

"Our goals can only be reached through the vehicle of a plan, in which me must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success." — Pablo Picasso

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TIME FOR A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN...

During the first half of this year the Committee of Management will be working towards the development of a new Strategic Plan.

The period of the previous Plan has concluded hence it is time for a new plan that will continue to provide a framework and guidance for the work of the Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre going forward. This is an important task that will include reflection on how the Centre is performing currently and how the Centre can best fit the needs of the surrounding community into the future.

The Committee of Management recently considered and agreed upon six principles that collectively should inform the continuing work of the Centre. These principles include:

- Advocacy – defining and expanding WNC advocacy and social action
- Responding to local community needs through community development principles - including food relief/welfare.



- Building social capital - including personal/group development
- Partnerships/networking – continuing to build on current and expand new partnerships
- Inclusion, diversity & access – how to ensure our practices and culture are inclusive
- Future financial viability of WNC

These principles will inform and ultimately shape the new Strategic Plan for the next five years.

Initially it will be important to gather as much information as possible from a range of relevant sources. Feedback, ideas and data will be sought from WNC members, other community agencies (Youth Hub, Headspace, St. Vinnies, Anglicare, Salvos, CWA Owls, library), WNC auspiced groups (Bass Coast Refugee Sponsorship Group, Housing Matters), Bass Coast Shire, and other groups invested in serving the local community.

COMMUNITY LUNCH BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

The Community Lunch at Mitchell House every Wednesday from midday is now a well established component of WNCs weekly program. Meals are expertly prepared by our chef Emma whose repertoire of vegetarian delights seems almost endless. For a gold coin donation, if possible, come along and share a delicious meal and friendly conversation.



REFUGEE FAMILIES EMBRACING LOCAL COMMUNITY LIFE

With the committed support of the Bass Coast Refugee Sponsorship Group the families who have made their new homes within our local community, are embracing the challenges of reestablishing themselves within a new country.

English language classes are progressing well and the children are all well settled into local schools. Swimming lessons have been a highlight with the children rapidly progressing through the various requirements towards a level of proficiency. Parents have undertaken driving lessons and in some cases licenses have been achieved followed by the purchase of a car. This in turn has understandably improved their mobility and their capacity to explore the local area. Employment has been gained and this too has led to a rising sense of independence, self-belief and personal pride.

The BCRSG members have worked tirelessly in their support of the families and that each has made such positive progress is due in no small part to the Group's commitment and willingness to give of their time and expertise to make the process of transitioning to a new environment as smooth as possible.

A special celebration was held at Mitchell House last November acknowledging the first full year since the arrival of the Al Habra family in Wonthaggi and to welcome Zamin's family. The Ali, Al Habra and Darwesh families were all present and were cheered when introduced to those present. It is no small thing to travel across the world with your family and make a new home in a very different environment. Each of the families have embraced the challenges and are enormously grateful for the opportunities they have been given and the support they have received as they embark on their journey to a new life in a new community.

The Group is self funded and an important part of their work is fund raising. Donations are often given and well received of course but fund raising activity is also a must. An example of the Group's fund raising efforts include a recent Bunnings BBQ! A long, hot day but an effort that was well worth the time and work to set it up and deliver on the day.



The Group is small in number and would welcome new members with a genuine interest in this area of need. Requirements to become a member include a successful Police Check and Working with Children's Check as well as completion of an online course offered by community Refugee Sponsorship Australia that focuses on the tools needed to provide meaningful support to refugee families making a new start in Australia. If you are interested in learning more about the Group's activity and perhaps becoming a member of the Group visit their website for more information:

<https://bcrsg.com.au/>

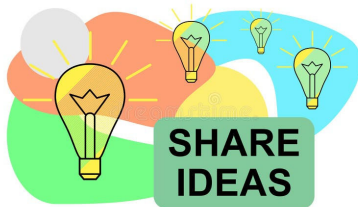


FROM THE MANAGER...

