



# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

This document provides a framework for community development in the context of Wingate Avenue Community Centre. In doing so, we would first like to acknowledge place the community centre is located, and the history of this place, which we appreciate as a relatively short period of time; the almost 40 years that our organisation has been operating.

In acknowledging place, we acknowledge the long and important history of communities that have lived, celebrated, connected, and learned in the place we know as Ascot Vale.

We also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which Wingate Avenue Community Centre rests, the Wurundjeri people. We acknowledge their connection to the land, sea and sky, and acknowledge that Wurundjeri land is a place of age-old ceremony, celebration, initiation, and renewal, and that the Kulin peoples' living culture has a unique role in the life of this region. We also acknowledge the intergenerational trauma of First Nations people and the negative impact of previous and ongoing Australian policies and practices. Wingate Avenue Community Centre seeks to be an environment which contributes to breaking this cycle.

We also acknowledge the ongoing and contested nature of the concept of community development. Community development can have many meanings, from community lead action to professionalised agency. Our practice of, and commitment to community development is rooted in the stories, traditions, and practices of residents, mentors, teachers, community leaders and workers, past and present. We view it as a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems (United Nations).



# Community Development

## Our Intention

We are focused on place-based approaches that build the agency of individuals and local groups. Agency enables people and groups to meaningfully influence the issues affecting their lives. To achieve this, we engage and work alongside individuals and groups to affect positive personal or community level change.



## Pillars

**Connect**  
**Collaborate**  
**Evolve**

## Our Values

**Compassion**  
**Diversity**  
**Inclusion**  
**Quality**

## Connecting Practices

We interact authentically with community members and value the lived experience of those we work for. This informs the development of strategic direction.

We develop opportunities for new social connections to be established.

Our relationships are based on reciprocity.

We work to remove barriers to engagement, inclusion and participation in our services, programs and activities.

We value the knowledge and wisdom that individuals bring to our organisation and community activities.

We amplify the voices of community members that may be marginalised in traditional decision-making settings through advocacy; we only speak on people's behalf by request.

We enable the voices of the community to be heard and acted upon in the development of programs and activities.

We work to create a safe and welcoming environment; to create an open dialogue between community members, staff, and other organisations.

We aim to be a learning organisation that creates opportunities for knowledge exchange and acquiring new skills for individuals and as an organisation.

We acknowledge the dedication of community groups and individuals by celebrating successes and progress towards our shared goals.

**Connect**

# Framework

## Collaborating Practices

### Collaborate

We recognise that we cannot achieve our mission alone; we invite and foster collaborations with others that align with our values, and who offer support, advocacy or services that benefit the community.

We work together with community and other services to bring about new initiatives and ways of working that meet community need.

We are a hub for the community to access a wide variety of services, support and information. We do this by inviting partners to provide services within our space.

We work with others to multiply the impact of our efforts and to create strong pathways for community members to pursue goals beyond the opportunities available at the centre.

We are a community driven organisation that values the strengths and experiences that are held individually and collectively within the community. Our work seeks to build upon and grow these unique gifts.

We endeavour to work with individuals, groups and organisations in cooperative manner based on trust and reciprocity to collectively reach our goals.

We share our resources with the local community to empower and strengthen community led activities.

### Evolve

## Evolving Practices

We aim to be responsive to, and driven by, community needs and aspirations by being flexible in the services and programs we deliver.

We recognise the dynamic and changing nature of the local community and seek to understand and reflect current and emerging local needs, desires and aspirations in the services, programs, and activities on offer at the centre.

We encourage lifelong learning for individuals, our community and as an organisation by offering opportunities for personal and professional development through training and other forms of education.

We conduct our work with transparency and accountability to the local community, our staff, volunteers, partners and funding bodies.

We embed reflection, monitoring and evaluation practices into our work and provide opportunities for participants to share their experiences so that we can continually improve our relationships, services and programs, and understand where there may be gaps in existing program delivery.

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## What is community development

Community development is a process where community members act on issues that are important to them. This may or may not be done with the support of a community development professional or agency. We understand it to be the art of bringing people together around common interests, opportunities or concerns, and working together to bring about a desired change<sup>1</sup>. We recognise 'people and their relationships with each other are the most valuable resource and are the starting point for any work'<sup>2</sup>.

At the heart of community development is a recognition of the value that is gained in working with individuals, groups and other organisations. Each partner has unique perspectives and strengths to contribute that build a richer picture of opportunities for positive community change. Community development seeks to build upon the strengths of community members that have an interest in contributing to improving a situation.

Community development is a holistic approach, grounded in principles of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination and collective action<sup>3</sup>. Community development considers community members to be experts in their lives and communities, and values community knowledge and wisdom. Community development programs are led by community members at every stage. It has an explicit focus on the redistribution of power to address the causes of inequality and disadvantage.

Community development is a practice that is dynamic and continues to evolve over time as residents move in and out of the area and the social, cultural, environmental, and economic contexts change.

## Why does community development practice matter?

*Wingate Avenue Community Centre Inc. is committed to being a centre that focuses on social justice, advocacy, and action on behalf of local people who are experiencing barriers to participation. We believe this commitment will lead to improved quality of life and empowerment for all in the local community.*

*Wingate Avenue Community Centre Constitution*

Community development practice gives us a framework through which we deliver services, programs and activities. It guides us on how we will deliver services that achieve our mission of identifying and addressing systemic inequities and barriers.

Historically, community development principles and practice have underpinned the work of community centres and neighbourhood houses across Australia. Although the programs and activities delivered by centres and houses differ based on the demographics and aspirations of their communities, the way in which community centres plan and implement activities are based on community development principles and practice (Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania, 2020).

Using a community development practice addresses social and economic issues the community identify as important and is key to achieving outcomes the community want, which in turn improves individual agency. Without a community development framework, we are providing services that we want; with a community development framework we are providing services that the community want and need.

Being located in the heart of the Ascot Vale public housing estate, with strong and trusted relationships with the community built over nearly 40 years, Wingate Avenue Community Centre is uniquely placed to support the community achieve their goals. Our community development framework supports us to do this.

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<sup>1</sup> Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania, 2020

<sup>2</sup> Ingamells A. et al, 2011, p18

<sup>3</sup> Kenny & Connors, 2017

## What does the research tell us?

Community development practice can lead to a range of positive outcomes for individuals, organisations and at a broader community level, which can help us to achieve the mission and goals of the centre.

Potential outcomes for individuals - each of these outcomes enhance the ability of people to influence the circumstances of their life<sup>4</sup>:

- Increased skills, knowledge and experience of residents.
- Strengthened community connections and confidence.
- Create opportunities for involvement at different life stages or as different life circumstances and goals evolve.

Potential outcomes for organisations:

- Community involvement helps Wingate Avenue Community Centre to make the best use of limited resources and utilise resources to have the most significant community impact.
- Increased effectiveness and sustainability of projects due to local skills and knowledge being the foundation of developing initiatives<sup>5</sup>.
- Ability to create programs and activities that are customised to the needs and input of local community<sup>6</sup>.
- Increased collaboration and efficiency as a result of working with individuals and other organisations to multiply the benefits to the community and develops organisational ability to respond quickly to emerging issues.
- Building the capacity for critical problem solving within and between organisations.

Potential community level outcomes:

- Increased health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Increased social capital and community cohesion through working collectively on issues of concern<sup>7</sup>.
- Addressing inequities in the community through increased community participation.

## References

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<sup>4</sup> Smart, 2019

<sup>5</sup> Health and Community Services Workforce Council

<sup>6</sup> Rooney, 2011

<sup>7</sup> Rooney, 2011; Smart, 2019