

Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre
Incorporated

ANNUAL REPORT

1st July 2022 – 30th June 2023

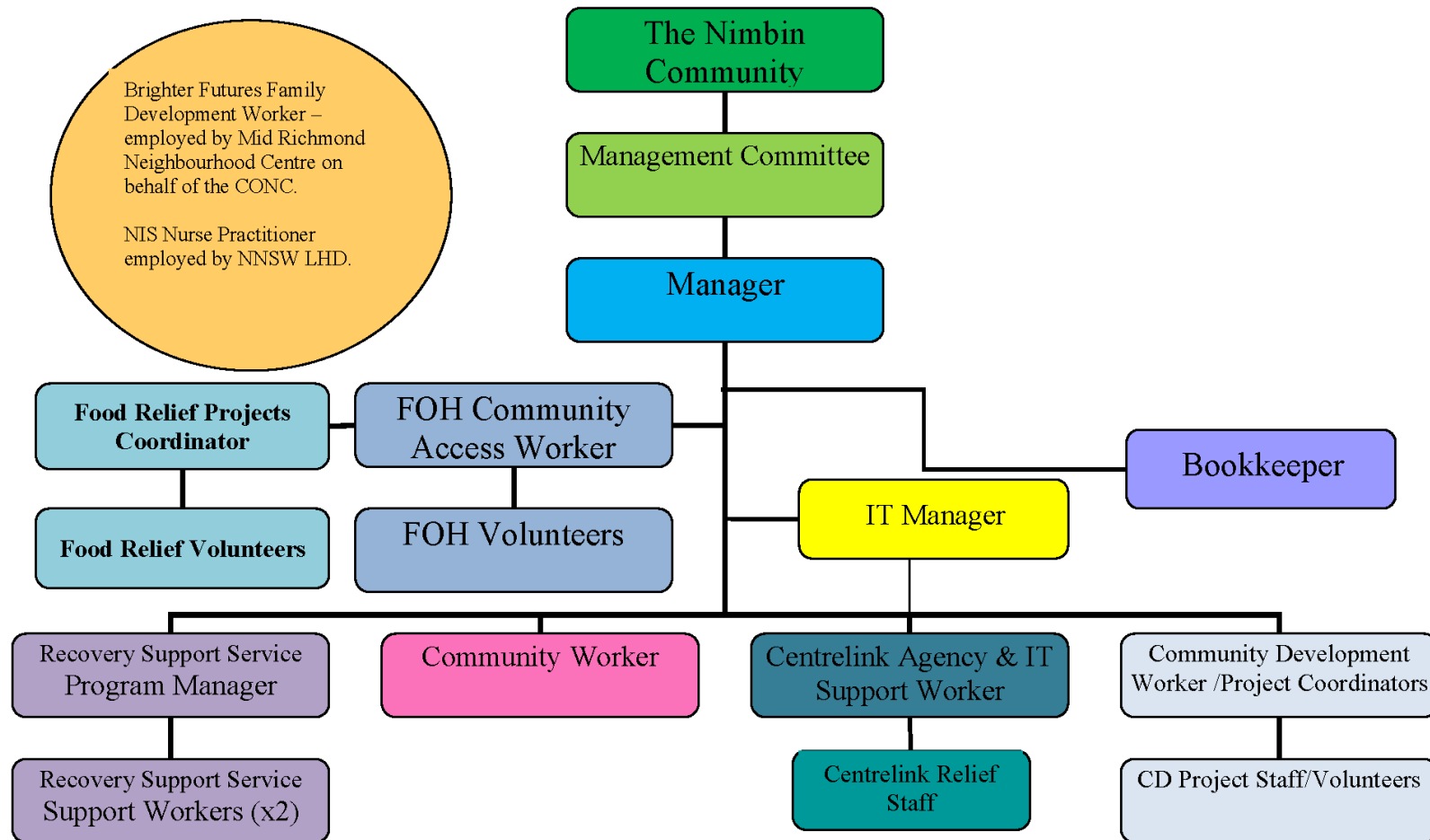


Photo Credit: Ana Jol (Wattle and Daub workshop at 7 Sibley Street)

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Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre – Organisational Chart





ABOUT US



Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre (NNIC) is a not for profit incorporated association, and a registered charity with gift deductible status (DGR). NNIC is governed by a voluntary management committee which is accountable to the Nimbin community, NNIC's members, regulatory and funding bodies. NNIC employs staff and volunteers, delivers various projects and activities directly, as well as providing an auspice role for community groups and projects.

NNIC works in partnership with many organisations, government and business, both locally and across the Northern Rivers.

OUR TEAM in 2022-2023

Staff

Natalie Meyer, Manager

Julia Melland, Bookkeeper

Peter Hawkins, Community Worker (Resigned July 2022)

Elke Tavra, Community Worker

Kerry Negus, Relief Community Worker

Nicole Raward, Front of House Community Access Worker

Laura Hill, Casual Relief Front of House Community Access Worker

Stephanie Seckold, Community Development Worker

David Julian, Services Australia/Centrelink Agent and IT Support

Laura Hill, Services Australia/Centrelink Agent

Kirsty Pamplin, Casual Relief Services Australia/Centrelink Agent

Reg Saunders, Casual Relief Services Australia/Centrelink Agent

Nicole Raward, Casual Relief Services Australia/Centrelink Agent

Chris Harris – Casual IT Administrator

Michael Higgins, Recovery Support Service Program Manager (Resigned March 2023)

Samantha Cromptvoets, Recovery Support Service Program Manager

Alison Southey, Recovery Support Service Case Manager

Shae Ellis, Recovery Support Service Case Manager

Virginia Waters – Project Coordinator – Nimbin Disaster Resilience Project

Sonja Rudolph, Family Development Worker, CONC Brighter Futures Far North Coast (employed by Mid Richmond Neighbourhood Centre).

Max Reithmuller – IT Consultant

Management Committee

Matthew Brumley, Chairperson (resigned at Nov 2022 AGM)

Jerome Reid, Chairperson (as from 1st March 2023)

Lisa Lucken, Deputy Chairperson

Reg Saunders, Secretary, Public Officer

Laurel Grant, Treasurer

Chibo Mertineit, Ordinary Member

Paul Le Bars, Ordinary Member

Tashanna Fuller, Ordinary Member

Anne Ransley, Ordinary Member

Volunteers

Front of House Support – Front Desk, Cleaning, Stalls etc:

Ron Duffy, Chris Harris, Reg Saunders, Chantelle Lapham, Tom Schuf, Roxanne Graham-Smith, Brad Moulton, Kirsty Pamplin, Christine Becroft.

Webmaster: Dave Julian (and Tom Schuf).

Food Relief Projects Coordinator: Heidi Glover.

Soup Kitchen/Food Team: Heidi Glover, Ron Duffy, Bob Keane, Janene Shoppee, Alison Bywater, Laura Hill.

Community Xmas Lunch – Gail Clarke, Rachel, Jane (and more).

Many thanks to the Anglin Family for their regular cook ups of meals for our freezer.

Art in the Park: Natascha Gleeson, Darren Cleaver, Annie Heitman.

Death and Beyond: Saskia Kouwenberg, Aine, Venessa Johnstone.

CDAT Members: Chibo Mertineit, Deborah Woodbridge, Amber Johnstone, Natalie Meyer (Chair).

7 Sibley Street maintenance, gardening and mowing: Andrew Edwards-Taylor, Sandy Burke, Rick.

7 Sibley Street volunteers – shop front etc: Christine O'Brien, Doug Pinch, Darren Cleaver

7 Sibley Street Compost Loo build volunteers: Mick, Steve Hale, Vicky Thrower, Sara Muston, Brad Moulton, Reg, Saan, Brian, Tim, Christine O'Brien, Kaelana, Wan, Binnah, Courtney, Faolan, Tara (and we know we have forgotten some!)

Special thanks to Klara Marosszeky of Australian Hemp Mansonry Co for all her support and wisdom. Thanks also to Andrew Kavasilas for the donations of hemp when we ran short.

OUR SERVICES and ACTIVITIES

Our Services

- Community Hub/Community Strengthening (information and referrals/community development) – *funded by NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) – Targeted Early Intervention (TEI).*
- Energy Account Payment Assistance program (EAPA) - electricity vouchers, Phone cards and taxi vouchers.
- Community Access to Technologies: *funded via fees for services.*
- Services Australia (Centrelink) Agency – *funded by Commonwealth Services Australia.*
- Nimbin Integrated Services – *(clinical service for dual diagnoses - people struggling with mental health and or alcohol/other drug issues) - the Nurse Practitioner position is funded by the North Coast Local Health District, and NNIC's costs of supporting and accommodating the project are funded by Healthy North Coast /North Coast Primary Network.*
- Brighter Futures Far North Coast – Nimbin Outlet Agency – *funded by NSW DCJ via the Consortium of Neighbourhood Centres Far North Coast (CONC).*
- CONC Emergency Relief (material aid, case coordination and wrap around services) – Nimbin Outlet Agency - *funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS) via the CONC.*
- CONC Food Recovery project – *funded via donations.*
- Material Aid: e.g. Food parcels/Meals/Tea and Coffee/Soup Kitchen/blankets etc. - *funded via donations.*
- Recovery Support Service – *funded by NSW Reconstruction Authority.*
- NGO Flood Support program – *funded by DCJ.*

Our Community Development Activities in 2022-2023

- Nimbin Disaster Resilience Project – *funded by Northern Rivers Community Foundation.*
- 7 Sibley St – Nimbin's Sustainable Living Hub – workshops, activities, events, Seed Savers, community composting, community gardens.
- Welcome to Nimbin Kit updates and distribution.
- Auspicing Nimbin CDAT (Community Drug Action Team).
- Auspicing Nimbin Death and Beyond.
- Auspicing CWA Nimbin Branch for a project to install air conditioning in their rooms – *funded by Northern Rivers Community Foundation.*

What is 'Community Development'?

NNIC is committed to community development which contributes to a stronger community and region. Underpinning this is a strengths-based approach and the understanding that community pride and cohesion is the key to a

functioning community and reducing crime, disadvantage, isolation and unemployment. We have seen that people working together and sharing resources can lead to significant activity including economic benefits. Community development is therefore a major element of NNIC's core business.

The basis of community development is the idea that local people already know what the issues and problems are and how to solve them. The community development approach assists communities to undertake projects in planned and structured ways, recognising the strengths and knowledge of local people and providing leadership.

Other Services/Activities Co-located at NNIC:

- Various community meetings
- Mobile Library Bus (Thursdays)
- Corrective Services/Probation and Parole

Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to our services and activities, and to the functioning of the Nimbin community in general. A number of volunteers assist with the operations of our front desk and technologies. Many other volunteers are involved in our community developments projects. NNIC aims to provide volunteers with opportunities that match their interests, skills and abilities.

We are a registered provider for Community Service Orders (Corrective Services), Work Development Orders (Revenue NSW) and Centrelink/Job Active volunteer placements. We also provide placements for school and tertiary students.



Manager's Report

Natalie Meyer, Manager

The past year saw ongoing efforts to address the impacts of the March 2022 Flood event, and it is clear that recovery will be a long and complex process.

Demand for services and support has remained high as a result, but we were fortunate to receive funding from the NSW Reconstruction Authority for the two-year Recovery Support Service (RSS) which enabled us to shift the bulk of that complex case work across to our RSS team. For the first time in the history of NNIC, we have been able to employ full time staff, with three full time staff funded via the RSS.

The RSS provides case management, and clients requiring material aid support, assistance with Centrelink payments, or generalist support outside of direct flood recovery issues, were usually referred back to our Community Workers, Emergency Relief program, Centrelink Agency, or referred into external services, thus enhancing the RSS by providing comprehensive wrap around support.



This year we were also very grateful to receive additional non-recurrent funding from DCJ (NSW Department of Communities and Justice) via the NGO Flood Support Program (FSP), which also enabled us to pay for additional staff time. We were able to replace the carpet in one area of the Centre with lino to extend our food preparation area, purchase some new equipment in particular a

new high-powered carpet-cleaning/washing vacuum cleaner, some new office chairs and provide over \$11,000 in vouchers to flood impacted clients for goods and services which were otherwise difficult to obtain via sources such as the Red Cross donations fund and GIVIT.

A small wage subsidy also enabled us to increase the hours of one of our staff members for the past year.

Thus, in total, our Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff temporarily increased **to 6.2 FTEs in** the past year (from around 3 FTEs in an average year).

Having extra staff hours really made a difference to NNIC and the community, and also enabled us to keep everything going in the context of staff stress and exhaustion after a very challenging few years, as well as absences caused by the ongoing impacts of COVID and for some, their own personal flood recovery efforts.

The NGO Flood Support Program commenced in August 2022 and is due for completion on 31 August 2023. Similarly, the wage subsidy referred to above, ends in October 2023. The RSS is due to wind up on 30 June 2024, although there may be an opportunity to extend it for a further 6 months after that, with reduced staffing levels and capacity.

