

Annual Report CAN Community Services

November 2023

A word from the Chair

2023 has been a year of change, challenge, and consolidation. Some of the highlights have been:

- The appointment of a new Executive Officer, Virginia Moebus-Nelson, who began work in February 2023. Virginia began immediately drafting a budget that was finally accepted in April. Virginia is the ideal fit for CAN Community Support (CCS). She is loved by staff, volunteers, participants, and Board members. She is creative, energetic, and enthusiastic. We are very fortunate to have her with us.
- With less funding available for programs in 2023, there has been a decrease in staff hours and the retirement and departure of two long-term staff members. Samy and Anne still pop in periodically to see how we are progressing without them.
- 2023 has been a year of consolidation following the lockdowns of 2021 and 2022, which impacted service delivery and participation negatively. Participation numbers have increased gradually to pre-pandemic levels and service delivery has resumed as planned in most programs.
- The board has undertaken an extensive fundraising program that has been extremely successful, and we are on target to balance the budget and allow for a small contingency fund for the future.
- Since May, as a Board, we have been considering our legal status. As an unincorporated Board with all the associated risks we need to ensure individual members are not exposed and vulnerable to external factors and events. We have sought advice and involved the UC Tas/Vic Synod and hope to resolve the outstanding issues by the end of the year.

The Board

The Board has functioned for almost 22 months with only a few changes. Current members are listed below, comprising Council, church and external members all contributing their expertise and particular skills. The changes to the Board include the following:

- The resignation of Tewelde Kidane and Sandra Carrasco halfway through the year. Both resigned due to external workload and unavailability to regularly attend meetings and support events. We thank them for their contribution over more than 12 months.
- Andreana Reale stepped back from her role as Board Treasurer in March but has remained an invaluable member of the board. We are very grateful for her work as treasurer throughout 2022. Andreana assisted with the recruitment of Sandra Ward to replace her as board treasurer for the duration of 2023. Sandra has been invaluable organising the Board finances in particular but also supporting fundraising and other activities. Sandra has given notice that she will need to resign from the board in Jan 2024 due to heavy workloads in her place of work. We are working towards a smooth transition and handover and seeking out appropriate candidates for this role.
- There have been changes in committee membership for a variety of reasons. The load borne by Board members who work and/or study means their time is limited. As volunteers they have limited availability. In addition to attending Board meetings, members contribute in a variety of ways from fundraising and other activities to participating on sub-committees and attending additional meetings.

Board members

Lyn Hannah- Chair
Gene Reardon- Deputy Chair, Council member
Sandra Ward- Treasurer
Bethany Davey- Secretary and church member
Andreana Reale- Church member
Emily Hart- Secretary until July 2023
Ray Gormann- Council member
Virginia Moebus-Nelson - EO and non-voting member
Elspeth McKerrell
Ken Tabart- Council member

The Board committees

Fund Raising Committee

This committee has been extremely active under the guidance of Gene Reardon. Successful fundraising events have been three appeals, a choir concert, and the September meal event with a Christmas appeal to come. Including general donations and donations from generous regular donors we have raised **\$45,898.67** this year (November – November)

These fundraisers take a great deal of organising and with support which has come from CAN friends and congregation, these funds ensure the budget is balanced.

Finance Committee

This committee meets monthly to check the financial situation of the CCS budget. The finances have been competently overseen this year by Sandra Ward with presentations to the Board much easier to read and interpret with the addition of a YTD column. We have aimed for a small contingency fund at the end of 2023 and are on target to achieve this.

Governance Committee

This committee has been difficult to form with a chair and solid working group. To address this issue the risk register and strategic plan will be completed by the end of 2023 using a group process at the remaining Board meetings. Elspeth has also taken the initiative to move the strategic plan along despite her more than full-time study load. We are extremely thankful for her stepping up to organize this task.

Signed:

LH

Lyn Hannah
CCS Board Chair
9/11/2023

A word from the Executive Officer

I have been incredibly grateful for the warm welcome from the broader CAN Community, staff, and volunteers within the Community Support Program since beginning this role in January 2023. It has been a year of great change as we also said goodbye to Anne Yii who retired after a long period of service with CAN Community Support, and Samy Ibrahim who finished up as our Sustainable Relief Co-ordinator to move on to a new chapter. Both Anne and Samy were well-loved and have been very much missed.

