



Park Orchards
Community House
& Learning Centre

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Our Vision

*Strengthened Community Participation,
Capability Enhancement and Wellbeing*

Our Mission

*To Provide Opportunities for Equitable
Community Engagement Through
Social, Recreational and Learning
Activities*

Contents

Chairperson's Report	Page 4
Treasurers's Report	Page 6
Board of Management	Page 7
About us	Page 9
Manager's Report	Page 10
Value Statement	Page 11
Staff	Page 12
Vocational Education & Training	Page 14
Early Learning Centre	Page 16
Nurturing the Educators of Tomorrow	Page 17
Pre-accredited Training - ACFE	Page 18
Community	Page 20
Nature in Art	Page 22
Art in Everyday Places	Page 23
Scones Together	Page 24
Biggest Morning Tea	Page 25
Community Garden	Page 26
Acknowledgements	Page 27

Chairperson's Report

The year 2025 has been one of significant development and growth at Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre Inc (POCHLCI). A bright future is building at Park Orchards, with our growing number of participants and classes, alongside plans for the continued development of our centre. Amongst other priorities will be the development of a new Strategic Plan to guide us through the coming years.

Many of you will have noticed that the land alongside our current building has been cleared, and planning is underway for a new facility to be developed when funding becomes available. This will enable many more classes to take place in the one location and will resolve several longstanding issues regarding class venues. In the meantime, we continue to use all available venues to deliver our new and existing programs, and we remain focused on developing courses and classes that meet the needs of our community.

The Community Centre remains a vital hub for social connection and engagement within the Park Orchards community. It offers a welcoming and safe environment where people can meet, acquire new skills, further their education, improve their health and wellbeing and access childcare. We also provide opportunities to undertake accredited and pre-accredited courses, community programs, clubs, and social events, as well as pathways for personal growth and community involvement.

There has been significant growth in the number of hours offered within the ACFE (Adult, Community and Further Education) arena this year. Classes have increased and participant numbers have grown. We endeavour to offer courses that reflect what the community is asking for - so if there is a class you would like to see, please contact the Centre and register your interest.

I would like to sincerely thank all of our administration staff for the enormous work involved in increasing our ACFE hours, including the additional effort required to upskill and meet the requirements of the ACFE Stronger by Design model. This task has been undertaken with enthusiasm, professionalism, and great resilience, and it is deeply pleasing to see the growth in funded hours come to fruition. This has created vital pre-accredited training opportunities for our community.

2025 has been a truly outstanding year for our RTO, with an excellent completion rate among participants undertaking nationally recognised qualifications - we congratulate each and every one of them on their achievement. The range of qualifications on offer continues to reflect the needs and interests of our community, and the commitment and dedication shown by participants throughout their studies has been wonderful to see.

Recognised throughout the community for excellence, our childcare service has expanded its hours in response to requests from many families. We are now running with extended hours from 8:00am to 5:00pm as a response to our families. This year also saw our very first graduation ceremony for children leaving our childcare and heading off to school - an event received with tremendous enthusiasm and warmth. Congratulations to all who took part. Thank you to all our Early Learning Educators and leaders for your support, your care, and for putting such happy smiles on the faces of our youngest community members.

Our Scones Together program remains one of our most popular and cherished events, with seats filling quickly every time. Following the inaugural success of our Biggest Morning Tea in 2024, we made the decision to establish this as our major annual event — and 2025 delivered an even more memorable occasion than the year before.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Country Womens Association (CWA) for once again baking their wonderful scones, and to the many generous individuals and businesses in our community who donated prizes for the raffle and supported such a worthy cause. A special thank you also to the dedicated volunteers who helped bring this and all of our community events to life - your efforts never go unnoticed.

To all our staff — my heartfelt gratitude for your dedication, professionalism, and hard work throughout the past year. Your commitment is demonstrated every day in the manner in which you meet daily challenges and contribute to our activities and projects. A special thank you to Kelly for her outstanding leadership, initiative, and commitment to the team.

I would also like to thank my fellow Board members for their unwavering commitment, enthusiasm, and professionalism over the past twelve months. To John, Deputy Chair, Meg, Secretary, and Ron, Treasurer — thank you. Each of you has demonstrated dedication and care, and you play a crucial role in guiding and supporting the organisation's goals.

As we move into 2026, we are excited about what lies ahead and confident in our ability to grow with purpose and clarity. Together, we remain committed to advancing our mission and making a positive impact within our community and beyond.

Heather Edmonds
Chairperson



We extend our sincere thanks to the 2024 Board members for their commitment and leadership. We also warmly acknowledge our valued former Board members Mike Green, Sherry Hutton and Wendy Taylor for their contributions, and thank those who continue to guide and govern our organisation.

Treasurer's Report

It is my pleasure to present the Treasurer's Report for Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre Incorporated (POCHLCI) for the financial year ended 31 December 2025. This report provides an overview of our financial performance and year-end position, reflecting a period of significant activity and robust financial health.

Financial Performance (Profit and Loss)

POCHLCI concluded the 2025 financial year in an excellent position, reporting a Total Net Profit of \$133,659.00. This result was driven by a Total Income of \$1,707,934.

Our diverse revenue streams continue to provide stability and growth:

- **RTO & Accredited Training:** This remains our strongest performing sector, contributing \$582,055.
- **Childcare Services:** Our childcare programs generated significant engagement, with total income from fees and subsidies reaching \$522,724.
- **Community & ACFE Programs:** These core community pillars combined for a Gross Profit exceeding \$407,840 highlighting our success in delivering valued local programming.

