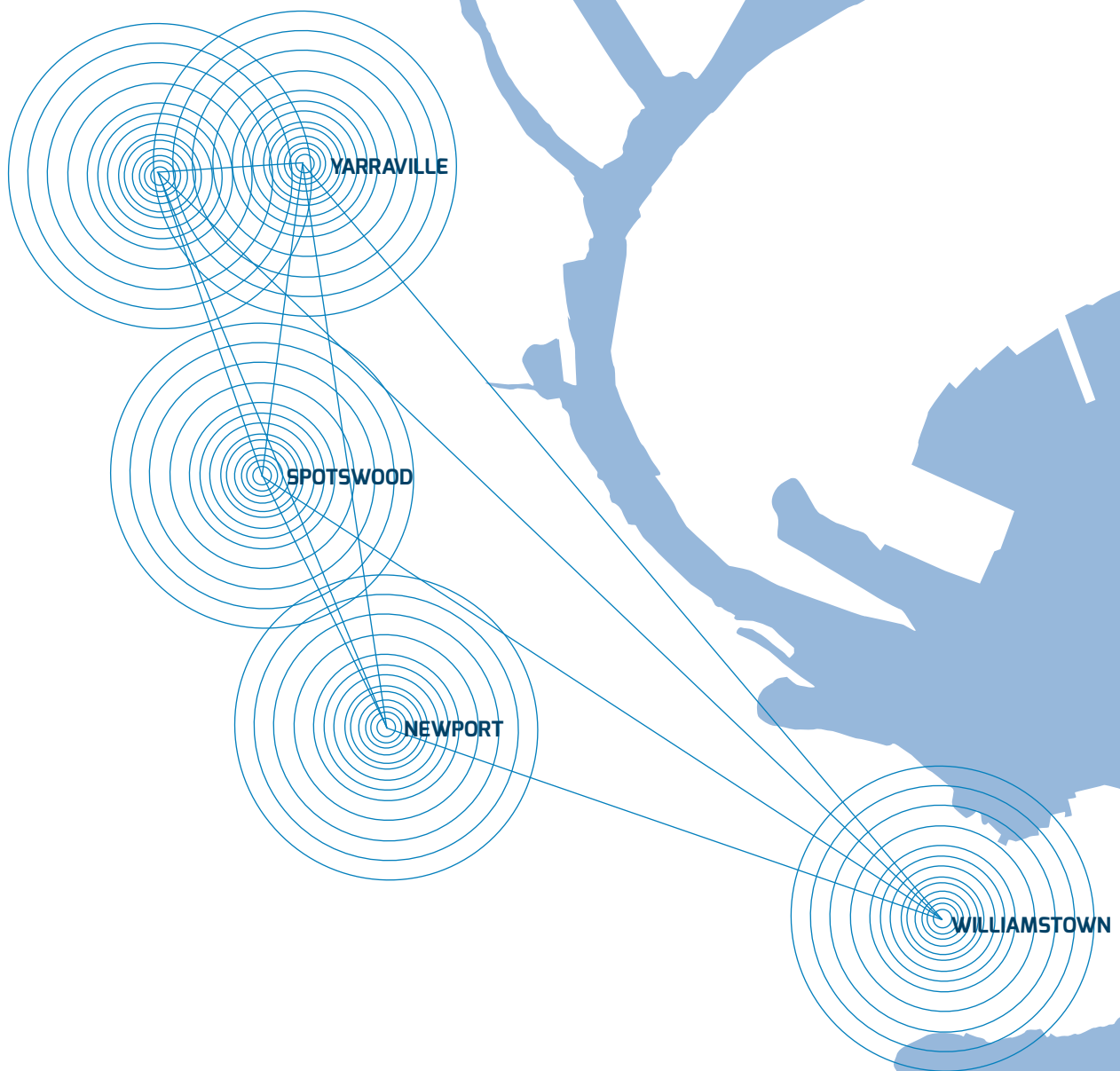




YARRAVILLE TO WILLIAMSTOWN  
**LEARN LOCAL CORRIDOR  
PARTNERSHIP STUDY**  
PARTNERSHIP FOR ACCESS PROGRAM



Williamstown  
Community  
and Education  
Centre Inc



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### Research group:

Dr Mark Brophy (Project Lead/Coordinator)  
Helen Rodd (Project Worker/Researcher)

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ACE	Adult and Community Education
ACFE	Adult, Community and Further Education (Victorian State government)
ACNC	Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission
ANHLC	Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres. New name adopted in 2015, Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (NHV)
ANHLC Census	An annual census of participants in neighbourhood houses for one designated week per year
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DGR	Deductable Gift Recipient (related to charity and taxation status)
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services (Victorian State government)
ITEC	Income Tax Exempt Charity (related to charity and taxation status)
Learn Local	The name for organisations registered to deliver ACFE learning programs
LGA	Local Government Area
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding (an agreement between parties that outlines each parties' role in a relationship or joint project)
Neighbourhood Houses Community Centres Learn Locals	The term "neighbourhood house" is used as a general term for similar organisations that are based in local communities, deliver a range of community development programs and activities and are recognised as part of the neighbourhood house sector. In this Study, the term is inter-changeable with "community centre", "community education centre", "learning centre", "centre" or "Learn Locals".
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Educational Research
NHCP	Neighbourhood House Coordination Program, currently administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
NHV	Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, formerly known as Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres (ANHLC)
Outlets	Outlets Cooperative Neighbourhood House Ltd
Outlets- NCEC	Newport Community Education Centre venue of Outlets
PBI	Public Benevolent Institution (related to charity and taxation status)
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TCC	Tax Concession Charity (related to charity and taxation status)
WCEC	Williamstown Community and Education Centre Inc
WCEC- JK House	Joan Kirner House venue of WCEC, located in Williamstown
WCEC- Spotswood	Spotswood Community House venue of WCEC
YCC	Yarraville Community Centre Inc
YCC- Francis	Francis St venue of YCC
YCC- Blackwood	Blackwood St venue of YCC

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stronger networks and integrated education and employment services give people access to the full range of training opportunities and pathways to work.

This Study explores the potential for formal and strategic partnerships between Learn Locals in Melbourne's inner west so they share more resources and offer more pre-accredited training to local people.

Population growth, changing demographics and the changing industrial and economic character of the inner west of Melbourne requires new alliances to engage with hard to reach learners and groups marginalised by change.

The changing environment of Adult and Community Education (ACE) with greater complexity, accountability and compliance is demanding that organisations collaborate more to improve their efficiency.

The Study examines the partnership potential between three Learn Local organisations in Melbourne's inner west: Outlets Cooperative Neighbourhood house Ltd, Yarraville Community Centre Inc and Williamstown Community and Education Centre Inc.

The Study represents the first phase of developing more strategic and formal partnerships between Learn Local organisations, and assesses 'where we are' and 'where we might go' to deliver more training, more efficiently, to more people.

The Study concludes that significant potential exists for more formal partnerships between Learn Local organisations to boost their capacity to deliver quality, responsive programs to their communities and grow organisational capacity and sustainability.

However, the Study highlights the need for greater support for the sector in forming these partnerships, alliances and networks, and integrating more effectively with other training providers and community organisations.

As a next step, this Study recommends establishing a regular partnership meeting with the managers of the three Learn Local centres to discuss, develop and implement the more immediate, short-term partnership opportunities identified in this Study, as well for long-term opportunities, including seeking further funding to enable a strategic partnership project.

This Study also summarises related contemporary theory on partnerships to inform potential partnering opportunities the three centres might explore.

# PARTNERSHIP FOR ACCESS PROGRAM

The Partnership for Access Program is an initiative of the Victorian Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board.

The program aims to address the Implementation Strategy of the *Learn Local: Focusing on the Future* report (Department of Education and Training 2015) developed by the ACFE Board.

That report values the range of relationships that Learn Locals develop, because relationships increase their capacities to offer better and more opportunities and pathways for learners. The report encourages:

- Durable partnerships, networks and organisational consolidation (pp. 6 & 25)
- Partnerships or alliances that deliver real improvements in sustainability, scale and quality (p. 7)
- Partnerships and pathways that deliver the full range of training options sought by communities (p. 10).

The ACFE Implementation Strategy aims to achieve strong outcomes for all learners through work that benefits Learn Local organisations and the people who work within them. In some cases, this means stronger networks and integrated education and employment services so that learners can access the full range of training opportunities and pathways to work.

The ACFE Board wants to build stronger partnerships between Learn Local organisations, and with business and the wider community.

Many Learn Local organisations have already shown they can develop successful partnerships for planning and delivering training initiatives that support people with low educational qualifications. There is significant potential for Learn Local organisations to deliver more training to these Victorians.

However, the sector needs greater support in forming partnerships, alliances and networks, and integrating more effectively with other training providers and community organisations.

The Partnership for Access Program therefore seeks to assess 'where we are' and 'where we might go' – to deliver more training, more efficiently, to more people.

The ACFE Board supports the exploration and formation of durable partnerships to provide high-quality programs, develop stronger pathways and improve provider sustainability.

## About the study

This Study explored the pathways to durable networks, partnerships or alliances that deliver real improvements in sustainability, scale and quality, across three Learn Local organisations:

### Outlets Cooperative Neighbourhood House Ltd (Outlets)

Newport Community Education Centre venue (NCEC)  
Manager – Therese McKenney

### Yarraville Community Centre Inc (YCC)

Blackwood Street and Francis Street venues\*  
Manager – Chris McCall

### Williamstown Community and Education Centre Inc (WCEC)

Joan Kirner House and Spotswood Community House venues\*  
Manager / CEO – Mark Brophy

This Study:

- Examines the three organisations and provides a profile of key characteristics, including similarities and differences
- Documents their existing relationships or any partnerships (formal and informal)
- Investigates contemporary theory on partnerships, to inform potential partnering opportunities the three centres might explore
- Sets out recommendations for future research, actions, initiatives or opportunities that may formally build and benefit existing synergies and extend partnerships between the organisations.

The scope of this Study was limited to the relationships between the three centres and the possibilities to extend and deepen these relationships. The Study did not focus on other external partnerships (such as industry sponsors) the centres have.

\*The administration and main delivery site of the multiple venue centres are  
YCC - Francis Street  
WCEC - JK House.

## Rationale and context

The three organisations which participated in the Study were selected for their similarities:

- All are Learn Locals
- They all deliver pre-accredited training
- They deliver childcare and 3-year old activity programs
- They receive Neighbourhood House Coordination Program (NHCP) funding
- They are members of Network West Association
- They engage in a variety of community development activities
- They are community-run (Incorporated Association or Cooperative).

