



Neighbourhood
Houses Victoria™



Neighbourhood House Survey 2022

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Background

The worldwide Covid-19 pandemic fundamentally disrupted the operation and activities of Victorian Neighbourhood Houses throughout 2020 and through to 2022. The report on the 2021 Neighbourhood House Survey showed the extent of this disruption¹. Now, this latest report shows a changed sector still rebuilding in the wake of the pandemic.

For many Victorians, 2022 was a challenging year beginning with the Omicron wave of Covid-19 in January. As late as mid July 2022, Victoria recorded over 65,000 active cases of Covid-19². At the same time, Victoria recorded unemployment rates reaching a 50-year low at 3.1%³.

Victorians witnessed increased cost of living pressures due to crop damage and supply chain issues, rising interest rates in part due to the impacts of the illegal Russian invasion in Ukraine. October saw major flooding in Victoria's north and parts of Melbourne. Covid inspired migration from Melbourne to regional Victoria also impacted housing affordability and demographics.

Comments from 99 Neighbourhood Houses in the 2022 survey suggest that all these factors impacted Neighbourhood Houses in 2022, with Covid-19 hesitancy and legacy (37%) the most mentioned.

This was the operating context for Neighbourhood Houses for the period covered by this report. The Neighbourhood Houses survey 2022 includes the responses of 394 (98%) of the 401 Neighbourhood House Coordination Program funded Victorian Neighbourhood Houses. The survey was a reporting requirement for the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). It was administered by Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (NHVic) on behalf of DFFH.

The survey was administered from February to March 2023 and gathered annual data. This marked a return to the pre-Covid survey method and was the first such compulsory survey since 2017 for Neighbourhood House Coordination Program funded Neighbourhood Houses. The 2021 survey used a different methodology, only collecting some data over a four-day period due to Covid-19 lockdowns. Consequently, some 2021 results are not directly comparable with 2022 results.

¹ nhvic.org.au/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=723ebecc-9cb0-431b-9406-7bbe649b2024

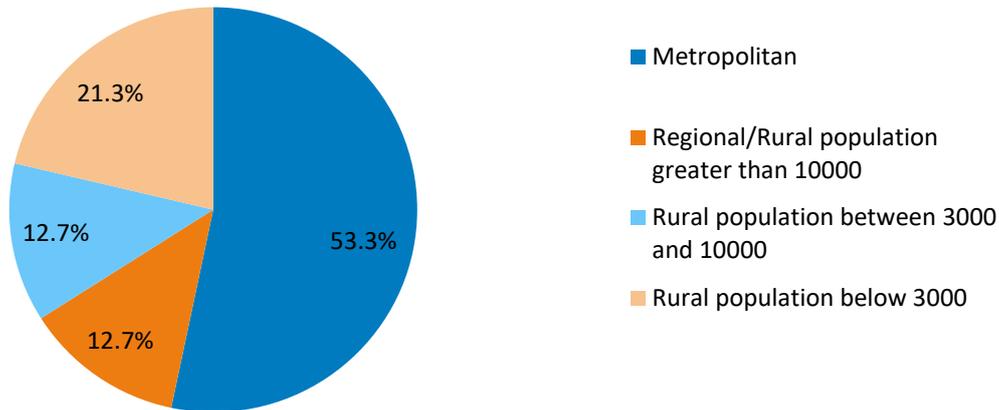
² [Coronavirus update for Victoria - 19 July 2022 | health.vic.gov.au](https://health.vic.gov.au/coronavirus/covid-19/coronavirus-update-for-victoria-19-july-2022)

³ [Labour Force, Australia, July 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](https://abs.gov.au/news-releases/2022/07/labour-force-australia-july-2022)

Neighbourhood Houses profile

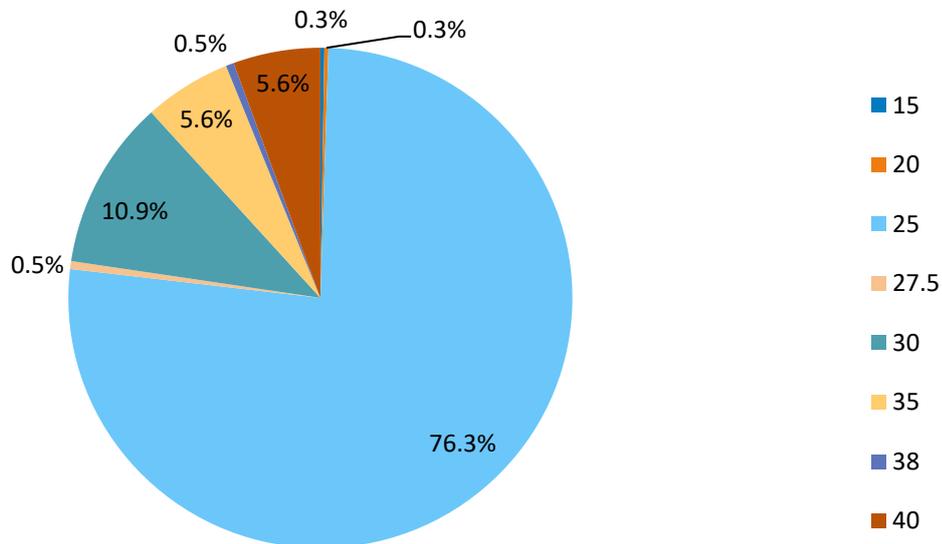
Neighbourhood Houses are relatively evenly distributed between rural and metropolitan areas as per the chart below.

Figure 1 - Community location, type and size



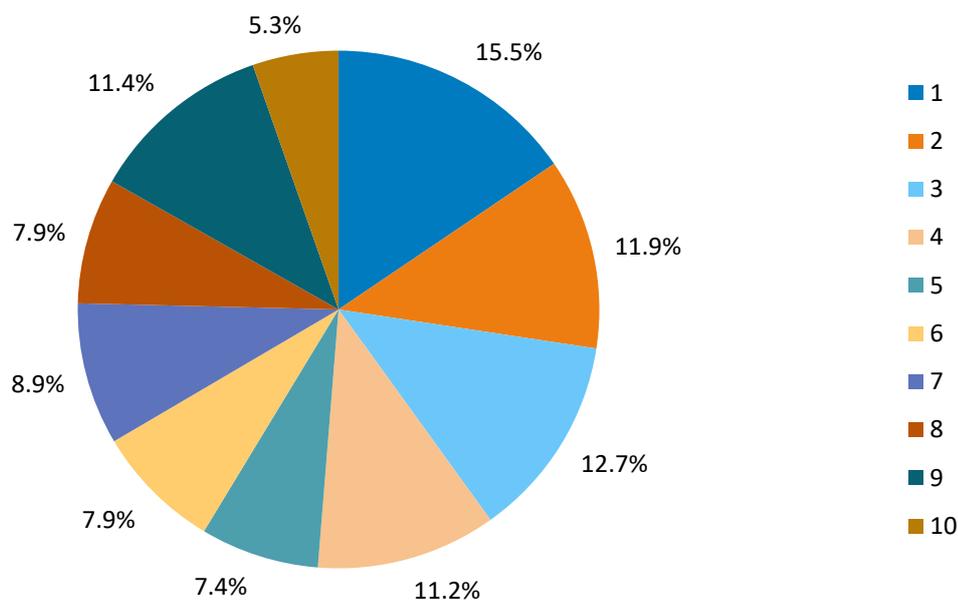
The introduction of a minimum 25 hours per week Neighbourhood House Coordination Program funding in 2018 has the vast majority of Neighbourhood Houses at that funding level with just two Neighbourhood Houses voluntarily at less than 25hrs per week.

