



**PORT PHILLIP
COMMUNITY
GROUP** // *Working for
Social justice*



PORT PHILLIP COMMUNITY GROUP
ANNUAL REPORT 2020 TO 2021

Contents

This report summarises PPCG activities, partnerships and outcomes achieved from July 2020 to June 2021.

Service effectiveness and responsiveness

Assisting more people in need through immediate supports, advocacy and referrals.

Building (individual and community) capacity

Welfare, financial counselling and education for better outcomes, connections and future.

Partnerships and innovation

Strengthening relationships to support service delivery, connections and outcomes.

Community engagement and social inclusion

Reducing inequity and inequality in our community.

Disclaimer: This report is provided for information and it does not purport to be complete. While care has been taken to ensure the content in the report is accurate, we cannot guarantee it is without flaw of any kind.

Acknowledgements

Port Phillip Community Group respectfully acknowledges the Yalukit Willam Clan of the Boon Wurrung. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging. We acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to the lands on which we work.

We appreciate and welcome diversity in all its forms, including staff, volunteers and community members, and believe this makes our teams, services and organisation stronger and more effective.



A **copy of this report** can be downloaded from the 'About us' page of our website ppcg.org.au/about-us/ by calling (03) 8598 6600 or emailing info-support@ppcg.org.au

Port Phillip Community Group Limited ABN 34 844 707 349
PPCG is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). PPCG is endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR).

Welcome

PPCG is a leading welfare, financial counselling and education provider primarily in the City of Port Phillip enabling more than 20,000 people in any one year, to better connect to their community, achieve their goals, and build better lives.

While there are high levels of advantage and favourable social health and inclusion in the LGA of Port Phillip, there also exists extreme disadvantage and poorer social health and inclusion in some of our neighbourhoods. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this disadvantage and created challenges for others who up until this point had been doing relatively well. Financial stress and job losses have increased over the past two years with the deepening impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic into 2021.

The demand for our services has increased over 2020-2021 with a greater number of people from broader socio-economic groups needing help. This is a direct result of the downturn of the economy and loss of jobs due to COVID-19 outbreaks, and the six long lockdowns in metropolitan Melbourne since 2020. Family violence, isolation, loneliness and the inability to meet financial commitments, as well as needing food, essential items, social connections and support are key issues and needs that our staff are responding to every day. Homelessness also continues to be a major concern.

The presenting issues of traditional and new clients now include the additional and visual signs of anxiety and depression directly as a result of COVID-19 due to loss of income, social connections and pessimism regarding the future.

COVID-19 responses

We have continued to meet our funder and stakeholder obligations while **responding and adapting to rapidly changing client and community needs during COVID-19.**

Achievement 1: Continuing to operate our information, referral and support, and financial counselling, via phone, on-line and as required face to face (in line with COVID safe requirements)

Achievement 2: Implementing proactive welfare checks for our clients and group participants to assess their need, well-being and mental health

Achievement 3: Providing emergency relief, food, and assistance to meet the increasing need of those in hardship

Achievement 4: Adapting our education courses, social and recreation activities to on-line platforms as possible

Achievement 5: Increasing our reach via social media platforms to share practical and support information during restrictions and lockdowns

Achievement 6: Expanding our Share the Food program for those in need, isolating or quarantining due to COVID-19. **Over \$1.3 million worth of food, meals and essential items has been provided across Port Phillip to those in need up to 30 June 2021. Our key partner the City of Port Phillip has very ably and generously supported us in all of our endeavours with Share the Food.**

Strategic Plan 2021–2025

We have a new Strategic Plan for 2021-2025. During the life of this plan, PPCG will celebrate 50 years of working with the Port Phillip community. As part of our Strategic Plan 2021-2025 we have reviewed our vision, mission and values.

Our vision and mission

Vision: A fair, just and inclusive community

Purpose: We support individuals, families and communities to live with dignity and self-determination

Mission: We provide responsive services in partnership with individuals, families and communities to empower people to achieve their goals

Our values

Underpinning all of the work that we do are our **five key values:**

- > **Respect:** we treat all people and each other with dignity and respect
- > **Equity:** we promote fair and equitable access to all of our services and resources
- > **Inclusiveness:** we embrace diversity, celebrate difference, and encourage participation
- > **Empowerment:** we work with individuals, families and communities to build on their strengths and to achieve their goals
- > **Accountability:** we approach our work in open and transparent ways and encourage feedback to improve our services and resources

The PPCG strategic plan can be downloaded from the 'About us' page of our website ppcg.org.au/about-us/