The organisations are well established and mature with a long history of innovation, willingness to explore options around partnering to improve access for learners and to improve their organisational sustainability.

Geographically the three organisations and five venues are connected and close. Their area of focus comprises Yarraville, Newport, Spotswood and Williamstown in the inner west. All five venues are connected via the Williamstown train line (See map page 9). Their geographical relationship lends itself to a 'catchment' approach.

Two other factors influencing these organisations have influenced the need for this Study.

1. The changing environment of Adult and Community Education (ACE) with greater complexity, accountability and compliance demands that requires the development of organisations for scale and greater collaboration across local catchments.
2. Population growth, changing demographics and the changing industrial and economic character of the inner west of Melbourne requires innovation, including new alliances that respond to the changing community, including engaging with hard to reach learners and groups marginalised by change.

## The process

This Study began with the centres agreeing to participate and share key data and information. WCEC was the lead agency and facilitated the research, which included:

- A researcher being employed in early 2015
- Ongoing briefings, discussions and consultation between the three centres, the researcher and key stakeholders
- The researcher attended meetings with all stakeholders
- Extant data collection was carried out including:
  - survey results from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) (for the two Registered Training Organisations, YCC and WCEC)
  - Neighbourhood House survey results from Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (NHV), as all three deliver the Neighbourhood Houses Coordination Program (NHCP)
  - local government surveys
  - information from each organisation's website (such as annual reports and strategic plans)
- Interviews were carried out with each manager and staff of the three centres
- Findings were validated with follow up surveys and telephone calls
- Literature research into models, types, theory of 'partnerships'
- Draft report compiled
- Final validation with Centre Managers
- Edit, design, print final study and distribute.

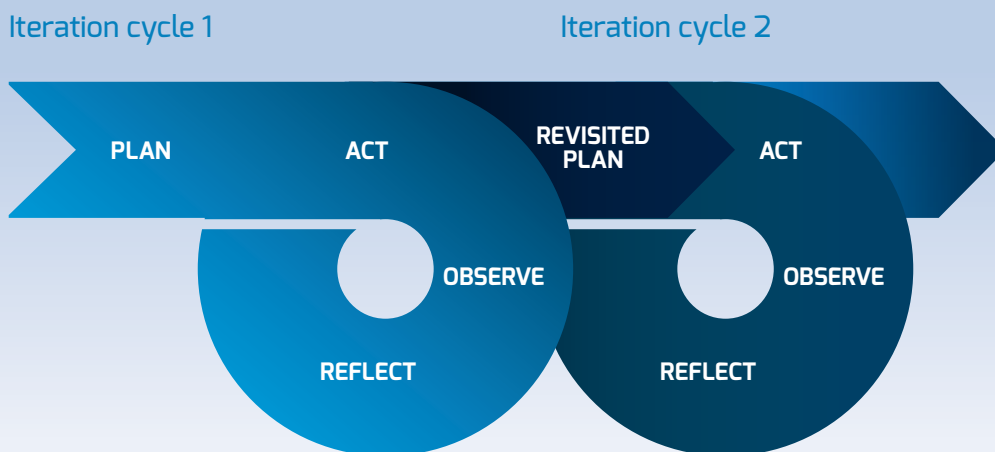
The Study incorporated an Action Research approach.

Winter and Munn-Giddings's (2001, p. 8) definition of action research, as a 'study of a social situation carried out by those involved in that situation in order to improve both their practice and the quality of their understanding' captures the essence of the philosophy underlying the action research approach.

Action research uses a framework of Plan–Act–Observe–Reflect to explore a research question, with an understanding that the undertaking of the research itself will impact on the research question and engender change. The phases of the Study were:

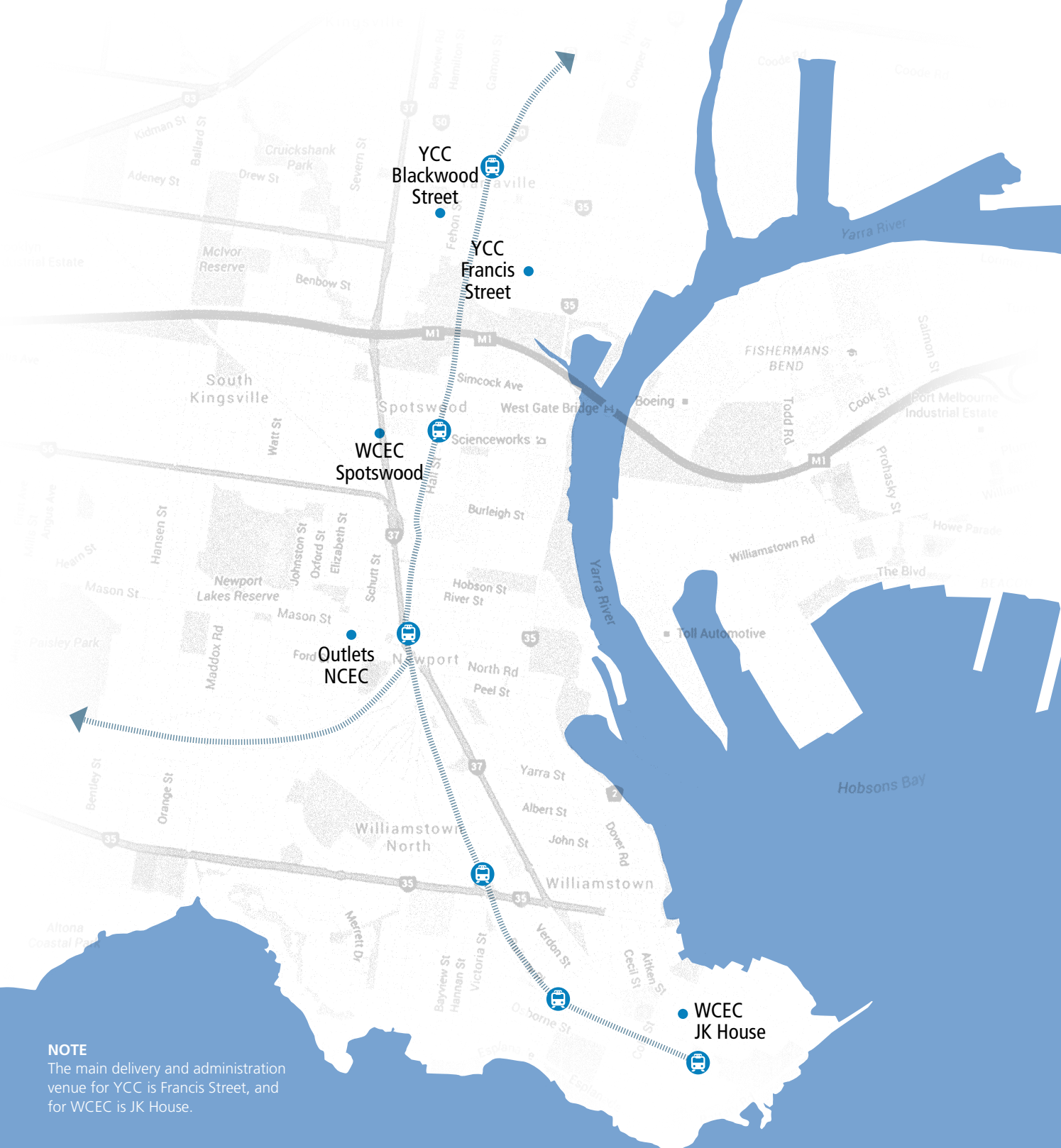
1. Identification of the question and securing commitment
2. **Plan** – Developing a plan of action
3. **Act** – Collecting data and current research, including interviews with the Study group
4. **Observe** – Analysing the data
5. **Reflect** – Reflecting on the data and making recommendations for future action.

Action research and the Plan–Act–Observe–Reflect framework operate in cycles and this Study sets the ground work for exploring more partnering possibilities between the three organisations.





# THE THREE ORGANISATIONS AND VENUES



**NOTE**  
 The main delivery and administration venue for YCC is Francis Street, and for WCEC is JK House.

# KEY CHARACTERISTICS

A distinctive characteristic of Neighbourhood Houses or Learn Locals is that each responds to its community in its own way. This quote from the Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centre's (ANHLC) website says it all:

*...if you've been to one neighbourhood house...you've been to one neighbourhood house...*

Each Centre has its own history and character. Centres create their own networks, partnerships, priorities and strategies that add to its character, identity and profile. They are responsive and agile; they are not 'one size fits all', precisely because they foster a culture of engagement with the community and build strong relationships that support their work.

Nevertheless, while each Centre is unique in its expression, they are part of a geography and a sector, and many elements of their character, identity, profile and relationships share common themes and common relationships. This would be expected in a sector where collaboration is a stated principle and goal of practice.

The following chart summarises the key characteristics of each Centre for this Study.

## Summary chart of key characteristics

Characteristic	Yarraville Community Centre	Outlets Cooperative Neighbourhood House	Williamstown Community and Education Centre
<b>Structure and identity</b>			
Established	1975	1973	1974
Governance structure	Incorporated Association	Cooperative	Incorporated Association
Governance structure-positions	Committee 9 members one vacancy (2015)	Committee 6 members one vacancy (2015)	Committee 10 members all filled (2015)
Number of members	9	51	99
Tax/charity status	Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) Income Tax Exempt Charity (ITEC) Tax Concession Charity (TCC)	DGR, PBI, ITEC, TCC	DGR, PBI, ITEC TCC
Registered identity	Charity (Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC)) Incorporated Association (Consumer Affairs Victoria) Registered Training Organisation (RTO) Learn Local (Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE)) Neighbourhood House (Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)) Children's service (DHHS)	Charity (ACNC) Cooperative (Australian Securities and Investments Commission - ASIC ) Learn Local (ACFE) Neighbourhood House (DHHS) Children's service (DHHS)	Charity (ACNC) Incorporated Association (Consumer Affairs Victoria) RTO Learn Local (ACFE) Neighbourhood House (DHHS) Children's service (DHHS)
Philosophy/ethos	Green/ Sustainable Inclusive/ accessible Community ownership Community development	Green/ Sustainable Inclusive/ accessible Community ownership Community development	Green/ Sustainable Inclusive/ accessible Community ownership Community development
Strategic Goals	Community Programs and Services Partnerships Profile Funding Internal Infrastructure Governance Sustainability	Meeting Community need through community development, facilitating access, inclusion and participation Education and Training programs Children's Services Our People Networking/Partnerships Financial sustainability Accountabilities Infrastructure Marketing & Communication	Serving the Community Service Delivery Economic Performance Governance Strategic Relationships Environmental sustainability Information Communication Technology (ICT)
<b>People</b>			
Staffing	No. 35 Effective Full Time (EFT):19 Sub-contractors 20	No. 7 EFT 3	No. 23 EFT 12 approx.