On the expenditure side, Total Operating Expenses were \$1,573,975. As a service-based community organisation, our primary investment remains our people. Wages, Salaries, and Superannuation accounted for the vast majority of our costs, totalling \$1,185,404 across the organisation. We also during 2025 were approved for the Early Learning sector Worker Retention Grant, supporting the increase to wages for employees working in the Early Learning Centre where the increase is supported with this Government grant incentive for 2 years. We maintained significant investment in resources and facilities, including over \$145,746 for course expenditure and resources.

Financial Position (Balance Sheet)

As of 31 December 2025, the Balance Sheet remains exceptionally strong, characterised by high liquidity and a healthy asset base.

- **Assets:** Our Total Assets stand at \$1,189,943. This is underpinned by a very healthy cash position, with \$682,069 held in bank accounts, including over \$380,000 in a Term Deposit to ensure long-term stability. Our Fixed Assets total \$473,958, which includes the Childcare Relocatable Building and essential plant and equipment.
- **Liabilities:** Our Total Liabilities are \$65,385. These are primarily comprised of standard operational obligations, such as employee leave provisions and GST payable.
- **Equity:** The organisation's Net Assets and Total Equity sit at \$924,558. This represents the accumulated financial strength of POCHLCI and provides a significant buffer to support future initiatives and community service enhancements.

Summary

The 2025 financial year has been one of remarkable success. Achieving a net profit of \$133,959 while maintaining over \$924,000 in equity ensures that Park Orchards Community House is well-positioned to continue its mission.

Our accounts reveal a lean, efficient, and highly effective operation. These results are a testament to the hard work of our staff, tutors, and volunteers, as well as the ongoing support of our members and funding partners, including the Department of Education, Department of Family, Fairness and Housing and Manningham City Council.

We look forward to continuing to strengthen our financial position in future years while still continuing to deliver programs that responds to our community's needs.

Ron Carroll
Treasurer

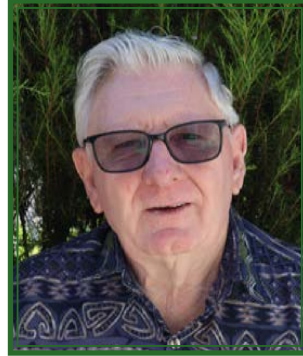
Board of Management



Heather Edmonds

Chairperson

Heather's experience spans both the public and private sectors, bringing a diverse range of skills and knowledge to the table. She has a strong background in business management, human resources, and workplace health and safety, and has applied this expertise across a variety of organisational settings.



John Balshaw

Deputy Chairperson

John has been a valuable member of the Board since 2014. With extensive experience as a First Aid trainer, he brings a deep understanding of vocational education and training (VET). His practical expertise has significantly contributed to the Board's overall effectiveness.



Ron Carroll

Treasurer

Ron's membership on the Board started in 2025. After a long career in the information technology industry as a consultant, he brings a wealth of knowledge to his position as Treasurer. Ron also brings expertise from previous board positions and experience in both the non-profit and private sectors.



Meg Downie

Secretary

Meg joined the Board in 2022. She has worked as a primary school teacher as well as a sales representative. In addition, she served as a Manningham Councillor from 2008 to 2016. Meg continues to be a passionate advocate for lifelong learning and community engagement.



Wendy Taylor

General Board Member

Resigned 2025

After immigrating to Australia from Scotland in 1975, Wendy was a primary school teacher for 40 years. Since retiring from teaching, Wendy has volunteered at Lifeline to run suicide intervention workshops known as ASIST and is the president of a Probus club. Welfare has always been important to her.

Belonging - Promoting a Sense of Community Spirit and Acceptance

Integrity - Honest, Ethical and Committed

Diversity - Recognise the Value of the Unique Contribution of Each and Every Individual

Sustainability - Striving for Excellence, Environmental Awareness and Resilience

Respect - Having Respect for Ourselves, Our Participants and the Service We Offer

About us

Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre Incorporated is a vibrant, community-based organisation committed to delivering quality opportunities for engagement through social, recreational, and educational activities.

In 1978, the Park Orchards School Council's community relations sub-committee launched a leisure time program, initially utilising the school art room. The program offered four courses in Term 1, 1979, taught by local tutors—marking the beginning of Park Orchards Leisure Time Activities (POLTA).

POLTA's mission was to create an environment that fosters lifelong learning for all members of the community. Park Orchards, often described as a village within the city, has a unique character, and we recognised the importance of supporting initiatives like POLTA to preserve and nurture this identity. The program's early success paved the way for the establishment of the Park Orchards Community House in 1983—a hub for learning and community development at 572 Park Road.

In 1986, the organisation became incorporated, and since then, we have undergone three building extensions to support our expanding range of programs. Today, we proudly offer a wide variety of activities and courses that reflect the evolving needs and interests of our community, including further education, arts and crafts, after-school programs, health and fitness, personal development, and early childhood education and care. We now operate across several locations, allowing us to broaden our reach and increase access to lifelong learning opportunities for more members of the community.

Our Early Learning Centre, also known as "Hilary's House," is well-regarded in the community as a safe, nurturing place where families can confidently leave their children while they work or study. Opened in 2019, this purpose-built facility—named after our long-time ELC Coordinator—is the result of years of dedicated work by our staff and Board. It offers a rich educational program and serves as a welcoming hub for community connection.

As a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre delivers nationally recognised Vocational Education and Training (VET), equipping learners with valuable skills for employment or further study. We offer a supportive learning environment with experienced trainers who are passionate about education and committed to student success. Whether individuals are entering the workforce for the first time, changing careers, or upskilling, our accredited training provides a solid foundation for achieving their goals.

