



2021 Annual Report



**North Melbourne
Language & Learning**



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Our Mission

To give adult residents of North Melbourne the language and learning needed to build a better life for themselves and their families.

Our Vision

NMLL will be North Melbourne's leading centre for the CALD Community, recognised for enriching and empowering the lives of the people it serves.



Our Values

Compassion

Sensitive, understanding and caring in our service of each other and all people.

Integrity

Honest, accountable, transparent and ethical in all our work and relationships.

Respect

Treating each person as we expect to be treated; offering acceptance and support in the face of challenges.

Perseverance

Finding effective, innovative and sustainable ways to fulfil our mission and vision.

Diversity

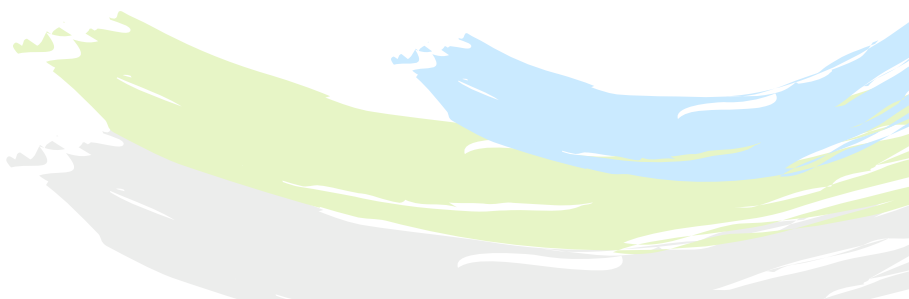
Building social cohesion by creating opportunities for inter-cultural experiences between people of all ages, gender and cultural background.

Celebration

Recognising and celebrating the efforts and achievements of our students and participants, their families and our staff and volunteers.

Acknowledgement of Country

NMLL acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay our respects to First Nations people and their elders past, present and emerging.



Once again it is my great pleasure to present my report on another successful year at North Melbourne Language and Learning (NMLL). 2021 was another year of great disruption as the world continued to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. For NMLL this meant enduring numerous lock-downs, and learning and teaching remotely for a second year in a row. Nevertheless, I am confident and enthusiastic about a bright future for NMLL.

Our Strategic Plan, originally created for 2019 to 2022 has been extended an additional year by the Committee of Management, mainly because it was still highly relevant but also so that a full revision can begin face-to-face in the second half of 2022. This process will include planning for continued growth and the improvements to resources and infrastructure to support that growth.

The Committee are extremely grateful for the commitment and energy poured into the running of NMLL by our administrative staff, teachers, community development staff and volunteers. That you can do what you do so efficiently, despite the challenges the world has thrown at us this past two years, never ceases to amaze me. Huge thanks as always go to Cliff Rundle, NMLL's General Manager. Cliff reminds me of a duck, gracefully gliding across a pond without so much as a ripple, while under the water, largely unseen, he is paddling away furiously. It is not an easy feat to make running a dynamic and busy organisation appear as effortless as he does.

We are privileged to be part of a successful organisation that contributes so much to building the social capital of our community. Everyone who comes into contact with NMLL gains a valuable connection to other people in the community. We admire our students for their enthusiasm to learn despite having to do most of this remotely. Thank you for being flexible and open to learning new things.

The great work of NMLL would not be possible without our sponsors and funding organisations and the financial support they provide to enable us to provide critical services to our community. We are also grateful for the work of our Accountant, Robert Pisano, who has supported NMLL for many years.

Whatever your part in supporting or running NMLL, thank you. If you are reading this, please encourage someone you know to enrol in a class, volunteer at, or participate in, an event or simply drop by to see what we do.

Despite reduced numbers and the challenges of the pandemic, the Committee of Management has met online for two years now. I would like to personally thank the Committee for their dedication, wisdom and support as I seek to stand down as Chair after 5 years in the role. There are exciting times ahead and **I am confident that NMLL is an outstanding organisation in good financial shape with excellent governance and a roster of staff and volunteers that are talented and diligent. Great things await.**

Mark O'Neil

Committee of Management

David Lansley (Treasurer), Catherine Lander (Secretary), Catharine O'Grady (Vice Chair), and Mark O'Neil (Chair).