Grace Hornsby and Yirgalem Frezghi, along with Ray Gormann, Lyn Hannah and the CCS board have also patiently, graciously, and generously assisted me to find my way through this year, along with our wonderful faithful volunteers. I am extremely grateful for their support and presence.

We were incredibly excited to welcome Ayan Mohamud into the role of Sustainable Relief Co-ordinator in May. She is energetic, creative and has a very grounded knowledge of this neighbourhood and its networks. She has been a great fit with our team and our work.

It has been an absolute joy to lead our hard-working, committed, and adaptable team of staff and volunteers. They are all well-loved by the community and our program participants and bring a kind, generous and joyful energy to work each day. This has been the biggest highlight for me as our team has formed and worked well together, adapting to change, welcoming and orientating newcomers and embodying our values of justice, inclusion, dignity, and hospitality.

It was also a highlight to be able to work with the congregation and the neighbourhood to establish our Little Free Pantry to complement our offering of food security for local households in need, particularly during this difficult time where cost of living is putting more and more stress on already disadvantaged households. It is a bright and happy spark in Palmerston Street!

Our Choirs in the Round fundraiser in May was a great success. Not only was it a great outcome financially but was a wonderful celebration of music and community coming together to support this neighbourhood. We were incredibly grateful for the support of the Melbourne Mass Gospel Choir, Gorani Men's Choir and Thursday's Children choir to help make it such a successful event. We were also very grateful to Therese Virtue, director of Thursday's Children choir, who arranged afternoon tea for the event adding not only additional funds to the outcome but also contributing additional atmosphere to a wonderful afternoon.

Grace and I have also been steadily working on reviewing and re-working processes in relation to finance, admin and IT amongst others. This has been time-consuming but a valuable part of streamlining and simplifying our operations.

Challenges moving forward include developing sustainable funding models to not only retain our current work and programs but to allow them to evolve. We have also worked with a smaller staff team this year which has involved some difficult decisions and some adaptation for existing staff and their roles which we will need to continue to monitor and negotiate into the future. Another challenge is recruitment, training and retention of volunteers to support our work. Despite this, our team undertakes incredibly significant work and maintains a wonderful reputation in the local community, with local services, local council, and funding bodies.

We move into 2024 continuing to maintain and consolidate our work and programs and carefully discerning how we might evolve organically and sustainably. We are grateful to the CAN congregation for all their supportive contributions and look forward to journeying together in this work over 2024.

Signed:



Virginia Moebus-Nelson
Executive Officer
9/11/2023

Programs

Family Learning Program

Yirgalem Frezghi has continued to provide an Out of School Hours Learning Support Program (Homework Club) to many local families, primarily from migrant backgrounds. She is ably supported by **Greg John** as well as a large team of volunteers. This program runs two afternoons a week at the Kathleen Syme library which is a wonderful modern facility and an ideal location.



The FLP (Family Learning Program) at Kathleen Syme library has supported **30 local migrant families** and **53 children** ranging from **grade prep through to year 11** to access additional educational support in literacy, numeracy and homework as set by their school.

Over the last two years we have also extended the program to run an additional afternoon a week located at Carlton Primary School. This attracts a different cohort of families and is in high demand. The school has expressed great appreciation for the additional support for their students. This is a highly successful program. It is still relatively new, and we are exploring ways to fine-tune and develop this program to meet the needs of this specific cohort.



The program at Carlton Primary School has supported **20 students between grade 1 and grade 4**. These students are referred by the school who identifies them as needing additional support.

While it has been wonderful to be fully back running the FLP in person, there are also several families who have continued to access the program via an online platform during 2023. We have had **11 students** access the Family Learning Program online during 2023.

Our Family Learning Program is supported by a huge, dedicated team of **58 volunteers** over the course of the year across the three afternoons. These volunteers come from the Church of All Nations Congregation, Melbourne University and the Student Colleges as well as from the local community. We would not be able to run the Family Learning Program without their assistance and commitment. We are also extremely grateful to the **Readings Foundation** who provide funding for our Family Learning Program.

Yirgalem also works in partnership with Our Place at the Carlton Learning Precinct to run a **bi-lingual playgroup** on Monday mornings. Mainly mothers and their pre-school children attend, giving the children opportunities for learning through play, a social outlet for the mothers, opportunities to practice English as well as build children's literacy skills in both English and a primary language spoken at home. The children love to sing songs and read stories in their language of origin with Khadra and Yirgalem. This year the bi-lingual playgroup has worked with **23 parents** and **33 pre-school aged children**.

