



MAKING MENTORS PILOT PROJECT

IMPACT REPORT

2019

Great Leaders Never Stop Learning

Our Purpose

Neighbourhood Houses Barwon INC will provide “a collective voice and sense of unity” for its members.

Priorities:


- Sharing resources, information and knowledge.
- Linking members with each other and community partners
- Community development
- Conversations – positive and productive
- Advocacy

Vision

Community Development principles and practice delivered with a sense of unity and a collective voice.

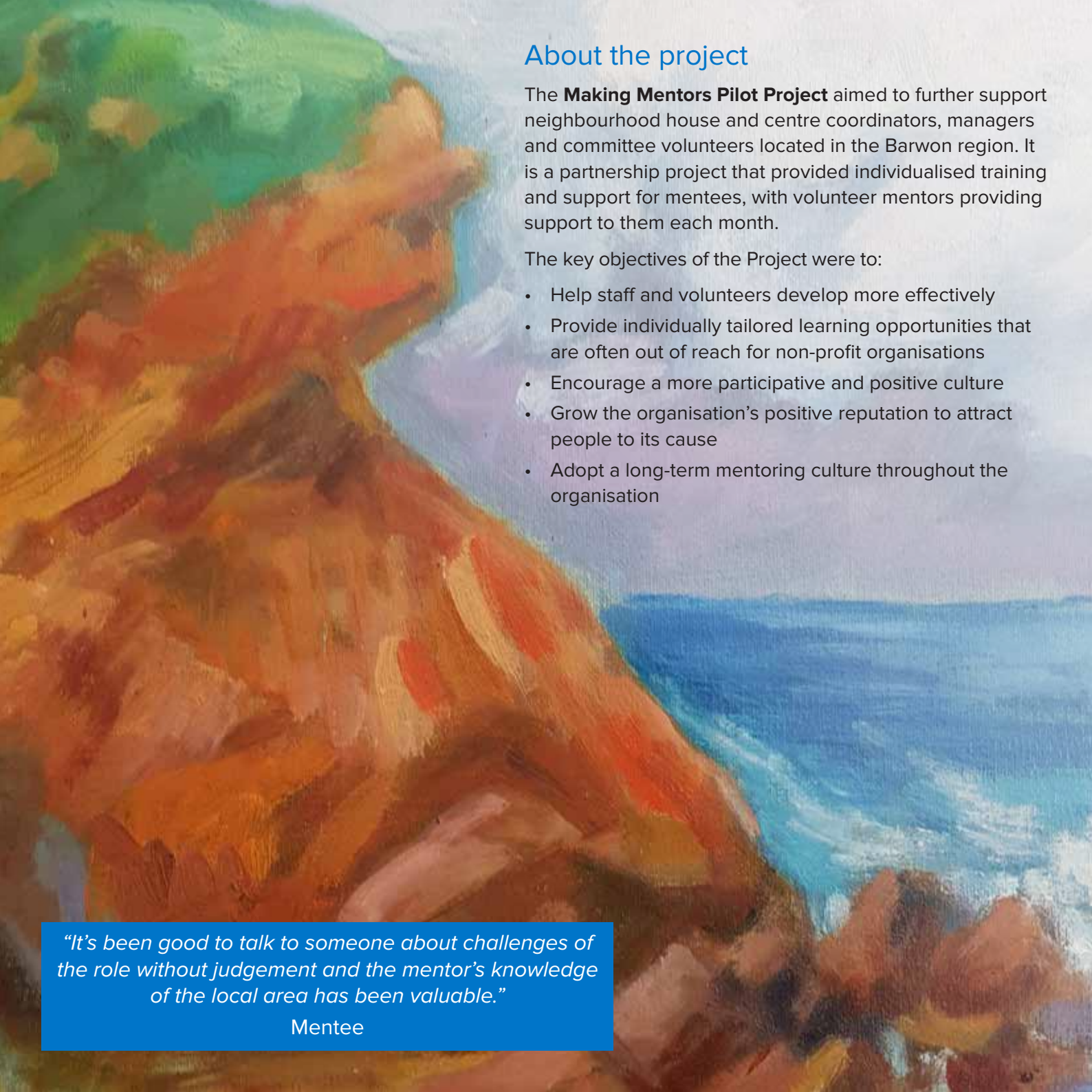
Mission

Enabling the delivery of quality community development through high level representation, advice, guidance and support.



