



## **Key Findings and Recommendations**

### **Community Needs Project**

#### **“Insight – What is needed to thrive in a changing landscape”**

#### **Ashburton Community Centre**

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In 2015 the Ashburton Community Centre received a Community Strengthening grant from the City of Boroondara and the Rotary Club of Balwyn for a consultant to undertake a Community needs assessment - “Insight – What is needed to thrive in a changing landscape”. The project was also supported with financial contribution from Ashburton Community Centre plus considerable in-kind support.

The aims of the project were:

1. To re-engage the Ashburton and Glen Iris community with their local Community Centre, through the identification of issues and targeted programs that are important to the local community.
2. To match ACC and Council strategic objectives with a clear business strategy for 2016-2019, from the list of potential sources of value creation, including shared value partnerships and initiatives created from the market research. (Encourage partnerships between local organisations and the development of local community networks).
3. To formulate the balance in program offerings needed to build revenue, based on the identified gaps in our services and the needs not being met by other organisations servicing our local community. The programs identified would need to consider affordability, time required to implement, current resources and acceptance of current members.
4. To ensure a focus on the front line engagement of local community to promote their health, wellbeing, independence and increase the community capability, reduce social isolation and capacity through clear evidence based strategic direction.

In February and March 2016 a survey was undertaken in the local community, with the current Centre members and with members who had previously attended the Centre.

The following presents the key findings and the Consultant’s recommendations.

# 1. Key Findings

This section summarises the key findings of the report and identifies actions and strategies that can be implemented to increase the use of ACC and meet the needs of the local community.

## 1.1 About the Community

- The population of Ashburton in 2016 is 8,280 which is forecast to increase to 8,778 by 2041, an increase of 6.02%. The population of Glen Iris in 2016 is 15,909 and is expected to rise to 17,333 by 2041 which is an increase of 8.95%.
- Ashburton has a larger proportion of families with young children, with 22.1% the population aged between 0-15 and a lower proportion of people in the older age groups (65+). 42% of Ashburton's households are made up of couples with children compared to 36% in the City of Boroondara.
- Glen Iris has a similar demographic with 21% of the population aged between 0-15 and a lower proportion of older age groups.
- Ashburton has 24.7% of the population born overseas, the largest non-English speaking country of birth is China, followed by India. Glen Iris has 21.9% of the population born overseas, the largest non-English speaking country of birth is China, followed by Malaysia.
- Analysis of individual income levels in Ashburton in 2011 indicates that 23.0% of the population earned a high income (over \$1,500), and 34.8% earned a low income (under \$400).
- Analysis of individual income levels in Glen Iris in 2011 shows that 28.0% of the population earned a high income, and 29.2% earned a low income.

### ***What does this mean:***

- The likely demand for services will continue to increase steadily as the population of Ashburton and Glen Iris increases.
- Almost half of the population of Ashburton and Glen Iris is made up of couples with children and program offerings should consider the needs of this group in addition to the current focus on older adults.
- Over a fifth of the population are born overseas with strong representation from those in China, India and Malaysia
- Income levels demonstrates that whilst price is a factor for many in the community, there are significant proportions of both Ashburton and Glen Iris (average 25.5%) who earn high incomes and have the capacity to pay. Over 30% earn a low income however and their needs must be recognised in the programming and payment options in order to facilitate participation.

## 1.2 Utilisation

- The total number of hours the centre currently provides activities from its rooms is 65 hours per week which is 10.8 hours a week or 1.5 hours per day on average. With 13 programmable hours per day per room equating to 546 available hours, the current utilisation rate is 11.9%.
- This does not include classes provided in the Copland room. ACC runs 11 hours of classes per week from the Copland Room and 3 hours off site each week.
- ACC also have 13 hours use by regular monthly hirers and approximately 20 hours of other hires each month.

### ***What does this mean:***

There is significant scope for increased use of ACC both for direct programming as well as for room hire.

## 1.3 Previous Program Attendance

The top five most popular programs by number of participants over the five years are:

1. Exercises - 307 participants
2. Yoga 267 participants
3. Keep Fit – 222 (note this does not include participants in 2012 as the data was not available)
4. Drawing and Thinking- daytime – 187 participants
5. Mah-jong – 185 participants

The table below shows the number of total participants in classes offered by ACC over the last five years. Class attendance was lowest in 2012 being 675 in contrast to 2011 a total of 1014. There were 713 participants in 2013, 1146 in 2014 and 1190 in 2015.

Year	Total Number of Class Participants
2011	1014
2012	675
2013	713
2014	1146
2015	1190

### ***What does this mean:***

The table shows that since the new centre has opened participation has exceeded pre redevelopment levels and is on an upward trend. Whilst there are more spaces in the new centre, this data shows that contrary to staff thinking that numbers were less than before the redevelopment, they are in fact higher than pre development levels. There is scope however to increase the utilisation of the centre and achieve higher participation levels.