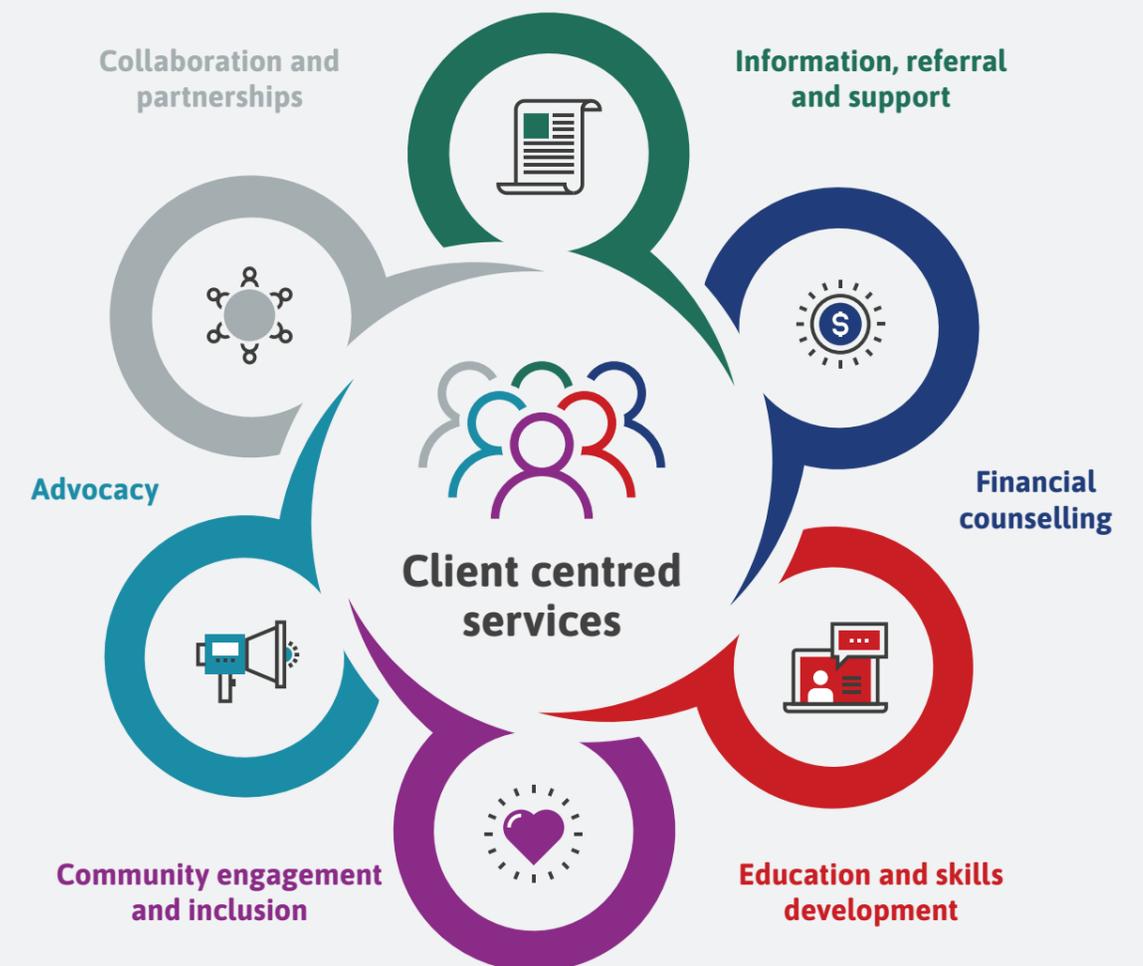
Michelle O'Neill. PPCG IRS staff providing sleeping kits for those sleeping rough

Services and activities

Our key services and activities include:

- > **Information, referral and support** including emergency relief and material aid
- > **Financial counselling**, tax help, and no interest loans
- > **Community engagement and inclusion** through social, recreational and wellbeing groups
- > **Education and skills development** along with pathways to employment
- > **Advocacy** to reduce inequity, social exclusion and poverty

Our service model incorporates a **client centred**, open door policy combined with **collaboration and partnerships** that builds on feedback from clients, key stakeholders and community.



Leadership reports

Chairperson and Executive Officer's Report

What a year it has been.

We, like most of you, are looking forward to seeing the back of 2021, but in doing so, we just wanted to thank you for all that we were able to achieve this year **thanks to your support.**

Firstly, we want to thank all of our remarkable supporters, partners, and the community who have checked in on us over the year to offer support and encouragement during what has been another difficult year for everyone.

We have once again been most impressed with the many local businesses, organisations, and individuals for their exceptional generosity and collaboration with us in 2020-2021.

