

**CONGREGATION OF CANBERRA CITY
2022 ANNUAL MEETING AND ANNUAL REPORT**

REPORT FROM UNITINGCARE CANBERRA CITY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

I can only repeat what I said in last year's report that this has been another difficult year for the Early Morning Centre (EMC) as we continued to adapt our operations to meet the demands of COVID-19. Our Director, Nicole Wiggins, our staff and our wonderful volunteers have worked really hard to keep as much of the EMC open as possible and to support our guests through very difficult times. We are very proud of them and very grateful.

Changes have been made to the EMC service delivery during the year in accordance with ACT Government guidelines. We have managed to continue essential services such as take away food, showers, laundry and telephones with some restrictions relaxed and other services introduced as the year progressed.

Meetings of *UnitingCare* Canberra City Management Committee

The *UnitingCare* Canberra City Management Committee met nine times during 2021/22. The annual general meeting was held on 15 September 2021 where office bearers were elected (Anne Butler as Chairperson, Campbell Macknight as Secretary and Graeme Lowe as Treasurer).

As indicated in last year's report, we have been trying to find new members for the committee, particularly younger ones and we have now recruited two younger women with experience in the social welfare sector. At the end of June 2022 members of the Management Committee were Anne Butler (Chair), Campbell Macknight (Secretary), Graeme Lowe (Treasurer), Paul Chalson, Margaret Watt (Convenor of Friends of the EMC), Alice Ferguson, Katelyn Peek and Jessica Meyer. Nicole Wiggins (EMC Director) also attends the meetings.

During the year the Management Committee progressively considered the implementation of recommended actions in the business plan 2018-20. This followed on from the review of the business plan on 8 March 2021. The Governance and Policy and Procedures Manuals were also updated during the year.

EMC Service Delivery Changes due to COVID-19

A number of EMC activities and visiting services have been postponed during COVID-19. A COVID plan has been developed and a COVID marshal assigned to each breakfast. Once again take away breakfasts had to be reintroduced on 13 August 2021 to comply with COVID restrictions. Dine in breakfasts resumed on 6 December. The EMC did not open for a week in January 2022 due to COVID cases among staff. After a short period of service from the door only, the community hub reopened for general entry on 15 March 2022 but breakfast continued as take-away throughout March. By end of June 2022, both breakfasts and community hub were open as normal.

Due to limited access to the community hub all other activities such as cooking classes, bingo, choir and art were not possible for most of the year.

The community hub is also being used to conduct interviews and assessments for housing assistance with Street to Home and Catholic Care.

COVID-19 Rough Sleepers Working Group

The Director has continued to participate in the COVID-19 Rough Sleepers working group which commenced in March 2020 and includes members from Community Services Directorate Housing and Homelessness sections and a number of homelessness and community agencies. These meetings have progressed housing options for rough sleepers through the Catholic Care AXIAL program and Mackillop House for single women with a separate section for women with children and other additional housing options that have been made available through increased funding

specifically for housing and homelessness. Hotel accommodation was offered to 13 guests in September 2021 with seven accepting the offer and five turning up and staying. Of these 3 moved into permanent accommodation.

Catholic Care ASSIST Program is a housing and homelessness service supporting people to find and maintain accommodation. It continued on an irregular basis during the year with a small number of guests attending. EMC has continued to work with the staff at Catholic Care making referrals to the AXIAL program for long term rough sleepers.

Rough Sleeper Data Collection Meeting

The Director has been participating in the rough sleeper data group primarily via ZOOM meetings and email correspondence. Face to face meetings were held throughout the year with ACT Housing and Homelessness Service, OneLink and St Vincent de Paul. The EMC is collecting monthly data that is sent to OneLink for comparison with data collected by other services. Regular meetings are held to discuss the monthly data submitted by all the participating agencies and discussions on improving reporting to ensure rough sleeper numbers are reported accurately.