Figure 2- Percentage of Neighbourhood Houses in each NHCP funded hours per week category.



Neighbourhood Houses are distributed across communities with diverse levels of disadvantage or advantage however the majority (59%) are in disadvantaged postcodes.

Figure 3 - Percentage of Neighbourhood Houses in postcode-based SEIFA deciles



Sector benchmarking

Almost no area of Neighbourhood House practice has been left untouched by the Covid-19 pandemic. The number and type of activities, how they are run, who and how many people participated were all affected. Staffing and volunteerism also changed.

Table 1 below compares median measures taken over three years from 2015-2017 to responses from 2021 and 2022. It is evident from Table 1 that while there has been substantial recovery from the 2021 levels, and capacity in staff and volunteering has recovered, participation was recovering at a slower pace for 2022.

Table 1 - Comparison of 2022 and 2021 survey medians with benchmark three-year medians - various measures

Measure	2022 weekly median	2021 median	2015-17 weekly median	2022 medians as % of 2015-17
Number of visits	230	144*	286	80%
Number of participants in programmed activities	150	78*	185	81%
Number of volunteers	11	6*	11	100%
Number of hours of volunteering	37	24*	44	84%
Program sessions undertaken	16	14*	20.5	78%
Staffed open hours	35	30	43	84%
Total paid staff hours	82	79	84	99%

*Data from 4 days only

Participation

As indicated above, neighbourhood houses reported improved levels of attendance and participation in activities compared to 2021. This was expected given the cessation of lockdowns but, post lockdown hesitancy⁴, density limits and check-in requirements⁵, particularly in the first half of 2022 when the Omicron Coronavirus variant was very active in the community, remained in play.

Neighbourhood Houses reported over 150,800 visits in an average week for 2022. This is about 75% of pre-covid levels. However, recovery in participation rates has been uneven with Metropolitan Neighbourhood Houses recording a 30% reduction in participants compared to 2017 whereas large regional centres recorded a 4% increase.

While the total weekly number of participants in activities is at 81% of the 2015-17 median, the proportion of Neighbourhood House attendees participating in neighbourhood house programmed activities recovered to a level approaching normal at 63.4% compared to the 3-year average of 65%.



Pictured: Neighbourhood Houses Barwon's Reconciliation Action Plan launch.

Volunteering

While the number of volunteers in Neighbourhood Houses recovered to pre-pandemic levels in 2022, those volunteers spend less time volunteering. The 384 Neighbourhood Houses that had volunteers averaged 17.9 volunteers and 68 hours of volunteering (medians 11 and 37 respectively). The average volunteer contributed 3.8 hrs compared to an average 3.9 in the 2015-17 period and four in 2017.

⁴ [COVID lockdowns left me wondering: Will socialising ever feel the same again? - ABC News](#)

⁵ <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-04/Pandemic-Open%20Premises-Order-2022-No-6.pdf>

However, the median number of volunteer hours worked per week is seven hours fewer than in 2017, suggesting unevenness across the sector in volunteering recovery post covid.



Pictured: The Mernda Repair Café delivers information and educational workshops, recruits and trains community champions, and creates opportunities for community members to engage and socially connect. Mernda Community House partnered with Whittlesea City Council and Sustainability Victoria and have received glowing feedback and consistent attendance from their participants.

Community Development Projects

The Neighbourhood House Coordination Program funds community development work. In 2022, 374 Neighbourhood Houses reported facilitating or actively participating in 4,333 diverse community development projects designed to benefit their whole community or a group within their community.

This measure is up 33% on 2021⁶. Table 2 outlines the types of projects by intended primary aim.

The two most common project types were intended to promote understanding and positive relationships between different groups within the community and to increase community self-reliance, each accounting for 11.2% of projects. These were followed by projects to improve access to services for a group within the community.

⁶ This question was not included in the 2017 survey.

Table 2 – Number and distribution of community development projects

Project aims	Average	Total	Count	% of total activity
Promote understanding and positive relationships between different groups within the community e.g., host cross cultural forums, awareness raising strategy in the community of minority group issues etc.	4.1	496	120	11.4%
Strengthen the capacity of a community to advocate for its needs e.g., training in lobbying, use of media, establish an advocacy group etc.	2.2	242	109	5.6%
Strengthen leadership within a community or cohort e.g., leadership training for a cultural group, set up youth mentoring for leadership etc.	2.0	259	129	6.0%
Advocate with and for the rights of a group within the community e.g., assist a group to engage with political leaders or other decision makers about an issue affecting them etc.	1.4	226	166	5.2%
Improve access to services for a group within the community e.g., a project to encourage a service or facility to improve access for people with limited mobility, requiring translators, requiring cultural safety etc.	2.3	451	194	10.4%
Attract, create, protect, or improve local services or infrastructure e.g., new health facility, men's shed, visits by services that otherwise not exist locally, public transport connections etc.	2.3	387	171	8.9%
Protect or improve the local environment e.g., tree planting, clean ups, advocacy to protect an environmental asset, sustainable energy project etc.	2.5	366	148	8.4%
Increase community participation in decision making at the community, local, state, or federal level e.g., encourage or facilitate participation on planning changes or applications, government consultations, meet the candidates session etc.	2.4	364	154	8.4%
Increase understanding of issues affecting a community or a cohort within the community e.g., local media strategy or public forums to increase community awareness of issues affecting a group e.g., youth, unemployed, refugees LGBTIQ+ community etc.	2.6	330	128	7.6%
Improve safety for the community or a cohort within the community e.g., bushfire preparedness project, crime prevention projects, reclaim the night project etc.	1.1	249	218	5.7%
Increase community self-reliance e.g., grow your own food project, energy reduction project, community fundraising activity etc.	5.6	497	88	11.5%
Strengthen the local economy e.g., develop a community enterprise, run a 'buy local' campaign etc.	1.4	142	104	3.3%
Strengthen community resilience e.g., post disaster, loss of major local employer etc.	2.9	191	65	4.4%
Other	0.7	133	65	3.1%
TOTAL projects		4,333		

Support for other groups/organisations

Neighbourhood Houses' support for other organisations and groups recovered strongly in 2022 with 3,396 groups using 364 Neighbourhood Houses' facilities each month compared to 3,721 in 2017. While still below 2017 levels, the median number of groups using the Neighbourhood Houses was six compared to seven in 2017.