We are proud of PPCG's work in responding with compassion and care to the increasing practical, psychosocial and support needs of people affected by the pandemic. PPCG has shown that despite being a very small organisation both in size and resources, that we keep making big and positive differences to peoples' lives consistently day after day.

Most importantly we thank every one of our staff and volunteers for their expertise and commitment in responding to the challenges of the pandemic whilst also personally experiencing the impacts of the many restrictions and lockdowns. Their great work and resolve in this time of inconceivable uncertainty and upheaval has been outstanding.

We look forward to reaching greater than a 90% vaccination rate by the end of 2021, and to reconnecting personally with our clients, partners and the community.

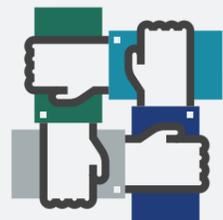
We commend to you our Annual Report 2021.



Michael McGann
Chairperson



Karen Sait
Executive Officer



Board of Directors

Bernard Joffe (retired November 2020),
Claire Edmanson, David Weinberger, Gina Fiske, Karen Sait, Liz Jennings, Michael McGann, Peter Giles, Susanne Birks

Income

The financial information below is from our audited Annual Financial Report year ending 30 June 2021. PPCG is a Not for Profit Company for financial reporting purposes under the Australian Accounting Standards.

For 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 our total income was **\$1,588,924** obtained from grants, donations, interest and fees. *This comprised contracted funding of \$1,439,778 and other income of \$149,146.*

We gratefully acknowledge the support from our funders and community partners, in particular our primary funder and partner the City of Port Phillip. Our other key funders and partners are:

- > Department of Education and Training, Victoria
- > Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Victoria
- > Department of Health, Victoria
- > Department of Social Services, Australia (via Community Information & Support Victoria - CISVic)
- > Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand (GSANZ)
- > HousingFirst, St Kilda Community Housing, South Port Community Housing Group

In addition to contracted funding we received additional one-off grants, donations and fees from philanthropic trusts, businesses and individuals. We extend our appreciation to each of these as they have enabled additional services to be delivered to our clients and the community and particularly to meet the increasing demand for our services as the pandemic continues.

Treasurer's Report

Despite the continuing and challenging financial environment that PPCG operates in as a small Not for Profit organisation, we are pleased to report a surplus of **\$38,007** against a planned and budgeted deficit of **(\$77,973)** for the FY 2021. This is due mainly to new income received to deliver additional and enhanced services directly in response to the individual and community impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the FY 2021 we improved our cash position by **\$20,467** reflecting the small surplus that we made.

In summary for the financial year ended 30 June 2021:

- > Total income was \$1,588,924 obtained from grants, donations, interest and fees
- > Total expenditure was \$1,550,917
- > This resulted in a net surplus of \$38,007

We continue to closely monitor our finances and proactively explore ways to increase our revenue for the next and future years.

Liz Jennings, Treasurer



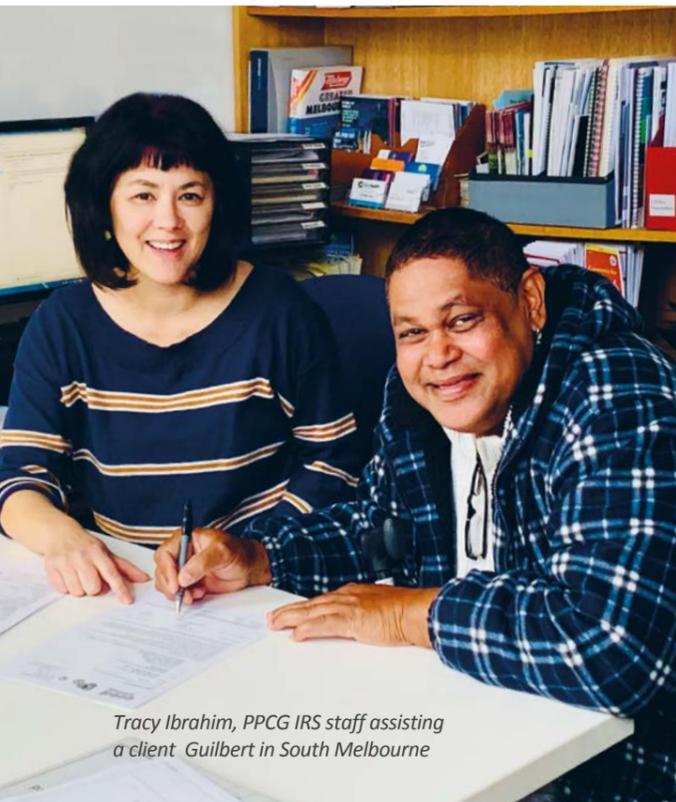
Income \$1,588,924
Expenses \$1,550,917
Surplus \$38,007

The full audited Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2021 can be downloaded from the 'About us' page of our website ppcg.org.au/about-us/

Service effectiveness and responsiveness

As Melbourne's restrictions and lockdowns continue, the tireless efforts of local community organisations and community members are as important as ever.

