



Mountain District

Women's Co-op Ltd.

trading as

Mountain District

LEARNING CENTRE



49th ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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Chairperson's Report

It is with great pleasure and pride that I write this report for 2022/2023.

Mountain District Learning Centre and Mountain District Community College have worked collaboratively over the past twelve months with the outcome seeing happy students from both the Learning Centre and the College.

Funding from the Queens' Jubilee Program enabled the front garden to be planted up with Australian Natives, The Centre building now has solar panels installed, which will help with the power costs and be ecofriendly allowing the changeover from gas to electric heaters. CCT cameras have been installed on the property.

The wonderful teaching staff work tirelessly, keeping the students involved and interested in learning, Lyndee and Aimee, our receptionists have been key in making sure all runs smoothly from the front desk. Leshelle and Sarah do a brilliant job looking after the finances.

A big thankyou to the Board who look after the governance of the Centre. There is a power of work done behind the scenes as you can read by the reports.

Our CEO, Janet Claringbold is the backbone of the Centre. Janet has so much expertise in working alongside the Board, networking with so many community organisations and just making sure the Centre is carrying out its role in the Community. A big thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution the Crafty Ladies and the Mountain Treasures make to the Centre. Both groups of ladies work tirelessly to contribute to our fundraising efforts, it doesn't go unnoticed or appreciated.

Robyn Burke

Chairperson, Board of Directors.



CEO's Report

We welcomed a return to a more “normal” environment in 2022 with COVID 19 lockdowns behind us and a chance to re-establish ourselves, and our systems, on-site.

Change is a constant at MDLC and we remain a flexible and responsive organization providing access to opportunities that help to build equality for people in the local community.

People finding ways to connect, to contribute, to become involved and to share and support one another, strengthen our community. Our focus continues to be education for young people not managing in the mainstream education system; adult literacy, digital literacy and numeracy programs; social support activities for people to reduce loneliness and isolation; and engagement activities for people living in our local community.

We find ourselves in a new environment in 2022 as our premises at 13-15 The Avenue is now the registered site for Mountain District Community College (MDCC) and we are sharing our venue with the students and staff of the School. With the pandemic interrupting education for young people, we are accommodating growing numbers in our alternative education programs. In addition to the MDCC population, MDLC are educating 42 young people in MDLC's “Cottage Program” at the Ferntree Gully Uniting Church site and at the site at EV's Youth Centre in Croydon.

Our ability to remain flexible in the changing environment is dependent on our collaborative partnerships. I am grateful for the generosity of Ferntree Gully Uniting Church in allowing us to use their site and to Eastern Regional Libraries (ERL) who support us in providing space in local libraries. Over the course of 2022, our partnership with ERL has strengthened through the development of a one-to-one volunteer literacy tuition program supported by ERL's Literacy Officer, Lizzie James.

The need for community based adult education is not diminishing, as local people who have been disadvantaged in education benefit from access to education in a way that allows them to engage and succeed. MDLC is proud to be providing an essential education service to the people in our community who seek to better themselves and to reach their potential as individuals.

It is concerning that the number of Adult Community Education providers in Victoria is declining. The continuation of this trend will make it harder for many people to access inclusive life-long learning in a highly supportive, friendly and relaxed environment. Adult Community Education has been one of Victoria's strengths. We hope Adult Community Education is given the opportunity to thrive once more.

I cannot say enough good things about the amazing team of people who contribute to the success of MDLC. I am grateful to our skilled and committed Board who continue to support our endeavours with considerable hours of their valuable time. I thank our staff who are highly skilled and experienced and have great passion for the work they do and acknowledge the contribution of our volunteers who are a pleasure to work with and help to make MDLC a truly fabulous organization.



Janet Claringbold

CEO

Board of Directors Sub-Committee Reports

Marketing & Growth

As with recent years the COVID-19 continued to impact all facets of MDLC's operation. A major focus for the Marketing & Growth Committee was to approach relevant philanthropic organisations, and while a number of these were identified previously the Committee refined its list of suitable possible donors.

In February the Department of Education & Training wrote thanking CEO Janet Claringbold for her correspondence regarding mental health support for students and a COVID-19 mental health grant of \$49,490 was issued for ongoing support.

Again in 2022 Ethical Investments made a generous donation and Pat Rivett needs to be thanked for identifying this donor and following it through.

In November a joint venture for mental health training through a Knox City Council Community Development grant, as part of the FTG Grants initiative was noted. At the Artisan Market on the 26th November 2022 a plaque was unveiled at MDLC acknowledging the \$9,000 grant received for tree planting.

Early in the year Robyn Burke was instrumental in organising new street signage to direct the public to MDLC, and she managed to have the Knox City Council's \$2,000 charge waived. We were also able to retain the old Mountain District Women's Co-operative signage for historical purposes. However, as we requested additional street signs the Council charged for these.

Robyn Burke identified how one organisation was using a QR Code for its marketing and this is being investigated for possible MDLC adoption.

As part of MDLC's marketing plan Janet Claringbold organised new stationery, new logo and the more relevant web address (www.mdlc.org.au). Student hoodies and jackets featuring the new logo were organised for the 2023 students, and a number of staff have also taken advantage of these smart clothes.

I have previously mentioned that MDLC values its ongoing partnership with the members of the Knox Learning Alliance, as well as Learn Local and Neighbourhood House activities. The quarterly Member's Newsletter continues to grow and this very professional publication is very well received and a credit to all who provide input. The Newsletter is distributed by email and is available on the website.

As convener of the Marketing & Growth Committee I would like to thank the members for their tireless work and attention to the demands of the Committee. Again, Robyn and Janet have continued to network with local government and like-minded organisations, and much of the excellent reputation MDLC enjoys goes back to them and our wonderful staff.