Nimbin Disaster Resilience Project We received \$50,000 from the Northern Rivers Community Foundation to progress the review of, and the strategies under, the Nimbin Community Disaster Plan. The Plan underwent extensive review and update by the Nimbin Disaster Resilience Group (NDRG) following the flood event. Community consultations were held in order to get community input to the revision of the Plan. The final version of the Plan was published in February 2023.

The funding also enabled the stocking of the NDRG emergency shipping container with evacuation supplies, the progression of the Nimbin Emergency Radio Network (NERN) and the Community Care Team (CCT). We were able to pay a Project Officer (Virginia Waters) for around five hours per week to work on these initiatives.

We are very grateful to all of our funders for the funding support in the past year, which helped us greatly to support our community in a period of high demand and significant trauma and stress.

Other Highlights

Nimbin Death and Beyond - the Cooling Plate finally achieved!

A case study of the value of persistence and tenacity, Saskia Kouwenberg climbed over considerable hurdles and unbelievable complexities involved in the importation of the cooling bed, and after ten years of fundraising and attempts by various people to get one, she finally achieved it. What an absolute legend! The cooling plate is stored at NNIC and is now available for hire for community members. Borrowing



protocols have been established and information resources developed to assist people to navigate their way through a home death situation. Links to death doulas in the area have also been established, to support people in the process.

NSW Community Well Being Survey

The survey is a joint initiative by our Peak Body, the Local Community Services Association (LCSA) and DCJ and was rolled out across NSW in the past year on a trial basis. The survey aims to measure community wellbeing, to better inform the community strengthening work of neighbourhood centres in relation to our Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) funding. The Nimbin community achieved the highest response rate in NSW. The survey results can be viewed on our website: About Nimbin>Survey Results.

Ongoing challenges

7 Sibley St boundary adjustment the decision by the Lismore City Council in 2021 to approve the boundary adjustment was effectively rescinded by the majority of the new Council in July 2023, despite us investing in a revised site plan and undertaking community consultations as requested by Council. We must now try to work with Council to find alternate possible solutions to address the barriers to us being able to extend the existing very small building in order for the site to be used to its optimal capacity, as well as addressing the need to improve vehicle and pedestrian access to the site.

The results of the community survey (164 responses) can be viewed on our website: About Nimbin>Survey Results.



Homelessness and the housing crisis many years of treating housing primarily as an investment asset rather than an essential human right to

shelter is really coming home to bite now, and the destruction of so many homes in the 2022 floods has exacerbated an already terrible situation. Lack of secure or affordable housing is dismantling community networks as long-time residents are forced to move further and further afield in an effort to find housing somewhere, anywhere. Even people with full time employment are finding themselves having to live out of their cars for extended periods.

The CONC wrote a submission to the Commonwealth Government's Senate Inquiry into Poverty, a significant focus of which was the affordable housing crisis. I appeared before the Senate Hearing to give evidence and speak to our submission. The hearing attracted considerable media interest, especially in the Northern Rivers which continues to battle the issue of so many flood affected homes in the flood plain.

Increasing overheads NNIC, and indeed all providers in the sector, are not immune to the impacts of inflation and significant cost increases including wage indexation, superannuation, insurances, rent, rates and electricity costs. Our funding continues to fall further behind the actual costs of service delivery and meeting the considerable standards and contractual and compliance obligations required of us. At present we are making up the difference utilising reserve funds to ensure we can maintain service levels, but this is not sustainable in the longer term.

TEI (or the equivalent funding which has been rebranded and renamed several times in the last 20 or so years), has only ever seen one increase since 1986, and that was almost 12 years ago. The shrinking of funding relative to actual costs is difficult to solve at the local level, since it is really about government funding priorities, over which we have little control. The NSW Peak Body for Neighbourhood and Community Centres – Local Community Services Association (LCSA) as well other sector peaks such as NCOSS and FAMS continue to lobby the NSW government in particular regarding the TEI funding shortfalls.

Partnerships and Networks

The **Consortium of Neighbourhood Centres Far North Coast** (CONC) remains our primary partnership and the CONC continued to deliver Emergency Relief (Commonwealth – DSS), the North Coast Food Recovery Program (self-funded), and Brighter Futures (NSW DCJ) across the region, as well the Staying Home Leaving Violence in Tweed, Byron and Ballina and the Tweed Child and Family Service in Murwillumbah (NSW DCJ).

Across the Region, the CONC Food Recovery program recovered 64,321kg of food that otherwise would have gone into landfill, in the past year. Over 6,000kg of that was distributed via NNIC.

All the CONC Partners are currently funded as RSS providers. Whilst we are funded independently and not as the CONC as such, we have been able to work together to problem solve and the RSS is now an agenda item at CONC meetings.

Nimbin Integrated Services Sadly, June 2023 saw the conclusion of Nimbin Integrated Services and the cessation of the funds that had been provided to NNIC to support the service, in particular our Front of House intake, triage and community access role. NIS was a long-standing partnership between NNIC, the NNSW Local Health District (LHD) and the North Coast Primary Health Network, which served our community well for over 16 years.

We continue to work with the LHD to find alternate solutions to provide relevant services to the community now that NIS has come to an end.

The **Nimbin Advisory Group** (NAG) continued to provide a strong communication conduit between Council and the Nimbin community.

The **Nimbin Disaster Resilience Group** (NDRG) See above.

Auspiced Projects

Community Drug Action Team (CDAT) The CDAT group wrestled with some unrelated injuries and absences in the past year which delayed the progress on our main current project which is an educational book around the safe disposal of sharps, in partnership with the Harm Reduction Unit of the NNSW Local Health District. A final draft of the booklet's text and layout was produced and a photography brief prepared. The project will continue into the next financial year.

Splendour In The Grass 2022

Despite the terrible washed-out conditions, two of our CDAT members managed to make it into Splendour, but were unable to take in all of our equipment and costumes. They did take in our Quiz Wheel, and because all bands were cancelled on Friday night, engagement was very high. Our CDATrs worked from the PASH tent and at one stage the PASH tent had three quiz wheels going in a row. Around 350 young people were engaged with CDAT on the Friday night, and at least that many again on the Saturday.

Nimbin Death and Beyond See above in Highlights.

CWA Nimbin Branch in the past year we auspiced our CWA branch to apply for funds from the Northern Rivers Community Foundation to install much needed air conditioning in their rooms located in the Community Centre site. They were unable to apply for the funds in their own right because of the structure of the CWA branch system within the greater national CWA network.

The local CWA branch obtained \$20,000 funds via the CWA network to distribute to Nimbin community members who had been flood impacted. NNIC distributed 100% of these the funds via vouchers to impacted community members, as the local CWA branch did not have the systems in place nor the capacity to distribute it themselves. In this way NNIC and the CWA where able to work collaboratively to optimize the resources available for the community.

Staff professional development Various staff and volunteers attended Professional Development opportunities including ASIST Suicide Prevention Training, Carers and Responders Training, First Aid, Psychological First Aid, We-Ali-Li trauma informed practice, Plan C grant-writing, Cyber Security training.

Community Events/Consultations Held*/or Attended

- July 2022 – Nimbin NAIDOC Day*
- October 2022 – Nimbin Community Disaster Plan review – community consultation*
- December 2022 - NNIC Community Christmas Lunch*
- March 2023 - International Women's Day we joined the CWA Celebration Sharing and Connecting Women's Stories with Nicole and Kerry providing a weaving activity.
- March 2023- NNIC Community Recovery Event alongside Nimbin Ngar-Walls Skate Event*
- April-June 2023 - 7 Sibley Revised Concept Plan Community Consultations*
- April 2023 Charity of the Day at The Channon Market
- May 2023 – Electric Tipi (at 7 Sibley St)*
- June 2023 - Community Care Team Training Day*

Finances

The financial state of the organisation remains healthy with over \$2.12 of (current) equity for every \$1 dollar of debt as at 30 June 2023, and a debt-to-(current) assets ratio of 0.47.

There was an overall deficit of \$19,067 which was primarily caused by the costs associated with the composting toilet at 7 Sibley Street (the income for which was obtained in prior years).

Our bookkeeper Julia continues to maintain our books in a highly professional and accurate fashion.

Graham Cook of Cook and Cook Accountants continued as our Auditor.

Organisational Carbon Footprint

CO2-e –Travel

Manager: 1,038kms

RSS staff: 2545kms

Other staff: 240kms

Flights: Nil

Total for travel: 3823kms x 186g CO2-e/km = **711kg** CO2-e

(assumptions: ~8L / 100 km | ~186g CO2-e / km (8L/100 km x 2.33 and divide by 100 = 186 g CO2e/km)).

Note: our travel CO2-e increased this year due to recovery efforts - RSS staff undertaking site visits, attending forums and meetings in Lismore, Ballina,

Lennox Head. Manager and other staff also attending recovery related meetings and events held across the region, FSP Forums etc.

CO2-e Electricity

Sibley: 1592kWh Billed

NNIC: 5410 Billed

Total: 7002

Offset by Solar production - Surplus to grid: 435kWh

Total for electricity: 6567kWh = **5188 kg** CO2-e

CO2-e Water

Sibley St 14kl plus NNIC 29kl = **21kg** tCO2e

CO2-e Waste

1 x 240L bin x fortnightly @75% = **1,498kg** CO2-e

1 x trailer load of building waste 7 Sibley St (treated timber and other non-recyclable materials) = **374kg** CO2-e

CO2-e Food (Food Relief projects, community BBQs, events – NAIDOC and Christmas Lunch)

Est 10,326kg (est value = \$3 per kg = value \$31,000 = \$596/wk = **22,500kg** CO2-e.

Total **CO2-e including food: 30,292kg = 30.3 tonnes**

Total CO2-e excluding food: 7792 kg = 7.8 tonnes

The global aim is for a max of 2t per person, and for organisations to steadily decrease their CO2-e.

The per person CO2-e is difficult to correlate with NNIC's situation, particularly in relation to food consumption, given that our services are delivered to so many people and food distribution to people is a core activity of the organisation. The food is not consumed by our own staff and volunteers so it is not NNICs own consumption. We have therefore separated food from everything else.

We have also refined the CO2-e calculations to improve accuracy, thus rendering comparisons with prior years redundant. We are aiming to establish a reliable baseline and to improve on this by reducing our carbon footprint over time.

A significant increase in our CO2-e in the past year was unavoidable due to increased staff travel associated with ongoing flood recovery efforts and the use of 7 Sibley St for the RSS 5 days a week, from 9am to 5pm and resulting electricity costs, plus increased food distribution.

Ref: <https://calculator.carbonpositiveaustralia.org.au/>



Services Snapshot - What We Did in 2022-2023

Earlier
Intervention/Info/referrals

7,778

CW: 910
Front of House/Manager: 6471
7 Sibley St: 397

Material Aid

8,696

ER Case Coordination: 810
Meals/Food Parcels: 3782/1845
Showers: 42
EAPA electricity vouchers: 40
Laundry vouchers: 92
Christmas Hampers/Gifts: 25/80
Soup Kitchen: 1980

Access to Hub
Equipment Etc.

3,487

Community Access to
technologies: 3226
Room Hire: 40
Phone access: 221

Identified
Clients/Customers

3,262

NNIC CW: 253
NIS: 130
RSS: 261
Centrelink: 2618

Website

www.nnic.org.au

Unique Visitors

13,520

Average 1,125/month
Visits: 34,633 Average: 2.6
visits and 2.3pages per visitor

General Assistance
(Front Desk)

Appointments – client reception
and support

1,302

7 Sibley St Workshops

48

Participants

268

Disaster Response

Recovery

Vouchers given: **\$31,055**

CDAT

Info posters: **1**

Splendour: 700
young people
engaged

Consultations

2

Community Disaster
Plan
Sibley St Concept
Plan

Centrelink
Agency o/s

7,342

Events

6

Community Xmas Lunch
NAIDOC Day
Community Recovery BBQ
Electric Tipi at 7 Sibley
CCT training day
Art in the Park

**Total Occasions of Service
= 28,664 (+ 34,633 website visits)**

**3,262 Identified Clients + 268 workshop
participants**

Some of Our Outcomes 2022-2023

TEI Community Wellbeing Survey - Nimbin

80% agreed/strongly agreed they feel connected to the community;
80% agreed/strongly agreed they get involved in local activities/groups/events;
82% agreed/strongly agreed that most local community organisations can be trusted;
91% agreed/strongly agreed that most local community organisations are useful and valuable.

TEI Client SCORE Surveys

66% of TEI client SCORES showed an overall positive outcome with improvement in one or more domains.

RSS Client Surveys

89% strongly agreed the RSS assisted them to meet their flood recovery goals;
74% strongly agreed that the RSS assisted them to return to their normal everyday life;
100% said they were treated with dignity and respect.

