




Reynard Street
Neighbourhood House



Reynard Street
Neighbourhood House
2023 Annual Report

The Heart of Coburg





**Reynard Street
Neighbourhood House
acknowledges the Traditional
Owners of the Coburg area in
which we work, the Wurundjeri
Woi-wurrung people.**

We recognise their continuing
connection to land, skies,
waterways and community.

We pay our respects to them
and their culture, and to their
Elders past, present and future.

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Reynard Street Neighbourhood House would like to thank
Philippa Sweikert for designing this year's Annual Report!

Dear Members and Stakeholders

We are pleased to present the Chair and Manager's Report for Reynard Street Neighbourhood House's 2023 Annual Report. The past year has been one of growth, resilience, and community engagement. We have continued to adapt and thrive, thanks to the dedication and support of our staff, volunteers, and community members.

One of the standout achievements of this year has been the successful upgrade of the Robinson Reserve and Community Garden. In collaboration with the Merri-bek Council and with funding from the Department of Jobs, Precincts, and Regions (DJPR) through the Living Local Suburban Fund, we have transformed Robinson Reserve into a vibrant community hub. The addition of new event spaces, enhanced facilities, and various elements in the community garden has reinvigorated the space, making it a focal point for community interaction and engagement. We look forward to hosting a series of exciting activation events in the coming year, further enhancing the appeal of this community asset.

The impact of the pandemic has gradually diminished, but we must acknowledge the challenges it presented. It's hard to believe that we were still wearing masks in July 2022 as yet another wave of COVID spiked during the winter months and finally caught up with many of us in the second half of

2022. However, our commitment to serving our community has remained unwavering. We extend our sincere appreciation to Foodbank, Open Table, and Second Bite for their invaluable support in providing rescued foods to those in need. This support has allowed us to adapt and evolve our food relief program from distributing fresh produce to establishing a pop-up market and community pantry in early 2023.

Our partnership with Corrections Victoria and the community cooking program has resumed, enabling us to provide delicious community lunches every Friday. Additionally, our Social Enterprise Café has thrived, with our dedicated team of volunteers baking pastries, biscuits, and chutneys, which are now available for sale at the Reynard St Café. The installation of a large market umbrella in the café area, thanks to the Stronger Communities Grant, will greatly improve the comfort of our outdoor space.

Our volunteer programs have continued to thrive, defying the statewide trend of declining volunteerism identified in the 2022–2027 Victorian Volunteer Strategy. Our accessible and inclusive volunteer opportunities provide pathways to education, training, and work for members of our community.

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Chair and Manager's Report

In 2023, we successfully transitioned to Social Planet, an online platform that has streamlined program administration, online bookings, attendance tracking, and client details. This transition has improved the efficiency and convenience of our operations.

Our inclusive programs have flourished with annual funding, particularly the Garden Art group, which now incorporates mosaic art and enjoys strong participation. Programs in Cooking, Sewing, and Art have seen remarkable growth in enrolments, exceeding previous years' figures and even reaching capacity.

We capped off the year with the Spring Festival, a community-driven climate action project called Grow Eat Together funded by Merri-bek Council and auspiced by Reynard Street Neighbourhood House. This event was a resounding success and an amazing example of a collaborative effort between RSNH and community members, attracting over 200 attendees who participated in workshops,

enjoyed music, savoured delicious food, and soaked in the vibrant community atmosphere.

As we look forward to 2024, we are excited about the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. Our commitment to serving the evolving needs of our community remains steadfast. We are grateful for the unwavering support of our members, volunteers, and stakeholders, and we look forward to another year of growth and community engagement.

A huge thanks goes to the core staff: Ruby Walker-Smith, Meri Carnovale, Craig Burgess, Nathacha Subero, and Bronwen McLoney for their caring, dedicated, and creative work. Their unwavering commitment and innovative approaches have been instrumental in driving our programs and initiatives forward.

To the team of volunteers, we offer our deepest gratitude. We could not operate without your invaluable contributions. Your time, energy, and



passion make Reynard Street Neighbourhood House the welcoming and vibrant community space it is.

We would also like to express our heartfelt appreciation to the RSNH Committee of Management for their unwavering commitment to governing our organisation. Your guidance and support are instrumental in our continued success.

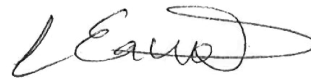
As we move forward, we bid farewell to some cherished members of our Committee of Management leadership team. To our Secretary Celia Torres-Villanueva, our Treasurer Owen Martin, our Deputy Chair Erin Dale, and I (Lucy Eames) say a special thank you and cheerio to our Chairperson Phil Day, who has led us with amazing support and a sense of fun for the past four years. We extend our warmest wishes to you all for a bright and fulfilling future. Your contributions have left an indelible mark on Reynard Street Neighbourhood House, and you will be greatly missed.