Multicultural Women's group

Our Multicultural Women's group continues to attract a range of local women from a huge array of multicultural backgrounds each Tuesday. There is always laughter, fun, conversation, and food afoot. It is an important space for connection, friendship building and breaking down isolation. It is particularly important for women who are new to Australia as it gives an opportunity for them to build friendships, practice their English and learn about what supports are available to them. The group meets weekly and they enjoy conversation, craft, and food. They often go on an outing together and this year have enjoyed trips to Williamstown Beach, the National Gallery, the Botanic Gardens and more. They also have health and well-being sessions from time to time including women's health talks with health professionals from CoHealth, pampering sessions and Henna tattooing.

During Term 4, the women's group also enjoyed participating in jewellery-making workshops facilitated by local organisation SisterWorks.

Over the course of this year **21 women** from a vast array of backgrounds have formed a core group and built a supportive community together, forming a foundation to reach out to other women in the community and draw them in.

Many of the women from women's group also volunteer to help in our other programs – it is a great foundation for building confidence and other skills. They are the heartbeat of our centre!

2023 is the first year Yirgalem has run the Women's Group on her own and she has risen to the occasion. She has also appreciated the support of volunteers to assist her including Elizabeth Carew-Reid and Prithiva Singham.

We were delighted and very grateful to receive a grant through **City of Melbourne** to support our Multicultural Women's Group this year.



Food Security Programs

Wednesday Community Lunch

It has been a real highlight to be able to offer our mid-week community lunch every week this year after several years of lockdowns and COVID spikes forced it to become very sporadic. A small team of volunteer cooks and hosts prepare food from a beautiful diverse array of cultures each week. All food has halal and vegetarian options to ensure all guests are properly welcome.

Our volunteer lunch cooks prepare a menu each week, shop for ingredients and then prepare a meal for 25 – 30 hungry guests.

We have also hosted guests from the City of Melbourne TechHelp pop-up who joined us for lunch to assist any guests with issues they might be experiencing with technology.



GenU Training held an information stand during lunch to provide information on free education and training opportunities in the community sector for individuals who experience barriers to education and training,

Finally, we co-hosted neighbourhood lunches with our good friends at the Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre on 4 occasions this year.

This has all assisted our efforts to slowly re-build our community lunch program following the complete shut-down of this program due to COVID 19 over the last 3 years.

Almost all of our volunteers who work with food have now completed Food Safety Training thanks to the City of Melbourne who have offered this to all of their grant recipients for free.

Co-ordination and oversight of community lunches remains a challenge given the decrease in staff numbers. We are grateful to Yirgalem for generously picking this up in 2023 on top of an already busy workload.



We are so excited to be back sharing a meal together each week and extending hospitality in this way to our neighbours. We invite you to join us any Wednesday at 12 noon in Dyson Hall!

Community Pantry and Little Free Pantry, Fruit and Vegetable Market

Ayan Mohamud replaced Samy Ibrahim as Sustainable Relief Co-ordinator in May, overseeing our Food Security programs including our community pantry food parcels and our Fresh Food Market on a Thursday. Our Community Pantry has been busy with demand higher than ever due to the cost-of-living crisis. Over the course of the last financial year, we provided **918 non-perishable grocery parcels** and **over 3000 fresh food parcels**. This equates to approximately **19,600 meals** over the course of the year for local households who are struggling to put food on the table – an extraordinary effort! Foodbank Victoria, our food distribution partner, have advised that we are the largest generalist provider of food relief in the City of Melbourne based on the amount of food we access from them.

We are incredibly grateful to **Muna Hassan** for her work overseeing the Community Pantry in the period when we were recruiting a co-ordinator as well as on a number of other occasions over the last couple of years to cover staff needing to take leave. Muna continues to contribute generously as a lead volunteer in our pantry and is well-loved by the community. In recognition of her hard work Muna has been nominated for the Social Housing Volunteer Awards. She is joined by a large team of other volunteers including our drivers who pick up a van full of food from Foodbank each Wednesday to fill our Community Pantry.

During the covid period and with the change of personnel we lost a number of core volunteers. However Ayan has worked hard to recruit a reliable, fun and hardworking team of volunteers to ensure our Community Pantry runs smoothly and is well-stocked. It is a fun and welcoming team who greet locals needing food relief.

Ayan and one of our long-term lead volunteers were able to complete a Mental Health First Aid certificate recently which offered some great learning around managing some of the challenges our pantry participants face, particularly in relation to mental illness and addiction.