John Gerrard
Director

Finance and Facilities Report

Centre Risk Profile

Although we can report only a small surplus our financial status is sound with the result for 2022 being a profit of \$4,493.94. This was partly due to our needing to do a revaluation of the property after we consolidated the titles of The Avenue and Victoria Street plus the costs involved with the transference of staff and students to MDCC. Other factors were the increase in the Provision for Staff Entitlements, increase in depreciation of the property improvements (renovation), increased insurance costs, higher maintenance costs.

Scholarships

Knox Vincentians – St John the Baptist Parish – provided \$1,000 in scholarships to support four students with their education costs in 2022. Their support is very much appreciated.

Donations

MDLC kindly thanks the many supporters, both local and in the wider community, groups and individuals who generously give donations to help with the education programs. In 2022 your support was greatly appreciated:

Douglas & Wendy Hammerton
Rotary Club of Ferntree Gully
P Rivett
R Corben
Ethical Investments
Candace Kalapp
And two very kind anonymous donors

Fundraising

Fundraising activities and raffles were held in 2022, for Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Christmas to name a few.

Our regular craft groups raised funds by gold coin donations and commissions from market sales, and we gratefully acknowledge their contributions to MDLC. These were:

Mountain Treasures
Sit n Sew
Crafty Ladies

Grants

Knox City Council – Community Development Grant - Festival of Food
Knox City Council Volunteer Grant – FTG News
Knox City Council Teen Mental Health & Wellbeing
Bendigo Bank Grant – upgrades to FTG News Office
Bendigo Bank – publication of A Guide to FTG Village (from 2021)
Bendigo Bank – Artisan Market (from 2021)
R E Ross Trust Grant – funding Youth workers in the Cottage Program

Department of Agriculture (Federal) – Queens Jubilee Grant
Department of Education & Training (Vic) – Covid 19 Mental Health Support Grant
Department of Premier & Cabinet (Vic) – Victorian Youth Fest
Good Things Foundation – Be Connected Grant

Thank you to all the above organisations, along with our Local, Commonwealth and State Government funding partners. This funding makes it possible to keep our programs running.

Venue and Facilities

In early 2022 the renovations necessary to establish the school were completed and a Certificate of Occupancy issued.

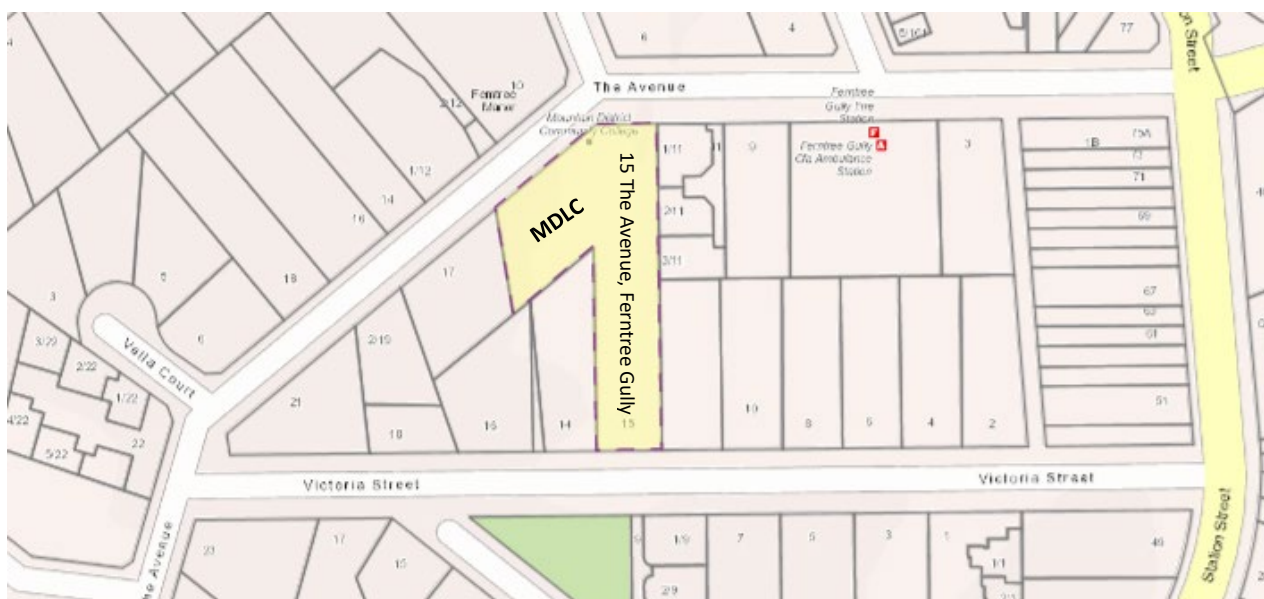
The future development of the Victoria Street property is under discussion with the possibility of MDCC taking out a lease on both land and buildings. However, there is a considerable amount of planning work to be done by MDCC staff and Board of Directors before any proposals can be considered.

MDCC

Registration of MDCC work was completed in January. Staff and students were transferred to MDCC as a separate entity. It was noted in April that staff cost amendments were impacting on the MDLC budget causing some strain.

As MDLC and MDCC share MDLC’s facilities, staff and venue services costs are managed through service agreements, negotiated annually. Negotiations caused a delay in the transfer of funds to MDLC, but the reimbursement of costs incurred with the application for registration helped to ease that situation.

Enid Hughes
Treasurer



Asset Management

It is my pleasure to report to MDWC Ltd members that the buildings and facilities used by the Mountain District Learning Centre to present an ever-growing range of courses and activities and to accommodate the Mountain District Community College have been well looked after and improved during the past year and continue to contribute to the Centre's reputation as a provider of an effective, efficient and attractive learning and working environment.

In terms of asset improvement, the highlight of the year was undoubtedly the installation and commissioning of the 13.5kW solar panel array. Costing a little less than \$12000.00, the system is regularly halving our consumption of power (depending on how sunny the days are!) and indeed, we frequently "export" energy back into the power grid. Although the rate of return per kWh is meagre, (5.1c), it helps to defray our energy costs. A concomitant factor of equal importance is that the system significantly reduces our carbon footprint. For example, the total emissions savings during the first three months of 2023 was 2.3 tonnes of greenhouse gases. As noted in an article appearing in the *Ferntree Gully News* (Issue 82), the array demonstrates that the Centre takes its environmental responsibilities very seriously.

One of the unfortunate consequences of 2022's severe winter was the exposure of the inadequacy of our aging gas-fired central heating system. It frequently broke down or was otherwise ineffective in meeting the needs of staff and students. It was also excessively expensive to run. In these circumstances the Board authorised the decommissioning and removal of the gas installation and its replacement with a split-system airconditioning unit powered by electricity. For reasons of versatility, the system is in three parts with two serving individual classrooms while the third, larger, device is ducted to the remainder of the building. While this project cost slightly in excess of \$22000.00, there are many longer-term advantages arising from the change to electrically powered heating and cooling and our solar array will make a significant contribution in this regard.

Major installations and developments are always satisfying but the task of maintaining the Centre's premises (including our property at 12 Victoria St, Ferntree Gully) is continuous. As noted in previous Annual Reports, one of the more enjoyable features of the Asset Management function is the role of our Working Bees. Usually held on the first Saturday following the End of Term, they routinely bring together members of MWDC, members of the Board and members of staff, all of whom are often accompanied by their partners. Issues requiring attention are coordinated expertly by Lyndee Stride and the results of the volunteer's efforts are always valuable and cover a wide range of projects. However, the day-to-day business of keeping the Centre's buildings functioning and the doors open (often literally!) usually falls to our ever-helpful handyman, Ron Bast, for whom no project seems too difficult. As an organisation, we are fortunate to have someone of Ron's talent and agreeable disposition on hand to solve all the irritating small and not-so-small problems that inevitably arise with a building under such user pressure as ours. The Board thanks Ron sincerely for his support.

Members will be aware that last year, our Garden room was violated by thieves who stole about \$3000 worth of our gardening equipment. In the light of this, a review of our security arrangements was conducted resulting in the installation of extra security cameras and movement-sensitive lighting. Ron Bast also modified some of our boundary fencing and strengthened security around the garden shed and it is pleasing to note that we have had no further intrusions.

On the subject of our gardens, visiting members will have noted what wonderful jewels we have in our surrounding horticulture. This is entirely due to the work of our Garden Coordinator, Luise Topma and her loyal and talented band of helpers. During the year, Luise was successful in applying for a grant under the terms of the (late) Queen's Jubilee Fund being awarded \$9000 which was entirely spent on the garden and associated facilities. The Board thanks Luise and her dedicated crew for their astonishing efforts and the credit they bring to the Centre.

Finally, something for the future. Members will have noted that the precinct of the Centre has never had the protection of any form of motorcar speed limits or even warning signs in The Avenue to alert drivers to the presence our staff, students and members regularly crossing the street to attend classes or functions in the Cottage or Studio. As The Avenue falls within the Knox City Council's Local Area Traffic Management jurisdiction, a delegated Board member recently made representations to Council's Traffic Engineer seeking to have this situation rectified. Given that the Mountain District Community School is now officially registered and in operation within our Centre, it is hoped that our approach will be successful.

Ross Corben

Convenor, Assets and Facilities Sub-Committee

Partnerships and Affiliations

MDLC highly values collaboration with organisations through partnerships and affiliations including:

- Community Houses Association of the Outer Eastern Suburbs (CHAOS)
- Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (NHV)
- ACEVic
- Adult Learning Australia
- Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC)
- OELLEN
- Ferntree Gully Uniting Church
- Knox Infolink
- Knox Emergency Relief Network (KERN)
- Eastern VET network
- Knox Learning Alliance
- Volunteer 4 Knox
- Knox, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges Youth Service Provider Networks
- headspace Knox
- Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS)
- EACH
- Foothills Community Care
- Uniting Care; SwinLocal
- Eastern Regional Libraries
- Knox, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges Councils
- Ferntree Gully Rotary
- Community Housing Limited
- Ferntree Gully Village Traders Association
- Hills Op Shop
- Other local schools, charities and community groups

Honouring Jan Corben

MDLC Board members, volunteers, staff and friends had the great pleasure of celebrating the unveiling a plaque in honour of Jan Corben OAM at a special event shared with Board member Ross Corben and his family. The plaque is now visible at the front entrance of the building as a reminder of Jan’s welcoming nature.

Jan Corben was actively involved in the Mountain District Women’s Co-operative during its early years navigating the terrain of what was a relatively new concept. In the early days the administration of a Neighbourhood Learning Centre was mainly voluntary and a dedicated group of women including Jan worked determinedly, building the foundations of this organisation.

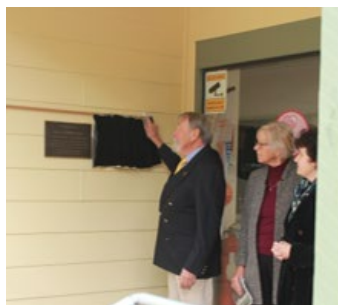
In the early 1980s Jan was in the role of the Education Convenor with participation growing to around 400 people per week attending activities which included adult education classes (including HSC classes), childcare, children’s programs & playgroups, discussion groups, art, craft & fundraising activities and opportunities for volunteering and skill building.

Jan is quoted as saying “in a Neighbourhood Centre you had to be able to do anything and everything, but formal qualifications and specific skills were not required. A dedication to what you were doing coupled with adaptability and a very wide range of basic skills were the keys. A friendly smile and the time to listen were important, as were the acceptance of awful working conditions, old buildings, uncertain funding and no award conditions”.

