



ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021

BLACKHEATH AREA
NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

BANC is a multipurpose not-for-profit community-based organisation servicing the Upper Blue Mountains of NSW.

Our Vision

A diverse, inclusive and connected community which works together to build its resilience, and its social, environmental and economic sustainability.

Our Mission

BANC is the heart of creative, inclusive services that support the sustained well-being and resilience of its community.

Our Values

Inclusive: BANC welcomes all people regardless of their age, gender, ability, cultural or religious background.

Fair: All those who wish to participate in our programs and services are treated equally and respectfully.

Professional: BANC pursues high ethical standards.

Committed: BANC works with its hearts and its head to build a great organisation that meets the needs of its clients and community.

Responsive: BANC aims to meet, as efficiently and effectively as possible, the needs of its clients, colleagues and community.

Innovative: BANC designs creative options to deliver the most effective results for its clients and communities.



We acknowledge the Gundungurra and Dharug peoples as the traditional custodians of this land.



GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

As I write we are in lockdown again and the prospect of a spring holiday is fading. I have been working from a little table at the end of my bed for over a year now, the line between work and home erased and the sense of time and passing events muddled and blurred.

We were all just beginning to process the impact of climate change after that horrifying introduction from the bushfires of 2019/20, and then the COVID-19 pandemic swept the world. However, compiling this Annual Report has been a warming reminder of how much the BANC team and its community has managed to achieve in a year filled with mask-wearing and zoom meetings, bookended by lockdowns.

Tough times test the mettle of individuals and communities, sweeping away the trivial stuff and letting what is underneath shine out. It's true that for many in the Upper Mountains it has been a year of struggle – to learn online, to keep a business afloat, to live separated from family and friends. But it's how we have all responded that really matters, making the joys of connection, creativity and mutual support all the sweeter.

Many have found meaning in contributing to the wellbeing of others. BANC has been overwhelmed by our community's generosity, provided much-needed food and money to those who are struggling. Many others gave of their time and skills to create some of the events in this report.

Likewise, for BANC it has been a year of strengthening our community by building partnerships with other organisations. We signed new a partnership agreement with the Blackheath Presbyterian Church, enabling us to manage bookings for their Hall. BANC already has plans for fun community-building events in that space post-lockdown so watch out for details. We partnered with Blue Mountains City Council around our plans to upgrade Blackheath Community Centre to create a sustainable facility that can be used when an emergency such as bushfire threatens. We worked with Blackheath Area Men's Shed and CatholicCare building Little Street Libraries; with Cliff View Community Farm growing and distributing fresh vegetables to local people in need; with Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network and local artists to deliver a range of creative bushfire recovery activities and many more.

Internally there were a lot of changes at BANC this year. A new structure strengthened our planning and communication across the organisation. Long term staff Sue Johnston, Dot Allen and Anne Parker resigned, and we welcomed Lee O'Dowd Austen as BANC Access Manager, Penny Murdolo as Finance Manager and Laura Allen as BOOSH Coordinator. Along with Cathy Rood in the newly created Neighbourhood Centre Coordinator role, they form our new senior staff team. I commend all four leaders for their ambitious achievements this year. They have nurtured their teams, despite the heartbreak of plans dashed.

Finally I want to mention the BANC Board members; steadfast and capable local people who have freely given of their time and skills throughout the year, their optimism for BANC's future tempered by careful governance.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

To some extent my report this year has an element of 'Groundhog Day' to it. Throughout 2020-2021 the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre (BANC) has both achieved significant outcomes and overcome substantial adversity. We have consolidated our financial position, thanks to hard decisions by the Board and staff, particularly in the COVID context. At the same time, we have provided high quality service to clients, participants and visitors.

BOOSH has a new lease of life under the management of Laura Allen, and we continue to get very positive feedback from satisfied students, parents and carers. BANC Access has continued to provide many and varied services to participants despite COVID restrictions and manager Lee O'Dowd Austen has initiated some exciting ideas and programs for his team. The Neighbourhood Centre and Cyber-Shed continue to provide advice, assistance and activities for our regular guests and visitors. We were all most excited at the significant grant the Neighbourhood Centre won to support bushfire recovery work – hearty congratulations to Jo Davies and Centre co-ordinator Cathy Rood.

