

People,
Planet,
Performance

Our year in review

CEO and Chair message

This year has been characterised by remarkable achievements and strategic advancements at the Centre for Participation, propelling us forward and reaffirming our commitment to our mission and values.

One of the standout successes of this year has been the growth of our social enterprise, Laneway – Café without Borders. This venture, strongly supported by our partnership with Federation University’s Horsham Campus, not only offers delicious meals but also empowers marginalised individuals by equipping them with valuable skills and employment opportunities. We take immense pride in its positive impact on our local community and our organisation.

‘We take immense pride in Laneway – Cafe without Borders and its positive impact on our local community and our organisation.’

Our partnership with VicHealth has led to the creation of our latest social enterprise, the Wimmera Food Collective. It provides fresh, healthy, and affordable culturally appropriate food to the community through cooking classes, affordable fruit and veggie boxes, and waste reduction education, aligning with our mission to create meaningful opportunities and foster positive change within our community.

Thanks to a Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions social enterprise growth grant and capital expenditure approval, we were able to acquire more suitable vehicles for two of our enterprises. This strategic investment will allow us to scale our operations and better serve our communities.

MyCareCrew Home Help completed its first year of ground maintenance at the Grains Innovation Park. This social procurement partnership exemplifies our commitment to making a positive impact on our community while delivering high-quality services. Moving forward, we will continue to explore more social procurement opportunities that can provide employment for marginalised individuals.

We secured the Volunteer Management Activity contract in partnership with Ballarat Foundation for the Grampians Region for four years, along with funding for stakeholder mapping and a 10-year regional participation plan for the Wimmera Southern Mallee region for 2023-2024.

Community support for the elderly remains a major focus. Our team of more than 400 volunteers delivered over 18,000 nutritious meals to the elderly and vulnerable. This year we provided over 1075 hours of social support and 655 trips to medical appointments and shopping for individuals over 65.

The landscape of aged care is constantly evolving, and while we maintain a positive approach, we acknowledge the uncertainty it brings. We have conducted strategic workshops to ensure we are well-placed amidst these changes.

Our social enterprises have significantly expanded essential services such as meal delivery, cleaning, home assistance, and gardening, all driven by a strong social mission. This expansion has not only improved access to crucial services but has also fostered community connections while empowering individuals to maintain their independence.

We take immense pride in our growth within the NDIS space, particularly in School Leavers Employment Support (SLES). Our commitment to providing meaningful opportunities for participants with disabilities remains resolute.

Our commitment to supporting the migrant community was recognised during the year. It was an absolute privilege for the Centre for Participation to receive a Highly Commended Award in the category of Vocational Education and Training for Pre-Accredited Community-Based Training. This award was presented by the Hon. Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria, as part of the Victorian Multicultural Commission annual awards.

Internally, we have thoroughly reviewed and updated our marketing and communications plan, realigning our sub-brands to better communicate our mission and impact. Simultaneously, we are actively working on a new website that reflects our growth and evolution since the merger of Volunteering Western Victoria and the Wimmera Hub in 2016.

In our unwavering commitment to safeguarding our organisation and stakeholders, we conducted a comprehensive cyber security audit and implemented recommendations to ensure the highest standards of data protection and information security.

Our financial position remains stable, a testament to the diligent oversight and management by our dedicated team. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Jason Maybery, Sherrine Clark, and our Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (FAR) for their exceptional work in ensuring our financial strength.

As we bid farewell to Sally Boyd after her dedicated term as a director, we express our sincere thanks for her unwavering commitment and enthusiasm. Looking ahead, we are focused on strategic board recruitment and the establishment of a new subcommittee for consumer quality in the upcoming financial year. We also extend our appreciation to John Martin for his tenure as Chair.

Furthermore, we continue to lead as the Grampians’ local representative for Social Enterprise Network of Victoria (SENVIC) and collaborate closely with sector leaders and Social Enterprise Australia. Our involvement underscores our steadfast commitment to driving positive change.