Characteristic	Yarraville Community Centre	Outlets Cooperative Neighbourhood House	Williamstown Community and Education Centre
Industry Award	Children's Services Award Educational Services (post-secondary) Award 2010	Neighbourhood House and Adult Community Education (NHACE) Collective Agreement	NHACE Collective Agreement
Volunteers (average per year inc governance group)	Yes- 25	Yes- 10	Yes- 26 approx.
Student / Work experience placements & institution	10 per year various local secondary schools (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning VCAL students) Victoria University University of Melbourne Adult Migrant English Service (AMES)	6 per year Selmar Ashley Victoria University Swinburne University Westgate Community Initiatives Group (WCIG) Local schools	4 approx. per year Victoria University University of Melbourne local schools

### Venues, locations and infrastructure

Venues	2 main venues 8 locations Francis Street venue owned by State Government Blackwood Street venue owned by Council	1 main venue 2 locations Main venue owned by Outlets Cooperative	2 main venues 5 locations Joan Kirner House owned by Council Spotswood venue owned by State government
<b>Rooms available for hire: Meeting Rooms (small-medium groups)</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hall (large groups 40+)	Yes	Yes	Yes
ICT lab	Yes	Yes	Yes
Children's room + outdoor area	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kitchen + Room	Yes	Yes	Yes- whole venue
Art/craft space	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gallery space	Yes	Yes	Yes
Disability infrastructure	Toilets Lift Recharge point	Toilets Ramps Recharge point	Toilets Ramps Recharge point
Community garden	At Blackwood St and raised garden beds at Francis St	No	At Spotswood Community House
Computer systems	PC (Office, labs, laptops) Apple/Mac platforms (ipads- courses)	PC (Office, labs, laptops) Apple/Mac platforms (ipads- courses)	PC (Office, labs, laptops) Apple/Mac platforms (ipads- courses)
NBN	At Blackwood St. Coming soon at Francis St	No	No- currently planning for connection
Wifi (public access)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Solar power	No	No	No
Solar hot water	No	No	No
Water tanks	At Francis St	Yes	At Spotswood Community House

Characteristic	Yarraville Community Centre	Outlets Cooperative Neighbourhood House	Williamstown Community and Education Centre
Recycling	Yes	No	Yes
Public transport accessibility	Yes train (Williamstown and Werribee line), bus (Route 472 and 409)	Yes train (Williamstown and Werribee line), bus (Route 472), Taxi rank	Yes train (Williamstown and Werribee line), bus (Route 472)

## Contractual relationships and obligations

Funding bodies	Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) Adult Community and Further Education ACFE Council Department of Education and Training DET (Vic) Department of Education and Training DET (Cth) Bendigo Bank	DHHS ACFE Council Department of Social Services DSS (Cth)	DHHS ACFE Council DET (Vic) DET (Cth) Hobsons Bay Community Fund Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
Sponsors	Yarraville Swim Centre	Rotary Bunnings Mobil Newport Traders Association Newport Fiddle Folk Club	Mobil Keima Press Naiko Personal Computers Simmers Hardware Yarraville Swim Centre Signway Citiwest Rentals Bunnings Williamstown Gardener Joncol Trailer Trash Newport Timber Living Colour Studio Spotswood PS Bunnings Quest
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	Think West Consortium (common with Williamstown) Learning for Employment Consortium (common with Williamstown) West Footscray Neighbourhood House Braybrook Maidstone Neighbourhood House JobCo Community Centre network City of Maribrnong	Australian Multicultural Community Services Gateway Community Services Victorian Immigrant & Refugee Women's Coalition New Hope Foundation	Think West Consortium (common with Yarraville) Learning for Employment Consortium (common with Yarraville) Western Suburbs Legal Service
Other formal Partnership contracts	Human Rights Commission-Racism it stops with me Healthwest partnership Western English Language School Department of Justice	No	No
Auspicing/sponsoring community initiatives	Yes	Yes	Yes

Characteristic	Yarraville Community Centre	Outlets Cooperative Neighbourhood House	Williamstown Community and Education Centre
<b>Networks</b>			
<b>Sector networks/ Memberships</b>	Network West Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (NHV) Thinkwest Learning for Employment Consortium Jobs Australia Adult Learning Australia (ALA) Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) Pro Bono VicTesol ourcommunity Moonee Valley/Maribyrnong Local Learning and Employment Network Volunteer West Leadwest	Network West NHV ALA Playgroup Victoria Free Kindergarten Association (FKA) Adult Community Education Victoria (ACEVic)	Network West NHV Thinkwest Learning for Employment Consortium Jobs Australia ALA
<b>Local government network</b>	Maribyrnong Neighbourhood House Cluster Innerwest Settlement Advisory Committee Maribyrnong Youth services Maribyrnong Older Persons Reference Group	Hobsons Bay Community Centre Manager's group Hobsons Bay Interagency network Hobsons Bay Settlement network Hobsons Bay Refugee Network	Hobsons Bay Community Centre Manager's group Hobsons Bay Interagency network Hobsons Bay Settlement network Hobsons Bay Refugee Network
<b>Local community networks (main)</b>	West Welcome Wagon Western Bulldogs Maribyrnong Truck Action Group Friends of Stony Creek Alcoholics Anonymous	Rotary Lions Club West Welcome Wagon Hobsons Bay Bicycle Users Group Timeball Club Friends of Market St Reserve Hobsons Bay Hellenic Women's Greek Club Williamstown & District Greek Elderly Club Newport Traders Association Newport Fiddle Folk Club Australian Arabic Women's Association Maori -Polynesian group Asia Access- Japanese group Finnish Association Friends of Newport Lakes Newport Organic Collective Local Schools	Mobil network Visit Williamstown West Welcome Wagon Williamstown Chamber of Commerce

Characteristic	Yarraville Community Centre	Outlets Cooperative Neighbourhood House	Williamstown Community and Education Centre
Other Networks	National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) networks Alpha Autism Scope Centrelink Jobactive Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) New Hope Foundation Wyndham Community Education Centre Settlement program & Wyndham Settlement Network Red Cross (Community Detention program) Victorian Electoral Commission CityWest water Surf Life Saving Club Emergency services: SES MFB Ambulance Police Dispute Settlement Centre Community Law Action	Latitudes (youth housing group) Scope Westgate Communities Initiatives Group (WCIG)	Small business mentoring service Certified Practising Accountants Not For Profit Network Centrelink Jobactive
Subscriptions/ Licenses	ourcommunity SurveyMonkey Victorian Adult Literacy Basic Education Council (VALBEC) Crimcheck	MYOB (software) SDLC enrol (software) ourcommunity	VALBEC- 'Fine Print' Virtual Independent Learning Centre (AMES) Herald Sun Crimcheck MYOB ourcommunity

## Promotions

Brochure (paper)	Yes per term Distributed to Libraries; other Neighbourhood Houses; Health centres, schools, cafes. Letterbox distribution by Fermax (rotated quarterly across Maribyrnong)	Yes per term Distributed to Libraries; other Neighbourhood Houses; local organisations; Health centres, cafes.  Letterbox distribution by volunteers	Yes per semester Distributed to Libraries; other Neighbourhood Houses; local organisations; Health centres, cafes.  Letterbox distribution by volunteers
Electronic newsletter	Yes Malt Creative Per fortnight	Yes (email) Per month	Yes (email) Per month
Online: Website	Yes	Yes	Yes
Youtube channel	No	No	Yes
Social media: Facebook	Yes	Yes	No
Twitter	Yes	No	No
Other:	Thinkwest website Maribyrnong Council calendar Local newspapers Various other targeted websites according to program e.g. Gumtree	Gumtree School newsletters Local newspapers Council brochures	Thinkwest website Council brochures Local newspapers

Characteristic	Yarraville Community Centre	Outlets Cooperative Neighbourhood House	Williamstown Community and Education Centre
<b>Regular Suppliers</b>			
Regular PD/training	Victorian Adult Literacy Basic Education Council (VALBEC) Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) Learning for Employment Adult Learning Australia (ALA) Jobs Australia VET Development Centre First Aid and CPR Health Corp Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE)- Centre for Adult Education (CAE)	Sue Larkey (Autism educator) RESUS (First Aid, CPR etc) Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (NHV) Hobsons Bay City Council ACFE Free Kindergarten Australia (FKA)	Wyndham Community Education Centre (for Training & Assessment qualifications) First Choice (first aid et al) NHV Hobsons Bay City Council
Stationary	Paperchase	Officeworks	Paperchase
Cleaning & sanitary services/products	Who gives a crap? Pink sanitary services	Flick washroom services Officeworks	Westside Cleaning services A Cleaner World
Security	Britech Security	Paul-tec	Britech Security
Utilities (Electricity, gas, water)	Powershop Energy Australia (gas) Citywest Water	Momentum Citywest Water	AGL Power direct Citywest Water
Telephone	Commander-soon to be replaced with VOIP	Telstra Commander	Telstra Ipecs system – NBN compatible
Photocopier	Melbourne Copier	Ricoh	Sharp
ICT	Cornerstone	Cootacom	Naiko Personal Computers
Educational resources (eg early childhood; adult education)	No preferred	Modern Teachers Aid Officeworks Free Kindergarten Australia (FKA) Noah's Ark	No preferred
Furniture	No preferred	No preferred	Woods Furniture
Maintenance (building/ grounds)	Council	Ian Fraser (electrician) Cut Clean Services Maxworks Peter Woods (electrical test & tag)	Joncol Building Services (Spotswood) Cheswick Consultants (grounds) Council (JK House)
Validation & moderation	Learning for Employment Consortium Thinkwest	N/A	Learning for Employment Consortium Thinkwest
Prof services: Audit	Joseph Boyar	Joseph Boyar	Joseph Boyar



Characteristic	Yarraville Community Centre	Outlets Cooperative Neighbourhood House	Williamstown Community and Education Centre
Legal	Justice Connect	No	No
Accountant	In house	In house	Carrinya Consulting Services
Banking	Bendigo Bank	Bendigo Bank Commonwealth (CBA)	CBA Bendigo Bank
Graphic Design	Watts design	In house	Shane Wales
Printing and publishing	Watts design	In house Keima Press	Keima Press

