



BANC banc.org.au

Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22



Supporting and connecting our community

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



The year 2021-2022 was another testing year for BANC. The lingering effects of the COVID pandemic affected some of the services that could be run by BANC and unfortunately a number of our colleagues contracted the virus. In addition, there were some people who left BANC and we thank them for their contribution to the work of this amazing community organisation. I make particular note of the significant contributions of Cathy Rood, Lee O'Dowd Austen and Tracie McMahon and thank them for their service. Despite those setbacks BANC has persevered and prospered. While much of the work of BANC goes without public acknowledgement, every person who has worked or volunteered for BANC in the past year deserves applause.

Powering up a place of safety and connection

A significant achievement was the installation of a 42kW solar system using 98 solar panels on the east and north facing roofs of Blackheath Community Centre. A photo of the launch features on the cover of this report. The panels were funded by a Bendigo Bank Foundation grant for communities impacted by the Black Summer bushfires. The panels are the first step in a broader project to reduce the community's carbon footprint, create a more comfortable and useable public space and to ensure Blackheath has a powered venue in which residents can gather when natural disasters and emergencies occur. This is particularly important for vulnerable people, whose welfare has always been BANC's top priority.

Policy priorities

In the lead-up to the local government elections, the BANC Board developed five policy positions for presentation to candidates and we are committed to working with local, State and Federal representatives to achieve positive outcomes. The positions were:

1. Greater priority to the maintenance and upgrades of community halls and centres;
2. Improved disability access to Council community facilities;
3. Specific Council support for upgrading the Blackheath Community Centre;
4. Specific Council action to increase social and affordable housing in the LGA; and
5. Harmonise and extend concessions for Council fees and charges to vulnerable and disadvantaged people and community organisations.

As a result of our advocacy the Mayor of the Blue Mountains City Council indicated two outcomes:

1. A review to identify the best ways to generate affordable housing in the LGA within the framework of the existing Local Environmental Plan.
2. A study to examine if we can increase concessions and use of council facilities without impacting revenue and increase equity and transparency.

Internal changes

After a review of our operations and acknowledging the steady the growth, the Board has made some internal changes that it hopes will move BANC into the next phase of its existence. The Board has formed two sub-committees to better support improved governance. They are:

- Governance, Risk & Compliance, and
- Finance, Audit & Improvement.

The Board has also allocated resources to the recruitment of a Services Manager and Operations Manager to better support operational functions and service delivery that will assist BANC well into the 21st Century.

Acknowledgments

I thank our General Manager, Leah Godfrey, who continues to work tirelessly in order to keep the many components of BANC working and financially viable. Leah's advice to the Board and clear communications with staff continue to be a fundamental reason why BANC is still operating and delivering for its community.

I also thank the hard-working Board who devote significant time and energy into their many meetings, fund-raising and miscellaneous requirements.. I thank Vice-President Jo Hibbert for her sage advice and chairing of meetings at short notice. I thank Yuliya Mann, our Treasurer, for the provision of clear and practical guidance about the financial side of BANC. I thank our Secretary, Bronwen Stinson for our meeting minutes and insights from private practice.

Thanks to Henry Lebovic for championing SmartenUp fundraising, which delivered the new solar panels. Additional thanks go to Gary Moore for pursuing the housing strategy with Council, being a member of SmartenUp, representing BANC at the Blackheath Highway Action Group, and stepping in to assist the management of BANC Access when it was between managers.

I thank Christine Wheeler for joining and contributing to SmartenUp as well as work on major funding applications. I also thank Lisa Sampson for joining the Board and bringing her significant experience in Board governance to BANC. We are maturely growing as an organisation thanks to Lisa's recommendations.

Finally, I note the departure from the Board of Jennifer Ross. Jennifer has contributed significantly to the Board, over a large number of years. She was a member of SmartenUp and played a significant role in gaining the Bendigo Bank Foundation grant for the solar panels. Jennifer's knowledge, enthusiasm and experience will be sorely missed. I thank her for her contribution and wish her all the best in the many other activities she is involved in.