The Cooperative continued to grow under Jan’s leadership with the Board purchasing two properties to accommodate the growing learning needs in the community. Jan was well respected in roles he held outside the Co-op, contributing to the strength of the sector through her involvement with the TAFE Board, ANHLC, CHAOS and ACEVic.

When Jan retired in 2004 it proved difficult to find a replacement to fill her well-worn shoes. A Board member commented “we have had many interviews, many discussions, many anxieties and (to be expected) much criticism about how we have gone about this. However, at the end of the day finding one person to fill Jan’s shoes proved to be impossible. We moved on to looking at dividing the duties and distributing the responsibilities of the position.”

Jan may have retired from her position as Coordinator, but her involvement continued in a voluntary capacity as Convenor of the CAE Book Club and as a Director of the Board. Her passion and significant work for the sector was honoured by an Order of Australia Medal recognising her outstanding achievement and service to the community.



Acknowledgement of Funding Bodies

MDLC is grateful to our major funding bodies including:

Victorian Government

- Department of Education and Training - Skills First
- Department of Education and Training - Adult and Further Community Education (ACFE),
- Department of Education and Training - Reconnect
- Department of Health & Human Services – Neighbourhood House Coordination Program
- Department of Health & Human Services – Home & Community Care (HACC) Planned Activity Groups

Commonwealth Government

- Department of Health – Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) Social Support Groups

Local Government

- Knox City Council – Neighbourhood House Operational Funding Program
- Knox City Council – Community Development Grants
- Maroondah City Council – Community Development Grants

Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

Compliance demands a huge amount of time and careful monitoring. We are required to keep up with changes in our Contract (Skills First Funding) to ensure that we meet the expectations and requirements of the Victorian Government for the successful delivery of courses on our scope of registration.

It is always a challenge to gain enough interest from the community to deliver some courses. For Responsible Services of Alcohol (RSA) we delivered 3 courses with a total of 23 enrolments and for White Card (Construction Induction) one course with 19 enrolments.

Our regular compliance schedule included internal audits including the 2022 Skills First Internal Audit, annual Program Delivery Plans (PDPs), Training & Assessment Schedules, student reporting and many other important documents.

During 2022 we added 22480VIC Certificate II in Small Business (Operations/Innovation) to our scope, this qualification was determined to be an appropriate course offering to Mountain District Community College (MDCC) as the VET component of the Vocational Major (VM). Students learn about and how to meet the current and future industry requirements to work effectively within small business contexts across a range of industry sectors.

Alison Percy

Education & Training Manager

The Cottage Program

22472VIC Certificate I in General Education for Adults (CGEA)

22473VIC Certificate II in General Education for Adults (CGEA)

22474VIC Certificate III in General Education for Adults (CGEA)

For the first time in two years, we were able to teach face to face classes without any periods of remote learning. Whilst this was welcome news, we also found the students and ourselves feeling tired and overwhelmed at times. We put this down to lockdown fatigue and we focussed on building our routine stamina back to where it was pre-lockdown.

This year we delivered a fourth program to offer additional spaces for young people, this was due to the impact that the past two years had, had on young people, their mental health, lack education (time spent at school & remote learning) and poor engagement. The fourth program was full by the end of Term 1 with a waiting list.

We enjoyed the opportunity to get back out and explore our local and wider communities with restrictions being lifted but in a COVID safe way. We focussed on reengaging with our communities, building confidence while using public transport and spending time amongst the wider public.

The key feature of our programs is to provide a strong youth worker presence. We are very fortunate to have the experience and skills of our youth workers to support our students, our youth workers do a vital job within our programs, they help young people to make informed choices around areas like education, wellbeing, health and relationships, overcome challenges like poor mental health and take up positive opportunities to build their skills, become independent, and contribute to their communities.

Several of our students were offered a volunteer work placement at the Hills Church Op Shop each Thursday morning over a six-week period. This volunteering experience offered them opportunities to learn about the retail industry, they participated in retail activities such as: freshen & tidy counters, organise shelves and clothing racks, dust, arrange and present items for sale. At the end of their volunteer program Jenni (Manager) presents the students with a reference which they can use when applying for work.

We are fortunate to have strong connections with external services so that we can provide opportunities to better our students' skills and knowledge. Our students were able to engage in experiences such as the YSAS SHERPA Graffiti workshop, Careers and pathways sessions, Respectful Relationships Workshop, Teen Mental Health First Aid and Yoga Sessions this year.

Towards the end of the year, we began working on pathways for each student. Most students completed their certificates and went onto further education at TAFE, work, or apprenticeships. The remaining students will return in 2023 to complete their certificates or begin a new certificate at the next level.

In 2022 we welcomed Tiana, Crystal, and Michael to our Cottage team as casual Youth Workers. Tiana, Crystal, and Michael all completed their work placements with MDLC, and demonstrated a high level of empathy for our cohort, also displaying excellent skills and knowledge in the youth work sector.

Our Youth Workers and Teaching staff worked particularly hard throughout the year to bridge gaps in students' education that had dissipated throughout the extended lockdown periods. It was hugely satisfying to see our students building on their confidence and self-esteem through re-establishing routines and embracing opportunities for socialisation, teamwork, and communication.

We are looking forward to 2023 and offering yet another group, our fifth for the Cottage Program. MDLC continues to actively work to being a part of the solution for alternative education. Our focus remains on provision of a safe and supportive environment which understands the complex nature of social anxiety and the impact this has on young people.

We are looking forward to another year, full of great experiences, learning and progress.

Alison Percy

Education and Training Manager

MDLC acknowledges The Ross Trust who generously provided a grant for the Cottage Program.



