

# Reflections on 2025 – and the Year Ahead

Joan Kirner House, Williamstown Spotswood Community House Altona North Community House

# January 2025

Lynne and group cooking up a storm at Spotswood Community House.

Part of the **Rejuvenating Spotswood Community House** program, sponsored by **Melbourne Airport**.







Pamela Anderson, CEO of **EMILY's List Australia**, provided a generous donation to our Food Relief program.





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Williamstown Community and Education Centre chief executive Dr Mark Brophy (left) with Dr Gerard Zammit from the Healthcare Foundation who donated toiletries to be distributed to disadvantaged people throughout Hobsons Bay. (supplied)

# Offering a helping hand

The Williamstown Community and Education Centre (WCEC) has been given a helping hand to continue its work supporting the disadvantaged in Hobsons Bay.

The WCEC received a donation of toiletries and essential items to be distributed to those in need throughout the Hobsons Bay community.

The donation came courtesy of the Healthcare Foundation, another local organisation which helps the less fortunate in the inner-west.

The Healthcare Foundation was established five years ago by podiatrist Dr Gerard Zammit who operates a chain of foot care clinics across the western suburbs, including in Altona and Altona North.

Dr Zammit's foundation has regularly donated food to the WCEC which it then distributes via its Food Releif and Pantry Swap initiatives, but the donation on Monday, January 20, was the first to contain toiletries

and sanitary products.

WCEC chief executive Dr Mark Brophy said he was extremely appreciative of the Healthcare Foundation's generosity.

"These donations help our local disadvantaged tremendously, in not only helping them financially, but bringing dignity into their lives," said Dr Brophy, who pointed out that Hobsons Bay was home to much more disadvantage than many people realised.

"Many locals are unaware of the significant amounts of people doing it tough in local public housing including the high rise Floyd Lodge and Nelson Heights."

The toiletries and sanitary products will be distributed from the WCEC's base at Joan Kirner House where its sponsored programs, training courses, morning teas and other events and initiatives take place.

For more information, email: manager@wcec.com.au

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# **February**

We were chosen as the 'Conference Charity' by the Country Women's Association of Victoria.

We received a huge donation of toiletries to contribute to our Food Relief Program.





We received a free Food Cube and Workshop at Spotswood Community House.

Sponsored by Cultivating Community





**Bunnings Altona** provided gift voucher to help establish our community garden at Joan Kirner House.



# March

Beach Safety Program.

Sponsored by Life Saving Victoria, Williamstown Beach.





Presentation to the **Rotary Club of Point Gellibrand**, at the Pelicans Landing restaurant in Williamstown.





Teachers Fedra, Lucy, Jodie and Rita, Project Officer Lucila, Vice President Lucienne, and others in our community, were all nominees for **The Hon. Melissa Horne MP International Women's Day Celebration**.

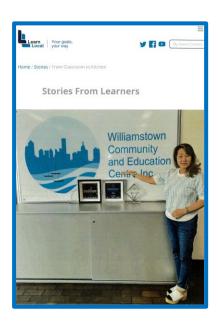
"In recognition for their dedicated effort and work in our community."



Cultural Diversity Week Celebration at The Laverton Community Hub.



# **April**



### Another good news story.



On the Learn Local website.

HERE.

### From Classroom to Kitchen

Julia was a popular student at Joan Kirner House at Williamstown Community and Education Centre, where she was enrolled in ACFE English classes between 2014 and 2018.

To improve her English, Julia attended as many available classes as possible. Initially, she started in lower-level beginner classes, but through her commitment and dedication, she progressed to more advanced levels.

Julia credits her teachers—Lynne, Jodie, and Fedra—as an essential part of her learning journey. She describes them as approachable and patient. When she first started classes, her English was limited, and she was very quiet and shy. However, as she made new friends, gained confidence, and became more involved in her community, she embraced new challenges.

In 2018, she purchased a restaurant in Patterson Lakes where she had been working. Unfortunately, in 2019, the restaurant burned down. With no close family and little support in Australia, this was a devastating experience for her.