Other Outcomes

30 people were relieved of \$13,416 worth of electricity stress.
\$6,078 of fines paid off via Work Development Orders

Sibley St Workshops Surveys

93.5% of participants surveyed reported increased confidence;
46% reported said they were inspired to consider a new business idea;
94% said they learned new skills to improve their life circumstances;
91% learned about services/activities/facilities available in the community;
95.5% said they feel more connected to the community as a result of the workshop.

Our CO2-e footprint

(travel, electricity,
water & waste)
7,792kg
(up from 6486kg in
21-22)

Food Recovery

Over **64 tonnes** of food
rescued via CONC Food
Recovery across the region in
22-23.
6 tonnes of that was
distributed by NNIC.

Volunteers

54 volunteers
involved in NNIC
services and
activities (exc.
Management
committee)

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

NNIC is a member of the Local Community Services Association (LCSA) which is the Peak Body for neighbourhood and community centres in NSW. LCSA is a member of the Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association (ANHCA), the Peak Body for neighbourhood and community centres in Australia. ANHCA is a member of the International Federation of Settlements and community Centers (IFS), which is the global Peak Body for neighbourhood and community centers ('settlement houses' being the term used for neighbourhood centers in the USA).

The IFS is a signatory to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. [*The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*](#), adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

The IFS is calling upon neighbourhood and community centres across the globe to consider how they may be contributing to the UN SDGs.



1 NO POVERTY



\$6,078 of electricity relief provided through the EAPA program to 40 people.
\$20,000 worth of Food and Fuel Vouchers provided.
\$11,055 worth of flood relief vouchers provided.
8 people paid off \$6,078 worth of unpaid fines via volunteering under the WDO scheme.
 2,618 people assisted with income support issues via our Centrelink agency.
187 people's financial crises reduced via wrap-around ER services provided.

2 ZERO HUNGER



Community gardens at 7 Sibley Street: est. 30 people sharing harvest/seeds

Food Distributed in 22-23

Via Food Recovery Project: 6000kgs recovered from potential landfill and distributed.

Via Food Pantry: 5,233 kgs

Via cooked meals: 3,782 meals

Via Friday Soup Kitchen: 1980 serves

Via Christmas hampers: 25 hampers

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



130 people supported to address mental health and/or AOD issues via NIS clinical service.

66% of Community Workers' clients reported overall positive outcomes against goals and circumstances, leading to empowerment and independence.

161 people supported to recover from the 2022 Floods.

95% of attendees at Sibley St workshops felt more connected to the community.

94% of attendees learned new skills to support their life circumstances.

94% of attendees reported increased confidence as a result of attending the workshop.

5 GENDER EQUALITY



Board representation: 43% women, 57% men, 0% other.

Chairperson is male, Treasurer is female.

Staff representation: 70% women, 30% men, 0% other.

Manager: Female

Volunteers: 43% men, 57% women.

International Women's Day celebrated.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Provided community members with access to drinking water post-floods.

Provided 42 shower vouchers for flood impacted people.

Provided 92 laundromat vouchers to disadvantaged and/or flood impacted people (funded by St Vinnies).

Lobbied local council to enhance Nimbin's water storage capacity.

EM1 and bokashi produced and sold for composting toilets.

Composting toilet constructed.

Flow-forms water purification workshops conducted.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



Member of Sustain Energy, Northern Rivers—collaboration working on regional renewable energy projects.

4.5kW array on premises at 71 Cullen Street.

Promoted solar array care and maintenance tips.

Rocket stove workshops conducted.

Low/no fuel cooking workshops conducted.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



NOTE: NNIC questions the concept of perpetual economic growth, and prefers the goal of economic security and stability.

Skills workshops at 7 Sibley Street:

46% of participants reported new skills acquired to apply to a new business idea.

48% reported the workshop inspired them to consider a new business idea.

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Demonstration composting and hemp masonry toilet under construction.
Tools and Equipment Library (57 members) and NEW Community Cooling Plate-sharing equipment to reduce consumption and user costs, and empower DIY.
7 Sibley Street promoting sustainable living skills and technologies - 397 visits (locals) and 381 (visitors).
Providing shared access to IT equipment - PCs, internet, phones, copy/print, plus rooms/space - 3,487 occasions service.

10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



NNIC is a registered member of ACON's Welcome Here project, which promotes LGBTIQI welcoming and inclusive businesses.
Bundjalung language promoted at the centre with key words & meanings on permanent display (with consent).
% of people accessing universal services who are First Nations People: 16%

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES



7 Sibley Street promotes sustainable living ideas, skills and technologies.
Tools and equipment library - sharing resources/reducing consumption.
Stewardship role over the Sustainable Nimbin Community Plan (SNCP) - Strategies under 9 key Focus Areas being progressed by NNIC, community organisations and community members.
Nimbin Community Disaster Plan reviewed and updated.
Community-led Disaster Response and Recovery Plan developed.

12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



100% compostable or washable plates/cutlery etc used for our events and soup kitchen.
100% post-consumer waste recycled paper and toilet paper used.
100% of compostable waste is composted. 100% of recyclable plastic is separated and sent to recycling. Some of the produce grown using this compost is donated back to NNIC for events and food relief.
NNIC Purchasing policy embeds sustainability considerations
7 Sibley St promoting recycling and reduction of single use plastics.
Community composting facility provided at 7 Sibley Street.

13 CLIMATE
ACTION



Stewardship role over the Sustainable Nimbin Community Plan (SNCP) - the SNCP strategies aim to either mitigate or adapt to climate change.
Our organisational CO2-e for 22-23 (electricity, travel, water, and waste) = 7.9 tonnes.

15 LIFE
ON LAND



7 Sibley St workshops: food and fibre processing; resilient food gardening; wild clay harvest and firing; building with hemp, light earth, wattle and daub, tipi raising.
Welcome to Nimbin Kit includes a page "Living on the land" plus wildlife and environmental information.
Wildlife/animal/pet info and referrals: 88

16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



Community Wellbeing survey conducted.
82% agreed/strongly agreed that most local community organisations can be trusted.
91% agreed/strongly agreed that most local community organisations are useful and valuable.

17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



NNIC is a member of the following:
- Local Community Services Association (LCSA), ANCHA and IFS.
- Better Chances Forum, Northern Rivers
- Nimbin Health and Welfare Committee, Nimbin Police Community Consultative Committee and Nimbin Advisory Group (convened by Lismore City Council).
NNIC partnerships:
• Consortium of Neighbourhood Centres Far North Coast.
• Sustain Energy Northern Rivers.
• Nimbin Disaster Resilience Group.

Front of House Report

Nicole Raward, Community Access Worker

NNIC is open 5 days a week, from 10am to 4pm and our Front of House (FOH) is the first point of contact for everyone who walks into the Centre.

The Community Access Worker performs the initial triage, intake and assessment of people needing help, and facilitates in-house and co-located service referrals. The FOH also provides information and referrals to external services and fosters relationships with agencies across the LGA and the Northern Rivers.

The FOH team directly assists people with the use PCs, copying and printing, document layout, accessing and completing forms, device support (especially mobile phones) and immediate material aid needs.

The team's focus is on building and maintaining good relationships with our community through service delivery that is welcoming, non-judgmental, and inclusive.

At NNIC's FOH we take our motto seriously: 'If we don't know we will find out for you'.

A Year of Goodbyes and Welcomes

This year we said goodbye to NNIC volunteers and FOH relief workers Roxy Graham-Smith and Brad Moulton and welcomed Chris Becroft as a volunteer on Mondays. Chantelle Lapham joined the team again as a volunteer and also assists in the FOH. Alison Bywater and Darren Cleaver also joined as volunteers and both continue to give in so many ways to our organisation and benefit from their involvement at NNIC. We said hello and goodbye to Natascha Gleeson as the volunteer facilitator of Art in the Park.

Laura Hill our second Centrelink Agent worker has now been trained as the relief FOH CAW worker. It has been great to have Laura on deck and she has also become highly involved as a volunteer in our Food Relief services and her work on the Food Team is highly valued as we problem solve issues and investigate new project ideas.

Community Corrections returned to NNIC in 2022, where each fortnight we work with Keane in supporting a Nimbin Outreach service.

Fundraisers and Donations

The community continues to support our activities generously with many donating funds to assist those still recovering from the March 22 Floods and our other material aid programs.



We had a great day at The Channon as 'The Charity of the Day' where shaking our buckets and chatting about what we do in community saw many donations come our way. We made over \$1,500 at the April market which funded the purchase of swags, mattresses and other emergency relief items.

To celebrate Female Football week, The Nimbin Headers Football Association held a gala Women's Football event where we watched local women's teams thrash it out on the field and raise awareness of the importance of inclusion in sport. We are

grateful they chose NNIC as their charity recipient and the \$4,700 raised will be directed to delivering emergency and crisis relief services to Nimbin women and their families, via vouchers for the Nimbin Emporium and Nimbin Service Station, which will also support local businesses.

Art in The Park

Natascha Gleeson brought her skills as a visual art teacher to Allsopp Park each Friday for Art in the Park. Many locals looked forward to the weekly art play session.

Annie Heitman and Darren joined in assisting her with Darren continuing to bring Art to the people once Natascha Gleeson was no longer available.

Nimbin Central School Work Experience Student

A highlight this year was having Year 10 student Lilly from Nimbin Central School join us for a few weeks in June. Lilly had a great eye for design and good IT skills. While at NNIC Lilly designed the poster for our Nimbin Neighbourhood Pantry, a new project to be launched in July 2023. Lilly was surprised by the extent and scope of the services we provide at NNIC and found her time very interesting and rewarding, so much so she is contemplating a career in the Community Services sector. We wish Lilly well and hope we see her again and look forward hosting Nimbin students again soon.



Food relief and material aid

The pressures of escalating costs of living, together with the nationwide housing and rental crisis made more impactful locally by disasters, is still seeing many seek emergency relief supports via material aid here at NNIC. We want to do more to support more Nimbin households, so plans are underway from our dedicated

Food Team to find practical ways to engage those in our community that are struggling with the increases to household expenses.

Having secured additional space on the Community Centre site, in the coming year we will finally be implementing our long-held plans to commence a Food Pantry, which will expand our food relief services to enable community members to purchase cheap grocery items. This will enable the inclusion of community members who need assistance but are reluctant to accept purely charitable aid.

Unmet Housing Needs and Mental Health

In the past year we had **554** occasions of unmet need at the FOH, related to housing. We witness on a daily basis the impact unsecure housing has on people and their families and acknowledge the almost impossible task for many to escape the cycle of homelessness. Living day to day in survival takes its toll on physical and mental health, and our primary focus is the immediate safety and the meeting of the individuals basic needs but we are mostly helpless to provide meaningful outcomes – i.e. we cannot get them access to housing.

We do what we can to reduce daily stresses by providing material aid and support by linking clients to housing specific services and with completing forms. We keep an eye on local networks including social media for local affordable rental solutions. The experience of many this year is long waits on hotlines for emergency/crisis housing often to be told there is nothing available.

Community Flood Recovery

Getting together as a community is an important part of recovering from adverse events. Thanks to the Lismore City Council and their Community

Recovery Officers we received funds to provide a free BBQ down on the basketball court cooked up by our volunteers from the Food Team and FOH as well as provide a community Earth Mandala to coincide with the Nimbin Gnar-Walls Skate Event. It was a great family day out where our NNIC and RSS team had the opportunity to connect with our community, check in with how they were travelling post-flood and provide information about support services available locally.



Front of House – Reception, Information and Referrals

Reception Occasions of Service (triage, client appointments and support):

1,302 (Cf. 1,365 21-22, 1,026 20-21)

NNIC Community Workers: 478

NIS: 217

Brighter Futures: 30

Other Co-located/Outreach Services: 122

Front of House Occasions of Service (information and referrals): 6471

(Cf. 9,724 21-22, 3194 20-21, 4,458 19-20)

Info/Referrals: 6,383

Plus 88 animal welfare info and referrals

*animal welfare info includes the provision of pet food and other supplies

Front Desk Material Aid Occasions of Service: 6,485 (Cf. 6,124 21-22, 1,828 20-21, 3,504 19-20)

Miscellaneous goods (toiletries, blankets etc): 726

Meals: 3782

Food packs: 1845

Showers: 42

Public Access to Equipment, Technologies, Rooms: Occasions of Service: 3,487 (Cf. 3,045 21-22)

PCs/Print/Copy/Fax: 3154

Secretarial support: 72

Phone use: 221

Room hire/ bookings: 40

Volunteers

Volunteers provide crucial support to all operations at NNIC. It is the role of the CAW to recruit, roster, and supervise NNIC volunteers with many using the opportunity to meet Centrelink mutual obligations, work off fines to meet Work Development Order (WDO) requirements or do their student placement.