TREASURER'S *Report*

2021 proved to be another challenging year for NMLL. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to significantly disrupt NMLL's education and community development activities. Through the course of 2021, Melbourne was in lockdown for a total of 16 weeks. Lockdowns and social distancing reduced NMLL's ability to offer face to face teaching and this inevitably affected our income. Support from the Federal and Victorian governments was also less than in the previous year. NMLL received its final JobKeeper payment at the beginning of 2021, and some projects had to be deferred, reducing or delaying income. Fortunately, NMLL had strong cash reserves coming into 2021, and these provided a buffer against reduced course income due to reduced student numbers and hours.

Also positive, the experience gained in 2020 meant that NMLL was able to flexibly deliver a range of courses, and was better placed to respond to the range of disruptions during the year. In particular, with assistance from the Victorian Department of Education and Training, we invested substantially in laptop computers during the year to allow students to undertake courses remotely and reduce digital exclusion, particularly during periods of lockdown. NMLL also benefitted from valuable assistance from the City of Melbourne, Moonee Valley City Council, the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and the Collier Foundation. The continued support of our funding partners has been vital in allowing us to continue providing our courses and other services.

An important financial development for NMLL in 2021 was involved in the Victorian government's Paving the Way Forward program. In response to the substantial impact of COVID-19 lockdowns on many of the people, we work with, the Paving the Way Forward program works with residents, community groups, local government and service providers in the Flemington and North Melbourne public housing estates to help solve local issues and increase community resilience. Funding for the program is \$490,000 over two years. Being chosen as the lead manager was an endorsement of NMLL's track record of effectively managing community programs in the area.

Careful control of spending through the year was also important given the falls in income from some activities and the need to defer some community development programs due to COVID-19 restrictions. But most importantly, *the commitment, support and goodwill of our funding partners, our loyal and dedicated staff, and our volunteers have been vital in allowing NMLL to continue its work in a difficult environment. Our ability to meet the challenges of the past year would not have been possible without their exceptional support and dedication.* We look forward to continue working together to help our participants achieve life-changing outcomes in a still difficult time.

Income and expenditure in detail (Note: Dollar amounts are rounded to the nearest \$10.) NMLL recorded income for the year of \$853,650 and incurred expenditure of \$852,390, resulting in a surplus for the year of \$1,260. While this is down from the surplus achieved in 2020, it is similar to the surpluses of earlier years. It is also the sixth year in a row that NMLL has achieved an operating surplus, and represents a good outcome in a difficult operating environment.



Income and expenditure in detail

(Note: Dollar amounts are rounded to the nearest \$10.)

Income was lower than the previous year mainly due to the ending of government COVID-19 related assistance. Lower student enrolments and teaching hours also reduced income, but careful management of expenditure meant that NMLL finished the year with a good cash buffer to meet possible future shocks and scope to invest further in service delivery and community development. The decision to bring forward some asset depreciation expenses in 2020 also contributed to a healthy balance sheet. Net assets at the end of the year totalled \$356,250, of which \$30,340 was in long-term physical assets (including building improvements). The retained earnings of \$324,650 effectively represent the working capital required to support NMLL's ongoing operations.

Financial Report

For the year ended
31 December 2021
Summary of results

Note: Summary figures in this report are extracted from the draft annual financial accounts of NMLL for the year ended 31 December 2021. The full accounts provide more details on the financial performance and position of NMLL, including a description of the accounting policies adopted, explanatory notes, and the independent auditor's report.

David Lansley

	2020	2021
Income	968,985	853,653
Expenditure	930,210	852,389
Net surplus for year	38,775	1,264
Cash held at end of year	536,021	630,070
Other short-term assets	75,175	64,889
Long-term fixed assets	14,961	30,338
Total liabilities	322,740	420,911
Net assets at end year	354,982	356,251

GENERAL MANAGER'S *Report*

In last year's report I noted that 2020 was a pivotal year and a huge test of NMLL as an organisation. 2021 was no less of a challenge. In fact, it was such an eventual year on so many levels that it is difficult to capture it in a few hundred words.

