



Chairman's message

In 2019, the Bridge Darebin board focussed on the strategic direction of the organisation for the next four years while continuously improving governance structures, processes and procedures.

This focus resulted in the completion of some key activities across the year, including the development of the 2019–2022 strategic plan, a refresh of the vision and mission statements and a review of board roles and responsibilities, including the development of a board skills matrix, a governance charter and position descriptions for board roles.

The board is confident that the implementation of the new 2019–2022 strategic plan will ensure that Bridge Darebin continues to deliver on our mission to strengthen the local community by providing social and education services that empower those who need it most.

In 2019 Brooke Dellavedova was elected as a board member. Apart from the valuable addition of Brooke, all other board members and elected roles remained unchanged from 2018. This, I think, demonstrates the ongoing stability of Bridge Darebin's governance team, who remain engaged and committed to their work.

In 2019 an ongoing and lengthy dispute with a similarly named not-for-profit organisation was satisfactorily resolved and gave us the opportunity to rebrand as Bridge Darebin. The inclusion of Darebin as part of our identity makes an important

statement that demonstrates our commitment to our local community. Personally I would like to thank the team at Good Business Matters, who provided their expertise to assist us to complete the rebrand within short timelines.

From a board perspective, it was great to see the work of Bridge Darebin recognised in 2019 with a number of awards. While our work should never be about winning awards, the recognition of our achievement by external stakeholders and funding bodies clearly demonstrates the quality of Bridge Darebin's work, and in this context provides many opportunities to build upon our existing programs and services in subsequent years.

Looking toward 2020, the key priority for the board is to ensure the organisation continues to grow steadily and strategically, while maintaining a sustainable mixture of revenue sources. Bridge Darebin's new enterprises will be watched with interest to ensure that strategic support and advice is provided by the board at the times it is required. With the implementation of the 2019–2022 strategic plan, the board will also maintain a focus on organisational objectives in terms of our financial performance, our customers, our staff, volunteers and governance.

At the time of writing, it is now clear that 2020 is an unprecedented time in our histories, however there should be no doubt that even in these uncharted waters Bridge Darebin will continue to respond to community need when and where it is required.

John Sheen, Chairman

CEO's message

"Robust conversations" is a favourite phrase of mine because without them we cannot effect lasting, positive change.

There is no one-size-fits-all answer to poverty, inequality, crime and climate change, and as grassroots community leaders it is our job to have robust conversations at every level of government and with any person of influence to support those most affected. Neighbourhood houses such as ours are in a unique position to lobby decision makers and help them understand that complex problems require innovative solutions. Innovation is where Bridge Darebin comes into its own.

In 2019 we innovated with Moon Rabbit continuing to move closer to zero waste, providing environmental leadership throughout Darebin. Our innovative training programs delivered employment opportunities for disadvantaged adult learners. We commenced a pilot project for bespoke online delivery modules, creating better overall learning outcomes (Who knew how important that would be in 2020?). Environmental education became a focus within our childcare centres, and our markets provided both a unique shopping experience for locals and opportunities to educate and support Darebin micro-businesses.

In a first for the neighbourhood-house sector, I was honoured to be part of a group of neighbourhood-house managers and colleagues to spend two weeks in East Timor in May, sharing skills and networking with the women of Timor-Leste. It was a brilliant example of community development in practice and we hope to visit again to provide further support.

In order to empower people to live their best lives we need to give them opportunities to articulate their goals. For some it may be having a reason to leave the house and make new friends. For others, it is upskilling to enable better employment opportunities or pathways to further study. Others want to spend with a social conscience; the customer base at Moon Rabbit is evidence of that. Parents seeking supportive child care, people looking to share a community lunch, marketgoers and stallholders wanting to support the buy-local ethos, budding artists, people seeking exercise, those needing some form of help... the list goes on. Once we understand the community need, we work together with them to facilitate solutions.

In order to provide this level of service, it takes a team of dedicated staff and volunteers who share our core values: community first, authenticity, inclusion, innovation and positivity. Thank you to the most incredible group of hard-working people who make up the staff and volunteers of Bridge Darebin. Your willingness to embrace and create innovation, meet new challenges and your refusal to run for the hills when I utter the words "I have an idea" is what makes this place so wonderful and so progressive.

Thank you to our board, whose unwavering support, focus and determination ensures we are on track to meet our strategic objectives.

