



COUNCIL POLICY

Council Policy Title:	Council Support to Neighbourhood Houses
Council Policy ref. no:	6.4
Responsible Department:	Corporate and Community Services
Date of adoption/review:	24 July 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

There are currently five official Neighbourhood Houses operating in Colac Otway Shire:

- Colac Neighbourhood House
- Gellibrand Community House
- Forrest and District Neighbourhood House
- Apollo Bay Community House
- Lavers Hill Neighbourhood House

These form the "Colac Otway Network of Community Houses" which comes under the Barwon Network of Neighbourhood Centres Inc.

There is also a Cressy and District Neighbourhood Centre which operates at the Cressy Maternal and Child Health Centre.

2. OBJECTIVES/PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide details of Council's support to the Neighbourhood Houses within the Colac Otway Shire.

Council recognises and supports the benefits to local communities of Neighbourhood Houses in relation to Council's role in facilitating the development and strengthening of local communities. Council identifies Neighbourhood Houses as a significant contributor to community development.

This policy is underpinned by the community development principles of access, equity, participation, rights, partnership and diversity

3. BACKGROUND

The first Neighbourhood House/Community Centre in Victoria was established in 1973 with the help of State Government funding. Currently there are approximately 350 Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres throughout Victoria.

Community Centres/Neighbourhood Houses are managed for and by the community itself. Decision making is shared by the community itself. These are the people who best understand their own diverse needs.

Community Centres/Neighbourhood Houses have a special atmosphere. They are welcoming, non-threatening places where anyone can come to meet new friends, contribute to their community, get helpful information and learn new skills.

Although Community Centres/Neighbourhood Houses differ from each other in many ways, they all aim to encourage personal growth, self-help and sharing of knowledge. Community Centres/Neighbourhood Houses work with a range of other local and state organisations in both formal and informal networking and partnership arrangements. Many centres have also become a social force for their local communities by reducing social inequalities and enriching the quality of life for community members.

“The Neighbourhood House Community Development Model

The model of neighbourhood house community development practice can be described in six simple and generic steps. These steps enable houses to have a key role in local area planning to meet the needs of their local communities. They are:

1. ***Involving*** the community and encouraging participation and inclusion and valuing diversity and difference at all levels of neighbourhood house operation.
2. ***Identifying*** community needs and aspirations.
3. ***Determining*** appropriate community programs, activities and services in response to those needs, ensuring that diversity and difference are valued.
4. ***Partnering*** with community organisations, businesses, government and philanthropic organisations to secure appropriate funding and support.
5. ***Delivering*** quality programs, activities and services.
6. ***Evaluating*** the effectiveness of all aspects of neighbourhood house operations, including programs, practice and governance.”

Dept of Human Services Program Guidelines

What Services do Neighbourhood Houses/Community Centres Provide?

- Connectivity, people to talk to, sharing of common interests and having fun.
- Information, skills development, affordable and supportive retaining and promotion of self-esteem for long-term unemployed.
- Support, referral and community education on problems such as family violence, grief and grieving, financial management, parenting, etc.
- Development of skills to encourage economic self-sufficiency.

- Adult literacy and numeracy.
- Health education and preventative programs.
- Computer education.
- Activities for children from pre-schoolers to teenagers.
- Activities and information for indigenous and ethnic groups.
- Integration of disabled and disadvantaged into community activities.
- Special activities and programs

4. DEFINITIONS

Community

A group of people living in the same geographic location (locality, township or suburb) and/or a group of people having common interest and needs.

Neighbourhood House

Neighbourhood House organisations are known by a variety of names, including Community Houses, Community Centres, Neighbourhood Centres and Learning Centres. The defining attribute and common thread is that they are all not-for-profit organisations which focus on providing generalist activities, programs and services that respond to diverse community needs.

Neighbourhood Houses provide a place where members of the community are able to access support, information, learning opportunities and participate in social programs or in the operation and management of the House, as volunteers.

5. POLICY

It is Council policy to support Neighbourhood Houses in the following ways:

1. Provision of financial assistance via annual funding to the Neighbourhood Houses located within the Colac Otway Shire where funds are available within annual budgets.
2. Financial support to the Regional Neighbourhood House network provided via an annual funding amount where funds are available within annual budgets.
3. Where possible provision and maintenance of facilities at peppercorn rental according to the lease documentation.
4. Support to the individual committee of management in providing advice and information where requested.
5. Advocacy on behalf of committees and management of the Houses and the Neighbourhood House program.

6. Participation in Colac Otway Network of Community Houses to ensure a co-ordinated approach to addressing community needs.

Council recognises and supports the benefits to the community of Neighbourhood Houses in providing programs, services and venues for community development as well as avenues for informal support and opportunities for resident participation in the planning and delivery for services at a local level.

This policy recognises the ongoing community development role Neighbourhood Houses play at a local level and has been developed to provide guidance in the support of Neighbourhood Houses.

Council will work in partnership with committees of management to develop and resource local communities.

Support to Neighbourhood Houses has a dual benefit that underpins the concept of community building. It provides avenues for Council to communicate with and enhance local communities as well as enhancing the Neighbourhood Houses ability to work with local residents to meet their needs.

6. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed in line with changing needs of the communities in the Colac Otway Shire and State Government Neighbourhood House Policy on a four year basis.

7. RELATED POLICIES/PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES

Neighbourhood House Co-ordination Program 2012/2013
Program Guidelines and Neighbourhood House Sector Information Guide
- *Department of Human Services.*

ADOPTED/AMENDMENT OF POLICY

Policy Review Date	Reason for Amendment
25 January 2012	Adopted by Council
24 July 2013	Review