In addition, we provide a range of pre-accredited courses, offering accessible pathways to future opportunities and lifelong learning.

These entry-level programs help build the confidence, knowledge, and skills needed to transition into further education or employment. Pre-accredited courses are especially valuable

for those returning to study, seeking to improve their language, literacy, numeracy, or digital skills, or wanting to re-engage with learning in a friendly and inclusive setting.

Our organisation is guided by a volunteer Board of Management, elected from within our membership. The Board provides strategic oversight and governance, ensuring our operations remain aligned with community needs and sector standards.

Our team is made up of a diverse group of dedicated professionals, including our Executive Manager, Assistant Manager, Finance Administrator, VET Co-ordinator, Community and ACFE Co-ordinator, Marketing and Administration, Early Learning Administrator, Early Learning Co-ordinator, and Early Childhood Educators.

We are also supported by a talented team of trainers, who bring a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to their work, ensuring the delivery of quality programs across all areas of learning. We remain grateful for the continued support of Manningham City Council, who own the buildings in which we operate and provide us with access to additional venues such as Domeney Recreation Centre for our accredited training and Warrandyte South Hall for health and wellbeing classes.

Manager's Report

Reflecting on 2025 at Park Orchards Community House and Learning Centre

This year has been one of growth, teamwork, and shared achievement for our team. I am incredibly proud of the commitment, support, and positive attitude shown throughout the year, especially during busy and challenging periods. Together, we celebrated many successes, strengthened the way we work together, and continued to support one another while delivering positive outcomes across the organisation. This report reflects not only the progress we have made as a team, but also the dedication, care, and hard work each person has contributed towards the strong performance and continued success at Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre.

Leading into 2025, we focused on continuing to grow and strengthen our programs and services across the organisation. This included expanding our Pre-Accredited Learn Local course offerings, developing new and engaging workshops and short courses, and securing Skills First funding to support our VET learners. We also remained committed to delivering a warm, welcoming Childcare Program that provided families with a place where children felt happy, safe, and excited to attend each day.

Over the last 10 years, we have increased participant intake by 67%, alongside an 18% growth in the number of programs offered. This demonstrates that our programs are not only expanding but are continuing to respond to the changing needs and interests of our community, with stronger attendance and engagement across all areas.

In 2025, an income of \$1.7 million generated more than \$14.5 million in value for our participants and community. This means that for every dollar of income received, we delivered over \$8.50 in social value, including almost \$787,910 in improved quality of life through social connection alone.

While we see the impact of our work every day through conversations with community members, students graduating, and children happily engaged in our childcare program, seeing these outcomes reflected so strongly in the data is both meaningful and inspiring.

The achievements outlined throughout this report would not have been possible without the dedication, passion, and commitment of our team. Every program delivered, every learner supported, and every positive community outcome achieved reflects the care and professionalism our staff bring to their roles each day. Their willingness to go above and beyond, support one another, and remain focused on delivering meaningful outcomes for our community has been truly valued. I would like to sincerely thank all staff for their hard work, resilience, and ongoing commitment to this success and the people we support.

We have a strong and dedicated team with over 139 years of service between them. On average our staff have been with us for an average of 6 years with two staff, Hilary Ramadge, Childcare Coordinator completing over 27 years leading our Early Learning Centre and almost 15 years for our Deputy Manager Lydia Denman. Thank you to all our team for this commitment to supporting our community.

This year, one of our key ongoing priorities has been continuing to work towards the delivery of a new Community House. With the age and limitations of our current building, this has been an important focus for many years. We sincerely thank Manningham City Council for their support and commitment in helping move this vision closer to reality through the acquisition of the site at 578 Park Road and the appointment of Perkins Architects to lead the design process. Together, we are working to create a welcoming and flexible space that reflects the needs, aspirations, and future growth of both Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre and the wider Park Orchards community.

Reflecting on the year, it is clear that the success of Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre comes from the people who make up our community; our staff, learners, families, volunteers, partners, and supporters. Thank you for your ongoing commitment, trust, and contribution throughout the year. We look forward to continuing this journey together and embracing the opportunities the future will bring.

Kelly Cooper
Executive Manager

Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre Incorporated

2025 - Real **Impact**. Real **Value**.

INCOME \$1,707,934

VALUE \$14,564,466

This figure includes the value of:

Improved quality of life through social connection:
\$787,910

Volunteer contributions: **\$130,754**

Services provided: **\$124,904**

Adult Community Education: **\$13,038,448**

Early childhood education and care: **\$482,449**

Services value includes:

Auspicing other organisations: **\$632**
• Fee for service activities: **\$124,272**

This community value equates to:

\$8.53 for every \$1 of income

\$142.75 for every \$1
of Neighbourhood House Coordination Program
funding

Over **\$5,608.19** for every hour the
neighbourhood house is in use

Employment value

17.6 FTE jobs

including 12.6 direct and 4.9 indirect
Full Time Equivalent positions

These values are produced by Neighbourhood Houses Victoria based on data provided by Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre Incorporated in the 2025 Neighbourhood Houses Survey. Only a limited range of activities where a determinable valuation method exists are included.

