



**BALLARAT
NEIGHBOURHOOD
CENTRE
ANNUAL REPORT
2024**



Contents



Chair's Report.....	2
Our Vision & Values.....	3
Committee of Management.....	4
Executive Officer's Report.....	5
2023 Reflections.....	7
BNC Stories.....	11
Community Development	13
Treasurer's Report.....	17
Organisational Chart.....	17
Partners & Networks.....	18

In the spirit of reconciliation we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



From the Chair

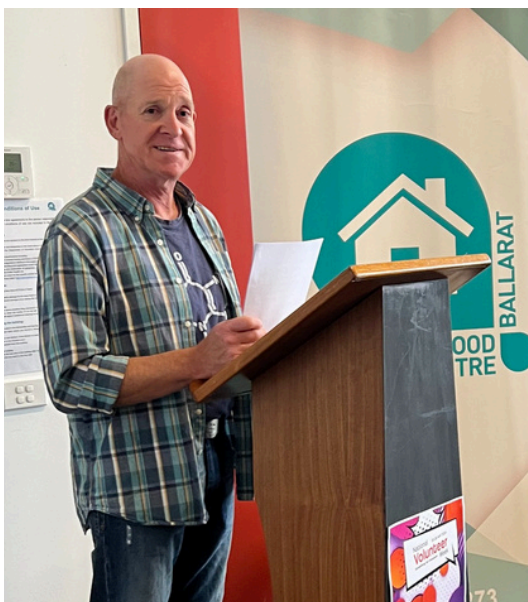
From a Committee of Management perspective, 2023 has been a stable year with no membership departures or arrivals. This has afforded the committee the opportunity to double down on our ongoing drive to refine and adapt both our policies and strategic direction.

We are continuing to explore ways for our houses to be able to reach deeper into the communities they serve. Ideas such as more diversified delivery models which take advantage of community spaces over a wider area. Of course always being mindful to ensure we engage with these communities to ensure our offerings are relevant to the needs of any community we serve.

Over the past year we have also witnessed the very real direct effects, and knock-on effects, of the significant cost of living spike. Life has grown ever-harder for those at the margins and the number of those who are at the margins continues to rise. The additional needs this creates are also driving us to consider what our role is in assisting those most impacted.

Ironically, at the same time as demand for our programs and services are dramatically increasing, we find ourselves in an era where funding our capacity to meet these needs grows ever more difficult. Government grants are fewer and farther between, and increasingly difficult to secure. Program funding is being reduced and in some cases cut altogether. Unsurprisingly, funding from philanthropic organisations is also growing harder to procure as demand for inclusion in their grants and schemes peaks.

But our neighbourhood houses are renowned for delivering amazing outcomes from shoestring budgets. Together with our managers we will work tirelessly to find new ways to fund what we need to. We will lobby harder than ever before and we will find imaginative ways to ensure we can continue to serve our communities.



Glen Crompton,
Chair
Combined Committee of Management for the
Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre
Ballarat East Neighbourhood House
Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre

Our Vision

resilient connected neighbourhoods

Our Mission

to enrich our community by providing opportunities to connect, participate and learn

Our Values

We take a person-centred approach to:

- Equity: creating opportunities with fairness and consideration of each individual's needs.
- Empowerment: Enhancing individuals' capacity to have control of their own lives.
- Inclusion: Embracing diversity in a respectful, safe and welcoming environment.
- Collaboration: Working together to achieve common goals.

Our Commitment to the SDGs

We achieve 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goal targets in our work:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere (1.1, 1.5)
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (2.1.2)
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (3.4, 3.5)
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (5.1, 5.2, 5.5, 5.5.2)
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (8.3, 8.5, 8.6)
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries (10.2, 10.3)
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (11.7)
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (12.3, 12.5)
13. Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning (13.3)
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (16.1, 16.7)
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (Technology 17.8)

Note: many of the SDG's overlap, for example Goal 1 End Poverty and Goal 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth. Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre works with unemployed job seekers to help them find meaningful work. This will help them earn a decent living and improve their living conditions, moving them above the poverty line.





Committee of Management as at 31st December 2023

There were no new or retiring Committee of Management (COM) members this year.

