



# **Active** through change. Supporting the **community.**

2019–20 ANNUAL REPORT

▲  
**Father's Day  
at OOSH**



▲  
**Community  
Open Day**



Riverwood Community Centre is an essential supporter of our local community and has been for over 40 years. We empower all community members, from children through to the elderly, to families and those living with disability.

Our passionate staff and committed volunteers have created an inclusive and enriching environment and accessible support services for those in need. We celebrate the cultural diversity of our local area and provide support for multiple voluntary and community groups. We believe in the power of community, and of banding together through change.

▲  
**End of year party**



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We acknowledge and thank the Traditional Owners of the land, the Bedigal Tribe of the Dharug Clan, on which we meet, walk, work and live. We acknowledge the Elders past and present and the care they have given this country.



# Chair's message



This year it's all about gratitude – for all the great effort and initiatives from everyone to keep us safe and connected during a year that was tainted by COVID-19. It has been an extraordinarily busy year for all of us at RCC as we faced the global pandemic and found ways to deliver COVID-safe effective services and policies.

During these unprecedented times, the RCC board, management, staff and volunteers have been amazing: working remotely and on the frontline; supporting and delivering programs and services, including food and other vital necessities, to our community's most vulnerable and disadvantaged. We are coming through this pandemic because of the hard work, sacrifices, and sense of unity throughout the community, along with a willingness to put others ahead of ourselves.

It has been a pleasure to work with our CEO, Michelle Newman. Michelle's impressive leadership, initiatives, and funding achievements have helped strengthen RCC's position to one of the leading grassroots organisations. With the support of the RCC board, volunteers and community groups, Michelle has led the RCC team, who worked tirelessly to support the community during this pandemic.

I would like to thank our partners and auspicing community groups who have helped maximise our reach and impact and have assisted us in developing new skills and connections. We are grateful for the support they offer to us and to the community. In particular, thanks to Canterbury Bankstown Council; Georges River Council; our state members of parliament Jihad Dib, Mark Coure and Sophie Cotsis; our federal MPs the Hon David Coleman and the Hon Tony Burke; and our local sponsors Club Rivers, Lantern Club and many other generous supporters. RCC will continue to grow from strength to strength and serve the needs of the community for many years to come.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all current board members, Pauline Gallagher, Manal Arbab, Helen Gialouris, Vicky Wang, Zorka Petrovska and Youcef Kabbara, for their hard work, dedication and support during my time as chairperson. I look forward to the new year and welcoming two new appointed directors, Robert Furolo and Billy Baydoun.

It has been an honour working with you all.

Stay safe and well.

**Karl Saleh OAM, Chair**

**Jihad Dib MP presents  
cheque for Community  
Building Partnership**



# CEO's message



This has certainly been an exceptional year and one we will all remember for many years to come. I have to congratulate the wonderful staff at RCC for their commitment and dedication to our clients and the community over the last 12 months and, in particular, the last 6 months, where everyone worked tirelessly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first half of the year was filled with plenty of activity at the Centre – opportunities for everyone to connect, learn and grow. This included our Community Fair and Open Day, Lunar New Year celebrations and weekly group activities and events. Then unfortunately we experienced the devastation of the bushfires across NSW and we supported these communities through generous contributions and donations from the local community. The remainder of the 2019–20 year was all about minimising the COVID-19 risk for the staff and community and continuing to provide essential services and food security – even when the Centre was closed from March to June.

The collaborative effort between centres, across geographic areas and throughout the community during this period is like nothing I have experienced in the past. Everyone has pulled together for a common cause – to keep one another safe and maintain access to information and whatever supports were needed. It is through the support of our dedicated board and our fantastic partners, sponsors and funding bodies that we have been able to continue to provide much needed assistance to our ever-resilient community.

In the midst of this phenomenal year we were also excited to secure funding for our major programs for the next few years. The Australian government has extended the contract for our aged care services delivered



▶ **Meeting with  
the Hon David  
Coleman MP for  
the MUSTER Grant**

through the Commonwealth Home Support Program through to 2022, and the Department of Communities and Justice has approved a 5-year contract for the delivery of our programs that provide flexible support to children, young people, families and communities through the Targeted Early Intervention program. This is wonderful news and offers some stability for the Centre and the community.

Despite COVID-19, the financial result for the year was still strong, showing a surplus of just over \$310,000. This can be directly attributed to the government stimulus support packages JobKeeper and the Cashflow Boost subsidies. These packages assisted the Centre to continue providing quality support at a time of great need across the community.