Additionally, 305 (319 in 2017) Neighbourhood Houses supported 1,689 (2,423 in 2017) community groups in other ways or an average of 10 groups per neighbourhood house. This comparison with 2017 should be read with caution as the question was modified in 2022 to better distinguish between support through provision of facilities and support provided other than use of facilities⁷.

The auspicing of other community groups remained relatively stable recording a slight increase on 2021; 938 groups (931 in 2021) were directly auspiced by 193 neighbourhood houses (197 in 2021). This auspicing enables groups to receive and account for funds through their neighbourhood house as well as providing public liability insurance cover and other protections, enabling a range of activities to occur that may not otherwise.

Table 3 below shows a breakdown of the groups auspiced.

Table 3 - Number by types of auspiced community groups

Type of group auspiced	Response Total	Response Count
Men's Shed	46	41
CALD group(s)	85	43
First Nations group(s)	24	14
Self-help group(s)	93	47
Disability group(s)	38	28
Mental health group(s)	36	26
Health / Physical activity group(s)	115	57
Child Care	10	9
Playgroup or other children's activities	88	45
Recreation or leisure group(s), including art, craft, etc	242	97
U3A / Senior Citizens	35	28
Other	126	65
Total Responses	938	193

⁷ Both the 2017 and 2022 surveys ask firstly how many groups use facilities at the Neighbourhood House. The 2022 survey then asks how many are *otherwise* supported whereas 2017 simply asked how many are supported. This 2017 phrasing allowed for people to include those who only use facilities to be included in both questions.

Programs and activities

Table 4 below shows the mix of programs as a percentage of all program sessions run by all respondents.

Table 4 - Comparison of percentage of sessions by program type: 2022 to 2017

Program type	2022	2017
Accredited vocational education & training*	3.3%	6.5%
Alternative to School programs (VCAL, etc)	1.3%	1.9%
CALD cultural activities	0.9%	N/A
Childcare**	4.6%	5.5%
Children's activities (5-12)	3.3%	3.9%
Children's activities (under 5)	2.1%	2.7%
Community Choirs/Music/Theatre	1.6%	1.9%
Community Events/Festivals/Markets	0.8%	0.8%
Community Lunches / Social Eating Groups	2.2%	2.2%
Community Newspaper / magazine / newsletter	0.7%	0.7%
Community Safety	0.5%	0.2%
Community Transport (trips and outings)	0.8%	1.0%
Computer training / digital literacy	5.4%	5.7%
Disaster/emergency preparedness/recovery	0.5%	0.2%
Early childhood development programs (e.g., early literacy, language development)	0.5%	0.5%
English as an additional language (EAL) training / English conversation	6.0%	4.8%
Environmental sustainability projects / groups	1.8%	1.4%
Family Support Programs	1.5%	1.7%
First Peoples Cultural Activities	0.6%	N/A
Homework clubs	0.7%	0.8%
Languages Other Than English	1.3%	1.8%
Life Skills programs & courses	2.8%	3.1%
Literacy & numeracy training	1.2%	1.3%
Outside School Hours Care / holiday programs	1.5%	1.9%
Parenting courses / groups	0.4%	0.2%
Personal Counselling Programs	1.3%	1.3%
Play Groups	2.6%	2.6%
Pre-accredited/Non-accredited adult education & training	9.7%	9.2%
Self-help groups	1.7%	3.0%
Senior's Groups (60+)	3.3%	3.0%
Volunteer training	0.8%	1.0%
Youth Groups (13-25)	1.9%	1.8%
Total Sessions		400,468

*The number of Neighbourhood House Registered Training Organisations providers has declined by 21% since 2017 from 43 to 34. At least 1 remaining RTO no longer provides accredited training but retains registration.

**The number of Neighbourhood House childcare providers has declined by 33% since 2017 from 120 to 80.

In 2021, these categories were realigned to provide a clearer picture. The 'Art and craft' category from the 2017 survey was combined with other activities designed to facilitate social connection. The resultant 'social connection, recreational' category accounted for 17.3% of activity (17.7% in

2021).

A 'health / exercise' activities category, covering physical health promoting activities such as exercise and healthy eating, accounted for 16.3% (15.6% in 2021) of activity. Together these accounted for one third of activity compared to just over a quarter of activity for the combined comparable categories in 2017.

Cultural activities for First Nations People and people from CALD backgrounds were separated out in 2022. They collectively accounted for 1.5% in 2022 (1.2% in 2021) with First Nations Peoples' activities accounting for the majority of activity in the category at 0.9%.

While overall the number of sessions delivered has recovered to 84% of 2017 levels, the most significant differences when compared to 2017 include:

- A 58% decline in the number of accredited training sessions
- A 52% decrease in the number of self-help group sessions
- A 44% decrease in the number of alternative to school program sessions
- A 32% decrease in the number children's activity sessions
- A 30% decrease in the number of childcare sessions
- A 9% increase in the number of English as an additional language sessions

The decline in self-help group sessions suggests a continuing hesitancy in a so-called Covid normal environment. For some people with disabilities⁸ and the elderly⁹, Covid-19 remains a concern which may account for some of the disproportionate lag in recovery for self-help groups. Changes in adult education and children's activities are influenced by other factors discussed below.



Pictured: Science Week gardening workshop at Reynard Street Neighbourhood House

⁸ ['Left in lockdown'- People with disability call for a COVID Recovery Plan - Women With Disabilities Australia \(wwda.org.au\)](https://www.wda.org.au)

⁹ [Maintaining social and emotional wellbeing among older adults during periods of increased social isolation: lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic \(tandfonline.com\)](https://www.tandfonline.com)

Services

New categories of services were included in the 2022 survey based on feedback from 2021. The new categories capture for the first time the work being done to support the circular economy and reduce landfill. They include waste reduction and recycling based services, as well as supporting charity organisations by acting as a collection point. The growth of co-working spaces was also captured. All these new services were in the top 15 services listed below at table 5.

Table 5 - Number and percentage of NHs providing services by type.

Service Type	Response Percent	Response Count
Room hire	91%	358
Referral (both formal & informal)	83%	326
Public computer / internet access	76%	300
Food relief - (e.g., food parcels, breakfast clubs, food bank, etc.)	70%	274
Community consultation	69%	272
Gardening groups/clubs/activities	68%	266
Library service / book swap	67%	265
Community advocacy	62%	245
Community Information / Citizens Advisory Bureau	54%	213
Auspice other community groups	53%	209
Charity collection point/service	52%	206
Coworking space	49%	192
Reception for hub / other services	44%	173
Resume services	38%	150
Waste reduction / recycling (batteries, phones etc.)	38%	149
Material relief - non-food items (e.g., clothing, cash, bill payments, public transport cards, fuel cards, food vouchers etc)	36%	141
Grant writing support	35%	137
Tutoring for individuals	34%	135
Emergency preparedness/Community resilience	33%	129
Employment services	30%	118
Visitor / tourist information	28%	112
Childcare	21%	83
Food security - long term (e.g., food co-op)	19%	76
Tax Help	17%	68
Other	17%	66
NILS / loan schemes	16%	62
Maternal and Child Health checks / immunisations	15%	58
Family violence services	14%	57
Financial counselling	14%	57
Volunteer skillsbank / Volunteer matching	14%	57
Centrelink	14%	56
Tool library / equipment hire	12%	46
Toy Library	6%	25
VicRoads services	4%	17
Home services (e.g., lawnmowing, home repairs, gardening)	3%	11
V/line tickets / services	2%	6

Disaster response

The floods of 2022 highlighted the roles neighbourhood Houses can and do play in times of disaster. This was perhaps most evident in Rochester where 90% of the town was inundated. The Rochester Community House (RCH) has been a focal point for recovery ever since, providing unprecedented amounts of food and material relief as well as direct assistance and referral for the diverse needs of the affected community. Rochester Community House reported distributing over 150 tonnes of food relief and almost \$400,000 in material aid to December 2022. Coordinating the relief, donations, and other forms of support from diverse sources across Victoria, the RCH has shown what a Neighbourhood House can do if it is supported to do so. Timely funding from the State Government together with philanthropic funding has enabled such a comprehensive response.