Overall 2021 was another year of challenge and achievement. Throughout NMLL was innovative in adapting to the challenges and effects of COVID and the needs of the communities. As a business NMLL developed new capacities, grew beyond what was achieved up to 2019 and finished with a surplus.

I'm exceedingly proud of what has been achieved, the result of a huge whole-of-organisation effort.

Thankyous

Firstly, I'd like to acknowledge and thank the entire NMLL staff for their contributions, commitment, professionalism and good spirits throughout the year. As outlined in the reports that follow all staff

made efforts above and beyond what can be reasonably expected of employees. Throughout 2020 and 2021 there was an exciting sense of unity and common purpose that drove an extraordinary collective and individual efforts ensuring NMLL services operated on-site or remotely throughout the entire period of COVID restrictions. All staff learned new skills and accepted the responsibility to adapt services and ways of working to ensure classes were delivered, targets were achieved and, extraordinarily, new services were conceived and initiated toward the end of the year.

Secondly, I'd like to thank every member of the Committee of Management (CoM). Once again, the Committee were steadfast in their direction, support and advice and ensured the organisation was steered through a prolonged and difficult time. This was in the context of each CoM member also working in an organisation finding its own way to survive COVID.



Thirdly I'd like to thank colleagues at the ACFE Board's Sector Expert Panel, ACEVic and the INC who have supported NMLL, NMLL's projects and me throughout the year.

Fourth a big thankyou to the services hosted at NMLL which add enormous complementary value to NMLL's education and community development activities.

They include the Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN) and the Reconnect service; Thrive which provides micro-business grants to refugees and asylum seekers who have arrived in the last 11 years and seek to create their own job, and The Centre for the NMLL Homework Club.

It would be remiss not to acknowledge the support NMLL received from Government and funding organisations: the Department of Education and Training (DET) for Skills First; Melbourne Polytechnic for AMEP; the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board for the ACFE core and pilot project funding; the City of Melbourne for community development funding; the Department of Fairness Families and Housing (DFFH) for Neighbourhood House funding. And for project funding NMLL thanks The Scanlon Foundation, the RE Ross Trust, the Collier Foundation, Moonee Valley City Council, the City of Melbourne; Melbourne Airport and the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of Australia (ANCHA).

NMLL's Strategic Plan has been an important organisational guide and framework over the last three years and particularly during 2020 and 2021. Within this framework there have been several significant developments.

The most significant was winning the Paving the Way Forward (PTWF) project. NMLL lead a consortium of Mission Australia and Drummond Street to work in partnership with the DFFH PTWF team to deliver a transformational project for and with residents of the North Melbourne Public Housing Estate. The project brought new resources to North Melbourne and also allowed for the recruitment and employment of four community development officers. Three were recruited, with support from the JVES, from North Melbourne and another from North Richmond.

In 2021 the foundations for the Tech Connect drop-in IT centre were put in place. These included the acquisition of laptops for students' loans, connection to the NBN and an upgrade of the NMLL IT system. Advocacy to Parliamentarians, also part of the strategy, lead to the DET forming a pilot program to issue refurbished laptops to Learn Local Organisations. DET is expected to release hundreds of laptops across the state in 2022.

As noted the in the 2020 Annual Report, **Tech Connect is a direct response by NMLL to calls from the communities during the 2019 and 2020 lock downs for access to computers, affordable internet and space to work.** Tech Connect is an outstanding example of the way Learn Local Organisations can embrace advocacy and community development strategies to effect change.

The closure of NMLL's third main classroom throughout COVID provided the impetus to expand delivery beyond the public housing estate. Spaces were hired at the West Melbourne Baptist Community Centre and the North Melbourne Community Centre. Delivery also continued at the River Nile Learning Centre. This expansion helped improve students' and NMLL's network and connections. It also helped address NMLL's chronic overcrowding and need for additional premises.

Each of the above developments are significant breakthrough projects. That they were achieved during COVID speaks volumes for the whole of organisation effort.



