

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria - Strategic Plan 2026-27

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (NHV) is the peak body member association for neighbourhood and community houses and learning centres in Victoria. As a registered charity, our purposes are:

- Build a shared vision of strong, inclusive communities and lead and influence social change to achieve this vision.
- Promote and enhance understanding of community development principles, while also strengthening the capacity of Neighbourhood Houses & Learning Centres in their community development practice.
- Advocate on behalf of the collective membership at local, state and national government levels.
- Provide support, advice, referral, professional learning and information to members
- Identify and capitalise on strategic opportunities to promote Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres and their work.

The Victorian Government funds NHV to deliver programs and activities across community participation and inclusion, sector capability and connection, and partnership with government. Our well-established Association has recently struggled through a difficult period, both financially and in terms of collaboration with our members and other stakeholders. With a renewed Board and a highly committed small team of paid staff, our intention by the end of 2027 is to re-stabilise NHV as a credible and relevant leadership body, lift the quality of support to the neighbourhood house sector, champion the role of community development, and ensure transparent and competent governance and management of NHV, working in close collaboration with our members and stakeholders.

Focus on financial discipline	Strengthen our governance	Enhance member value proposition in line with our peak function	Strengthen sector relationships and roles	Embed sector community development focus
Our ambition: To enable our Association to operate efficiently and effectively, with a return to positive assets by Jan 2028.	Our ambition: To ensure NHV is set up for future success and positive impact by strengthening decision-making and other governance mechanisms.	Our ambition: Measure and monitor member satisfaction, together with actions to enhance our membership value proposition.	Our ambition: Rebuild working roles and relationships within the sector as outlined in NHCP* guidelines. Build and maintain strong productive relationships with prioritised stakeholders.	Our ambition: NHs are recognised by decision makers as agents of change through place-based programs and activities.
What this will require of us: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver on our funding agreements with DFFH and other funding bodies. (Implement DFFH audit findings) • Ensure we redevelop financial stability through careful planning, with compliant and transparent accountability for our financial resources 	What this will require of us: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Board charter • Review Risk Framework and Risk Register • Work to agreed principles: <i>Curiosity and openness; Candor and respect for difference; Evidence-driven and risk aware.</i> 	What this will require of us: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding campaign for Houses • Review regular communications • Board roadshow 2026 • Resource library review (Refresh the library with a relevant and consistent site of resources that are centrally located. (Policies and practices, HR Policies) that is accessible to all members) • Member Survey 	What this will require of us: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership agreement with neighbourhood house networks • Influence the Neighbourhood House Coordination Program - Guidelines review • Board roadshow 2026 • Prioritise key stakeholders in particular our partnership with Networks, other state peaks and ANHCA, and develop stakeholder strategy alongside development of NHV strategy 2028-30. 	What this will require of us: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2026 - focus on embedding and raising awareness about CD principles and practice, in sector, in policy and at NHVic • Reinforce CD practice embedded and promoted (e.g. on website) • 2027 conference – reinforce CD practice • Consider brand positioning and promotion within 2028-30 strategic plan

KEY INITIATIVES TO PROGRESS STRATEGY

Output of NHVic team planning day, 12 March 2026

INITIATIVE	FUNDING/RESOURCING	NOTES
'Own' connection 'Safe and welcoming' spaces: best practice and barriers to participation.	Funded by Department of Health to undertake research into best practice in safe, welcoming and inclusive community spaces and barriers to participation among individuals experiencing social isolation and loneliness.	Lived Experience research component to be conducted in partnership with mental health provider NEAMI National.

INITIATIVE	FUNDING/RESOURCING	NOTES
Strengthen Governance	PDs are updated, all staff have development plans and performance plans.	In progress, some PDs to review still.
	Core policy review and update.	Include recruitment policy.
	Proposed constitution changes.	
Member value proposition	Resource library review and consolidation	NHVic to coordinate, ICDA partnership, Justice Connect partnership.

	Advice and assistance on legislative, regulatory and IR changes.	Identify partners to provide relevant advice, ideally pro bono or low bono.
	IR/HR information (not advice).	HR/IR tender for a preferred provider to the sector with emphasis on sector partnership and support beyond one-off advice.
	Explore cross-network Mentorship program.	Consider with Networks.
	Response templates to common enquiries – streamline member support	
Focus on financial discipline	New chart of accounts from 1 July.	Alignment of time costs and timesheeting to chart of accounts.
	DFFH Audit Findings	Continue to implement where appropriate.
	Procurement approval process	Policy and process
	Document structure/operating model	1 July
	Resolve premises usage/costs	
	Quotes/funding approval process.	Document process for new funded programs, billing, timeframes etc.
Embed sector community development focus	Conference theme and focus – briefing notes to speakers.	Make CD focus clear in workshop criteria and in briefing notes to speakers.

