

**MEMORANDUM OF
UNDERSTANDING
2018-2021**

**Yarra City Council
And
Yarra Neighbourhood Houses**

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Parties to the Memorandum of Understanding

- **Yarra City Council**
- **Yarra Neighbourhood Houses**
 - Alphington Community Centre
 - Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House
 - Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre
 - Collingwood Neighbourhood House
 - Finbar Neighbourhood House
 - Fitzroy Learning Network
 - Holden Street Neighbourhood House
 - North Carlton Railway Station Neighbourhood House
 - Richmond Community Learning Centre

(For the purpose of this document, the letters 'NH' will be used to describe all centres listed above, and the words 'Committees of Governance' will be used to describe their incorporated governance bodies.)

Preamble

Yarra is made up of a diverse and dynamic population. As such it is a constant challenge ensuring that programs, services and new initiatives are relevant and responsive to the needs of our community. Yarra is home to 89 710 people. About 19% of Yarra residents were born in non-English speaking countries and 23% speak a language other than English at home. The municipality is undergoing rapid change with many new housing developments and the population is expected to grow by 30% over the next 20 years.¹

The Yarra Neighbourhood Houses and Yarra City Council have a mutual primary goal to engage with these communities in determining the provision of equitable recreational, social, vocational training, environmental and other health and well being opportunities. In order to work in a truly collaborative manner and ensure roles and respect the vision and goals of each participating organisation – Yarra City Council and Yarra Neighbourhood Houses are committed to signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The original MOU was developed after an extensive consultation process of forums throughout 2007, which all parties attended. A working group of representatives from Neighbourhood Houses and Council steered the process. The MOU was reviewed in 2012 and 2017.

Purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding:

- To formally acknowledge the partnership between Council and Neighbourhood Houses;

¹ ABS Census 2016

- To foster and support a respectful and trusting working relationship between Neighbourhood Houses and Council; and
- To provide a framework of understanding on which all other documents, agreements and partnerships between the parties can be formulated.

Definition of Partnership

For the purpose of this document, the term ‘partnership’ is deemed to be the process by which local government and Neighbourhood Houses combine their capacities and resources to achieve a commonly agreed set of objectives (outlined in the MOU Annual Action Plan) that would be difficult to achieve by either organisation acting on their own behalf (edited from *‘Neighbourhood Houses & Local Government - Building Communities Together’, ANHLC 2005*).

(See appendix 1 for Partnership Framework diagram).

Term & Scope of the document

- The MOU is an ongoing agreement, subject to review and evaluation every four years, in line with the Council Plan.
- The MOU does not preclude the rights of either party to engage in other partnerships and alliances.
- The MOU is deemed a public document.

Legal Status of the Document

- This MOU is not legally binding on either or both parties.

Benefits of the Memorandum of Understanding

- Greater levels of trust, respect and understanding between the parties.
- Enhanced planning processes for community development and the delivery of dynamic programs, activities and services involving the broader community.
- Increased knowledge, information and resource sharing between the parties.
- A vibrant, diverse and effective Neighbourhood House program for all City of Yarra residents.
- Achievement of mutually desired outcomes

Key Understandings

1. RECOGNITION AND RESPECT

Neighbourhood Houses recognise and respect:-

- 1.1 The common vision, principles and values between Council and Neighbourhood Houses (as per Council Plan 2017-2021 and Appendix 1).
- 1.2 The Council imperative to meet the social, environmental, physical and financial objectives outlined in Council planning documents, policies and the Local Government Act.
- 1.3 The diversity and competing interests of services, activities and programs which Council is required to provide, and its support and advocacy on behalf of the wider community.
- 1.4 The decision-making processes and formal practices to which Councillors and Council staff are bound.
- 1.5 The political and legislative context in which Council operates.
- 1.6 Council's commitment to be consultative about areas of its operations where the community can influence its decisions.
- 1.7 The level of accountability which applies to Council activities.

Council recognises and respects:-

- 1.8 The common vision and principles between Council and Neighbourhood Houses.
- 1.9 The diversity, autonomy and self-determination of individual Neighbourhood Houses.
- 1.10 The strong commitment to community development principles and practices (Appendix 2) resulting in an inclusive, flexible 'whole of community' response to community's diverse needs and interests.
- 1.11 That Neighbourhood Houses have a long history of grass roots engagement and are uniquely placed to respond to the evolving needs of the communities of Yarra.
- 1.12 The community ownership of each Neighbourhood House, through members and Committees of Governance, who represent the wider community.
- 1.13 The integral nature of community participation and volunteering in all levels of Neighbourhood House operations.
- 1.14 The responsiveness to local and emerging needs, in particular those who are disadvantaged, that each Neighbourhood House demonstrates through its programming and activities.