Thanks to our funding bodies and supporters, particularly City of Darebin, who, among other things, have continued to improve our buildings to meet our growing needs.

Lastly, a huge thanks to the Darebin community who continue to engage and inspire me every day.

Chris Lombardo, CEO

Contents

02

Chairman's message

03

CEO's message

05

Our supporters
& partners

06

Our impact

07

Awards & honours

08

Child care

10

Adult education

12

Community

14

Moon Rabbit

16

Makers Market
Thornbury

18

Venue hire

20

Finance

Our supporters & partners

Our supporters

ANCHA

Barr Family Foundation

Bennelong Foundation

Bunnings Northland

City of Darebin

Foodbank

GoGet

Inner North Community Foundation

McGrath Northcote

Melbourne Airport

Northcote Bakeshop

Northway Honda

Office of Ged Kearney MP

Preston Connected Community

Victorian Government –
Department of Education & Training

Victorian Government –
Department of Health and
Human Services

Our partners

300 Blankets

Darebin Neighbourhood
House Network

DIVRS

Melbourne Polytechnic

Neighbourhood
Houses Victoria

North East Neighbourhood
House Network

Northern Support Services

United Minds

Victorian Aboriginal
Child Care Agency

Your Community Health

Our impact

Bridge Darebin has been strengthening the Darebin community since 1982, when we began as Preston Neighbourhood House.

We've come a long way and experienced significant growth since then. Our services now include adult education, child care, community programs, food services, markets and venue hire in Preston and Thornbury.

Here's a snapshot of what we achieved last year



Awards & honours

We're extremely proud to have been recognised for our efforts and impact in community development, education, environmental sustainability and business excellence.



Child care

We're proud to provide outstanding child care for over 20 years, led by passionate, supportive, experienced educators.

In 2019 we began shifting away from 3-year-old kinder and increasing our occasional-care sessions. We became registered for the Victorian Government Child Care Subsidy and our Thornbury backyard was renovated with a grant from the City of Darebin.

A new learning garden was installed in late 2019, with new garden beds and an outdoor learning area for children and families to learn how to grow and tend to a veggie patch.

The garden will be used for future sustainability and environmental programs for families. We also celebrated many special events throughout the year, with the end-of-year party always a highlight, bringing together all the groups and families to celebrate another wonderful year.

Testimonials

"Our 3-year-old loves Bridge Darebin. The staff are caring and nurturing and have made the transition that much easier for my son and me. I wish I had put him in sooner! He says the staff are his friends, which is very reassuring to know. He is happy there."

– Parent survey response

"The staff are exceptional! My child is always happy to attend. She has flourished and become confident because of the staff members' hard work and commitment."

– Parent survey response

Future plans

- **More focus on environmental sustainability in 2020, working with families and children on how to get involved, recycle and live more sustainably at home.**
- **3-year-old kinder has ceased and will be replaced with more occasional care.**



2019 in numbers



110

children attended our centres each week



10

languages spoken by childcare families

Arabic, Cantonese, Croatian, Dari, English, Farsi, Mandarin, Persian, Sinhalese, Vietnamese



72

events & celebrations



360

batches of play dough made by the children



720

stories read

Adult education

We offer a wide range of programs in English, technology, creativity, health and work-readiness to cater for the whole community.

2019 was another outstanding year, with 16.7% growth in ACFE student contact hours and increased enrolment numbers, thanks to more active promotion and working with job providers and referrers such as DIVRS.

In 2019 we started a Zumba program and increased the number of pottery classes, due to ever-growing demand.

In 2019, Tiered Training & Transition (TTT) became an award-winning program, winning the Creating Local Solutions Award at the Victorian Learn Local Awards. With each new group of TTT students we saw an incredible shift in motivation

to seek employment, volunteering opportunities and/or further education.

Inner North Community Foundation awarded us a \$20,000 grant to create a new program in 2020 around upskilling within the health and aged care sector.

And the ACFE board funded our pilot project to create interactive online learning modules, creating a better learning experience, greater learner engagement, more successful outcomes and better meeting the needs and expectations of adult learners, industry and government.