## 1.4 Stakeholder Consultation

Key points from the stakeholder consultation have been summarised below.

- Staff feel that utilisation has declined in comparison to levels of participation at the old centre and there is scope for increased activities however many of the rooms are small.
- Key user groups are older adults (50+)
- ACC offers over 40 classes each term with the majority running at an operating surplus.
- With three services funded by Council within close proximity to each other a co-operative approach is important. Each of the services has a different focus with The Craig focusing on families and children and Alamein Neighbourhood and Learning Centre receiving ACFE funding and having a focus on disadvantaged residents, Men's Shed, disability and social welfare.
- There is increasing competition in the area particular for programs such as Yoga.
- A recent survey of current enrollees (2015) shows that word of mouth was the most used marketing source followed by being a previous or current member. The next highest source was from the foyer followed by the Boroondara Bulletin.
- Samarinda Ashburton Aged Services offer similar activities at a cheaper price as the service is Home and Community Care (HACC) funded. Willingness to explore partnership opportunities and could assist with recruitment of volunteers and "back end" services.
- Regular and consistent access to the Copland Room has been challenging. The Library would prefer ACC to plan possible use of Copland Room across the year and then cancel it if not required rather than asking for access with short timelines. ACC to have priority of access and other groups can work around them.
- Consider running more starter courses –as high financial cost to term based activities can be a barrier for some – suggest 2-3 week long and these could be considered for kid's activities' too. Shorter activities work well with the library space too.
- A lower room hire rate may encourage more groups to the use the meeting rooms at ACC.
- Could consider offering taster classes through the library with ongoing classes then provided by ACC (need to check with Ashburton Library Manager re this).
- Make more use of the multi screen in the foyer to promote programs and activities
- Glen Iris U3A has 1,300 members is huge. ACC could benefit from looking at what they offer from introductory classes and could then offer options for ongoing participation. E.g. learn Mah Jong at U3A – continue to play at ACC.
- NIECH has been conducting a Shared Services Project exploring the ways in which member houses can work in partnership with each other for greater efficiency and effectiveness, i.e. "work smarter – not harder".
- One of the key issues from NIECH is that Ashburton Community Centre does not receive Neighbourhood House Co-ordination Program funding from the State Government.

## 1.5 User's Workshop

Key points from the Users workshop have been summarised below.

- Possible consideration of offering exercise classes through January
- Pay as you go more likely to attract participants to many classes
- Offer a shredder service and a battery recycling facility to the community
- Options for classes could include:
  - Parenting education groups
  - New technology – for parents and seniors
  - Children's art and craft - grade 3-6
  - Board games for families
  - Link with Camcare to offer activities for dads who only have kids on weekend -instead of McDonalds or parks being main options
  - Grandparent play group - Exercise class for men
  - Folk dancing classes
  - Walking group
  - Conversational German
  - Ballroom dancing
  - Open house - come and try

## 1.6 Staff and Tutors workshop

Key points from the Staff and Tutors workshop have been summarised below.

- Cost to classes is a barrier - consider offering weekly payment by direct debit to reduce financial impacts
- Fitness class for men
- Folk dancing
- Salsa dancing
- Tai Chi
- Chi ball
- Culturally inclusive activities particularly for the Chinese community
- Bridge classes/card classes
- French polishing
- Upholstery
- Chair exercises
- Zumba
- Cooking classes from different culture
- Culturally specific groups
- Nordic walking
- More activities for parents, toddlers, grandparents playgroup e.g. mothers walking group with pram
- Gardening group
- Men shed - Secret men's group - the group make something that then goes to another community group or charity
- Book club
- Parents group rather than a mums group

- Language classes
- Laneway learning
- Computer courses - getting the most out of your iPad
- The secret of Paris - Part 1 and Part 2
- History of fashion and art
- Current affairs discussion group – need a good facilitator
- Parenting classes and First Aid for babies/parents/grandparents
- Music discussion/appreciation classes
- Offer and make more use of the centre by and for people with disabilities
- Hub for bike rides - Lycra club
- Experience the centre before committing to classes e.g try one class for free
- Defibrillator in centre

### 1.7 Key Findings Community Survey

- The local paper is the most used method of being informed about centre programs and activities.
- 87.61% of respondents were aware of Ashburton Community Centre.
- Walking past was the main way people know about the Centre.
- Exercise classes is the activity that most people were aware was offered at the centre
- 42.71% of respondents had used the centre.
- Room Hire (36.08%) was the most participated in activity followed by exercise classes.
- Lack of time was identified as the greatest barrier to participation (55.56%).
- Price was considered very important by 38.43%.
- The weekend mornings are the most preferred time of day for activities/classes.
- Short courses (1-4 weeks) is the preferred length of time to attend courses.