2020-2021 saw BANC deal with the continuing fallout from the 2019 bushfire season, as well as negotiate its way through a second year of the global pandemic. During this period the staff and Board have shown admirable resourcefulness and compassion and have worked hard to deliver all the outcomes you will read about in this document. Of course, none of this would have been possible without our General Manager, Leah Godfrey, who has not only provided wise advice to the Board and skilled leadership to her staff, but, along with Finance Manager Penny Murdolo, has accessed much-needed financial support for the organisation.

There have also been some significant changes to personnel within the management of BANC. I wish to thank Sue Johnston, Annie Parker and Dot Allen for their experience and enthusiasm.

The Board has worked hard in the past year and I formally thank them here. Despite adversity, we have begun to implement a new strategic plan; assisted the Blackheath Highway Action Group; made a number of submissions relating to amenities in the local area; and met online to deal with the ever-changing conditions affecting our community.

It is a real joy to announce the arrival of a new Board member, Christine Wheeler who brings a wealth of community organisation experience, particularly in relation to music. We are grateful for her thoughtful contributions during her tenure to date. Particular thanks are due to Gary Moore for his representation of BANC on the Great Western Highway Co-Design Committee, where his expertise in dealing with government was invaluable. The same expertise also paid dividends in his liaison with local government, advocating for BANC's policy positions on community housing and Council fees and charges.

I also wish to thank Henry Lebovic for driving our environmental sustainability project and being a significant part of grant applications associated with developing the Blackheath Community Centre. In like manner I thank Jennifer Ross for her hard work with Henry in obtaining Bendigo Bank Community Foundation funding to put air-conditioning into the Phillips Hall. I thank Yuliya Mann for her clear and professional advice to the Board on budgets and spending – no small task considering the pandemic and shifting government policy. I thank our continuing Board members, Vice-President Jo Hibbert for running meetings and sharing her experience in the community sector, and Secretary Bronwen Stinson, for her timely and professional records of Board proceedings. Lastly we were lucky to gain an extra year with immediate past-President Kathleen Chirgwin, who postponed her departure to assist us. Alas, we cannot keep her forever and we will farewell her at this year's Annual General Meeting.

BANC is a transparent organisation that seeks to work with citizens and other organisations to keep our community thriving. As a hub and conduit BANC requires your support to continue its important work in the coming year. Please consider supporting BANC by becoming a member and, if you can, making a small financial donation, or offer your expertise to allow BANC to do what it does best.

Michael Brogan
President
BANC Board





200kg

Cliff View Farm produce donated



1380

people came to us for advice, referrals and information

460 Food pantry recipients

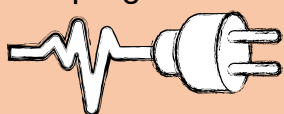
500 Murray's Meals

50 Heathens soup packs



32

people got help with power bills though our EAPA program

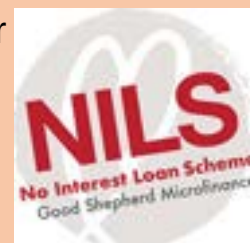


5232

is the total number of times a local person benefited from a Neighbourhood Centre service in this tough year

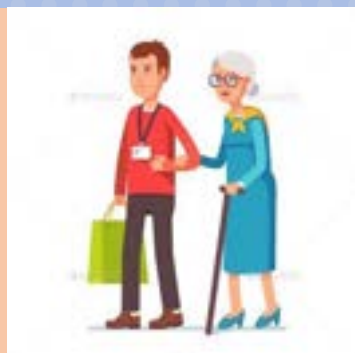
\$50,100

in no-interest loans enabled local people afford essential items like, car repairs and white goods



118

Times Blackheath Cares volunteers helped out local people who are less mobile or dealing with health and other emergencies.



Packing Xmas hampers

We couldn't have done it without...

Our fabulous exception volunteers Annie Parker, Jane Hamilton, Amanda Worgan, Katriona Herborn, Diana Swift, Tibby McKenzie, Bronwyn English, Barbara Hasslacher, Rosemary Barrett and Margaret Hogg. Cliff ViewFarm champions Lyndall Crompton, and Geoffrey Crompton, Hillier Windsor, Amelia Bennett, Murray Reid, Anita van Dartel, Gillian Rosconi and Sophie Tinning from Mary McKillop Today Bathurst and our wonderful Blackheath Cares volunteers (see P 13)

Blackheath Out of School Hours

At BOOSH we're here for fun!