Reconnect

2022 was another strong year for the Reconnect program at MDLC. With a focus on supporting local parents who are wanting to return to education and employment, two playgroups were established to create a central hub for participants to meet and be supported by Reconnect staff. We thank the support of Erin Paxinos of Knox Community Playgroup Inc. and Playgroups Victoria for their support and facilities in which to operate our playgroups. This opportunity meant we were able to create a safe, child friendly space to meet and share information whilst working towards educational and employment related goals.

We also worked with other various members of our local community to provide individualised case management support in targeting both vocational and non-vocational goals, to provide sustainable outcomes. Approximately 30% of our total case load requested to be guided towards their employment goals through resume writing, interview practice, careers consulting, confidence building, providing access interview and work clothing, conducting industry research and referral. The remaining 70% were guided towards their education and training goals. This was achieved by providing wrap around support services such as, assisted enrolments and course selection, providing access to course fees and course materials, referrals for specialist support services, advocacy, and strengths-based approaches to case management. It was a pleasure to provide such an individualised approach to each and every participant of the program.

Racheal Edwards
Reconnect Manager



ACFE Learn Local Pre-Accredited Training

Mountain District Learning Centre (MDLC) is a Learn Local funded through the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board in collaboration with the Department of Education. The pre-accredited training space provides opportunities for adult learners to increase their literacy, numeracy, digital literacy and employment skills across a range of courses in a safe and supportive community space with the aim of leaving no learner behind.

2022 commenced with steady enrolments to sessions even though COVID-19 continued to make its presence felt across the learning sector. At MDLC we continued with face to face and synchronous online classes giving learners the opportunity to learn and connect with their fellow peers in the local government areas of Knox, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges.

We continued with new learning in the digital literacy space from beginner skills to more advanced such as protecting our privacy online, identifying and avoiding new, advanced online scams and tricks, digital wallets and their uses, online government services as well as Smart TVs. The introduction of new technology and applications in the sector continue to make digital learning a necessity in our community. In 2022 we introduced English for Living & Working in Australia, this program was very well received by learners wanting to improve their English speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. The learners had the opportunity to travel on excursions to local cafes, open gardens and the Men's Shed.

As more jobs became available in the market place the adult literacy and numeracy classes discussed and explored where to find a job using the online Seek and Indeed websites. Learners were encouraged to compile a Resume, write a Cover Letter according to the job role as well as discussing interview questions and answers. Three learners were successful in acquiring new roles!

The second half of 2022 saw an increase in face to face learner numbers with COVID-19 restrictions being further reduced. This gave learners a chance to meet up with their tutors, friends and new learners for the first time in eighteen months!

Barbara Behan Buxton
Adult Learning Manager



Community Services

2022 started off well and it was so lovely to have groups and classes back to normal scheduling.

The year progressed with everyone enjoying a vast array of interesting and creative workshops and projects such as – Macrame, cardmaking, Hypertufa, Decoupage and cooking demonstrations.

The Friendship Group welcomed informative guest speakers such as Gary Cantwell from the Living Our Best Life Project (run by volunteers) who spoke about the importance of “Living in the Now”. Lots of questions were asked by almost everyone who attended, and we all gained a lot of insight from Gary.

The Mountain Treasures craft group enjoyed a busy and successful year with stalls at The Boronia Mall, The Knox Festival, The Stringybark Festival and the MDLC Artisan Market.

2022 saw the birth of the “Hills Mens Social Group”. This group was created in collaboration with the Hills Op Shop in Alpine Street Ferntree Gully, as there was a noticeable gap in our local society where men who are not particularly interested in Men’s Sheds or Bowling Groups had no other options available to them. MDLC and the Hill’s Op Shop joined forces to supply a space, tea and coffee facilities and a group leader to entice blokes who normally visit the op shop, to stay a while and enjoy a cuppa and a chat with other blokes with similar interests.

I’m very pleased to report that the group become really popular very quickly, and is now attended by a regular 8 blokes! New friendships have been formed, and many comment that it’s been a much needed enhancement to their lives. “Who’d have thought you could still make friends at this age” was a common phrase!

Rachel Bast
Community Services Manager



MDLC Artisan Market

Due to popular demand, the 2nd Annual MDLC Artisan Market was held on the last Saturday of November in 2022!

The market was initially created during the COVID-19 pandemic and all the lockdowns that ensued. Many people found themselves enjoying newfound hobbies and learned new skills such as painting, crafting, knitting, sewing, gardening and baking. As a result, MDLC created a small boutique market to entice local artists, makers and growers from the area to showcase and sell their wares.

Riding on the success of the initial market in 2021, the 2022 market doubled in size and attendance!

The market went from 11 stalls to 25 stalls in 2022, along with a coffee van from Mullum Mullum, and musicians from the Upwey Country Music Club, and a young up and coming musician, James Cormack-Brown.

The MDLC Artisan Market also collaborated with the Ferntree Gully Uniting Church Art Exhibition, and the Ferntree Gully CFA Open Day, so the The Avenue was literally alive with all the happenings of the day!!!



Home and Community Care (HACC) and Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)



Social Support Groups

Monday morning Advanced Craft

This relatively new group have become firm friends and are very supportive of one another. They have gelled well and there is lots of conversation during class while they are busy creating their projects. This class focusses on learning new techniques to apply to their craft and they are like “sponges” absorbing everything and looking at craft in a totally different way. They are excited to learn how to use different products and are blown away by the projects they create. Some of their projects run for a few weeks, and we sometimes have two projects on the go at once because of drying time for different techniques. They have produced some beautiful pieces including an altered book forest, mixed media record, steampunk and shabby chic journal covers, Alice in Wonderland tea pot, steampunk shoe, reverse canvas, creating a journal from scratch, different interactive cards, a shadow box, sewing a witch hat decoration and suffix puff Christmas tree. They also participated in the Art Show on Artisan Market Day in November.