We continue building on our strategic plan, with state and federal funds earmarked to support the development of a regional participation plan. Our vision for the next decade is to enhance participation, social cohesion, and alignment with the National Volunteering Strategy.

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We have incorporated the concept of impact into all our programs and followed this theme through in this report. It has been divided into three key concepts: People, Planet and Performance. We have chosen to assess the impact of our programs through these three key lenses as they encompass our ultimate goals and the impact we aspire to achieve through our work.

In summary, this year has been characterised by significant growth, expansion, notable achievements, and strategic advancements. We remain dedicated to our mission and values, embracing change and innovation as we continue to strengthen our communities and change lives.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our dedicated team, our supportive stakeholders, and the more than 400 passionate volunteers who enable us to extend our impact year after year. As we continue our journey, we stand by our mission to be a beacon of support and hope for our community, today and in the future.

Robbie Millar, CEO and Leigh Cooksley, Chair

19,830

HOURS OF ADULT EDUCATION DELIVERED

18,350

MEALS MADE AND DELIVERED BY VOLUNTEERS

410

VOLUNTEERS SUPPORTING OUR PROGRAMS

52

LEARNER DRIVERS SUPPORTED BY MENTORS

‘Our social enterprises have significantly expanded essential services such as meal delivery, cleaning, home assistance, and gardening, all driven by a strong social mission.’



What we do

'MyCareCrew social enterprises, enable people to live independently while fostering social connections and skills development, making a positive impact on people and our community.'

The Centre for Participation offers a wide range of services and initiatives to support many people in our community including **youth, the elderly, migrants and people with disability**. Our services underpin our mission to change lives and strengthen communities through local opportunities that foster growth, inclusivity, and a sense of belonging for everyone in the Wimmera region and beyond.

Snapshot of our services



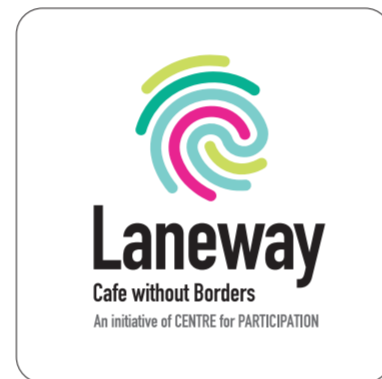
The Centre for Participation – offers a wide range of services and initiatives to support many people in our community.



MyCareCrew – Helping people live independently through home gardening and cleaning, social support, community transport and home meal deliveries.



Community Transport – helping people overcome transport limitations so they can access essential services, maintain social connections, and get out and about.



Laneway – Cafe without Borders provides opportunities for people with disability and from CALD backgrounds to gain work experience in hospitality and meal production.



Wimmera Food Collective – A space for the community to sell, purchase, and celebrate locally sourced, affordable, and culturally preferred produce.



Licensing the Wimmera – A program supporting youth and migrants to obtain their driver's licence.



Adult, Community & Further Education – Encouraging students to become life-long learners with courses in health, languages, business, hospitality and more.



Carer Support – Offering tailored support for carers of all ages through taxi vouchers, accommodation, respite and more.



Social Enterprise pathways – A work experience and training program giving people the work-ready tools they need to go on to gain employment.



School Leaver Employment Support – Helping school leavers overcome barriers to employment and start their career.



Youth Connections – Helping young people at risk of disengagement or offending find employment or education.



Meals on Wheels – Coordinating local volunteers to deliver Meals on Wheels to the elderly in the Horsham (LGA) area.

Youth services

Who: Youth aged 15 to 25 years old who live in the Wimmera
What: Community support, volunteering opportunities, employment support, driving lessons
How: – Wimmera Food Collective
 – Youth Connections
 – Licensing the Wimmera
 – Social Enterprise Pathways
 – School Leavers Employment Supports
Why: By supporting our youth with employment and civic participation, we're investing in the community for the long term.