In closing I'd like to acknowledge the contribution of three staff who made enormous contributions to the work NMLL. Firstly, Nikki Blanch worked as our community development worker for nearly 5 years. Her role was always insecure and depended upon successive projects but that insecurity never deterred Nikki from ambitious work. Nikki and Loretta formed a dynamic and innovative CD team, introducing co-designed activities that engaged the community, forged new skills and confidence and encouraged and supported people to seek and take opportunities. Highlights over the years include the Long table Feast, the Flourish programme, the Living Traditions Festival, Stories without Borders, the food at NMLL events, the students' speeches at the conclusion of the Refuge project and so much more. Thank you, Nikki, your legacy lives on in stories and video.

I'd also like to pay tribute to Graeme Lechte. An experienced and life long educator Graeme quietly shared his expertise with his colleagues, especially those new to adult learning practices, he also demonstrated the value of experiential learning and shared his talents for singing, music, drawing and writing. Graeme's insight also helped NMLL develop and refine NMLL's remote learning model.

Finally, Sarah Butterfield who joined NMLL after a student placement and embraced every opportunity with enthusiasm and creative flair, demonstrated in particular in her work with students at the River Nile Learning Centre.

COVID also highlighted areas for improvement. Throughout the pandemic and afterwards communities told us they didn't know about existing services, events and activities. In the information age this is a paradox that must be addressed. Co-designing better means of communication will be a priority activity commencing in 2022.

I'm proud to lead and work for an organisation that implements its values, that combines adult learning and community development, that works with local communities and that creates opportunities that improve peoples' lives.

Much has been achieved over the last year. Much more lies ahead of us. I'm confident NMLL can continue to make a difference in its own right, in collaboration other organisations and, most importantly, with local communities. I'm looking forward to the next 12 months.

Cliff Rundle



ADMINISTRATOR'S COORDINATOR'S

Report

2021 was another year of resilience and recovery from COVID. The whole year was bit of a roller coaster ride with lots of time in and out lockdown. Another year of virtual participation and mixed mode class delivery. We learned a lot from 2020 and grew stronger in 2021.

2021 was very similar to 2020 yet different with lots of optimism displayed in how people helped each other during the tough times. Students were more engaged in online classes participation with the option to loan laptops from the centre. Digital support was available to the students throughout the year.

Broadened range of activities

Despite the difficulties during the lockdowns NMLL delivered Skills First, ACFE and AMEP classes. Classes were delivered face to face and virtually depending on the demand and lockdown restrictions. Learning materials were developed by the teachers before each term and printed and delivered to the students by the administration team. Compared to 2020 we had more students in 2021 for all programs. We had students joining classes through Zoom from regional Victoria. This was only possible because of the huge effort made by all staff to build remote delivery skills, underpinning administrative and performance systems and IT capability. That we did this during the COVID pandemic was remarkable and amazes us.

During the pandemic NMLL also expanded its operation beyond the Alfred Street facilities. A new Skills First program commenced at the River Nile Learning Centre to support the young women to improve their English language skills. NMLL also commenced classes at North Melbourne Community Centre on Mondays and at West Melbourne Baptist Community Centre on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

AMEP hours were uncapped from 19th April 2021. Students who needed to continue their education but were ineligible because of 510 hours and the 5 years registration limits had become eligible.

From 19 April 2021, registration, enrolment or completion time limits were no longer applicable to clients with a visa commencement date on or before 1 October 2020. This is a significant reform for those who need to continue with their language skill development.

The famous cherry-picking excursion was back in 2021. It was limited to the students only because of COVID restriction. The excursion was successful and enjoyed by both teachers and students' groups.



After hours use, hosted services, preparation for Tech Connect

The communities we work with have asked for certain services. NMLL has worked hard to bring them to NMLL as hosted services or by winning tenders to run the service. They were all interrupted during COVID but several continued on site when possible and remotely during the lockdowns.

Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN) provided support at NMLL every Monday and Thursday. They provide support to eligible people who are unemployed and looking for jobs. RECONNECT is also a similar service focused on supporting those who need support to be job-ready. The JVEN and Reconnect services are run by a consortium led by Wingate Avenue Community Centre (WACC). NMLL and Kensington Neighbourhood House are members of the consortium.

A Homework Club, run by The Centre, is hosted every Wednesday from 5pm-6.30pm. This supports students in years 5-9 with their homework needs and complements other local Homework support services.