In her typical determined manner, Julia did not let this setback deter her. In late 2024, she opened her own Vietnamese restaurant in Williamstown. Miss La's Kitchen, located in the popular Nelson Place, is open six days a week and has become a favourite among her former classmates and teachers, many of whom are regular customers.

Julia plans to return to the Williamstown Community and Education Centre to continue learning and has also encouraged her staff to attend English classes there.

### Artful Mind testimonial.

My name is Judy Wolff, I have been attending Monday Art Group when I can, and I'm amazed at how I am able to paint and draw when there!

I think it is the company and peaceful background music which enables me to find myself through art practice in Janine's Art Group.

In the recent past, I was a volunteer in Lynne's EAL class.

I enjoyed being there and helping in any way I could with English and generally conversing with students and being another English speaker in the group.

Cuppa time was great also!

Thank you Lynne and students for the privilege and opportunity to participate for a while.





### Eid Celebration lunch

Sponsored by the **Healthcare Foundation**.







# May

The Year 2/3 student cohort at **Newmark Primary School**, Williamstown, visited Joan Kirner House to talk to centre users and students, as part of a project learning about the cultural diversity within our local community.







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Our Neighbourhood House Week tribute display.



National Volunteer Week recognition to all our exceptional volunteers who contribute so much to our Centre and Our Community.















# **June**

**Newmark Primary School**, Williamstown social project. Learning about the rich cultural diversity within our local community.







### Neighbourhood Houses Victoria survey.

Includes Altona North Community House.

# Williamstown Community and Education Centre and Spotswood Community House

2024 - Real Impact. Real Value.

**INCOME** \$652,567

**VALUE** \$5,511,286

# This figure includes the value of:

Improved quality of life through social connection: \$962,256

Volunteer contributions: \$133,500

Emergency relief provided: \$235,766

Services provided: \$130,111

Adult Community Education: \$4,049,654

# This community value equates to:

\$8.45 for every \$1 of income

\$27.94 for every \$1
of Neighbourhood House Coordination Program
funding

Over \$1,381.27 each for every hour the neighbourhood houses were in use on average

### Emergency relief value includes:

Food and groceries: \$230,366

Food vouchers: \$2,400

· Cash/prepaid or gift card: \$2,400

· Personal care & hygiene items: \$600

### Services value includes:

· Computer/internet usage: \$6,000

Facilities use or hire: \$24,840

• Résumé assistance: \$10,800

Auspicing other organisations: \$632

Community lunch, frozen or other meals:

\$9,600

Fee for service activities: \$78,239

### **Employment value**

13.5 FTE jobs

including 9.7 direct and 3.8 indirect Full Time Equivalent positions

These values are produced by Neighbourhood Houses Victoria based on data provided by Neighbourhood Houses in Hobsons Bay City in the 2024 Neighbourhood Houses Survey. Only a limited range of activities where a determinable valuation method exists are included.

### Maribyrnong and Hobsons Bay Star Weekly.



Spotswood Community House members (from left) Pei Ling Wan, Abdullah Nemah, Diane Ryan, Julia Marrallano and Lynne Hewet with a new garden bed built as part of efforts to rejuvinate the house on Melbourne Road. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 474590\_01

# Community House comeback

The Williamstown Community and Education Centre (WCEC) is renowned for the help it provides to people in Hobsons Bay and now that help is extending to other community centres too.

After receiving a grant from the Melbourne Airport Authority, the WCEC has set about rejuvenating the Spotswood Community House on Melbourne Road which has endured a tough few years.

WCEC's education co-ordinator Lynn Hewet is leading the rejuvenation efforts and explained why the Spotswood Community House needed their help.

"It's (the community house) between Spotswood Primary School and the new Union Quarter development and while that building was happening, there was a lot of upheaval, there was dirt, there was dust, there was traffic and it just meant a lot of the programs running at Spotswood had to be relocated," said Ms Hewet.
"And it was on the back of Covid so it

meant numbers dropped dramatically."