Staff



Kelly Cooper
Executive Manager



Lydia Denman
Assistant Manager



Stephanie Hurley
Finance Officer



Cathryn Harris
VET Co-ordinator



Jess Ali
Administration and
Program Support



Melody Solomons
Community Program
Coordinator



Germaine Crabtree
Learning Administration
Officer



Robyn Sheridan
Childcare Administrator &
Early Childhood Educator



Hilary Ramadge
Early Childhood
Co-ordinator



Sarah Wild
Assistant Coordinator/
Early Childhood
Educator



Kumin Davis
Assistant Coordinator/
Early Childhood
Educator



Micaelia Doolan
Early Childhood Educator



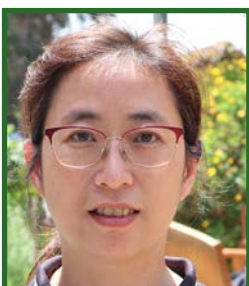
Harpinder Chand
Early Childhood Educator



Wei Chen
Early Childhood
Educator



Debbie Bambridge
Early Childhood
Educator



Wen Yue Liu
Early Childhood
Educator



Rida Reyes
Early Childhood
Educator



Nadine Kinniff
Early Childhood
Educator



Vocational Education & Training

In 2025 we continued our strong growth of the RTO by continuing to deliver the maximum number of commencements under our Skills First contract (Victorian state government funding), as well as expanding our RTO commercial offerings. During the year we offered two qualification upgrades, fee for service (CHC30121 and TAE40122), and an industry update for Early Learning staff of the CHCPRT025 Identify and report children and young people at risk, child protection unit.

A major milestone this year was delivering three CHC50121 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care face to face classes. This was due to changes to staffing around Diploma qualified early learning staff and strong graduation numbers from our Certificate III in Early Childhood led to three Diploma level classes being delivered in the one calendar year, with great success.

Our programs were supported by both the Reconnect initiative (providing student fee and resource assistance) and ACFE-funded Study Skills sessions.

Programs Delivered in 2025:

TAE40122 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment

- 1 daytime course (April)
- 15 upgrade completions

CHC30221 Certificate III in School Based Education Support

- 5 daytime courses (Feb, Mar, Apr, Jul, Nov)

CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care

- 1 daytime course (Feb)
- 3 upgrade completions

CHC50121 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care

- 3 daytime courses (2 X Feb and 1 June)

The RTO's most significant transition in 2025 was the implementation of the new Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) RTO Standards 2025. This reform required a comprehensive, organisation-wide review of practices, encompassing all levels of governance, end-to-end student life cycle processes, and the roles of both training and administrative staff.

Commencing in 2024, this substantial body of work involved evaluating existing systems, strengthening compliance frameworks, and aligning operations with the updated national regulatory requirements for RTOs. The transition required coordinated effort across the organisation to ensure that policies, procedures, and delivery models reflected the new outcome-focused standards.

By the 1 July 2025 deadline, Park Orchards Community House had successfully implemented the new outcomes-based framework and continues to demonstrate its commitment to delivering high-quality training and positive student outcomes in line with the revised ASQA standards.

In 2025 we continued running our TAE40122 Upgrade program to Industry trainers and assessors. This year we enjoyed facilitating this upgrade both interstate and here in Victoria. We particularly enjoyed delivering the upgrade to six of the trainers and assessors at one of our network partners The Avenue Neighbourhood House. The upgrades enabled existing trainers to update their qualifications to the current standard.

We retained all trainers from 2024, with Ann-Maree Thompson, Karina Griffiths, Anne Butler, Sarah Kinder, Karen McGown, Jacinta Buhagiar, and Bushra Essop Mohamed continuing to deliver high-quality training. All our trainers have now completed their TAE40122 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment Upgrades, ensuring they are continuing to hold the industries most current training qualification.

In 2025, they completed trainer upskilling and were involved in external validation sessions and "AI for the training environment" professional development session delivered by Pines Learning.

Cathryn Harris
VET Co-ordinator



- The training provided useful resources and practical activities, along with full support and encouragement from the trainer
- Certificate III in School Based Education Support

- Bushra is an amazing trainer who gives real life current examples from her work to help explain how the theory is applied in real life. It was also much better when we had a smaller class of students
- Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care



- The trainer (Jacinta) was supportive and approachable, and encouraged questions and discussion
- Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care

- The training provided constructive feedback from experienced professionals, opportunities to build connections with peers and industry professionals. It also offered in-depth coverage of relevant topics and encouragement and support from trainers and fellow learners
- Certificate IV in Training and Assessment

Early Learning Centre

Children naturally live in the moment, and they allow that moment to be what it is; magical and beautiful in every way!' - April Peerless.

This year has been one of growth, learning, and meaningful connections.

As a small, community-focused Early Learning Centre, we pride ourselves on providing a warm and welcoming environment where every child feels safe, supported, and valued. It has been a joy to witness the development of children's confidence, curiosity, and friendships throughout the year.

Our ELC supports children aged 0–6 years within a shared, open learning environment, where children of different ages learn alongside one another in one space. This approach fosters a strong sense of community, encourages peer learning, and nurtures the development of social skills as children build relationships across age groups. It is truly wonderful to see older children guiding and supporting their younger peers, while the younger children grow through observation and interaction.

Our educational programs, guided by the Early Years Learning Framework, are centred on play-based learning that honours each child's individual strengths, interests, and developmental journey. We also celebrate and embrace the cultural diversity within our centre, cultivating an inclusive environment where educators, children, and families alike feel respected, valued, and a genuine sense of belonging.