RCH was not alone. Neighbourhood Houses right across the flood affected areas rallied to support their communities in the most challenging of circumstances. Some metropolitan Neighbourhood Houses mobilised to assist their flood impacted colleagues providing food and goods, fundraising and other supports. Overall, 97 Neighbourhood Houses reported providing disaster recovery support within the last two years (excluding pandemic support).

Table 6 - Number of Neighborhood Houses by type of support provided during or post disaster.

Types of support provided during or post disaster	Response count
Food relief	65
Use of NH facilities for emergency services	25
Fundraising	16
Advocacy	43
Referrals	55
Feeding emergency service personnel	15
Hosting relief agencies onsite	18
Provision of counselling services	18
Storage or distribution of clothing or other essentials	39
Other	44
Total Responses	97

Staff

Of the 5,456 employee or contractor roles within neighbourhood houses 7.6 per cent are full time (5.8% in 2017), with 34.6 per cent part time (32.2% in 2017) and 30.5 per cent casual or sessional tutors (39.8% in 2017). Casual or fixed term employees accounted for 12.7% of the workforce with contractors at 14.6% compared to 10% and 12% respectively in 2017.

Overall, there were 559 or 9% fewer employees and contractors compared to 2017, despite new Neighbourhood Houses being funded in 2018. Most notable is the decline in the number of casual or sessional tutors, down from 2,395 in 2017 to 1,664 in 2022.

Only 25% of Neighbourhood Houses have one or more full-time employees.

Emergency relief

The 2021 Neighbourhood House Survey captured emergency relief data for the first time across the whole Neighbourhood House sector. In 2021, 187 Neighbourhood Houses managed over 40,400 kgs of food for emergency relief in four days: an average of 10.1 tonnes per day.

In 2017, this activity was not part of core Neighbourhood House activity and food amounts were not even counted. Only 135 Neighbourhood Houses (37%) provided any form of food relief.

In 2022, 274 or 69% of respondents reported they provide emergency food relief, moving from sixteenth in 2017 to fourth most commonly provided service. Furthermore, the amount of food relief provision has remained close to 2021 pandemic levels with around 191 tonnes of food provided each month.

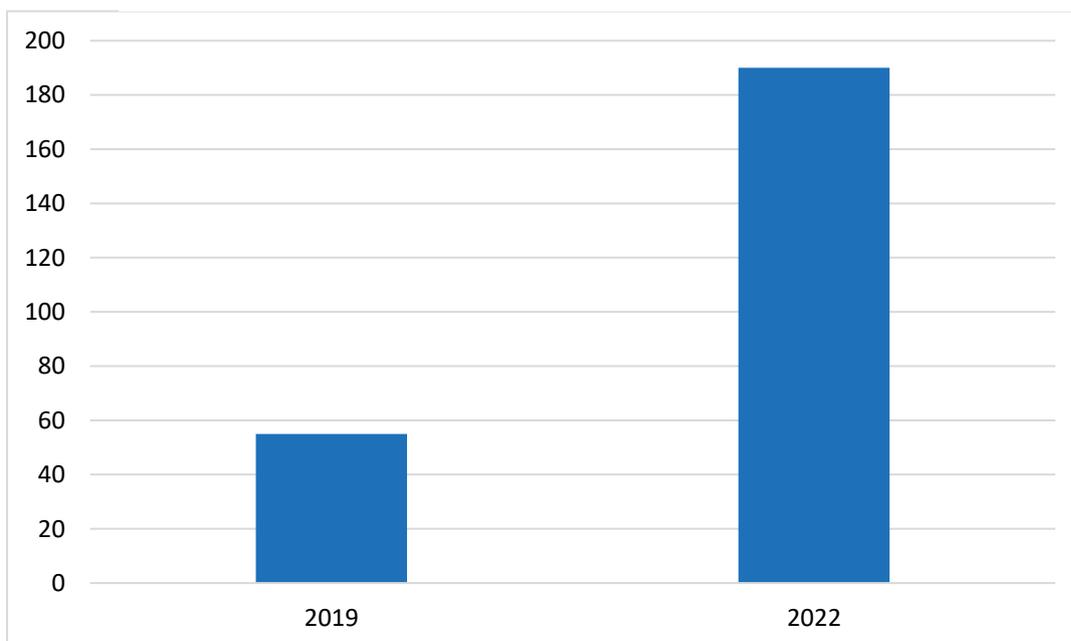
Foodbank is the single largest supplier of food accounting for 41% of all food relief. This comes at a cost to Neighbourhood Houses as Foodbank charges for many food items it supplies. Some Neighbourhood Houses have grants to assist but many do not, and most grants are not being renewed as they were considered Covid-19 assistance.

In 2022, 133 (34%) Neighbourhood Houses provided over \$240,000 of material relief such as financial assistance for bills or vouchers in an average month. This compares to (11.5%) of Neighbourhood Houses that provided an average \$620/week in the 2021 survey.

The continuing cost of living pressures and high levels of relief still being provided suggest this will likely not change soon.

Relief data was first captured in a non-compulsory survey in 2019. The amount of both food and material relief provided have increased 245% from 2019 to 2022¹⁰.

Figure 4 - Tonnes of food relief provided per month - 2019 and 2022.



¹⁰ Figures based on extrapolated data from 2019.



Pictured: This image of the food relief work at Braybrook and Maidstone Neighbourhood House provides some insight into the significant infrastructure and human resources required to operate a food relief program handling around 1.5 tonnes of food per month.

Referrals

Neighbourhood Houses are active in referring community members to a broad range of services and agencies to meet diverse needs of individuals.

In an average month, 382 Neighbourhood Houses reported making 12,928 referrals¹¹, with a median of ten.

This survey question was introduced in 2021, where the median number of referrals was five.

Neighbourhood Houses were also actively participating in connecting people with the State Government's Power Saving Bonus with 19,770 applications through Neighbourhood Houses worth almost \$5 million in 2022.

¹¹ This number includes an outlier reporting 2,500 referrals. This number has been checked and validated so the median provides a better indication of typical activity than the total or an average.

Social prescribing

Neighbourhood Houses have been early participants in social prescribing initiatives with a number of Neighbourhood Houses and Neighbourhood House networks initiating social prescription projects across the state.

Thirty seven percent (n=142) of Neighbourhood Houses indicated they were involved in a social prescription project or initiative. This is a 5% increase from 32% in 2021. Table 6 below outlines the numbers of Neighbourhood Houses by the types of involvement.

Table 7 - Percentage and number of Neighbourhood Houses by type of social prescribing involvement

Type of involvement	Percentage of Neighbourhood Houses	Number of Neighbourhood Houses
We are managing a social prescribing project / partnership	5%	18
We are a non-leading partner in a social prescribing project	12%	48
People are prescribed to us by a social prescribing project	19%	76

These 142 Neighbourhood Houses reported handling 1,187 social prescription referrals in an average month. A further 1,200 referrals were reported associated with the Knitted Knockers program, a prosthetic service for breast cancer survivors who have had a mastectomy. While this service fits the survey definition of 'a non-clinical services to improve their physical, mental and/or social health and wellbeing outcomes', it is more consistent with a one-off service providing a product rather than a program to promote behaviour change.

The following table outlines the sources of referrals and shows community health services as the most common source of referrals. Referral pathways will be influenced by the design of any social prescribing activity and the participating services.

Table 8 Number of Neighbourhood Houses by social prescribing referral source types

	Number of Neighbourhood Houses
A link worker / navigator / community connector	68
GPs / GP clinics / medical centres	68
Hospital	22
Community Health Service	91
Allied health professionals (e.g., psychologists, physiotherapists etc.)	66
NDIS providers	65
Maternal and Child Health services	41
Local Government	51
Other Community organisations	69
Other	26

Enterprises

The 2021 survey asked new questions about Neighbourhood House run community enterprises. Ninety-four Neighbourhood Houses run a diverse range of enterprises (86 in 2021) serving different purposes such as fundraising, providing training positions for accredited training students, providing volunteering opportunities and even providing grants to community groups.

Some Neighbourhood Houses run multiple enterprises. In total, the 94 Neighbourhood Houses reported running 160 enterprises (130) in 2021). The maximum number of enterprises was six in two Neighbourhood Houses.

The total reported income from social enterprises was \$4,225,842 from the Neighbourhood Houses' most recent annual reports.

Table 9 - Number of social enterprises by type

Enterprises	Number
Cafe	26
Catering Service	21
Op Shop	27
Book shop	8
Mechanic shop	2
Repair cafe/shop	6
Newspaper	16
Art / craft shop	10
Nursery	11
Other	33
Total Responses	160

Other enterprises range from First Nation's cultural immersion tours to a golf course, a hair and beauty salon and bunting hire and sales – to name a few.

Neighbourhood House Coordination Program Compliance

There are four compliance measures for Neighbourhood House Coordination Program funded Neighbourhood Houses, all of which were exceeded in 2022.

Measures include:

- Grants acquitted within the timeframe specified in the terms and conditions of the funding agreement
- Number of coordination hours provided (not included in 2022)
- Open hours equal to funded coordination hours
- Two activity hours for every one funded coordination hour

Table 9 below shows the weekly target and the reported outcome.

Table 10 - Compliance targets and outcomes

Performance Measure	Target	Outcome
Acquittals submitted on time (Neighbourhood House Survey)	92%	98%
Coordination hours	-	-
Open hours	10,644	14,613
Activity hours	21,287	46,386



Pictured: The goal of this project from Reservoir Neighbourhood House was to bring art and colour to a public housing estate in East Reservoir through an intentional and integrated community development mural project. Residents were consulted on the design of each House, and encouraged to suggest colours and motifs that were meaningful to them. A health worker was also present at these meetings, helping to address other health concerns for the residents.

Return on investment (ROI)

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria has undertaken analysis of the respondent data and applied various methods to determine some of the value of some of the respondents' activities.

As evidenced above, there is wide diversity in both the range and mix of activities undertaken by Neighbourhood Houses. This prohibits the opportunity for comprehensive Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis. Consequently, the method used by NHVic employs the application of various methods developed by others to value different activities where appropriate and possible.

Most activities were not evaluated due to the absence of existing methods in the literature and the costs associated with undertaking a (S)ROI study for the diversity of activities. The following analysis excludes activities likely to provide significant returns to individuals and the Victorian economy such as homework clubs, English language tutoring etc.

The value calculations used here draw on work undertaken by Deloitte Access Economics (2018, 2020) among others, which provided some methods for undertaking an SROI in a Neighbourhood House context.

The NHVic ROI calculation for the Neighbourhood House Coordination Program includes valuation of the following outputs/outcomes:

- Increased connection and inclusion in the community
- Increased broader social engagement
- Volunteers' increased connection and inclusion in the community
- Food relief
- Material relief
- Room use or hire
- Social enterprise sales
- Fee for service activities provided
- Use of services e.g., ICT equipment use, community lunches, Tax Help
- Auspicing other community groups

These activities are selected as they are most directly attributable to the Neighbourhood House Coordination Program funding i.e., they are activities that are enabled through the coordination work undertaken in Neighbourhood Houses and are not activities resulting from directly funded, stand-alone funding streams.

The table below shows the following value for these measures for 394 Neighbourhood House respondents:

Table 11 - NHVic determined community value provided in 2022 - NHCP measures.

Answer options	Response Total
Community connection	\$163,090,660
Food relief	\$45,953,325
Material relief	\$2,881,320
Room use/hire value	\$25,529,784
Social enterprise goods and services provided	\$4,225,842
Fee for service activities	\$11,642,695
Selected services provided	\$8,549,466
Auspicing other organisations	\$593,247
Total Responses	\$262,466,339

Using the input value of the Neighbourhood House Coordination Program for the 2022 calendar year, the above activities produce a return to community of \$6.80 for each dollar of Neighbourhood House Coordination Program funding.

However, the Neighbourhood House Coordination Program aims¹² include supporting lifelong learning opportunities for people to improve their access to training and employment pathways as well as identification of partners and funding sources to meet community needs. Consequently, other activities undertaken by Neighbourhood Houses can also be valued and included in a ROI calculation:

- Neighbourhood Houses assisted 19,770 Victorians who wanted or needed assistance to claim the State Government's Power Saving Bonus. The value to recipients was \$4,942,500 for 2022.

¹² [Guidelines 2016-2019 Neighbourhood House Coordination Program \(Word\) - DFFH Service Providers](#)

- ACFE programs delivered through Neighbourhood Houses were valued at \$395,503,037.
- Early Childhood Education and Care was valued at \$17,055,173.
- Kinder programs were valued at \$4,507,438.

Volunteering is treated by economists as an input in ROI processes where the value of the volunteer work contributes to the outcome being measured. From a Neighbourhood House perspective, volunteering is considered an outcome. The Victorian Government's Volunteering Strategy considers 'volunteering as a vital part of delivering the Victorian Government's priorities to build strong and resilient communities'¹³. The value of their labour contributes to the community by increasing the outputs and outcomes of Neighbourhood Houses. The value of labour provided by volunteers in 2022 was \$59,535,055.

If all these activities are included, the value to community generated per dollar of Neighbourhood House Coordination Program funding is \$19.28.

Additionally, there are employment benefits from the Neighbourhood House Coordination Program. The Neighbourhood Houses respondents provided 65,213 hours weekly of paid employment. This in turn creates further jobs in the broader economy. Overall, respondents generated 2,385 full time equivalent jobs including 1,716 direct and 669 indirect full time equivalent positions.

¹³ [Executive summary | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au)

Appendix A: Community value calculation methods

Social Connection

In 2018, Deloitte Access Economics produced a report¹⁴ that determined a monetary value for the community connection work of Morwell Neighbourhood House. The method, detailed in the report, uses existing research to calculate the contribution of community connection to a Quality-Adjusted-Life-Year (QALY). Quality-Adjusted-Life-Years is the most widely used approach for estimating quality of life benefits in economic evaluations¹⁵.

Different methods have been used to estimate the number of people who may potentially obtain social connection benefits. The 2018 report assumed that 50% of the annual unique visitors to the neighbourhood house were one off or infrequent for the purpose of their calculations. Appendix C of their report outlines the detail on their method.

A subsequent Deloitte report¹⁶ assumed that only new participants obtained social connection benefits. This assumption effectively discounts the importance of maintaining connections over the life course. Analysis from the Neighbourhood House Participants Survey¹⁷ and the broader social isolation and loneliness literature¹⁸ identify the value of maintaining social connections.

The 2017 Neighbourhood House Participants Survey respondents clearly distinguished between the two distinct benefits used by Deloitte; “meet new people/make friends” and “spend time with other people as benefits”. The first benefit implies creating or expanding social networks through the Neighbourhood House whereas the latter implies maintaining existing social connections within the Neighbourhood House. Where both benefits were selected, the implication is that relationships are in a formative or expansion stage, or they have connection in the Neighbourhood House but want to make more.

NHVIC uses the number of people attending programmed activities to calculate social connection benefit because:

- Programmed activities are group activities run over a period of time and therefore not attended in a one-off or infrequent way,
- People maintaining existing relationships are not excluded
- The figure is conservative as it may exclude regular service users such as drop-in, food relief or other regular informal visitors that could potentially obtain a social connection benefit¹⁹ but are not participating in programmed activities.

¹⁴ http://www.morwellnh.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/MNH_Social-Impact-Analysis_May-2018_.pdf

¹⁵ <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/illicit-pubs-needle-return-1-rep-toc~illicit-pubs-needle-return-1-rep-5~illicit-pubs-needle-return-1-rep-5-2>

¹⁶ <https://mannagumcommunity.files.wordpress.com/2020/08/nhg-sroi-2020.pdf>

¹⁷ See [Social isolation and loneliness - a neighbourhood house perspective](#)

¹⁸ See https://www.beyondblue.org.au/docs/default-source/resources/408362_0318_b11366_hrnt.pdf

¹⁹ 2% of all participants in the 2017 participant survey attended solely to use a service and identified a social connection benefit.

Volunteers are also included for the above reasons, consistent with their inclusion in the 2017 participant survey.

The number of weekly participants in programmed activity plus volunteers is multiplied by the percentage of participants that identified “meeting new people/making friends” and/or “spending time with others” as benefits of attending their neighbourhood house based on each Neighbourhood House’s 2017 Participants Survey²⁰. These two reported benefits are used in the Deloitte calculations and are most strongly associated with participants who identified attending for various programmed activities including, social and support groups, job training and support and other courses and classes.

The \$ Values are expressed in 2022 equivalents i.e., Quality Adjusted Life Year value of \$227,000²¹, which is consistent with Deloitte’s method.

The value of your Neighbourhood Houses increased social connection is calculated using this formula:

Number of participants in activities X 1 QALY (\$227,000) X percentage of people identifying a social connection benefit X contribution of social connection to a QALY (3.84%) X the extent to which contribution of social connection to a QALY can be attributed to attending the Neighbourhood House (28.57%).

The use of the participants in programmed activities as the basis for the calculation is conservative as it excludes regular attendees that receive a connection benefit through drop in, food relief or other non-program activities.

Deloitte further calculate the value of increased connection through increased participation in the broader community due to participation at the Neighbourhood House using the formula above for 10% of the participants.

Volunteering

Volunteering value is based on the replacement cost of volunteers’ labour. This is valued at \$48.16 per hour derived from the “State of Volunteering” replacement cost calculator²² for volunteers aged 55 -64.

The formula for calculating the community value of volunteering is:

Number of volunteer hours undertaken X volunteer hourly replacement rate

This is a conservative valuation. Replacement cost figure allows for some aging of Neighbourhood House volunteer population which averaged 50 years of age in 2012. The replacement cost for a 50-year-old is 11% greater (\$53.82) than the figure used here.

In addition, the valuation does not include the contribution to the economy and taxation from participating in volunteering, e.g., cost of travel to the place of volunteering.

²⁰ Where A Neighbourhood House’s participant data are absent or unreliable due to sample size, an average of Neighbourhood Houses in similar sized communities with similar incomes is used. Income is a proxy for volume of activities delivered through a Neighbourhood House.

²¹ <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-09/value-statistical-life-guidance-note.pdf>

²² [Volunteer Replacement Cost Calculator - State of Volunteering](#)

Emergency relief

Food and groceries

The value to community of emergency food relief is based on work undertaken by Foodbank in Australia²³. Their social return on investment analysis determined that food relief was valued at an average \$20.05 per kilogram of food in 2014 dollars. This valuation included the value of:

- Improved physical health (children)
- Better performance at school (students)
- Better social relationships
- Increased sense of self-worth
- Improved standard of living
- Improved physical health
- Increased emotional wellbeing
- Reduced waste and greenhouse emissions

While the cost of food has increased since 2014, the change in value of the social benefits is unclear. For this reason, we have retained the \$20.05 figure making this a conservative evaluation.

The formula for calculating the community value of food and groceries is:

Number of Kgs distributed for an average month X 12 (months) X \$20.05

Food vouchers

The community value of providing food vouchers is based on the dollar value of vouchers given out. This is a conservative valuation as it does not include the benefit derived from accessing food such as improved health and wellbeing, improved school performance for children etc.

The formula for calculating the community value of food vouchers is:

Total \$ value of food vouchers distributed in an average month X 12 (months)

Cash/prepaid or gift cards

The community value of providing cash/prepaid or gift cards is based on the dollar value of cash or gift cards given out. This is a conservative valuation as it does not include the benefit derived from items purchased such as improved health and wellbeing, improved school performance for children, added value to the economy etc.

The formula used for calculating the community value of cash/prepaid or gift cards is:

Total \$ value of cash/prepaid or gift cards distributed in an average month X 12 (months)

Fuel Vouchers

The community value of providing fuel vouchers is based on the dollar value of vouchers given out. This is a conservative valuation as it does not include the benefit derived from increased access to transport or the alternative use of funds that would otherwise have been used for transport such as improved health and wellbeing, improved school performance for children etc. It also does not include benefits to the local economy.

²³ <https://www.foodbank.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Foodbank-Hunger-Report-2014.pdf>

The formula used for calculating the community value of fuel vouchers is:

Total \$ value of fuel vouchers distributed in an average month X 12 (months)

Bill payments

The community value of providing bill payments is based on the dollar value of bills paid by the Neighbourhood House for individuals in need. This is a conservative valuation as it does not include the benefit derived from increased access to services for which bills were paid or the alternative use of funds that would otherwise have been used for bills such as improved health and wellbeing, improved school performance for children etc. It also does not include benefits to the broader economy.

The formula used for calculating the community value of bill payments is:

Total \$ value of participants' bills paid in an average month X 12 (months)

Public transport cards

The community value of providing public transport cards is based on the dollar value of public transport cards given out. This is a conservative valuation as it does not include the benefit derived from increased access to transport or the alternative use of funds that would otherwise have been used for transport such as improved health and wellbeing, improved school performance for children etc.

The formula used for calculating the community value of public transport cards is:

Total \$ value of public transport cards distributed in an average month X 12 (months)

Clothing

The community value of providing clothing is based on the dollar value of clothing given out. New clothing is valued at replacement cost whereas second-hand clothing is based on resale value such as in an opportunity shop. This is a conservative valuation as it does not include the benefit derived from increased access to clothing such as improved confidence and sense of wellbeing or the alternative use of funds that would otherwise have been used for clothing such as improved health and wellbeing, improved school performance for children etc.

The formula used for calculating the community value of clothing is:

Total \$ value of clothing distributed in an average month X 12 (months)

Personal hygiene items

The community value of providing personal hygiene items is based on the dollar value of personal hygiene items distributed. This is a conservative valuation as it does not include the benefit derived from increased access to personal hygiene items such as improved confidence and sense of wellbeing or the alternative use of funds that would otherwise have been used for personal hygiene items such as improved health and wellbeing, improved school performance for children etc.

The formula used for calculating the community value of personal hygiene items is:

Total \$ value of personal hygiene items distributed in an average month X 12 (months)

Services

Except for school breakfast clubs, service valuations in this section do not include additional benefits from the service such as improved health, job prospects or employment nor the auspiced

community groups' outcomes. This is due to the absence of appropriate research that quantifies these benefits.

Facilities Usage

The community value of facilities usage is based on the number of hours of facilities use by external groups and organisations per month and the cost of hiring an equivalent space locally as determined by each Neighbourhood House. This figure reflects value provided to the community rather than income received as rooms and facilities are often made available to community groups at heavily discounted rates or gratis. The value also does not include the benefits to community of the room use activity e.g., improved health, improved access to information or services, reduced cost of services etc., relative to the activity type provided.

The formula used for calculating the community value of facilities usage is:

Total number of hours of room hire in an average month x 12 months X cost per hour of local equivalent (either supplied or \$30).

Internet/computer usage

The community value of internet/ computer usage is based on the number of hours of internet or computer use by individuals in an average month. This is benchmarked to the cost of a commercially available equivalent i.e., internet kiosk regardless of whether a commercial alternative is available. Note that free Wi-Fi is not an equivalent as there is no support or equipment made available. Commercial rates from \$3-\$5²⁴ have been benchmarked. A \$2 lower rate has been used to account for the variation in the equipment and software provided. The rate does not include non-market benefits such as family connection, benefits from accessing or managing government services etc.

The formula used for calculating the community value of internet/computer use is:

Total number of hours of internet/computer in average month x 12 months X \$2

Resume assistance

The community value of resume assistance is based on the cost of a resume service for a fee. The fee was benchmarked at the median price of \$50 on airtasker.com²⁵. The value was discounted to \$30 to account for the fact that Neighbourhood Houses may provide a participant with assistance in developing a resume rather than creating a full resume as a service.

The formula used for calculating the community value of resume assistance is:

Total number of resumes assisted with in an average month X 12 (months) x \$30

Tax help

The community value of Tax Help usage is based on the cost of the cheapest commercial tax service found online²⁶ at \$100 per tax return. This is a conservative valuation as many tax help clients have multiple and/or complex returns which attract additional fees at commercial tax service providers.

The formula used for calculating the community value of Tax Help is:

²⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/dsinternet512/?rf=710935435612179>

<https://www.facebook.com/galaxysonicgaming>

²⁵ <https://www.airtasker.com/writing/resume-writing/>

²⁶ www.taxtoday.com.au/information/fees/

Total number of tax returns lodged in 2022 x \$100**Auspicing other organisations**

The community value of auspicing other organisations is based on the cost of purchasing public liability cover which groups would have to take out if they were not covered by the Neighbourhood House under auspicing arrangements. The price is benchmarked at \$632.46 for annual cover provided by Local Community Insurance Services²⁷

The formula used for calculating the community value of auspicing other organisations is:

$$\text{Total number of organisations auspiced in 2022} \times \$632.46$$

Community lunch, frozen or other meals

The community value of offering community lunch, frozen or other meals is based on the cost of purchasing a meal commercially, this has been benchmarked at \$10 per meal. This is benchmarked based on the prices quoted by ING, and numbeo.com²⁸ ranging from \$13 to \$25. It is discounted to \$10 per meal to account for regional price variation.

While many meals provided at community lunches are likely to be a form of emergency relief, participants may attend community lunches for other reasons such as for company or a lack of cooking skills. Because we are unable to distinguish between the two, meals provided are not valued as emergency relief.

The formula used for calculating the community value of community lunches, frozen or other meals is:

$$\text{Total number of individual meals served/provided in an average month} \times 12 \text{ months} \times \$10$$

School aged breakfast clubs

The value to community of food provided through school breakfast clubs is based on work undertaken by Foodbank in Australia²⁹. Their social return on investment analysis determined that school breakfast clubs were valued at an average \$110 per kilogram of food in 2014 dollars. This valuation included the value of:

- Improved physical health (children)
- Better performance at school (students)

Based on data from their report, the average breakfast is valued at \$31.40 in 2014 dollars. While the cost of food has increased since 2014, the change in value of the social benefits is unclear. For this reason, we have retained the \$31.40 figure making this a conservative evaluation.

The formula used for calculating the community value of school aged breakfast programs is:

$$\text{Total number of individual breakfasts served/provided in an average month} \times 10 \text{ months} \times \$31.40$$

²⁷ <https://www.localcommunityinsurance.com.au/>

²⁸ <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Melbourne> , <https://blog.ing.com.au/money-matters/saving/dust-off-your-lunch-boxes/#article-1811>,

²⁹ <https://www.foodbank.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Foodbank-Hunger-in-the-Classroom-Report-May-2015.pdf>

Fee for service activities

The value to community of fee for service activities is based on the actual fees paid for activities undertaken by community members where the activity was not subsidised by grants or third parties other than NDIS.

Many Neighbourhood House activities are provided at low cost and therefore the value is conservative as it is likely less than the replacement value if the activity was undertaken with a commercial or for-profit provider.

The formula used for calculating the fee for service activities is:

Total value of fee for service activities from the period covered by the applicable annual report

Power Saving Bonus

The Victorian State Government's Power Saving Bonus (PSB) provided a one-off \$250 payment for Victorian households to help ease cost-of-living pressures and encourage them to compare energy offers and save money. Neighbourhood Houses Victoria and Good Shepherd partnered to help community members who experience barriers to accessing the PSB apply for the State Government's \$250 Power Saving Bonus.

This valuation does not include ongoing savings from finding cheaper energy deals or the value of being linked to other services and opportunities through the Neighbourhood House and its networks. It also does not include value from the alternative use of funds that would otherwise have been used for power bills such as improved health and wellbeing etc.

The formula used for calculating the fee for service activities is:

Total number of people assisted to obtain the Power Saving Bonus in 2022 X \$250

Government subsidised Adult Community Education (ACE)

Based on analysis of the Allen Consulting's 2008 report, The Economic Benefit of Investment in Adult and Community Education in Victoria³⁰ commissioned by the ACFE Board. While there have been significant subsequent structural changes that have occurred in the VET sector, the work is most relevant because it examines the Victorian ACE sector specifically and includes pre-accredited as well as accredited training. The analysis discounts the value of pre-accredited compared to accredited training by estimating a proportional certificate equivalence.

Its use to estimate community value is also adopted because it is conservative in that it does not;

- include the significant known non-market benefits such as improved health, reduced criminality and welfare dependency etc. estimated to be equal in value to the market benefits
- include 36.3% of student contact hours to account for those with no market benefit
- include the direct contribution of ACE provision to the economy (direct and induced economic impact of provider expenditure and wages)

³⁰ https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/assets/documents/hilda-bibliography/other-publications/pre2010/ACG_economic_benefit_of_investment_adult_education.pdf

- include the benefits provided to community from \$10.09 additional tax revenues from increased income and gross state product for each dollar invested by the Victorian government in ACE
- account for the increased focus on delivery of pre-accredited training with market benefits since 2008
- account for tighter targeting of vocational training to industry demand

This report effectively values two principal community benefits at \$17.23 for each dollar of government funding. It is the value created over a 25-year timeframe from the learning provided. This rate is comparable with other work conducted locally and internationally. From a single year of state government investment of \$36.7 million, the report models:

Future income – \$202 million

Increased gross state product – 2.13 times the income effect - \$202 million x 2.13 = \$ 430.26 million

Total \$632.26 million / \$36.7 million state government funding = \$17.23

By comparison, a 2017 study from the University of Adelaide’s South Australian Centre for Economic Studies³¹ showed a return on investment for Cert I foundation courses averaging just 34 student contact hours at \$6.50 for each dollar of funding. However, the average SCH rate of \$43.70 was about 4.8 times the value of \$9.10 ACFE rate so equates to over \$31 return on investment for the same volume of activity if conducted as pre-accredited in Victoria. The study also only included the benefit of increased income and Victorian transition rates to Cert III and above for Learn Local students, with the corresponding higher income earning potential, are much higher³² than those in the South Australian study.

Work that includes a more comprehensive range of non-market benefits values Government subsidised Adult Community Education at much higher rates. A New Zealand analysis from Price Waterhouse Coopers³³ valued ACE returns, including a range of non-market benefits, up to \$72 for each \$1 invested. While the comparisons differ substantially in many ways, all add significant value because they focus on disadvantaged learners.

Any potential overstatement of community value due to the changes in the structure of ACE since 2008 are more than compensated for by the value of other benefits not included in the calculation.

The formula used for calculating the community value of Government subsidised Adult Community Education programs is:

Total \$ value of government student contact hour subsidies in 2022 X 17.23

³¹ South Australian Centre for Economic Studies. The Economic and Social Impact of the Adult Community Education (ACE) Sector. University of Adelaide; 2016.

³²

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/research/acfepublications/Participation%20training%20outcomes%20and%20patterns%20report_FINAL_Nov%202017.pdf

³³

<http://www.crystaladventures.co.nz/ACE/ACE%20Price%20Waterhouse%20Coopers%20Research%20Summary%20V4.pdf>

Childcare

While there is research that suggests significant benefit from childcare for some cohorts within the community³⁴, there is inadequate research to determine the value to community of occasional childcare beyond the actual value of the service for the broader population.

The formula used for calculating the community value of childcare is:

Total \$ value of government subsidies + parent fees in 2022 X 1

Four-year-old Kinder

The community value of four-year-old Kinder is based on a 2019 Price Water House Coopers study³⁵ which valued early childhood education in the year-before-school. It calculated a \$2 benefit for each dollar of costs.

The formula used for calculating the community value of four-year-old kinder is:

Total \$ value of government subsidies + parent fees in 2022 X 2

Social enterprises

The community value of running social enterprises is based on the value of sales from goods and services through Neighbourhood House run community enterprises in the most recent applicable financial reporting period. This reflects the market value of the goods and services provided. It does not include additional value generated such as avoided landfill, value of training and work experience, economic multipliers or the value of services or activities any profits support.

Total \$ value of social enterprise sales from the period covered by the applicable annual report

Community value relative to inputs

Community value for every \$1 of Neighbourhood House Coordination Program (NHCP)

Shows the total calculable community value from the organisation for each dollar of NHCP funding received in 2022. The NHCP provides the platform to develop and attract funding for the various activities the organisation undertakes.

The formula used for calculating the community value for each dollar of NHCP is:

Total community value/ total NHCP for the reported year

Employment

Employment is calculated using the total hours of paid employment response combined with multipliers derived from 2017 analysis by Deloitte Access Economics on the economic contribution of the Australian charity sector for the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission³⁶. The multipliers are based on employment data for the development and housing sector classification. This classification covers much of the work done by Neighbourhood Houses including community development and training (multiplier = 1.39). This means that for every full-time equivalent employee, a further 0.39 full-time equivalent jobs are supported elsewhere in the economy due to

³⁴ [Literature review of the impact of early childhood education and care on learning and development: working paper \(full report; 30 Sep 2015\) \(AIHW\)](#)

³⁵ <https://www.thefrontproject.org.au/images/downloads/ECO%20ANALYSIS%20Full%20Report.pdf>

³⁶ <https://www.acnc.gov.au%2Ftools%2Freports%2Feconomic-contribution-australian-charity-sector&usq=AOvVaw2R-20vVOybpm8ctvW5xsCY>

the economic activity created by wage spending. Neighbourhood Houses engage in activities that fit in other classifications e.g., emergency relief, referral etc which fit within the social services classification (multiplier = 1.46) or recreational activities that fit within the culture and recreation (multiplier = 1.35). These classifications' multipliers are marginally higher and lower than the development and housing multiplier respectively, further supporting the use of a 1.39 employment multiplier for the sector.

The formula used for calculating the total employment effect is:

$$\text{Total reported hours of paid employment} / 38 \times 1.39$$