Many of the programs that relocated from Spotswood went to WCEC and are now being sent back, including English language classes, boat license classes,

art groups for people with disabilities and a playgroup that supports parents of children with disabilities.

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Having started the rejuvenation efforts in October last year, Ms Hewet said good progress had been made, but they still had a way to go to get numbers attending the Spotswood Community House back

to where they used to be.
"At its peak we were probably having 80 to 100 through a week and at the moment we 30 to 40 so we've still got a way to go." Details: https://www.williamstownspotswoodcc.org.au/

### **Colours and Candles Workshop**







### **Cultivating Community** Gardening Workshops at Joan Kirner House.









National Volunteers Week tribute display.





### Hobsons Bay Community Fund 2025 Business Lunch.







# **July**

Lara and Lucila both attended the **Network West** sponsored two-day Mental Health First Aid Certificate Training.



Thanks to Community Bank, Altona and Laverton, Bendigo Bank, for supporting the many refugees and migrants to enrol in our English language classes.

Here is one story -



Julia Marallano came from Peru to Australia ten months ago.

Two of her four children live in Australia. At 83 years of age this is a major lifestyle change for Julia.

Most of Julia's life in Peru was spent living on the land, growing crops and then selling her produce at local markets.

It was no surprise therefore that when we started the gardening sessions at Spotswood Julia was in her element.

Julia is currently living with her daughter Ana in Newport. Family is very important to her, and she loves spending time with her four granddaughters.

Also, she has encouraged her younger sister Alejandrina (aged 79) to attend English classes with her.

Although their English is limited, both sisters are grateful for the opportunity to learn more about life in Australia and make new friends while improving their English skills at our Centre.

Lynne Hewet Education Coordinator.



**Newmark Primary School**, Williamstown, tapestry unveiled, on their social project, learning about the rich cultural diversity within our local community.





New Recycling Made Easy Hub at Joan Kirner house, with new recycling options.

- Blister packs
- Light globes
- Oral care products
- Small e-waste
- Printer cartridges
- Stationery
- X -rays.
- CDs and DVDs
- Bread tags





Having been a finalist in 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2023, and a winner in 2019, this year we decided to be a sponsor for the biennial **Hobsons Bay Business Excellence Awards** in the category of 'Creating social change and diversity'.



# **August**

Star Weekly. 13 August 2025. Page 7.



WCEC food relief volunteers Bobby Pearce, Maryann Wenzel and Mary Caldwell next to a food collection bin at Coles in Williamstown. (Lipbica Variation): 494144\_01

# Checkout the food bins

Grocery shoppers in Hobsons Bay will now notice something different when they approach the supermarket checkout.

Food collection bins have been placed at Coles in Williamstown and Woolworths outlets in Altona North and Spotswood as part of Williamstown Community and Education Centre's (WCEC) food relief program.

Whether doing their weekly supermarket shop or just picking up a few items after work, shoppers can now help those in need too by donating nonperishable food items into the collection bins located next to the checkout area.

The donated items are then packaged in mixed nonperishable food bags and distributed to disadvantaged members of the community by volunteers.

Food relief can also be accessed at the WCEC's headquarters at John Kirner House in Williamstown from 10am to 1pm on Mondays and Fridays (ask for Tahlia) and at Altona North Community House on Thursdays from 9am to 12.30pm (ask for Lara).

For perishable items, a fruit and vegetable swap is held in the foyer of Joan Kirner House, while fresh bakery items are available there each morning.

"The generosity of locals is outstanding" said WCEC chief executive Dr Mark Brophy of the reason why the organisation had been able to grow and refine its food relief program over the past few years.

"Every donation makes a substantial difference to locals in need."

Dr Brophy also acknowledged local businesses, organisations and not-for-profits who had donated to the program such as the Country Women's Association, Healthcare Foundation, The Village Williamstown, Share the Dignity, Mobil, and EMILY's List.

# **September**

Lucienne, our Vice President, attended the **Community Partners Grants Night** at the Laverton Bowls Club.

This event was an opportunity to connect with fellow community groups, hear impact updates, and learn more about our locally owned Community Bank model supporting Altona, Laverton and surrounds since 2000.