Program highlights this year included our participation in All Services Week, which featured a visit from Doncaster Police — a valuable experience that supported children's community awareness, safety understanding, and engagement with local services. Other enriching experiences included hands-on gardening workshops by Bunnings, a visit from Grant the Beekeeper, Science Week with Mad About Science–Drama Toolbox, music workshops with Dijana, Dental Health Week with Katie, and Storytime sessions with Kerryn from The Pines Library. Each of these experiences deepened children's learning and engagement in meaningful ways.

Maintaining strong relationships with families remains at the heart of everything we do. We deeply value the trust families place in us, and we appreciate the ongoing communication and involvement that helps cultivate a true sense of community within the centre. This year, we also extended our operating hours to better meet the needs of our community, offering families greater flexibility and accessibility to our service.

We continue to nurture our community connections with Park Orchards Primary School, with children attending the school's monthly Library Storytime sessions and making use of their gymnasium facilities. These experiences support school familiarity and strengthen our local partnerships in a meaningful way.

Our end-of-year family celebration was an enormous success, bringing together children, families, and educators in a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. Events like these reflect the strong sense of community that defines our ELC and provide wonderful opportunities for connection.

I would like to acknowledge our dedicated team of educators for their unwavering commitment and professionalism. Sarah, Kumin, Wenyue, Micaelia, Wei, Debbie, Harpinder, Anna, Rida, and Nadine consistently work together to uphold the highest standards of care and education, and their ongoing professional learning ensures our practices remain current and aligned with best practice. I also extend my sincere thanks to Robyn, our Childcare Administrator and Educator, whose organisational skills and knowledge play a vital role in the smooth running of our Early Learning Centre.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our volunteers for their generous support. Your contributions meaningfully enhance the experiences we are able to offer. We are equally grateful to the students who joined us on placement throughout the year, and we value the opportunity to support our organisation's own Early Childhood Education and Care students through incursions into the ELC — providing rich learning experiences while helping to shape the next generation of Early Childhood Educators.

We also acknowledge and thank our Board of Governance for their continued support and oversight. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our ELC throughout the year. We look forward to another year of learning, connection, and growth — together as a community.

Hilary Ramadge
Early Childhood Co-ordinator

Nurturing the Educators of Tomorrow

Our Early Learning Centre serves not only as a nurturing environment for the children in our care, but also as a vibrant and valuable learning space for the next generation of Early Childhood Educators.

Each year, we are proud to welcome a diverse range of students through our doors - from our own Park Orchards Community House Certificate III and Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care students, to students on placement from other training organisations, as well as VCE Vocational Major students exploring early childhood as a pathway. Together, they bring fresh energy and enthusiasm to our centre, enriching the experience for our children and educators alike.

A highlight of this offering is the incursion program facilitated by our Park Orchards RTO Trainers and Assessors across both the Certificate III and Diploma courses. Students are given the opportunity to prepare and organise a range of hands-on activities for the children - an experience that brings their learning to life in a real and meaningful way. Through these sessions, students develop their skills in sourcing and creating learning spaces, designing experiences that support children's development, and building genuine connections with young learners. The activities also form part of their formal assessment, providing an authentic and practical context for their skills workbooks.

This partnership between our RTO and our ELC reflects a wonderful alignment of purpose - supporting learners of all ages to grow, discover, and thrive. We are deeply grateful to Hilary and her dedicated team for the warmth and generosity with which they welcome our students, and for their unwavering commitment to supporting both the children in their care and the educators of the future.

It is a privilege to be an organisation that can offer this kind of integrated, real-world learning experience - one that benefits our students, our children, and our broader community in equal measure.



Each year, as a Park Orchards RTO Trainer & Assessor for the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, I make use of the Early Learning Centre as a valuable learning and teaching facility for students. Each term, the Centre enables students to plan and deliver activities for children, giving them hands-on experience in creating early learning environments and interacting with children as part of their assessment.

I greatly value the support of Hilary and her team, who warmly welcome and encourage participation in both the students' and children's learning and development.

Pre-accredited Training - ACFE (Learn Local)

ACFE Program Growth and Delivery 2025

In 2025, we continued to grow our ACFE course offerings, with a strong increase in enrolments and reported hours. We maintained valued partnerships and developed new collaborations, enabling us to deliver training directly to areas of identified need within our community.

This has been another successful year, with an expanded range of courses supporting a broad and diverse cohort of learners. We also welcomed new trainers to the team, strengthening our capacity to deliver high-quality programs across all areas.

Ministerial Visit

In 2025, we were pleased to welcome the Hon. Gayle Tierney, Minister for Skills & TAFE and State Member for Western Victoria, to Park Orchards Community House. The visit, alongside ACFE management, provided an opportunity to showcase our programs and the impact of community-based adult education.

Minister Tierney engaged with both students and trainers, taking time to hear firsthand about their learning experiences and the positive outcomes achieved through our programs. The visit highlighted the importance of local training delivery and the value of accessible, community-led education in supporting skills development and lifelong learning.

Course Highlights

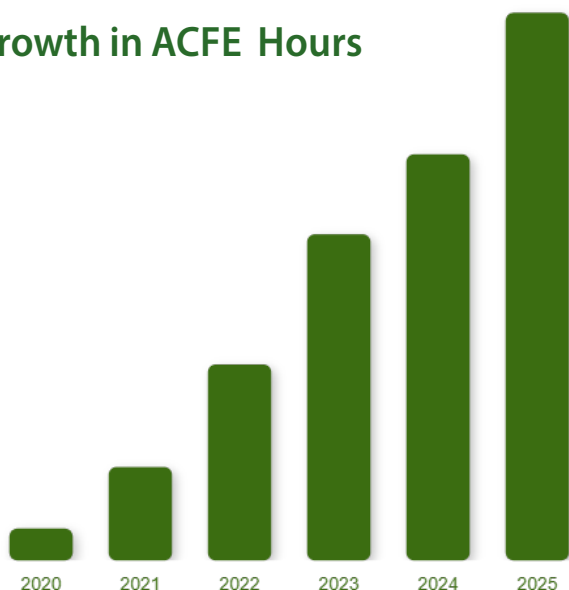
Our floristry classes, delivered across two levels, remained a consistent highlight and continued to be highly popular. We also delivered Mental Health Peer Support and English classes, alongside ongoing programs in Xero, Creative Arts, and Digital Literacy, all of which ran successfully throughout the year.