There was also a significant change in accounting standards during the year, which means we are now required to report this surplus, even where funds relate to grants and other projects that have not yet been completed. Previously, these unexpended funds were carried forward to be expended in future years, but we are no longer able to do this under Australian Accounting Standards and to meet our reporting requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. This will mean that some years we may show a surplus, and others a deficit, due to continuing projects.

Thank you for all your support this year. I feel truly privileged to work with a board, members, staff and community that is so committed to helping each other.

**Michelle Newman, CEO**

# Looking forward: our strategic plan 2021–2023

## Mission

To pursue a future for all – one that embraces diversity and encourages sustainable strategies that support the most disadvantaged in our community.

To use a variety of approaches, tools and technologies to meet and support people in the ways that suit them best and that is professional, respectful and effective. Our ultimate aim is to provide assistance to anyone in the community who is in need of it. This assistance includes practising community advocacy, and empowering individuals and local auspicing and partnering community groups. We recognise that our approaches will differ in response to the people or situations involved, including by providing a range of Centre-based or outreach support.

## Vision

Individuals in the areas we service at Riverwood Community Centre will have the capacity to meet their own needs and develop a safe community in which they are happy and proud to live.

## Purpose

Riverwood Community Centre provides a range of high-quality services to meet the needs of individuals and communities, in a caring and inclusive environment, so community members can actively participate in decisions that affect the quality of their lives.

## Key focus areas



- 1 Demonstrate strong leadership
- 2 Embrace and encourage diversity (in all forms)
- 3 Prioritise support for the most disadvantaged in our community
- 4 Deliver quality services
- 5 Collaborate effectively
- 6 Foster a thriving and responsive Centre

## Core values

- |             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1 Integrity | 4 Respect     |
| 2 Community | 5 Inclusivity |
| 3 Teamwork  | 6 Compassion  |

Hon Tony Burke  
MP and Pan  
Nukunuku MC

Community Open Day



Community  
Open Day



Community Open Day

# Getting through COVID-19 together

The COVID-19 global pandemic was an unprecedented challenge that our staff, volunteers, and the community met with a great deal of strength and resilience. We committed to providing every support we could while keeping the community safe and well.



**92% INCREASE IN TELEPHONE CONTACT**

92% increase during COVID-19 in telephone contact and 370 aged services clients who hadn't used this service before.



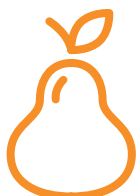
**86% INCREASE IN HOME VISITS**

86% increase in COVID-safe home visiting and 113 aged services clients who hadn't used this service before.



**61% INCREASE IN SHOPPING**

61% increase in list-shopping and 52 aged services clients who hadn't used this service before.



**1144 FOOD PARCELS DELIVERED**

We delivered 1144 food parcels to young people and their families during the lockdown period.

## Music, language and craft

In June 2019, we started working with an 81-year-old Cantonese- and Mandarin-speaking client who enjoys playing Mahjong, is able to play numerous Chinese musical instruments, and is an accomplished dressmaker.

Suffering from chronic lower respiratory disease meant that she needed to isolate as soon as COVID-19 emerged, limiting her social interactions and connectedness. However, as a purposeful and forward-thinking individual, the client was keen to have a regular home visitor to teach her to use an iPad and to improve her English.

During these visits, our aged services support staff were able to improve her spirits by creating opportunities for her to learn and taking time to talk with her. The client was making artistic and attractive cloth face masks to give to family and friends. By supporting the client's motivation to 'do something' we were able to maintain her functional ability and wellbeing.

The client's daughter and carer is appreciative of the services her mother receives and glad that her mother has access to 'a beautiful organisation with wonderful and dedicated people'.

## Food for a crisis

More than 400 bags of free food and groceries were distributed on Saturday, May 23, to local residents of Riverwood doing it tough and facing financial hardship during the COVID-19 crisis. Dedicated volunteers from the Canterbury Bankstown Harmony Group and Riverwood Community Centre, along with local federal and state politicians, came together to help hand out the free food kits at Riverwood Community Centre.

'Congratulations to our local volunteers for making this program a huge success in helping our residents in need,' Karl Saleh OAM, the coordinator and the initiator of the program, said. 'These distributions have brought our community closer together and are an example of the essential work that we can carry out to keep our community spirit high and to help our local residents during the pandemic.'

Harmony Group -  
free food program  
for locals in need

Sanitising hands  
at long day care



Choir practice  
during COVID-19

Aged services shopping  
during COVID-19

# Supporting our community's youth and families



**115** PARENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS

were held between June 2019 and February 2020.



‘The support through RCC means so much. I have learned so much from you and gained so much knowledge from being connected with programs. During COVID-19, RCC has made a difference in my family’s wellbeing. We are all grateful for your service and the support we have received has meant so much to us all.’