This year we:

- Assisted 1 student placement with obtaining their Certificate 2 in Community Services
- Supervised 8 Work Development Orders
- Assisted 7 volunteers to meet Centrelink obligations
- Trained 5 FOH volunteers in Covid compliance, cultural competency/ safety, WHS, customer service, administration and IT skills, triage and referral options.

Front Desk/reception volunteers: 9

WDO volunteers: 8

Food team volunteers: 10

Art in the Park: 3

Total FOH/Food Team volunteers: 30

Other Volunteers:

Nimbin Death and Beyond 3

Nimbin CDAT: 3

7 Sibley St: 5 (i.e. those who were not also FOH etc vols)

Compost loo build volunteers: 13 (as above)

TOTAL Volunteers (excl Management Committee): 54



Food Relief Projects Report

Heidi Glover - Food Relief Coordinator

Our food relief team has had a busy year with continued flood recovery efforts, supply issues, shop closures and road work sometimes affecting our food relief deliveries, because of this we have occasionally had some very small deliveries.

Although this occurred, our team has provided a large number of fresh foods to the Nimbin community, sometimes supplementing our fresh food boxes with fresh food ordered from the NSW/ACT Foodbank.

At the beginning of the 2023 School year we visited Coffee Camp Public School and offered to provide them with weekly donations of fruit and bread for their P&C run tuck shop, this was greatly received and acknowledged in their regular assemblies and newsletters. We have also continued to provide fruit and bread to the Nimbin Preschool for their healthy eating programs. We have been lucky enough to keep receiving a large number of meat items that we are able to give away, make up healthy nutritious meals to go in our freezer and use for our weekly meat option at the soup kitchen.

Food distributed in 2022/2023 through the CONC Food Recovery Project

Fresh fruit and Vegetables: 5029 kgs

Bread and rolls: 8000 packs

Other baked goods: 1000 packs

Meat: 800kgs

Meals: 3782 individual cooked meals

It is very rewarding to be able to provide such an incredible amount of assistance to our local community whilst also preventing these goods from ending up in landfill. As always, our amazing volunteers sort and prepare the goods for distribution or cook them up into meals. Any food donations which are past being useable for these purposes are given to a local pig farmer or composted at 7 Sibley Street for use on the gardens.



Food Distributed in 2022/2023 through the NNIC food bank

Food ordered from NSW/ACT Foodbank: 5233kgs

Food packs: 1845

Total food distributed (est) 10,263kgs

Soup Kitchen



Average customers per week: 45

NNIC's Soup Kitchen which has been operating for 31 years, has been slowly growing in the past three years. The Soup Kitchen provides nutritious cooked meals and a social engagement opportunity and soft entry point to NNIC and other services. The ingredients used for the soup and breads served alongside them come from the Food Recovery Project and supplemented by donations of cash and fresh produce.

Christmas Lunch and Hampers

25 Hampers were distributed to families doing it tough in 2022. This year we decided to go eco-friendly by using beautiful paper bags to pack our hampers, replacing the plastic baskets used in previous years. The CWA Nimbin branch made delectable

Christmas puddings to spread more Christmas cheer to the recipients.

Our big free community Christmas lunch was a hit with 190 community members coming to celebrate and eat together at the Town Hall. The day is run by volunteers who prepare and serve delicious array of Xmas fare for community members of all ages. The highlight was Santa turning up in the Nimbin RFS Brigade's Firetruck to hand out gifts to 80 children aged 12 years and under. Special thanks to the always amazing volunteers, the CWA Nimbin branch, Gail Clarke, the RFS Brigade and Santa!



Other Food Relief updates

The rising cost of living has continued to impact our local community with the demand for food relief continuing to grow. We spent some time in March and April researching local food pantries with the goal of setting up our own, to provide low-cost pantry items to community members in need. Many hours have been put into this project and an expression of interest has been lodged for a small building where we could set up Nimbin's first low-cost food pantry! Watch this space...

Nimbin NAIDOC Day 2022 was held in Allsopp Park on 8th July 2022, and our Food Team rallied to prepare, cook and serve food for the event.

The NNIC food team had a great day down at the Nimbin Skatepark for the Nimbin Gnar-Walls Event held in March. Our volunteers prepared and served a delicious free sausage sizzle with veg, vegan & gluten free options available, cold drinks and even ice blocks! A big thanks to the Lismore City Council Community Recovery Officers who provided us with \$1000 to bring this free NNIC



event to support our Nimbin community recovery and to BOWLZILLA crew for bringing the skate action of the Nimbin Nar-Wall to Nimbin.



Community Worker Report

Elke Tavra Community Worker (*pictured below at the DCJ Flood Support Forum*)



1. Service Summary

The Community Worker (CW) service offers individual face to face appointments, three days a week between the hours of 10am to 4pm.

The service is primarily funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) under the Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) Community Strengthening funding

stream, to provide Community Support services to vulnerable individuals, families and communities. TEI programs aim to prevent the escalation of risk factors linked to abuse, neglect, and violence through the provision of accessible, culturally sensitive, and effective support and services which proactively address such risk factors.

The CW role is also responsible for Emergency Relief case coordination, where the goal is to provide early intervention and achieve lasting outcomes, rather than providing a purely crisis-driven response. Unfortunately, however, the reality is that in the context of the escalating affordable housing crisis and cost of living pressures, it can be challenging to lift many ER clients out of the poverty that drives constant and ongoing financial crisis.

The CW offers advice, information, and support, facilitating referrals to external services and advocating on client behalf when necessary. The CW collaborates with colleagues within NNIC, the broader Nimbin community, and external agencies and organisations to ensure that individuals receive coordinated support. Through a combination of addressing immediate needs and facilitating progress toward long-term goals, the CW aims to strengthen protective factors, respond to identified risk factors, ensure that parents and caregivers can achieve personal wellbeing/safety goals, and ultimately, assist families in providing a safe and nurturing home environment for their children.

Building Trust

People seeking support from the CW service face numerous challenges and hardships. They often lack fundamental material and social resources (e.g., adequate housing, healthcare, transportation, education, support, and finances), have difficulty identifying and accessing the services they need, and feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of problems they face.

Many are concerned about information being shared with government organisations and/or the wider community. Establishing trust with these people requires understanding and respecting their diverse perspectives, and is typically earned over time through the provision of consistent, reliable support and a non-judgemental approach.

Engaging with the CW is particularly valuable for people because it provides a safe and confidential space where they can begin to address their multifaceted challenges. The CW acts as a supportive guide, helping clients navigate the complexities of their situations, connect with essential resources, and formulate a path forward. We aim to be flexible and responsive to client needs and build individual capacity and resilience in order to strengthen the community as a whole.

Ultimately, the success of services aimed at the vulnerable members of our community is determined by the level of engagement between the provider organisation and the community itself.

Neighbourhood Centres, such as NNIC, are deeply integrated within the community and thus play a crucial role in delivering a wide range of social services on a wrap-around basis.

We have the opportunity to make a substantial impact on the lives of individuals, families and the broader community by serving as a welcoming gateway to diverse services, and operating as a 'one-stop-shop' for accessing a wide range of queries.

2. Using SCORE to measure client outcomes – Is anybody any better off?

TEI and Emergency Relief services both report via the DEX reporting system, using SCORE (evaluation tool) to capture client outcomes and assess whether they are any better off as a result of the services or support they received.

Clients are scored across three categories: Circumstances, Goals and Satisfaction; and are scored both pre-and post-service. At any given point in time, only the pre-service assessment will have been conducted in relation to some clients. Not all CW clients are scored – for example those who present on only one occasion for something very simple or those who are immediately referred out to external providers.

During the reporting period **54% of TEI clients were scored in one or more domains.**

66% of TEI client scores indicated an overall positive outcome.

3. Service Data

22-23 Total No of TEI clients: 253 TEI (Cf. 297 in 21-22).

22-23 Total No of ER clients: 187

22-23 Average sessions per TEI client: 3.6 = Total sessions 910 sessions
22-23 Total Occasions of Service ER: 810

Total CW sessions/occasions of service: 1720

As at July 2022, some clients still had no access to their homes, and the enormity of the task ahead was beginning to sink in. More than one year after the March 22 floods, many people continue to grapple with the lingering effects of the disaster. Many people have expressed feelings like progress has stalled, or they've taken one step forward only to take three steps back.

Additionally, cost of living pressures have resulted in increased financial stress and a rise in homelessness among low-income households.

Even before the floods, housing affordability was a key concern for the community. The situation was further exacerbated by the displacement of numerous people due to the floods. For many months, emergency accommodation options were virtually non-existent between Brisbane and Grafton as these resources were allocated to assist flood victims.

There was a substantial increase in clients experiencing homelessness this year, rising from 11.12% to 21.34%. A further 10% of clients were at risk of homelessness.

Despite increasing numbers of homeless or at risk of homeless clients, occasions of service relating to housing decreased, reflecting the lack of housing options and referrals available.

The most pressing area of need for TEI clients was Material Aid/Emergency Relief, accounting for 51% of cases. This year there were 810 instances of Emergency Relief services provided to clients, compared to 505 in 2021-22. This heightened demand for emergency relief and material aid reflects the ongoing referrals from the RSS, coupled with the financial strain experienced by low-income households in the region (50% of TEI clients were experiencing financial stress).

The second most prevalent TEI service issue was mental health issues, with 43% experiencing issues around mental health.

Of particular concern is the increase in the past year in clients presenting with distress relating to suicide risks of/attempts by close friends or family, or expressing suicidal ideations themselves.

Additional noteworthy changes are an increase in the number of people seeking to settle fines through a Work Development Order (WDO); a decrease in the number of people seeking legal assistance; and a rise in individuals seeking disability support.

There was a decrease in first-time clients, from 53% the previous year, when many flood-affected people accessed services which they ordinarily would not do, to 44.49% in 2022-23.

There was an increase in both ATSI and CALD clients, and clients aged 65 and older increased significantly, from 2% to 15.35%. We also saw more parents with dependent children, increasing from 17.5% to 22.92% These changes are likely due to the demographics of those affected by the flood and living costs, the overall ageing of the community and ongoing efforts to provide support to those affected by the floods.

4. Data in more detail

Client demographics	This Year (22-23)	Last Year (21-22)
First Time Client	44.5%	53%
Female	58.5%	59%
Male	41.5%	41%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	13.78%	9.5%
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	9.95%	1%
Youth (under 19 yrs of age)	2.76%	3.7%
Senior (aged 65+)	15.35%	2%
Parent with dependant child	22.92%	17.5%
Homeless	21.34%	11.12%
At Risk of Homelessness	10.28%	<i>N/A not collected</i>

TEI Service Issues - Occurrences	2022 to 2023	2021 to 2022
Material Aid / Emergency Relief	187	505
Crisis counselling/generalist support	165	124
Family Functioning	31	54
Mental Health	109	147
Aged Care	9	11
Health	44	53
Alcohol and Other Drugs	5	13
Grief and Loss	26	46
Housing	132	171

Disability / NDIS	37	10
Risk of Serious Harm to child (ROSH) / Brighter Futures	9	11
Family Violence	15	27
Legal	37	102
Financial Stress	127	206
Youth	28	12
Work Development Order	24	19
ATSI Social & Emotional Wellbeing	15	38
Suicide risk	9	1
Other	6	13
Total TEI Occurrences (Issues)	1,015	1,563

Emergency Relief / Material Aid	Occasions of Service (22-23)	Occasions (21-22)
Food Parcel	272	95
Food Voucher	173	119
Telephone	2	14
Laundry Voucher	92	109
Hygiene Products	25	45
Miscellaneous * includes kids' toys, donated furniture, water, cooking gear, tents, mosquito nets, hot water bottles	55	112
Petrol	99	31
Meal	8	82
Electricity/Gas	40	29
Swag Backpack Bed	2	7
Not Classified (Nappies, Bedding/Linen, Clothing, Baby Formula)	42	120
Total O/S:	810	763

Case Studies

Case Study One

The client initially sought assistance from NNIC to update their address with Centrelink, having recently moved to the area in search of employment following the floods. During their interaction, the Centrelink agent realised that client, their partner and two infant children were experiencing homelessness. They were referred to the NNIC Community Worker for assessment and support. An initial assessment of the client's circumstances was conducted using the SCORE framework, which demonstrated that they faced a number of challenges.

Pre-Service Client Circumstance SCORE: 27/55

The client's SCORE was low in the domains of housing, employment, community participation, financial resilience, and material well-being. Their biggest priority was finding stable housing for the children. They had contacted Link2Home services but were deemed ineligible. They had good prior rental references and I was told that the partner had recently secured employment. The client was suffering from an injury that was preventing them from working. The children were fed, clothed, developing appropriately for their age, and appeared to be happy and thriving despite their circumstances.