We bought more than 60 laptops for the Tech Connect program and also for the students to attend online classes. Laptops were provided to all the students who needed one to participate in online classes. All the laptops had been properly set up by our IT specialist Carlo Carabella.

Acknowledgement

It was a tough year but was great to see students coming to class with a smile and trying hard to attend online classes during the lockdown. I appreciate and would like to acknowledge all the hard work done by the teachers to develop the learning materials and to be supportive to all the students.

I would like to acknowledge and appreciate all the support I had from Administration Assistant Nicole Li during the lockdown. Finally, many thanks to the NMLL general manager Cliff, Sam the education coordinator, CD staff, IT, finance, and all the students and community members for their help and support in 2021.

Manatosh Chakma



EDUCATION AND COMPLAINTS COORDINATOR'S

Report

In the second year of Covid-19, another year of exceptional circumstances, NMLL continued to deliver its education programs and associated compliance requirements with resilience and determination. **Flexible learning approaches using online platforms and a range of digital devices, supported by course work books, were essential features of delivery.** They enabled NMLL to reach and engage with students ensuring that their learning and social participation had continuity. All of its major programs were delivered: The Federal Government's Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), and the Victorian Government's Skills First accredited courses and the Adult Community and Further Education programs.

The AMEP, NMLL's largest education program, underwent major legislative changes, which took effect from April 19, 2021. The changes included:

- Removing the 510 hours limit on a person's entitlement to free English tuition
- Raising the upper limit for AMEP eligibility (and exit point for the program) from functional English to vocational English
- Removing the time limits on enrolling, commencing and completing tuition for eligible migrants who first arrived in Australia on / or before 1 October 2020.

These changes have resulted in more clients eligible for the program and an increase in the AMEP NMLL enrolment. Enrolment numbers are expected to grow in 2022.

Alongside these changes, the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) who is responsible for the AMEP, consulted on what the AMEP should look like in the future and, informed by the consultations, have published a proposed AMEP model. The new model will be finalised before the next AMEP Request for Tender (RFT) to be released in 2022. **The new AMEP model is output rather than input based,** and its central feature is payment based on achievement of accredited units and certificates of the English as an Additional Language (EAL) curriculum which will be used by all AMEP providers across Australia. **These changes pose challenges but also provide opportunities.** NMLL has the capacity and the capability to maximise student learning outcomes and manage its reporting requirements. Reporting on unit and certificate outcomes already started in the second half of 2021 despite the limitations of the current AMEP Management Reporting System (ARMS) used by DHA. Selection of the units of study within EAL courses and certificates still remains true to the curriculum demands of the EAL Framework and responds to the needs of students enrolled in the program. These are not the only expected changes to the AMEP model - others include a greater emphasis on student pathway support and delivery of classes from the community and other Learn Local venues.



Expanding and diversifying delivery venues and working with Learn Local and multipurpose community agencies to address the learning and employment needs of client cohorts have been the strengths of NMML in 2021, and this despite Covid-19, or perhaps because of it. Offsite delivery is valuable to NMML, its clients, its staff and its future. We continued our work with the River Nile Learning Centre (RNLC) to deliver the EAL accredited program at the RNLC venue in Victoria Street West Melbourne. The women's only program was developed with regard to their needs, hopes and aspirations. The program is under the Skills First Victorian Government's contract. Some of the students face multiple issues, and an aspect of the program is the social support element provided by the RNLC. This partnership is valuable for both NMML and the RNLC, and should continue in the foreseeable future.

Similar thinking was behind the collaboration between NMML and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) on a program developed by NMML with input from VACCA. As we could not have in person classes due to Covid-19, the program was delivered online and focused on the digital literacy needs of indigenous elders. **The co-design consultation with the VACCA leadership and NMML, ensured that the program was tailored to the needs of indigenous elders.** This program was supported by the Victorian Government's Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board.