–Yassina, Family support client

We believe children and young people deserve the best start in life. Our programs offer support for children, young people and families to ensure they thrive.

This year, we have offered additional online services, working on increasing both physical and mental health in the community’s youth. We also delivered food, toys and care to families in need.

## Youth services

RCC’s youth services were expanded this year thanks to a grant from the Australian government. The MUSTER grant has allowed us to run structured physical activities with a nutritional advice program, and an after-hours youth drop-in once per fortnight. The Fitness for Wellbeing program has given our young people access to a personal trainer on a weekly basis. Young people can come to the Centre, enjoy a healthy meal, and strengthen their mental health through social connection and a physical exercise program with a trained professional. This program has helped our young people to better understand the importance of physical activity while dealing with everyday challenges. The late night drop-in service provided structured and unstructured activities in a safe space, as well as a meal, information, referrals to other appropriate services and counselling and support for local young people.

The youth services school holiday program was a fantastic opportunity for the young people who engage with RCC’s services to participate in recreational and fun group activities outside the Centre during the school holidays. Spending the day out and away from their everyday life, visiting places that many of them have never experienced, gave these youth the opportunity to connect with the staff and each other and to challenge themselves through activities such as rock climbing.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions from March, we continued to deliver weekly exercise and mindfulness activities online to support the young people in isolation. Staff also delivered food boxes to young people and their families to help during COVID-19. We look forward to commencing our regular services, ensuring young people and the community remain COVID-safe.

**YOUNG PEOPLE  
ACCESSED YOUTH  
PROGRAMS**

**3150**

times from July 2019 to March 2020.



**192+**  
WELLBEING  
CHECKS

were made between April and June 2020 to families to check in and provide support when needed.



**310**  
CHILDREN

benefited from their parents attending a parenting program at RCC.

Jamberoo  
Park

Youth fitness



Family support  
Christmas party

## Family support

The RCC family support service works with families and children under the age of twelve to provide assistance through advocacy, referral, court support, support with parental difficulties, case management and more. One of the highlights this year was the popularity of the supported playgroups that were run twice a week during school terms for parents with preschool aged children. These playgroups were a great way for parents and carers to spend time with their children and learn together through play.

The family support team collects toy donations and distributes these toys to disadvantaged families every Christmas. Last year, when opening her present, one little girl said, 'You mean, I get my very own doll?' and one little boy said of his toy, 'I have been wishing and waiting for one of these, but I never thought I would get it!'

Distributing toys is one of many services we provide to targeted communities and families, but perhaps no other activity brings as much joy and delight as these toys. It's incredibly rewarding to see the impact that we're making with these donations, especially during this hard time where many people are struggling. Thank you to our many partners who contribute to the toy drive each year.

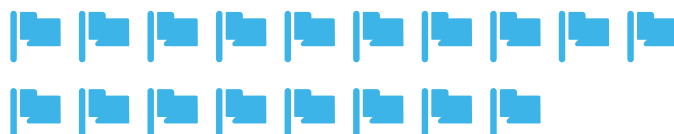


COVID-19 impacted our ability to deliver our family support services, so we used this as an opportunity to identify areas in which we could continue to make a positive impact on the community. One of the areas that had an increased demand was the need for food staples and household supplies.

Thanks to the support of our partners, such as the Greek Orthodox Church in Belmore, Bankstown Women's Health Centre, Baker's Delight in Bankstown, Oz Harvest, and Human Appeal International, we were able to meet this need and provide over 250 families and young people with food parcels and basic supplies.

**18** NATIONALITIES

attended family services parent-and-child programs.



## Empowering people to choose their own path



**93%**

of our aged services clients are very satisfied with our transport services.



**89%**

of our aged services clients believe that RCC provides culturally appropriate services especially well.



**88%**

of our aged services clients said that our social support meets their needs extremely well.



**83%**

of our aged services clients feel that the cost of activities/programs is extremely reasonable.

**‘Anything I need I just ring up and they sort it out for me! They are very good and they treat me like one of the family.’**

–Verna, aged services client

This has been a year of connection to purpose. Partnering with clients is not just a process we follow, it is at the very essence of our core values. Our programs and supports are built around clients having a meaningful level of contribution in the development of their care and support services.

Over the past 12 months we have seen an increase in people wanting to join our aged and disability programs and become more socially connected. There was a lot of interest in our social support groups, our gentle exercise and movement classes and our community outings.