With increased ACFE-funded hours, we further expanded our course offerings in 2025. New and emerging programs such as How to Use AI, Introduction to Canva, and Introduction to Video Editing supported learners to build digital skills, strengthen online safety awareness, and develop capabilities for work and small business.

Partnerships and Community Collaboration

Through strong collaboration with partner organisations, we continued to grow student participation across ACFE programs, particularly in courses designed for learners of all abilities and those supporting English language development.

Growth in ACFE Hours



Melody Solomons Community Program Co-ordinator



Hon. Gayle Tierney, Minister (retired) for Skills & TAFE and State Member for Western Victoria, and Sam Quinlan, former Acting Regional Manager North Eastern Victoria, ACFE, pictured with Chairperson, staff and students.



Community

In 2025, our community programs continued to grow and evolve, offering a dynamic blend of established favourites and new initiatives. With a variety of term-based courses, workshops and free clubs available, community members have enjoyed meaningful opportunities to participate, learn and build connections.

Loneliness Afternoon Tea

As part of Loneliness Awareness Week 2025, we hosted a fully booked Afternoon Tea that provided a welcoming and inclusive space for community members to come together. Featuring guest speakers, open conversations and a relaxed afternoon tea setting, the event encouraged meaningful connection and shared experiences. It was a wonderful opportunity for participants to engage, build relationships and feel a stronger sense of belonging within the community.

Supporting Safe and Confident Technology Use

In response to growing community interest, we delivered a series of How to Use AI and Scam Awareness workshops, both of which were fully booked and very well received. These sessions provided a supportive space for participants to build confidence, develop practical skills, and engage in important conversations around technology and online safety. Due to the strong demand and positive feedback, the AI workshop has since been expanded into a course, allowing for deeper learning and ongoing community engagement.

New and FREE Clubs 2025

This year, we were excited to launch our Beekeeping Club, a wonderful new addition to our already popular and growing suite of free community clubs. The club has been warmly received, offering a welcoming space for participants to explore beekeeping, share knowledge, and build social connections.

Our free clubs continue to be a much-loved part of what we offer, bringing together community members with shared interests in a relaxed and inclusive environment. Alongside our new Beekeeping Club, our established clubs continue to thrive - including Photography Club, Gardening Club, Weekly Walkers, Genealogy Club, Social Walking Group, and Book Club - each providing a wonderful opportunity for connection, learning, and fun.

Getting the Community Moving

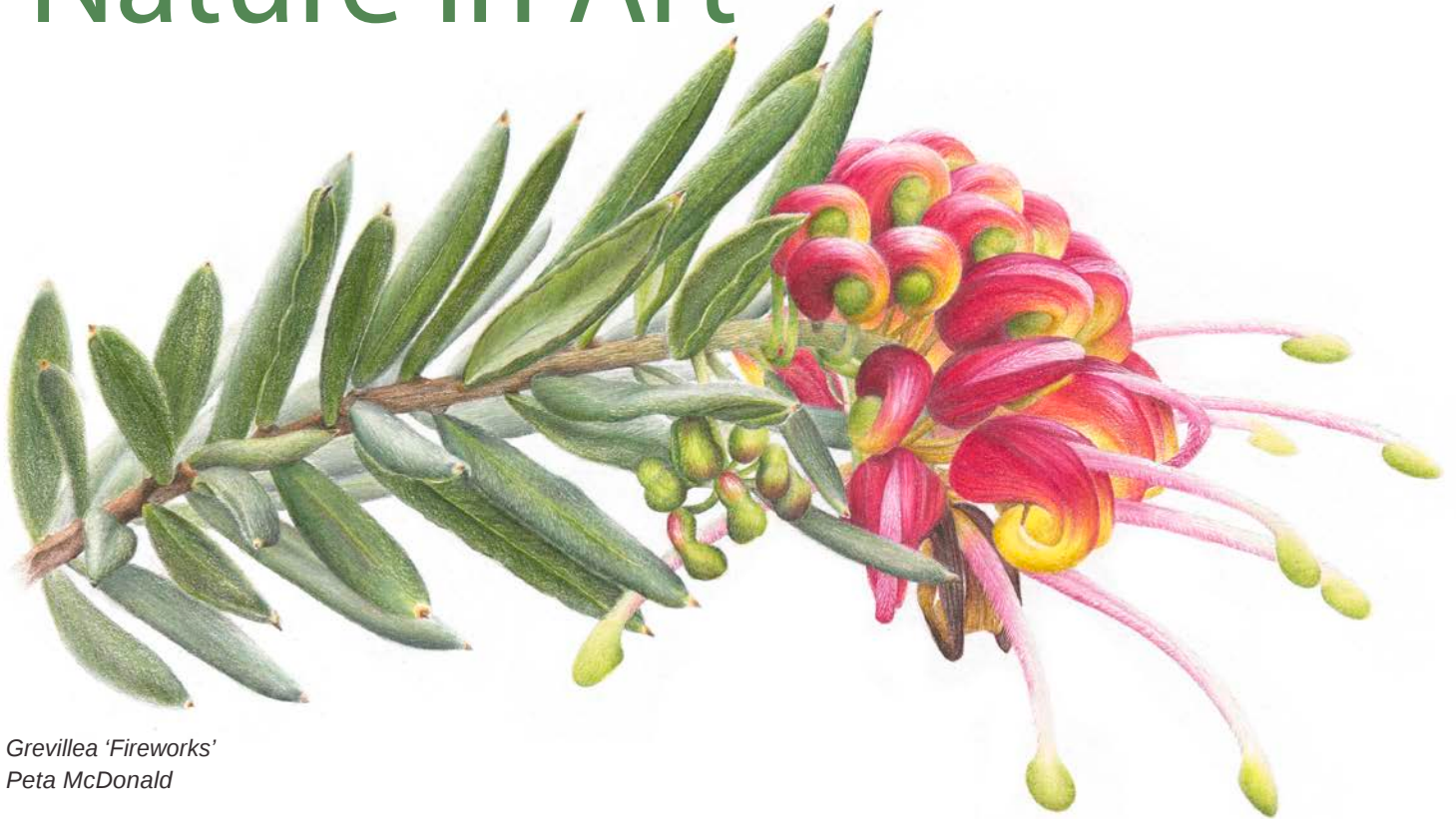
Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre continues to promote community wellbeing through a diverse range of health, fitness and movement programs, including Tai Chi, Stay Fit/Live Fit, Yoga, and our new Rhythm & Movement dance program. These offerings encourage participants to stay active, express themselves through movement and dance, and support both physical health and mental wellbeing, while building social connection within the community.

Melody Solomons
Community Program Co-ordinator





Nature in Art



Grevillea 'Fireworks'
Peta McDonald

Our Centre has a wonderful reputation for the study of Natural History Art. Each week over 80 students participate in our many classes specific to this beautiful form of art.

Established in 1996 at Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre, by Terry Napier, the Nature in Art group is dedicated to the study of natural history illustration and painting. Working on a diverse range of subjects, its members' principle aim is to gain knowledge and understanding of a subject's physical characteristics through close observation and to capture the detail in a pleasing, graphic way. This combines scientific accuracy with artistic vision and allows different students to paint with varying levels of detail.

Nature in Art covers an extensive range of subjects: flowers, insects and animals. Under the guidance and encouragement of the teachers, students learn to see things in a new, more complex way and their paintings emerge into beautiful works of art.

Some of our 80 students have been involved in our Nature in Art program for over two decades and our community of artists includes the renowned botanical and natural history artists and tutors Terry Napier, David Reynolds, Peta Harrington and Peta McDonald.

Terry Napier was awarded the Celia Rosser Medal in 2010. He has paintings in the State Collection and the Cranbourne Collection at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Melbourne and also The Gardens of Government House Florilegium held in the State Library Melbourne. He is represented in the Australian collection in the Inaugural International Botanical Exhibition 2018.

David is an experienced botanical and natural history artist with a background in commercial art, graphic design, photography and multimedia. He is known for his "Accurate Realism" style, capturing botanical and wildlife subjects with careful detail while honouring the expressive qualities of watercolour.

David finished teaching with us during 2025. We sincerely thank him for his many of teaching. His commitment and passion have inspired and guided many students throughout his time with us, and his contribution to our Nature in Art program is deeply appreciated.

Peta Harrington has always enjoyed different forms of art since a young age. Peta has been a student of Terry Napier's for over twenty years and since commencing the Nature in Art classes has developed a love of painting, particularly the level of detail presented in nature. Peta has been teaching Nature in Art since 2019.

In 2024, Peta McDonald joined us, bringing a strong background in Biological Science and over 20 years of experience as a science teacher. She is an Honorary Research Associate at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne and recently completed a Botanical Illustration Studentship at the Melbourne Herbarium. Peta enjoys sharing this intersection of science and art, inspiring others with the beauty and mystery of the natural world.

Art in Everyday Places



Our Nature in Art artist and trainer Terry Napier was part of a bold new initiative, PUBLIC VIEW, is inviting the community to experience art as part of everyday life by transforming familiar urban spaces into open-air galleries.

Manningham Mayor, Councillor Deirdre Diamante, welcomed the initiative as a meaningful opportunity to reconnect with creativity, nature and community. "In the rush of daily life, it's easy to overlook the beauty woven into our surroundings. PUBLIC VIEW encourages us to pause, take notice and engage more deeply with the spaces and people around us," Cr Diamante said. "Bringing creative expression into everyday environments creates opportunities for reflection and sparks curiosity. It's a gentle invitation to connect in ways we often overlook," she added.

A celebrated natural history artist, Terry Napier has lived in Park Orchards for more than 57 years and has been painting since childhood. His works are held in Victorian collections, and he is widely recognised for his contributions to art education and his detailed studies of the natural world. Through his work, Terry encourages viewers to pause, observe and appreciate the beauty of nature around them.

"Exhibiting at Tunstall Square is another opportunity to share the magic and beauty of nature with the community — to show what fascinates me and perhaps remind people of what we are in danger of losing. Art in public spaces can serve as that reminder," Terry said.





Scones Together

Scones Together continued to go from strength to strength, building on the wonderful foundations established since the program's inception in early 2023. What began as a heartfelt response to social isolation — brought to life through the vision of community members Tristen Haigh and Vickie Redfern, and supported through the vital partnership with Park Orchards Community House & Learning Centre, this program continues to be one of our most popular and impactful community programs.