To address the above challenges, the client was referred to the Connecting Home program, to secure assistance with affordable housing options. They were assisted to apply for a bond loan through the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), to help secure a rental property. As the local medical practice was not taking new patients, information on nearby bulk-billing GPs was given so that the client could access follow-up care for her injury. Material aid in the form of food and petrol vouchers, food parcels, baby items, and material goods were supplied to alleviate immediate financial burdens, which allowed them to save towards a month's rent in advance. They were given information on local playgroups and workshops so that they, and their children, could begin to make community connections.

The client subsequently secured housing in the private rental market, and found local employment and began to settle into the local community. However, they continued to return to NNIC for support. At first, I was told they continued to struggle financially due to the partner's employer owing them significant wages. I gave them information from Fair Work Australia but further assistance in this regard was declined.

As time went on it became clear that the partner was not in fact owed money and was spending their wages on drugs and alcohol whilst the client shouldered the costs of their daily living expenses including paying the rent. When the client confronted their partner about this they were physically assaulted and the Police were called by the neighbours. By now concerns around Family and Domestic Violence, including assault and financial coercion and the impacts upon the well-being of their children, had arisen and a ROSH report submitted.

The client was linked into Brighter Futures Far North Coast as well as Women Up North, and separated from their partner.

I supported the client to access childcare to enable them to continue working and maintain their rental housing. The client continues to connect irregularly with NNIC. Their most recent SCORE indicates significant improvement in their circumstances.

This case demonstrates the importance of building trust overtime and providing consistent and regular wrap-around support, as the true facts of the situation only became clear after an extended period of engagement.

Post-Service Client Circumstance SCORE: 40/55

Case Study Two

The client is a sole parent in their fifties, who faced a significant crisis during the devastating flood event of February 2022. In the days beforehand, their car (which they lived in with one of their teenage children) had broken down and needed to be towed to the mechanic. The mechanic's workshop was inundated and all vehicles stored there completely submerged. As a result, the client's car, and all of the family's belongings, were destroyed. They sought temporary refuge in emergency shelters, but when they closed, the client and their children found themselves with nothing and no place to go. The mechanic said he was unable to compensate the client for the loss of their vehicle and at the time was struggling with his own total loss of his workshop and business and insurance issues.

The client had a history chronic homelessness, and faced a number of complicated challenges. They had endured significant trauma in the past, and subsequently lacked trust in clinical services. Their focus was upon survival from one day to the next, and it was evident that they struggled with confidence and self-advocacy. NNIC had been building a relationship with the client for some time, via material aid and food relief programs.

The client had declined to join the social housing waitlist in the past, but was now considering it as a viable option.

The client's initial SCORE assessment reflected the devastating impact of the floods on their life, across many domains.

Pre-Service Client Circumstance SCORE: 26/55

Numerous sessions were provided to the client and immediate emergency relief was provided to equip the client and their child with access to essential items such as bedding, shelter, clothes, and food. The client was referred to Legal Aid for assistance in negotiating with their insurer with whom they had Third Party Property, theft and fire insurance and together we were able to secure payment from their insurer (NRMA) in relation to their lost vehicle.

The client was referred to the RSS program, and obtained some flood grant funding to assist with their situation. They were finally able to secure a long-awaited private rental and their other children returned to live with them, marking a significant turning point in their life.

New challenges emerged as the client struggled to maintain daily living costs now that they were paying rent and utilities etc for the first time in many years. We supported them to negotiate a lower rent in exchange for work on the property, and provided electricity vouchers via the EAPA scheme. An appointment with a financial advisor was further arranged to provide them with additional advice and support.

We also equipped the client with information on local courses and support programs for youth, and gave employment guidance and information to pass to their children, one whom has since secured paid employment.

The client's most recent SCORE assessment showed improvement across almost all domains.

Post-Service Client Circumstance SCORE: 37/55

The client expressed that they are forever grateful for the help received from everyone at NNIC. It has been heartening to see the transformation from a client who was only able to focus to pure survival, to someone who is empowered to plan for the future of themselves and their children and, who envisions contributing to the community in meaningful ways.



IT Report

Chris Harris, IT Manager

This year has seen NNIC implement cyber security policies and procedures due to the increased risks posed from external threats. Even though we have a simple network, no servers etc we still need to remain vigilant to ensure any information we collect about staff, volunteers and clients is protected to the best of our abilities.

Systems have been set up to ensure any document scans are regularly deleted. I already do weekly backups of the managers, front desk PC and the community workers. The backup disk is stored off site in case of complete disaster so that the data can be restored if ever needed. The Manager's PC which includes our books is permanently backed up every day onto a local hard drive, to provide extra security against data loss.

We are also implementing more rigorous processes such as regular password changes for our router and Wi-Fi. This will also mean that clients using our guest account will be able to print documents from their phones rather than the present system whereby they have been sending documents to our public email account if they need printing done.

The Wi-Fi network connection between NNIC and 7 Sibley Street is working as well as can be expected. A printer has been installed at 7 Sibley St so that the RSS staff do not have to come across the road to NNIC's main premises whenever they print something out.

In the coming year we will need consider switching to the fixed wireless NBN. We are still on the ADSL, a deliberate choice to ensure a mix of technologies in the village so that e.g. if the NBN network fails there is an alternate connection in the village. It is becoming harder to manage however, as the slow connection interrupts the optimal performance of our third-party cloud-based data systems as well as the performance of virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom and MS Teams which these days are a part of the everyday functions of the Centre.

Fuji Xerox recently replaced our photocopier/printer as the previous one was superseded. Getting used to the new interface not been too painful. The copier provides a small source of income for the Centre and has gradually overtaken the computers in terms of community use, with more people needing documents printed, signed and either re-emailed, scanned or faxed, than they need to access PCs.

Having Max Riethmuller on hand for advice and input been a real asset for me personally. His depth of knowledge has meant that configuration issues (which can be quite complex) can be sorted in half the time. I would personally like to Thank Max for all his hard work, dedication and patience in showing me the 'how to' moments.



Services Australia (Centrelink) Agency Report

David Julian, Services Australia Agent and IT Support/Webmaster

The Services Australia/Centrelink Agency is open from 10am-2.30pm Monday-Thursday, 10am-2pm Fridays.

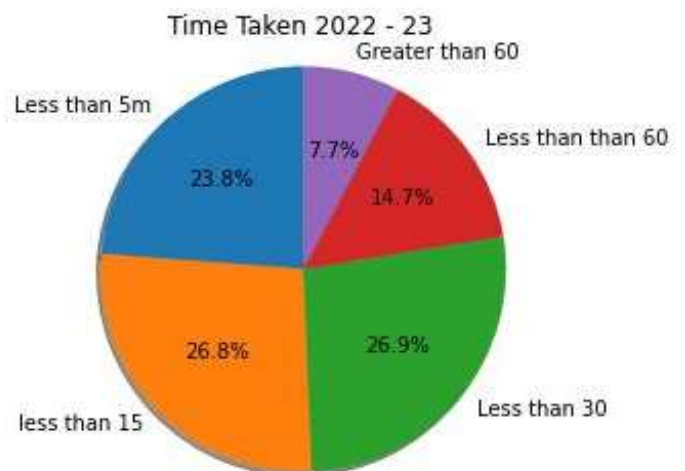
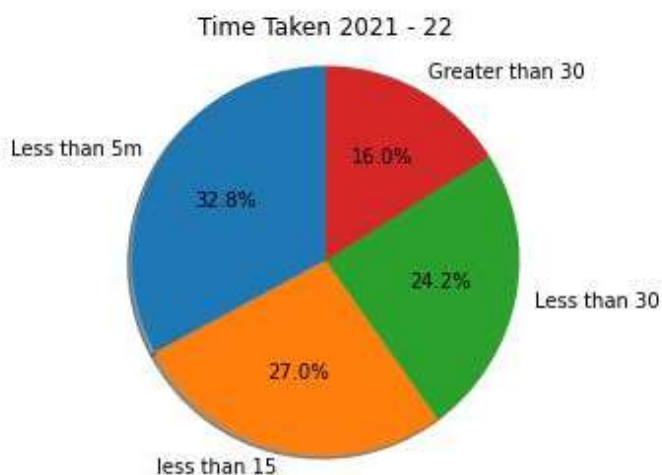
Total Occasions of Service: 5,080

Total number of customers: 2,618

	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
Occasions of Service	5080	7342	4299	5081	4306
Total Customers	2618	2631	1625	1982	2136

Service*	% of Total	Service	% of Total
Register for MyGov	1.8	Assist using silver service	10.9
Linking Codes	2.1	Assist with faxing	2.5
Assist with MyGov Web	11.4	Identity confirmation	2.6
Assist with MyGov App	3.2	Assist with form completion	6.9
Assist on customer device	5.0	Provide form / publication	8.0
Assist on self-service terminal	25.4	Refer to Services Australia phone	10.1
Upload document	9.9		

***Data only available from October 2022**



The number of customers remained steady. Occasions of service have returned to more normal levels after the huge spike in demand following the March 2022 floods, however the data related to the number of occasions of service is not directly comparable to previous years because the data we collect was altered by Services Australia in October 2022.

The time taken to assist each customer is increasing due to the longer time it is taking silver service to answer as well as the increasing complexity of enquiries. Last year 16% of enquiries took longer than 30 minutes to complete while this year it was over 22% of all enquires.

Homelessness and mental health

Since the natural disasters and pandemic lockdowns of the last several years the agency has seen a significant increase in people presenting with mental health issues, often directly related to homelessness. It is clear that the worsening housing crisis and poor mental health are inextricably linked. I have seen how mental and physical health deteriorates dramatically after losing secure housing. Homelessness often means that people find it difficult to meet Centrelink obligations and their situation is made even more difficult when payments are suspended. Unfortunately, there are no concessions given to the homeless regarding mutual obligations and Centrelink reporting requirements, despite the fact that it is increasingly difficult for homeless people to meet these requirements. Customers requesting major personal crisis exemptions have been increasing.

Identification and privacy

There have been a number of high-profile data breaches occurring at some government and private organisations, most notably the breach of Medibank systems. Some Agency customers have claimed their identity has been compromised with unauthorised access to bank accounts and my.gov.au accounts. Consequently, Services Australia has increased identity confirmation requirements for customers. Agents are now required to sight photo identity before making silver service enquiries. As well customers are required to answer several questions to confirm their identities. This has caused anxiety in some customers who see these questions as an unnecessary invasion of their privacy.

Privacy is a major issue for the staff as we are often dealing with personal and sensitive matters in a semi-public space. Issues such as relationship breakdowns, child care arrangements, medical history and incarceration history routinely arise in the course of day to day work. These are dealt with as discretely as possible, however it is often necessary to refer customers to the NNIC community workers if they show signs of concern or anxiety when dealing with these issues.

Family Payments/Child Support

Family payments, including child support, family tax benefit and parenting payments, are one of the most complicated payments for customers to navigate. They involve dealing with multiple parties such as parents, children,

care givers, and ex partners. Often communication between these parties may be difficult, involving issues such as domestic violence and estrangement. Centrelink Families Team members, Services Australia staff who are authorised to deal with family payments, are often difficult to contact involving extended waits of 30 minutes or more on the silver service line and several hours on the Centrelink family's line. Apparently, there are no Families Team members at the Lismore Service Centre.

We are often dealing with single parents of young children who are under time and emotional pressures. Single parents are often forced to negotiate with ex partners regarding child support payments required from partners who have part-time or no care obligations. To complicate matters, child support is dealt with by an agency separate from Centrelink. Negotiating families and child support payments often involve several rounds of toing and froing between the Centrelink Families Team, child support and ex partners.

Recent changes announced to Parenting Payments mean that as from September 2023, parents will remain eligible to receive the parenting payment until the youngest child turns 14. The Parents Next program has also been discontinued.

Job Networks and compliance and claims

A large number of jobseeker customers attend the Agency attempting to resolve payment suspensions, typically occurring as a result of non-compliance with mutual obligation agreements. Often customers are not even aware they have missed appointments, or are non-compliant in other ways, until they attempt to report their income. Job network agencies (JNA) have a policy of not lifting suspensions until customers have an in-person meeting. This causes significant frustration because customers with suspensions usually do not have sufficient funds to travel into Lismore for a meeting. There is an ongoing issue with communication between JNA and Centrelink, with customers being told by JNA it's a Centrelink issue and Centrelink saying it is a JNA issue. This reached a point where I had the manager of a JNA on one phone and the silver service operator on another phone and I had to physically hold the two phones together so they could resolve a customer compliance issue.

Medical exemptions are another source of frustration for Jobseeker customers. In the normal course of events a customer who is unable to look for work because of a medical issue obtains a Centrelink medical certificate from their doctor and submits it via upload to their online account. This should automatically suspend them from mutual obligation activities. However, recently, it has been taking Centrelink longer to process these certificates, sometimes up to 2 or 3 weeks. If a customer has a mutual obligation activity within this time, and they do not participate, they will be breached because the JNA will not see the medical exemption on their system. Medical certificates are sometimes rejected because they are incorrectly filled out. Recently Centrelink changed the format and it is not clear what fields are mandatory. Long wait times for GP appointments contributes to the problem.