Lynn Foster
Group Leader



Nature Craft

It was a great year filled with many activities that the clients all enjoyed. First Term we did some bottle art, tissue paper flowers, and egg dyeing for Easter. Second Term we did a mixed media panel, Bark art, and an autumn leaf collage on a record. Third Term we did some air dried clay art, eco dyeing and pressed flower art. Fourth Term to name a few roller painting Mosaic and a Dried flower wreath for Christmas.

Sharon Saliba
Group Leader



Craft and Grow

Craft and Grow Group were hands on in 2022 making everything from fizzy toilet cleaners, sculpture paintings, pretty Kokedama. Polymer clay gnomes were a great hit as well as yummy chocolate crackles. Stress balls and pompom creatures made us laugh and we made new friends during a feather macramé workshop.

Luise Topma
Community Garden Coordinator & Social Support Group Facilitator



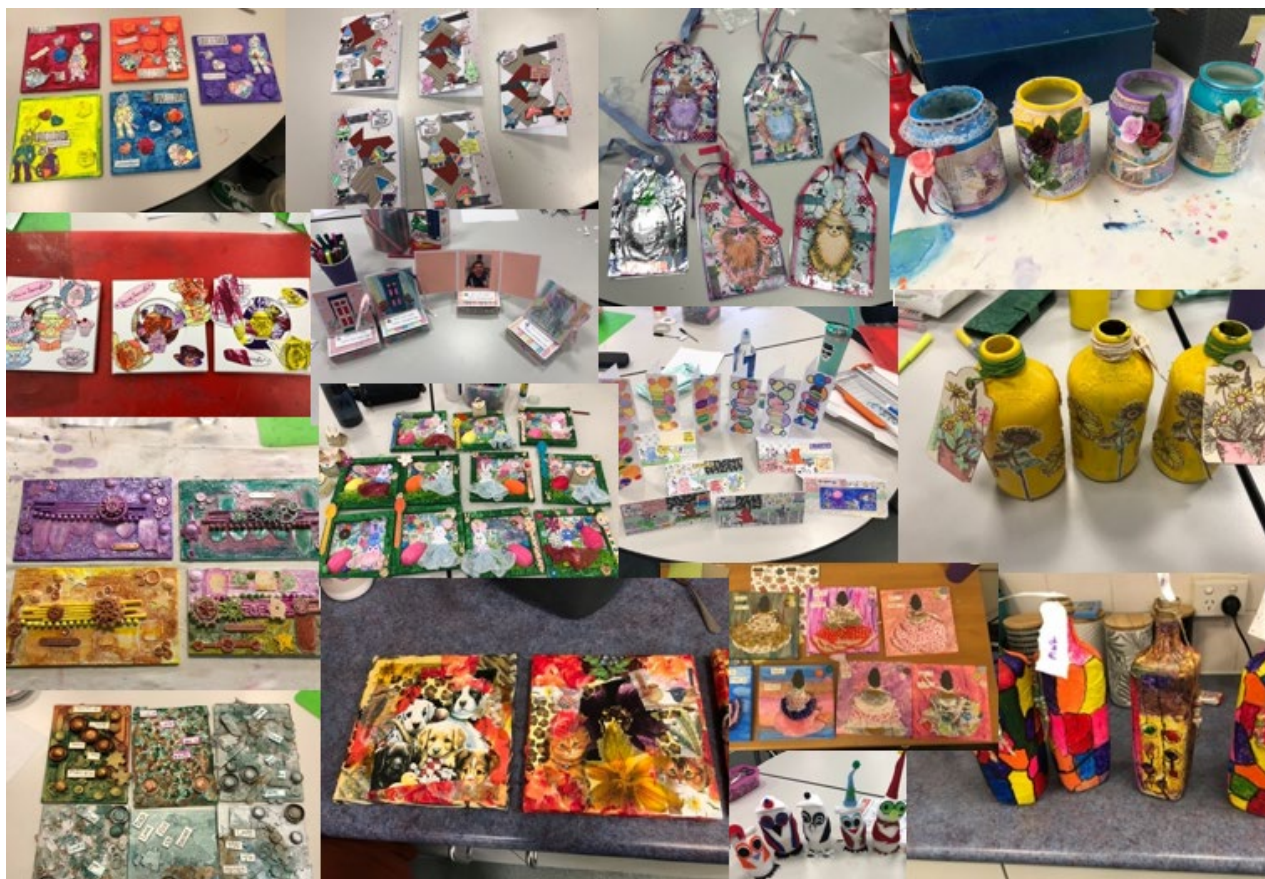
Wednesday Paper Craft

This group was held at Yooralla for majority of the year, coming back to MDLC for Term 4 with the warmer weather. Whilst at Yooralla the class consisted of 11 participants, but only 4 made the transition when we returned to the MDLC craft room. With the craft room size, it could not hold the amount of wheelchairs Yooralla could, and some of the clients had been part of our program for such a long time they opted for a change of program.

Term 4 was a much smaller group but the clients were thrilled to be coming to MDLC for a change of scenery and some quiet time to relax and enjoy their craft. They also enjoyed sitting out in our beautiful garden to enjoy lunch after class.

This group had a busy year completing many projects including sock owl doorstops, an acrylic painted bottle vase, a pencil box, Easter reverse canvas, lots of different interactive cards, tags, "Tin Man" mixed media board, a tag album, mixed media canvases, decoupage jar and Christmas gnomes. This group completed Christmas themed mixed media canvases to display at the Art Show held on Artisan Market Day.

Lynn Foster
Group Leader



Wednesday Mixed Media Art

This group had a busy year with some clients leaving and new clients joining. The class dynamics changed over time with some of the new clients needing more assistance with their art work. The class moved from lots of painting and different technique work to more mixed media style art. We switched things up and offered projects that took several weeks to complete. These covered such things as collaged houses, a lot of abstract work and a roses mixed media canvas. We painted on different substrates such as records and bottles.