## Aged services

Community connection is at the core of what we do, so when the bushfires devastated thousands of people across the country this year the aged and disability services teams united to raise funds for those most affected by the devastation.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and now it seems hard to remember a time when words like coronavirus and social distancing were not part of our day-to-day life. For many people, COVID-19 created more division and social isolation, but we have worked to reignite what ‘connection’ truly means. The pandemic forced us to quickly adapt and reprioritise our work to ensure the continual delivery of essential services.

The aged services programs support clients with higher levels of vulnerability, so it was important to limit exposure and the risk of COVID-19. We introduced weekly welfare checks, reaching out to hundreds of clients over the phone each month to ensure they remained connected and had access to support services. We also increased our home visiting, shopping and transport services to ensure the most vital and basic needs for everyday living were met.



RIVERWOOD AGED  
SERVICES PROVIDED

**54,428**

hours of support.



**449**

HOURS OF NDIS  
SUPPORT FOR 14  
CLIENTS

## NDIS support

Our NDIS support coordination service continued to engage with participants throughout the year, ensuring they were connected to the supports and services they required.

The COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the way we worked, communicated and supported people with a disability. Our shared adversity became our shared responsibility, which the team embraced with positive emotion and optimism. In a time of uncertainty, the team went from strength to strength by cultivating a sense of community through shared goals and a strong sense of purpose. During COVID-19, our primary aim was to ensure all clients remained supported and connected, as many were already grappling with social isolation and loneliness.

With a future that holds unprecedented change for all of us, the aged and disability team is stronger than ever and committed to delivering safe, quality and meaningful supports to all our existing and new clients.

We look forward to delivering support coordination, group activities, social outings, domestic assistance, home visiting, shopping services, home maintenance and transport in a safe, modified way in 2021.

Aged services  
playing games

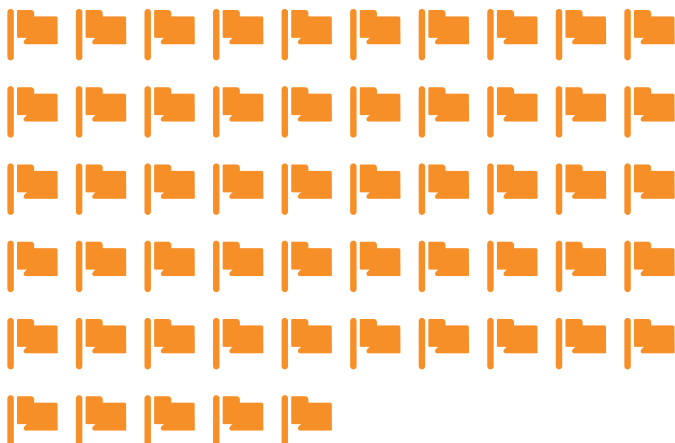
Aged services  
group



Aged services at  
the community  
garden



**606** ACTIVE AGED  
SERVICES CLIENTS



FROM **55** COUNTRIES



## Connecting people through community



**22** LOCALS CLEANED UP RIVERWOOD

The Cleaner Greener Riverwood program started in 2020 with a Beat the Bottle clean-up event attended by 22 locals.



**OVER 100** AT THE MEN'S SHED OPEN DAY IN NOVEMBER 2019

The Men's Shed was kept busy pre-COVID-19, opening every week with the help of our volunteers Amy, Frank and Mr Gu. Over 100 people came to the Men's Shed open day in November 2019 and were treated to prizes made by Men's Shed volunteers such as timber footstools and pen holders.

**'Without the garden I would be lost and lonely. I love sitting in the sunshine and growing things. It really helps with my physical and mental health. Thank you, RCC, for keeping the garden open.'**

—RCC gardener

**Our community programs help to connect people and give them agency in shaping their own neighbourhood.**

We embrace the diversity of the community through multiple celebrations and activities, and we help people stay connected and positive, even when they have to be physically apart. Our programs have continued to be essential this year, including our garden, which has sustained people through a time of limits and difficulties.

## Initiatives and programs to strengthen our community

The Riverwood community garden was able to keep going right through lockdown with gardeners socially distancing and wearing masks. It was great to see all the fabulous produce emerging in spring after a lonely autumn and winter. Our regular program of workshops with the community greening crew, working bees, meetings and get-togethers were a hit in 2019, but unfortunately had to be cancelled during the lockdown.

We did have a lovely Garden Party in December in partnership with ROAR to celebrate our multicultural garden and communities. The gardeners and ROAR provided a fabulous feast for over 60 people to enjoy.

