



strategic development group

The Centre, North and West
Melbourne

Community Needs Analysis

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Executive Summary

The Centre is a not-for-profit incorporated charity situated on Errol Street in North Melbourne that was established forty years ago and operates as a neighbourhood house and learn local organisation. It seeks to provide programs and activities that respond to the need and priorities and to enhance the wellbeing of community members of North and West Melbourne.

The **Community Needs Analysis (CNA)** was undertaken for The Centre by an independent consultant between September 2021 and March 2022. The **purpose** of the CNA is to provide information that will inform the development of new and creative ways for The Centre to engage with diverse communities in the suburbs of North and West Melbourne and to better meet their identified priorities and needs.

The Analysis was conducted **in** two phases between September 2021 and February 2022 using **participatory formative enquiry**. Informant interviews, focus group discussions, an online survey and review of census (2016) data and selective review of publicly available documents and records were used as data sources. Consultations took place with a wide and representative range of informants – community members and representatives of organisations.

The impact of **COVID-19** restrictions meant that the timeframe for the Analysis was extended and that Phase one (September to December 2021) interviews were completed remotely. The prominence of COVID impacted on what was heard during consultations, particularly in relation to the recent extreme and sudden lockdowns that some residents in North Melbourne had experienced.

Community Overview

North and West Melbourne has a growing population with growth of resident numbers projected to increase significantly over the short to medium term due to major infrastructure (business and housing) development. An increasing number of younger employed professional people live in the area. Most residents live in private rental properties, with fewer owner occupiers. A smaller number, but significant proportion of people living in public and social housing.

Cultural, language, social and economic diversity are strong community characteristics. This diversity was consistently identified by interviewees. Another strong and recurring positive community characteristic is **connection** between the community members. However, often informants spoke about more **localised connection** between specific groups that is location based or through social, cultural, or language ties.

Conclusions and Recommendations

A framework consisting of different outcome areas related to **individual** – economic participation health and wellbeing, access to learning, local connection (people and place); **community** – empowerment (leadership, voice and access to resources), social cohesion (connection and

participation); and **community located organisations** – coordination and collaboration, was used to guide the data collection and reporting the Analysis findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The critical **conclusions and recommendations** for each of the three levels are:

Individual	
Key Conclusions	Recommendations for The Centre
<p>Keen to engage with The Centre although all had limited or no knowledge of The Centre prior to the Analysis</p> <p>Expressed concern of being (over) consulted by organisations but then not following up with action</p> <p>Seeking a space to meet, socialise and do activities</p> <p>Seeking support to arrange and convene activities – organisation that <i>“does with them but not do for them”</i></p> <p>International students want to mix with other students and wider community</p> <p>Cultural and language groups initially want to engage with their own group</p> <p>All groups identified skills they are keen to share</p>	<p>Arrange follow up meetings with the groups consulted to demonstrate commitment to action</p> <p>Continue to engage in culturally safe and accessible ways with members of CALD groups - i.e. employ bicultural workers and / or volunteers</p> <p>Dedicated resources (staff time, budget) be made available for ongoing community engagement activities to support building mutual understanding, trust and relationships</p>

Community	
Key Conclusions	Recommendations for The Centre
<p>Population growth projected to continue</p> <p>Increasing number of young professional residents</p> <p>Cultural and language diversity an ongoing feature</p> <p>Disparities social and economic will continue</p>	<p>Continue to reach out to different groups in the community in culturally safe and accessible ways</p> <p>Continue to promote the value and benefits of diversity in the community through small scale and larger community located events and activities</p> <p>Keep up to date with the changes in demographics of residents particularly as large-scale housing is built and impacts of COVID long term becomes clearer</p>

Community Organisations	
Key Conclusions	Recommendations for The Centre
<p>Sufficient number and quality of organisations in community</p> <p>Coordination and communication is poor between organisations and with community</p> <p>Competitive more than collaboration between organisations often due to limited funding opportunities</p> <p>Priorities tend to be donor driven more than based on community identified priorities and needs</p> <p>The Centre is not well known by many of the organisations</p>	<p>Increase visibility of The Centre - continue to connect and seek more ways to collaborate with other organisations, and make it a more accessible space</p> <p>Community representation in The Centre - staff, volunteers, governance reflect the diversity</p> <p>Dedicate resources to support meaningful engagement, collaboration that provides the basis and will support genuine codesign and codelivery processes</p>