Spring is always a great time to join our Wednesday morning Willy Walking Group.





Dr Jill Disint from our Committee attended the Hobsons Bay City Council **Make It Happen Grants Celebration**.

This was an opportunity for Council to recognise and celebrate the achievements of grant recipients.





### **October**

Several of our volunteers attended the Volunteer Appreciation Event hosted by **Melissa Horne, State Member for Williamstown** at the Spotswood Cricket Club.

Volunteers were officially recognised for their dedication and commitment to our community.

We even got a mention in the Victorian Parliament **HERE**.









Irene La Rosa, Manager of **Williamstown Commonwealth Bank** gave presentations to several of our classes on staying safe with online banking.







Fedra and her English class from Altona North Community House enjoying an outing.





# We were featured in the **Melbourne Airport's Economic and Social Impact Report** 2025.





A link to the Report is <u>HERE</u>. See page 65.



# Supporting multiculturalism and inclusion in Melbourne's west





Williamstown Community and Education Centre has established the Spotswood Rejuvenation project to help culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities across Melbourne's west build social connections through a range of informal activities that prioritise inclusivity. In FY25, Melbourne Airport contributed \$10,000 to support the Spotswood Rejuvenation project.

### The Spotswood Community House rejuvenation project

The project is designed to promote and grow the area's multiculturalism and diversity by engaging current and future learners at Spotswood Community House in a variety of accessible, informal activities. Spaces are created where people can engage with others to improve social isolation and support informal sharing of cultural practices and history.

Recreational activities facilitated under the program include gardening sessions and walking groups, as well as educational experiences such as cooking classes and arts and crafts workshops.

The program aims to be a hub for cross-cultural exchange across Melbourne's west, providing the community with a safe, inclusive space to not only build stronger connections with their community, but share their own culture. This not only benefits the individuals participating in the program through the development of greater social capital but helps the community establish and build stronger social cohesion and culturally inclusive ways of living.

### Social value supported by the Airport's contributions

The \$10,000 contribution by the Airport to the Spotswood Rejuvenation program is estimated to have helped create more than \$33,000 in social value through the promotion of connection and inclusivity in Melbourne's CALD communities.

"This generous contribution by Melbourne Airport has built the capability and capacity of our Community House. Isolated and disengaged locals are able to meet together, build skills, develop new relationships and engage with their community."

Dr Mark Brophy,

CEO Williamstown Community and Education Centre



In partnership with Newmark
Primary School, Williamstown,
Joan Kirner House hosted the
Year Six Volunteer Program for
nine weeks.



Children assisted with many tasks, under the astute supervision of our Tahlia.



Our President, Sonja Ilievska announcing and presenting the award at the Hobsons Bay

**Business Excellence Awards** Gala.

Several Committee and staff members attended.

Congratulations to our sponsorship support category winner, **Amarapave.** 



Our Tahlia is on the Hobsons Bay Local Safety Committee in partnership with Victoria Police.



Hobsons Bay News. Edition 45. Page 9.

Newsletter link is HERE



### WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP CREATE A SAFE AND CONNECTED COMMUNITY

We're working in partnership with Victoria Police on the Hobsons Bay Local Safety Committee.

Co-chaired by Local Area Commander Inspector Damien Madden and Hobsons Bay Mayor Daria Kellander, the Local Safety Committee brings together local voices, with a committee made up of community and business representatives as well as state government and regional services.

The Local Safety Committee is a platform to identify community safety priorities, and to be able to consider emerging issues and trends, with a focus on prevention.

Committee members include representatives from Victoria Police, Council, Latitude Directions for Young People, Laverton Community Integrated Services, Hobsons Bay trader associations, IPC Health, CoHealth, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, among others.

At both Altona North Community House and Spotswood Community House classes had a free **StrokeSafe Talk** provided by **The Stroke Foundation**.



Our teacher Fedra, at Altona North wrote -

Hi Mark and Lynne,

As you know, we had Bob Carey-Grieve from the Stroke Foundation as a guest speaker this morning.