Often, when we go down to the garden to do a bit of weeding or have a chat to people about how they are going, gardeners will give us bits and pieces from their garden. We've had fresh eggplant, figs, chilli, garlic, asparagus, lettuce, sword lettuce, tomatoes, kale, shallots, mint and parsley. A big thank you to John, Wendy, Lucy, Linda, Margaret and many other gardeners for their beautiful produce.

The community team works closely with local volunteers to celebrate our wonderfully diverse and active communities. Community members put in a lot of time and energy to help us plan and run events throughout the year, such as the Moon Festival in October, Harmony Day in March and Refugee Week in June.



**80** PEOPLE JOINED US IN THE GARDEN OVER THE YEAR

to grow beautiful produce and flowers and make connections with other gardeners.

 **OVER 100 PEOPLE**

attended the July 2019 health and wellbeing expo.

Lunar New Year

Community garden



**EVERY YEAR WE TALK TO OVER**

**5,000 PEOPLE**

through our information and referral service and connect them to the right service, person, or program.

Men's Shed open day



Lunar New Year 2020 was the last event we ran before lockdown. It was a great success with over 210 people attending to see a showcase of Peking Opera, join in on dance lessons from the Twilight Rouge Dance Group, see the Riverwood Chinese Community Dance and Choir perform and more. As restrictions continue to ease, we are excited to get our events calendar going again with a Reconciliation Week event planned for 2021.

When the COVID-19 lockdown began, we knew that many of our clients who normally attended Centre community events and social groups would be feeling isolated. So, we started the Good Stories SMS service. Every weekday at 4 pm we invited people to share their good news stories with us. Then we selected one story to share with all the members of the group.

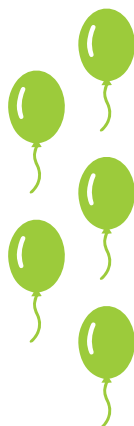
We had some great stories about how people were keeping themselves occupied – growing sprouts, making tofu, cycling on exercise bikes, rescuing stray cats and much more. As many as 118 people joined us between April, May and June 2020, with comments such as, 'Enjoy reading the Good Story messages every day. They have made me feel good,' and, 'In answer to your question of what made me feel nice today, well, just knowing you guys are there!' We hope we helped make someone's day a little brighter.



**WE HELPED**

**289 PEOPLE**

with filling in forms and phone calls. Assistance dropped slightly in the first month of lockdown but has been growing back to normal numbers of around 6 to 8 people per week.



We ran

**5 COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS**

from July to February 2020, attended by a total of

**1,570 PEOPLE**

– from 60 at our Garden Party to over 1000 people at the Spring Fair in October.



◀ Vacation care science



‘RCC was very quick to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and elevate their practices and we were very reassured that someone genuinely cared for our child.’

–Mark and Gladys, LDC/OOSH parents



▲ Long day care space

◀ Letters to aged services clients during COVID-19

## Child care services

The Riverwood Community Centre long day care, before and after school care, and vacation care services support children’s development in a happy and secure learning environment.

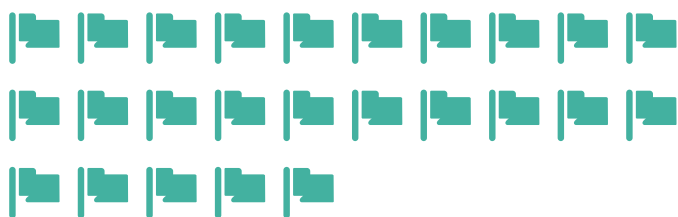
This has been an extraordinary year for children’s services. In August 2019, the long day care was severely flooded and the staff in LDC and OOSH worked hard to relocate the services into a shared space while still providing quality care. The parents were understanding and supported the staff, helping out as much as they could. By the September 2019 school holidays the LDC was completely refurbished and looking fantastic.

Our child care services remained open throughout the COVID-19 crisis. We value our children and families and supported the parents and carers working in essential services by providing some normality for the children during this time. Our dedicated staff created quiet corners for the children for when they felt overwhelmed, giving them a safe space in which they could calm down.

We look forward to an exciting year ahead with a revamped preschool program, out of school hours programs that enhance each child’s learning and development, and vacation care activities that no child will want to miss.

**165** FAMILIES FROM **25** COUNTRIES

accessed one of our child care services.



‘Riverwood child care services has become like a family to me and my son and I am so thankful to be part of this community.’

–Monica, OOSH/vacation care parent



# Our people

Our team has been incredibly resourceful and worked tirelessly to deliver services to people in need through challenging circumstances.