On behalf of everyone at the Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre we take this opportunity to thank the COM members for their ongoing support and recognise how fortunate we are to have such a fabulous group of community minded people leading the organisation.

Chair Glen Crompton

Deputy Chair Annie de Jong

Secretary Lisa Buckland

Treasurer Jane Jens

General Members Cameron Duthie
Bradley Smith
Laura Le Marshall
Alan Labas

Executive Officer/ Public Officer Vicki Coltman



From the Executive Officer



After several challenging years, life returned to 'normal' in late 2023 as community members re-engaged fully with house activities and programs. This was both rewarding and exhausting as we juggled the increase in people through the facilities with the number of requests for help and support.

Providing this level of support is only possible when you have the commitment of a fantastic team of dedicated staff, tutors and volunteers. It was great to see everyone working together ensuring those who needed help were supported, as well as watching everyone support each other along the way. For everything you do and for stepping up for our community. I thank you all for your passion and dedication. It is a pleasure to work with such a fantastic team.

I also recognise how fortunate I am to have the support of Glen, the Committee of Management Chair, and the other seven Committee of Management members. With their strategic focus on building resilient and connected communities, they have led the organisation to another great year. On behalf of our community, I would like to thank them for their commitment, for being available to help, and for sharing their knowledge and advice when needed.

Every week in the Neighbourhood Centre you will find a range of activities and programs designed to help people connect, participate and learn, including Chatty Café's, lunches, morning teas, garden and walking groups, access to computers and printers, child restraint checks, and document signing. Overall all programs experienced an increase in participants and activities.

Learn Local course enrolment increased as the year progressed. In particular term 4 saw a significant increase in people returning to Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) courses which resulted in us delivering 107% of our planned training hours.



From the EO continued



Our Kitchen Social Enterprise, underpinned by the Cooking Up Jobs course, continued to deliver low cost meals on a weekly basis to our mainly older community members. Like all our programs, our food relief program is only possible with the help of our many volunteers and the generous support of our donors and sponsors.

Place based community development projects consisted of the four Spotlight on Sebastopol (SOS) projects, our small community garden and reactivation of the Delacombe Community Hub. These projects are discussed in the following pages and highlight the deep connections we have when working with our community.

It was also great news in June for our unemployed clients when our Jobs Victoria Work & Learning Centre (WLC) contract was extended for two more years. Having achieved an employment KPI of 230% in the previous four year contract, it is clear our person centred approach is highly successful at helping people into employment.

Finally reflecting on 2023, it is rewarding to see how much we have achieved this year. However, I expect 2024 to be a challenging year of change, as we settle into a new post pandemic 'normal' life. We will see people with greater needs and higher expectations of support, as many more people now come to the Centre as their first place to seek assistance.

Reduced funding, the end of our large Sebastopol projects and more competition for grants and sponsorship was already impacting BNC at the end of 2023. I foresee 2024 will bring some interesting challenges and opportunities for innovative delivery approaches, especially working in collaboration with new and existing partners.

Vicki Coltman





Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre 2023 Reflection

Over the past few years we have settled into a nice pattern of providing a large community event and then a couple of morning or afternoon teas each term. Alongside our weekly community lunches, free computer access, community garden, and support services this gives community members many opportunities to connect with friends, regularly participate or just drop in for help.

There were well over 50,000 visitors to the Hub in 2023, accessing facilities and BNC programs. Whilst we grew our volunteer numbers slightly, the total volunteer hours were slightly lower. We added more Justice of the Peace services; launched the ArtBox as a new display studio; and provided the Hub venue as a pre-polling station for the October Referendum. Room hire was generally down as people continued to work from home and we saw a reduction in employment service providers hiring the venue after the number of providers reduced as service contracts ended.