Based at Blackheath Public School we provide before and after school and vacation care that emphasises children's developmental needs, social interactions and physical abilities.

Our mix of structured and spontaneous activities are inclusive of every child aged 5 to 12. The program is sustainable and cost-effective, using recycled and natural materials and is based upon 'My Time, Our Place' and its 7 quality areas.

This year during the vacation care period we had a record average of 27 children attending our 30-place centre,

The safety of our kids is BOOSH's top priority. We have carefully followed the rolling COVID regulations including sanitising all toys and surfaces daily.

Highlights for the year included outdoor nature cubbies and the BOOSH Olympics! On this day we made medals in the morning then launched into our events including classic running races, Egg and Spoon races, Sack Races and more.

Our growing numbers have allowed for bigger and more exciting activities such as our Community Project "The Stories we Tell" drama performance (before COVID Lockdown)



We couldn't have done it without...

Liz Barclay, Kristen Hardge and the Teachers at BPS

Blackheath Op Shop

All our wonderful parents and carers

BANC Access disability support

Our BANC Access staff have overcome the past year's many challenges with flying colours, delivering a range of essential services to over 120 participants. We're the only organisation providing NDIS services to Upper Mountains people with a disability who live independently, and our local knowledge and connections add untold value to what we do. Whether we are putting together a package of practical supports or providing social connections through trips and events, we take care to meet the individual needs of every participant.

Together, we've met COVID uncertainties with skill and resilience. When we had to limit group activities, we sharpened our focus on providing one on one supports for individuals and on increasing participant numbers in our plan management and support coordination services.

We've been bowled over by the incredibly positive feedback we've had from participants and we hope to keep improving by listening to and learning from their lived experience, streamlining our processes and providing a greater variety of services in the year to come.

We couldn't have done it without...

Our amazing participants who teach us so much, the Board for their support and our resilient and inventive staff



Despite a condition that limited her mobility, Kim (left) had been living independently in her own house, even though the terrain and steps leading to her home were difficult and dangerous. When the challenges became too great, she reached out to her BANC Access Support Co-ordinator.

Working with her, we helped Kim find accessible accommodation, manage financial issues and deal with the complexities of selling, packing and moving. Helping Kim and her cat Socks find a home where they can live their best life was wonderfully satisfying for our whole team.



Creating warm and genuine community connections for participants like Lyndall (above left: celebrating her birthday at Access) and John (below on an outing) is a key part of what we do. And the community has responded by reaching out to our services in ever-growing numbers (above right)



Making connections

Cyber_Shed

Cyber_Shed tutor and digital guru Simon Hare has guided numerous grateful students through the complexities of computers, phones and the internet, receiving rave reviews for the free service



Simon and Susan
Templemen MP

"Simon provides a relaxed and friendly atmosphere in which to learn. He is endlessly patient and non-judgmental and all my queries are clearly addressed."

"I appreciate Simon and this service so very much and I would be at sea without it."

Welcome Table

Lindena Robb's Welcome Table is one of the most-loved social connectors in the upper mountains, bringing together new arrivals, residents and people who are socially isolated for fun and information sharing. Over the year, an average of 27 people came to each weekly event at the Ivanhoe Hotel - a total of 519 visits in all. Just one sample of feedback:

When I first moved to the mountains I only knew a few people. Now, four years later I have a large

and vibrant group of friends that I love.

This is almost completely due to the welcome table. I'm very thankful that it exists."



The Heathens



One of the longest-running community projects supported and auspiced by BANC is the Heathens choir.

Currently with 77 members, the award-winning choir has been making music since 2009. This year they were the very picture of resilience, practicing outdoors because of COVID restrictions and cheering us up with performances in the park in March and April along with with local musicians Hot Club de Katoomba and the Kanimbla Quartet

Cliffview Farm

This year, Cliffview Farm joined the BANC family when the Board voted to auspice this beloved local institution. As well as providing free organic fruit and veggies to the community, the farm gives everyone a chance to get their hands in the soil and know the satisfaction of reaping what you sow.