## Board members



**KARL SALEH OAM**  
Chairperson since 2017



**VICKY WONG**  
Director since 2015



**MANAL ARBAB**  
Director since 2017



**PAULINE GALLAGHER**  
Director since 2016



**HELEN GIALOURIS**  
Director since 2012



**ZORKA PETROVSKA**  
Director since 2018



**YOUCEF KABBARA**  
Director since 2019

## Management staff



**MICHELLE NEWMAN**  
CEO



**DONNA LEWINGTON**  
Aged and Disability  
Services Manager



**NADIA SALEH**  
Child, Youth and Family  
Services Manager



**JOANNE ROBERTSON**  
Corporate Services  
Manager

## Our staff

‘Our services and reach across the community are only possible through the dedication and commitment of all staff at Riverwood Community Centre’

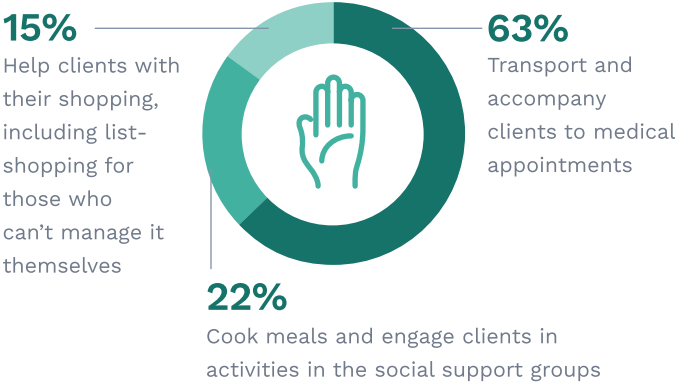
–Michelle Newman, CEO

## Our volunteers

The Centre thrives because of the committed people who volunteer across our range of services, giving their time and attention to the community.

Knowing people need a hand is what attracts many of our volunteers to the Riverwood Community Centre’s aged services program. RCC volunteers do so much for so many without asking for anything and RCC recognises and values this critical contribution.

## MOST FREQUENTLY PERFORMED VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES



# Meet our community

## Helping youth to thrive

William (name changed) is an 18-year-old living with his large family in Riverwood who recently graduated from high school. After graduation, William was hoping to study engineering at university. However, due to family conflict and financial difficulties, he was faced with the possibility of becoming homeless and had to look for employment instead.

William regularly accessed our recreational activities at the Centre, during which we noticed his change of behaviour and the signs of potential drug use. William opened up to us about his life and reached out for help and, as a result, was engaged with an outreach AOD counsellor at the Centre.

We worked very closely with William to get him ready to join the workforce, helping him to establish necessary qualifications such as a resume and white card, and going over interview techniques and job search methods. After a few attempts applying for jobs, William was successful for a work trial at a local warehouse and gained a permanent part-time position. He continues to engage with his AOD counsellor and is now able to help out his family financially, which allows him to stay in his family house. William is planning to go back to study next year.

## Getting people moving

We provide a regular safe, reliable and flexible door-to-door transport service, taking clients to their personal and medical appointments. However, the pandemic meant that we needed to change the way we were delivering this essential support. Physical distancing is one of the key ways to lower the risk of COVID-19, so transporting clients has required an imaginative and resourceful reevaluation of logistics – one where our buses have come in handy!

We regularly support a 67-year-old client by transporting her to her medical and podiatry appointments. In 2012 she was diagnosed with a degenerative disease that affects cognition and balance. She is unable to do more than one thing at a time, like talking while walking, and suffers from mood changes. The client lives alone, is proudly independent and hasn't let her diagnosis affect her cheeky sense of humour – she laughs at herself and her unusual gait, 'I don't walk, I hobble.'

We were able to continue to support her throughout the pandemic by providing a safe alternative to mainstream transport (such as taxis or public transport) and were able to check in on her while she was isolating. The client is grateful for the service, saying that 'we are always on time' and 'the staff are mindful of how to handle me and that's not easy'.

At the time of the diagnosis the client had completed a Cert 3 in disability services and part of the course was an information visit to the Centre. She saw the various services in action and was impressed with the professionalism and caring attitude of the staff. 'Nothing has changed. Thank you, you are my lifeline.'



◀  
**Youth services  
vacation fun at  
Jamberoo Park**

### Aged services volunteering



## Ren's volunteer story

Ren came into the aged services outings program in June 2019, applying to volunteer to work in an area in which he had experience with family members. Ren, who is 20, is a medical student studying to do his honours degree.

In his application, Ren stated that he wanted to connect with his local community to help make it a better place. Ren did just that, gaining personal satisfaction and having fun with the clients and they with him on the outings program.

Ren enjoyed the interaction with the clients, supporting them where required, accompanying participants around the gardens at the Bowral Tulip Festival, providing a critical opinion on the Archibald artwork at the Art Gallery of NSW or just sharing fresh figs picked together on the farm.