Workplace Health and Safety Reports

The Director presents these to the Management Committee every three months. No issues arose during the year but the Management Committee agreed it was a useful exercise.

Opening at weekends

Following the provision of government funding, the EMC was opened at weekends from 17 July 2021 for a 12 month trial. Weekends were officially opened on Saturday 31 July by Housing and Homelessness Minister, Rebecca Vassarotti. With Cherie Styles filling the position of Assistant Manager, they have been very successful and the ACT Government has now advised that funding will be extended for a further 12 months.

Finance

Trading result for the year was a surplus of \$136,977 due primarily to the reduced scope of services under COVID restrictions and savings resulting from very generous one off donations of food supplies from people keen to help during COVID. We were able to add \$50,000 to our donation reserve to be used to support the resumption of full-service delivery and new initiatives once we are free of all COVID restrictions.

Staff and Volunteers

We were fortunate that staffing was stable during the year under the guidance of our amazing Director, Nicole Wiggins. The Management Committee is very grateful to all our staff who have persisted in supporting our guests through very difficult and trying times. Staff at end of June 2022 were:

- Nicole Wiggins Director
- Cherie Styles Assistant Manager
- John McDonald Client Support Officer
- Dinah Morrison Client Support Officer
- Spaceman Africa Client Support Officer
- Samata Holmes Client Support Officer
- Nic Watson Coffee Cart Manager

The EMC also continues to be supported by a dedicated team of volunteers and inquiries about volunteering are received on a regular basis. The total number of volunteers supporting the EMC during the year was 75. New volunteers are welcomed on a regular basis and undertake initial one-on-one training with the Director. The majority of volunteers who suspended volunteering during COVID-19 have not yet returned. The modified take-away breakfast along with the need to have a smaller team in the kitchen and dining room to ensure social distancing meant that this reduction did not impact on our services.

Guest numbers

Statistics of the number of guests using the EMC are in the tables at Attachment 1. COVID continued to reduce breakfast numbers although these now appear to be stabilising (9021 in 19/20, 5593 in 20/21 and 5554 in 21/22). Attendance at the community hub continued to be popular along with phone use, crisis food packs, computers and showers.

Outreach

One of the EMC's aims is to work cooperatively as part of the social welfare community in Canberra. Our Director works very hard to keep informed of what other agencies are doing and regularly attends community meetings including:

- Ministerial Roundtable with Specialist Homelessness Services: The Director attended this half day forum on 6 July 2021 where strategies to assist rough sleepers and to address the housing shortage were discussed. A further Zoom meeting was held on 13 September 2021.
- ACT Housing and ACT Health meeting: Three meetings were held in September 2021 via Zoom to discuss COVID response plans and outbreak management plans. Further meetings were held during the year.
- Meeting with Louise Gilding of Executive Housing ACT: To discuss vaccinations and testing among rough sleepers and other service users. The EMC offered to conduct an informal survey of service users to gauge vaccination levels. This showed a very high vaccination rate among EMC guests with only five of the approximate 100 guests asked being unvaccinated.
- CSD and Community Sector update meeting on 1 March 2022 to discuss the Counting the Cost Report. Minister Rachel Stephen Smith attended the meeting to speak about the report.

- Service Needs, Gaps and Outcomes Framework: The Director participated in two workshops in March 2022, one involving homelessness agencies and the other involving food providers. The EMC also hosted a service user consultation on 31 March 2022 as part of the development of the framework and has attended other whole of sector workshops. She also participated in the Rough Sleeper and Complex Clients Subsector workshop. The framework is due for completion at the end of June 2022.
- Meeting with the consultant in relation to the OneLink evaluation.
- Joint Pathways (which includes all the ACT homelessness services thus providing a networking and information sharing opportunity for agencies in the sector).
- Who's New on the Streets (the regular SVDP Street to Home meeting).
- Visit by the Productivity Commissioner: The Director hosted a forum at the EMC on 7 April 2022 for the Productivity Commissioner and the Executive Managers from ACT Housing and Community Services Directorate. A number of homelessness agencies attended to provide input to a review of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.
- Rotary Dinner: The Director attended the dinner on 29 June 2022 where a cheque for \$5,000 was presented to the EMC.