Future plans

- New Health & Aged Care course
- New LEAP pre-accredited short courses, preparing people for employment or focussed on upskilling
- Incorporate interactive learning modules into our core delivery to create better learning outcomes for students, bringing our program delivery into the 21st century



2019 in numbers



25,790 hours of programming



1,177 enrolments



132 programs



29 tutors



70% of TTT graduates continued on to meaningful employment, volunteering or further study

Testimonials

“When I started working in Melbourne many years ago, I had to pay a lot to study computer courses but was not satisfied. Over the last three years, I have been studying computer courses nonstop at Bridge Darebin. All the tutors answered my questions and helped me understand computer devices better. I have learned a lot and now help people in the community. I recommend people to study at Bridge Darebin, and to have fun.”

– Hanh

“Step Up to Work was very comprehensive, targeting more than just job-hunting techniques. It challenged us to re-examine how we approach looking for work. The career coach was a rare mentor in her field, not only experienced and knowledgeable but also genuinely caring, passionate and dedicated to helping her class to achieve.”

– Jane

“TTT was a very supportive, safe environment where I was eased into the role of café attendant and could go at my own pace. It eased a lot of my social anxiety”

– Laura

Community

Community development is at the heart of what we do – bringing people together and supporting those facing barriers, such as social isolation, disability and homelessness.

In 2019 we welcomed a new Community Development Coordinator, Mahira Sobral, who introduced new programs such as lunchtime relaxation, encouraging community members to take half an hour out of their busy day for a moment of calm and quietness.

Mahira spent much of 2019 building community by developing the Moon Rabbit Bulk Foods Collective – increasing community accessibility to pantry staples at affordable prices – and getting it ready for launch in 2020.

We focused on providing inclusive spaces for community members to come together and learn from each other. We hosted a morning tea at Moon Rabbit, with tips for zero-waste living, and a Darebin Seniors Month event to help senior citizens learn more about climate change and sustainability. And

we partnered with the City of Darebin and Brush & Co to offer 40 free haircuts to Bridge Darebin community members.

Laneway Lunches continued to grow and we partnered with Good Samaritan to donate all leftover food each week. And we partnered with 300 Blankets to launch Soul Kitchen Preston, providing more meals to vulnerable community members on Sunday nights.

Our volunteer program was an Awesome Volunteer Program finalist at the North East Neighbourhood House Network Awards. We introduced a formal volunteer induction program and a monthly volunteer newsletter, and we welcomed three new volunteers and five new student placements.

Testimonial

“Volunteering at Bridge Darebin is welcoming, varied, challenging, useful, inspiring, eye-opening, rewarding, educational, tasty, busy, stressful, stress-relieving, valued, adventurous and FUN.”

– Julie, admin volunteer



Future plans

- Moon Rabbit Bulk Foods Collective to launch, increasing community accessibility to pantry staples at affordable prices
- New Heart of Thornbury program with creative courses, workshops and activities
- Educational opportunities for childcare families around sustainability
- New comprehensive recycling system



2019 in numbers

13,824

volunteer hours (worth \$442,358)

2,559

Laneway Lunches served



30 active volunteers



5 new community programs and events

Moon Rabbit

Our environmentally innovative café is also a hospitality-training site for students in our TTT program.

2019 brought a year of incredible growth, opportunities and community engagement for Moon Rabbit. With zero waste as our goal, the café won the Sustainability Award at the 2019 Darebin Community Awards.

Moon Rabbit participated in a few special events in 2019; highlights include catering the closing party for Environmental Film Festival Australia, the Green Noise music event and three Makers Market Thornbury pop-ups. We showed our support for climate change and closed the café for a day so the whole team could

participate and joined the annual CaféSmart fundraiser for another year.

We removed a wall at the front of the cafe and installed a new countertop and display fridge in its place, which allowed us to expand our menu to include more 'ready-to-go' foods. Our customers enthusiastically embraced these new additions. We trialled Saturday openings (although customers loved Saturday trade, it wasn't financially viable in the colder months). And we started planning the 2020 launch of the Bulk Foods Collective.

2019 in numbers



15,379

drinks sold + disposable cups saved from landfill (600+ takeaway coffees provided in glass jars)



3,633

jaffles sold



2,840

sweets treats sold



94%

Increase in revenue from 2018

Future plans

- Catering to become an official offering
- Mobile coffee van to launch
- Bulk Foods Collective to launch
- Broaden community knowledge about zero waste



Testimonials

"Grateful for such an inspiring, progressive and positive space in the community – keep it up!"