	L&D program on Community Development in conjunction with Network Managers and with input from the sector.	Defining the pathway. Review of current CD practice.
	Review and relaunch core documents in the resource library.	Core docs review with Networks, standards development/rubric.
	Neighbourhood House Week theme in 2026 and 2027 to promote CD principles	‘Community Lunches and CD’ Advocate for 2027 theme with CD focus.
	CD resources for any funded projects	Eg ‘How PSB can support community development’ ‘CD approach to food relief’ – influence DFFH guidelines to encourage CD approach.
	Showcase good CD practice via the awards	Review awards and criteria for 2027 to align better with CD principals, review relevance of Sustainable Development Goals as award framework.
Sector Structure – strengthening	Networks partnership agreement	Keir, with support from Board, to develop a partnership agreement, including monitoring and review milestones.
	Board road show (timing TBC)	
	Stakeholder review and stakeholder management strategy	To be developed in 26/27 however implementation relies on resources.

	Potential network stream/sessions at conference.	
	Role for ANHCA/promotion of ANHCA at conference. Potential ANHCA update to members through the year.	
Learning and Development	Conference – reinforce CD fundamentals and current practice, and consider a ‘new manager’ stream in conference.	Note: 43% of NH managers in roles for less than 3 years, 22% for less than two years.
	Establish L&D working group to input into sector capability framework and inform our L&D program.	
	Meet growing need for AI and IT training to encourage efficiency in sector.	Policy and risk focus. InfoXchange partnership – define what they will provide.
	Communities of Practice	Review how/if we do them and when as part of our L&D strategy.
Advocacy and government relations	(See Member survey) Agree ACFE election strategy with other peaks.	
	Concerted approach to build relationships with opposition parties.	
	Continue to support ANHCA/Justice Connect advocacy on DGR with evidence from the sector.	

	Budget/election campaign: existing resources – support the sector to campaign for a significant funding increase in the 2026 pre-election budget in May, continuing to the state election in November as required.	Ongoing.
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Functional areas – BAU and initiatives

Research and policy	Annual survey, review pricing and work involved.	Work with Department and Networks to scope inclusion of questions to input into governance and financial dashboards for each member.
	Social connection/social prescribing: Continue to act as voice of the community sector in design of state and federal trials, influence design to ensure NH are supported and funded to do this work.	
Business operations	Annual ICT review – hardware and software currency.	Following review and consolidation of hardware and licences in 2025, need to ensure regular review to avoid previous issues.
	Office clean-up and working bee.	
	Document management	Review/dispose of hard copies and digitise where possible.

	CRM Transition and integration	\$\$\$? Resource estimate and timeline needed. Ensure design allows us to tag and log comms.
	Improve query/complaint management.	Assess functionality and costs of ChilliDB CRM to track and report.
Marketing and Communications	Law Week, Science Week (BAU)	Hopefully Parliament of Victoria also
	Website review	Review and upgrade the 'Find a Neighbourhood House' map as a priority, continue to develop web content.
	Sector Feedback survey – June/July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sector Update review – format and frequency. - Advocacy priorities - L&D needs - Contacts update
Improve sector wellbeing Sector wellbeing strategy	Unable to identify funding sources. Project will be overseen by core staff, assisted by Melbourne Uni Social Work (MSW) Masters students on placements using resources from Benefolk, the Social Services wellbeing NFP.	Wellbeing strategy will be based on sector feedback via focus group and survey to identify psychological and other health and safety risks as well as protective factors. It will include practical recommendations to address hazards and increase protective factors in the domains of leadership, culture, policy, work design and training/development. Funding structure and premises issues at a sector level will also be in scope.
Revenue diversification Power Saving Bonus	Hopefully another round of PSB in 2026/27 (TBC)	

Revenue diversification/sector impact	Funded by DEECA, partnership with EV to support community outreach and enablement of electrification in 12 target LGAs	Potential to extend partnership to other areas with philanthropic funding, otherwise will cease Oct 2026
Revenue diversification Melbourne University of Social Work partnership.	Likely to be a smaller cohort in 2026/27	

APPENDIX I: MONTH-ON-MONTH PLAN

STRATEGIC PILLARS	INITIATIVES/BAU	TEAM	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	Notes
Strengthen Governance	PDs are updated, all staff have development plans and performance plans.		X												
	Core policy review and update.	KP	X	X	X										
	Proposed constitution changes.	KP (BD)*	X	X	X	X									
Member value proposition	Resource library review and consolidation	BP								X		X	X		
	Advice and assistance on legislative, regulatory and IR changes.	DP				X			X			X			
	IR/HR information RFP (May '26 start)	KP/DP	X	X											
	Response templates to common enquiries – streamline member support	BP									X	X	X		

*President or other Board member(s) as determined by the Board.