We assist many customers to apply for Disability Support Pension (DSP). Claiming DSP is a difficult and time-consuming process. Claimants often need the assistance of NNIC's Community Workers, since it involves revealing detailed medical histories and this is often traumatic. DSP claims are often rejected, not necessarily because of merit but because paper work, particularly medical reports, are insufficient or incorrectly completed. Doctors need to be advised regarding correct, Centrelink friendly terminology and format to be used to ensure deserving claims are successful. Fortunately, there are some good resources available on the welfare rights website (<https://welfarerightscentre.org.au/>), including a sample letter for doctors and information on the Centrelink assessment process. **Silver Service**

~~The~~

~~Families payment no families at lis service centre~~

~~Some silver service inconsistencies and wait times. Silver service for complex enquiries or for people with disabilities or emergencies.~~

~~Change stat catagories~~

~~Parenting payment age increase~~

~~Small increase in jobseeker and rent assistance.~~

~~Housing crisis~~

~~Mental health cri~~

Agency Technical Issues

We have had ongoing connectivity issues with the Centrelink self-service terminals (SST's). This is due to the aging nature of the relevant cabling. This problem also affects the 2 Centrelink phones as they use the same connection. Services Australia is investigating ways to solve the problem.

We are also proposing to relocate one of the SST's into the Centrelink office, and out of the main room at NNIC, to address social distancing and privacy issues. Currently the two SST's are very close to each other and since COVID it means that only one of them can be used at any time. This will involve re-cabling by a SA technician.

NNIC IT Support

At present we are working as team to develop more efficient file sharing systems between the NNIC team members, as well as a digitalised client booking system.

The NNIC website upgrade continues to be a work in progress.



Nimbin Recovery Support Service

By Natalie Meyer, with input from the RSS Case Managers.

Purpose

The Nimbin Recovery Support Service (RSS) was established in September 2022, via funding from the NSW Reconstruction Authority, to provide support to those in Nimbin and surrounding areas who were impacted by the Feb/March 2022 flood disaster. The RSS caseworkers develop individual Disaster Recovery Plans in collaboration with impacted clients, to support them to develop their recovery goals and identify the steps that can be taken along the way in order to achieve those goals.

This can include assisting them to find and access available resources and specialist support and linking them into social and community resources, e.g. NNIC material aid support and generalist services, NNIC Services Australia/Centrelink Agency, external child and family services, medical/psychological health professionals.

People can access the RSS via email, telephone or by presenting at the RSS office, located at 7 Sibley St, five days a week, 9am to 5pm, except when the team is out in the field conducting home visits, meetings or client outreach sessions in Uki and The Channon.

Recovery In Our Community

The road to recovery can be long and arduous, often fraught with unforeseen obstacles and bureaucracy. The RSS advocates for clients with complex situations, including people 'who fall outside the box'.

Many of the rural land sharing communities (aka Multiple Occupancies or 'MOs') in our area were impacted by severe landslips and infrastructure damage, with multiple residents of the MOs directly impacted and many kms of shared access routes in the MOs badly damaged. The legal structures of the MOs are variable and difficult to explain to the grant administrators. There have been significant barriers to clients obtaining financial assistance such as limitations upon numbers of applications per MO, depending upon the structure, in spite of many residents affected on the MOs, and a general lack of understanding of and support for the heavy impact of the landslips throughout the area.

Dealing primarily with residents impacted by landslips and property access issues has added additional layers of complexity, requiring a great deal of evidence to meet eligibility requirements, as the grants were originally designed to deal with the impacts of flood water inundation of homes, rather than the inability to actually access one's home due to landslips and washouts, or the loss of key infrastructure such as water lines, tanks and pumps, external bathrooms and toilets.

The RSS team continues to lobby for geotechnical assessments and support to assist people to remedy landslip damage that threatens their homes, or to relocate their home to a safer position.

In addition to the aforementioned obstacles clients have faced on their road to recovery, there are the mental health impacts associated with having to rehash the experiences of last year's events.

The aim of the RSS is to limit the need for clients to re-tell their story over and over again. The reality of applying for government funding support however, entails a somewhat triggering and re-traumatising experience for many clients, as they are required to provide evidence of the disaster impacts upon them, including photos, written statements and a lot of toing and froing with Government agency staff in order to prove their case for funding.

Community Outreach events

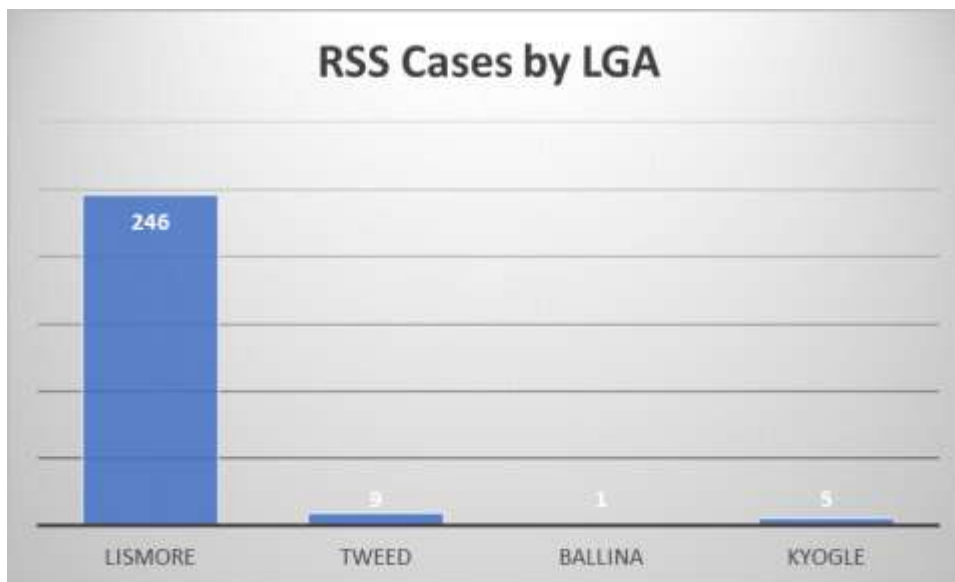
Alison attended the community consultation on the Nimbin Disaster Plan on 29th October 2022 to provide information to people about the RSS.

Alison and Shae attended the Gnar-whals event on 4th March 2023, to provide information to attendees about the RSS.

Samantha attended the Jiggi community resilience day in May 2023 together with NNIC Manager, Natalie and NDRG member Damian, to provide information on the RSS, the Nimbin Disaster Plan and the NDRG.

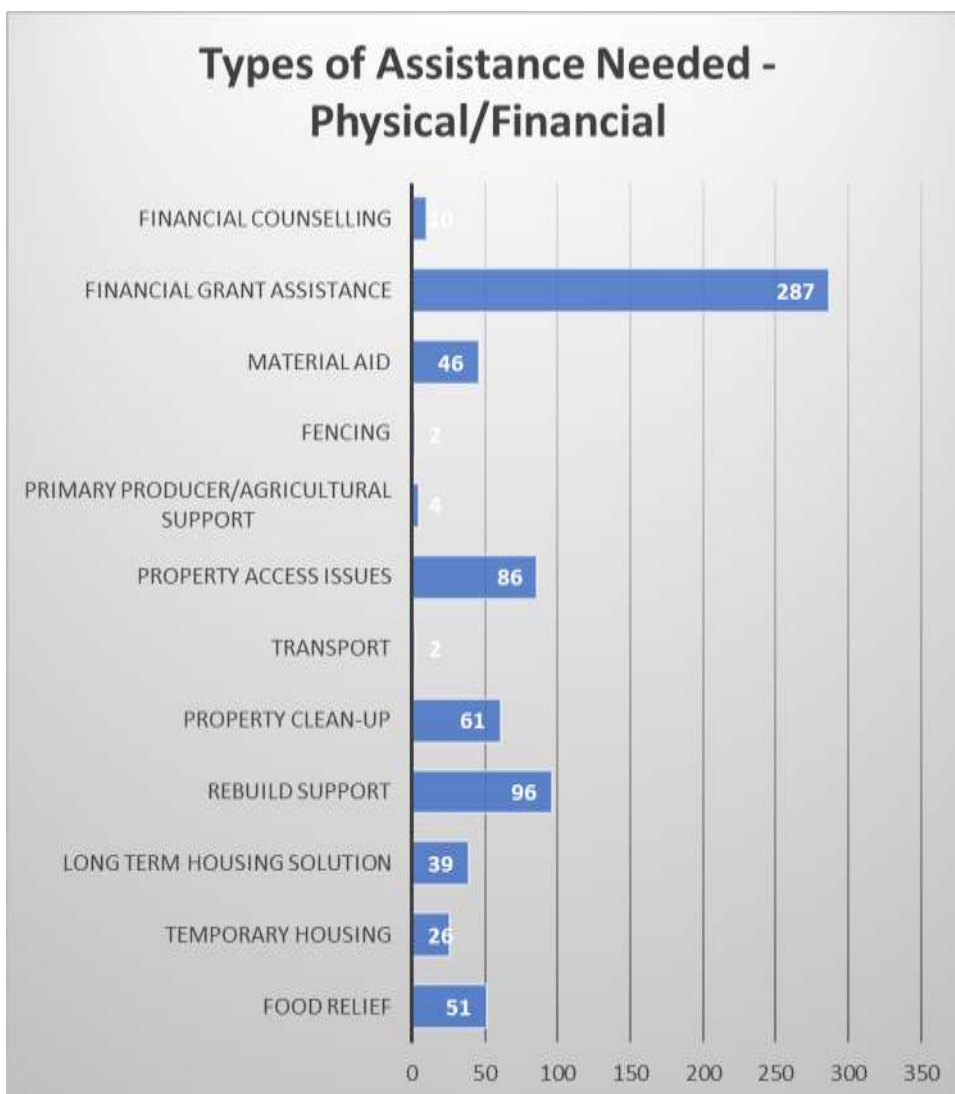
Our Clients

To date, we have engaged with 261 clients, including from 16 local Multiple Occupancy communities and 3 different local government areas. 46% of our clients have been impacted by landslips, 25% were impacted by floods, and 30% were impacted by storm damage. 12 RSS clients have been displaced from the community for an extended period.

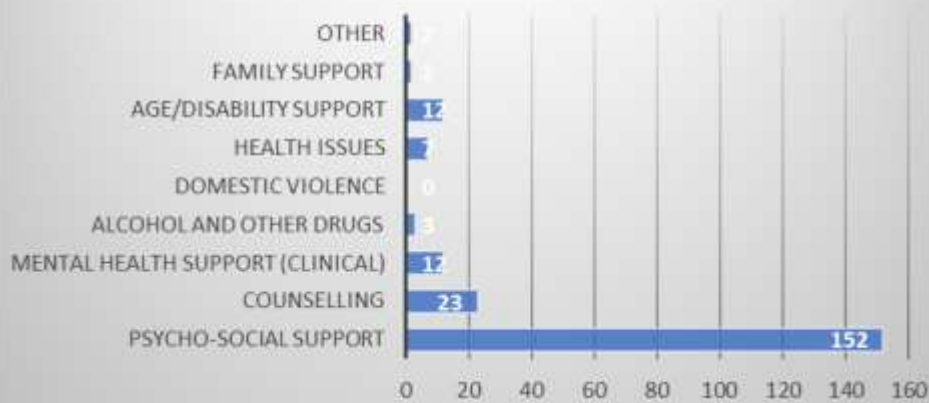


101 cases were initially transferred from NNIC Community Workers at the commencement of the RSS, and the majority of subsequent referrals have been self-referrals, with some referrals from other RSS providers in the region, or other external service providers.