We support youth to reach their goals and forge connections with the community by offering support for learner drivers with experienced mentors through the Licensing the Wimmera program. We engage young people aged 12–25 in the Horsham region who are at risk of disengagement or offending/reoffending through our Youth Connections group work and training, and we support school leavers who have barriers to employment to find secure work through School Leavers Employment Supports (SLES).

Aged services

Who: Elderly people over 65 years of age who live in the Wimmera
What: Community support, lifelong learning, volunteer opportunities, in home assistance
How: – MyCareCrew
 – Community Transport
 – Meals on Wheels
 – Digital literacy
 – Carer support
Why: Providing essential services and a friendly face enables us to help individuals live independently and stay connected.

Community support for the elderly remains a major focus. Many of our 400-strong volunteer team are retirees themselves, working to give back to their community through opportunities including our Community Transport services, as well as help delivering thousands of nutritious meals to the elderly and vulnerable with Meals on Wheels.

Our MyCareCrew team help people live independently by offering gardening, cleaning, transport, meals and social support.

Digital literacy courses empower students of all ages to stay connected and promote lifelong learning.

Migrant services

Who: Migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers
What: Community support, adult education, meal delivery, employment support, food programs
How: – Wimmera Food Collective
 – Laneway – Cafe without Borders
 – Friendly staff and volunteers to support people settle in
 – English classes
 – Micro business classes
 – Licensing the Wimmera
 – Social Enterprise Pathways
Why: Assisting newcomers to arrive, survive, and thrive fosters a welcoming and inclusive community for all citizens.

We are proud to support our migrant, refugee and asylum-seeker communities to enable them to 'arrive, survive and thrive'. Our designated Migrant Support Worker offers assistance and information about the variety of programs and courses available. These include Licensing the Wimmera – supporting new migrants to obtain their driver's licence, as well as English language, digital literacy, and microbusiness classes.

Our Social Enterprise Pathways Program provides workplace training in customer service and hospitality, and the Wimmera Food Collective is an inclusive space that offers various culturally relevant food.

Disability services

Who: People with disability
What: Community support, education, food services, driving lessons, hospitality skills, employment support, NDIS services, volunteer opportunities
How: – MyCareCrew (recipients and participants)
 – Laneway Café (recipients and participants)
 – Adult, Community, and Further Education
 – Carer support
 – Community Transport (recipients and participants)
Why: Opening pathways to participation enables people with disabilities to build social connections, self-confidence and skills.

Our social enterprises open pathways to participation by providing opportunities for people with disability to gain valuable work experience and build social connections and skills while supporting the community.

Many initiatives support community members by engaging them on both sides of the equation. For example, Laneway – Cafe without Borders offers a supportive environment for people with disability to gain experience cooking meals which are then delivered to other vulnerable community members, generating funds that can then be spent on further training and support.

People

The heart of every community is its people

The Centre for Participation has not only touched the lives of those we serve but has actively empowered them to become contributors to society, fostering more inclusive and diverse communities. Our impact resonates through improved health, social connections, volunteer-client engagement, and empowerment. As we look back on our achievements, we find inspiration in the stories of resilience and transformation that continue to define our mission.

Enhancing community connections

What a remarkable year we've had, one filled with achievements, collaborations, and a profound impact on our community.

One of the most successful partnerships was with the Ballarat Foundation for the Grampians Region. We worked tirelessly to secure the Volunteer Management Activity contract for the next four years. This contract means that we will continue our mission of fostering volunteerism and community engagement, which has always been at the core of our organisation's values.

In our quest to make volunteering more inclusive and diverse, we collaborated with Volunteer West to develop the Culturally Inclusive Volunteer Toolkit. This toolkit aims to break down barriers and promote inclusivity in volunteering, ensuring that everyone feels welcome and valued equally.

But our commitment to our community extended beyond just volunteering. We secured state and federal funding for 2023-2024 to develop a comprehensive stakeholder mapping of volunteerism in the Wimmera Southern Mallee region. This will lay the foundation for creating a 10-year regional participation plan, ensuring that our efforts will continue to make a difference for years to come.