In 2023 we had:

- 1000 visitors use the Hub in an average week
- 1432 activities, with 648 people in an average week participating in activities
- 11 different types of volunteer roles: garden, office, social enterprise & classes
- 75+ organisational supporters, partners and sponsors of our programs
- 44 different organisations used the facility for meetings, training and activities
- Users hired 100 hours of facility hire in an average month
- 15 different groups using a room in the Centre in an average month, 5 of these groups supported in some way by BNC



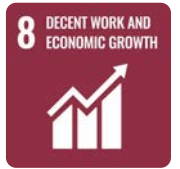
**102
volunteers**

**6200+
volunteer
hours**

**50,000+
visitors**



Jobs Victoria Work & Learning Centre



Achieving an employment KPI of 230% at the conclusion of the four year contract in June, it is clear our wrap around approach given to clients is highly successful. After providing this service for 11 years we have formed many great relationships and friendships, whilst taking people on their journey from unemployment to decent employment. We were pleased in October to receive a new two year service contract to continue our work supporting local long term unemployed clients.

Unfortunately, we also experienced a reduction in funding, which combined with the ending of all other state funded employment programs in this region, currently leaves us as the 'last man standing' providing this service. Consequently, we experienced increased demand and for the first time ever we had to turn people away. To support these people we have introduced several new ACFE funded work ready courses and will be encouraging those ineligible for WLC support to enrol in one of these courses.

Achievements to end of contract 31/10/2023*:

- Total active clients in system 811 (Target 381)
- Total number of employment placements 554 (Target 244)
- Clients unemployed for >12 months (at intake) 25%
- Employment placements retained for 4 weeks 79%
- Employment placements retained for 26 weeks 50%
- Number of non-accredited training placements 524 (Target 242) (80% completion)
- Number of accredited training placements 116 (Target 89) (53% completion)

* since contract commenced 1st July 2019



Brotherhood
of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty



811
clients

554
employment
placements

640
training
placements



Our Kitchen Social Enterprise



The social enterprise operates with the fantastic support of food donations from local businesses and community organisations including SecondBite. It has also been supported for the past three years by the Ian Potter Foundation and each year receives funds from a wide range of sponsors and donors. Conscious of cost of living increases, we maintained the lunches at \$10 this year, which was below cost but much needed and was gratefully received by the community.

Supported by a band of regular volunteers and adult education students the BNC team led by Chef David once again provided hundreds of low cost meals to our older community members. Along the way, providing a practical employment pathway to 50 people in the Cooking Up Jobs course; opportunities for people to give back by volunteering; a safe place for people to meet and feel less socially isolated; and saved thousands of kilograms of food from landfill.

The social enterprise:

- held 30 weekly community lunches, averaging 80 people at each lunch or 2500 people per annum, plus provided 25+ take away meals after each lunch
- rescued 6600kg of food from landfill
- donated 1000kg of food to community members
- employed a kitchen hand trainee role for a year 11 student
- had 24 volunteers who contributed 1910+ hours of support to the social enterprise

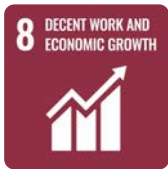


**6600kg food
rescued**

**2755+
meals**

**1910+ hours
volunteered**





Learn Local Adult Education & Training

Our strategic commitment to prepare people for employment and accredited education using easily accessible adult education pathways is working and is widely recognised by local employment service agencies, employers and the community. As expected our learners come from all walks of life and were born in 35 different countries. We continue to support many vulnerable learners from indigenous and multicultural backgrounds, and have a partnership with Raven Collective to support women with domestic violence experiences.

After a slow start to the year, term 4 saw a significant increase in people returning to Learn Local courses pushing us over our targeted delivery training plan hours. Overall enrolment in adult education has steadily grown in the past few years with 479 students completing 19607 hours of training. This represents a 50% increase in training hours delivered since 2018. Cooking Up Jobs, Digital Literacy and the Sewing courses continue to be our most popular courses.

Overall we achieved:

- 107% of total allocated hours or 19607 of 18384 hours*
- 774 enrolments for 479 unique students
- 120 courses were delivered, covering 30 different course topics
- Courses were delivered across 7 sites and 4 Local Government Areas (LGAs)
- Learners identified as 65% women, 43% over 50 years old, 3% as Indigenous
- 24% of students were born overseas, coming from 35 different countries
- 17% of learners live outside of Ballarat, in 14 other Local Government Areas
- collected many learner case studies and testimonials - [find them on our website](#)

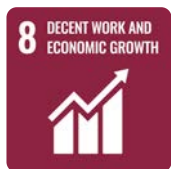


**107%
hours
delivered***

**19607
student
contact
hours***

**774
course
enrolments**





Get the help to empower you to become your best self

June was born and raised in Bangkok, Thailand and came to Australia seven years ago aged 30 to pursue study. She originally resided in the city of Melbourne and then made the move to Ballarat in 2019. June was keen to gain local employment and signed up for a job agency which in return referred her to Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre (BNC).