The year consisted of acrylic painting both on canvas and in their art journals, covering one point perspective, blending skies and adding clouds, some scaled drawing and using watercolours. This class displayed their Christmas themed art work at the Art Show on Artisan Market Day.

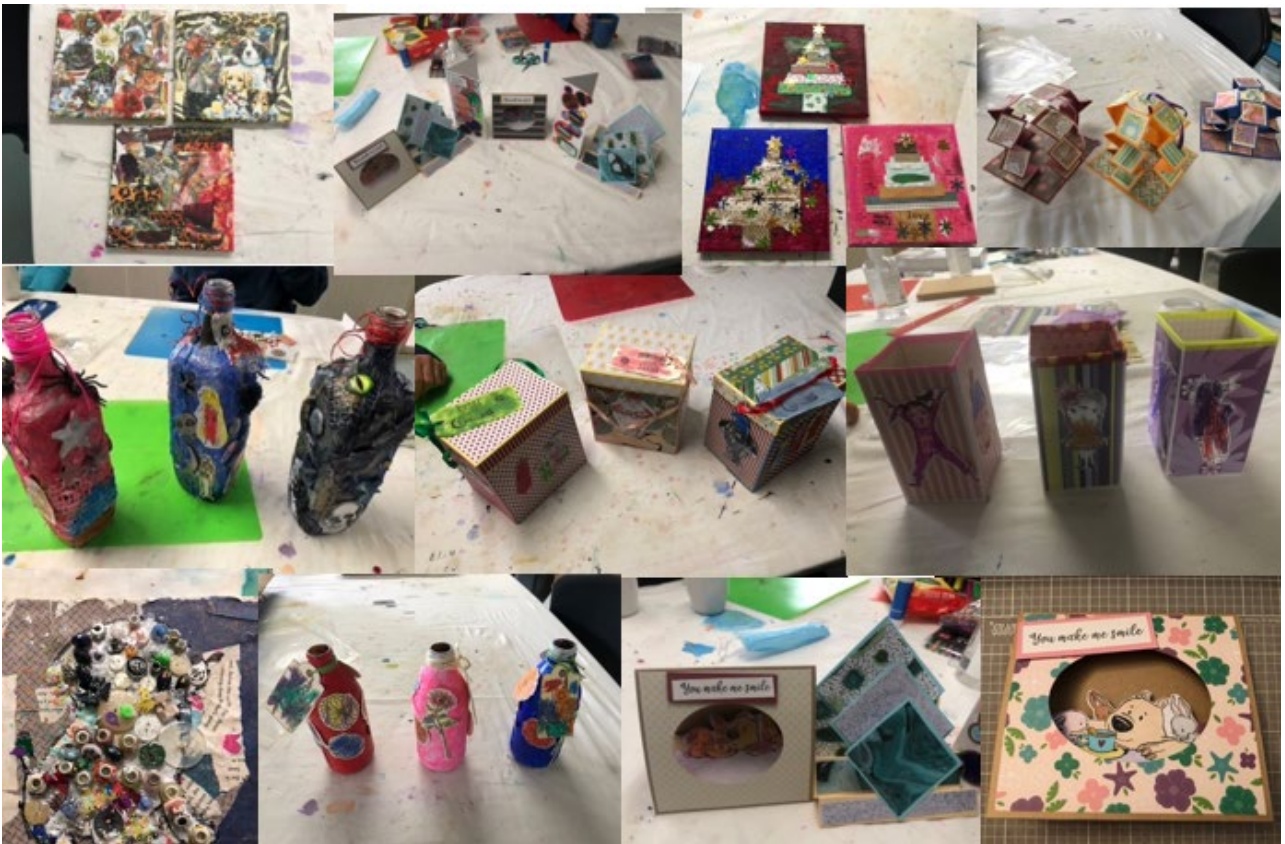
Lynn Foster
Group Leader



Thursday Morning Beginner Craft

This new group started at the end of Term 3. A very enthusiastic small group who enjoyed coming each week and made some lovely projects including a pencil box, sunflower bottle vase, Halloween bottle, some mixed media boards and a gift box. They also enjoyed doing some gel plate printing. They were not scared to add their own spin on my demonstration models and showed their own flair in their finished projects.

Lynn Foster
Group Leader



Thursday Afternoon Crafteria

These ladies love their craft. They provide suggestions which is fantastic. We love when the clients share ideas of what they would like to do. They had a very busy year crafting and enjoying each other's company. We welcomed a couple of new clients to the class and they fitted in perfectly. The craft activities ranged from stick windchimes, a book folding vase, tie snakes and sunglass holders, reverse canvases, recipe books, collage, working with frames, mixed media jars, gift boxes, mixed media CDs, gel plate printing, a Halloween house album, and many different interactive cards.

Lynn and Sharon
Group Leaders



Bit by Bit Computers

The year under review saw a welcome return to having face to face classes. Students unanimously agreed that, while Zoom worked, a face-to-face class provided much more learning. Having said that, all students agreed that learning how to navigate their way on Zoom had, in fact, made them more confident in navigating the computer.

The class numbers did not grow as I would have loved them to – but the students were quite delighted with the numbers as they were. The students felt they could express any difficulties they were having and there was time for new learning to be embedded.

The class chose not to stop for afternoon tea, preferring to use the time to master whatever new feature was being introduced. As is our usual practice, on the first lesson for the first term, the class took time to discuss the draft Session Plan and made changes to include particular features that they wanted to master throughout the term. This happened at the beginning of each term.