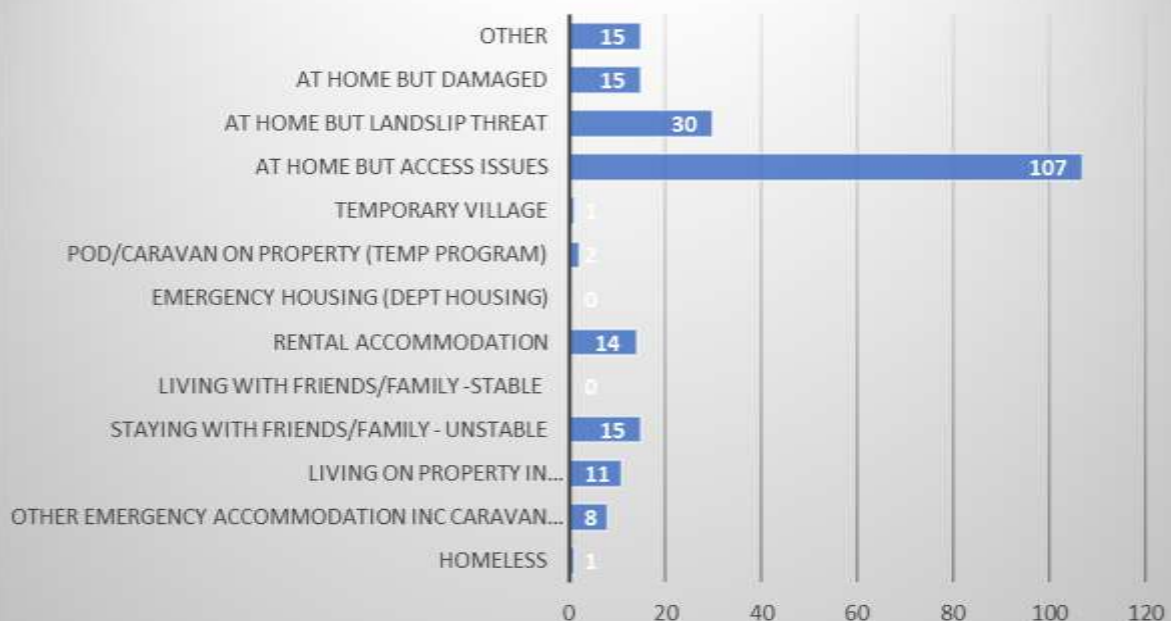
43% of our clients had damages to their driveway/access roads while 40% had direct damages to their home. 50% of our clients were eligible for/successfully received the Back Home grant, 9% have approved Disaster Relief Grant applications and 29% of clients were referred back to NNIC's Emergency Relief and material aid programs.



Types of Assistance Needed - Health & Community



RSS Cases - Living Arrangements



Client exit surveys

100% of clients who completed our exit survey felt they were treated with dignity and respect, listened to and understood by their caseworker. 89% strongly agreed that the service assisted them to identify their recovery goals and the steps needed to achieve them. 89% strongly agreed that the service assisted them in reaching their recovery goals. 74% of respondents strongly agreed that as a result of the service, they felt able to return to their usual everyday life.

Do you have suggestions for how could improve the service?

- "No. Thanks so much for helping me. ♥ "
- "The service was exceedingly excellent, consistent and persistent. Finally got a breakthrough, a few hoops and hurdles to go through."
- "Have DRG, Johns Lyng group begin work on creating accommodation."
- "Service fantastic, couldn't be better."
- "No! Shae was superb with every aspect of our grant application. Everything Shae did was done to perfection. Thanks to her "tireless" efforts, our grant was finally approved. Do whatever is needed to keep this amazing and caring person employed with your organisation. Efficient and caring people like Shae are a rarity these days!!!"
- "I think the Nimbin Disaster Recovery Service needs to coordinate with Federal, State, and Local Government, and associated agencies, to advocate for those in the Nimbin community who are unable to return to their homes because of major structural or land slippage issues"
- "No you were just fabulous Alison you were wonder women tell lots of people to go there best help and support 🙌💖"
- "Maybe more frequent follow up"
- "No suggestions"

Do you have any other comments or feedback?

- "THANK YOU!!!!!!"
- "Keep up the excellent work and consistency."
- "The Case Manager I was given helped me obtain documents that have helped me get back on track. 14 months after the disaster we are still waiting on action to rebuild a home."
- "The staff at Nimbin Recovery Centre are very patient, and empathetic and their knowledge of the service and application process is very complete and their ability to assist is of a high standard. Thankyou very much!!"
- "Enormous thanks to the NSW Government for providing this assistance and to all the caring people at the Nimbin Flood Recovery Service for directing us through the application process."
"Very pleased with the service and outcome that enabled me to pay some overdue bills that I incurred during that severe weather event and the recovery support service in Nimbin instilled a strong feeling of loving community spirit and help when needed"
- "I am extremely grateful for the assistance provided to me by Alison Southey and the rest of the team. Your warmth, courtesy, and compassion are brilliantly matched with your professionalism. You have made a massive positive difference to many local residents, and your service deserves the ongoing support of the Nimbin community in return."

- *"Simply the best words of Tina Turner 🤝💪😁🌟🧠💖"*
- *"Fantastic team. Very responsive and professional and caring."*
- *"So friendly"*
- *"Thank you"*
- *"I am grateful for you service"*
- *"Very grateful for the support I received"*

Case Studies

Case Study One

The client was displaced after massive landslips prevented access to their home, which was situated on a MO (multiple occupancy). Their story is still ongoing.

At the time of the flood, they had a friend staying and they had to leave the property on foot due to the large landslide blocking the drive. They sought refuge at a neighbour's place, but then all had to flee from there when more landslips. They all then fled to yet another neighbour's house at the bottom of the mountain and the landslips followed them down shortly after.



Their recovery has been slow going, with many barriers along the way. The trauma they have suffered with the event and afterwards has made for a very difficult time. We are grateful that following much lobbying by NNIC and others, the Disaster Relief Grant was expanded to cover eligible clients for damage to access routes caused by landslips and washouts.

At this time, the client has been conditionally approved for the Disaster Relief Grant to repair their home. They were later also approved for the Back Home Grant but until the DRG funding is finalised, they are not able to use the money from the Back Home Grant.

They were couch surfing and house-sitting for friends for 12 months prior to being approved for one of the At Home Caravans which was placed on a friend's property. This has been extended after the initial 6 months and moved to another friend's property until February 2024.

Currently they are trying to locate another site on the MO to rebuild after several Geotech engineers have advised it is unsafe to continue living at their home. We are hopeful that the client will be eligible for support under the Resilient Homes Program but nothing has been offered as yet.

The client has been grateful to the RSS for our advocacy between the government departments that are involved with the rebuilding. The fact that they reside on a MO has made the situation very complex. It has been very challenging for the government bodies to understand the concepts of MOs and how they work. The MOs are finally being recognised by the relevant government agencies, after significant lobbying, but there is still a long road ahead.

Case Study Two

The client and their adult son presented to the RSS nine months after the flood. During the floods, they had been renting a small unit in Lismore while settlement of their newly purchased property was being finalised. Having only recently moved to the area from interstate the two had been living in the unit for a mere three weeks before the flood hit and they lost all of their possessions. After the floods, they were displaced for quite some time and stayed at the evacuation centre at the Southern Cross University for close to three weeks, before couch surfing and staying in emergency accommodation for an extended period.

Because their Lismore accommodation was intended to be temporary only, they had a verbal lease with their landlord and they had been paying rent in cash, for which the landlord did not provide receipts. Their verbal lease included all utilities therefore they did not have any utility bills linking them to their address. They were therefore unable to provide evidence such as utility bills or lease agreements, which was a significant barrier to them obtaining any financial support.

Advocacy by the RSS caseworker supported the clients to access \$7,200 rental support payment to cover the costs of emergency accommodation and \$5,000 to replace lost furniture and possessions. In addition to this, NNIC provided both with \$1,000 vouchers via the FSP funding from DCJ to purchase items to enable them to return to their education and work activities.

They also received two caravans through Camplify's 'At Home' caravan program to locate on their property to enable them to start working towards building a new home.

Case Study Three

A First Nations' client presented to the RSS experiencing homelessness. Prior to the floods, they had lived a transient lifestyle in their fully equipped van for several years. The morning of the flood, they were awoken by flood waters engulfing their van, the electrics were destroyed, and they had to break one of the windows to escape the van. Luckily a good Samaritan was nearby, and having witnessed the event, quickly came to the client's rescue.

The client was assigned a case worker, who determined that a Disaster Relief Grant (DRG) application would be the client's best option to obtain the funds to replace their van. The DRG provides support for eligible applicants who may live an itinerant lifestyle, such as 'rough sleepers', those in temporary dwellings and people living in vans/caravans.

After several months, the client's DRG application was approved, but initially only for a \$3200 camping package, which was not going to solve their issue of homelessness brought about by the loss of their van in the floods.

The RSS caseworker was able to escalate the matter, achieving an increase to the DRG funding to \$20,000, which enabled the client to replace their van and equip it to enable them to live in it, and they are no longer homeless as a result.



Nimbin Integrated Services

Genevieve Beggs, NIS Nurse Practitioner

The Nimbin Integrated Services (NIS) concluded as of the end of the June 2023, after sixteen years at NNIC. The Nurse Practitioner has retired after many years of service delivery to the Nimbin and outlying communities.

During the month of June 2022 prior to the NP's retirement, she ceased seeing clients unless in crisis mode to provide closure to a number of issues.

The NIS provided clients with access to various services, crossing boundaries which had been previously difficult for the clients to negotiate, and took on an integrated, holistic approach. The "one stop shop" model facilitated successful outcomes by ensuring strong linkages with NNIC's services as well as other service providers who accessed their clients at the Centre, enabling a 'wrap-around' service provision for NIS clients. These strong integrations and collaborations extended outside the Centre with other service providers as well.

Nimbin Integrated Services (NIS) was an innovative community originated and based clinical health service targeting multi-diagnoses clients, those with mental health and substance abuse issues, in particular. The service was delivered by a Nurse Practitioner (NP) specialising in mental health/drugs and alcohol who was permanently based in a well-used, non-health community organisation in the town – Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre. The NP worked through close street-based contact with the community of Nimbin and offered a flexible, immediate, short and longer-term therapeutic support to clients with a range of mental health problems and/or drug and/or alcohol dependence.

The service included a proactive and preventative approach as well as having the capacity to deal with crisis situations. The major focus of the role was the caring relationship, which included engagement with all stakeholders, collaborative problem solving and decision-making, and the promotion of interpersonal competencies, growth and health.

The NIS model was underwritten by the core principles of consumer-centred care; thereby generating the most effective and satisfying care and treatment to all stakeholders. The Nurse Practitioner practiced within her realm of advanced practice under her Clinical Guidelines (Scope of Practice). In the process of treating patients, State and Territory legislation allows nurse practitioners to initiate diagnostic studies, perform certain procedures, and prescribe certain medications within an approved drug formulary and to refer patients to other health care professionals.

NIS commenced in 2007 as a 5 day per week program. In 2017 the Nurse Practitioner experienced a serious health issue and subsequently reduced her hours to 3 days a week from 2018. Despite this, client numbers remained at significant levels. The greatest concern to the Nimbin Integrated Service was the need for an active succession plan. Previous active part-time succession plans had not been fruitful in recruiting an additional (and eventually replacement) NP to the role. At one point in 2020, the LHD was successful in recruiting an additional NP for one day a week, however the individual chose to move to another State and position and never commenced seeing clients at NNIC.

The end of NIS is a significant loss to the Nimbin community.

In the coming year, NNIC is committed to working with the Local Health District and other partners to find alternate solutions to ensure there are services in Nimbin to support the needs of people experiencing mental health and AOD (alcohol and other drugs) issues.

NIS in 2022-2023

The NP's management support team changed in early 2022. NIS was shifted from the LHD Nursing directorate to the Mental Health/Drug & Alcohol directorate. As the NP's retirement grew near, the urgency to address succession escalated, however it became clear by the end of June that a new NP would not be recruited and NIS as we have known it would cease.

Other issues to be noted were ongoing difficulties with the computer internet connectivity. The functions of the NP role including data collection and reporting were dependent upon connection to the LHD intranet, but the system broke down in December of 2021, and was not resolved until nine months later. The NP worked hard prior to her retirement to complete the data entry required including the backlog of nine months' data accumulated whilst the system was inaccessible.

Flood Impacts

The flood impacts continued to cause trauma and stress and demand for NIS remained high throughout the past year despite the wind-down of NIS in the final quarter of the year.

Total clients for 2022-2023: **130** (137 in 21-22, 166 in 20-21, 263 in 19-20, 274 in 18-19)

NIS ceased taking new referrals (other than severe crisis situations) as from around March 2023, in preparation for the cessation of the service. Clients were offered referrals to alternative external services but not many of them chose to take up these referral options.

Total active client cases as of 1.07.2022: **43**

NEW referrals: **51**

Cases reopened: **36**

Cases closed/transitioned to alternate services: **130**

Total active clients as at 30.6.23: **0**

Client demographics: (No. of clients)

CALD: **1**

ATSI: **6**

LGBTQI: **2**

Men over 50: **30**

Men under 50: **28**

Women over 50: **43**

Women under 50: **29**

Families with dependent children: **7**

Children (under 15yrs): **0**

Teens (15-17): **1**

Average length of time between referral and contact – **1.5 week**

Average duration of service – **6 months**

Mental Health Act Involuntary Scheduling Events: **0**

Case Closures:

Number of cases closed and categories of case closure: **130**

Successful completion/improvement: **87**

Never engaged (referred in but never presented): **13**

Deceased: **2** (One suicide, one natural causes)

Cases transitioned (due to end of NIS) to other services: **15**

Disengaged due to end of NIS and choose not to take up alternate service options: **13**

New Referrals came from:

- No of client self-referrals/presentations: **18**
- No of community/family/carers referrals: **11**
- No of in-house NNIC referrals to NIS: **14**
- Other sources: **8**

Case Studies

Case 1

Client was referred by an outreach D&A provider. They disclosed a significant history of poly-substance use, and was now using THC oil, cannabis cookies, and beer, stating that his cannabis use was medicinal. They had attended detox units in the past.