“I have increased self confidence in my skills and abilities. This confidence helps with the management of complex and difficult tasks.”

Mentor



About the project

The **Making Mentors Pilot Project** aimed to further support neighbourhood house and centre coordinators, managers and committee volunteers located in the Barwon region. It is a partnership project that provided individualised training and support for mentees, with volunteer mentors providing support to them each month.

The key objectives of the Project were to:

- Help staff and volunteers develop more effectively
- Provide individually tailored learning opportunities that are often out of reach for non-profit organisations
- Encourage a more participative and positive culture
- Grow the organisation's positive reputation to attract people to its cause
- Adopt a long-term mentoring culture throughout the organisation

"It's been good to talk to someone about challenges of the role without judgement and the mentor's knowledge of the local area has been valuable."

Mentee

Project funders

Our thanks to the funders of the 2019 Project.



Project Reference Group

The Project attracted significant interest from many funding and key stakeholders, with some brought together to become the Reference Group. The Reference Group met quarterly in 2019, to provide expert advice and support to deliver the Project.

Thanks to members including:



Neighbourhood House representatives from each NOCH



Q&A with Beth Davidson – Project Reference Group Chair

Why did you join the Project?

I joined the project because I think it offers a great professional development opportunity for our coordinators to increase their skill set and tap into existing wisdom and experience. In our time poor sector, this program means that people can arrange things in a way that suits their personal schedule and commitments rather than needing to respond to external drivers and timeframes. It also means that they establish trusting relationships to call on. As a mentor, it gives me an opportunity to share insights and learnings gained from more than three decades of hard, exciting, enjoyable experience in this and other sectors.

Has the Project made a difference to positive culture?

It's my understanding that the project had made a valuable contribution to the confidence, skills and both personal and professional development of the mentees. I have witnessed this on several occasions where I have seen coordinators handle previously challenging situations with confidence and professionalism – and to good outcomes. We have so much capacity in this sector and so much wisdom, this Project provides a way for the wisdom and experience to be shared in a way that makes great contribution to the whole sector.

Did the Project promote the organisation's positive reputation?

The intent of the project was to enhance the capacity of the people involved. It has been such a positive project that I'm sure the flow on effects to NHB will continue to recognise the organisation's leadership and thorough professional approach to developing and implementing projects of this nature.



Mentor Beth Davidson and
Mentee Deb Humphreys



Learning Forums

Two learning forums were run during the Project year, offering a chance for mentees, mentors and others linked to Neighbourhood Houses Barwon to be able to further develop skills.

The learning forum topics were chosen from feedback given through learning logs that mentees completed after each mentoring session. The learning logs revealed that many mentees wanted further advice on staff and volunteer supervision.

The second learning forum, Mental Health First Aid, was run before R U OK? Day. Mental health was chosen as several mentees had identified through learning logs the significant challenges they facing managing and coordinating behaviours of staff and volunteers.

Supervision – Overview, June 2019

10 mentees, other staff and volunteers participated in the Supervision Framework Training. The training was facilitated by Samantha Dellamarta from Delroy Consulting.

The two-hour workshop was held to provide coordinators and committee members with an overview of the Supervision Framework and the way in which it can operate within a Neighbourhood House.

The training session worked through the purpose of supervision, the details of the framework and the different types of supervision it covers and the role both a coordinator and a chair should play to ensure it is conducted effectively.

One of the participating Neighbourhood Houses had recently introduced a new management structure, and were really excited to introduce supervision into the new model to strengthen its impact going forward.