During the year we covered lessons on the following topics:

- Working with emails – covering the following:
 - What is an email; how does email work, understanding an email address, email etiquette, fonts and formatting, language tone, sending an email
- How to download photos from a device and save on computer
- How to save and retrieve documents from USBs
- How to be Cyber Security Savvy
- How to shop safely online
- How to create a paypal account
- How to make changes to your computer using the Control Panel
- How to install and uninstall programs on a computer
- How to work between two windows
- How to create effective searches
- How to set up a Kindle
- How to Understand and use File Explorer
- How to work with Templates
- What is Green Computing
- How to create a calendar using personal photos

Despite not stopping for afternoon tea, the class bonded well. They shared stories about their gardens and swapped cuttings which was very special to see as they all lived alone, and although they all had families, nonetheless the relationships created at MDLC were very important to them.

Lillian Brown

Tutor

MDLC Social Friendship Group

Term 1 began with the Friendship group members reconnecting again and making their own name tags. Up next was the year of the Tiger, members were given fortune cookies and enjoyed some Chinese finger food. Many of the conversations within the group were about the Chinese horoscope.

All about me was designed to get to know people a bit more.

As Easter neared, we had hot cross buns and an Easter egg hunt. Jack, who had joined us on a student placement, also showed the group how to make Easter egg baskets.

In term 2, the Friendship group celebrated Mother's Day with a Devonshire Tea.

The Friendship group were also listening to 1970's music during the session, and two of the group members modelled clothes from that era.

In late May the Friendship group decided to run a Biggest Morning Tea Fundraiser for cancer, a total of \$100 was raised.

On the 15th of June the Friendship group celebrated its 7th birthday.

During term 2, one of our group members offered to give a talk about growing up in Ferntree Gully and how much the area has changed over the years.

In August of Term 3, the Friendship group welcomed Guest Speaker, John Moyses, John talked to us about I.T. tips and tricks, and in particular, how to protect ourselves from scammers.

The group also turned up in late October ready to celebrate Halloween with lots of scary music, black clothing, fake spiders, witch's hats, and quite a lot of lollies.

Late in term 4 the group welcomed Guest Speaker Matthew Allan, Matthew is a Metro Rail Awareness and Safety Officer, who spoke to us about how to stay safe when using public transport and how to get the most out of your Myki card. As the year neared to a close, the Friendship group worked on finishing their Christmas craft trees and managed to attend two Christmas parties.

Naomi Orr & Debra Parkhurst Group Leaders



Halloween fun



Celebrating Mother's Day



Christmas Craft Activity

Women on the Move

2022 was not the best year we have lived through as we had quite a few of our ladies not in good health and consequently found they could no longer attend exercises.

We lost from our ranks Shirley, Dot, Rosemary, Gerda and 2 ladies passed away being Jean and Joy. During the year we also had quite a few ladies join us and not long after decided to move on, which was sad.

The Women On The Move Group is blessed with a wonderful volunteer Peter, who picks up and drops off some of our lucky ladies from their homes every Monday. Unfortunately some of our ladies can no longer drive, so we all very much appreciate having Peter.

Because some of our ladies were very lonely during our lockdown we tried to makeup for it by having a coffee catchup during the month on the 4th Wednesday which was enjoyed by those who attended.

Even though we are an exercise group we also just enjoy a get together away from the hall so we had a couple of light luncheons at Gwen's where we knitted and laughed at nothing in particular.

At the end of each term after exercises we had lunch out at local eating houses and our last for the year was at Crave in Boronia where we had a Christmas dinner and sadly said goodbye to Marcia, our instructor for the last 6 years.

It was suggested that our ladies, and especially some from countries outside Australia, write their own story and share and two of the ladies, Wil Hurkens and Gwen White did, so we are still waiting for the rest as it is something for our Grandchildren especially.

All in all it was not our best year but we did get together and exercise which was our aim to keep us all moving.

Gwen White

Women on the Move



Community Hi-Rise Garden

Volunteer Garden Program

2022 was a big year for the Volunteer Garden crew. We started our “Planting Tree’s for the Queen” project, had our plaque unveiling and started work on the final stage to be completed in 2023.

There were frilly poppies and bright green produce. The volunteers kept busy with keeping the garden looking amazing, weeding, pruning, trimming, cutting, sowing, and planting all in a day’s work.

There have been many supporters of our little garden in 2022 just to name a few Hoselink, Richgro, Seedfrees, Eden seeds, Larder and Thyme, Sue Worms and The Knox Woodworking Group.

Luise Topma

Community Garden Coordinator & Social Support Group Facilitator



Ferntree Gully News Report

The financial performance of Gully News in 2022 resulted in a surplus of \$ 10,641 which included grant funding along with boosted advertising revenue of \$39,304 and some book sales of “Scenes and Stories”. Special thanks are due to Pam for outstanding energy in managing advertising.

A grant received from the Bendigo Bank contributed to an extensive office refurbishment and another from Knox Council supported volunteer training at the Community Newspaper Association of Victoria (CNAV) Conference and website refurbishment.

Positives in 2022 included a return to the Cottage office post Covid; working to rebuild the office team; collaboration with MDLC & Village Traders regarding large scale State Government and Knox City Council grants for community safety in the Village and revitalisation through Arts projects; revival of community events, especially the 26 November ‘Fair’. In October Ferntree Gully Library hosted a promotion of the Newspaper and in November the Village Guide was published.

Less positive was the enforcement of “No Junk Mail” delivery in August which led to a drop in circulation from 11,000 to 10,000 copies, followed by John McMillan’s accident that left our distribution processes in need of improvement.

Ferntree Gully News participated in the Knox Festival and with an exhibition of newspaper photos and an exhibition at Millers Homestead with a public talk in April and again in October.

We look forward to 2023 and plan to extend news and distribution to the foothills, including to the State electorate office and new MP in Belgrave.

The annual Volunteer Thank You Party returned to Ferntree Gully Library in May.

Anne Boyd
Editor