## Programs and services

Child care (Ltd type 2)	Yes	Yes	Yes
3yo activity program	Yes	Yes (returning)	Yes
Playgroups	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accredited on scope	Yes Certificates in General Education for Adults (CGEA) English as an Additional Language (EAL)	No	Yes CGEA/EAL
Pre-accredited	Yes 22,480 Student Contact Hours(2015)	Yes 1,200 SCH (2015)	Yes 14,440 SCH (2015)
Online delivery	In development (re followup student homework tasks online)	Email homework	Homework and online tasks and links on website for students who are absent
Short courses	Yes	Yes	Yes
Activities for children (inc school holiday programs)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Activities for young people	Yes	Yes	Yes
Activities for seniors	Yes	Yes	Yes
Activities for people with disabilities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Activities for Asylum Seekers	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other specific cohorts	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)	CALD Women	CALD, Indigenous

Characteristic	Yarraville Community Centre	Outlets Cooperative Neighbourhood House	Williamstown Community and Education Centre
Computer/ICT programs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Creative Arts programs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Health and wellbeing (fitness) programs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cooking programs (cultural & healthy)	Yes	Yes	Occasionally
Sustainability and environment programs (inc gardening)	Yes	Yes	Occasionally at Spotswood
Languages	Yes	No	Yes
Recreational	Yes	Yes	Yes
Counselling & welfare services	No – informal and referred	Yes	Yes
Food access	No	No	No
Other community development projects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Regular User groups	Yes Social groups Self help groups Fundraising groups Environmental groups Community Groups	Yes Social groups Self help groups Religious groups Community groups Environmental groups Rotary Body corporate groups Music groups Parent education groups Education groups Deakin University (longitudinal research)	Yes Social groups Self help groups Religious groups Community groups

# WHO VISITS THE CENTRES?

## Community participation

An aggregate collation of data from the annual ANHLC Census of Neighbourhood Houses (2013) provides some insight into the level of participation in the three centres.\*

Within the survey period of one week approximately

# 1,099

people visited and used the services of the three Learn Locals

**71%** WOMEN

MEN **29%**

**21%** UNDER 9 (assuming mostly Childcare)

OVER 45 **38%**

**25%** DIDN'T HAVE ENGLISH AS A FIRST LANGUAGE

**15%** HAD A DISABILITY

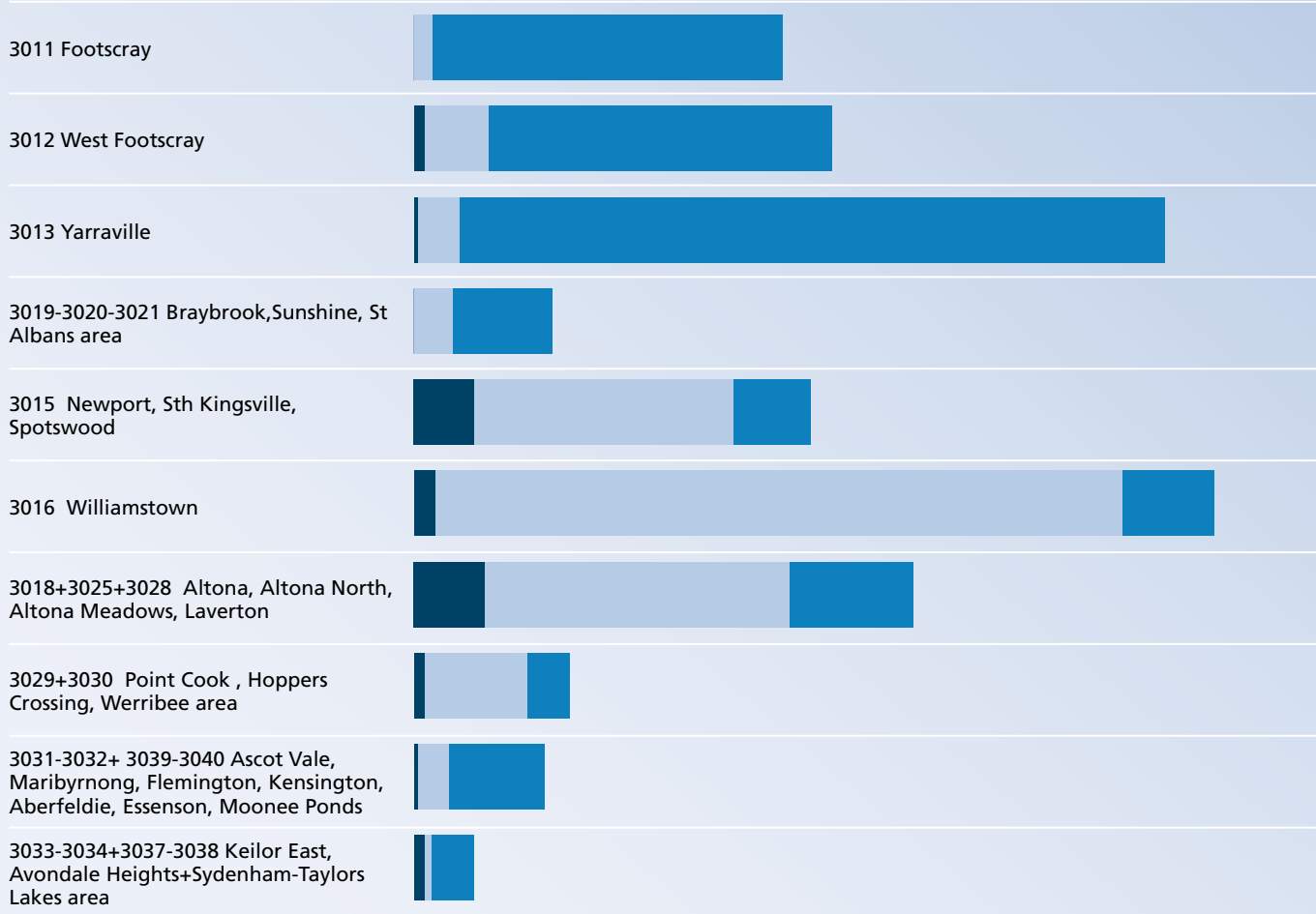
**37%** WERE CONCESSION CARD HOLDERS

**\*NOTE on ANHLC Census data:**

Although providing a useful overall picture, the ANHLC data should not be considered as totally accurate. The survey is taken over a one week period, and factors such as a one off special event or a group excursion, can effect the accuracy of the data. Also, the survey is voluntary and is reliant on each visitor taking the time to complete the survey. It has been reported by Centre managers that many CALD learners and learners with low literacy opt out of completing the survey. Therefore, it is likely that the actual figures of participants during the census period, in reality, is greater than the figures presented in this Study.

## Geographic reach

### Participant Postcodes



### KEY

- OUTLETS
- WCEC
- YCC

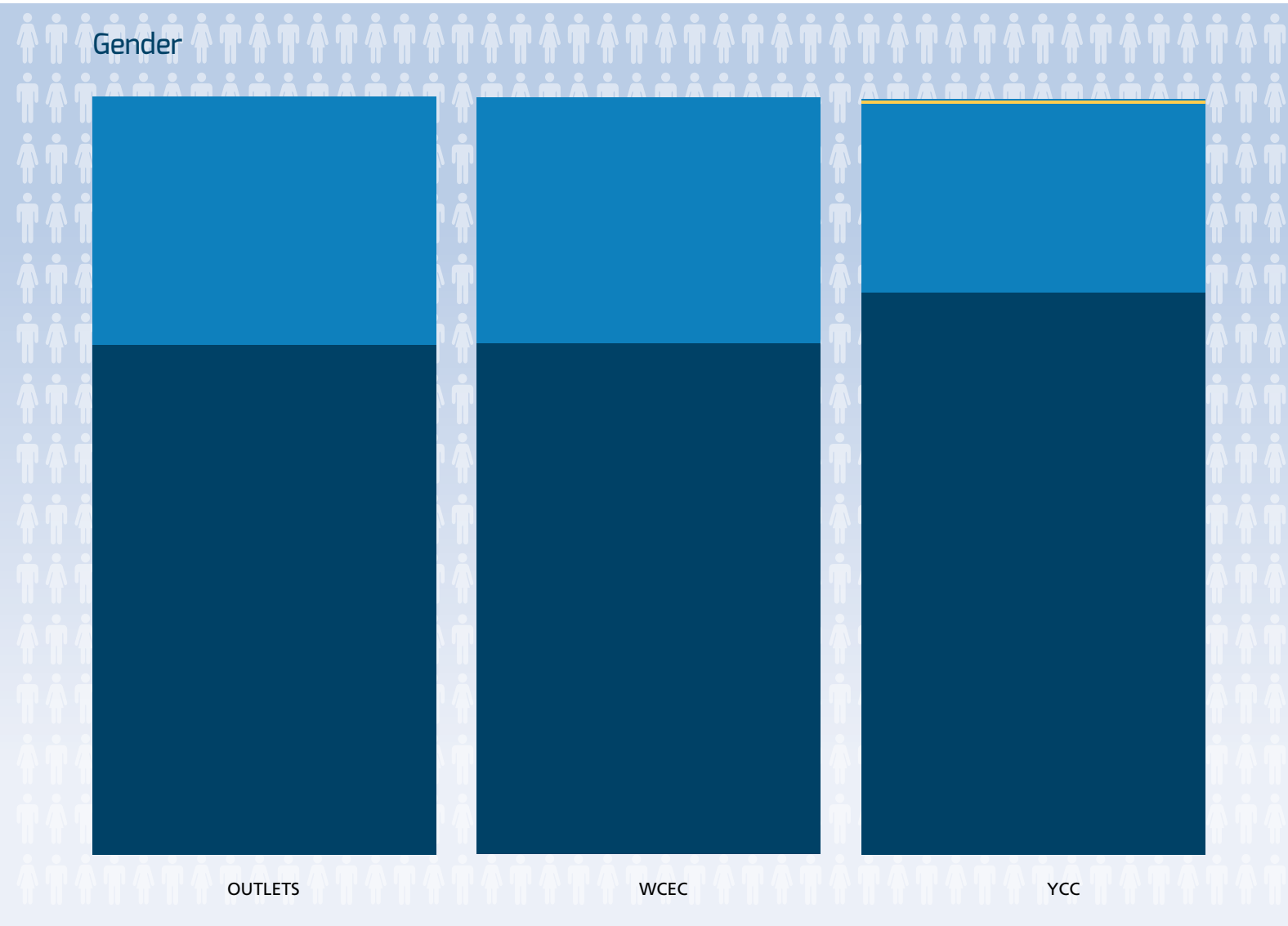
Source: ANHLC Census data 2013- Yarraville Community Centre (43K04), Newport Community Education Centre (32K04), Williamstown Community and Education Centre (32K08) & Spotswood Community House (32K06) (raw numbers).