COVID-19 has defined how we have delivered our services during 2020-2021 and has required even greater innovation and agility than the previous year. What has remained consistent is listening to people about their lives and their struggles, and working with them on how best to assist them either through immediate practical assistance and support, or through advocacy or referrals to specialist services.



Tracy Ibrahim, PPCG IRS staff assisting a client Guilbert in South Melbourne

Information, Referral and Support (IRS)

Our IRS remains the gateway to our services and activities through the knowledge, skills and connections that our IRS staff encourage and facilitate. Every day we make a positive difference to the material needs, financial, physical and psychological well-being of individuals and families on low income, those experiencing disadvantage or in financial hardship, and those escaping family violence.

In any one year we make thousands of referrals and answer a myriad of inquiries on a daily basis. We provide practical and material aid in the form of food vouchers, fresh food, pantry items, meals, targeted support funds, pet food, travel passes, pharmacy assistance and healthcare items, rough sleeping kits, winter woollies, and more recently face masks, hand sanitiser and other protective equipment.

With the deepening impacts of COVID-19 and the new Delta strain emerging in 2021, the demand for our services has increased with a greater number of people from broader socio-economic groups needing help. This is a direct result of the downturn of the economy and loss of jobs due to COVID-19 outbreaks, and the six long lockdowns in metropolitan Melbourne since 2020.

"Since I walked into your door at the beginning of this horrible year - I have been blown away with the overwhelming care and compassion I have been shown. The Christmas Hamper is a joy. I have said a few times that your staff have made me feel seen in a manner that I had given up on. Please know that this is no small thing."

Judi, IRS client

The faces of homelessness

Being homeless is incredibly difficult, and the longer people wait for a home, the more complicated their lives become. Mental health issues, illness, addiction, poverty and unemployment can often be the outcome rather than the cause of homelessness.

During 2020-21 over 48% of people who came to us for assistance identified as homeless, in insecure housing, sleeping rough or unable to find housing. Of note is that those in private rental and homeowners accessing our support increased by 55%. Many people accessing our services usually have other complex issues impacting their lives. An alarming trend is women (usually with children that fall behind on their rent after their violent partner has left, usually taking all the family income, or women escaping family violence situations. This leads to housing eviction or a cycle of short term and emergency housing often with a loss of possessions and social connections. We worked hard throughout the year to help find suitable accommodations, stave off evictions, and provide practical and material aid.

"Gemma called through looking for some support, she said she is quite illiterate and needs some assistance with some police related issues like filling out forms etc.. She said she is not the one in trouble, something happened to her car while she was sleeping in it. Can someone please call her."

City of Port Phillip ASSIST referral to PPCG IRS

During COVID lockdowns, we also helped many people who were new to support services. After losing their jobs they could no longer pay their rent or keep up with mortgage payments. For people relying on Centrelink payments there are very few affordable rental properties.

"Like many other agencies, PPCG continues to be overwhelmed by people who are homeless, in insecure housing, sleeping rough or unable to find housing. We are now helping new clients who have never needed welfare support and who are about to lose their homes due to the pandemic. There is just not enough affordable housing for everyone. We need a real commitment to fix this problem once and for all."

Karen Sait, PPCG Executive Officer



Maz Fox, PPCG Financial Counsellor providing financial support via phone during COVID restrictions

Financial counselling

Financial counselling, in partnership with Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, continues as a highly sought after service. We provided 6,317 responses to clients' financial inquiries. Our work involved discussions of debt management options with clients and direct advocacy with banks, energy providers and other creditors. We continued to work collaboratively with local Family Violence Services and St Kilda Legal Service as many legal and financial issues are often intertwined.

Our clients sought assistance for debts including credit cards, personal loans, utility bills, mobile phones bills, mortgages and rental arrears. An increase in the largely unregulated *Buy Now Pay Later* schemes offered in the financial market left many of our clients over committed, spending money they had not yet earned to purchase goods and services. Easily accessible, but expensive payday loans, continued to cause financial difficulties for our clients with their establishment fees, high interest rates and late fees causing loan balances to quickly spiral into unmanageable debts causing great distress.