He delivered such an informative and engaging session.

We all really appreciated the insights he shared and found his talk both inspiring and practical.

Fedra.



Students have recently set up new garden beds in the rear of Joan Kirner House.



Thanks to a generous **Hobsons Bay City Council - Toyota** equipment grant, and some gift vouchers from **Bunnings** in Altona North.

All the way from purchase to construction, the students did a great job.







# **November**

Our Clothes Swap for Recycle Week was extremely popular.



**Williamstown High School** year tens completed an *Adventure and Community* subject which exposes them to local community organisations.

As part of their studies, the students visited Joan Kirner House.

We had about 25 students visit to see what type of services we offer and ask questions useful for their community project assessment.





We hosted a **Hobsons Bay Community Foundation** meeting at Joan Kirner House.

The Hobsons Bay Community Fund is a perpetual philanthropic fund established to support, strengthen and benefit the community of Hobsons Bay for present and future generations.

They have supported us with numerous projects over many years, including sponsoring our current Willi Walking Group.

We are also a member of their Philanthropic Club.

Details of the fund can be found HERE.



With our **Bridging the Digital Divide Program** we have been able to provide over 100 one-on-one assistance sessions.

We have assisted those with limited digital literacy in completing essential online administrative tasks.

Help has been given to complete citizenship and passport applications, Centrelink forms, resume writing, scholarship applications, utility bill issues, infringement notices, and email and mobile phone support.

This initiative was made possible through the generous funding from the Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association and Bendigo Community Bank, Altona and Laverton.

Australian
Neighbourhood
Houses & Centres
Association



Rebecca Harding, the Multicultural Liaison Officer from **Fire Rescue Victoria**, gave a session on 'fire safety at home' to our English class at Altona North.



Rebecca delivered a wonderful fire safety session for us...

It was incredibly informative, engaging, and truly appreciated by everyone.

Fedra. Teacher.



Nat, one of our students (Centre), was awarded the **2025 MEGT Foundation Scholarship**.



We supported the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence with the Zonta Club of Melbourne's West, with a display of cutouts of orange ladies at Joan Kirner House.

The orange ladies appeared across Hobsons Bay to mark a global campaign aimed at ending violence against women and girls.









**Zonta** also made a huge donation to our Food Relief Program.



### A Christmas message from one of our students.

Dear teachers, classmates, and the entire Williamstown Community and Education Centre team, this Christmas, I want to send you a message filled with love, gratitude, and light.

This year has been one of the most difficult of my life because of the loss of my brothers and the emotional process I went through in Colombia.

But when I returned to class, I found more than an English course — I found a place where hearts are supported, and spirits are lifted.

Thank you for the emotional support, the patience, and the understanding you have given me every step of the way.

To Mark, our CEO, thank you for leading with kindness and for creating a space where every migrant feels welcome and valued.

To the ladies in the administration office Tahlia, Lara and Lucila, thank you for your smiles, patience, and the warm help you give us every day.

To my teachers Lynne, Fedra, Lucy, and Jim, thank you for your dedication, your encouragement, and for believing in me.

Your kindness, guidance, and patience have given me strength during moments when I needed it the most. You have been a true blessing.



Ruth and Lynne

And to my classmates, who come from so many different countries, cultures, and stories: thank you for walking this journey with me. Even though we speak different languages and come from different worlds, we share something beautiful: the desire to learn, the patience to listen, and the respect to grow together.

You have also been an important part of my healing and my progress.

During this special season, I want to wish each of you a Merry Christmas filled with peace, unity, and hope.

May the New Year bring health, opportunities, joy, and blessings to you and your families.

Thank you for making this place a true refuge for everyone who arrive searching for a new beginning.

With all my love and gratitude,

Ruth.

# **December**

In December we received generous donations to our Food Relief program from **Jost Australia**, **EMILY's List Australia** and **Commonwealth Bank**, **Williamstown**.













Successful grant from the **Hobsons Bay Community Fund** for sponsoring a Spotswood Community House initiative in 2026.