They had a mixed employment background and limited financial means. They also disclosed a history of self-harm as a young person and stated they have paranoid thoughts and hear whispers that get louder. They had been admitted to MH acute care and also seen a psychiatrist in the past who and had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and prescribed Lithium but never took it. They also talked of having a flat mood but then a speedy mind for 1 to 2 days, then depression. They further admitted to having anger issues and has been working on this.

They engaged well with NIS resulting in their stabilisation and ceased using alcohol. They now have plans for the first time for many years to re-engage with higher education. They will need ongoing support to be able to achieve this goal, however, and refused the offer of a referral to alternate services once they knew that the relationship with the NP would cease when NIS came to an end.

Case 2

Client was referred by a family member who had been a NIS client back in 2019.

The family which includes parents and adult children had moved to Nimbin in 2016 after an enormous amount of trauma and legal issues.

The client had a history of significant alcohol abuse history dating back to when they were a young person. They regularly experienced severe alcohol withdrawal symptoms and had been in and out of various clinics.

I worked with them to develop tools to improving their emotional regulation skills and capacity. They regularly attended sessions and over time demonstrated real improvements in emotional regulation. Their resilience and ability to cope with stressful situations also improved, and they ceased utilising alcohol as their primary coping mechanism.

Case 3

Client presented with anxiety issues, in circumstances where they had never previously sought any help. They said they had few friends and were always sick and scared. They spent period of time in bed to avoid facing the outside

world. They explained they often felt frustrated, and had a lot of pent up emotions.

Further conversations revealed a significant history of substance use including speed, cocaine, and MDMA. They hid their drug use from their partner and feared if their partner found out they would leave them. This appeared to be the root cause of their anxiety issues. They had given up smoking around 12 years prior but now had taken up vaping, and drank alcohol every day.

We initially talked about distraction techniques related to anxiety and changing their drinking patterns. Over time we also talked about their reliance on other substances, particularly cocaine.

Over the course of working with them, they reduced their alcohol consumption from a carton of beer a week to a carton of beer a month. They also stopped vaping. Their anxiety issues eased significantly as a result. Hopefully they will continue to progress along their positive course.

Case 4

Client was involved in complex family matters resulting from the severe mental health issues of their former partner, who also had substance abuse issues, had been making irrational choices and was increasingly adopting extremist views on a range of issues, which ultimately lead to them kidnapping the children and taking them out of the area and away from the client who was the legally designated primary carer. This led to their partner being charged with assaulting the Police and interventions by DCJ .

The children were returned to the client's care but the situation destabilised the family and the client sought to repair the relationship enough to create better communications with their former partner for the benefit of the children and needed support and strategies around how to manage this given the mental health issues of the partner.

The client and their former partner are now both located in the same city with their daughters and are working constructively towards parental access and improved communications around the needs of the children. The client has commenced seeking employment and has settled back into a healthy routine with the children. The client has put strong support systems in place around themselves and the children.

Case 5

Client had a long history of cannabis abuse and had been diagnosed with Schizophrenia, Dyslexia, and Autism. They were periodically homeless and quite deluded in their thinking with extreme resistiveness to interventions.

After working with them for some time they made significant changes in their life, the main one being the cessation of their using cannabis use. The client acknowledges the difference in their thinking, says they no longer experience hallucinations, and are able to discern fact from fiction. Their functionality is greatly improved and they say they feel so much better.



Community Development Report

Stephanie Seckold, Community Development Worker

7 Sibley Street Operations

The RSS commenced operations from 7 Sibley St as from September 2022, and the usual 7 Sibley St workshops and activities moved to weekends or off site.

We also increased the workshop fees to better cover the actual materials etc. costs.

Despite these two factors, and somewhat counterintuitively, overall workshop attendances increased. There was also a significant boost in workshop numbers over the week of the 50th Anniversary of the Aquarius Festival, during which we ran daily workshops for visitors in the gardens at 7 Sibley St.

However, access to the Tools and Equipment Library decreased, due to it only being open for borrowing on Saturday mornings, rather than several days per week.

Sustainability Alley and the Sustainable Nimbin Community Plan

The 2022 Nimbin Show was cancelled due to ongoing post-flood poor road conditions compromising livestock safety, and so for the third year in a row, we were unable to do Sustainability Alley, where we usually showcase the activities at 7 Sibley Street, promote the Sustainable Nimbin Community Plan (SNCP) and deliver activities, conduct surveys etc. in relation to the SNCP.

The SNCP is now well overdue for review and update, the current five-year plan being from 2016 to 2021. We have been unable to progress this due to the combined impact of Covid, the floods and other issues which have been prioritised, such as the Community Disaster Plan (the development of which was a strategy under the SNCP).

Site maintenance/development

- ❖ Food van moved back onto site to facilitate outdoor events
- ❖ Low-tech building displays (stardome, wattle and daub, concrete cloth-to be completed)
- ❖ New garden volunteers Sandy and Darren
- ❖ Front flower and herb gardens maintained by Andrew
- ❖ Mowing and whipper snipping - Rick
- ❖ Work ongoing to complete hempcrete composting toilet waterproofing and tiling, fit outs, final carpentry and painting, solar installation to be completed.



New Equipment

- ❖ Donated– pressure cleaner, weed sprayer, Vacola preserving kit.

Collaborations

- ❖ Agroforestry 6-part workshop series with Solar Farms (Cerise) and Charlotte Daly.
- ❖ On-going meetings with LCC waste team to explore MOU for waste minimisation and creating circular economy projects.

Progressing the Sustainable Nimbin Community Plan (SNCP) Goals

LOCAL FOOD SECURITY

- ❖ Seed exchange meeting and sales of locally saved seeds.
- ❖ 6-week Agroecology/syntropic garden workshop (design, methods, cooking with subtropical, locally appropriate plants). (Held off site).

REDUCING WASTE

- ❖ On-site composting continuing with organic waste from NNIC and Nimbin markets.
- ❖ Coordinated waste management at Mardigrass, sorting refundable recycling (\$150 to 7 Sibley).

- ❖ Making bio-fuel from used vegetable oil workshop

PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY

- ❖ Engaging with visitors, explaining 7 Sibley purpose and Nimbin values (environmental, self-sufficiency, etc.) referring them to sources of information and easy to implement changes they can do at home. Promoting workshops.
- ❖ Sales of products made on site: EM1 and bokashi for compost toilets and gardens.



SUSTAINABLE BUILDING

- ❖ Making cob rocket stoves, solar cooker and biochar gasifier workshops for low/no fuel cooking. Wild clay processing and firing, light earth building workshops (held off site).



- ❖ 50th Anniversary of Aquarius Festival: Tipi-raising, weed block, hempcrete, wattle and daub, stardome building workshops during Aquarius celebrations- good attendance in including many visitors from outside of Nimbin.
- ❖ Archimedes water pump workshop, making flow forms for water purification, earth-forming for managing landscape water flows.



SKILLS SHARING

- ❖ Processing and firing raw home sourced clay for ceramic, Mosaics with recycled tiles for waterproofing surfaces.
- ❖ Craft workshops with a focus on DIY/cottage industry development and fibre processing/using recycled and found materials: String making, felt hats and shoes, needle felting, leather tanning, macramé jewellery, growing cotton and fibres, textile weaving, spinning, knitting, braiding own dog collars/livestock halters, Crafty Kids workshops.
- ❖ Weaving circle on Wednesdays (outside) commenced May 2023 with regular attendees, hosted by Amy (no cost) and social knitting with Sue on front verandah on 3rd Tuesday of each month (donation).



Program/Activities data

Community Tools and Equipment Library

Total members to date: 57

Tools borrowed occasions of service 22-23: 49

Info and Referrals, Workshops

Info and referrals (locals) occasions of service: **397** (545 in 21-22)

Info and referrals (visitors):
occasions of service: **381**

(334 in 21-22)

Workshops conducted: **48**

(35 in 21-22)

No of workshop participants:
268 (195 in 21-22)

Saturday workshops were generally well attended and so the pivoting to Saturdays from weekdays was actually a success and enabled increased workshop access.

Summary of Workshop Topics:

Rocket Stove construction, Felt shoe making, Making shoe soles, Felt hat making,



Leather tanning, Agroecology, Wild clay series, Waterproofing clay, Diesel/veg oil conversion, Star-Dome construction, Paracord braiding (animal collars and harnesses), Cooking without fossil fuels, How to make an Archimedes water pump, Tile mosaics, Flow form water processing, Macramé jewellery, Emergency corflute sleeping pod construction, Tipi raising, Building with wattle and daub, Light Earth building, Weed Crete, Reciprocal structures, Cement cloth, Knitting.

Plus, regular outdoor weaving circles in the gardens.

Workshop Outcomes – participants surveys

No. of paper survey responses: 48 (= 18% of total participants)

Note: this is an increase from last year. In the past year, DEX reporting introduced the option for the workshop facilitators to complete a survey in relation to workshops, indicating their assessment of the workshop outcomes based on their observations and direct verbal feedback from participants. Thus, most workshop outcomes were assessed, either by the facilitators themselves, or jointly with the participants, or via direct hard copy surveys completed by participants.

Demographics

% of survey respondents who fall into one or more TEI category
(ATSI/CALD/Disability/Financially struggling/isolated)
26 (54%)

Survey Responses - Number of survey respondents reporting the following:

How Well? - Workshop ratings:

Very Good: 42 (87.5%)

Good: 6

Moderate: 0

Poor: 0

Very Poor 0

1. My Confidence to Learn new skills has increased:

Strongly agree: 27 = 56%

Agree: 18 = 37.5%

Neither agree or disagree: 2

Disagree: 0

Strongly disagree: 1

2. The workshop inspired me to consider a new business idea:

Strongly agree: 10 (21%)

Agree: 12 (25%)

Neither agree or disagree: 21 (44.75%)

Disagree: 5

Strongly disagree: 0

3. The workshop provided me with new skills to apply to a new business idea:

Strongly agree: 13 (27%)

Agree: 17 (35.4%)

Neither: 12 (25%)

Disagree: 5

Strongly disagree: 1

4. The skills learned will help me improve my life circumstances

Strongly agree: 25 (52%)

Agree: 20 (42%)

Neither: 2

Disagree: 1

Strongly Disagree: 0

5. I learned something new about services, activities of facilities available in the community

Strongly agree: 28 (58%)

Agree: 16 (33%)

Neither: 4

Disagree: 0

Strongly disagree: 0

6. As a result of the workshop I feel more connected to the local community

Strongly agree: 30 (62.5%)

Agree: 16 (33%)

Neither: 2

7. I met someone new at this workshop OR I connected with a new network of people

Strongly agree: 35 (73%)

Agree: 13 (27%)

Neither: 0

Disagree: 0

Strongly disagree: 0

Some workshop participant testimonials

- *I loved Steph's enthusiasm and adaptability. Very inspiring.*
- *I will be back for more – what a wonderful resource for our community.*
- *Absolutely amazing! Thank you so much!!*
- *The workshop facilitator was clear, succinct and informative.*
- *Will definitely be continuing my journey with wild clay. Thank you for the inspiration!*
- *A great turnout of people who shared their knowledge and skills for a collective outcome.*

- *I saved up to attend this workshop and it was well worth it!! Thank you, Steph.*
- *Amazing. We came with 2 adults and 2 kids aged 8 and 11 years and they made the best hats and loved the day. Thanks soooo much!*
- *I will be signing up for more 7 Sibley st workshops, I enjoyed the social interaction.*
- *This workshop was good to overcome [my] inertia and inspire [me] to become engaged in lots of new ways.*

Financials

Total Income (mostly workshops + some retail sales) \$ 6,578

Total workshops etc expenses: \$314.70

Net income: \$ 6,263.30

Shop sales reduced due to the shop itself only being open one day a week (Saturdays) due to the accommodation of the Recovery Support Service during weekdays.

However, workshop revenue increased due to higher participation as well as increasing workshop fees (from \$10 to \$15, and \$30-\$50 for those workshops involving more preparation or materials supplied to participants).

We also offered a number of multiple-day short courses, which increased participation, and also encouraged bookings and pre-payment.

Prior to the occupation of the site by the RSS, the site used very little electricity generally had the water turned off at the mains, as the is to be as off-grid as possible. The subsequent increased utilities costs are being covered by the RSS funding whilst the site is primarily occupied for this purpose.





Compost loo – after the hemp installation



Hemp rendering in process

