

# Manager's 2007 Report

The past year has seen the Neighbourhood Centre through some major changes with staff adapting to the relocation of services within Surry Hills and Chippendale and the appointment of a new coordinator to OOSH and a full-time Centre Manager in April 07. Despite these challenges the commitment and resilience shown by staff who maintained services to such a high degree during this period and the support shown from a dedicated Management Committee has enabled SHNC to enter a period of stability and work together collectively as we plan our move to new facilities in mid 2008.

Financial support for the Centre and our various childcare and community programmes continues to be supported by the Department of Community Services (DoCS). Our excellent relationship with the City of Sydney (CoS) and the support of the Lord Mayor, Clover More continues in the form of grants and sponsorship of our annual festival.

Since commencing as manager, a lot of my time has been spent with staff developing an awareness of how our services operate, who they are accessed by and identifying the range of issues confronting residents within the inner city. Networking with other agencies and attendance at interagency meetings has supported this and enabled me to re-establish and strengthen relationships with organizations servicing Surry Hills and Neighbouring communities such as St Vincent's, DOH, SHPTA.

While there was an initial loss of numbers attending Occasional Care (O.C) following the move to Chippendale, the number of attendees has slowly picked up and currently averages 14 children per day. Initial discussions have been held with the CoS regarding service provision upon moving to the new centre with consideration being given to providing long day care due to the increased demand for this type of service.

After running at a loss last financial year O.C is now prospering following a substantial increase to fees. The high regard shown towards the service and staff is evident by the fact there was no departures from the service during this period of transition other than through the normal progression to preschool.

Out Of School Hours (OOSH) services (After School Care and Vacation Care) continues to be delivered at Crown Street Public School. The popularity of this service is evident by the waiting list for enrolments which extends into 2008.

In term 2 discussions were held with Valerie Martin, Crown Street Principal about re-introducing Before School Care, however despite the initial strong interest low level of commitment shown by families resulted in a decision not to proceed.

In May OOSH failed its accreditation; this coincided with the handover of the Coordinators role and a lack of familiarity with SHNC's policies and procedures. OOSH was required to submit a self study report in October and staff are optimistic they will now pass their accreditation.

Please refer to Salma's report for the range of Multicultural programmes that are currently provided and the partnerships we have formed in implementing these. Funding for these projects is supported in part from the CoS Grants and donations from service users.

Whilst the advocacy and referral service has seen a reduction in numbers requesting support due to our relocation and lack of visibility the Centre continues to be involved in other community activities and joint working initiatives. In conjunction with St Vincent's we continue to facilitate the weekly older men's' group – Blokes Business which averages 6 attendees per week and have been actively involved in a mental health working party which facilitated a community event at Northcott for World Mental Health Day on 11<sup>th</sup> October. This attracted 100 participants and will provide a framework for future programme development.

Proposed new programmes to be introduced over the next two months include a younger men's group, called Man-to-Man which will support men feeling socially isolated within their communities

and explore topics such as man's role in a changing society. Following the success of village based Older Women's Networks we intend to develop a Surry Hills group with an introductory planning session to be held at the end of November. With Christmas just around the corner we are also partnering with the Salvation Army to run a programme on how to manage your finances for a debt free Christmas called "Holiday Helpers", this is a follow-up programme to a successful session on budgeting earlier in the year.

The monthly Surry Hills Markets continue to be highly sought after despite stall fees being increased in May. Following ongoing queries in relation to stallholder accessibility Leanne has approached the CoS to enquire about the possibility of increasing the number of markets per month however it remains unlikely that the Council will be able to accommodate this request. In line with changes to our policies and procedures eft pos was introduced in August as the preferred payment method in an attempt to reduce the amount of cash on site and ensure staff safety.

There was no festival held during this financial year due to proposed plans to close Prince Alfred Park for renovations. As renovation plans were rejected Cathy Wills was appointed as festival director and preparations immediately got underway with the support of some enthusiastic volunteers for a festival to be held on 13<sup>th</sup> October 07 with a second festival planned for April 08.

October's festival had an excellent turnout with an estimated crowd of 90,-100,000; double that of 2006. A substantial amount of money was raised for the Centre which returned a profit of over \$70,000. Cathy Wills and Sue Anderson did an amazing job, with special thanks to our volunteers, Artists and Entertainers who donated their time on the day. SHNC is also grateful for the support of our major sponsors, including the CoS.

Next year I hope to be able to expand our services as we move into our new Centre. Unmet needs identified within interagency meetings and feedback from community consultations will enable us to provide services that are reflective of the needs of Surry Hills residents at both an individual and community level. To support this and recognising the limited resources available to us I hope to be able to build on the successful partnerships we have already established and identify ways in which we can partner with other locally based organizations and inner city Neighbourhood Centres.

In June SHNC became an incorporation which has been much awaited as it will streamline compliance and administration and provide the framework for enabling us to offer salary sacrifice to staff. I would like to thank Genevieve McMahon for her proactive role as acting coordinator in helping us to achieve this.

Finally I would like to thank everyone associated with SHNC who has supported me during my transition into the Manager's role. In particular the Centre staff, John Ferguson for being much more than our book keeper and our Management Committee members who have given of their time and energy generously. My thanks also to our partners at St Vincent's, Northcott, DOH, CoS, SHPTA, Centacare, Hope Street, TAFE and the Salvation Army.

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