BANC believes every local resident is an important part of our community and that no-one should be isolated or excluded. This year **2291** people attended one of our 23 Community Engagement and Social Participation events and workshops and **1133** attended an Education and Training skills program or workshop.

Making connections

Community development was very busy this year, in spite of COVID complications as we connected and inspired .

Lindena Robb ran some beautiful 'Playing with Paint' workshops, that were 'inclusive and calming' and filled with 'open, loving and boundless creativity.'

Tonica Bird helped us to create Faery Doors, stunning nature-based creations that live in our trees and gardens.

Trish Carter and Virginia Field combined their skills of floristry and mindfulness to bring 'Blossoming Mindfulness' to Blackheath.

We worked with Blackheath Area Men's Shed on the Little Library project. and shared their fabulous libraries with local community groups, especially those in fire-affected areas.

Undeterred by restrictions on gatherings, the Blue Shorts festival went ahead online, with more than 30 brilliant short films entered, and 16 awardees.

To build post-fire resilience we held community BBQ events in Medlow Bath, Blackheath and Mt Vic with Step By Step, CatholicCare and local residents.

BANC's partnership with local artists and light specialists Illuminart led to the Breathing Space project in April. Local schools and pre-schools, artists and community members contributed over 160 images that were projected onto the front of the Victory Theatre. A magnificent reminder of the strength and resilience of our community.

Finally, in May we were honoured to work with Bunjalung/Yaegl and Blue Mountains local, Janelle Randall-Court who ran a workshop supported by the ANTaR Reconciliation group and BANC to bring a rich cultural and learning experience to the children of Mount Victoria Public School.

Playing with Paint



Faery doors



Reconciliation week



Illuminart image by 7 year old Lucinda

We couldn't have done it without...

Our community for partnering with us with such enthusiasm and generosity to bring our projects to fruition and our funding bodies, particularly those who made small grants available which is how many of the above projects were enabled.

Making connections



HUFF

The Heads Up for Fire and other Emergencies (HUFF) Program was first developed by BANC and the Blackheath/ Mt Victoria RFS in 2009. This year we have more than 70 active volunteer facilitators right across the upper Blue Mountains and further afield.

Each facilitator stays connected with neighbours in their area, especially those who are at-risk, unprepared or lack access to internet or social media. Together, they help develop neighbourhood response plans for disasters such as bushfires, windstorms and heavy snow.

Facilitators also work closely with local RFS brigades, ensuring that everyone in their street or community has the latest and best safety information. This year, as well as holding post-fire resilience events, HUFF partnered with Cyber_Shed to help HUFF facilitators access bushfire preparedness apps such as Fires Near Me during Get Online Week

Following the destructive fires of 2019-20, we asked participants how HUFF held up. This is some of what they said:

"HUFF program proved its value during the terrible 2019 fire season."

" Acted as a bridge between the authorities and the community for distributing information."

" HUFF program has improved contact with my neighbours, especially the vulnerable."

"Residents are now better prepared about what will cause them to decide to leave (or stay). In the most recent fires nobody left whereas a number had left during past fire incidents."

" I had moved from an area that was not affected by bushfires, consequently I had no knowledge of what to do, what to be aware of or where to go in the event of a bushfire. I found the information given to me by my facilitator very informative & precise. It helped me to to decide when to evacuate & when to return."



Become a facilitator or find out where your nearest hub is at www.BANC.org.au



Our supporters, sponsors and partners

Currently BANC receives funding from:



Education



Good Shepherd
Microfinance



Fair
Trading



Australian Government
Department of Health



Communities
& Justice



phn
NEPEAN
BLUE MOUNTAINS

An Australian Government Initiative



Our supporters, sponsors and partners

Belong Blue Mountains
Bendigo Bank
Blackheath Country Women's
Association
Blackheath Knitwits
Blackheath Men's Shed
Blackheath/Mt Vic RFS
Blackheath Public School
Blackheath Mt Victoria RSL Sub-Branch
Blackheath/Mt Victoria Rural Fire
Service
Blackheath Presbyterian Church
Blue Mountains City Council
Blue Mountains Food Coop
Catholiccare
Commonwealth Department of Health
Gateway/Step-by-Step
The Good Things Foundation
Jane Armstrong - Mental Health First Aid
Medlow Bath Residents Association