Thank you to each and every one of you who has played a role in our journey. Together, we have achieved remarkable successes and strengthened the bonds within our community. As we look ahead, we remain committed to serving our community's evolving needs and fostering a sense of belonging and togetherness.

Sincerely,



Philippa Day
Chairperson / Public Officer



Lucy Eames
House Manager



One of the standout achievements of this year has been the successful upgrade of the Robinson Reserve and Community Garden... The addition of new event spaces, enhanced facilities, and various elements in the community garden has reinvigorated the space, making it a focal point for community interaction and engagement.

About Reynard Street Neighbourhood House

Who We Are:



We are an incorporated, not-for-profit organisation in Coburg. We aim to promote community wellbeing, reduce social isolation, and support and encourage an inclusive, empowered and resilient local neighbourhood.

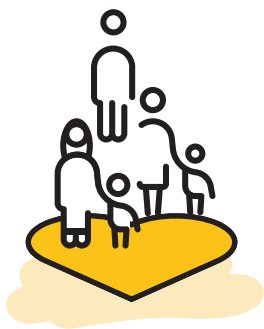


Founded in 1988, Reynard Street Neighbourhood House (formerly Robinson Reserve Neighbourhood House) is managed by a Committee of Management made up of local residents who have an interest in the community.



We receive funding from various sources including Merri-bek City Council and the Victorian Government. This funding assists us in the running of programs and activities.

What We Do:



We create a welcoming space to enrich personal, family and community development.



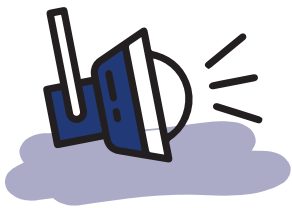
We engage with our community and represent and respond to local needs.



We deliver accessible, high-quality programs and services.

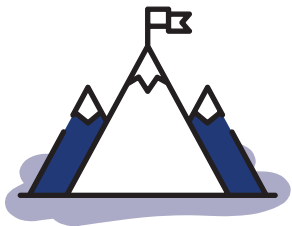


We build community wellbeing and resilience.



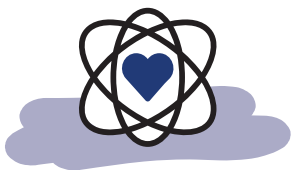
Our Vision

To be a vital hub for a happy, healthy, vibrant and inclusive Merri-bek community.



Our Mission

To improve the wellbeing of our community and build a strong neighbourhood by being a welcoming place where everyone can learn, connect and play



Our Values

Our values underpin everything we do. In our work we aim for:

Sustainability: financial sustainability and a minimal ecological footprint, with an emphasis on innovation and continuous improvement.

Inclusion: we value diversity and recognise, respect and welcome all people equally.

Integrity: on an organisational and personal level we maintain high standards and our operations are honest, ethical and transparent.

Respect: for ourselves, each other and the natural environment. We act with care.

Community connectedness: engagement with the local service system and strong links with organisations and service providers to meet community needs.

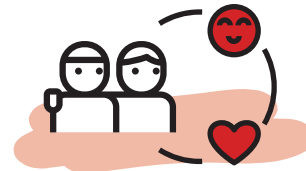
Our Impact

Real impact, real value.

Income:
\$345,910

Community Value:
\$2,345,503

This figure includes the value of:



Improved quality of life through social connection: **\$575,280**



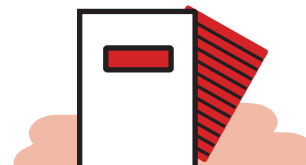
Volunteer contributions: **\$383,739**



Emergency relief provided: **\$244,806**



Services provided: **\$280,114**



Adult community education: **\$860,931**



Social enterprise goods & services: **\$860,931**

A place for connection

Reynard Street Community Garden has been an ongoing project of the House since the first seedlings were planted in the Robinson Reserve seven years ago.

Since then, the Garden has grown (literally!), and continues to grow. The garden now has a wide range of nutritious and culturally appropriate food plants cared for by a dedicated group of volunteers and neighbours. It is a major asset of the House and an important place for community connectedness in Coburg and in Merri-bek more broadly.