Clients relished the contact with a younger person, sharing the life experiences, challenges and personal changes that life brings. Ren has been a wonderful addition to our volunteer workforce.



### Aged services home visit

## Maintaining crucial connections

A 75-year-old Vietnamese client lives with her son who leaves home for work in the early morning and comes back at night. The client had a stroke and experiences continued imbalance, and has speaking difficulties.

Pre-COVID-19, the client attended the Vietnamese group on a regular basis. Initially, she was a little reserved and did not share many ideas and opinions. She only interacted with some of the people in the group. After a while, the client felt at home in the group and began to express personal ideas, talked to other members, and even encouraged members of the group to continue attending.

During the lockdown, the client was isolated at home. Staff telephoned every week to ask how she was, to check on her daily living and to support her needs. The Vietnamese staff who worked in the group arranged to visit her 2 hours per week.

Since the client has that social interaction, she is happy to share her experiences and perspective on life. Even with her speech difficulties, she likes talking, sharing information about her circumstances and her perspective on the journey of life as a whole. Staff have also taught her to play games. She learns quickly and feels very excited when she wins. That stimulates her memory, thinking capacities and also improves mobility. The client looks forward to seeing the staff every week and wants to come back to the group.

# Working together

## Partners and funders

### Active Social Group with our partner

There are many people in our area who live on their own or are in their fifties or sixties and have gone through life changes, such as retirement. We know that this can cause social disconnection for many. So, with the help of some funding from the Lantern Club, we set up the Active Social Group for people over 50. At least one session had 55 people, and there's a core, diverse group of around 25 who said they have valued the opportunity for regular social connection through activities such as lawn bowls, exploring parks and waterways, cooking, karaoke, card-making and more. While we put the group on hold during the lockdown, we hope to do more when the weather warms up and we can run outdoor activities.

### Donation for the garden

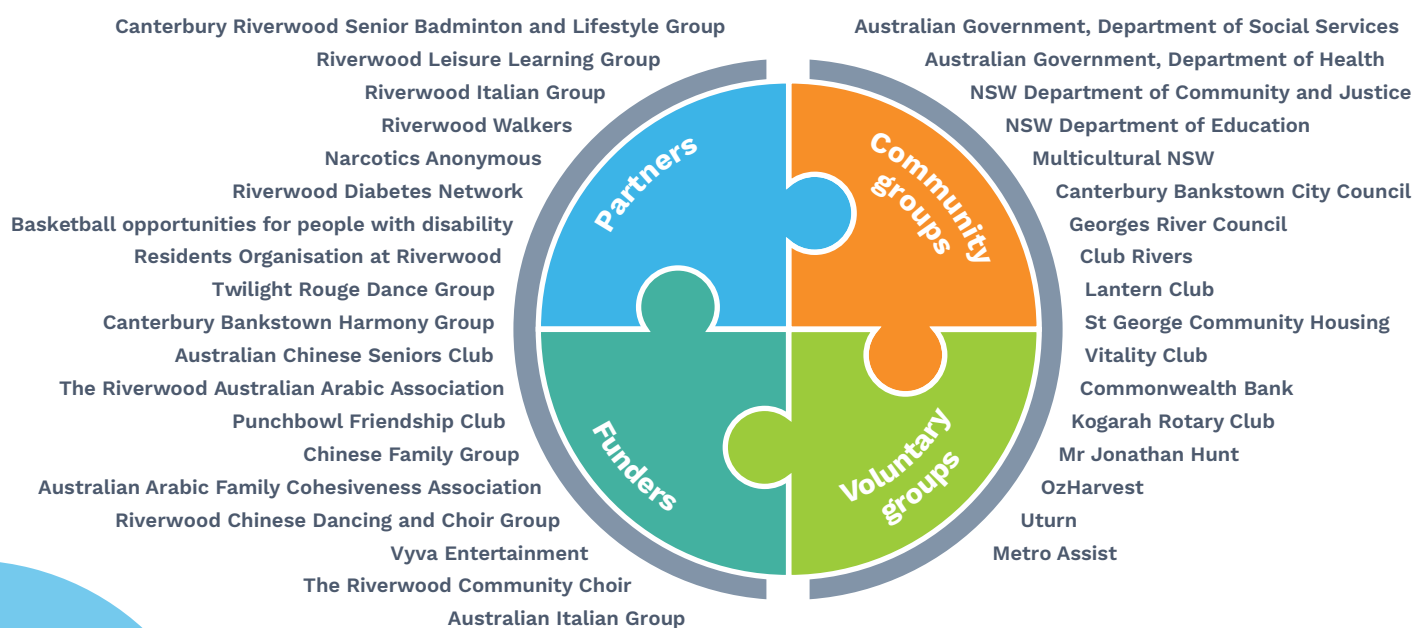
Uturn is part of the King Cotton group of companies and recently opened a Uturn Recycled Fashion shop in Bonds Road, Punchbowl – not far from the Centre. This wonderful group has agreed to provide RCC with an annual donation to support our community garden. We are grateful for their generous support.