EMC Business Plan

During the year, the Management Committee has continued to work with EMC staff to implement the business plan following the Management Committee meeting in March 2021 which provided an opportunity to assess progress on the plan and modify certain proposed actions. The plan groups proposed activities for the EMC round five strategies:

- Better experience of homelessness with access to essential services
- Better physical and mental health
- Better life skills
- Better social connections
- The EMC is a sustainable organization.

Progress in relation to the five strategies identified in the business plan is outlined below.

Better Experience of Homelessness with Access to Essential Services

The EMC provides a number of services that enable guests to mitigate the problems of being homeless. Despite COVID, we have continued to maintain the EMC as a community hub with services provided both by the EMC in its own right and through other service providers who visit the EMC on a regular basis. Services provided to guests by the EMC itself include:

- Free food much of which has been served at the door during COVID. Up to 21 December 2021, OZ Harvest continued to deliver pre-made meals each Monday and Wednesday along with various fruits and vegetables to distribute to guests. After that meals have been made at the EMC with ingredients supplied by OzHarvest.
- laundry
- showers
- telephone
- computers including internet
- scripts
- mailing address through the EMC PO Box
- lockers

- some clothes. EMC staff have been securing donations of clothing and bedding from a broad range of sources such as oneoff donations from members of the public and from partner charities and community agencies.

Services are also provided by outside organisations who visit the EMC on a regular basis. Most of these were disrupted during the year due to COVID but have now resumed. These include:

- ADCAS and Meridian recommenced outreach sessions in April 2022 to provide information about My Aged Care.
- Street to Home which provides updates and connects with rough sleepers who are EMC guests resumed in March 2022 on a weekly basis.
- Mobilise, a student charity co-ordinated by ANU students, provides free clothes
- Knights of Malta visited the EMC on 21 June 2022 and provided 4 winter coats to guests.
- A hairdresser resumed attendance at the EMC on 17 March 2022 and provided haircuts to 8 people. In June 2022 she provided haircuts to 11 guests.

Better Physical and Mental Health

Issues with the Medical Clinic continued during the year with Capital Health Network having problems organising contracts with medical staff. We were advised on 7 June 2022 from the Capital Health Network that it would be withdrawing from the responsibility of providing staff from the clinic from 30 June 2022. The clinic has now closed due to the withdrawal of the Capital Health Network and the Interchange General Practice. We have had discussions with ACT Health and the Director is in discussions with Directions to see whether their medical bus could attend the EMC. The Directions bus provides services including a doctor in attendance in Veterans' Park on Fridays and some EMC guests attend.

Feros Care (NDIS information) returned in March 2022 and has continued on a monthly basis.

Naloxone-overdose response workshops were held on a regular basis during the year COVID restrictions permitting.

CAHMA continued to attend for outreach sessions to provide alcohol and other drug information and case management, including quit smoking courses and nicotine replacement therapy sessions. Again some of these visits did not occur due to COVID.

Five COVID Pfizer vaccination clinics were held in August and September 2021 and one in October 2021 with a total of 340 vaccinations provided. A further COVID vaccination/booster clinic was held on 14 February 2022 but only 4 vaccinations were done so future clinics were cancelled. ACT Health provided funds for food as an incentive for guests to attend.

A flu vaccine clinic was held on 18 May 2022 with 9 people attending.

Better Life Skills

Street Law visited the EMC on an intermittent basis due to the lockdown but is now attending regularly.

Computers: Guests have been using the computers regularly, COVID restrictions permitting, with nearly all the computers in use for most of the day. The six tablets are also used regularly by guests.

Cooking Classes: There have been no classes since March 2020 due to COVID.