BANC is a dynamic and valuable part of the Blackheath Area community. In 2022-23 BANC will be revisiting its strategic plan, bedding down its new governance structures and investing in making BANC a great place to work, volunteer and contribute to the wider good of the greater Blackheath area. Please consider supporting BANC by becoming a member and, if you can, offering financial or in-kind support to allow BANC to do what it does best.

Michael Brogan

President,

Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre 2021-2022

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT



Often, when times are darkest, our light shines brightest. That was certainly the case for BANC this year. I am immensely proud of the way our staff, Board and volunteers rose to the challenges of the COVID-19 lockdowns. This Annual Report illustrates the many ways in which we reduced the impact of illness, isolation, financial difficulties and mental health challenges that the pandemic brought to our community.

BOOSH remained open throughout all lockdowns, dedicated staff providing essential workers with crucial care for their children. The BANC Access Supports team worked tirelessly, advocating for people living in group homes to access exercise supports. Plan Management and Support Coordination continued to be provided via phone, email and videolink. The Neighbourhood Centre team moved to remote delivery with ease. Demand for emergency relief skyrocketed, but we kept on delivering.

Following extensive consultation with staff, BANC continued to mandate mask wearing and vaccination for staff, volunteers and contractors keeping them and our service users physically healthy and safe. Staying mentally well was also a big priority. Cathy Rood and Jo Davies used creative, connecting ways to understand how BANC can support and encourage early help-seeking among its staff. The results have been absorbed into the way we do business.

Once lockdown ended we resumed face-to-face activities with vigour. The Hub activities run at the Church Hall at 125 Wentworth Street have been embraced for their creativity and variety. You can read more about this marvellous work later in this report.

BANC has signed a contract with Infoxchange to receive ICT support, subsidised through the Social Sector Transformation Fund. Their assessment looked at hardware and software assets, network and internet configuration, and licenses. BANC also purchased a database with funds provided through the Social Sector Transformation Fund. Both of these initiatives will streamline and consolidate our business, making reporting obligations and delivery to our community more efficient.

As noted in the President's report, the ongoing improvements to Phillips Hall and our new strategic directions were also key parts of the success story for BANC this year. I thank the Board for its hard work and dedication through a year chock full of challenges. I commend the work of all of my colleagues this year, and particularly thank the senior staff for their proficiency and support.

Leah Godfrey

General Manager,

Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre 2021-2022

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE HIGHLIGHTS

HUFF!

Heads Up For Fire
or *any* emergency



Looking out. Linking in.

HUFF is a BANC initiative that brings neighbourhoods together to plan for and co-ordinate during natural disasters, particularly bushfires. This year we held **6 education sessions** for our **52** community facilitators, and kept in touch monthly with news and new resources. We worked with Brian Jewell of the RFS to deliver **four safety seminars** that were open to all residents. Our partnership with Habitat for Humanity Australia saw HUFF refer vulnerable residents to Habitat for vital property clearing.



Above: HUFF volunteers tour Katoomba bushfire control centre



It's been a very successful as well as challenging year at the Neighbourhood Centre. The COVID lockdown meant we were often closed, but our staff again stepped up and worked from home, providing emergency relief vouchers, NILS loans, delivering food, referral information, supporting people with a friendly phone call and much more. Under Simon Hare, the CYBER_SHED team have increased both their hours and student numbers.

Two major wins for the year were responding quickly and effectively to the big increase in demand for food assistance and establishing a buzzing Creativity, Wellness and Resilience Hub. Read more on the following pages.

Our other programs: HUFF, Cares, CHSP Social Support, and Neighbourhood Centre office services, have all flourished. Thanks to all the staff at the Neighbourhood Centre for their amazing work supporting our community. They do it with a smile even though at times it is challenging. To Jade, Jo, Simon, Louisa, Liz, Peter, and the front desk volunteers—thank you for your support in my time as NC Coordinator. It has been an immense pleasure working with you. You have made my job very easy by being such an amazing team. And finally to Leah, in particular, thank you for your unwavering support during the year, it has meant a lot to me and the team.

