

## **MANAGERS REPORT 2007/2008**

It has been another busy and challenging year for the Neighbourhood Centre with an increasing number of new clients accessing our services. I remain excited by the commitment shown by all our staff in maintaining services to such a high standard and thank everyone for their ongoing support and contribution towards service development as we move to the new Centre.

Despite encountering some delay with the construction of the new Centre in November 07, the intended move back to Crown Street remains on target for January and we are hopeful we will be able to begin operating our services at the start of the New Year. The return of the Centre to Crown Street has been highly anticipated and we look forward to be able to consolidate our services within a centralised location and welcome new community groups to the building.

With all community organizations the financial stability of the Centre is fundamental to its survival and growth. The accounts for 2008 place us in a very strong financial position and ensure that we will be able to continue to provide a highly responsive service that addresses the needs of the community. We are also constantly exploring all available funding opportunities and are hopeful that we will be successful in our application for 'endorsement as a deductible gift recipient', this will render us eligible to apply for grants we have been excluded from in the past. In addition to this we have looked towards strengthening existing partnerships and establishing new ones as evidenced in the diversity of partnership programmes that will be offered in 2009.

As Occasional Care (O.C) grows from strength to strength we have been looking towards the future and the relocation of the Centre back to Crown Street. Since February we have been researching the type of childcare parents require by surveying current families and inviting expressions of interest from the wider community. Feedback has indicated a high demand for Long Day Car which substantiates research undertaken by the City of Sydney. Mike Salon has developed a business plan based on this feedback and the 2 models of care to determine the viability of each. We have also received invaluable support and guidance from Sharon Campisi, Manager, Children's Services and Facilities for City of Sydney.

Out Of School Hours (OOSH) services successfully passed its accreditation in January with many of the key areas validated at a good to high quality. This was the first accreditation that OOSH has gone through; the next accreditation will occur in 2010. Whilst all other programmes will be run from the new Centre as of 2009, OOSH will continue to operate from Crown Street Public School.

The Multicultural Programme is to extend its programme of activities upon moving into the new building. English students will also be able to access specialised software applications that will provide both group and 1:1 learning opportunities and citizenship courses.

Demand for the markets continues to exceed stall availability, however ongoing wet weather has resulted in a reduction of casual stallholders attending on market day and impacted on potential income.

In May Amber Jones replaced Janet Collins as Market Assistant; Amber has a background in fashion and design and has previously volunteered on 2 Surry Hills Festivals.

April's Festival was a huge success despite the close proximity to the 2007 festival. There was an estimated crowd of 100,000 festival goers across the day enjoying excellent entertainment in 8 performance areas, exploring 240 market and food stalls and a variety of other fun activities. Feedback from all those who attended was positive and we are already receiving enquiries from both artists and the public about the date for festival 09.

Prince Alfred Park is now recognised as the festival's home, however the possible closure of the park for renovations at the end of 08 has necessitated the need for us to identify an alternate venue of Harmony Park and surrounding laneways for Festival 09 which will take place on 18<sup>th</sup> April.

I would like to once again thank Cathy Wills and Sue Anderson for their 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.

To coincide with the festival we updated our Centre brochure which highlights all activities and events we organize, Mike Salon has uploaded this onto our website and produced an annual day-day diary that shows the dates of all activities/events. We have also introduced parent handbooks into our Children Services which outlines our policies and procedures and which requires parents to sign a declaration agreeing to abide by these. The Markets terms and conditions have also been updated, the wet weather policy is being enforced with permanent stallholders required to pay for their stall site regardless of weather conditions.

Annual staff appraisals were undertaken in May, common themes arising was a request for staff to have the more regular contact across programmes and for increased training opportunities. Unmet training needs have since been identified and training undertaken, it is also anticipated that the move to the new building will assist in improved communication and staff access across services.

As we prepare to move into the new centre staff have worked hard to raise our profile and increase our visibility within the community; this has been achieved by increased branding of the markets and festival, increased website profiles, updating pamphlets, pamphlet drops, regular attendance at interagency meetings, establishment of community partnerships and auspice of community groups, community survey and consultation and visibility across a broad spectrum of media. Already we are seeing the benefits of this proactive response and in 2009 I hope to see the re-emergence of a highly supported Neighbourhood Centre that will continue to develop and address the needs of its community.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported the Centre in the last year. This includes our funding bodies, partner organizations, City of Sydney (in particular Beth Jewell, Sharon Campisi and Jennifer Trinca), service users and our volunteers.

To the Management Committee I thank you for the commitment and expertise that you generously provide and for the ongoing support and guidance which has enabled me to grow within my role in the last year.

Finally, I would like to thank all our wonderful staff for their energy and dedication and for making the Neighbourhood Centre welcoming to all.

Kate Melhopt  
Manager  
Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre