



Historic timeline of the Victorian neighbourhood house sector

1970s – 2000

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria Inc

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1973

Community Houses, Neighbourhood Houses & Community Learning Centres were first established in Victoria. It was a period when there were few employment prospects for women. There were no superannuation requirements for women. Only a few years previous to this time, if a woman married, or got pregnant, she often lost her job, and then rarely returned to the work force.

Local people gathered together informally in Neighbourhood Houses, much of the spirit of community support and consultation having been spawned by the AAP - the Australian Assistance Plan - which was an initiative of the Whitlam Government. There had been 7 pilot programs in Victoria, and it was the start of a conscious effort for governments to consult communities on a local regional level. It established a very "aware" community consciousness.

Due to shortages of staff there was often wide use of message books, and part-time office work carried out by volunteers. The Office, if there was one, was more often a storeroom as much as anywhere to carry out administration. As years have passed, increased funding, increased legalities and accountability requirements have required Houses to be far more formal in operation, and "business-like" as we approach the year 2000.

If there was child care, it was care by unpaid workers, in unregistered premises. Women valued the chance in a Community House to get their teeth into something worthwhile. There was true community development work carried out by volunteers who spent hundreds and hundreds of hours in unpaid work. The continuation of the volunteer ethic is one of the great strengths of the movement, where the benefit to the House and the volunteer has been mutual.

1974

Funding was obtained through the Victorian State Liberal and Country Party. Some funding was obtained through the Federal Labor Government's Australian Assistance Plan.

Mid 1970s

Social changes of the post Whitlam era led to health and community services being delivered more as a "social right" of all people rather than as a charitable duty. Community Houses sprang up as a response to the need for women specially to get away from "the kitchen sink" and have the opportunity of the "two hour time slot" where they could get some respite.

1976

About 12 Houses existed in the Melbourne Metropolitan area. The main themes were empowerment, caring and sharing and developing better education opportunities for women.

The AAP was terminated by the Liberal Government on June 30th, 1976.

1977

The Victorian Liberal Government introduced the Family and Community Services (FACS) program as a scheme to promote community development along similar lines to the AAP. Houses previously funded under the AAP transferred across to the FACS program and many new Houses were funded for the first time.

1978

The "Community Houses Association of the Outer (Eastern) Suburbs" Network (CHAOS) was established.

1979

About 40 Houses were meeting regularly. The Association of Neighbourhood Learning Centres (ANLC), the state peak body, was formed.

The Victorian Liberal State Government, under the Minister for Education, The Hon. Lindsay Thompson, agreed to fund a number of Houses for their provision of Higher School Certificate (HSC) for adults.

VALG grants – Voluntary Adult Learning Grants – a total of \$55,000 was granted for the whole of Victoria. As a result of the Kangan Report (1974), the Commonwealth Government allocated grants to the States for the non-government providers of education.

1981

59 Neighbourhood Houses across the state were in receipt of \$201,528 which totaled 16% of the overall FACS grants allocated that year. Ref: CSV 1985 Discussion paper "The Neighbourhood House Scheme Draft Policy". ANLC – West was formed, later to become the Western Association of Community Centres.

1982

Regional TAFE Councils were established by the new Labor Government. Community based Providers were allocated 1% of the TAFE budget.

Around this time, it was acknowledged that Houses needed consistent, paid co-ordination if they were going to develop with any credibility and strength.

Council of Adult Education (CAE) Liaison workers helped many community groups incorporate. Legislation gave CAE the role of policy makers for Adult Education. Many Houses were growing rapidly.

1983

Many Houses had representation on the Local and Regional Consultative Councils set up by the State Community Services Department to give opportunity for community input into the allocation of funding grants. Establishment of TAFE Board and Regional TAFE Councils.

1984

ANLC became incorporated as an Association.

1986

ANLC membership, statewide in Victoria, totaled 110 Houses.

1986

The Adult Education Review, which ultimately led to the Adult, Community and Further Education Board being established, was conducted. The first Department of Further Education (DFE) funding was received by Houses. Statistics and records of "Student Contact Hours" had to be maintained for accountability. And so, the paperwork started.

Many Houses received funding under the FACS (Family and Community Services) grants. The FACS grants were the state Liberal Party's answer to the community expectations which had been developed under the AAP - The Australian Assistance Plan under the Whitlam government at a federal level.

Community Support & Development Grant (CSDG) from CSV for a small amount of co-ordination were introduced.

The Neighbourhood House Co-ordination Program (NHCP), was set up by Community Services Victoria, (CSV) to fund Houses. 39 Houses received on-going funding.

The National Link of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres, the Australia-wide Neighbourhood House national peak body, was established. Jane Dewildt was the first worker, and the National Link was incorporated in Victoria.

1987

Many Houses received triennial (3 year) funding provided by Community Services Victoria, under the NHCP (Neighbourhood House Co-ordination Program) as at 1st

In July funding of a further 82 Houses, brought the total to 121 Houses throughout Victoria whereby they became funded for 5, 10 or 20 hours per week. With programmatic funding came increased accountability and six monthly monitoring and increased need for more sophisticated accounting systems.

1988

Another 69 Houses were funded through Neighbourhood House Co-ordination Program.

Regional Councils of Further Education were established.

A substantial increase in funding became available from the Division of Further Education to those community providers who could deliver adult education programs.

Introduction of Child Care regulations and the requirement to register Child Care Centres had a big impact on Houses. Houses were required to register childcare workers as "persons-in-charge".

In many Houses, the committee was registered as the proprietor. Space requirements whereby 3.3 square metres per child in care were required meant that many childcare areas had to be extended.

There was a greater awareness of public buildings catering for people with disabilities. With the legislation there came government funding to bring about solutions to shortfalls in provision in public buildings.

Unions and The Association of Further Education Centres (AFEC) supported the application of the Social and Community Services (SACS), Professional Administrative, Clerical, Computing and Technical (PACCT), and Clerical and Administrative Awards to House personnel.

Many Houses started to pay award wages to staff including childcare workers. Government "TAKE-A-BREAK" childcare funding was a significant milestone. Childcare funding had always been available through the Adult, Community and Further Education Board. However the Take-a-Break funding was the first childcare funding that wasn't granted on the basis of support to Adult Learning.

Charges for Child Care had to be increased in order to contribute more towards wages.

1989

Establishment of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Further Education. ACFE legislation brought in the concept of "Community" in adult education. Curriculum development took on greater importance.

ANLC membership reached 250. The "No Smoking" debates started, and smoking was banned in many Houses.

As Houses became bigger in size and it became accepted that they were "here to stay", there was increased need for local Councils to formulate occupancy agreements. More paperwork! More need for observation of legalities.

Neighbourhood Houses networks were incorporated in Barwon, Wimmera/West Grampians, and Southern Westernport.

1990 ANLC became ANHLC, including the word "Houses" in the title. Now the Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres.

The AAAE and the AACE amalgamated to form the AAACE.

Service agreements with funding bodies were introduced. Move to far greater accountability for public money. This was a reaction to the post 1988 'boom and bust' period, the downfall of Pyramid Building Society, and the failure of various public institutions.

1991

Approximately 300 Neighbourhood Houses now operating in Victoria.

Many Houses got their first computer under The Choice and Opportunity Plan (CHOP). Many Houses were given computers loaded with the Job and Course Explorer (JAC) software was introduced.

Small business demands on Houses increased taxation and superannuation requirements.

Formal enrolments for statistics were required by funding bodies.

1st Neighbourhood House Week was held in Victoria in August. This initial one was at State-wide level.

The National Link conference was held in Victoria. A decision was made to use the money from the Office of the Status of Women to support meetings of National Link Secretariat.

CSV funded 190 Neighbourhood Houses from a budget of \$3.9 million under the NHCP. A DFE budget of \$9.8 million became available to community-based further education. The focus was on vocational training, however, some general community training funds were also available.

Many Houses were receiving financial support from their local government.

1992

ANHLC conducted a project aiming to increase the participation of non-English speaking background people and released the Neighbourhood and Diversity Report.

1993

The Association of Further Education Centres became ACE (Vic).

Approximately 10% was cut from the NHCP under the Liberal Government and concern was felt about how many Houses had dropped below the \$20,000 standard base rate of NHCP funding.

1994

December 1994 Council amalgamations had a big impact on many local networks. The amalgamations brought to the surface the inequality of funding across Local Government Areas.

Local government support had grown to \$2 million in the form of premises and grants. NHCP distributed \$4.8 million to 263 Houses.

Adult, Community and Further Education Board provided approx. \$4 million to Houses.

Some Houses which had previously been heavily funded by Council faced the threat of being put out to Compulsory Competitive Tendering. Some local Councils saw CCT as a way to "off load" their responsibilities for funding Houses.

1995

1st Adult Learners Week (National event). The City of Whitehorse was named the City of Learning. National Competition Policy.

The principle of the Competition policy is that organisations are not permitted to collaborate with a potential competitor. It is permissible, however, to enter into joint ventures where partners retain their autonomy.

Under the National Competition Policy, organisations are not supposed to share resources that otherwise would give one of them a competitive edge. Neighbourhood

Houses found themselves having to clearly restate their philosophy of shared and co-operative information in the face of competition.

ANHLC and the Victorian Community Foundation ran the Inclusive Communities Project stage 1 with the aim of improving opportunities for people with disabilities.

1996

During Neighbourhood House Week, May 1996, the Minister for Community Services, The Hon. Dennis Napthine, launched the large metal public signs for the National Logo. The signs were designed to be hung on the "Welcome" boards to cities and towns, or for the exterior of Community and Neighbourhood Houses. The positive response to the National logo has been enormous, which indicated that the need for some tangible expression of the sense of connectedness was very high.

1997

Adult, Community and Further Education funding shifted from co-ordination and course funding to unit costing for student contact hours.

There were approximately 340 Neighbourhood Houses in Victoria.

60 Houses "unfunded by DHS" formed a lobby group to gain access to NHCP funds.

The Inclusive Communities Project commenced providing resources, training and advice to Houses / Centres seeking to work with people with intellectual disabilities and experience of psychiatric illness. The Department of Human Services is commenced a major redevelopment of the Neighbourhood House Co-ordination Program (NHCP) across Victoria.

ANHLC was funded by the Jack Brockhoff Foundation to distribute (to Neighbourhood Houses) Poverty Action Grants.

1998

New Children's Services Regulations were introduced with increased management responsibilities.

The Neighbourhood House TV video was shown on commercial television during Neighbourhood House Week.

ACFE grants total \$23,860 (figure must be incorrect) distributed amongst 460 community based providers.

1999

Houses undertook a major political campaign to secure additional funding under the NHCP.

Neighbourhood House Week campaign launch for 1999: "The Best is Just Around the Corner".

The proposed introduction of a GST created much debate.

DHS initiated enterprise bargaining in the sector.

The Jack Brockhoff Foundation granted the ANHLC Poverty Action project \$40,000 for the second time.

The Inclusive Communities Project "Manual of Good Practice" was published. Judy Buckingham was the project officer and author of the manual.

September State Government election saw the Liberal government make an election promise of \$1.1 million to the sector. Labor Party then won the election on September 18th and promised an extra \$6.6 million to Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres over the next 3 years.

Selected "under-funded" Houses were to be topped up to a minimum of 15 co-ordination hours per week. Selected "unfunded Houses" to be given minimum funding of 15 hours per week.

In December the "Crossing Thresholds" conference - combined national and state - was held involving ANHLC, National Link, ACE(Vic) and ALA. For ANHLC this was in lieu of the annual ANHLC conference at Dookie.

The conference was immediately preceded by the ANHLC 20th Birthday party celebrations.

2000

We all survived the Y2k bug.

GST seminars crowded the calendars in preparation for 1st July 2000!

Neighbourhood House Week in May 2000 saw the launch of the National Link "Turn of the Century" CD.

As at 12th May 2000, there are currently approximately 328 Community Houses in Victoria.