June said BNC helped provide her a sense of connection to the community and started her building a social network as she knew nobody upon arrival. She was originally able to take part in the gardening component offered by the Centre and then progressed to working voluntary with the kitchen social enterprise scheme during Covid. June said this was great for her skill building professionally but also amazing in terms of sociability and she established strong friendships through these programs.

June must have made a tremendous impression while volunteering her time for the Centre during Covid, selflessly preparing meals for the needy, because in February of this year she gained employment working for Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre in a full-time administration role! June says during her voluntary days in the Centre she was able to train towards this administration role and tailor her pre-existing skills learnt from her time working for six years as an Auditor in Thailand. This was quite a prestigious job she held and is testament to her intellect and attention to detail. Mix this with the caring, selfless nature and excellent work ethic she displayed to her colleagues and its little wonder June was asked to join the team at BNC.

June says BNC has brought nothing but positives into her life right from the start, and the Centre has given her a great sense of inclusion and community involvement. She has been given the opportunity to meet and work with local people from all walks of life. June commented she gained wonderful professional opportunities and has made many lifelong friendships through the Centre. She observed as a migrant coming into a new country confidence can be low and things can be overwhelming, but BNC helped her to overcome the adversity and flourish.

She would encourage anyone feeling they are facing any barriers whether they be social, emotional or professional to approach the Centre and access the services and support that help empower locals to become their best selves.

This story was captured by John in December 2023 as a student placement project for his Bachelor of Community and Human Services degree. Read more stories on our website:

<https://www.ballaratnc.org.au/about-m/testimonials>





Empowered with new skills to thrive in this technological era

Russell is 56-year-old man. He became a qualified baker and pastry maker in 1986 and went on to gain employment with a major food processing company for the bulk of his adult career which spanned 17 years in total. He prides himself on having an excellent work ethic and only missed one day in 17 years. He was often the man to be relied upon on to come in hours early on late notice or as emergency cover for relief on shifts, it was for Russell; any sacrifice to help the company and maintain production.

Unfortunately, Russell suffered an injury to his back while at work and this forced him to take some time off. After the injury he says he was not treated with due care or compassion by his workplace and felt pressured by HR to return prematurely after only a few months off. He ended up ultimately reinjuring his back not long after returning.

Russell felt badly let down by the company and says after this second work injury his employment was very unfairly terminated. His state of mind and general mood was terribly impacted, leaving Russell feeling betrayed and horrified at the gross mistreatment he had endured. Russell had planned to dedicate his working life to this company and ultimately retire there upon completion of a long and loyal service.

After this traumatic event Russell was assigned to an employment agency whom in turn referred him to Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre (BNC). Roxanne was his first point of contact, and she was the person who initiated a drastic change in his life at this point. Russell felt a colossal barrier greatly impeding him from retraining was his total IT illiteracy. He, with the guidance of the BNC staff members, decided to enrol in a Basic Computer course. He enjoyed it so much he immediately upon completion signed up for the Intermediate Computer course which he conquered with no hassle.

Russell now considers himself adept at using the computer and its various programs along with all the other associated modern technological devices. This includes his smartphone with its internet and multimedia features, features which before his training he had no idea how to utilize. Russell talked glowingly on how much these newly acquired skills have empowered him to thrive in this increasingly technological era. Russell is currently enrolled at Federation University and is due to start studying towards his training and assessment accreditation in 2024 opening even more exciting pathways in his bright future.

This story was captured by John in December 2023 as a student placement project for his Bachelor of Community and Human Services degree. Read more stories on our website: <https://www.ballaratnc.org.au/about-m/testimonials>



Community Development

At BNC we support both place-based and 'in-house' community development activities, especially when there is additional funding for these projects. Within the house we held a range of small social gatherings, published community newsletters, held several art exhibitions in the ArtBox, continued to grow our community garden, and held successful celebration events. We continued to support vocational placement for TAFE and University students and maintained our volunteer numbers by investing in our volunteers with training and support.