- 1.15 That Neighbourhood Houses operate under a complex mix of funding arrangements.
- 1.16 The limited resources and facilities and competitive funding environment by which Neighbourhood Houses are constrained.
- 1.17 Each Neighbourhood House needs to constantly balance competing priorities within individual strategic plans.
- 1.18 The relationship to a broader Neighbourhood House sector, both State and Federal, via the North East Neighbourhood House Network and the peak body, Neighbourhood Houses Victoria.
- 1.19 The commitment by Yarra Neighbourhood Houses to a collaborative approach in the planning and delivery of programs and services.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

Neighbourhood Houses accept responsibility for:

- 2.1 The delivery of programs, referrals, activities and services according to community development principles that are responsive to local and emerging needs (appendix 2).
- 2.2 Remaining inclusive and encouraging of community participation at all levels of Neighbourhood House operations, including Committees of Governance.
- 2.3 Ensuring that good governance processes and practices are in place, including financial management, risk management and strategic planning.
- 2.4 Providing a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment and compliance with relevant Council, State and Federal regulations and legislative obligations.
- 2.5 Addressing disadvantage, wherever possible, and advocating with and on behalf of members of local communities.
- 2.6 Keeping Council informed about social trends, issues and opportunities which affect local communities.
- 2.7 Participating in Council planning and policy development opportunities where possible.
- 2.8 Partnering with Council in a positive, constructive and respectful manner
- 2.9 Act in the spirit of this MOU.

Council accepts responsibility for:

- 2.10 Supporting and enabling Neighbourhood House participation in all relevant planning, policy development and consultation processes.

- 2.11 Ongoing provision of a Neighbourhood House Funding Program and access to relevant Council funding and resources which contribute towards the financial sustainability of Neighbourhood Houses and in kind support to the Yarra Neighborhood House Network.
- 2.12 Creating opportunities to promote to all council staff on what Neighbourhood Houses do.
- 2.13 Advocating with and on behalf of Neighbourhood Houses at state and federal government levels when necessary.
- 2.14 Maintaining Council owned buildings and grounds and signs as per the Building Assets Management Plan.
- 2.15 Advising Neighbourhood Houses to enable compliance with required standards and legislative obligations
- 2.16 Partnering with Neighbourhood Houses in a positive, constructive and respectful manner.
- 2.17 Collaborating and engaging with the North East Neighbourhood House Network.
- 2.18 Act in the spirit of this MOU.

3. MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

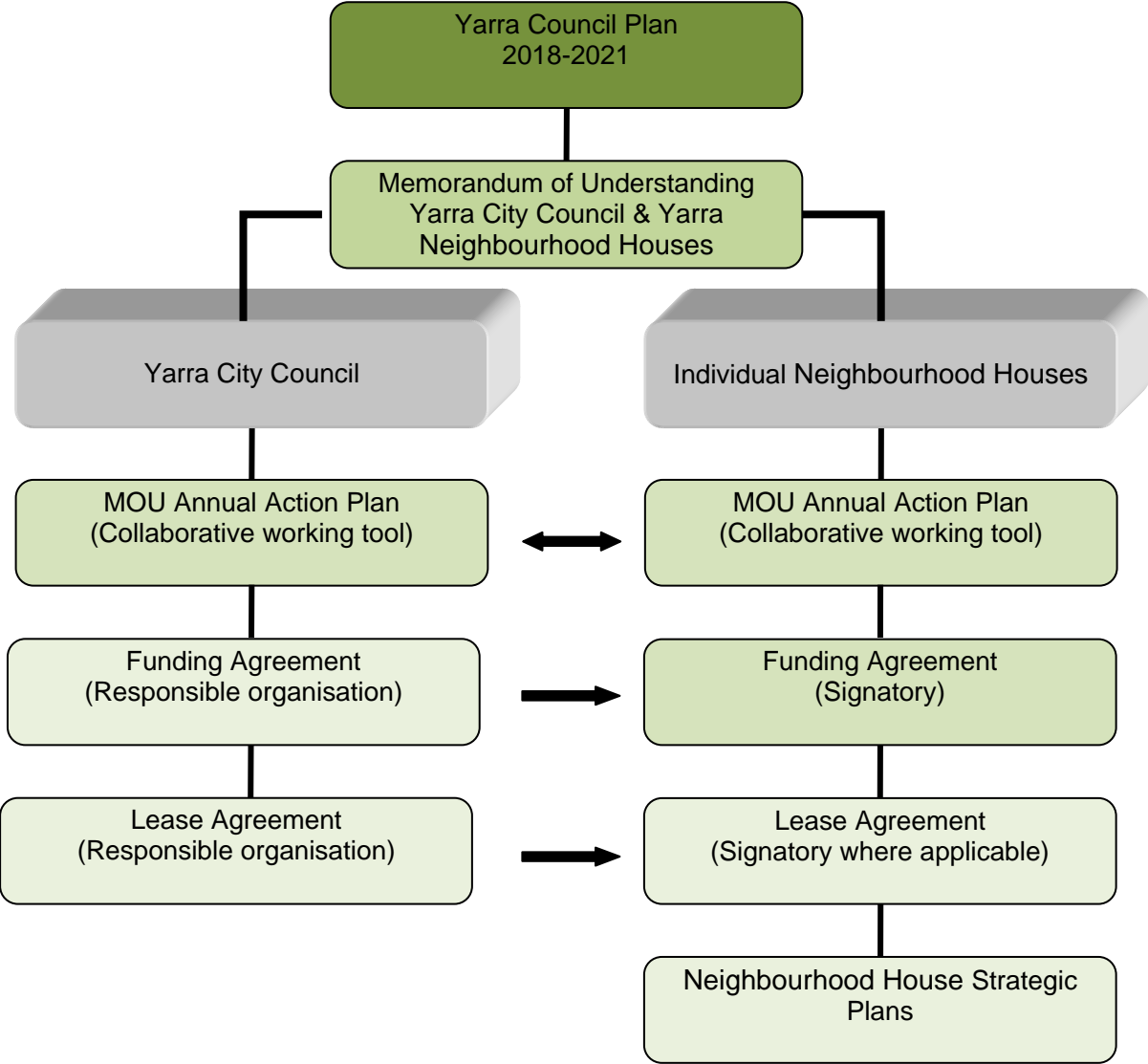
Neighbourhood Houses and Council will be accountable via:

- 3.1 Timeliness and quality of agreed reports and information.
- 3.2 Participation in and implementation of the collective Yarra City Council Neighbourhood Houses MOU Action Plan.
- 3.3 An annual report by Officers to Council on the Neighbourhood House MOU Action Plan.
- 3.4 Both parties agree to abide by the dispute resolution procedure (appendix 3).

Neighbourhood Houses

- 3.5 Provision of strategic planning documents.
- 3.6 Provision of an Annual Report, including an annual financial statement.
- 3.7 Compliance with Council funding and where relevant leasing agreements.

Partnership Framework



APPENDIX 2

Community Development Principles

The following principles are deemed to apply when reference is made to Community Development principles. (Acknowledgement to Neighbourhood Houses Victoria for reproduction of these principles.)

Community Participation

Everyone has a valuable contribution to make and community members can join in at any level. Volunteers and community members are integral to the decision-making, evaluation, provision, participation and direction setting at all levels of the organisation.

Community Ownership

Members are actively involved in decision-making and have ownership of the centre's programs and activities. A voluntary management committee comprising elected members who live, work or participate in the local community governs each centre. The governance model is developmental, working co-operatively and collaboratively with staff, volunteers, centre participants and the wider community, thus generating a range of community benefits.

Empowerment

A process that respects, values and enhances people's ability to have control over their lives is put into practice. This process encourages people to meet their needs and aspirations in a self-aware and informed way which takes advantage of their skills, experience and potential. Change and growth occurs through informing and empowering individuals and communities. Houses and centres do not seek to do for others but to empower others to do for themselves.

Lifelong Learning

Learning is integrated into all aspects of centre activities, thus building and supporting the personal skills, knowledge, abilities and resilience of people. The health, wellbeing and connection of people and their families occur through formal and informal pathways in education, employment and self-development.

Inclusion

The diverse contributions that people make are valued, no matter what their background or varying abilities. Individual and local needs are acknowledged and addressed, often through informal interaction. Identifying these needs and issues through a range of methods is instrumental to informing the planning and development of activities and programs.

Access and Equity

Centres are accessible and welcoming. They promote a fairer distribution of economic resources and power between people by aiming to improve the social, environmental, economic and cultural infrastructures within their communities.

Social Action

Internal and external factors that impact on the local community are analysed and relationships between individuals, groups and organisations and within the community transformed through collective action.

Advocacy

In meeting individual and group needs, Neighbourhood Houses act with, or on behalf of, community members.

Networking

Linking, forming alliances, collaborating and working with individuals, groups, other agencies, government and business are crucial, with interaction between formal and informal methods to achieve connections within the local communities.

Self Help

Individuals are supported in coming together in a caring group environment to share information, knowledge, skills and life experience in order that each participant can reach their own personal goals.

APPENDIX 3

Dispute Resolution Procedures

Should a dispute arise over any aspect of the Memorandum of Understanding, the parties involved will adopt the following procedures in an effort to negotiate a satisfactory resolution.

Points of references for determining whether or not the MOU has been breached will be:

- the understandings and the responsibilities contained in the MOU
- the obligations and conditions contained in the funding agreement.

In the event of a dispute between a Neighbourhood House and Council:

- Either party may request a meeting within 7 days of the disagreement to discuss the matter in dispute and negotiate a mutually acceptable resolution.

If the dispute cannot be resolved between the parties through direct communication within 28 days of the initial meeting, the parties will appoint a mediator. If no agreement can be reached about a suitable mediator, the matter will be referred to the Dispute Settlement of Victoria (DSV) to appoint a mediator. The parties must agree to equally share any fees and costs associated with the mediation process.

Both parties must agree to follow the terms of the agreement made at mediation.



SIGNATORIES TO THIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Signed by the Chairperson / President on behalf of:

Name of Neighbourhood House:

Signature:

Print full name:

Date:

Signed on behalf of Yarra City Council.

Signature:

Print full name:

Date:
