



2024

Annual Report



nmll North Melbourne
Language & Learning



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 Peoples and their elders past, present and emerging.



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Our Mission

To build the knowledge and skills of individuals and communities to assist them achieve their goals and participate successfully in the Australian community.

Our Values

Our values will be reflected in our behaviour and the way we work:



Compassion

We are sensitive, understanding and caring in our service of each other and all people



Integrity

We are honest, accountable, transparent and fair in our work and relationships



Respect

We treat each person as we expect to be treated and offer acceptance and support in the face of challenges



Creativity

We develop and co-design effective, innovative and sustainable ways to fulfil our mission



Diversity

We build social cohesion by creating opportunities to engage and value everybody to celebrate diversity



Celebration

We recognise and celebrate the efforts and achievements of our students and participants, their families, and our staff and volunteers

CHAIRPERSON'S *Report*

I am very pleased to present North Melbourne Language and Learning's (NMLL's) report for 2024.

In 2024, the strength of NMLL and the challenges facing organisations in our sector were both very evident.

The key issue for the Committee of Management during the year was the problem of relocating NMLL in 2025 when the organisation has to move due to the demolition of the housing tower where we are located. Finding a suitable new home has been complex. NMLL has had very concessional rent for many years so paying a commercial rent was not an option. As a result, we explored a range of possibilities and had numerous discussions with the Victorian government, the City of Melbourne and not-for-profit organisations doing similar work to NMLL.

Talking to these organisations reminded me again of the important work NMLL has done in the North Melbourne community for many years. Formed in 1989, NMLL originally provided English language classes, and this has remained central to our work. Over the past seven years, more than 750 students have attended English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes at NMLL, while there have been more than 3,000 enrolments in pre-accredited courses. In 2024 there were people from 30 countries enrolled in classes at NMLL, speaking more than 13 languages.

Over time, however, we have developed into a broader community hub, providing space and administrative support for a range of community services. In 2024 these included the North Melbourne Public Housing Tenants Association, the Uniting Employment Service, the City of Melbourne's North Melbourne Neighbourhood Partner, Drummond Street's Family Services staff, a Homework Club, The Venny to You active play service for children, and a food pantry.

As always, NMLL's contribution to the community has depended on many people and organisations.

The dedication, hard work and enthusiasm of NMLL's staff and particularly the General Manager Cliff Rundle has been essential to NMLL's success during 2024. I am again also grateful to our accountant, Robert Pisano, who has provided invaluable assistance for many years.

Not-for-profits like NMLL rely on financial support from a range of sources, and I would like to thank all the organisations that provided the funding vital to NMLL's continuing operation. And my sincere thanks go to the volunteers and community members who have helped NMLL in many ways to improve the lives of people we work with.

In 2024 the members of the Committee of Management continued to generously give their time and expertise, reflecting their commitment to supporting the diverse communities of North Melbourne. During the year the Committee welcomed four new members who brought important new skills and experience. Two Committee members resigned during the year and I would like to thank Catharine O'Grady and Abdiqadir Muhamed for their valuable contributions.

So, on behalf of the Committee of Management of North Melbourne Language and Learning Inc., I am pleased to share with you the Annual Report for the year ending 31st December 2024.

David Lansley



TREASURER'S *Report*

Overview

2024 was another year of both financial challenge and achievement for NMLL. The challenges were not new to NMLL – rising costs, ongoing funding constraints, and limited resources – but are becoming more difficult to navigate. Compounding these issues is the uncertainty surrounding our required relocation in late 2025, due to the upcoming redevelopment of the Alfred Street towers (discussed below). All of these factors continued to place pressure on our operational planning, financial management, and broader organisational sustainability. They also reinforce the **ongoing balancing act between generating income, managing costs, and maintaining the reach and quality of our services.**

Despite the challenges, NMLL successfully managed to balance its budget for the year, meet increased demand for its services, and retain appropriate financial buffers to support its planning and ongoing operations.

Income and Expenditure

(Figures are rounded where appropriate)

In 2024, NMLL generated total income and expenditure of just over \$1 million. Despite substantial financial pressures, we closed the year with a modest annual surplus of \$866.

This marked our ninth successive annual surplus, which is a notable achievement given rising operational costs and ongoing constraints in funding and resources.