Activities run through the garden are facilitated by Nathacha Subero, our garden coordinator, and include: Garden Working Bees, a monthly Food Swap, an Urban Gardening Group and our Inclusive Gardening program. We also offer a very popular weekly Inclusive Garden Art session facilitated by Bec James.

Over the last year, the Robinson Reserve has received an upgrade, complete with an outdoor shelter and fully functional and aesthetically pleasing compost bays! Stay tuned this next financial year for a brand new greenhouse for seed propagation.

Beyond 2023, we hope to continue to establish the garden as habitat for pollinators and other wildlife and as an abundant food bowl for our neighbourhood.



"The strong growth of the garden has been driven by passionate volunteers who have contributed their time and enthusiasm to make this space thrive. We have not only been building a garden together but a beautiful community of gardeners, nature lovers and change makers."

Nathacha, Garden Coordinator





Community Spotlight

Gianni

Over the last 3 years, Gianni Grigoletto has become a key volunteer in the Community Garden. He is also an ongoing participant in our Urban Gardening Group. Gianni's kindness, generosity and sense of humour have made him a well-loved member of the House and Garden.

His passion for olives and growing interest in low-waste gardening for food has led him to consider the uses for parts of this plant usually wasted in industrial production, and so he has recently approached scholars at Melbourne University about an olive paste he has developed. In the community garden, he has shared this knowledge with people across different generations. Always on a quest to learn more, Gianni has recently taken an interest in establishing habitat and wildlife corridors using Indigenous plants.

Gianni was nominated for the 2023 Victorian Senior of the Year Award.

Learning and connecting in community

Reynard Street Neighbourhood House offers a wide range of programs and activities that address a strong community need for social connection and for learning new skills. Our program activities are coordinated by our Administrative Officer, Bronwen McLoney.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Our English as an Additional Language classes now offer the meaningful, in-person opportunities for connection and learning that were a feature of our language classes prior to the pandemic.

Life has now fully returned to the classroom, and learners from a wide range of countries and in different stages of settlement and migration now attend classes across two days each week. We've seen a greater number of learners visiting Australia on shorter visas who have taken the opportunity to join in with activities at the House and develop their skills in English at the same time. A number of learners have attained citizenship during the course of the last financial year, and classes at RSNH have supported these learners with this process.

Reading and Writing and Conversation classes led by Barbara Guignard-Driberg have focused on key literacy and communication skills and social connection. Beginner and Intermediate classes with Craig Burgess have focused on interpersonal employability skills and on building capacity and confidence.



377 participants in programs per week



"I love creating a space for learners to be themselves and express what they think and feel. English is difficult and the opportunity RSNH offers for learners to try out their language and build confidence is invaluable"

Craig, English Tutor





In 2023, we offered programs across Technology, Languages, Creativity, Horticulture, Hospitality, Health and Wellbeing, Children's Programs, Workshops and Events.

Technology

Beginners Computers
Intermediate Computers
Connect Club with Work Readiness

Languages

English Conversation
English Basics
English Intermediate
English Reading & Writing

Creativity

Visual Art
Sewing Projects
Beginners Sewing

Horticulture/Garden

Urban Food Gardening
Introduction to Permaculture

Hospitality

Creative Cooking
Introduction to Cafe Skills

Social

Singing by Day
Inclusive Garden Art Group
Inclusive Gardening
Inclusive Cooking Group
Community Lunch

Health and Wellbeing

Circuit Classes
Pilates
Heart Foundation Walking group
Deep Ecology – Falling in love with the world
Chatty Cafe

Children's Programs

Community Playgroups
New parent groups
Jamming with Jemma



Community Spotlight

Seda

Seda joined English (EAL) classes in July 2021. Over the last two years Seda has put her hand up to volunteer in various activities at the House including assisting in English Conversation class with lower-level learners, serving food in the Community Lunch and events and helping in the office. Coming to the House has helped Seda find confidence with her English and has given her a sense of connectedness, during the pandemic and beyond.

Seda worked as an accountant in Turkey, and now plans to study Education or Social Work with a view of working in these professions in Melbourne. "My experience in English classes has led me to discover that I enjoy helping others with their learning."

Seda was nominated for an Adult Learners Week award in 2022.

House Programs

CREATIVITY

Creative programs at the House have flourished over the last year and this was reflected in a key finding of the 2022 RSNH Community Survey: community members want opportunities to express their creativity, engage in activities out from behind a screen and connect socially.

We now offer two Sewing classes weekly, facilitated by Ruby Walker-Smith. Learners in these classes get the basic skills they need to sew with greater confidence and to develop personal projects of their own with support and guidance.