According to the ANHLC Census 2013, all centres have strong local, neighbourhood participation. Similar patterns are shown in the ACFE Regional Pre-accredited Data Pack (2014). The ACFE 'Data Pack' also collects annual data from Learn Local organisations.

Sixty per cent (Hobsons Bay) and 69 per cent of (Maribyrnong) local residents participated in pre-accredited training in their Local Government Area. Outlets' participants are primarily drawn from the surrounding suburbs, whereas the YCC and WCEC centres cast a wider geographic net across the inner west, up into Moonee Valley and out into the Wyndham area. This is also confirmed in the ACFE data.

This may possibly be due to a combination of the YCC and WCEC centres being sizable RTOs in the inner western region, the informal referrals they make between each other, and the partnerships they have with regional consortiums, Thinkwest and the Learning for Employment consortium.

## Participant characteristics – selected indicators in comparison



### KEY

- FEMALE
- TRANS
- MALE

Women are the major participants in each of the centres. The regional data shows that double the number of women participate in pre-accredited training compared with men in the regional data (ACFE 2014). This reflects the pattern of ANHLC data.

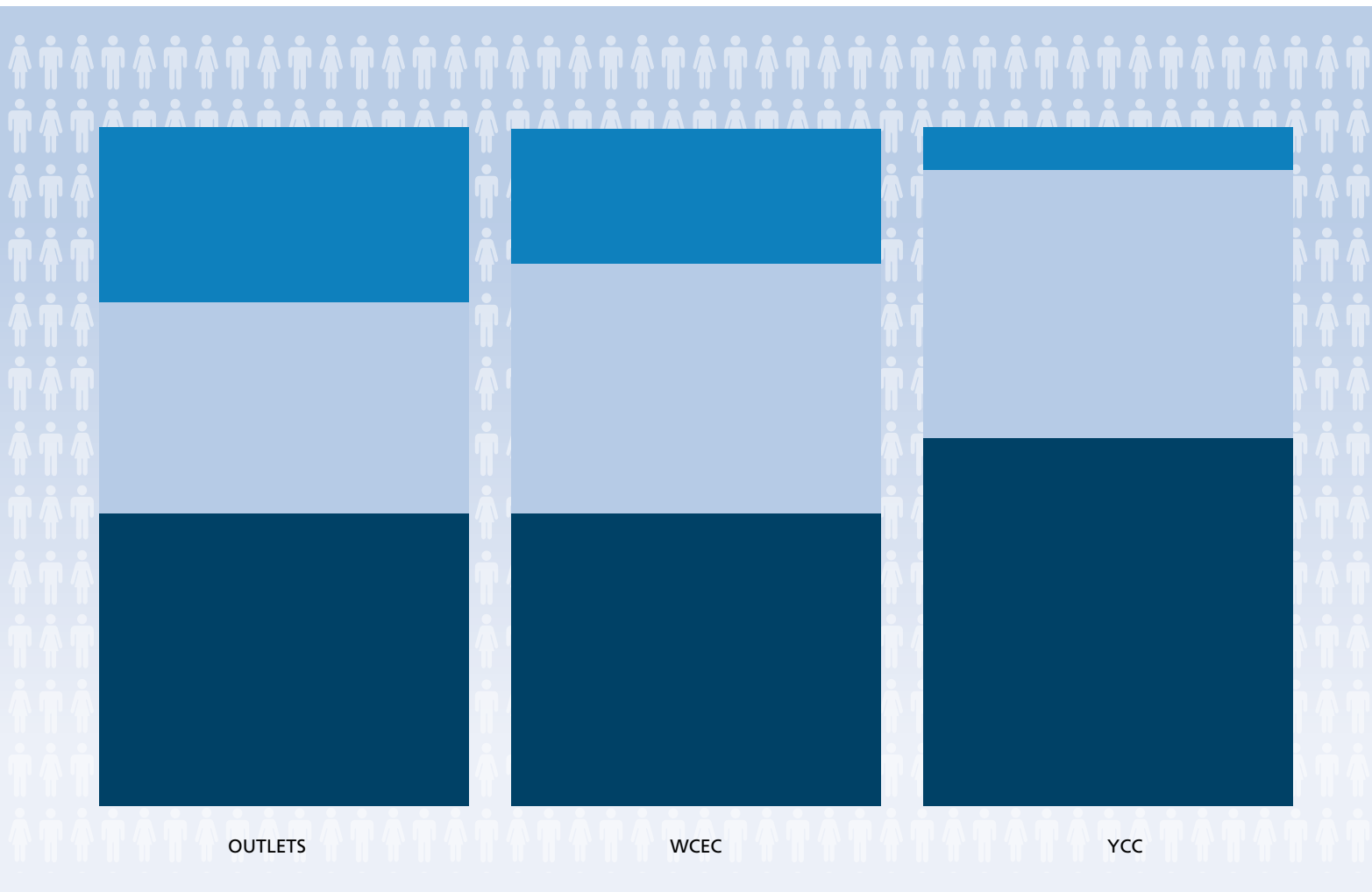
A small number of transgender participants attend YCC programs.

Slightly more men are attending the WCEC and Outlets compared with YCC, which may reflect declining employment in local manufacturing industries. ACFE data supports this, showing a 162 per cent increase for enrolments of 'Males 45 years and older' in Hobsons Bay.

Furthermore, figures for 'vulnerable workers' rose 118 per cent in Hobsons Bay.

Source: ANHLC Census data 2013 (%)

## Age



### KEY

- 65+
- 45-65
- 20-44

The majority age range for participation is 20–44 years across the three centres, followed by 45–64 years, then 65+ years.

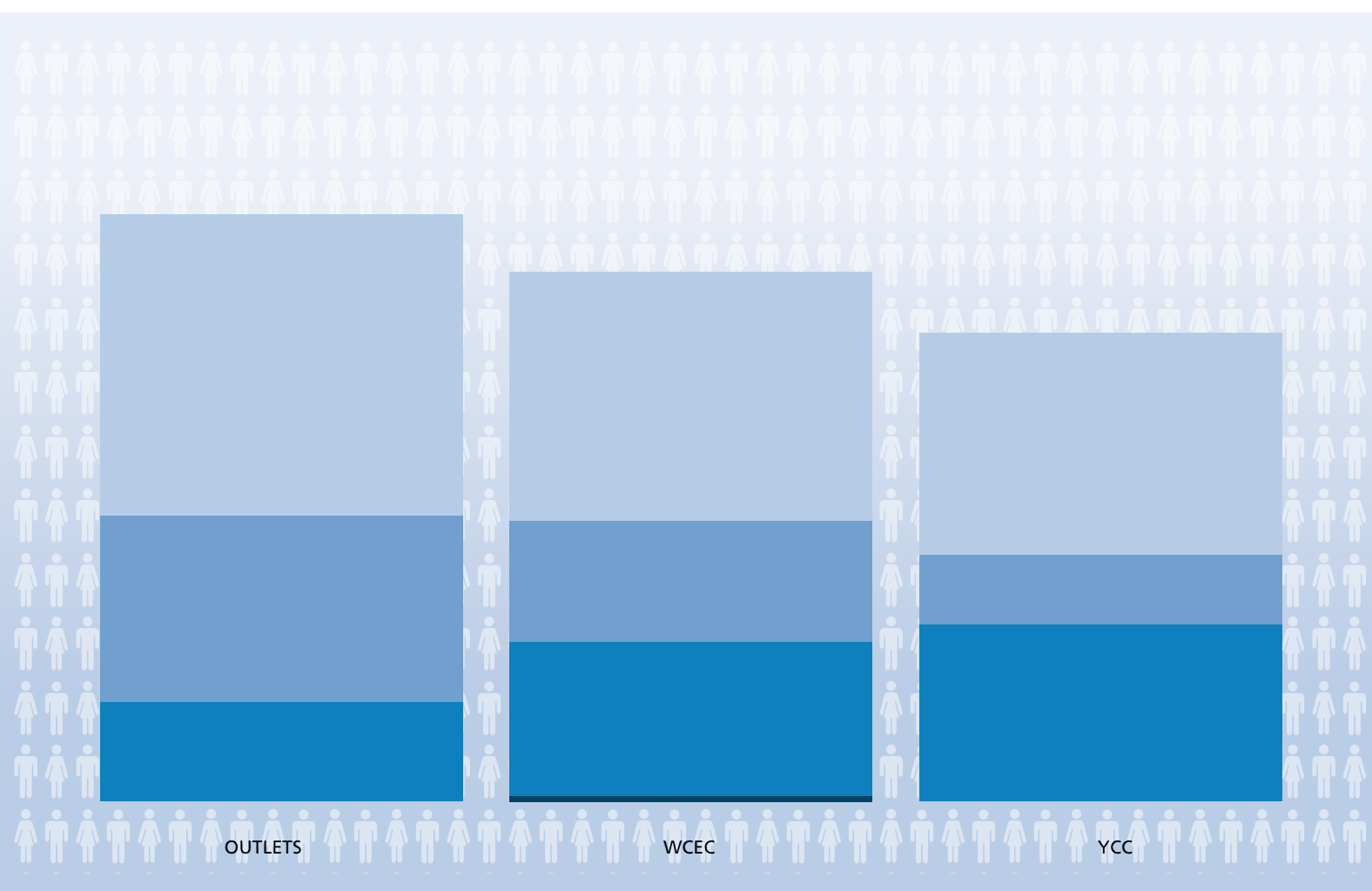
YCC has a greater proportion of participants aged 20–44 years and slightly more participants aged 45–64 years, which may reflect the younger populations (young adults, including university students in shared households) and young families that comprise a significant proportion of the local community. It may also reflect the extensive range of short courses on offer that tend to attract greater numbers of people aged 20–44 years.

WCEC attracts a greater proportion of older persons (65+ years) than the other two centres, whereas Outlets attracts slightly more middle-aged people aged 45–65 years than WCEC.

The ACFE Data Pack reflects a similar overall pattern indicating that students of working age (defined as 15–64 years) were 86 per cent of the student body.