Cathy Rood, Neighbourhood Centre Coordinator

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



BANC delivered a record 82 workshops, activities and events during the year, despite COVID setbacks. The growth would not have been possible without grants from our local Primary Health Network and the NSW/Federal Government bushfire recovery grant partnership. Our gratitude goes out to them. Our new Hub was the 'engine room', delivering social connections, creative outlets, skills to enhance personal and environmental wellbeing; and education sessions about safety, personal finance and much more. Many thanks to our wonderful community for all the ideas and energy you brought to the Hub and to our facilitators, who continue to deliver such inspiring programs and opportunities.



Photos clockwise from top: Mocktails and Matisse were on the menu for Seniors Week; Lemon Twist dance lessons; attendants at the Art of Dying workshop; youngsters take part in a nature excursion; participants in the monthly Family Art Workshop; local preschoolers celebrate moving to big school with a picnic; BANC General Manager Leah Godfrey at the inaugural monthly Fridays at 125 pizza party; Poet James Gering leads the weekly Inklings writing group; Blue Shorts film-making workshop; RFS Officer Brian Jewell gives a seminar on bushfire safety; local young people participate in a hands-on mural painting workshop; children show the results of the Faery Doors craft workshop.

TACKLING FOOD INSECURITY

MURRAY'S MEALS

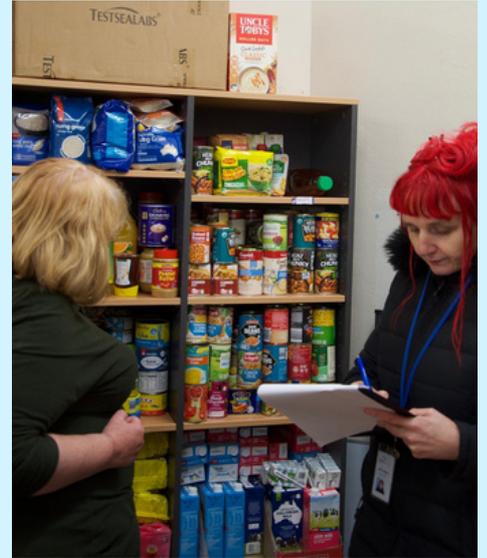


Murray Reid's delicious vegetarian meals have been a much-loved staple of the BANC food pantry for many years. Murray sources his veggies free from Box Divvy Mt Vic and Cliff View Farm.

In the kitchen of Victory Theatre Cafe, under the supervision of Chef Kim, he transforms them into warming soups and rice dishes - about 500 serves a year. These are then stored in a dedicated freezer at the Neighbourhood Centre, ready to be distributed to those who need them. And the reviews are always five star. Our deepest thanks, Murray, for your dedication, kindness and culinary skills !!



Food hampers ready for delivery



BANC project officer Jade Hudson helps a client use the BANC food pantry

Nobody could have predicted the massive impact COVID would have on the need for food assistance here in the mountains. We saw hundreds of families and individuals who had been thriving but who were now without an income and desperate for support.

The response from our community was nothing short of magnificent.

Every day bags of food and essentials that had been bought by local people at supermarkets were delivered directly to BANC's doorstep. We were kept busy delivering these to folks in Blackheath, Mt Vic, Medlow Bath and the Megalong Valley who had requested them online. Cash donations also poured in, and were converted into much-needed food, fuel and heating vouchers.

A special thank you to Michael from the Friendly Grocer and Bruce from the Blackheath Butchery who added their own contributions to every food voucher, to Amelia at the Blackheath Laundromat, who not only provided laundromat vouchers, but who also put together care packs of toiletries for people in need and to Robyn, who generously donated vouchers from the Veggie Patch every fortnight.

Farm to table

Cliff View Community Farm contributed a massive quarter tonne of fruit and veggies this year and Box Divvy Mt Vic provided free boxes of fresh produce every week. They were delivered by BANC to local people in need through the year.