The digital literacy for parents' class was one other initiative which saw NMML partner with Kensington Neighbourhood House (KNH), focusing on the digital literacy skills required by students to better engage with the primary and secondary schools of their children. More and more schools are going paperless to communicate with parents, and to engage with teaching and administration staff has become for many parents and guardians difficult. The program, supported with funding from the ACFE Board, considered ways of communicating with schools, including becoming familiar with key aspects of Compass, a student learning and management system used by many schools. The program is expected to develop further in 2022, with a greater focus on how best to use Compass and maximise its communication features between parents and schools. This initiative requires additional consultation with schools in the area, particularly Debney Meadows Primary and Mount Alexander College, but could also be extended to other schools such as North Melbourne Primary. We are planning to deliver it from primary and secondary schools to give the program a relevance that is immediate and practical.

The strategy of working with other agencies to deliver programs can also be seen in the ACFE Board funded Skills for Work and Study (SFWS) Health Course program. The program has been rescheduled for 2022 due to COVID lock downs and restrictions, and planning is under way with education institutions including TAFE and employers operating in the health sector, particularly aged care specialising in home care, an area of great need. Programs like the Health Course must be promoted for their immediate relevance and pathway aspects so crucial in an area that has been growing over many years but particularly recently. Once again, **this development fits well in the NMML Engagement Education and Employment Pathways model that frames NMML operations, collaborations and services.**

We used a classroom at the West Melbourne Baptist Church Community Centre and at the North Melbourne Community Centre due to COVID restrictions on social distancing when we resumed in-person classes.

Community venues such as these should be seen beyond the pandemic as positive ways to expand the NMML program and to work together with other similar minded organisations. We seek opportunities that are real and worth pursuing for the benefit of clients and NMML.

Looking forward to 2022, NMML submitted to the ACFE Board for funding for a greater number of digital literacy programs to be run either as stand-alone or integrated with the accredited language, literacy and numeracy courses. **Digital literacy is a priority at NMML which evolves and strengthens from year to year.** In 2022 NMML will run digital literacy skills development courses – Digital Essentials Level 1 and Level 2. Underpinning digital literacy programs is the aim to strengthen people's digital literacy skills for work, study and broader social inclusion objectives.



In 2021 the Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) VETStat updated the results from the 2021 Student Satisfaction Survey and 2021 Employer Satisfaction Survey. NMLL results have been pleasing over the years, and 2021 showed that students who had participated in our courses had responded positively to questions about their learning experience at NMLL and their learning outcomes. In both areas **NMLL was well above or above the Victorian average**, with the only exception being the category 'the proportion of VET students with an improved employment status after training' which was below average. This is not surprising as all courses at NMLL are VET foundation study entry level programs and not apprenticeships or have a work practicum. Specifically, the independent research demonstrated gains in the following areas of enquiry: positive perception of teaching; positive perception of the assessment process; achieved their main reason for training; proportion of VET students who went on to further study at a higher level than their completed training; proportion of VET students who would recommend NMLL.

In the second year of the pandemic when most of the delivery was once again online, **the focus of professional development continued to be on honing and expanding digital skills**, and becoming more adept using them to engage with students. There is greater understanding of the value of online and flexible delivery and staff have been supported to undertake webinars and workshops through various outlets such as the VET Development Centre, Adult Community Education Victoria (ACEVic), and Adult Learning Australia (ALA). **Digital literacy is so much a part of the way the world communicates, empowers, learns and works, that it is a standard feature of professional development.** The medium is digital in much of what we do, including participation in Community of Practice (CoP) groups, such as those that explore low level and intermediate level EAL teaching, teaching different levels and different abilities in the same class, mental health, OHS and working from home, moderation and validation

activities, and accessing portals that house resources and webinars that enrich the teaching profession. In 2021 NMLL teachers shared their knowledge of websites focused on EAL that are level specific and compiled resources (with links) mostly available at no charge. This professional development toolkit is essential for teachers so that they are better able to expose students to digital learning and to the benefits of such learning: learning independence and confidence, curiosity about the world, finding areas that are valued and worth learning, and connecting and engaging with the local and global community.

For the record, **NMLL received its RTO re-accreditation after a stringent audit by independent auditors engaged by the Government's Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)**, as noted in the previous Annual Report. We knew at the end of 2020 that the auditors were fully satisfied that our systems were compliant and found no non-compliance at all. It is important to note that the RTO re-registration audit is the same for postsecondary institutions delivering accredited adult education and training, such as TAFEs. The re-accreditation is testament to the diligence, policies and processes that NMLL has in place to guarantee quality training under the VRQA and the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF).