A new Introduction to Visual Art class led by Craig Burgess began this year, with classes reaching capacity almost immediately. Learners experiment with different techniques across a range of media and develop their own creative processes in a friendly, relaxed space. Two learners from these classes went on to study Visual Art and Animation at TAFE and classes at RSNH supported them in reaching this goal.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Our Community Playgroups run Monday to Thursday and are an integral part of life at the House. Playgroups are facilitated by Meri Carnovale with a team of dedicated volunteers and supported by students on placement completing a Diploma of Community Services.

Set in our light-filled Playgroup room and our beautiful Sensory Garden, Playgroups give children the opportunity to learn about the world and each other in a safe and nurturing space. Whether in the sandpit building castles, singing together or drawing and painting, the activities on offer each week are all fun and engaging, and are designed to bring out the best in each child. At the same time, Playgroups provide parents from across Merri-bek with the opportunity to connect socially and have a coffee and treat from our Community Cafe!

COMPUTERS

Computer classes at RSNH provide community members with key skills in Digital Literacy and address an important gap in knowledge and experience in adult learners who haven't had the opportunities to learn about computers previously.

Projects include activities related to employability, including CV and Cover Letter writing, as well as activities designed to develop basic skills and confidence across Microsoft Office software and in accessing information using common internet browsers. Computer classes provide learners with a space to try out new skills in a low-pressure, focussed environment and are supported by our Computers tutor Daniel Makowski.



"I love to see the way students, families, volunteers and participants form connections, develop skills, grow in confidence and have fun. I think the positive impact that has on individuals has a flow on effect in their families and communities – it's a ripple effect."

**Bronwen,
Administrative Officer**



Community Spotlight

Rei

Rei volunteered on the coffee cart for over a year until early 2023. He connected with the House via the Cafe Skills workshop, motivated by a desire to learn how to use a professional coffee machine. Also, during the pandemic Rei worked largely from home as a writer, and so volunteering at the House represented the chance to talk with others and connect.

“I think RSNH provides a great opportunity for participants and volunteers. Before starting volunteering, I thought that volunteers just provided their time and labour, but I found that volunteers also get a great feeling from joining, and become a member of the local community. Before volunteering at the House, I didn't know about Neighbourhood Houses in Australia. I highly recommend RSNH and I really loved the people and atmosphere and enjoyed my shifts there”.

Supporting community and environmental well-being

Reynard Street Community Cafe is a social enterprise, supporting environmental and community well-being. We provide kitchen, barista and front-of-house training opportunities for volunteers to learn the basics of hospitality in a friendly and inclusive space.

Our delicious sweet and savoury cafe treats are made from repurposed and donated food, using sustainable food practices to minimise food waste. Coffee grounds from our cafe are used in our compost bins and worm farms in our Community Garden. Food from the Community Garden is used in the cafe.

With the option to pay-it-forward or donate via the cafe, the cafe (alongside the Weekly Market, Community Pantry and Community Garden) addresses food insecurity and the financial barriers many experience in getting enough to eat each week.

During the pandemic, volunteers in our Food Program, led by Kitchen Coordinator Ruby Walker-Smith, made over 16,000 free healthy frozen meals for the community. In 2022, the Program provided 12,120 kgs of food relief. This next year we have big plans to use the key learnings from our Food Program to establish a catering business, providing affordable culinary delights from a community kitchen for your next party!

With the park upgrade underway next door, we now have outside and covered seating in our Community Garden, and we hope the Reynard Street Community Cafe grows from strength to strength as a place where people can spend time together and connect.



12,120 kgs of food relief provided by the program in 2022



"I love being able to share my passion for food with cooking class participants. Coming up with new menus from our rescued food and community garden is a challenge that I thrive on. I'm proud of being able to connect with a diverse section of the community and to be able to adjust to the needs of different people."

**Ruby,
Kitchen Coordinator**



Community Spotlight

Denise

Denise McLachlan has been volunteering as a barista on the coffee cart for the last 8 years. She makes coffees for the playgroup families and other customers from the neighbourhood. Denise initially connected with Reynard Street via an ad for an Introductory Coffee workshop in the local paper. At the time, she had no barista experience but quickly found she enjoyed it and she now makes excellent coffee! Denise also helps others learn coffee-making skills, taking on a mentoring or supporting role with new barista volunteers. On top of that, Denise regularly helps out in the kitchen and at events, such as the Christmas Party or events coinciding with the Friday Community Lunch.

Denise was nominated for the Merri-bek Volunteer of the Year Award 2022.