Empowering our youth

We established a collaboration between the Youth Connection program and Alternative Programs from Horsham College. This partnership aims to empower our youth and provide them with more opportunities to succeed in their education journeys.

The Youth Connections Program has been instrumental in empowering at-risk youth within the Horsham community. Through innovative group work, training, and networking activities, we have improved their social, emotional, educational, and employment outcomes and reduced their involvement in the Justice System.

As part of our efforts to engage with socially isolated youth during school holidays, we developed and offered Youth Holiday programs in 2023. The response was overwhelming, and we were proud to support 54 participants, surpassing our target of 30.

Our commitment to mentorship also shone brightly during this financial year. We delivered mentor training and successfully trained 15 new volunteer driving mentors in the Licensing the Wimmera program, who supported 52 learner drivers, providing a total of 2,618 driving hours.

This year saw 284 students undertake a staggering 13,742 hours of Adult, Community, and Further Education (ACFE) training. This education is a stepping-stone to a brighter future for our community members.

284
STUDENTS ENROLLED IN OUR EDUCATION COURSES

In a shining moment for our organisation, our English Language Teacher, Dr. Jan Schimdt-Loeliger was a finalist in the Learn Local Teacher Awards in 2022. This recognition underscored the dedication and excellence of our team members in delivering education and support to our community.

Many of her students are part of the Migrant Support Program, which empowered multicultural community members through skill development, English language programs, and micro-business courses. By making migrants feel welcome, we are fostering a sense of belonging and improving the vibrancy and inclusivity of our communities.

And finally, our social enterprises have enriched marginalised groups, empowering them to secure employment and actively participate in their communities, fostering diversity and inclusion.

'Our social enterprises have enriched marginalised groups, empowering them to secure employment and actively participate in their communities, fostering diversity and inclusivity.'

'By providing supervised driving hours and mentorship, we have expanded opportunities for young, disadvantaged drivers, leading to improved employment, education, and social prospects.'

Wholehearted dedication: Dianne's story

Dianne began volunteering for the Centre for Participation in August 2022, assisting with non-emergency medical transport, social support, Meals on Wheels delivery, and mentoring a learner driver in the Licensing the Wimmera program. Her positive attitude and proactiveness saw her very quickly become a valued member of the Centre for Participation's volunteer team.

Dianne's passion lies in non-emergency medical transport. Twice a week she undertakes an 8-hour round trip to ensure a rural client has access to vital dialysis treatment.

Beyond volunteering tasks, Dianne's exceptional interpersonal skills saw her take on the unofficial title of 'social coordinator' during breaks in the Woman's Journey adult education classes. She helped to build connection among participants, fostering networking and helping friendships develop.

Dianne's genuine support extended beyond scheduled activities, as she proactively reached out to her participants when they needed it most. Her empathy and warm demeanour created an environment where people felt welcomed and supported, making her an invaluable asset to the community she served.

For Dianne, the interactions with both volunteers and staff have solidified her sense of belonging in her community. It fills her with a sense of purpose, while utilising her skills and providing meaningful social connection.



Drive time: Crystal's story

Crystal lives on a remote farm 45km from Horsham with her father and younger sister. Unfortunately, the 17-year-old had to leave school to become full-time carer for her father who is in palliative care. So, while obtaining her driver's licence was critical, it also seemed impossible.

Her school counsellor referred Crystal to the Licensing the Wimmera program, and she was then matched with Rodney, an experienced volunteer driving mentor who often takes an entire day to travel to remote centres, drive with multiple learners and then travel back home.

'Rodney is an absolute legend and has helped me go from a 3/10 to a 10/10 safe driver. He has helped me lose all my bad driving habits and we have gone on such cool adventures during our drive times,' said Crystal.

'... obtaining her licence will ensure that Crystal can continue to be her father's full-time carer...'

With only a couple more hours to complete before she can take her driver's test, obtaining her licence will ensure that Crystal can continue to be her father's full-time carer and enable her younger sister to remain in school. Her long-term goals to finish school, travel and pursue further education in childcare will be greatly enhanced by having her driver's licence.