– Customer survey response

"Such a warm, friendly, community feel with delicious coffee and yummy food and treats – so worth the visit"

– Brendan, Google review

"Excellent coffee presented very well at a great café in Preston. ... Very inviting fit out and I find any excuse to get myself to Moon Rabbit to enjoy the ambience, great food and coffee. I am made to feel very welcome here and look forward to my next visit."

– Gus, Google review

Makers Market Thornbury

Our much-loved community event celebrates local makers while raising funds for Bridge Darebin community programs.

One of our favourite ways to engage with our community is through Makers Market Thornbury, where we provide a platform for local makers to showcase and sell their creations.

In March we welcomed Ramona Barry, our new Programs, Office & Events Manager, who took over administration of the market.

2019 was an outstanding year, with three fully booked markets with 50 stallholders at each. We spent the year consolidating what we do well, speeding up our response time to stallholders and putting new systems in place for a smoother bump-in and bump-out process.

Each market included a stall that highlighted the pottery and artworks of Bridge Darebin students and tutors, and Moon Rabbit café popped up at all three markets to serve delicious coffee and jaffles.

2019 in numbers

\$4,523

raised for Bridge Darebin community programs

900+

 visitors

150

stalls selling artwork, toys, candles, clothing, jewellery, ceramics, plants and more



92

stallholders on the waitlist for the December 2019 market

Testimonial

“Market life is fickle and for the last two events we attended [elsewhere] they were well advertised and amazing stallholders, but low foot traffic. So we were blown away – yet again – by this weekend’s Makers Market Thornbury.

Making your own product and selling requires vulnerability, and the crowd at the market this weekend not only validated us, were lovely to chat to, but also we had a great day for sales.

Thank you to everyone for all the hard work that goes into arranging this, and to the community that support this event. We are thrilled to be booked in for the next two events and can’t wait to come back”

– Sarah, stallholder

Future plans

- Online stallholder applications
- Return to four markets, one for each term
- Have a more curated market, with exclusive stallholder events, children’s craft activations and the Moon Rabbit Bulk Foods Collective.
- Support IDAHOBIT (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia & Transphobia) with a queer market



Venue hire

Venue hire is both a significant income stream and a vital link for community engagement, creating valuable pathways to our other services and partnerships.

Bridge Darebin has many multi-use spaces available for hire across our sites in Preston and Thornbury, including large halls, training rooms and two kitchens.

Over the course of 2019 these spaces were used regularly by community groups, not-for-profits and local businesses, running choirs, dance classes, mending workshops, counselling sessions, yoga, karate, tai chi and Alcoholics Anonymous groups.

Our spaces were also used for one-off hires for weddings, birthday parties, AGMs, dance classes, singing groups, language classes, training sessions, workshops and meetings.

In 2019 our computer lab was officially renamed Gerry's Space, after our much-loved computer tutor Gerry Kruyer passed away.

2019 in numbers



5,007

hours' worth of venue hire



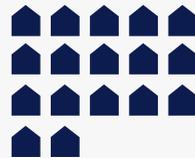
48

one-off venue hires



40

ongoing bookings

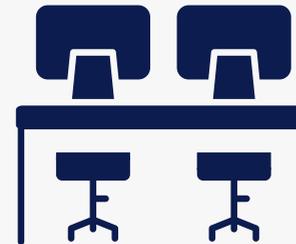


17

spaces hired

Future plans

- Add co-working space supported by childcare in Thornbury
- Work with council to ensure all our buildings meet community needs and expectations