Soldier On: Soldier On, a charity that supports returned soldiers, has donated several guitars to the EMC and a regular fortnightly jam session commenced in May 2021 with Colin from *Soldier On* facilitating the group. The sessions were suspended due to COVID but have now resumed.

Better Social Connections

Although restricted in its activities this year, the community hub provides strong social connections for our guests. Many just like to come in, have a hot drink and chat to the staff and other guests.

There were also a number of other activities during the year which enhanced social connections. These included:

- Pets in the Park continues to be held on the third Sunday of the month with Rainbow Paws and the pet grooming service also attending.
- The guest library which is regularly re-stocked with books and continues to be popular with guests.
- The EMC Christmas party was held on 13 December 2021. Food, hampers and other assistance were provided by Green Hills, the Egyptian Coptic Church, Helping ACT and Nicole Lawler and her team. Gift vouchers for Coles or Woolworths were provided by Canberra City Uniting Church members, GIVIT and a range of other regular donors.
- A Harmony Day BBQ was held on 21 March 2022.
- Easter lunch on 21 April 2022 hosted by the Egyptian Coptic Church. The Church also provided Easter hampers for the guests.
- The Current Affairs discussion group restarted in April 2022.
- Feel Good Feed: This commenced in March 2022 with Canberra Consulting providing lunch for approx. 25 Guests. Helping ACT has also provided monthly lunches.

The EMC as a sustainable organisation

Friends of the EMC annual report 2022

The ongoing support of the Friends of the EMC is very important and always valued. During this time of pandemic this support has been demonstrated in many different ways. As has been the case for 2020 and 2021, due to covid constraints fundraising has been difficult so we remain extremely grateful to our core group of supporters who have maintained their regular financial donations. As well, we have been heartened to receive many one-off donations of money or goods that have helped immensely during these difficult months. Supporters call in, often unannounced, with donations of meals, food items for our emergency food parcels, warm clothing or cakes for morning tea.

The second Annual Non-Event fundraiser run through the Hands Across Canberra (HAC) appeal was a great success with more than \$12,000 being raised simply through selling tickets to a non-event! HAC held a giving day where donations up to \$5,000 were matched by HAC. The EMC organised a fundraising “non-event” to coincide with this day in order to increase donations. The non-event gave people the choice to purchase differently priced tickets which allowed supporters to do whatever they wanted with the time. Some people said they would spend time with their grandchildren, others spoke of having a quiet evening at home with no pressure to dress up and go out.

Our End of Financial Year appeal was also well supported. It's fortunate that because of the wonders of social media we have been able to fundraise without the need to gather people in one place.

Friends and supporters receive four emailed newsletters a year containing updates on EMC activities. These activities are also highlighted on our Facebook page which is carefully maintained by our skilled volunteer, Sarah Kentwell. The newsletters, the Facebook page and our website enable the work of the EMC to be demonstrated to the people of Canberra. As well, the list of our business sponsors continues to grow and this demonstrates the respect for the EMC and its work that has developed in the ACT community.

Our thanks go to our Patron, Tim Gavel, who continues to raise the challenges of homelessness and the work of the EMC at every possible opportunity. We are also grateful for the support of our three Ambassadors: Peter Barclay, Paul Powderly and Debbie Rolfe.

Safe Shelter Donation: Unfortunately, Safe Shelter closed its operations this year but donated its remaining funds of \$21,455 to the EMC. This donation was greatly appreciated and was used to purchase sleeping bags and other items for rough sleepers, consistent with the Safe Shelter philosophy.