54
YOUTH PARTICIPANTS IN OUR YOUTH HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

52
YOUTH DRIVERS SUPPORTED TO OBTAIN THEIR DRIVER'S LICENCE

15
NEW DRIVING MENTORS

60
CARERS OFFERED SUPPORT

Planet

Our path to sustainability

Over the past year, we have made significant progress in adopting sustainable practices that align with our mission to reduce our footprint and contribute to global environmental efforts. This retrospective explores our sustainable initiatives, their impacts, and our vision for the future.

Plastic reduction

One of our noteworthy achievements this year was the introduction of 'Responsible Cafes' within our Laneway Café. This innovative program aimed at reducing single-use plastic has yielded impressive results:

- We discontinued the use of single-use plastics including plastic drinking straws, plates, cutlery, drink stirrers and expanded polystyrene food service items.
- We introduced a 'Mug Library' that encourages our community to embrace reusable products. Patrons can borrow and return mugs, reducing the need for disposable cups and containers.

Paperless transition

We've taken significant steps to reduce paper usage across our organisation:

- All carer support, CHSP and HACCC programs have transitioned from paper storage to online data systems, significantly reducing printing volume.
- The finance department and the HR system transitioned to paperless file storage.
- Board meetings and subcommittees have gone digital, eliminating the need for printed materials in most instances.
- We've offset 1.00 tonne of CO2-e through Greenfleet who plant enough biodiverse native trees on our behalf to offset the emissions from printing this report. The funds help Greenfleet grow our forests and grow climate hope.



Carpooling and carbon savings

We've enthusiastically embraced carpooling in our Community Transport program to reduce our carbon footprint. Overall, by covering a total 4,620km with two passengers per trip instead of our traditional one-on-one service, we've managed to save an impressive 0.533 metric tons of CO2 emissions.

Worm farm

We have introduced a worm farm at our Wimmera Food Collective to divert food scraps from Laneway Café away from landfill. This initiative not only showcases our commitment to reducing waste but also demonstrates a forward-thinking approach to environmental responsibility.

Electric bike

To further reduce emissions, we added an electric bike to our fleet during the year, saving 5.69 kilograms of CO2 emissions, even with minimal use.

Solar panel installation

Through the installation of solar panels, we've made substantial strides in sustainability. This year we saved 20.83 metric tons of CO2 emissions through solar power generation.

4,620

KILOMETRES SAVED THROUGH CARPOOLING

5.7

KILOGRAMS OF CO2 EMISSIONS SAVED THROUGH E-BIKE USAGE

20.8

METRIC TONS OF CO2 EMISSIONS SAVED THROUGH SOLAR POWER GENERATION.

'Every kilometre saved, every paperless transition, and every solar panel installed brings us closer to a more sustainable world.'

'Our commitment to sustainability isn't just a short-term effort; it's a roadmap to a greener and more responsible future.'

26,056

KILOGRAMS TOTAL CO2 EMISSIONS SAVED IN THE PAST YEAR

Towards 2030

For the Centre for Participation, aligning with the United Nations 2017 Sustainable Development Goals is an opportunity to commit to making a positive impact on climate change as an organisation.

The goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all, and in order to leave no one behind, it is important that we achieve them by 2030. These are some of our sustainable goals over the short, medium and long term.

Short term

- Expand our plastic reduction initiatives to include more environmentally friendly products.
- Transition paper-based processes to digital systems.
- Increase carpooling initiatives and support eco-friendly transportation options.
- Expand our renewable energy sources to further reduce our carbon footprint.

Medium term

- Implement more energy-efficient practices and technologies.
- Continue to educate and engage our community in sustainable practices.
- Explore partnerships with like-minded organisations to amplify our environmental impact.
- Monitor and reduce waste generation across our operations.

Long term

- Achieve carbon neutrality.
- Further reduce waste through recycling and responsible disposal.
- Invest in sustainable infrastructure and green building practices.
- Become a leading advocate for sustainability in our community and industry.