Thank you to staff and volunteers

Admin

Andelys Jolley
Carol Steele

Chatty Cafe

Alice Hucker
Jessica (Xiaorong) Yang

Cafe

Andrea Cataldi
Denise McLachlan
Dianne Liquorish
Hassan Nazmul
Haruna Oguchi
Helen Oliverio
Justin Binko
Nando Campana
Pheobe Xiuming Li
Rei Yamakura
Richard Foale
Robert Seamons
Savitri Jitendra
Sophie Bellman

Committee

Celia Torres-Villanueva
Cheryl McLachlan
Erin Dale
Katherine Thorn
Matt Dravich
Neryl Jeanneret
Owen Martin
Philippa Day
Shannon Wiseman

Computers / IT

Alan Hooman

Design

Philippa Sweikert

Driving

Duncan Cole
Ian McMillan
Peter Siatos
Phillip Ridi

Events

Nina (Xiaomin) He
Sara Gillard

Garden

Alan Potter
Carmen Noguera
Christine Romeyn
Emiko Pelaggi
Gianni Grigoletto
Hala Akkawi
Hillary Jane McLeish
Jonathan Eastman
Jonathan Richards
Lloyd Honeybrook
Maggie Cowling
Michael Orfanos
Pauline Galvin
Sharief Ouaida
Simon Eastman

Garden Art

Harriet Pearson
Stephanie Miceli

General

Adua Merola
Les Toth
Lynette Giles
Mary-Grace Giovankis
Michael Riley
Sam Rosso

Handy person

Ian Williams

Kitchen

Anne Erna
Froso Siatos
Isabelle Day
Jenna Pride
Mandy Dubrich
Rosemary Southgate
Teigan McLean
Duygu Arslan
Patricia Burke

Playgroup

Farah Bator Naqvi
Laura Carman
Minnie Zimmerman
Suzanne Rogers
Zahra Latifi

Social Media

Arun Amatya

Walking Group

Ian Gibson

Intern

Minori Satake
Sankun (Joe) Bangkra

Students on placement

Puja Bhattarai
Dipali Rai
Sandeep Kaur Sran
Arshdeep Kaur
(Jessica) Xiaorong Yang
Wendy Manyere
Harman Pannu
Anupa Acharya
Natalie (Tho Thi Quynh Nguyen)
Binaya Lamichhane
Olivia (Hong Van Pham)



STAFF

Lucy Eames

House Manager

Alfina Astuto

Bookkeeper

Bronwen McLoney

Administration Officer

Craig Burgess

Volunteer Coordinator, English Tutor,
Introduction to Visual Art Tutor

Meri Carnovale

Playgroup Coordinator, Work Readiness
Tutor

Nathacha Subero

Garden Coordinator, Inclusive Gardening
Facilitator, Introduction to Horticulture
Tutor, Events Coordinator (Placemaking
Festival)

Ruby Walker-Smith

Food Relief/Kitchen Program Coordinator,
Sewing Tutor, Inclusive Cooking Tutor

TUTORS/INSTRUCTORS

Barbara Guignard-Drieberg

English Tutor

Bec James

Inclusive Garden Art Tutor

Daniel Makowski

Computer Tutor

Sue Broumos

Exercise Instructor



Funders

We acknowledge the funding and support from the following Government bodies:

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)

Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions: Adult Community & Further Education

Merri-bek City Council

Key Partners / Relationships

We would like to acknowledge and thank our partners and supporters:

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria

North West Neighbourhood House Network
(NWNHN)

Corrections Victoria

Open Table

Food Bank

Second Bite

Merri Food Hub

CIS Merri-bek

Bunnings Coburg

Merri-bek Community Gardening Inc.

Coburg West Primary School

Veolia

VINC

Bendigo Community Bank, Strathmore Branch

Peter Khalil, Federal Labor Member for Wills

Anthony Cianflone, State Member for Pascoe Vale

Grow, Eat, Together (GET)

The Seed Collection

Stott's College

Onemda

Merri-bek City Council Maternal and Child Services

Workskil Australia Coburg

Campbell Page

Atwork Australia

Matchworks

Jobfind

APM Employment Services

Life Without Barriers

Liberty Disability Services

BodeWell Community Care

Onemda

Bodewell Community Care

AMS Consulting Group (Aust)

Breakthru


Flourish Australia


IPAR


Nabenet


Melbourne City Mission

Sacred Heart Mission


 104a Reynard St, Coburg VIC 3058


 Open: Monday to Friday 9am - 4pm

 +61 3 9386 7128

 admin@rsnh.org.au

 www.rsnh.org.au

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