We also :

- Delivered community events including a harmony week celebration, International Women's Day morning tea, Seniors month Sing Australia afternoon tea, weekly Chatty Cafes, monthly social sewing sessions and attended the Volunteer Expo and BGT Jobs Expo. (1100+ attendees to these activities)
- JP's volunteered 427 hours signing 3741 documents
- Completed several Spotlight on Sebastopol projects
- Supported 13 students completing their vocational placement requirements
- Supported Ballarat District Community Support Register participants
- Applied for 31 grants, with a 68% success rate
- Distributed 3 quarterly Connecting Sebastopol Newsletters (12500 total newsletters)
- Maintained 2000 subscribers to the quarterly BNC Newsletter
- Increased our social media followers to 2500+
- Restarted the Delacombe Walking Group meetups
- Continued to provide a range of services to the community including free computer access, help with sick pay guarantee applications, and child car seat checks



427
JP hours
volunteered

1100+
activity
participants

13
placement
students



Community Development: Sebastopol



Whilst we have been working on four Spotlight on Sebastopol (SOS) projects since mid-2021, with several projects impacted by construction and pandemic delays, it was rewarding to finally complete the first project this year.

The **SOS Connecting Sebastopol** project saw the creation of a Sebastopol Community Group, the new Connecting Sebastopol website, videos of residents sharing their Sebastopol stories and a quarterly Newsletter. Now with several interested groups and community members involved, the Community Group is going from strength to strength and the newsletter is attracting advertisers, articles and volunteers to letterbox it. The focus for 2024, will be to secure additional funding to keep building this fantastic community project.

The other three SOS projects are due for completion in the first six months of 2024, with some components of each project completed during 2023.

SOS Discover Historic Sebastopol saw the first history information board installed on the Royal Mail along with a large photograph of the original Tram Depot (featured on the cover of the Annual Report). Informative blue signs with eye catching historical images will be located around Sebastopol as the Discover Historic Sebastopol trail comes to life. There will also be a Discover Historic Sebastopol brochure in key locations and available online which covers 27 historical sites with a map, stories and rare photos of each site.

SOS Public Art projects:

- Located on The Royal Mail Hotel wall the **Tram Depot Mural** is the first location for the Discover Historic Sebastopol interpretive signs. After the mural launch, we were thrilled when the family of 99 year old Jim Maher (featured on the cover of the Annual Report) contacted us to say he was the driver depicted in the mural, he subsequently visited the site dressed in his full conductor's uniform. Like the BNC mural in Cobden Street Mt Pleasant, this mural has attracted positive feedback and engagement from the community. PS. Jim turned 100 in April 2024!



Community Development: Sebastopol



Public Art projects continued:

- The **Arthur Jenkins map** (pictured on the previous page) of the Sebastopol goldmines was reproduced and is now located in the Sebastopol Library where anyone can enjoy this wonderful artwork and explore Sebastopol's mining history.
- **ArtBox Indigenous Art Project.** Several years ago, the City of Ballarat donated their art shipping container to BNC. Now located in the BNC small community garden, we worked with Indigenous youth from Phoenix P-12 Community College and Deidre Burgoyne Rosier a local Indigenous artist to create welcoming Indigenous artworks on the ArtBox and community garden totem poles. This was a wonderful opportunity for the youth to be involved and ArtBox is now providing an accessible 24/7 display space for local artists, schools and community groups.
- The **Street Art Project** to be located on the Totally Workwear wall in Albert Street is due for completion in early 2024. Local artist CaxOne has designed a vibrant artwork for the wall which celebrates Sebastopol and incorporates his memories of growing up in the suburb including a nod to the Borough of Sebastopol with the old municipality logo, recognition of the gold mining history with imagery of a shovel, a boot to represent the area's history in shoe-manufacturing and a celebration of the Burra Football Netball Club with their kookaburra mascot featured.