Other contributions: We were also fortunate to receive contributions and donations this year from:

- Brumby's (18 loaves of sliced bread per week picked up from Lyneham by our patron Tim Gavel)
- Capitol Chilled Foods (32 three litre bottles of milk per week)
- The Tall Foundation
- Canberra Consulting
- Helping ACT (food parcels and food for emergency food parcels).
- Rotary
- Weston Creek, Yarralumla and St Columba's congregations.
- The ANU Students Association who provided a 'Winter Coats for the Homeless' coat rack
- Price Waterhouse Cooper
- Community Housing Canberra
- Country Women's Association
- North Belconnen Baptist Church
- OzHarvest <https://www.ozharvest.org/canberra/> .
- Hands Across Canberra
- GIVIT
- Grill'd restaurant, Belconnen
- Andrew Leigh MP
- Nicole Lawder MLA
- Elizabeth Lee MLA
- Mercy Association
- Ngunnawal Street Pantry
- Icon Water
- Kangarra Waters
- Mirinjani Village
- Saara Holidays
- Phoenix Knitters

- Rainbow Paws

Conclusions

It has been another difficult year with COVID restrictions on opening and our staff, volunteers and guests all affected by the pandemic. We are optimistic that things are on the mend and we look forward to a more productive year in 2021/22. We are very pleased with our weekend openings which are growing in popularity, and we are pleased to see most of our regular service donors returning. We plan to undertake more activities with the easing of restrictions. We are extremely fortunate to have the continued support of our staff, volunteers and guests through this period as well as our ongoing community support. Thank you also to the members of the Management Committee for their encouragement and ongoing commitment during this period.

Anne Butler

Chair

22 August 2022

Early Morning Centre Statistical Reports

Breakfasts (including takeaway): 2017/18 – 2021/22

Month	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Per cent male 2021/22
July	729	769	918	497	338	78.4
August	957	919	875	401	477	67.9
September	860	737	905	527	375	88.0
October	899	741	866	463	352	90.1
November	918	733	903	528	435	83.2
December	750	671	744	434	460	83.0
January	930	841	865	374	418	82.2
February	854	772	727	449	490	80.2
March	796	735	796	463	542	82.6
April	840	863	461	502	519	82.4
May	888	1060	476	483	565	86.8
June	659	803	485	472	583	85.8
TOTAL	10,080	9,644	9,021	5,593	5,554	

Other services/activities -2021/22

Month	Hub week days	Hub weekends	Breakfast community hub	Meals weekend	Cuppas w/days	Cuppas w/ends	Shower w/day	Shower w/end	Laundry	Phone usage	Lunches weekdays	Computer usage	Crisis food w/days	Crisis food packs w/ends
July	1115		206		1844		84		13	189	286	176	236	
August	1024		282		2033		69		13	42	282	93	242	
Sept	1089	213	289		1707		16		2	0	346	0	260	
October	1401	232	287		1836		23		0	0	187	0	260	
Nov	1130	273	333	206	1813		16		2	62	258	19	267	
Dec	603	232	239	140	1148		35		1	82	114	106	118	
Jan	580	139	195	99	797		58		3	42	114	63	151	
Feb	821	255	224	160	1093	338	86	22		NA	175	2	225	27
March	1165	356	318	199	1410	456	93	31		80	214	77	197	24
April	1053	365	241	123	1184	380	80	26		224	158	146	198	12
May	1395	476	258	216	1721	553	97	27		20	292	161	164	27
June	1347	356	310	205	1874	676	89	35		89	325	238	198	38

Month	Mail	Doctor	Prescriptions	Legal services	OneLink	Lockers	Pets in the Park	Ainslie Lodge	Weekday referrals	Weekend referrals	Dog packs	Cat packs
July	16	19	3	2	1	0	23				9	14
August	11	3	0	5	5	0	0				12	8
Sept	6	0	0	0	0	0	0				19	11
October	8	0	1	0	2	0	0				14	12
Nov	3	0	0	0	3	0	26				9	12
Dec	6	0	0	0	4	0	23	3			7	13
Jan	5	0	0	0	2	0	23	2			15	10
Feb	5	0	0	2	3	1	16	2	5	9	11	11
March	16	5		0	3	1	17	4	11	6	16	9
April	14	2		0	10	0	23	1	8	4	19	15
May	13	10		5	15	1	15	5	8	12	11	11
June	11	0		1	15	1	21	5	34	5	7	13