Marcelle Renkin with mentee
Kyla Beale at the Mental Health
First Aid Learning Forum

Mental Health First Aid – Overview, September 2019

13 mentees and other staff participated in the learning forum and outcomes focussed on:

1. Awareness and prevalence of mental health conditions in Australia
2. What makes a mentally healthy workplace?
3. How to approach and check in early if there are signs and changes of mental health challenges
4. Developing a 'self-care' plan

Survey results from the forum showed:

84% felt more confident or the same about supporting their own mental health needs after the forum

77% stated their understanding of mental health had improved after completing the forum

53% felt more concerned about supporting staff and volunteers with mental health needs after the forum*

Which part of the learning forum was of most benefit to you and why?

"Self-care plan, this was good to reflect on how I can 'fill my own bucket'"

Mental Health First Aid – Participant



Cathy Roth left and mentee Karen Williamson

Q&A with Mentee Karen Williamson

Why did you join the Project?

The opportunity to have a mentor was something that I had identified as a personal goal. I had previously spoken to friends who had found a mentor a rewarding and valuable experience. I was hoping to be matched with someone outside the neighbourhood sector. I wanted a broader approach to how I reflected on my strengths and challenges within the role.

How has the Project assisted you to develop more effectively?

Mentoring has offered me both operational and reflective self-development. It has challenged me to explore the way I worked and my management style. It's allowed me to gain new perspectives and an appreciation of the skills and experience I bring to my role. The mentoring relationship has been a beacon of light in a role that is at times challenging. I strongly believe having a mentor from outside the NH sector has challenged me to reflect on the way I work.

How did the learning forum support you?

Both learning forums covered material that I had just completed within other PD training. I did however find the mental health first aid training to be very worthwhile. Loved the way it was presented. I found it useful and something that I have referred back to.

Has the Project made a difference to positive culture?

At times it feels as if our role is complex and demanding. It is easy to feel isolated. Mentoring is another avenue where you can feel supported but also challenged to make time for self-reflection. I have become more self-confident in the value of my skills and experiences that I bring to the role.



Christine Heath

Q&A with Mentor Christine Heath

Why did you join the Project?

I joined the project warily at the outset, as I was slightly nervous and unsure about what I might be able to offer. It quickly became evident that my mentee was a very capable, knowledgeable and experienced person, but she had only recently moved to Geelong and it was my local knowledge that she needed most. She also needed a sounding board – someone that would just listen impartially and without judgement. My advice was offered (and hopefully accepted) from a completely different perspective to hers without any hidden agendas. I acted as a sounding board and often I didn't have to say much. Sometimes just expressing your issues and concerns out loud to someone that has no involvement in your day to day problems and has no hidden agendas is all you need. It often allows you to answer your own questions.

How has the Project been of benefit?

Mentoring has been extremely valuable for me as it has made me realise that I do have something to contribute, even if it is just being there for someone to bounce ideas off.

How could the Project be improved?

The program was all too short and I feel that with a few extra months we could have developed much stronger connections, but it was a great start and I would be very happy to continue to provide assistance in the future.

The program was extremely well run and the co-ordinators were helpful, organised and always there to help or answer questions.

Q&A with Reference Group Member, Renee Williams

Why did you join the Project?

This project was a natural progression of the collaborative work the Department, Barwon Network, Barwon Neighbourhood Houses and key stakeholders have been undertaking over the past couple of years (the Barwon Network Sector Sustainability Model). This model identified and assisted Neighbourhood Houses in the Barwon region with organisational health and best practice benchmarking. Those foundations led us to naturally progress to this project.

How is mentoring valuable?

Mentoring allows the transference of skills, experience and knowledge to mentees in a safe and supported environment. It helps build confidence and motivation in areas that challenge you and also helps you build professional networks that can assist in the capacity building for both mentees and mentors.

Has the Project made a difference to positive culture?

