

Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre



Corner Collins and Norton Streets
Surry Hills NSW 2010

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Centre Coordinator's 2006 Report

The past twelve months have been very challenging for the Centre as it has undergone a number of transitions. It has also, however, achieved a number of successes which is very gratifying.

Perhaps the highlight of this year was our very successful Surry Hills Festival 2006 which was held on 20 May. This year the Festival was held at a new site, Prince Alfred Park which allowed for more stalls, increased entertainment areas, interactive space and carnival rides. The Festival attracted some 50,000 people and returned a profit of over \$60,000 – a first for the SHNC - under the extremely capable supervision of our Festival Coordinator, Sue Anderson who did a fantastic job for us. The SHNC is also very grateful for the support of our many Festival sponsors, and, in particular, the City of Sydney Council. We are hoping to return to Prince Alfred Park with our 2007 Festival in Spring next year when refurbishment of the park has been completed.

The last financial year has also seen a change of faces on the Management Committee. Mike Salon left us earlier this year to enjoy some his retirement after some four years as Chairman. The SHNC is very grateful for his tireless work in this position. Mike was replaced as Chairman by Jay Myers.

Our current Directors are:

Jay Myers
Linda Scott
Simon Watts
Alan Piggott
Bob Starkenburg
Sara Lubowitz
Arkady Zykov
Angus Renshaw

In July 2006, the Management Committee also accepted the resignation of Anthony Stratford after nearly two years of very hard work with stakeholders and the community. Genevieve McMahon has been acting in the Coordinator's role since Anthony left whilst a permanent replacement is found.

Since I have been in the role the SHNC has been extremely busy, largely as a result of the need to move both our Neighbourhood Centre base and our Childcare facilities whilst the current Neighbourhood Centre is demolished to make way for the City of Sydney's magnificent new four level community building.

When completed, it will be Sydney's most environmentally-friendly Community Centre and will house a new Library, a 26-place Childcare facility and a dedicated Neighbourhood Centre.

We are very much looking forward to the new space and modern facilities the building will have to offer the Surry Hills Community and look forward to expanding and increasing the number of programs which we run.

Until April 2008, our Childcare Centre will be located at 1 Beaumont Street Chippendale, and Spring, Lina, Joyenti and Lee did a superlative job to effect an almost seamless transition to the purpose-built centre. Although, understandably, there was initial fall in numbers of families patronising the Centre, we are now back to operating at near capacity with children from the local area. The Childcare Centre is highly regarded and is a credit to Spring and her team.

OOSH continues to operate successfully at Crown Street Public School and we are fortunate to have Leonie Atterton agreeing to replace Lina as coordinator. We thank Lina for her hard work in the role and welcome Leonie. Leonie is a qualified primary school teacher and should be an asset to the program.

In the meantime Salma and myself, with help from Beth Jewell at City of Sydney Council were able to locate temporary premises at Bourke Street Public School. We are very grateful to Lorraine Gentlemen, the school principal for assisting us in our time of need and allowing us to "stay local". Already we are seeing some benefits of the partnership with interest from parents and staff in the programs and referral services we run. Salma, our multicultural officer was asked to attend the school assembly for Refugee Week and has been invited to address the assembly about our services.

Initially, there were some fairly serious logistical problems which unfortunately were beyond our control but, after almost two months, it is a great relief to finally be connected to telephone and email! We are beginning to find that people are adapting to our new location and we are seeing an increase in "drop-ins" which is gratifying.

Our multicultural programs have expanded over the past twelve months with English conversation classes being held three times a week and a consistently high demand for multicultural cooking classes, sewing classes and the monthly excursion. Hope Street organisation has recently approached SHNC with a mind to forming a partnership with us in the new year. Possibilities under discussion include increasing the number of English conversation classes as well as offering advanced English classes, increasing the numbers and range of our cooking classes and, possibly, offering hospitality training to the disadvantaged and/or unemployed. This should be an exciting time and moves us in the right direction to being in a position to offer a full range of community services by the time we move to the new Centre.

The Markets continue to do well with Leanne Lightfoot coming in to her twelfth year as coordinator of the very successful markets, an extremely important source of income for the SHNC. Demand for stalls is so high that they are consistently booked out within 20 minutes of markets of people calling the markets "hotline", a new dedicated mobile telephone line. The markets also have a new set of policies, procedures and a standard agreement for stall holders.

The markets have also been disrupted by the move as once Doherty Hall is demolished we will need to implement alternative ways for stallholders to pay (probably by cheque or direct deposit). Discussions are also underway with Council about alternative temporary surfacing for the grassed areas and toilet amenities.

We would like to thank our book keeper, John Ferguson for keeping the show on the road during a very difficult transition time. Without his intimate knowledge of the history, administration, financials and day-to-day running of the SHNC it could have been a very difficult period indeed.

We look forward to a smoother year ahead in 2007 and the lead-up to our returning to the new premises in 2008. As usual we thank the Lord Mayor, Clover Moore and the staff of the City of Sydney Council for their continued support and assistance.

Genevieve McMahon
Acting Centre Coordinator