### **Centre Christmas function.**

Huge appreciation to all staff and volunteers who worked hard to make this an outstanding and very special event.



### Thank you to all those organisations that have supported and partnered with us in 2025.

































































































































































# POSITION.





















Justice and Community Safety





### Other achievements in 2025.

- Over 350 student enrolments.
- 20 separate pre-accredited classes across three venues.
- Over 26,500 hours of pre-accredited training delivered.
- 24 separate local providers, with 36 discrete classes, delivering programs across a wide range of interest areas including exercise, yoga, acting, boating, language, music, art, religious groups, gaming, floristry, specialty education, disability groups, meditation, counselling, crafts, etc.
- Considerable surplus delivered for the year, making it 14 years in a row of financial surpluses.
- Over \$67,000 income from 11 successful project grants, out of 17 grants applied for.
- 40 free community morning teas, nine BBQs and weekly walking group, sponsored by Hobsons Bay Community Fund and Mobil.
- Considerable ICT upgrades, repairs, and improvements to all three venues. Joan Kirner House, Spotswood Community House, and Altona North Community House.
- Over 50 migrant students sponsored to enrol in English classes.
- Over 50 new Be Connected clients given IT assistance through the Good Things Foundation funding.
- 45 Power Saving Bonuses processed.
- Over 100 locals helped with online tasks though our Digital Divide project.

### What's planned for 2026?



# 2026 WCEC Term Dates and Public Holidays

### **Term Dates**

Term 1: Tuesday 27 January to Thursday 2 April (10 Weeks) Term 2: Monday 20 April to Friday 26 June (10 Weeks) Term 3: Monday 13 July to Friday 18 September (10 Weeks) Term 4: Monday 5 October to Friday 11 December (10 Weeks)

### **Public Holidays and School Term Breaks**

Break	New Year's Day	Thursday 1 January
	Australia Day	Monday 26 January
Term 1	Labour Day	Monday 9 March
Term 1 Break	Term 1 School Holidays	Monday 6 April to Monday 19 April
	Good Friday	Friday 3 April
	Sat before Easter Sun	Saturday 4 April
	Easter Sunday	Sunday 5 April
	Easter Monday	Monday 6 April
Term 2	ANZAC Day	Saturday 25 April
	King's Birthday	Monday 8 June
Term 2 Break	Term 2 School Holidays	Monday 29 June to Friday 11 July
Term 3 Break	Term 3 School Holidays	Monday 21 September to Friday 2 October
	AFL Grand Final Holiday	Friday 25 September*
Term 4	Melbourne Cup	Tuesday 3 November
Term 4 Break	Term 4 School Holidays	Monday 14 December to Monday 25 January
	Christmas Day	Friday 25 December
	Boxing Day	Saturday 26 December

Joan Kirner House Williamstown, Spotswood Community House, and Altona North Community House 9397 6168 <u>admin@wcec.com.au</u> ABN: 67 864 341 860 Inc. Ass. Reg. No: A0014000T



# Calendar of Events

February	Welcome Back BBQ Wednesday 4
March	Cultural Diversity Week
17 to 23	BBQ Wednesday 18
May	Neighbourhood House Week
11 to 17	BBQ Wednesday 13
May 18 to 24	National Volunteers Week
June	Refugee Week
14 to 20	BBQ Wednesday 18
July	Welcome to Semester 2 BBQ Wednesday 15
September	Adult Learners Week
1 to 8	BBQ Wednesday 2
November	Recycling Week
9 to 15	BBQ Wednesday 11
December	Christmas Centre Lunch Wednesday 9

January 13 and 14 at Joan Kirner House.



Highly recommended by staff.

10:00AM -

12:30PM

REGISTER AT: WWW.WESTSIDEARTS.COM.AU AGES: 6 - 12YO.

\$70 PP

Studio

GET CREATIVES westsidearts.com.au



Have a safe and happy break.

We reopen on Tuesday January 27.

Thanks.

Mark.

**Dr Mark Brophy PhD** Manager / CEO. Williamstown Community and Education Centre Inc. manager@wcec.com.au 9397 6168.