Source: ANHLC  
Census data 2013  
(% excluding 0-19  
categories)

## Diversity



### KEY

- Concession card
- Disability
- English not primary language at home
- ATSI

Source: ANHLC  
Census data 2013  
(% individual  
variables)

A small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are attending the WCEC and YCC.

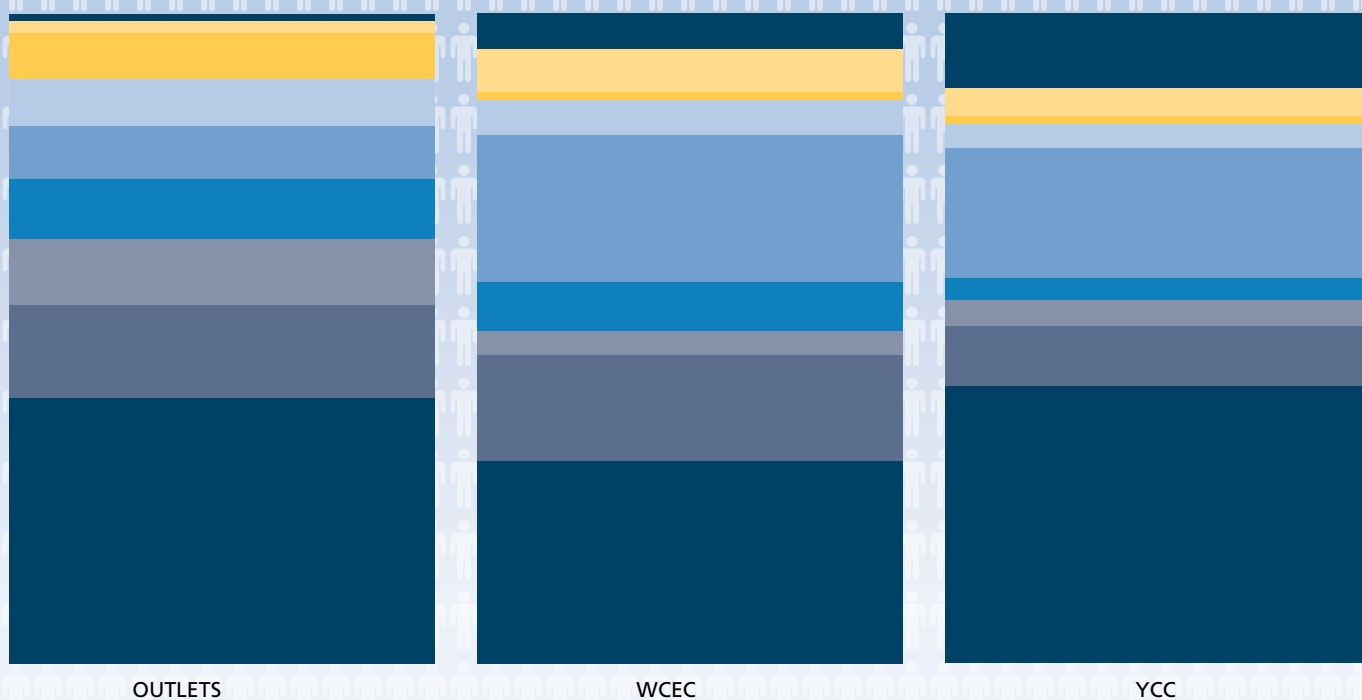
All centres are attracting CALD participants, mainly through their English language programs. YCC is attracting the highest proportion, with WCEC only slightly less. This may be due to both YCC and WCEC being RTOs and offering pre-accredited and accredited programs.

Outlets attracts a substantially higher proportion of participants with disability. Outlets also has the greatest proportion of concession card holders accessing their programs but, importantly, concession card holders represent the greatest proportion of participants in the diversity indicators.

Taking into account the range of diversity indicators, the data demonstrates the three centres are attractive to diverse learners, and also accessible to and inclusive of diverse and disadvantaged learners.

Learners from a CALD background, Indigenous, disabled, males 45+ years and vulnerable workers were identified as priority groups for the North-Western Metro Melbourne ACFE region in 2013/14. The ACFE and ANHLC data indicates that all three centres are catering extremely well for the learning needs of these diverse groups.

## Reason to attend



### KEY

- Exercise / health class
- Support group
- Volunteering, placement
- Advice / Help
- Childcare / playgroup
- Use a service
- Job training / job support
- Social Group
- Course or class

There are many reasons for people to attend the centres. Clearly their status as Learn Locals is an attraction, as indicated by the high response rate for all three centres for 'course and classes'.

Older males and vulnerable workers as well as 'second chance learners', those disengaged from education and training and those re-entering the workforce would form part of this number involved in pre-accredited courses providing employment skills programs, vocational options and pathways.

Childcare and playgroup are important drawcards for all centres but especially for WCEC and YCC which have larger spaces for children's services.

Social groups for Outlets and WCEC are slightly higher and may reflect the participation of community groups including seniors groups. WCEC support groups provide a motivation to attend. Exercise and health classes are an important drawcard for YCC, whereas job training and support is important for Outlets. Outlets also involves a higher number of volunteers and placements, reflecting an agreement with a local child care training organisation.

Each centre, whilst providing a range of programs and services, develops its own strengths and program mix in response to the community and the needs of local learners.

Combined, the three centres and five venues cater to an extremely diverse range of disadvantaged people within a relatively small geographical area.

Source: ANHLC Census data 2013 (%)



## Commonalities and relationships between the organisations

While the three centres are different, their operations share very similar traits.

Analysis of the information in the Key Characteristics chart, the ANHLC data and interviews conducted with the centre managers identified many commonalities and areas where relationships already exist.

These relationships provide a platform for expanding partnerships between the centres in future.

Key common features and existing collaborations are summarised below.

### Structure and identity

- ✓ Similar governance structures across all three
- ✓ All community owned and governed
- ✓ All have full charity status
- ✓ Common 'Neighbourhood House' identity
- ✓ Common 'Learn Local' identity
- ✓ Common philosophy and strategic goals
- ✓ Strong links between YCC and WCEC due to RTO status and participation in two consortiums in western region
- ✓ Strong links between WCEC and Outlets due to being located in same municipality and sharing similar Council networks (e.g. Hobsons Bay City Council Managers Group)
- ✓ Common strategic goals including, specifically, community programs and services, governance and financial management and strategic partnerships

### People

- ✓ Similar staffing mix (e.g. educators/tutors; child care workers; admin and management)
- ✓ Currently some ad hoc sharing of staff (childcare and tutors)
- ✓ All three managers contact each other when looking for staff, especially teachers/tutors and childcare workers. Historically, many staff who work at one centre, also work in other centres; word of mouth recommendations valued.
- ✓ All involve, manage and develop volunteers
- ✓ All involve, manage and develop students on placement (common source to all three is Victoria University and local schools)

## Venues, locations and infrastructure

- ✓ From north to south, the five venues are in a virtual straight line along the Williamstown rail line, from Yarraville station to Williamstown station (six stops apart, an 11 minute journey)
- ✓ All attend sector-related meetings in each other's centres (e.g. WCEC and Outlets for Hobsons Bay meetings; WCEC and YCC for consortium meetings; Network West meetings on occasion in Williamstown or Yarraville)
- ✓ All have community meeting spaces of varying sizes
- ✓ Some referral between centres when community demand for space exceeds capacity
- ✓ All have similar program facilities, varying in size and capacity, translating into options for referral and pathways
- ✓ All venues are accessible to people with disabilities
- ✓ All accessible by public transport including Werribee rail line

## Contractual relationships and obligations

- ✓ Common funding sources and obligations to funding bodies
- ✓ Variation occurs in relation to local funding sources and specific projects/initiatives
- ✓ Considering all have PBI and DGR status, there appears to be low levels of philanthropic funding
- ✓ All auspice/sponsor local community initiatives
- ✓ MOUs exist with other organisations however, no formal agreements between the three centres are in place (however, more *informal* relationships feature strongly)
- ✓ Both WCEC and YCC managers are regularly communicating by phone and email on a wide range of issues. They are often checking, clarifying and helping each other with compliance, IR issues, staffing, sector developments, etc. Both managers use this communication to support and mentor each other
- ✓ WCEC and the Outlets managers, due to being in the same Local Government Area, meet each other often at formal and informal events hosted by the council or other organisations in the municipality

## Networks

- ✓ All centres have developed extensive (deep and wide) and diverse networks
- ✓ Informal relationships between the three centres are strong
- ✓ All participate in common sector networks
- ✓ Cross-over of networks strong according to geography (i.e. local government networks) or sector relationships (RTO related consortiums or Neighbourhood House sector networks)
- ✓ While local government networks appear fixed to municipal geography, participants span municipal boundaries
- ✓ While community networks are largely defined by local relationships, there are some common community networks (especially those that have reach across the catchment)
- ✓ Some common subscriptions and memberships

## Promotions

- ✓ Common promotional strategies
- ✓ Common networks often used
- ✓ All three centres send each other materials such as brochures and promotional fliers and display this information in each other's centres so community members/learners can access local opportunities
- ✓ Mixed take up of social media often depending on use by local community

## Regular suppliers

- ✓ Some overlap with suppliers (often through referral from one centre to the other)
- ✓ Similar activities but different suppliers (variation perhaps due to 'buying local' ethos and established personal relationship with centre and local supplier)
- ✓ Some common training/ professional development suppliers. Differences vary according to program needs and priorities, as well as varying professional development budget allocations
- ✓ Some activities undertaken in-house rather than out-sourced

## Participants

- ✓ Participants are diverse and reflective of community
- ✓ All centres are true to their philosophy/values of inclusion and participation, providing access to diverse, disadvantaged and priority groups (as identified by ACFE).
- ✓ Crossover in geographies – all centres draw participants from similar areas in the catchment (Footscray to Newport—Altona to Williamstown)
- ✓ Yarraville and Williamstown have a wider reach. Yarraville has greater reach into the north, Williamstown further west into Wyndham
- ✓ Whilst participants come for many reasons, courses and classes are a significant attraction to all three centres

## Programs and services

- ✓ All Learn Locals, offering pre-accredited training
- ✓ All provide English language programs for CALD learners
- ✓ Referrals of students to programs offered in other centres (e.g. Outlets regularly refers students to YCC for specific computer courses; WCEC would pathway students to YCC for courses offered at a higher level)
- ✓ With computer classes, WCEC and Outlets tend to run basic, introductory courses. When requests come in for higher level learners they refer to YCC. This is an unofficial and informal 'understanding'. Nonetheless, it is a successful strategy that ensures local learners receive appropriate training and pathways for further education.
- ✓ As large RTOs in the catchment area WCEC and YCC tend to share staff resources and expertise related to teaching and learning as well as offering informal debriefing amongst staff members
- ✓ As large RTOs and members of two regional consortiums, YCC and WCEC draw participants from a broader geographical area
- ✓ YCC and Outlets have developed formal partnerships with other organisations that enable it to expand its reach and extend opportunities for learners in other localities and cohorts
- ✓ WCEC and Outlets, both being in Hobsons Bay, work in the same Council-sponsored and driven initiatives (e.g. Spring into Life campaign, Cultural Diversity week)
- ✓ Sometimes the centres are involved in similar programs but not aware of each other's mutual participation (e.g. Asylum seeker collection for West Welcome Wagon)
- ✓ All offer childcare and children's programs for local families
- ✓ All utilise a community development framework to facilitate community programs for a range of diverse community groups and participants (refer to common values/philosophy)
- ✓ Each centre, whilst providing a range of programs and services, develops its own strengths and program mix in response to the community and the needs of local learners

# WHAT IS A PARTNERSHIP?

There is extensive research in partnership theory and practice with the literature detailing various and multiple definitions, frameworks and models.