The **SOS Sebastopol Community Garden** is our final SOS project. Covid delayed by 18 months, this year we finally saw works begin on the Spencer Street site. A collaboration with Phoenix P12 Community College, the garden infrastructure was installed late in 2023 and is expected to be operational by June 2024.

Once complete, the community garden will become a community asset for:

- training and education programs on horticulture and environmental sustainability,
- community events and activities,
- community members to volunteer and to gather in a safe space for a cuppa, and
- a market garden and a farmers market.



Community Development: Delacombe



Prior to 2020, BNC convened a group of representatives from local organisations working together to develop and support the Delacombe residents living near the Doug Dean Reserve. Known as the Delacombe Chairs Forum (DCF), the group were actively involved in this community giving local residents a voice on issues which impacted them, including to the City of Ballarat's Reserve Redevelopment Master Plan. Despite plans to restart the DCF meetings in 2023 this unfortunately did not eventuate. We have stayed in contact with representatives from most of the DCF member organisations and will continue to work with them to support this community, especially as the Leawarra neighbourhood undergoes the Big Housing Build transformation over the next three years.

In 2021, after the Delacombe Community Hub remained closed from the 2020 lockdown, the Delacombe community began to actively lobby BNC to take over managing the facility. In July 2023, BNC finally signed a three year lease with the City of Ballarat to manage the Delacombe Community Hub and Community Garden.

Whilst externally in good condition, internally the Hub contained a great deal of unwanted furniture and other items. It took us several months to clean out the building, repaint the internal walls, sort the furniture, fix the blinds and generally set it up for community use. By the end of 2023 the building was being used five days a week by community groups, the Ballarat & District Community Register volunteers, a local JP and became the home of the BNC Chatty Café. Despite having limited funds and resources to support this community, BNC will continue to activate the building for community groups and will relocate some staff permanently into the building in 2024.

With the inside refurbished, our attention turned to the community garden. With no maintenance and little care for 4 years, the garden has fallen into disrepair. Many of the beds are no longer suitable and the garden will need to be rebuilt. We will commence rebuild works in the garden in 2024 using it as a training space for our Gardening Up Jobs students and creating opportunities for community members to once again volunteer in their local community garden.