### Wellness clinic

The Sydney Local Health District and RCC partnered to conduct a wellness clinic during COVID-19. We worked together to ensure the people of Riverwood had access to information, COVID-19 testing, influenza vaccinations and a takeaway meal. Despite the rain, 206 people attended, with 122 receiving the Fluvax injection and 24 tested for COVID-19. All results were negative. We had a short timeframe to organise the day but with everyone's help we achieved a great result for the community.

### Food for youth

We have established a wonderful new working partnership with All Saints Church (Greek Orthodox Parish and Community of Belmore) and the Mother Maria of Paris Mission. These partnerships have allowed us to support so many young people and their families by donating bread, fruit, vegetables and cooked meals on a weekly basis. The generosity and willingness of our partners to support the local youth has made a huge difference to our programs.



# Community and voluntary groups

## Community Choir

The RCC Community Choir is an important community group that recently became part of the Centre and started rehearsing here this year. The choir are proud to have maintained high membership numbers during the pandemic. They have even gained new members. During the lockdown phase of COVID-19, the choir rehearsed online via Zoom, and now rehearse face-to-face in the park outside the Centre, observing social distancing and wearing masks. The choirmaster Mr James Paul said, 'The choir is so important to its members so we have been trying our best to maintain connection with all of our members.'



**The Hon Gareth Ward and Mark Coure MP  
visit RCC to discuss community services**

## Community Fair and Open Day

The Community Fair and Open Day in October 2019 was a free event for locals. The Fair opened officially with a Welcome to Country from local Dharug woman Aunty Lyn Martin. The MC, Pan Nukunuku; our CEO; Chairperson; and local MPs Jihad Dib MP, Hon Tony Burke MP and Sophie Cotsis MP welcomed everyone and promoted the significance of such events to the local community and the Centre. Mark Coure MP and Hon David Coleman were disappointed they couldn't make it on the day. The Fair was a great opportunity for community members to gather informally; buy second-hand goods; eat food from a range of cultures; enjoy performances; watch and take part in sports demonstrations; and learn about the Centre and the services, programs and activities we offer. A feature of the day was the participation in a community cultural mosaic workshop. The mosaic depicts the many cultures in the Riverwood area. People of all ages and backgrounds participated in the artwork and enjoyed the experience of being part of something significant to the community. The mosaic has taken pride of place on an external wall of the RCC building.

## One Meal Riverwood

One Meal Riverwood faced many challenges and 'reinventions' in 2020. The service transformed from a full sit-down dinner inside the Centre every Monday night to a takeaway service in March. At the height of COVID-19 everyone was worried that the service would have to close. However, food services to support the vulnerable in the community were allowed to continue, albeit under strict guidelines.

Through the dedication and enthusiasm of the wonderful volunteers 'on the ground', and the cooks and helpers behind the scenes, the meals continued to be delivered from the back of the Centre at an earlier time slot of 5 pm. At the height of the pandemic, patron numbers dropped, but soon built back up as word spread that we were continuing to support the local community.

**'One Meal could not be more grateful to Michelle and the staff at the Riverwood Community Centre for allowing us to continue, accommodating all the changes and supporting our service week in, week out. We are now back to preparing and distributing around 80 meals every Monday.'**

**—Emma, One Meal**



**80**

**THREE-  
COURSE  
TAKEAWAY  
MEALS**

prepared by One Meal Riverwood each  
Monday night from May.

Aged services  
during COVID-19



Community  
Open Day



Family support  
and Oz Harvest



OOSH quiet  
space





◀ Youth drop-in during COVID-19



▶ Riverwood Community Centre staff

## Our year in photos



▶ One Meal Riverwood



▶ Riverwood Community Centre bus with fantastic new logo

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## **Auditor's report and financial statements:**

To obtain the full 2019–2020 Riverwood Community Centre auditor's report and the 2019–2020 Riverwood Community Centre financial statements please visit our website at [riverwoodcommunity.org.au](http://riverwoodcommunity.org.au). These reports will be available to view and download. Members can request a hard copy at the centre during work hours.

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## **Contact Riverwood Community Centre:**

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