Despite the considerable difficulties of working for most of 2021 under COVID 19 lockdowns and restrictions post lock downs, NMLL has come through with a proud record. All who work at NMLL – teachers, administration staff, volunteers, Community Development colleagues and students are champions. Thank you. **My heartfelt thanks go especially to the teachers and the administrative staff who work so hard in such difficult times on complex contracts and systems to make sure that the program has the quality and the integrity to respond to the diverse needs of our multicultural community.**

Sam Navarra



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR'S

Report

COVID continued to dominate our work in 2021 and presented ongoing challenges to our community development (CD) work where face-to-face is the preferred mode of participation in our activities. There was a general weariness as collectively Melbournians came out of our sixth lockdown and 260 days of strict COVID restrictions over a 2-year period. At the same time there was a little more optimism with vaccines becoming available towards the end of the year.

NMLL's CD programs continued to adapt to the COVID environment. The CD team took the few opportunities between outbreaks to conduct some CD programs face-to-face – such as the Flourish, Men's Talk Project, Community Champions and Integrate. These are summarised below.

Flourish

2021 continued with NMLL food-based programs focused on skill development and celebrating cultures and traditions through food. Six videos were produced with local community cooks showcasing traditional recipes from their countries of origin. The videos replaced our usual face-to-face community workshops that NMLL has been running over the past 5 years. To view some of these videos visit the NMLL Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/northmelblanguagelearning>. *Thankyou to our Flourish participants – Sadiyo, Halima, Shahid, Fahan, Aheda, Furdus – for your involvement in the Flourish program and for generously sharing traditional recipes that are important to them.*

Men's Talk

In 2021 NMLL consulted with 84 men who live or connected to the inner north west of Melbourne as part of a series of focus group sessions and targeted survey. They shared the challenges they, and others in their community, face in their employment journey in Australia. They provided insights into the supports required for their career and work aspirations. Focus group sessions and consultations with the men began as face-to-face interactions and had to moved online during the lockdowns. Thankyou to all the men who participated in the focus group sessions and survey. The information from the Men's Talk project has been used (and will continue to be used) to advocate for improvements in employment service delivery and used to inform the Paving the Way Forward (PTWF) employment initiatives.

Community Champions (interrupted)

The origins of this program are firmly placed in supporting local community members to make informed decisions about education and employment options as well empowering members of the local community to be the information gatekeepers. Although the Community Champions Program was interrupted by COVID lockdowns and hampered then participants ability to fully experience the outcomes of this program, NMLL appreciates the time, effort and participation of our Community Champions in 2021 and in previous years. Thankyou.

Integrate

The Integrate program emerged from community feedback and our learnings from delivering programs and community consultations over several years. Starting as a food-based pathways program called “Home-made”, COVID restrictions led NMLL to change direction to develop the “Integrate” program. The Integrate program emerged from a co-design process in 2021 with previous NMLL program participants. This process identified a weakness in the services system: although a range of services are locally available, often community members were not aware of the services. Integrate creates a link between services and community members. The NMLL CD Worker works with members of the community and services to facilitate a link between the community member and service participant.

NMLL acknowledges the generous support of the Scanlon Foundation who have provided two years of funding for this project. The Scanlon Foundation have been extremely flexible in supporting the changes in direction to this program. Without that flexibility and trust NMLL would not have been able to deliver the Integrate Program – which is fast becoming an important community program linking community members and services.

A focus on building on our participant’s digital skills continued throughout 2021 within our programs and through advocacy campaigns, including:

- Participation in Community Agencies for Digital Inclusion (CADI) – NMLL advocated for digital inclusion of public housing residents in North Melbourne, Carlton and Kensington through our continued work with CADI and through local, members of parliament, Ellen Sandell and Adam Bandt.
- The CD team supported the procurement of over 60 laptops through the generous grants from City of Melbourne, Collier Charitable Fund and HMS Trust to continue to build the digital skills of NMLL learners and program participants. NMLL students are now able to access laptops for use during class and at home to support their digital learning and skills building.
- Wi-Fi upgrades for Tech Connect Digital Drop-in – the CD team successfully secured funding through the HMS Trust to support the digital upgrades for the Tech Connect Digital drop-in service. The aim of Tech Connect is provide free access to laptops and internet, quiet work and study spaces and digital expertise for NMLL students and North Melbourne communities.