Our thanks to farm manager Lyndall, all her volunteers and the folks at Box Divvy for their generosity.



Packed produce boxes

BANC ACCESS

Caitlin's Access journey



Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre's Access program has been a life-changer for our family. My daughter Caitlin was their first NDIS client and they still care for her to this day. The staff have had our back through many difficult times, such as transitioning Caitlin to accommodation. They have managed every challenge with respect and kindness.

There's no way we could make it through without our Support Coordinator. For years I had to manage Caitlin's illnesses and try to navigate the system at the same time. It took up pretty much my whole life. These days, I trust all the negotiation and calling around to her Support Coordinator.

Caitlin's Access carers are amazing. When she takes part in social programs and outings, the team always makes her feel included and valued. I have complete confidence leaving her in their hands.

You can tell the staff at BANC all genuinely care about Caitlin and she loves seeing them. When we visit the office, everyone stops what they're doing so she can go around and say hello. There's no doubt that BANC Access has helped Caitlin become the beautiful fun-loving girl she is today and we are so grateful for their care.

Helen Fox



Caitlin and Access support worker Veronica take a four-legged friend for a walk



Members of Thursday Mens' Group on a trip to Lithgow blast furnace. L to R Craig Weir, Adrian Reed, Barry Beveridge, Joe Allard, Dean Mallard..



All aboard for another day out - the BANC team in action, picking up clients.

2021-22 has been a busy year for the Access team, with much change and upheaval. Despite this our team have managed to continue to support 100 NDIS participants with zoom, phone calls, visits, groups and tireless machinations behind the scenes. Our team have huge grins in place behind their masks now we are able to provide face to face support again!

We welcomed eight new support workers building the team to twenty, ensuring smooth delivery and ensuring everything we do is person-centred and responsive.

As always, we are continuing to look for better ways to serve our participants and find the best resources available. We are also introducing new technology solutions and considering new programs and directions. As usual, we'll be seeking input from all our participants so we get it just right, ensuring BANC Access continues to provide quality, responsive, committed and inclusive services that meet the needs of our community.

BOOSH

BOOSH has had its biggest and best year yet, with our participants enjoying a whole new set of exciting and stimulating activities. The Warped Ninja Wall, where the children got to test themselves with extreme climbing, jumping and sliding was just one example. We also turned the climbing shed into a "laser obstacle course" where children had to duck, cover and weave their way through it a maze created entirely from their own imaginations.

On the learning front, BOOSH activities included STEM days and Science Days, where we've blown up zip-lock bags with chemical reactions, made film canisters fly and made giant foam explosions with yeast and peroxide.

As usual, the inner wellbeing of our kids is of paramount importance. We have focused on the *My Time, Our Place* outcome of "Children have a strong sense of wellbeing, connect and contribute to their world." To do so, we facilitated the children's wants, interests and needs by directly working with their ideas and making them happen right away.

At BOOSH we have daily planned activities and crafts, but quite often the children will tell us what they want to do instead. This contribution of spontaneous ideas allows the children to have a strong sense of belonging and empowerment.

Here's to another year of learning, creating, building and fun!



BOOSH in action (from top) Ninja Wall; laser obstacle course; exploring science



Below: Getting crafty (from right); Reconciliation week; bird masks; making snowflakes



OUR SINCEREST THANKS TO

Financial supporters

Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund
Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Community Foundation
Blackheath St Vincent De Paul
Blue Mountains City Council

Blue Mountains Nepean Primary Health Network
Muriel at Kotes by Kobe
Kim McClymont
Virginia King
Department of Communities and Justice

Partners

LINC
Mt Vic Flicks
Belong Blue Mountains
Blue Mountains City Council
Mountains Youth Support Team

Sydney Water
Thrive Services
Wentworth Health Care
Good Shepherd
Thrive Services
Blackheath Public School

Mary MacKillop Today NILS
Mountain Youth Support Team
Winmalee Neighbourhood Centre
Gateway Family Services
Springwood Neighbourhood Centre
KU Inclusion Support