Compared to the previous year, income increased by \$116,000 (13%) and expenditure by \$125,000 (14%). The growth in overall activity mainly reflected expansion in education program delivery to meet increasing demand, alongside the continued impact of cost inflation.

In terms of income, around two-thirds was attributable to the Further Education program, including activity under the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) (in partnership with Melbourne Polytechnic) and Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) program (funded by the Victorian government). The balance of income mainly came from core community development services and support activity (funded by the Victorian Government and City of Melbourne), as well as other one-time project activity. The overall increase in income reflects the organisation's ongoing efforts to respond to growing community demand, and to strengthen its service offerings and income potential.

In terms of expenditure, the growth in spending reflected increased resourcing to support expanded program activity, and the impact of ongoing cost inflation, including for mandated increases in staffing costs. Underlying cost growth continued to outpace indexation in government funding – some funding rates have remained relatively stagnant over several years – putting added pressure on the organisation's ability to maintain services without additional income generation or cost control.

It is important to note that while we achieved a surplus in 2024, this was partly supported by one-off project funding and cost containment measures that may not be replicable in future years. The structural imbalance between income growth and cost inflation remains a central concern for our planning and management efforts.

Cash and Net Assets

(Figures are rounded where appropriate)

NMLL's cash holdings at the end of the year totalled \$428,000, down \$71,000 from \$499,000 the previous year. This planned reduction mainly reflected the spending during the year of grant funding received in the prior year (that was received in advance of the associated activities) plus investments in capital expenditure/asset upgrades. Despite the decrease, cash levels remained healthy throughout and continued to support ongoing service delivery and operational stability.

Fixed asset spending during the year totalled just over \$28,000, mainly for furniture and equipment upgrades (which were mostly government grant-funded) and continued to improve the functioning of our program spaces.

Net assets at the end of the year totalled \$367,000, unchanged from the prior year. Of this, \$79,000 was tied in long-term physical assets (including for the new asset spending described above) with the remaining \$289,000 comprising cash and other 'liquid' net assets. This liquid reserve or effective working capital underwrites NMLL's planning and ongoing operations and remains appropriate for NMLL's circumstances, particularly with addressing the risks and opportunities ahead.

Planning and Relocation

One of the most significant challenges ahead is the anticipated relocation of our premises from late 2025, following the planned redevelopment of the Alfred Street towers. While the exact timing and location are yet to be confirmed, NMLL has been actively working to secure alternative accommodation and reviewing options for its operations during and after transition. We are actively engaging with government to secure support for this process.

At present, the full financial and operational impact of the relocation cannot be accurately determined. However, it is clear that the continuation of our existing operations will depend heavily on securing government assistance, particularly in accessing appropriate premises in the North Melbourne area.

While we are confident that operations can continue with adequate support, some adaptation may be required to align with changing conditions.

Conclusion

Despite rising costs, funding challenges, and upcoming uncertainties, NMLL has demonstrated strong financial and operational management throughout. We closed the year in a stable position, both in terms of our program delivery and financial health. However, the path ahead requires close monitoring and continued diligence, and support from our stakeholders, in navigating the financial challenges and significant upcoming transitions.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to express sincere thanks to our amazingly dedicated and committed staff, our funding partners, and our inspiring participants. Your collective efforts continue to drive the mission of NMLL and improve life outcomes for the members of our community.

Summary of results for the year ended 31 December 2024

Note: Summary figures in this report are extracted from the full annual financial accounts of NMLL for the year ended 31 December 2024.

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.

	2024	2023
Income	1,017,641	901,335
Expenditure	(1,016,775)	(892,194)
Net surplus for year	866	9,141
Cash held at end of year	427,849	498,438
Other short-term assets	76,966	103,527
Long-term fixed assets	78,661	73,092
Total liabilities	(216,027)	(308,474)
Net assets at end year	367,449	366,583

Christopher Harding

GENERAL MANAGER'S *Report*

Visitors and staff often comment about the positive vibe at NMLL. Many departed staff say it is one of the things they most miss. Students put it differently and say NMLL is a very good place to be at.

Whatever the expression, **NMLL is a place people value and want to be involved with.**

Many factors create the vibe. Part of it is about the friendly atmosphere, the smiles and the ever-present laughter. Another part of it is about the positive energy of teachers, CD staff, volunteers, administration staff and the hosted services.