Due to increasingly high running and maintenance costs and other associated logistical challenges, we retired the old CAN Toyota Hiace this year and have replaced it

with a car share membership with GoGet. This has been cost-effective, logically efficient and is a more environmentally sound way of managing our transport needs, most commonly our weekly trip to Foodbank to collect our order.

To complement our food security work, we were excited to install a **Little Free Pantry** in Palmerston Street in July. This gives space for 24/7 access to food relief where locals can “Give what they can and take what they need.” It enables an offering of emergency food relief outside of our office hours and has been well taken up – times are very hard, and many are doing it tough. We are incredibly grateful to the congregation in particular for their support of this project and to local neighbours and services like the Community Grocer who fill the Little Free Pantry with leftover produce from time to time.

We are grateful to **City of Melbourne**, **City of Yarra**, **Foodbank Victoria** and **OzHarvest** for partnering with us to provide funding and in-kind support for our food security programs including our community lunch. We are also grateful to be able to support a number of locals with pharmacy costs through **Pickford's Pharmacy**.

Other Activities

The Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre has been a great partner this year. Their Urban Farmer and her volunteers assisted us in renewing and re-establishing the garden space in the AlleyWay, which was becoming dead and rundown.



We hope to build up a group of volunteers to keep developing the garden and the AlleyWay space over the coming year, but are thankful for the groundwork the CNLC volunteers have put in.

We have also appreciated tapping into the CNLC community composting program. The Food scraps from our fresh food market and our community lunch are collected on an electric bike each week and taken back to the CNLC site to be added to their community compost hub.



Staff

Role	Position	Program area	Hours / week	Days worked
Executive Officer	Virginia Moebus-Nelson	Administration / Management	26	Monday – Thursday
Administration Officer	Grace Hornsby	Administration (shared between CCS and congregational work)	18	Monday – Thursday
Community Development Worker	Ayan Mohamud	Community Pantry and Food Relief Parcels/Fresh Food Market	20	Tuesday – Thursday
Community Development Worker	Yirgalem Frezghi	Multicultural Women's Group, Family Learning Program, community development	24	Monday - Wednesday
Coordinator - FLP	Greg John	Family Learning	9	Monday -Wednesday
Cleaner	Eyoel Haileselasie	Cleaning	15	5 days per week
FTE:			2.77	
Community Development Worker	Anne Yii			Retired Dec 2022
Community Development Worker	Samy Ibrahim			Resigned March 2023

Volunteers:

Alexander Ryan Ariyanto
Cetin Arsin
Mirabel Asante-sege – Board member & market volunteer
Alaa Attwani
Greta Bird – CAN Congregation
Ian Bird – CAN Congregation
Clare Blazey
Jol Blazey
Lilli Boucher
Hugh Browning
Sophie Cameron
Elizabeth Carew-Reid
Anna Grace Cohen
Matthew Cohen
Coco Cover
Nate Cross
Bernghard Vincent Danielson
Nathan Della Gatta
Pedro Campos Deveza e Silva
Dominique (Demi)
Lily Donosky
Gregory Doumani
Susan Edwidge
Zeinab Elsaify
Anne Evans
James Forbes
Fatuma Ghairat
Ty Matthew Gilson
Michael Harrison
Muna Hassan
Lucy Hattink
Ingrid Hollis
Ashleigh Hutt
Gune Inyasio
Evan John
Jenny John
Abby Johnson
Michael Kantor
Natalya Kay
Pam Kerr – CAN Congregation
Lucas King
Oliver King
Cindy Klewick
Thi Manh Mai
Florence Maslen
Marta Mamo
Rachel Nalos
Paul Mayfield – CAN Congregation
Riccardo Mecchi
Rosa Merigan
Lesley Elisabeth Million
Parthasarathy Murugesan
Jane Newton-Brown
Han Nguyen
Raymond Parsons – CAN Congregation
Mia Pope
Marella Porraz
Sue Ralston – CAN Congregation
Sebastian Colin Rivalland
Charlotte Russell
Edie Sanson
Cynthia Shannon
John Shannon
Prithiva Singham – CAN Congregation
Claire Steel
Ken Tabart – CAN Congregation
Cameron Upfield
Madison Webstern
George Whitehead

Partners:

Ormond College
Carlton Learning Precinct and Our Place
Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre
Kathleen Syme Library
City of Melbourne
City of Yarra
Readings Foundation
Uniting Share Appeal
SisterWorks
CoHealth
OzHarvest
FoodBank