Community supporters

Bakery on Wentworth
Blackheath Baptist Church
Blackheath Butcher
Blackheath Chamber of Commerce
Blackheath Friendly Grocer
Blackheath Laundromat
Blackheath Men's Shed
Blackheath Public School
Blackheath Presbyterian Church
Blackheath Probus
Blackheath/Mt Victoria RSL

Blackheath S355 Hall Committee
Blackheath/Mt Victoria RFS
Blackheath Uniting Church
Blackheath Vegie Patch
Blue Gum Montessori
Box Divvy Mount Victoria
Blackheath Community Area Alliance
Blackheath Country Women's Association
Mount Victoria Community Association
Medlow Bath Residents Association

Heathens Choir
Kookaburra Kindergarten
Radio Blue Mountains
Sacred Heart Parish Blackheath
Kookaburra Kindergarten
The Big Fix
The Victory Theatre & Cafe

Volunteers and workshop facilitators

Brian Jewell
James Gering
Murray Reid
Helena Zadro-Jones
Emma Jinks
Lesbians Incorporated
Lyndall Crompton
Mick O'Neil
Morna Colbran
Simon Hare
Bruce McKenzie
Christine Wheeler
Chris Tobin
Hannah Surtees
Hillier Windsor

Jane Armstrong
Leafy Adventures
Lindena Robb
Lis Bastian
Nick Wilson
Sue Wildman
Gordon Watson
Christopher Smith
Kelvin Carne
Ash Baker
Tonica Bird
Ashley Baker
Uncle Lex Dadd
Tad Breezee
Ken Bromilow

Jacinta Tobin
Janelle Randall-Court
Aiden Haskins
Norman Yeend
All our HUFF Facilitators
And all our Blackheath
Cares Volunteers

BANC Reception:
Diana Swift
Peter Karsten
Rosemary Barrett
Amanda Worgan
Elouisa West
Nikki Priebbenow
Katriona Herborn
Annie Parker
Tibby McKenzie
Jane Hamilton
Margaret Hobbs
Saskya Clarke

BANC staff

2021-22

BANC Board

2021-22

BANC Access team

Pamela Adams
Ainsley Aitken
Ashley Baker
Helen Beeby
Mark Bennet
Jane Byers
Stephen Carr
Michael Catts
Melissa Davies
Kym Dow
Geraldine Fairbairn
Catherine Ferguson
Cornelia Gartner
Tracy Hardwick
Elizabeth Harry
Willem Hendrickson
Debbie Hill
Trent Kennaugh
Fiona Loeb
Juliet Macken
Amar Mall
Michelle McKenzie
Tracie McMahon
Peter McQuade
Jocelyn Munster
Courtney Nolan
Lee O'Dowd Austen
Lisa Reid
Timothy Rose
George Roure
Brook Saunders
Michelle Seers
Veronica Stevenson
Claire Strong
Chelsea Taylor
Elizabeth Thomas
Nicole Toms
Filip Tota
Kylie Wade
Richard Webb

BOOSH team

Laura Allen
Janette Booth
Tanis Brown
Jacqueline Gilchrist
Summer Grant
Mia Gyaneshwar
Matilda Keating
Chantel Kur-Vale
Thomas Milgate
Nicole Roxburgh

Neighbourhood Centre team

Liz Barclay
Michael Clarke
Jo Davies
Simon Hare
Jade Hudson
Christine MacMahon
Cathy Rood
Elouisa West

Management team

Sarah Clarke
Jenny Crocker
Leah Godfrey
Peter Karsten
Penny Murdolo
Amanda Worgan

Michael Brogan: President
Johnen Hibbert: Vice-President
Bronwen Stinson: Secretary
Yuliya Mann: Treasurer
Kathleen Chirgwin (till October
2021)
Jennifer Kelly (till May 2022)
Henry Lebovic
Gary Moore
Lisa Sampson (from November
2021)
Christine Wheeler