To capture the breadth of how 'partnership' can be conceived, this Study adopted the view that partnership is fundamentally about *relationships* between organisations.

Relationships can vary in *nature*. For example, a relationship still exists even if that relationship is a competitive one, however, competitive relationships tend to stifle the development of collaborative, productive relationships that are necessary to fulfil the broader purpose of not for profit organisations around community benefit.

These relationships can also vary in scale and *formality*. For the purposes of this Study, the 'Relationship Continuum' has been developed to illustrate how partnerships are conceived in the context of the Learn Local sector.

## The relationship continuum



(Adapted from Success works 2002 and VicHealth Partnership analysis tool 2011)

The continuum illustrates *types* of relationships but does not indicate an ideal, or suggest that relationships need to progress along the continuum to an 'ideal' end. The continuum gives expression to the range of relationship possibilities organisations can form.

The continuum outlines the *nature* of relationships formed between organisations, ranging from simpler, informal expressions to more sophisticated, formal relationships. An outline of each of the continuum relationships is outlined in the chart below. The chart lists characteristics that reflect the depth and complexity of the relationship.

## The relationship continuum

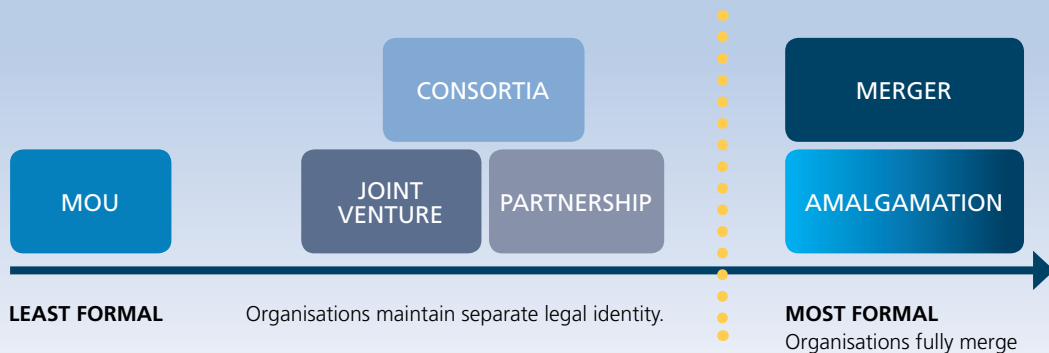
Informal						Formal
Coexisting	Networking	Coordinating	Cooperating	Collaborating	Partnering (formal)	Merging/ Amalgamating
Operating in the same sector or geographic area	Operating in the same sector or geographic area	Operating in the same sector or geographic area	Operating in the same sector or geographic area	Operating in the same sector or geographic area	Operating in the same sector or geographic area	Operating in the same sector or geographic area
	Sharing information	Sharing information	Sharing information	Sharing information	Sharing information	Sharing information
		Altering activities for a common purpose	Altering activities for a common purpose	Altering activities for a common purpose	Altering activities for a common purpose	Altering activities for a common purpose
			Sharing resources	Sharing resources	Sharing resources	Sharing resources
				Enhancing partner's capacity	Enhancing partner's capacity	Enhancing partner's capacity
					Entering into formal partnership agreements & contracts	Entering into formal partnership agreements & contracts
					Merging organisations into one entity	

(Adapted from McLeod J 2011, The partnership analysis tool, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Vic Health, <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/chipp/community/help.asp>)

**Informal relationships** are the most common type of relationship and are a significant part of the practice, organisation and policy agenda of Learn Local and Neighbourhood House sectors. The variety occurs in the *level* of informal engagement between organisations. Informal activity can occur from the coexisting end to the collaborating section of the continuum, where organisations have formed, over time, close, deep and sophisticated relationships.

**Formal relationships** are often characterised by their legal status where legal contracts or agreements about the partnering arrangement are developed. The following diagram relates to the relationships at the formal end of the continuum, *Partnering (formal)* and *Merging/Amalgamating*.

## Formalising relationships



(from Justice Connect 2015, p 9)

For the purposes of this Study, all of the 'least formal' arrangements indicated in the diagram (MOU, Consortia, Joint Venture, Partnership) correspond to the '*Partnership (formal)*' segment of the relationship continuum.

The diagram developed by Justice Connect (an organisation specialising in Not-for-Profit legal advice) focuses on the variety of legal arrangements that may exist between organisations. As the diagram suggests, there is, within formal arrangements, a gradation in the formality of the possible arrangements between organisations.

The least formal is the MOU. It has the status of an agreement between organisations and is developed and signed by both organisations. MOUs are often used when risks are low.

More formal arrangements are *Consortia, Joint Ventures and Partnerships (formal)*. More formal legal arrangements, often contracts, are developed between organisations to deliver a particular project or program. It acknowledges that each organisation has specific expertise to offer a project/program, be it particular skills, strengths, resources or due to geography. The main point to remember with these types of arrangements is that each organisation remains its own legal entity.

Finally, the most formal arrangement is when organisations merge or amalgamate. Here there is a change in the legal status of the organisation/s. This may be expressed by one organisation ceasing and its functions becoming merged into the other organisation or an entirely new organisational entity is formed.

# Analysis of the nature of the relationships between the organisations

## The three centres- analysis using the relationship continuum



From an overview of the data collected about the three centres and an examination of the relationships between them, clearly, the three centres do more than 'co-exist'. Despite the potential for each centre to adopt a 'market' approach and construct competitive relationships, all three centres demonstrate a commitment to the collaborative principles that underpin sector values. However, the centres have not entered into any formal agreements or contracts with each other to date. Other formal partnering arrangements exist with other organisations but not between the study group.

The relationships that exist between the three centres falls across the informal, middle range of the continuum: Networking, Coordinating, Cooperating and Collaborating.

### Networking

The three centres share information regularly. They attend similar network meetings such as those organised around local government, Learn Local or Neighbourhood House interests. At these meetings there is mutual sharing of current events, concerns or developments including sharing of brochures for programs their centres are delivering. The centres circulate in common wider community and educational networks and share information related to these contexts.

### Coordinating

The three centres and venues engage in planning activities together for a common purpose. The three centres by virtue of sharing similar vision and values are committed to the common purpose of building strong, inclusive and sustainable communities through a community development framework.

The three centres are connected geographically and serve both their local neighbourhoods and the wider catchment area. They are all involved in each other's events (such as Annual General Meetings) as well as broader sector events that serve their common purpose. They strongly identify as belonging to a sector and will coordinate events such as Neighbourhood House Week or Adult Learners Week.

They have participated in issues of mutual concern such as asylum seeker support initiatives (such as West Welcome Wagon). They have promoted each other's programs to community members. The two centres located in Hobsons Bay have participated in working groups developing local government publications about services offered by neighbourhood houses and participated in organising municipal-wide programs and festivals. The two RTOs, WCEC and YCC, are actively participating in two consortiums developing and delivering programs to learners across the western region.



## Cooperating

The three centres share resources regularly in a variety of ways to support their common purpose. They will offer to host meetings and share meeting rooms, they recommend and share child care and education/training staff as well as suppliers and professional services, and will facilitate access to relevant networks within their sphere of influence.

## Collaborating

Given the ethos of each centre and the community development principles of the sector, it is affirming the three centres have cooperative and collaborative relationships.

A deeper expression is when deliberate actions enhance the capacity of another centre. This might involve improving staff capacity, operations, program delivery, or governance. Collaboration recognises the independence of each individual centre but acknowledges the mutual benefits of inter-connectedness.

Each centre demonstrates this through referrals to other centres. This recognises each centre has particular strengths and resources and that, in the end, participants can benefit by creating informal pathways between the centres or options for participants. It also means the centres can commit resources to areas of strategic priority rather than spread effort and resources thinly across too many areas.

As Learn Locals they often seek each other's support and advice around curriculum development, resources and templates. With the increased and complex demands around governance and compliance, especially for the RTOs, the centres support each other through debriefing, auditing and reporting discussions, and moderation and validation processes for courses and classes. Letters of support for projects are another action of collaboration.

The complex role of manager, with the significant responsibility and knowledge requirements to run a multi-layered organisation, as well as respond to the needs of a governance committee, can be demanding and stressful. Assistance from peers is an essential element in supporting good management and sustaining resilient leadership.

All these actions enhance the capacity of each of the centres to deliver quality, responsive programs to their communities and grow organisational capacity and sustainability.

Given the range and level of relationship that currently exists between the three centres, a willingness to participate in this Study, and a demonstrated openness to developing formal partnerships, these conditions offer great potential for further formal partnering arrangements.

## Possibilities for 'deepening' the existing relationships

Many activities identified above are performed on an ad hoc basis and not with conscious, strategic intent, yet even these ad hoc collaborative actions are building capacity and adding value. A conscious, intentional and planned approach to developing strategic partnerships could offer opportunities to each to strengthen their operations and service delivery to generate better outcomes for individuals and communities.

## Strategic alliance

Each centre identifies in their Strategic Plan the need for developing 'Strategic Partnerships' therefore the planning framework is already in place for committees to consider deepening the partnership relationship.

The broad range of data collected on each of the centres clearly indicates there are strong foundations on which to build a successful formal partnership. They are 'like' organisations with congruent values, structures, programs, staffing, networks and goals. Formalising the relationships enables the centres to develop a strategic alliance.