It is also the result of the constant refinement of educational engagement and delivery, of working with students to progress from where they start to the point where they meet their goals. It is also the result of the community development team continually and more broadly engaging with the diverse communities to co-design services that address expressed needs. It's the result of a diverse, helpful and multilingual administration team. The Pathway Support Program (PSP) and the weekly onsite presence of Drummond Street have also contributed through improved student support and assistance to deal with issues that would otherwise prevent some students' continuation.

Ultimately the vibe is about the diversity of everyone working together, seamlessly with respect and purpose.

In my view the collective performance reached new levels in 2024. From the perspective of purpose, people, finance and environment it is evident that NMLL's underlying strategies are making a positive difference. The following reports provide more detail. The financial performance is particularly pleasing being the ninth successive annual surplus, delivered when many similar organisations finished with a deficit or closed.

As noted in the Chairperson's report the public housing redevelopment and the imminent demolition of the Alfred Street tower is the harbinger of huge changes. NMLL has worked with the diverse communities of North Melbourne for 36 years.

During relocation negotiations with Ministers, MPs and senior bureaucrats it is often remarked that the work and services provided by NMLL are wonderful, highly valued and appreciated. The level of support during the relocation will test the strength of those sentiments.

As a place-based organisation with funding tied to delivery in the North Melbourne neighbourhood, NMLL needs to be funded to re-establish in new premises within the neighbourhood.

Thankyous

Although a small organisation NMLL's work involves the contributions of many people. Firstly, my thanks go to the entire NMLL staff for their commitment, innovation and tenacity throughout the year. Thank you to the Committee of Management for their direction, advice, commitment and support of the organisation and me. A big thankyou to the hosted services that operate from NMLL's shared office. Last but not least, to our accountant Robert Pisano and our ITC contractor Carlo Carabella, who are both champion problem solvers.

It would be remiss not to acknowledge the vital resources received from Governments and funding organisations. In particular Skills First, AMEP and ACFE which fund education programs, the City of Melbourne and DFFH for funding community development activities and the following organisations and government departments for funding projects conceived and delivered by NMLL: the Department of Transport and Planning for the Catch-up and Gathering @33 projects that resourced the refurbishment of the community "shed", now a highly valued community resource, and Greater Western Water who have funded the popular fortnightly Food Markets.

Looking Forward

As a place-based organisation NMLL sees the on-ground effects of funding and social policy decisions and believes its important these be communicated to decision makers. To that end NMLL participates in local, regional, state and national debates and developments affecting the Adult Community Education (ACE) sector. NMLL is a Board member of the ACEVic, the Victorian peak body for community-based registered training organisations (RTOs) and Lean Local Organisations (LLO), is a member to the ACFE Board's Sector Advisory Group and an active member of various local and regional forums. Through these channels NMLL is engaged in debates about funding, the reform of ACFE delivery, housing, the public housing relocation program and local food provision systems amongst other issues.

An important issue is the longer-term viability of the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector. With costs escalating faster than income it is increasingly difficult for small community-based RTO/LLO/NHs to remain financially viable. The continued closures of ACE organisations around Victoria and the consequent loss of employment, services, opportunities and potential underline the concern. In the current climate these closures occur exactly when the employment, services and support are most needed.

Directly addressing these issues as well as building financially sustainable businesses is a challenge NMLL and the ACE sector must continue to grapple with. Advocacy on these matters will continue as an important part of NMLL's work.

I'm proud to work at and lead an organisation that continues to adapt and make positive contributions to peoples' lives. There is much to do and I'm looking forward to maintaining the vibe and working with the NMLL committee of management and staff and local communities in 2025.