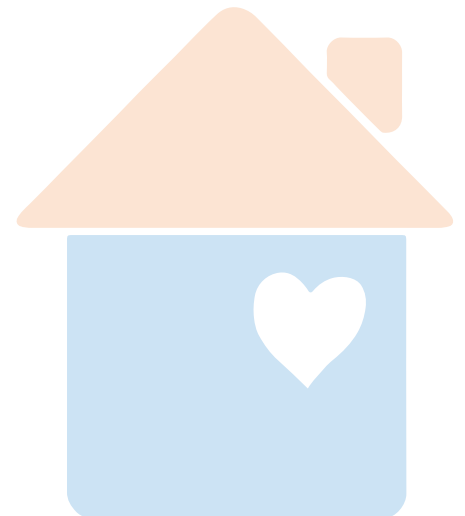
My observations and feedback I have been given by participants has been that the project has made a difference in creating a positive culture, this program has demonstrated empowerment in participants and assisted in building their practice as Community Development workers. I think it has also acknowledged the diverse ranges of skills available in the Neighbourhood Houses and Community Development sector to be able to mentor each other to achieve some fantastic outcomes for the Barwon region.

Did the Project promote the organisation's positive reputation?

Yes, the Barwon Network and key partners have delivered a project that highlights the innovative thinking from the Network and members on building the visibility of Neighbourhood Houses in local communities and its collective knowledge and its commitment to build on and share with others.



NHB former networker Fleur Parry with Be More Mindful's Kate Meadows



Evaluation

The 2019 Project evaluation found that 33% of mentees surveyed felt their knowledge and experience had improved since beginning the Project and 67% stated that it had remained the same.

For the **mentees** who completed the end of year survey:

33% felt less challenged in their role since beginning, 77% felt just as challenged

33% of mentees became more engaged throughout the Project, 50% continued with the same engagement and 17% felt they were less engaged by the end

60% 60% of mentees stated that the it was very easy to access the project, 20% found it easy and 20% stated it was not easy

For the **mentors** who completed the end of year survey:

50% felt their mentee's knowledge and skills had improved since beginning

75% were more or just as engaged at the end of the Project

2019 Key Stats

There were 16 mentees and mentors who participated in Project. All mentees were managers or coordinators of neighbourhood houses or centres.

8 female mentees

6 & 2 6 female and 2 male mentors

2 learning forums were run focussing on staff/volunteer supervision and mental health first aid

75% of mentors were from outside the sector

100% of mentees were not engaged in training at the beginning of the Project

"I enjoy meeting with my mentor as I admire her drive and experience. I hope to learn more from her as time goes by and I am able to utilise her experiences as projects arise."

Mentee

"I saw this as such an amazing Project to be involved in and would have loved something like this to have existed when I commenced in the role."

Mentor

Improvements – Snapshot

The Project saw six methods of qualitative and quantitative evaluation involving mentees, mentors and reference group members including surveys and questionnaires.

The following improvements were identified through these evaluation methods:

- **Assessments** – police checks of mentees and mentors for mentees and mentors took longer than expected, resulting in a delay for mentoring to begin
- **Matching** – there was a limited pool of mentors from the sector available to mentor
- **Surveys** – the survey of the overall project to be done earlier in the Project, as well as at the end of the year
- **Venues** – location of training should include regions other than the City of Greater Geelong
- **Availability** – there were some mentoring sessions unable to be completed due to work, travel and leave conflicts

“We took a while to get going, as my mentee’s police check took a long time to come through, so our sessions have been limited, but still valuable. Maybe if police checks are in place beforehand, we could have fitted more in.”

Mental Health First Aid – Participant

Improvements and Opportunities

Improvement	Opportunity
Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase from 3 weeks to 6 weeks
Matching	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage mentors from the neighbourhood house sector from outside the Barwon region, online communication option may be an option to reduce travel
Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mentee Preparation Session should be followed by a survey to mentees and mentors about matching at the end of the second session
Venues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure training is located throughout the Barwon region, where travel is an issue provide an online communication option
Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide an online communication option so mentees and mentors can continue mentoring sessions when required





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Thanks to our funders



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