

PAGE CONTENT

Page 1

- CEO's Message

-WCC 37th Annual
General Meeting

Page 2

- Community Trans-
port

Page 3

- Poverty and Finan-
cial Crisis on the
Increase in Whittle-
sea

Page 4

-L2P Driver Program
Launch

CEO's Message

Being part of a growing community like Whittlesea presents many exciting opportunities and challenges. Over the years, Whittlesea Community Connections has welcomed the challenge of responding to the growth of the municipality through initiating new programs and services. In this edition you will read about one of those services, -Community Transport, established by us in 2006 and now preparing to move into a new phase in its development. You will also read about one of our older services, Emergency Relief and the current challenges being faced by many Whittlesea residents struggling to make ends meet in these tough economic times.

On a more positive note, this edition invites you to help us launch one of our newest programs, the L2P Driver Mentor program. Established in partnership with the City of Whittlesea Council and VicRoads, this program aims to make young drivers, safer drivers. Unfortunately, Whittlesea does not have a great road safety record and Whittlesea Community Connections is determined to ensure that we are able to have a positive impact on this vital issue for our community.

But as you will see below, we begin by inviting you to attend our 37th Annual General Meeting to learn more about our work and the help celebrate our achievements in 2009-10.

Jemal Ahmet

Whittlesea Community Connections invites you to:

37th Annual General Meeting

Thursday 25 November 2010

Where: Fountain View Room
Whittlesea City Council
25 Ferres Boulevard (enter from McDonalds Road)
South Morang VIC 3752 (Melway 183 A10)

When: 4:30pm Thursday 25 November 2010

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Minutes of Previous Meeting
3. The Year in Review – Presentations by staff and community volunteers
4. Presentations:
 - Volunteer Recognition Awards
 - Peter Cleeland Memorial Award
5. Financial Report
6. Elections to Committee of Management

Refreshments will be provided

Please RSVP on 9401 6666 or admin@whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au

Community Transport

You can't be included if you can't get there!

The Role of Community Transport in creating inclusive communities

WCC's Whittlesea Connect – Community Transport Service was established to help address transport disadvantage and assist local residents to participate in their community. The service is available to City of Whittlesea residents who have no access to a private vehicle and where public transport is inaccessible or inappropriate. Reliable transport is provided to non-urgent health appointments, access to services and community programs and other social and recreational activities.

In 2010 Whittlesea Connect has made more than 1,000 journeys, transporting people who would have otherwise been unable to attend appointments or social activities. For many users the community transport service is their connection to the community, reducing social isolation and providing access to services that they would otherwise have been unable to use. The preventative health benefits and community participation outcomes are vital to building social capital and leading to healthier more socially included communities.

Both the Federal and State governments have recognized the importance of promoting social inclusion within their policy frameworks. The Federal government describes their vision of a socially inclusive society as *“one in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of [their] society”*.

The main focus of the Social Inclusion Agenda has been on addressing disadvantage within communities, with particular attention to employment creation. However one area of need that is often overlooked but which contributes significantly to social exclusion is transport disadvantage. This is particularly an issue in the outer suburbs, and certainly the case in Whittlesea, where public transport is limited and services are spread out across a large municipality.

While the evidence of the connection between transport disadvantage and social exclusion is clear (see Gray et al, 2006, Battellino, 2009, Urry, 2002) there is a definite lag in policy responses. The concept of community transport is still relatively new in Australia and rarely seen outside the context of the Home and Community Care (HACC) program. WCC has seen first hand the benefits of community transport and we believe it to be a valuable tool in addressing disadvantage, connecting communities and mitigating social exclusion. If social inclusion strategies are to be meaningful in growth areas such as Whittlesea, then transport disadvantage needs to be addressed. Unfortunately Whittlesea Connect remains unfunded while demand for the service from both individuals and agencies (that struggle to keep the services and programs accessible) continues to rise sharply.

In the absence of direct government support, WCC is exploring the transformation of the service into a social enterprise. Using a business model, we hope to keep service running and self-sustaining. However, we strongly believe that both the federal and state governments have a clear responsibility to fund community transport, especially if the rhetoric of social inclusion is to have any real meaning in the disadvantaged communities of the outer suburbs.