From the Treasurer



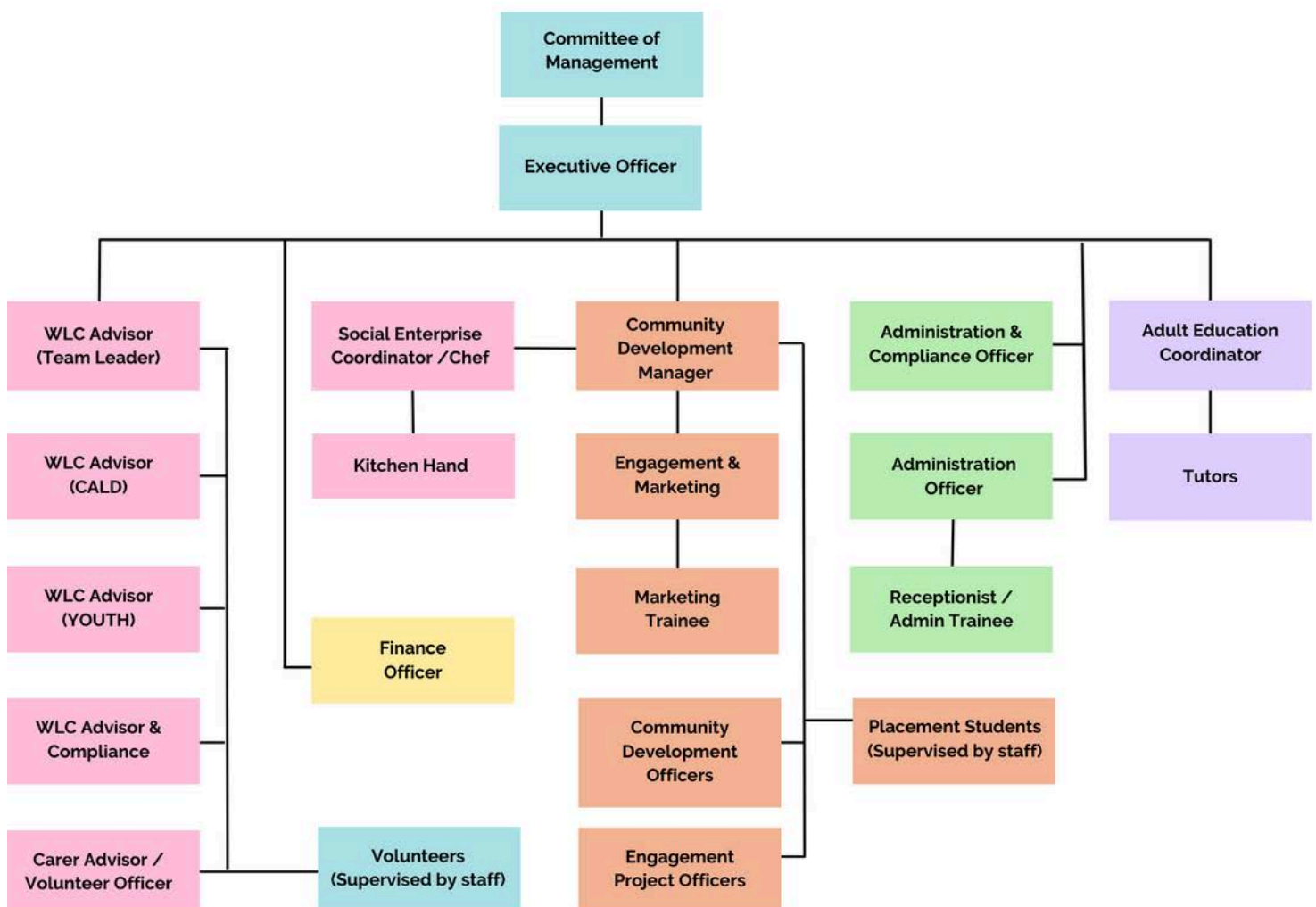
For the 2023 year, Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre (BNC) had a net deficit of \$99,657 compared to a net surplus of \$179,225 in 2022. This resulted in a decrease of total member's funds to \$447,712 compared to \$547,369 in 2022.

The 2022 surplus reflects funding received in advance for the Work & Learning Centre and Spotlight on Sebastopol projects. This funding was included in the 2022 accounts as income not 'funding received in advance' due to the completion of key non-financial milestones which triggered funding payments. Expenses related to this funding were incurred in 2023 and 2024. Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre received \$221,126 in ACFE Grants and \$890,200 in Government Grants, which is significantly lower than the previous year.

A full copy of the 2023 Financial Statements can be downloaded from the Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre website or contact the Executive Officer for a copy.

Jane Jens

Organisational Chart





Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre Partners and Networks

A very special thank you to our major funding partners for their continued support.

- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Department of Jobs, Precincts & Regions
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Phoenix P12 Community College
- City of Ballarat & Regional Development Victoria
- Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre, Ballarat North Neighbourhood House & Ballarat East Neighbourhood House

Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre staff convene the following networks:

- Delacombe Chairs Forum
- Jobs Victoria Work & Learning Centre Local Advisory Panel
- Connecting Sebastopol

Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre staff are members of the following networks:

- Central Highlands Association of Neighbourhood Houses Committee
- Neighbourhood Houses Victoria Board
- City of Ballarat Safety Committee
- Food Access Network
- Ballarat Youth Services Network
- Spotlight on Sebastopol Committee
- BRMC Education & Employment Working Group
- DET South Western Victoria Regional Engagement Forum
- Volunteer Coordinators Network
- CORE Alliance
- Work & Learning Centre Network
- Social Enterprise Victoria Network (SENVic)
- Ballarat 4 Kids
- Ballarat Local Jobs Program

To support our community we rely on many people and organisations to help us with not only the big things but also the little things our community needs. 2023 was no exception and we are grateful to everyone who helps us to support our community.





ABN 79 868 780 589

Ballarat South Community Hub
11 Tuppen Drive, Sebastopol. 3356
PO Box 540W, Ballarat. 3350

Email: reception@ballaratnc.org.au
www.ballaratnc.org.au

Phone: 5329 3273