Welcome to 2025! Of course it's March so you may already be well settled in and this new year may not feel so new. In either case 2025 is underway and giving us some familiar experiences and some new ones.

After the Christmas break we reopened in January and our Term 1 Grapevine program has been available for a few weeks now. You can always access it on our website or pick up a hard copy next time you're at Mitchell House. There have been a couple of changes to last year's program so it's well worth the effort to grab one.

As you'll read elsewhere in the newsletter, 2025 is a planning year here at Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre. Our current strategic plan is due to be renewed and we want to find out what you think about your local neighbourhood house: what you like, what you think we could do differently, what else we could be doing etc. So we are scheduling a variety of opportunities for the many people and groups that have a stake in how we operate and it would be great if you could spare some time to let us know your thoughts.



WNC members and volunteers are invited to come along to Mitchell House on the 8th of April, 1.30 to 3pm to discuss your experiences, thoughts and ideas as well as to offer us suggestions for our direction over the next five years. We hope to see you there!

Leslie

HOUSING MATTERS BASS COAST

This group of committed community minded people has been advocating strongly in favour of adequate housing for residents of our region for some time. They facilitate regular renter's rights sessions at Mitchell House (see opposite for details) and explore other options aimed at providing shelter for those who are currently without consistent living arrangements.

One such initiative is the concept of a "Winter Shelter". The group is currently working with the Uniting Church in Cowes and PICAL towards the possibility of establishing such a facility in that location. The group is hopeful that a similar facility might be replicated in Wonthaggi in the future.

Homelessness is an issue in our community requiring attention, the group also facilitates the Combined Services Homelessness Coalition that meets monthly at Mitchell House. This coalition of service providers including the Salvation Army, Yes Youth Hub, YMCA, CWA, and the Wonthaggi OWLs provide local support in the form of shower vouchers, food supplies and importantly, social support activity. The group has produced an information poster titled "What can I do to help my community?" detailing the various services available in the community to assist those requiring help.

Email: housingmattersbc@gmail.com for more information if desired.

Renters' Rights 2025.

- Has your rent increased without notice?
- Are your repairs not being done? Is mould a problem?
- Are there delays getting your bond returned?

Find out your rights as a tenant from the Gippsland Community Legal Service.

Come along to Mitchell House, 3 – 4.30pm on the second Thursday of the month to get free and confidential advice.

Sessions in the first half of 2025 are on:

March 13th, April 10th, May 8th & June 12th.

Bookings are essential so call us at WNC on **56723731** to **book an appointment.**

These sessions are brought to you by Housing Matters Bass Coast, in conjunction with the Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre.

reception@wonthaggi-neighbourhood-centre.com.



"WNC is on the land of the Bunurong Boonwurrung people of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional owners of this land where we gather to learn, work and play. We thank the elders past, present and emerging for their custodianship and their continuing connections to the land, sea and community."



This year, from 12 to 18 May 2025, we're making waves with the theme
"Ripples of Change"!

Every action, no matter how small, has the power to create a ripple effect – spreading kindness, sparking ideas, and strengthening communities. At Neighbourhood and Community Houses and Centres (NCHCs) across Australia, we see it happen every day! A friendly smile, a shared story, a new skill – these small moments add up to something big, sending waves of meaningful change that extends far beyond our local neighbourhoods.

From community projects to everyday conversations, these ripples of change build momentum, shaping stronger, more connected communities. Whether it's volunteering, learning something new, or simply reaching out to someone in need, every action helps build a stronger, more connected community.

This Neighbourhood House Week, join us in celebrating the power of small actions that lead to big impacts. Get involved – have a chat, lend a hand, try a new class, or be part of a local event. Share your stories on the theme 'From small ripples grow big waves of change!'

Whether it's a moment of kindness, a new connection, or a community initiative, every story inspires others to take action.

Together, let's turn **little ripples into big waves of change!**



Australian
Neighbourhood Houses
and Centres Association

neighbourhood
HOUSE WEEK **12 - 18**
MAY '25