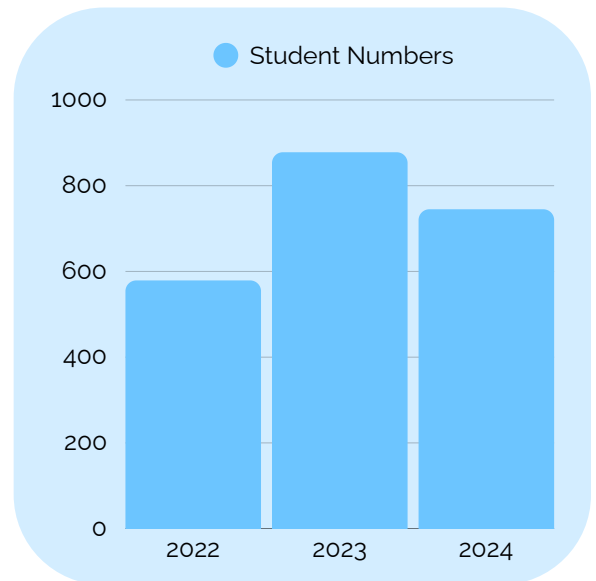
Cliff Rundle

Despite the challenges brought on by the relocation of high-rise buildings around North Melbourne, NMLL had another productive and rewarding school year in 2024. This success was made possible by the dedicated efforts of both staff and students.

2024 Enrolment

This year, NMLL saw a total of 745 enrolments—a 15% decrease from 2023's 878. This decline resulted from the strategic decision to scale back on external course delivery and focus more on in-house programs to better meet students' needs.

NMLL continued to serve a culturally rich and diverse student body.



More than half of the learners were from African countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, and Egypt. Other students hailed from Asian nations including China, Vietnam, and Afghanistan, as well as Middle Eastern countries like Iran and Iraq. While students ranged in age from 18 to over 70, most were of working age. Women continued to make up the majority of enrolments, accounting for 84%.

Broadened Range of Activities

A wide array of accredited English as an Additional Language (EAL) courses was offered, ranging from foundational to vocational levels. These were funded under the Governments' Skills First and AMEP (Adult Migrant English Program) initiatives and were available to eligible participants. In addition to classes at North Melbourne, NMLL launched a new middle-level English course at the Djerring Flemington Hub to reduce the waiting list for students.

NMLL also delivered ACFE-funded pre-accredited programs such as General English and Digital Literacy at both the main centre and River Nile Learning Centre (RNLC). Short courses aimed at enhancing specific language skills like speaking, listening, reading, and writing were also available for EAL students.

The ACFE-supported Pathway Support Program (PSP) was once again accessible to all EAL students. It offered tailored guidance on educational planning and career development through resources, information sessions, and referrals to relevant services.

The much-loved Cherry Picking end-of-year excursion, organised by the Community Development (CD) team, took place as usual. However, due to rising costs, attendance dropped by half, with around 50 participants, including students and local residents. Nevertheless, all of them enjoyed a memorable and joyful experience with family and friends.

After Hour Use and Hosted Services

NMLL continued to host a range of weekly and after-hours services. A new initiative by Drummond Street Family Services brought social workers to the centre every Tuesday to assist students with issues like Centrelink, housing, homelessness, and mental health.

NMLL's Homework Club, facilitated by The Centre, saw a significant rise in attendance. It ran every Wednesday afternoon for students in Grades 4 to 10 and operated alongside the Venny's mobile adventure play program, which featured fun activities and a bike program in the green space outside NMLL.



Volunteering and Staff Development

NMLL's long-standing volunteer program continued to thrive. This year, two administrative volunteers, both current students and local residents, joined the team and later transitioned into paid staff roles. Such progression is common at NMLL, where volunteers often gain valuable work experience and networking opportunities, often leading to employment.

The addition of these two new team members further enriched the diversity and efficiency of the admin team. Their multilingual skills and varied cultural perspectives were invaluable for communication, understanding needs and processes such as student enrolment, language support in PSP meetings, and translation work for CD team projects.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to administration team members Furdus Suliman, Nabiha Said, Tien Doan, and Tri Febrina Kristin for their outstanding contributions to the administration team and the broader NMLL community. Their commitment to supporting adult learners ensured smooth operations throughout the year.

On behalf of the admin team, I also extend heartfelt gratitude to the General Manager, teaching staff, CD staff, IT, finance, students, and community members for their ongoing collaboration and support. Together, we successfully navigated another year of transitions and challenges. I look forward to continuing our work in 2025.

Hoang Nguyen

EDUCATION COORDINATOR'S ACCREDITED CLASSES

Report

In 2024, our commitment to delivering quality teaching and learning experiences in a safe and supportive learning environment, remained at the core of our activities, continuing to produce positive outcomes for our learners. Through our English language and digital literacy programs, our team of dedicated and professional teachers continued to advance our mission to empower adult learners from migrant and refugee backgrounds living in the North Melbourne community and surrounding suburbs.

Throughout the year NMLL continued to innovate to improve students' attendance, students' learning and progress toward their goals. Many activities contribute to this goal and include the increasingly diverse range of incursions and excursions, the Pathway Support Program (PSP), NMLL's network of visiting organisations, the integration of education and community engagement activities and the flow of ideas from staff.

Here is an overview of the educational activities throughout 2024.

Adult Migrant Education Program

The Commonwealth Government-funded Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) remains the largest student cohort at NMLL. In 2024, we saw continued growth in our AMEP enrolments and the consolidation of the classes at the Djerring Flemington Hub. NMLL is proud to be part of the Melbourne Polytechnic AMEP network, consisting of 15 TAFE providers and Learn Locals. Looking ahead to 2025, NMLL will provide support to Melbourne Polytechnic as it prepares a submission for the new AMEP contract. The new contract is likely to bring significant changes, which NMLL will need to navigate, highlighting the ever-evolving nature of the community adult education sector and the need for providers to remain adaptable and innovative in order to survive.



Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Programs

In 2024, NMLL launched an exciting new initiative, supported by funding from the Victorian Government, to enhance the learning experience for students with low-level English language skills.

This initiative focuses on providing small, intensive, and targeted literacy and oracy support to learners, designed to boost their foundational literacy skills in a relatively short period of time.

Delivered alongside their main classes, this additional support enables students to gain greater confidence and proficiency in both reading and speaking, helping them engage more fully in the classroom and beyond. By focusing on these core skills, we aim to provide a tailored learning experience that accelerates language development, creating a stronger foundation for learners to build upon as they progress in their studies and integrate into the broader community.

Digital Literacy Programs

Our Digital Inclusion Strategy, developed over several years, has become an integral part of NMLL delivery to EAL students. This strategy ensures that our students receive expert support in building essential digital skills. The Digital Essentials Level 1 and Level 2 courses provide valuable training to enhance students' digital literacy for work, study, and broader social inclusion.

Digital exclusion remains particularly pronounced among refugee communities, making these initiatives crucial. The programs are tailored to meet learners' diverse needs and abilities, with a focus on practical skills such as using smartphones for banking, downloading educational apps, navigating Google Maps, managing contacts, and ensuring privacy and security settings.



Pathway Support Program

The ACFE-funded PSP continued to thrive in 2024, with a focus on career planning, better alignment with the AMEP's Individual Pathway Goals (IPG), and building stronger networks with relevant services. This valuable program, available to all NMLL students, was developed and is delivered by our former Education Coordinator, Sam Navarria. It is designed to assist students in completing their current courses while also providing them with information related to education, vocational training, employment, settlement, and community involvement.

Community Connections and Learning

Each term NMLL students look forward to school-wide excursions, providing opportunities for new experiences in Melbourne. In 2024, our teachers and students visited several exciting and educational locations, including the Naarm Ngarru Library, Victoria Markets, the State Parliament of Victoria, the Melbourne Museum, Jean McKendry Neighbourhood Centre, and Port Melbourne Beach, where they participated in beach safety training with Surf Life Saving Australia.

These excursions, led by our enthusiastic and committed teaching team, provide students with the opportunity to practice their language skills outside the classroom, fostering a greater sense of community engagement.

Additionally, students participated in various educational events, including the AMEP Careers Fair at Epping Campus, Health Education Sessions at the AMES Multicultural Hub, and a Women's Health Education session, which covered important topics such as national health screening programs and reproductive health services.

Conclusion

The Education section of the 2024 Annual Report highlights our continued dedication to providing high-quality, engaging, and inclusive educational programs. We remain committed to fostering a supportive learning environment that empowers our students to thrive in both their personal and professional lives. As we look ahead to 2025 and beyond, we remain focused on driving positive educational outcomes and creating lasting impacts in the communities we serve.

Sarah Ward



EDUCATION COORDINATOR'S PRE-ACCREDITED CLASSES

Report

NMLL's pre-accredited classes play an important role in the education of our students. Funded by the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board, pre-accredited classes are intended to support adult learners in their efforts towards improved literacy and numeracy, as well as lifting their English language, digital and employability skills.

Language and Literacy

An important function of pre-accredited classes at NMLL has been supporting learners in their accredited courses. Operating as educational clinics for students needing extra support in one or more of the key English language macro-skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), these pre-accredited classes empower students to overcome the specific difficulties that they are facing in their English language acquisition and to help them maintain their progress towards their qualifications. These skills-focused courses, as well as general English units, at NMLL and at our partner organisations Djerring Flemington Hub and River Nile Learning Centre, significantly contribute to NMLL's mission to build students' knowledge and skills and to support them in the pursuit of their individual goals and community engagement. Many thanks to Apeksha Zhao, Monica Deitos Stedile and Peter Bonnell for their support for students' language learning needs.



Digital Essentials

Fundamental to this goal of improved social inclusion is fostering digital literacy, the objective of our Digital Essentials Level 1 and 2 courses. Digital technology is central not only to the educational goals of contemporary individuals, but to contemporary financial, social and cultural life. General life administration (bill paying, banking, housing and healthcare) and civic engagement are now next to impossible without digital literacy, and the barriers to digital inclusion for recently arrived refugees and other migrants can be especially high. Our Digital Essentials teachers, Apeksha Zhao, Kate Davis and Robert Domanski, work closely with students to determine what digital knowledge would make the most impact in their everyday lives. Developing and delivering lessons on basic typing and keyboard skills, privacy settings and cybersecurity/scam protection, the Digital Literacy team help students learn to save files, manage contacts, and locate reliable information, as well as using apps for banking, shopping and travel reservations.

Digital technology is central not only to the educational goals of contemporary individuals, but to contemporary financial, social and cultural life.

The quality of life improvements that resulted are not to be underestimated, and heartfelt appreciation goes out to the team for their tireless efforts in facilitating students' digital inclusion.

Pathway Support Program

2024 saw the continuation of the ACFE funded Pathway Support program, a 2023 initiative developed and coordinated by our highly experienced former Education Coordinator, Sam Navarro.

The PSP works with individual students to support the successful completion of their courses at NMLL through assistance with personal issues including food relief, housing security, citizenship, and health and family issues.

The PSP also focuses on specific employment needs and on supporting students on their journey to employment. Key to this process is helping individual students develop a career plan, learn job search and application strategies, and master employment application language and job interview techniques. Many thanks to Sam Navarra for his unflagging commitment to helping students improve their educational outcomes and prepare for future employment.

Looking Ahead

Our successful delivery of pre-accredited courses will allow us to offer more English, literacy and digital skills classes, as well as introducing numeracy classes. Our commitment to excellence in pre-accredited education and its core values of flexibility and its focus on learner needs will continue to support our students in meeting their educational and employment goals and facilitating their inclusion in Australian community life.

Jim McCormack

This past year was a year of momentum and refinement for the Community Development team together with the communities we work with.

Free Food Market

Our Free Food Market, funded by a Greater Western Water Thriving Communities grant, evolved from a community pantry which aimed to provide food relief through a 'take what you need, give what you can' approach, while topping the pantry up on a monthly basis with staples purchased from Food Bank. Reflecting on community feedback, we opted to transition to a 'Free Food Market' which aimed to provide a greater variety of foods at a set time on a fortnightly basis. Community members preferred this model of food relief because there was more food available (including fresh produce, which wasn't possible to distribute through the Pantry), and because they could rely on the regular timing of the market. By the end of 2024, we were seeing up to sixty community members from different households attending the Free Food Markets.

While this is a great achievement, it demonstrates the hardship that our students and community members of the North Melbourne Public Housing Estate are experiencing, with 48% of City of Melbourne residents experiencing food insecurity in 2024.[1]

This program was made possible by our Food Program Coordinator Sophie and our wonderful volunteers Sid, Susan and Ellen who ensured the smooth running of the project, particularly through the transition from pantry to market.

[1] Find Affordable Food in Melbourne:
<https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/news/find-affordable-food-melbourne>



Yarn Over

Our new social knitting and crochet group Yarn Over aims to provide space, materials and support for community members who are interested in fibre arts. Funded by the City of Melbourne's Community Inclusion grant, this fortnightly program began in July 2024 and quickly amassed a committed and diverse participant group, many of whom had learnt these skills in their countries of origin but who had fallen out of practise as a result of the cost of yarn and materials in Australia. This project prioritised sustainability, providing participants with donated and thrifted yarn, mill end yarns of various compositions (excess yarns that would have otherwise been discarded in the production process), and new yarns made from natural fibres including cotton, wool and bamboo. This exciting project will become part of NMLL's core programming in 2025 at the conclusion of the funding period due to the commitment of participants and volunteers.