Performance

‘Focusing on partnerships that matter by expanding our relationship with key organisations has amplified our impact, showcasing the power of collaboration in creating a vibrant community.’

Leading the way – our internal success

The Centre for Participation has continued to make significant strides towards its mission to change lives and communities, with fantastic performance results both internally and externally.

Financial

This year, the Centre for Participation's total revenue was \$2,495,749, just slightly down on last year's revenue of \$2,558,110. This was earned from state government grants (37%), federal government grants (24%), social enterprise revenue (25%) and other grants, contracts and donations (14%). Our total expenses were \$2,354,107.

Our focus on financial sustainability through diversification of revenue streams saw our revenue from social enterprise almost double since last year.

Our social enterprise activities brought in \$876,007, of which \$627,111 was revenue generated through trade, and \$248,895 through state and federal government grants. This revenue played a crucial role in supporting our operations.

Operations

We looked at our supply chain and established procurement from eight social enterprises and B Corps, further strengthening the social impact ecosystem.

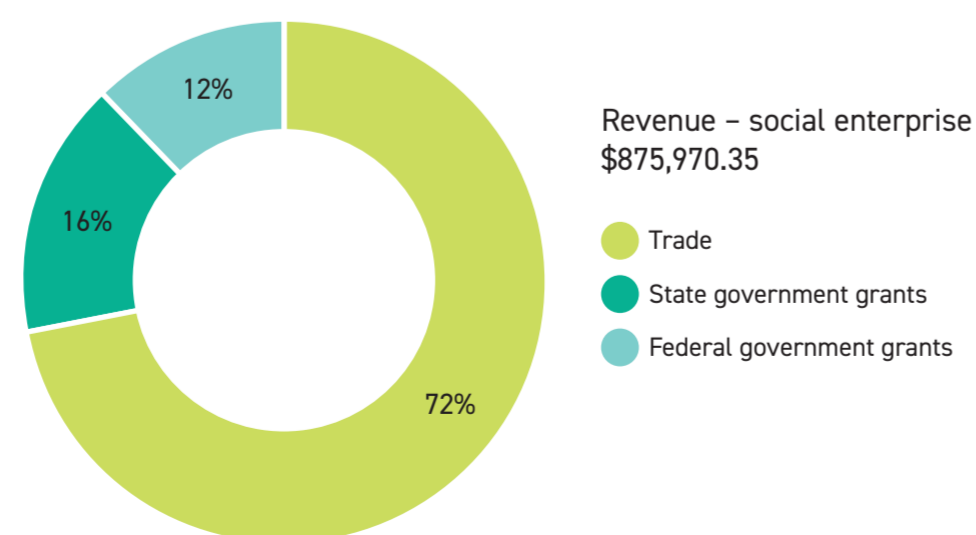
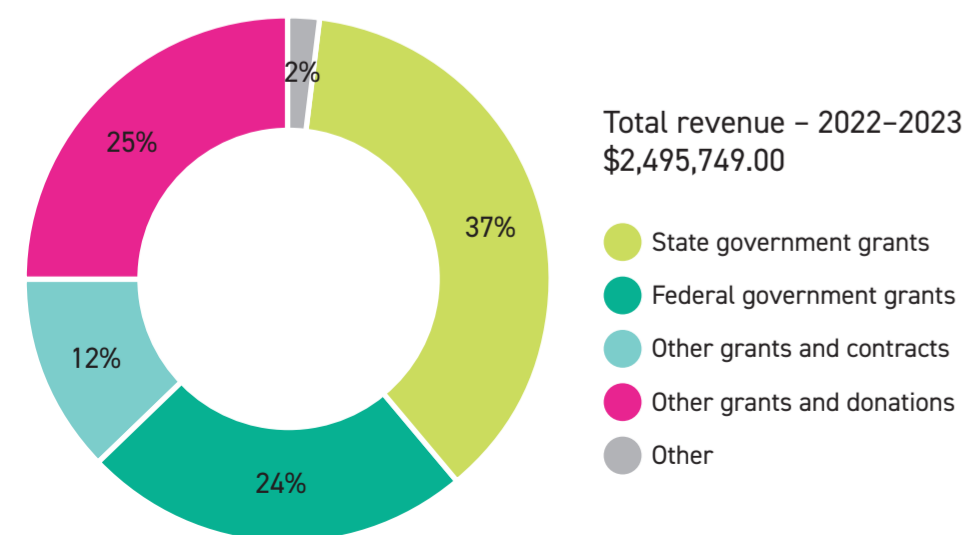
Our team grew from 18 to 25 full time and part time staff. Much of this employment growth was due to the new Wimmera Food Collective as well as expanding our social enterprise, NDIS and youth programs which resulted in increased employment hours for both our NDIS participants and multicultural staff by 9.7%.