Testimonial

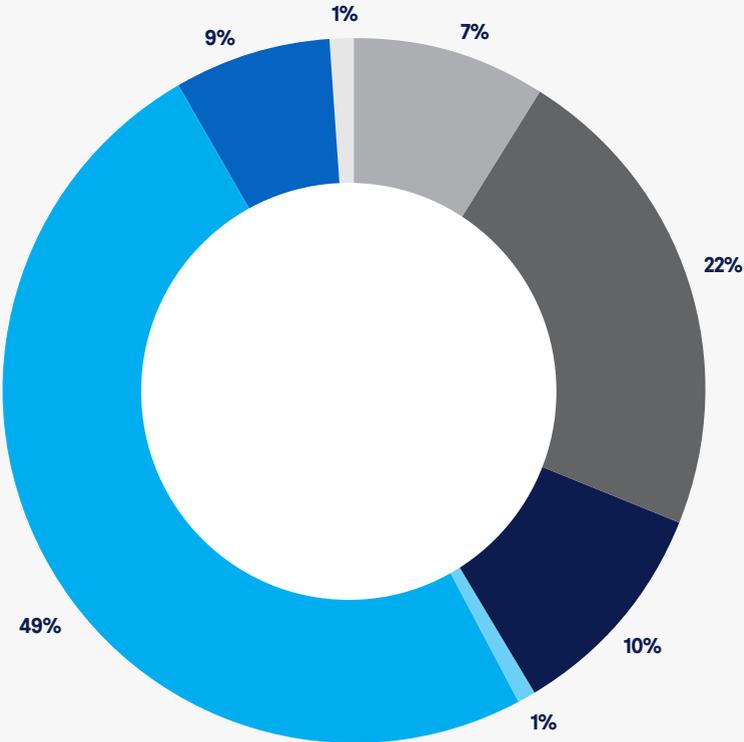
"I feel fortunate to have been hiring facilities in Preston and Thornbury from Bridge Darebin for several years now. Quality facilities complemented by the pleasant, friendly, approachable team of professionals who administer them and cater so amazingly well to hirers means that, year after year, I always want to go back to Bridge Darebin for a venue to hire. Predominantly though, it is the people, that team of professionals, who do such an outstanding job.

Whenever I have had a challenge – a need to change a booking, for example – the team has always been there to help me, offer solutions, provide helpful alternatives and always in a such a pleasant and supportive fashion. As I say, it's the people – they are a gift to the community."

– Ciarán, venue hirer

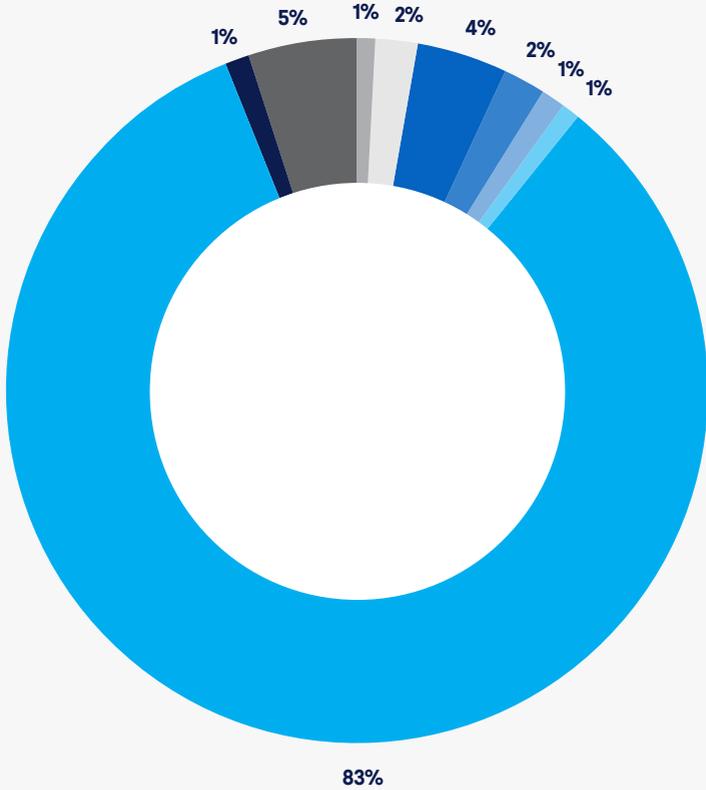
Finance

Income 2019



- Moon Rabbit café: \$154,481
- Children's services: \$364,696
- Course fees: \$159,511
- Fundraising: \$23,059
- Grants & funding: \$812,360
- Venue hire: \$109,489
- Other: \$24,777
- Makers Market Thornbury: \$5,903

Expenses 2019



- Advertising & marketing: \$19,583
- Assets & equipment: \$32,356
- Café expenses: \$63,589
- Client expenses: \$27,954
- Facilities: \$16,136
- IT: \$17,021
- Salaries & wages: \$1,324,453
- Utilities: \$18,577
- Other: \$80,279
- Insurance: \$2,886

Finance

Income 2015–2019



Expenses 2015–2019