NMLL WeChat

In 2024 we created an official NMLL WeChat group as part of our ongoing commitment to communicating with diverse communities. Our thriving WeChat forum serves as a conduit for information from service providers and local organisations, in addition to promotion of our programs and activities, which have seen a boost in participation levels as a result.

Capital Works

Our capital works program funded by the Federal Government's Living Local grant came to an end, improving our outdoor space by funding new lighting, outdoor heaters, café-style blinds around the perimeter of our patio, and a drinking fountain for humans, pets and wildlife. These improvements made the space significantly more functional, allowing us and community members to make use of the space for meetings, programs, recreational use and celebrations all year round. It helped to increase feelings of belonging and community spirit which were desperately needed, especially after community member's experiences of increased isolation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. While the State Government has committed the 33 Alfred St public housing tower to redevelopment, we will do everything possible to save and recycle elements of the upgrade for alternative use.



Redevelopment of the Public Housing Tower

The redevelopment of the public housing tower at 33 Alfred Street, NMLL's home for the past 18 years, was announced by the State Government in September 2023.

Since then, we have supported and advocated for residents and community members by maintaining open channels of communication with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Homes Vic, the City of Melbourne, Inner Melbourne Community Legal and community leaders. Our Community Development team continues to provide individual support to community members facing relocation, and has continued to share critical information through our social media channels.

We continued to support the North Melbourne Public Housing Residents Association (NMPHRA), which hit some exciting milestones in their first full year as an Incorporated Association in 2024. Demonstrating strong growth and commitment to purpose, NMPHRA ran a Community Fair, several large community meetings, advocated strongly on behalf of community members about the public housing redevelopment, and held its first Annual General Meeting in 2024. Our Community Development team supported NMPHRA in the background, providing guidance and assisting the facilitation of community meetings.

Volunteer Program

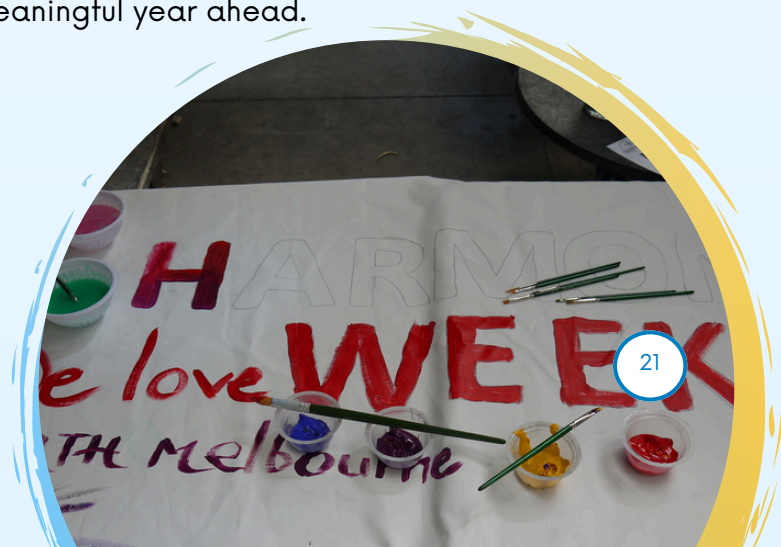
As part of our volunteer program, the Community Development team recruited 14 new volunteers to support our classrooms, administration team and food program. Some volunteers stayed with us for a semester, some for a year, and seven volunteers will continue with us into 2025. All of our volunteers, no matter how long they are with us, make a positive impact on the communities we serve and we remain humbled and deeply grateful at their commitment to supporting vulnerable communities with us.

Core Community Development Programs

In addition to these exciting events and achievements, we continued to deliver our core Community Development programs Neighbourhood Networking and Gardening@33, which aim to foster community connections while targeting social isolation. Each year the value of these 'tried and true' programs is evident in the confidence, joy and strengthening of the social fabric of the community members who participate.

The experiences and achievements of the past year have provided us opportunities to learn and adapt, instilling in us hope and purpose for a meaningful year ahead.

Kymerlee Simpson





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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