Held monthly, each session welcomes participants with freshly baked scones with jam and cream, accompanied by tea or coffee, alongside talks from guest speakers on topics meaningful to participants' lives or a craft activity. The atmosphere remained as warm and inclusive as ever, and the program continued to draw an increasingly diverse and engaged group of older participants. What began as a program aimed at addressing social isolation among older adults had naturally evolved into a richly varied gathering, welcoming individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and walks of life.

Throughout the year, Scones Together continued to grow in both reach and reputation. Registrations and attendance remained strong, with the monthly sessions consistently drawing enthusiastic crowds and a growing waitlist of new participants eager to join. The program continued to meet important health and wellbeing needs, fostering a deep sense of belonging, connection, and joy among all who attended.

The dedicated volunteers remained the backbone of the program. Their commitment, care, and generosity were consistently recognised and deeply valued, with volunteers reporting a profound sense of purpose and fulfilment in their role. The relationships formed — between participants, volunteers, and the wider community — flourished well beyond the monthly sessions, reflecting the enduring ripple effect of kindness and connection that Scones Together inspired.

The year reaffirmed everything that makes Scones Together so special — a place where every person who walked through the door felt respected, valued, and truly connected. It was another year of shared stories, warm cups of tea, and the simple but profound joy of coming together.

During the year, the Scones Together program was nominated for a Manningham City Council Community Award in the Community Age Well category. Even though we did not win this award, being a finalist was a true honour and recognises the importance this program provides to our community each month through its social connections. We thank the Manningham City Council Age Well team for your nomination and recognition of this program.



Biggest Morning Tea

Building on the success of our inaugural Biggest Morning Tea in 2024, this year's event reaffirmed our deep and growing commitment to this important annual occasion. The Biggest Morning Tea has firmly established itself as our major annual fundraising event, and our dedication to supporting Cancer Council Australia remains stronger than ever.

Once again, the generosity and enthusiasm of our community was truly humbling. The event brought together participants, volunteers, and supporters in a wonderful celebration of community spirit and shared purpose. Attendees enjoyed a delicious morning tea and an exciting raffle, alongside a truly moving question and answer session hosted by Cat, who spoke with Alexis about her ongoing experience with cancer. Alexis's openness and willingness to share her story created a powerful and memorable moment — a poignant reminder of why events like this matter so much.

We were also pleased to acknowledge the contributions of the Craft a Cure for Cancer group, who held a stall of handmade gifts to help raise funds. Their ongoing efforts and presence added meaning and a wonderful sense of purpose to the occasion, and we are grateful for their continued support.

We are thrilled to share that an incredible \$3,363.75 was raised on the day — a remarkable reflection of our community's generosity and commitment to such an important cause. Every dollar raised went directly towards Cancer Council Australia's vital work in cancer research, prevention, awareness, and patient support services, and we could not be more proud of what we achieved together.

We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to the generous individuals and businesses who supported the day by donating raffle prizes. Your contributions played a significant role in the success of the raffle and, in turn, the overall fundraising total. It is this kind of community spirit and generosity that makes events like this truly special.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to making this year's event such a success — whether through attending, volunteering, donating, or simply spreading the word. Your generosity and support are what make this event truly special, and it is a privilege to witness our community come together so wholeheartedly for such an important cause.

The Biggest Morning Tea continues to be more than just a fundraiser. It is a testament to the power of community — a reminder that when people come together with kindness and purpose, they can make a real and lasting difference.

We look forward to continuing this tradition and building on our impact in the years ahead.





Community Garden

What a year it has been in the garden! From new arrivals to returning favourites, there has been plenty to celebrate across both garden levels.

***"The love of gardening
is a seed once sown
that never dies."
- Gertrude Jekyll***

Our perennial performers continued to shine. The roses and salvias put on a beautiful display, and the passionfruit vine was truly the star of the season, delivering an extraordinary bumper crop. There is something special about picking fruit fresh from the vine and sharing it with the people around you - it captures everything this garden is about. The chilli plants, as dependable as ever, also delivered a fiery and plentiful harvest to add to the season's bounty.

The stools, tables, and benches across both garden levels remain popular gathering spots for classes, lunches, and quiet moments in the sun - a much-loved part of the garden that continues to bring people together.

None of this happens without people. A heartfelt thank you to Alby for keeping everything watered and thriving between our regular gardening days - your quiet dedication makes an enormous difference. And to all our volunteers - Alby Boccalatte, Rhona Diviney, Geoff Hipwell, and Janice Clarke - a big thank you. Your time, care, and enthusiasm are the roots that hold this whole garden together.

Here's to another wonderful season ahead.

Gertrude Jekyll was a hugely influential British garden designer and writer in the late 19th and early 20th century, renowned for her naturalistic planting style and her belief that gardens should feel alive and personal.

We gratefully acknowledge funding and support from:

Manningham City Council

We are grateful to Manningham City Council for their generous and ongoing support — both the funding and the premises that make our work possible, as well as the continued involvement of council officers and our local Councillors.



Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

We are grateful for the financial support offered by the Victorian Government through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing who value the work we do as a Neighbourhood House.



Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions

The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) offers support through the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) program and Skills First.



Neighbourhood Houses Victoria

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria offers support through Professional Development, Human Resource advice and with regional collaboration on projects.



Warrandyte Community Bank Branch of Bendigo Bank

The Warrandyte Community Bank Branch of Bendigo Bank offers support through their Community Investment Program.



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