For further information about the community transport service contact either Stephen Lewis or Annette McKail on 9401 6666

WCC News
Issue 3—Nov
2010



Poverty and Financial Crisis on the increase in Whittlesea

Whittlesea Community Connections continues to provide a vital Emergency Relief (ER) Service assisting community members in financial crisis with financial assistance. Community members work alongside our staff as volunteer ER assessors and devote their time to carrying out assessments and assisting some of the most vulnerable in the community. In this financial year we expect to directly assist in almost 2,000 instances of crisis intervention. We also provide additional support where possible with Telstra vouchers, phone cards and met cards.

While we are able to assist a significant number of people each week, when we analyse the number of people turned away, the shortfall in funding becomes clear. Since January this year, we have turned away 731 people due to lack of funds and a further 306 people because of eligibility requirements put in place to help us manage excess and rising demand. These figures reflect a large number of community members in crisis whose immediate needs are unlikely to be met elsewhere.

WCC is currently conducting its 3rd Emergency Relief Survey (the 1st being conducted in 2002 and 2nd in 2006). The survey is conducted periodically to provide a snapshot of the reasons people seek emergency relief and to observe any shifts in trends for financial stress for disadvantaged residents of the City of Whittlesea. Preliminary findings show that Domestic Violence, Gambling and Drug and Alcohol use are often underlying reasons for seeking help through ER. Housing and rental stress continues to be an ongoing battle for service users and is linked to other factors such as relationship breakdown, domestic violence, unemployment, depression and anxiety.

This year, the survey has also sought to explore the impact of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). So far, 77% of participants indicated that they had been affected by the GFC. When asked how they were affected, responses were mainly directed towards an increase in daily living expenses including the cost of travel, health and medical expenses, school fees and an increased difficulty in accessing ER. A significant number of responses referred to an increase in the cost of food, utilities and a lack of affordable housing.

In 2009, WCC received additional 'one off' funds from FACHSIA to provide assistance to those affected by the GFC. This funding was used to increase the number of appointments each week and to increase the amounts of money we could assist with. Even with this increase, the above figures show that we continue to turn people away because we do not have the funds to assist all those in need. In addition to the GFC funding, FACHSIA provided further funds to assist vulnerable groups. WCC received a portion of this funding and employed a full time worker to provide case management support to ER clients with complex issues. The case management service has been able to assist clients who seem to fall through the gaps when trying to access specialised services. It has also allowed for an improvement in collaborative service delivery both internally and with external agencies. Single session case management has provided an opportunity to assist clients by providing information or making appropriate referrals and longer term case management has allowed for the provision of intensive support to clients with complex needs.

In June 2011, the additional funding provided by FACHSIA will be expended and to date, there has been no commitment to continued funding. The cut in funding will mean a drop in the number of appointments made each week at WCC and an end to the Case Management Service, which in turn means the number of people that go unassisted each week will continue with no programs in place to provide further support to people with complex needs. In a climate where we are seeing unprecedented demand for our services, it is clear that there is still a long way to go in addressing social exclusion. WCC sees the ability of people to meet their basic needs as the first rung on the ladder to social inclusion, and urge the federal government to ensure that people in financial crisis and ongoing and cyclical poverty are prioritised in funding allocations. When people queue outside our door for two hours before we are open, then something surely is 'not right'.

L2P LEARNER DRIVER MENTOR PROGRAM

WHITTLESEA COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS INVITES YOU
TO THE LAUNCH OF
WHITTLESEA L2P LEARNER DRIVER MENTOR PROGRAM

By
David Turnbull
CEO - City of Whittlesea



5.30 PM THURSDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2010

At

FOUNTAIN VIEW ROOM
WHITTLESEA CITY COUNCIL
25 FERRES BOULEVARD
SOUTH MORANG 3752

The launch will be preceded by Whittlesea Community Connections annual general meeting which will start at 4.30pm. You are cordially invited to attend the meeting and then join us celebrate the launch

Refreshments will be provided