### 1.8 Key Findings Member Survey

- Art/Craft classes were the classes most participated in 32.7%
- Main reason attending welcoming, informative and professional office staff
- 17 respondents suggested art/craft, 16 suggested health and exercise, 12 suggested cooking, 10 suggested languages, 6 x computer/IT, 3 suggested discussion groups, 2 suggested by card games, 1 x gardening
- Time of day was the highest rated reason for participation
- Price was deemed moderately important by 41.84%
- Length of course was rated very important by 41.84%

### 1.9 Key Findings Previous Members Survey

Other (25.5%) was the main reason previous members had not returned to the ACC, followed by being “too busy” (23.4%) followed by “not interested in any course or activity offered” (19.1%). 17% indicate that they have returned or are planning to return in the future.

## 2. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to support the ACC increase use and participation of the centre.

### Partnership

- Enter into discussion with Samarinda Ashburton Aged Services to explore how the two centres could work together. Samarinda have a bus for example and may consider bringing some of their people down to the ACC for classes. Price is a key consideration.
- Consider using the Volunteer Alliance Service provided by Samarinda Ashburton Aged Services to assist with the recruitment of volunteers.
- Maintain regular contact and co-operation between Alamein Neighbourhood and Learning Centre and the Craig Family Centre to ensure effective communication and co-operation and to minimise program duplication wherever possible.
- Liaise with Camcare to determine whether it is viable to offer the venue as a space where Dads (who have weekend access) can come with their children on weekends
- Book the Copland Room as many times as the centre could possibly require in advance the previous year and then cancel if class does not go ahead rather than trying to negotiate access when the room has already been committed to others.
- Continue to foster positive relationships with Ashburton Library staff.
- Approach the Council to provide additional 3 hour parking permits (Camberwell CC has 3 hour parking permits for clients to display on their parked cars).

### Programs/Classes

- Consider offering programs in the following areas in order to meet the broad demographic of the area:
  - Parenting Education Workshops – toddlers, primary school and teenagers
  - Activities for parents and children to do together across all age ranges e.g. cooking, craft,
  - More activities for parents and pre schoolers that they can participate in together – some with a child focus e.g. craft/music and some with a parent focus e.g. mums and baby yoga
  - Short parenting support classes
  - Playgroup for Grand Parents
  - First Aid for toddlers, children adults, CPR etc
- Consider more social groups (similar model to existing table tennis classes), such as adult colouring once a month. Introductory classes could be held in Bridge, Mah Jong and other activities from which social groups could be formed.
- Make more use of the kitchen by increasing the number of cooking classes targeting one off or short classes on the weekend for families - could be seasonal e.g. Easter baking, Christmas Ginger Bread House etc. and offer cooking classes based on a particular ethnic cuisine for example

- Explore folk dancing, Zumba or other form of dance for older adults
- Consider exercise classes with a focus on older men
- Consider short classes for home beautification e.g. soap making, candle making, terrariums, herb pots etc.
- Consider technology classes – particularly iPad and smart phone
- Consider music, singing or drama classes
- Continue to offer a range of art and craft activities
- Continue to offer all programs that are currently generating an operating surplus

### **Marketing**

- Better utilise the multi-screen in the library foyer to promote and inform the community of activities available.
- Tie balloons on the front of the sign on High Street to draw passers-by attention
- Leverage one off events by using the opportunity to talk to newcomers about what they are interested. Ensure promotion of centres activities is undertaken during the event.
- Continue to build social media presence as this will become increasingly important in the future.
- Continue all existing marketing strategies including the local paper (community survey showed this is most used method of finding local classes).

### **Program Structure**

- Consider running more short term courses 1- 4 weeks to make it more financially affordable for people as well as address the general “busyness” that many people face.
- Consider one off – short term classes over the weekends that parents and children can do together.

### **Pricing and Processes**

- Greater flexibility in pricing models may assist in increasing utilisation by those from lower socio economic backgrounds.
- Offer pay as you go where practical by using direct debit facilities (people still commit to the term if that is the length of the class).
- Consider offering the first class free to new comers (try before you buy).
- Consider allowing people to only pay for the classes they can attend e.g. (If they are going on holiday and can attend some classes then allow them to do so – Canterbury Community Centre do this and it is working well)
- Provide the opportunity for payment plans when required.
- Benchmark room hire rates with other nearby community organisations and consider lowering prices to attract new users. Ensure a cheaper rate for regular hirers.



**Other**

Consider other community services that could be offered at ACC to bring people into the centre such as a paper shredding service, battery recycling etc.

**Conclusion**

ACC is a very well managed centre offering over 40 classes each term. Members find the centre very welcoming and friendly and this contributes to its success. Participation is at a higher level than before the redevelopment, however there is significant scope for increased utilisation of the centre.

Going forward, the major area to explore is to increase the number of short courses or one off workshops to attract new users and to offer options for those who are time poor to ensure the centre meets the needs of a broader range of local residents.