Governance

We have continued to uphold strong governance, accountability, and effectiveness. We remained fully compliant with regulatory bodies, including the Australian Taxation Office, Australian Securities and Investments Commission, and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. Moreover, the organisation successfully completed a smooth and timely audit process, highlighting its commitment to financial transparency and good governance.

The board and management team engaged in strategic sessions, focusing on the upcoming changes to the new Support at Home Program, demonstrating the organisation's forward-thinking approach.

‘Leading with integrity through dedication to strong governance, impactful advocacy, and diversifying revenue streams showcases our authentic leadership in creating positive change.’



Our external success

Advocacy

We continued our role as the Grampians Local Lead for the Social Enterprise Network of Victoria (SENVIC), contributing to the growth of the social enterprise sector in the state.

We also continue to actively participate in key advocacy campaigns within the Community Transport, Meals on Wheels, and Volunteer sectors, advocating for positive change and representing community interests effectively.

Partnerships

The organisation expanded its network of partnerships and alliances, deepening its relationships with key organisations such as the Ballarat Foundation, Volunteering Victoria, VTCTA, Federation University, WDEA, Meals on Wheels Victoria, SENVIC, and Grampians Community Health. These collaborations have amplified our impact on the community and enhanced the organisation's ability to address community needs comprehensively.

Community engagement

Our efforts to create a vibrant, resilient, and inclusive community are evidenced in the strong program results.

The Social Enterprise Pathway program created 3,698 hours of skill development for people disengaged and marginalised from the workforce. We are proud to say this helped 14 individuals find employment, promoting inclusion and driving economic growth in the region.

Laneway – Cafe without Borders prepared meals for an impressive 289 catering jobs and 33 community events and delivered over 62,000 home-made meals to vulnerable members of the community. While MyCareCrew worked up a sweat with over 3,000 hours of gardening services.

In the Adult, Community, and Further Education program, we welcomed 284 students who amassed a total of 13,742 hours of learning. Our English language classes and micro business classes designed for the Migrant Support Program were well supported with 24 participants from a range of cultural backgrounds.

The Licensing the Wimmera driving program clocked up 2,618 driving hours, supporting 52 learners and training 15 new mentors. This resulted in 11 drivers obtaining their probationary licences.

Our community support program delivered just over 1000 hours of social support, 665 trips to activities, shopping and appointments. We also offered relief for 60 carers through taxi vouchers, motel accommodation and respite. And our support extended to 54 at-risk youth by keeping them occupied during the school holidays.

Our strategic goals

1. Anything is possible for anybody
2. We're all in this together
3. Authentic leadership
4. Getting on with business

Our impacts at a glance

Licensing the Wimmera driving program >	15 new mentors	+	52 learner drivers	+	2,618 driving hours	=	11 probationary licences gained
Social support programs >	410 volunteers		665 transport assistance trips		65 carers supported		1075 hours of social support
							18,350 Meals on Wheels delivered
Social enterprise programs >	3,698 hours of Social Enterprise Pathway learning		3,000+ gardening hours		6,200 Laneway meals cooked and delivered		289 catering jobs
							14 employment outcomes



> COMMUNITY > VOLUNTEERING > LEARNING > PARTNERSHIPS

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