Adult Learner’s Week 2021 – in September 2021 NMLL celebrated Adult Learner’s Week with an online event with NMLL students, volunteers and supporters. This was a wonderful and positive event and a hallmark of how far students have come with their digital literacy skills. This event was the inaugural online event for all NMLL students as they had wrestled a range of digital inclusion (exclusion) challenges over 2020-21 COVID lockdowns. The Adult Learners Week Event was a testament to the commitment and tireless work of the English teachers during COVID and the persistence of our students.

NMLL's community development and engagement opportunities expanded in 2021 through our successful bid to deliver an innovative initiative focused on North Melbourne Public Housing residents subject to the hard lockdowns of 2020. NMLL formed a partnership with – Drummond Street Services (DSS) and Mission Australia (MA) – to lead the delivery of the PTWF initiative in North Melbourne in conjunction with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). The PTWF project is a one-year initiative funded over 2021-2022. In 2021 the North Melbourne PTWF Community Partner was involved in coordinating resident consultations and was an active participant of 2021 Resident Action Groups (RAGs) that focused on a co-design and problems solving process with public housing residents from North Melbourne and Flemington. The Action Groups focused on problem-solving key issues around Communications, Maintenance, COVID response and Community Facilities and Spaces. A further update of the progress of this initiative will be provided in the following Annual Report.

After years of a stable CD team, the CD team experienced staff changes during 2021.

- Nikki Blanch left her role as the Community Development Worker after five years of service to pursue other career opportunities. Nikki was a valued member of the CD team and NMLL and continues to be a friend of this community and NMLL's work. On behalf of all of us collectively I would like to thank Nikki for her tireless work and commitment to our community. Nikki left a legacy which reflects her personal flair and significant communication skills. Please visit our Facebook where there are a range of short-videos and photos of Nikki's work throughout that time.
- Abdiqadir Muhamed joined our CD team for the first part of 2021 and worked on the Men's Talk Project. Although Abdiqadir's time with NMLL was short, his passion for working in this sector was evident and he tackled this complex project with enthusiasm and brought some great insights and connections for NMLL. Abdiqadir introduced NMLL to sweet Somali tea as a regular Friday treat for NMLL staff. Abdiqadir remains a friend of NMLL and continues to connect with the CD team in his current role with cohealth.
- Kymie Simpson took over the role of Community Development Worker in September 2021. The COVID lockdowns meant Kymie started in her CD role remotely. Kymie's first connection to the NMLL community was at our online Adult Learner's Week event with NMLL students and volunteers. As soon as the lockdowns enabled face-to-face interactions Kymie was out there in the community meeting with NMLL students and community members. Kymie has brought her own personal touch to the role creating a friendly and welcoming environment for students and community members as they return to a COVID-normal life. The popular cherry-picking excursions took place in December for 50 of our students after a 2 year gap. Designing and establishing the Integrate Program Model was also another key activity for Kymie in 2021.



Looking forward to 2022 from 2021 the CD team moves towards;

- Building on and learning from our new way of working with our community and, at the same time, reconnecting with our community face-to-face in delivering a range of community-focused and cultural events in 2022.
- Continuing to prioritise supporting education and employment pathways for our community members
- Facilitating cultural exchange and understanding through community activities and events as we move to a COVID-normal way of living
- Prioritising and undertaking important advocacy work as identified through our engagements and consultations with our communities
- Prioritising co-design in our CD work and extending this practice to co-delivery. Co-design describes a work practice that prioritises working with and alongside our communities to develop and design programs and activities. Co-delivery describes a work practice of working alongside and with our community to deliver these programs and activities together. This practice has been articulated and will continue to evolve in the NMLL CD principles and practices statement.

Loretta Asquini



THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A sincere thank you to all our supporters from the North Melbourne community and beyond. Your contribution makes an immeasurable difference to the lives of many.



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