Megalong Valley Community &
Landowners Association
Mary MacKillop NILS
Mountains Christian College
Mt Vic Flicks
Mt Vic Community Association
Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health
Network
Nick Wilson from Kestrel IT
Northwest NILS
NSW Department of Community Services
and Justice
Presbyterian Church Blackheath
Springwood Neighbourhood Centre
Sonya Wilson from Kestrel Web
St Vincent de Paul Blackheath
Sydney Water
The Big Fix
The Heathens
Winmalee Neighbourhood Centre

Accreditations

BANC is registered with the Australian Charities and
Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC);
is a Public Benevolent Institution endorsed to access Tax, GST and Income
Tax exemptions; and
is endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR).

BANC is an accredited No Interest Loans Scheme
(NILS) client services provider;
a registered NDIS provider;
an approved provider for Child Care Subsidy; and
an approved provider through the Australian Children's Education & Care
Quality Authority.



Our supporters, sponsors and partners

Blackheath Cares volunteers

Rosemary Barrett
Robin Bell
Ella Berryman
Kelvin Carne
Constance Ellwood
Bronwyn English
Michael English
Rose Graham
Claire Gurney
Jane Hamilton
Simon Hare
Rachel Hodge
Margaret Hogg
Jade Hudson
Brian Jewell
William Keating

Leona Kieran
Marilyn Kraus
Rose Lord
Garry Lamb
Rose lord
Gina Oliver
Annie Parker
Murray Reid
Robin Reid
Suzanne Slavec
Susan Stanbridge
Diana Swift
Elouisa West

Vale Bryn Town

Mt Victoria resident Bryn Town died in January this year after a short illness. Bryn was a lively community member, volunteering his time, skills and energy to many causes.

He was a much loved member of BANC, serving on both the BANC Management Committee and the No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) Committee. Bryn was a big fan of the microfinance aspect of NILS, providing people on low incomes with access to safe, fair and affordable credit.

Bryn overflowed with love and pride for his family. He constantly told stories of the achievements and adventures of his sons and grandchildren. He was devoted to his wife Sue, who also volunteered at BANC for many years.

Following his death Bryn's family sought donations for BANC, in lieu of flowers. The money raised was used to support disadvantaged and vulnerable people with emergency relief and social support.



Our staff 2020-2021

BANC Access

Amanda Nicole Banks
Helen Beeby
Mark Bennett
Jane Byers
Stephen Carr
Michael Catts
Sophie Clement Davies
Melissa Davies
Kym Dow
Aimee Lee Druett
Geraldine Fairbairn
Lynn Godfree
Erin Grace
Tracy Hardwick
Saffron Harris
Paula Havey
Susan Johnston
Rafael Salamanca
Debbie Hill
Susan Johnston

Trent Kennaugh
Juliet Macken
Michelle McKenzie
Peter McQuade
Courtney Nolan
Lee O'Dowd Austen
Darren Procter
Timothy Rose
George Roure
Brook Saunders
Michelle Seers
Rodney Small
Veronica Stevenson
Nicole Toms
Filip Tota
Richard Webb

Office

Dorothy Allen
Leah Godfrey
Peter Karsten
Penny Murdolo
Helen Robson

Neighbourhood Centre

Liz Barclay
Michael Clarke
Johanna Davies
Cornellia Gartner
Simon Hare
Jade Hudson
Octavia O'Brien
Cathy Rood
Elouisa West

BOOSH

Laura Allen
Janette Booth
Tanis Brown
Jacqueline Gilchrist
Matilda Keating
Larissa Laskowski
Sarah McLoughlin
Thomas Milgate
Anne Parker
Nicole Roxburgh
Elisabeth Thomas

Our Board 2020-2021

President

Michael Brogan

Vice-President

Johneen Hibbert

Secretary

Bronwen Stinson

Treasurer

Yuliya Mann

Kathleen Chirgwin

Jennifer Kelly

Roger Butterworth (till October 2020)

Henry Lebovic

Gary Moore

Christine Wheeler (from May 2021)