STRATEGIC PILLARS	INITIATIVES/BAU	TEAM	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	Notes
Focus on financial discipline	New chart of accounts from 1 July.	HH, KP	X												
	DFFH Audit Findings – continue to review and implement.	HH, KP	X			X			X			X			
	Procurement approval process	HH	X												
	Resolve premises usage/costs	KP	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Quotes/funding approval process.	HH			X										
Embed sector community development focus	Conference theme and focus – briefing notes to speakers.	BP (BD)	X	X	X	X	X			X					
	L&D program on Community Development in conjunction with Network Managers and with input from the sector.	BP								X	X	X	X	X	
	Review and relaunch core documents in the resource library.	BP					X	X		X	X				

STRATEGIC PILLARS	INITIATIVES/BAU	TEAM	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	Notes
	Neighbourhood House Week theme in 2027 to promote CD principles	BP (BD)									X	X	X		
	CD resources for any funded projects	BP				X			X			X			
	Showcase good CD practice via the NHVic awards	BP (BD)	X			X			X			X	X		
Sector Structure – strengthening	Networks partnership agreement	KP (BD)			X	X	X								
	Board road show (timing TBC)	KP, KM (BD)		X	X	X	X								
	Stakeholder review and stakeholder management strategy	KP (BD)										X	X	X	
	Potential network stream/sessions at conference.	BP				X	X				X				
	Potential ANHCA update to members through the year	BP		X			X			X			X		

STRATEGIC PILLARS	INITIATIVES/BAU	TEAM	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	Notes
	Role for ANHCA/promotion of ANHCA at conference.	BP									X				
Functional areas – BAU and initiatives															
Learning and Development	Conference – reinforce CD fundamentals and current practice, and consider a ‘new manager’ stream in conference.	BP									X				
	Establish L&D working group to input into sector capability framework and inform our L&D program.	KP, BP	X	X	X	X									
	Meet growing need for AI and IT training to encourage efficiency in sector.	BP			X			X			X			X	
	Communities of Practice (investigate, seek feedback and recommend)	BP						X		X			X		

STRATEGIC PILLARS	INITIATIVES/BAU	TEAM	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	Notes
Advocacy and government relations	Agree ACFE election strategy with other peaks.	KP	X	X	X										
	Concerted approach to build relationships with opposition parties.	KP	X	X	X	X									
	Continue to support ANHCA/Justice Connect advocacy on DGR with evidence from the sector.	KP	X	X	X	X	X								
	Election campaign: existing resources – support the sector to campaign for a significant funding increase before the state election in November	BP	X	X	X	X									
Research and policy	Annual survey, review pricing and work involved.	DP				X	X	X	X	X	X				
	Social connection/social prescribing: Continue to act as voice of the community sector in design of state and federal trials, influence design	KP		X				X			X			X	

APPENDI III: REPORTING AND MONITORING

NHVIC STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

VISION:	Connecting thriving Victorian communities
MISSION:	To lead and support all members to be innovative, sustainable and influential
STRATEGIC THEMES TO 2026	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diversify revenue 2. 'Own' connection 3. Improve wellbeing in the sector 4. Evolve our Governance

OVERALL PERFORMANCE	TOTAL
Department Goals by Status (ex 1.1)	
Division Goals by Status (ex 1.1.1)	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IMPROVE SECTOR WELLBEING			
1.1 Develop and communicate sector wellbeing strategy	Keir Paterson	0%	NOT STARTED
1.2 Use NHCP Guidelines Review to ensure funding rules promote better wellbeing	David Perry		
DIVERSIFY REVENUE			
2.1 Disability inclusion funding model paper	Keir Paterson		NOT STARTED
2.2 Carer connects partnership	Kristine Rawlinson		NOT STARTED
2.3 Carer Gateway partnership	Kristine Rawlinson		NOT STARTED
2.4 MUSW Placements Partnership	Kristine Rawlinson	0%	NOT STARTED
2.5 Grow NHV Assist profitable services	Sonya Davis		NOT STARTED
2.6 Continue to support NHs to gain DGR/PBI status	Cameron MacRae		NOT STARTED
'OWN' CONNECTION			
3.1 Participant survey to quantify social connection benefits in NHs	David Perry		NOT STARTED
3.2 'Safe and Welcoming Spaces' DoH research	Keir Paterson	0%	NOT STARTED
3.3 Continuing advocacy, research and participation in influential forums	Keir Paterson	0%	NOT STARTED
EVOLVE GOVERNANCE			
4.1 Continue to support DGR/PBI sector applications	Cameron MacRae		ON TARGET
4.2 Evaluate, recommend and transition to new entity structure/constitution	Keir/Board	0%	NOT STARTED
CRITICAL BAU/ENABLING STRATEGIES			
5.1 CRM transition.			
5.2 NHACE renewal		80%	ON TARGET