A recommended next step therefore is that the centres formalise, through a MOU, the existing partnership, as well as clearly stating the intention to pursue other partnering opportunities, as highlighted in this Study.

## Catchment alliance

The geography, transport connections, participant reach and existing informal relationships lend itself to a catchment approach. The value of a catchment approach is that all partners can contribute their strengths and expertise to a broader range of learners and community members across the inner west, extending beyond the reach and capacity of a single operator.

A catchment approach means the centres could investigate how to work within and across municipal boundaries in all areas of operations.

The centres could also investigate promoting across municipal boundaries similar to Duke St Community House who are involved in both the Brimbank and the Maribyrnong Cluster of neighbourhood houses and associated promotions developed by each council precisely because that Learn Local caters for participants in both municipalities. The data suggests this is also true for the three centres in this Study.



Centres could also consider promoting their programs along the train and bus routes.

While the three centres have full charity status and are eligible to apply for philanthropic funding, this opportunity has had little take-up by the centres. Joint applications for project funds for largescale community development projects across the catchment area may be more attractive to funders and provide opportunities for targeting diverse communities and achieving significant impact on entrenched social issues.

## Enhanced organisational capacity

The centres could investigate formal agreements for sharing various functions including:

- Staffing, volunteer management, student supervision
- Committee induction and training
- Shared training, development and networking of staff, especially sharing expertise
- Back-of-house functions
- Shared spaces, perhaps developing a common database for room hire
- Developing shared policies and joint work on community development initiatives especially involving auspicing and sponsoring local projects
- Group purchasing for supplies, memberships, subscriptions etc.
- Joint brochures for programs especially articulating pathways for local learners
- Joint social media plan that is targeted where needed and appropriate.

## Improved learner pathways and options

There are opportunities to formalise pathways and develop diverse program specialities amongst the Learn Locals, especially the RTOs, to allow learners to progress through various levels and program options.

The centres could further investigate out-posting of courses in various venues across the catchment. Outlets has moved away from delivering accredited courses but could consider having specific pre-accredited courses relevant to local learner's needs delivered through the partnership at their site. Both YCC and WCEC deliver courses in various locations. Further market analysis may indicate that learner needs may be more appropriately met by delivering courses at specific outposted locations across the catchment, further extending the reach and access to participants to the north and west.

Possible 'next step' options to develop and/or formalise the existing relationships and joint action for these three centres are provided by ACFE (2015).

Firstly:

- Develop a formal **strategic alliance** to collaborate on a set of agreed objectives whilst remaining independent organisations.

From this, the centres could aim to develop specific initiatives, again suggested by ACFE:

- **Purchasing consortium** to secure discounted rates on bulk orders, such as computers
- Shared training delivery across a group of providers in a regional area to provide better access for students, a broader range of course offerings and access to more/ specialist teaching staff
- **Shared corporate services** with organisations working together to manage back-of-house services such as human resources, finance, payroll, marketing, procurement and compliance activities to reduce costs and free up time to focus on students
- **Shared facilities** where organisations agree to share the use of an existing or planned facility via a license or other kind of ongoing agreement, such as using another provider's kitchen facility to deliver hospitality courses
- **Co-locating** training and service delivery across Learn Local organisations, other education and training providers, local government, employment services and welfare agencies to better target learners and reduce accommodation costs (ACFE 2015).

An assessment of these options would need to be addressed by the managers and committees of each centre. Of these, this Study has already identified the possibility of a purchasing consortium, shared training delivery, shared corporate services and shared facilities, as well as a formal partnership for project submissions (particularly to large philanthropic organisations) and a catchment alliance (similar to a strategic alliance).

There are other options which could be further explored if the three centres pursued more formal partnership arrangements. The appropriate forum for this discussion is with committees and managers.

## What makes an effective partnership?

In exploring the theoretical background relating to 'partnerships', this Study seeks to *describe* the types of relationships that exist, to identify what *qualities* are required that will influence the effectiveness of informal and formal relationships, and to develop an awareness of the *lifecycle* of relationships.

The literature identifies several 'factors' that influence the quality and effectiveness of partnerships.

### Partnership factors

The 'factors' are the principles or features of a partnership considered of importance for successful and effective partnerships.

It is commonly recommended that effective partnerships require these discrete but interlinked 'factors' to be considered successful.

It needs to be noted that a weakness or lack of a 'factors' may not necessarily be of concern.

Eight separate 'factors' are described here:

1. **A desire, need and purpose** – A realistic, clear and shared recognition and acceptance of the need or desire for a partnership.
2. **Mutual benefits** – A good relationship and potential outcomes where all partners benefit mutually. All partners complement each other.
3. **Shared commitment, ownership and vision** – Shared goals, objectives, and ways of doing things. Trust developed and maintained and partnership is fair, and equal.
4. **Collaborative planning** – Realistic and collaborative planning, control and choice.
5. Clear and robust governance arrangements – Partnership arrangements, processes, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities robust, clear and understood.
6. **Honesty, respect and clear communication** – Partners are open, honourable, respectful and honest with each other. Partners acknowledge, recognise and advocate for each other. Diversity is welcomed and differences are resolved effectively.
7. **Capacity and competency** – Valuable and sufficient competency and capacity of the partnership to make it work. Partners work across boundaries (professional, organisational).
8. **Monitor, reflect and learn** – Partners learn through reflective practice. Realistic ways of monitoring and measuring achievements.

(adapted from DSE 2005 and Brophy 2011)

Relationships form, deepen and change over time. There are stages in all relationships. Stages change due to the nature of the relationships formed and the needs of organisations as they adapt and innovate in response to changing contexts. The following chart identifies key stages or activities that may occur in informal and formal partnerships and influence decisions to engage at different levels in partnership building. An awareness of the lifecycle of partnerships can support groups to recognise where they are in that cycle and what lies ahead and what is needed to build good partnerships over time.

## Lifecycle of partnerships

1. **Connecting** – Potential partners meeting, discovering compatibility, getting to know each other and starting their planning for future activities together.
2. **Contracting** – Negotiating, deciding on roles, rules and funding.
3. **Divergence** – Discover that there are different ideas about how things should be done, but managing and overcoming the inevitable differences and/or conflict between partners.
4. **Collaborating** – Developing techniques for keeping the momentum going when the partnership is working well.
5. **Maturing** – partners begin to grow and mature.
6. **Closing** – Ending a partnership or ending one partner's involvement. Perhaps as a precursor to turning into another 'type of relationship' or a new partnership altogether with others.

(adapted from DSE 2005 and Brophy 2011)

Clearly, the study group is at the 'connecting' phase of the lifecycle of developing formal partnerships. The aim of this Study is to reveal the commonalities, discover the compatibility and analyse the partnering possibilities of the three centres. The remaining lifecycle stages are signposts for possible future phases of this action research project.

The Partnership Factors can assist in analysing and assessing the quality of the relationship between the three organisations participating in this Study, as well as indicate ways forward and provide a framework for fostering and strengthening effective partnerships.

This Study represents the first factor and is exploratory in nature. In coming together for this Study the centres have demonstrated a desire to explore the possibilities. The centres are already engaging in informal collaborations and this, although ad hoc, enhances each other's capacity which could potentially offer greater opportunities if formalised and consciously developed.

The centres are complementary organisations, with common vision, values and strategic purpose. They share many common traits as the data indicates. They have developed good working relationships within the catchment and within the sector more broadly and have positive indicators for partnering success. This provides a solid foundation for proceeding to a second phase of a formal partnership through discussion and planning.

The Lifecycle and Partnership factors as outlined above provide the three centres, their stakeholders and decision-makers with a clear framework for future formal partnership strategic action.

# CONCLUSION

This study examined the key characteristics of the three organisations and their venues, Yarraville Community Centre, Outlets Cooperative Neighbourhood House and Williamstown Community and Education Centre, which are geographically connected via the Williamstown train line, creating an inner west Learn Local catchment area. The comprehensive profile developed identifies the unique character and strengths of each organisation, however, what also emerges from the data are the many commonalities and shared qualities across the three organisations.

This Study documents the existing formal and informal relationships the three centres are currently engaged in. Informed by contemporary theory on partnerships, it was identified the centres have developed informal ad hoc relationships that range in depth from networking and coordinating to cooperating and collaborating. As rich and productive as these relationships are, the centres have not entered into any formal partnership arrangements, despite having formal partnerships with other organisations.

Their many commonalities combined with a shared vision, mutual values and strategic goals provide essential partnership factors to base future discussion about potential partnering opportunities. Whilst the current informal relationships have somewhat enhanced the capacity of each organisation, a conscious, intentional strategic approach to partnership-building would yield greater impact and improved synergies, especially in improving organisational effectiveness and sustainability as well as opportunities for the community and local learners across the catchment area.

This Study identified a range of possible opportunities for deepening partnerships between the three centres, from more immediate activities that extend the existing collaborations to more long-term, extensive plans that align with the governance and strategic planning processes of each organisation and require joint partnership planning mechanisms and significant resources.

This Study represents the first phase in developing the relationships between the centres, where connecting and exploring compatibility, mutual interests and possible opportunities are a prequel to more formal discussions, planning and negotiations. Any planned change requires sound preparation and planning to achieve a readiness for change.

The Study adopted an action research approach where the process of engaging all three organisations in a discussion about relationships and partnering, in and of itself, facilitated a deepening of relationships and an openness to exploring further partnership possibilities. Therefore, a second iteration of the action research cycle has been proposed in the recommendations.

The Recommendations aim to identify and build joined-up approaches, sustaining ongoing Learn Local provision, increasing the viability and effectiveness of each individual centre and the three centres as a whole.

This effort could be sustained in many ways, for example through the increased efficiencies and decreased costs as a result of partnering, or seeking joint funding, including those from philanthropic sources.

This will increase the capacity and ability of these Learn Locals to provide learners further opportunities to access and engage in quality education and training and associated pathways.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Distribution of this Study to stakeholders, and the Recommendations be endorsed by each of the Learn Local committees
2. The centres formalise the existing alliance, such as with a Memorandum of Understanding or similar.
3. The centre managers formalise a regular partnership meeting to discuss, develop and implement the more immediate, short-term partnership opportunities identified in this Study, and to discuss and plan for long-term opportunities, including-
  - Seeking further funding to support a project officer to establish and implement discrete initiatives to build partnerships and increase efficiencies and service provision across the three centres
  - Develop and implement a strategic partnership project to progress a formal, long-term partnership between the three organisations.

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