Victoria:

3 Levels of Free Exhibitions to enjoy
or enjoy Cartier Exhibiton (Entry Fee at own Cost)

- Concession \$39.00
- Non-Concession \$43.00

Bus leaves MDLC at 9:30am sharp and returns approx 3pm
BYO Lunch or enjoy a meal at NGV cafe or tea rooms

Bookings by 14th July
Call 9758 7859 or email office@mdlc.org.au