This year we built upon our already strong partnership with Good Shepherd's to also offer financial capability support both remotely and in person. Our new financial capability worker Romy, and her financial expertise is a much welcome and important addition to our holistic financial services.

Paul's Story*

Paul engaged with our financial counselling service due to experiencing financial hardship with a number of debts including credit cards and a personal loan. At 53, Paul had been made redundant from his workplace after many years of employment. Due to his age, a complex medical condition, and eventually a cancer diagnosis, he had difficulties securing permanent work.

After completing several short-term contracts, he was again unemployed, living on JobSeeker payments. He was struggling to meet his everyday living expenses, let alone make repayments on his increasing debts. Given the uncertainty surrounding his employment prospects and his ill health, advocacy from our financial counsellor secured debt waivers on the credit cards and personal loan debts. This enabled Paul to focus on his health and well-being, and relieved much of the financial and physical stress he was experiencing due to his multiple and unmanageable debts.

"You have managed to give me a perfect outcome and the best path I could hope for moving forward. I really can't thank you enough. You have helped make this difficult journey a better one both financially and emotionally."

Paul, financial counselling client

**not his real name*

Tax Help 2021

We continue to provide an annual tax help service in partnership with the Australian Tax Office and the City of Port Phillip, for those on low income without the skills or confidence to complete a tax return. Average returns are \$200 - \$1,000 which is a significant financial boost for those on low incomes. During the past year we assisted with the lodgement of 37 tax returns with 70% of people remotely assisted due to restrictions and lockdowns. This year saw a significant increase in females accessing tax help - 78% compared to 22% males, and overall 38% clients from CALD backgrounds.

"Bernard was very helpful. He was knowledgeable and able to answer my questions. His help was great, fantastic."

Alice, Tax help client

Once again we were fortunate to have two skilled tax agent volunteers - Bernard Joffe and James Gould.

"The main aim of tax help is to assist those who are a little intimidated about completing their own tax returns or who do not have the means to complete their tax returns by themselves."

Bernard Joffe, Tax Help volunteer for the past 16 years



PPCG Client Anna receiving support in a COVID safe setting

Building (individual & community) capacity

No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)

NILS is a fantastic initiative and opportunity to build social capital for community members. As an unfunded program it is facilitated by our IRS staff as we receive only \$5,000 per annum to help with administrative costs.

We are therefore grateful for the diligence and support provided by our skilled NILS volunteers, without whom we would not be able to run such a successful program.

This year we assisted 31 households to obtain loans totalling over \$35,000 for items such as laptops, white goods, car repairs, medical procedures and to enrol in education courses. No interest loans of up to \$1,500 are available with repayments typically ranging from \$20-\$60 per fortnight. With our ongoing support most loans are paid off within 12 months, and provide items and opportunities that many of us take for granted. Several of our clients are now up to their third or fourth successful NILS loan.

"When my fridge broke down I panicked. It was during lockdown and with 3 young kids to feed I was nervous about having to shop daily for fresh food. I applied for a NILS loan with PPCG and was so surprised and grateful to have my loan approved the next day and the new fridge delivered two days later. Just fantastic!"

Maryam, NILS recipient

SARA Financial Wellbeing for Women

The SARA Financial Wellbeing for Women course was once again run over eight weeks face to face, in between lockdowns. Women from diverse backgrounds and experiences explored their relationship with money, mapped out financial goals and built on their financial management skills. Most importantly they shared their stories, skills and experiences with each other.

"I can't begin to tell you how much I have gotten out of the course. It has changed my life significantly. I feel so much more capable and literate around financial matters. Hopefully making decisions will be easier with the knowledge and education gained from the course."

Lisa, SARA course participant



Catrina Sofo, PPCG Community Engagement facilitating SARA Financial Wellbeing for Women course.

Family in Focus

The Family in Focus course commenced in 2021. It is a course for parents who want to enhance their knowledge and skills, and impart these learnings to their whole family. Information and skills development are provided on a range of family friendly topics.

The course is online so that participants can review and complete the modules at their own pace, with PPCG staff support available as needed, including computer support. Participants also receive hard copies of course materials, and a copy of the 'Barefoot Investor for Families' book. Feedback is that for most participants, learning at their own pace and at home is preferred.

Back to School Fund

A \$3,000 grant assisted 70 local families and their children with the purchase of school uniforms, books and access to school excursions.

We are extremely grateful to the South Melbourne Community Chest for their ongoing support of this much needed and valued program.

"This past year with so much home-schooling has been really stressful, both financially and emotionally. PPCG's support helped me to purchase the extra items I needed so that my kids were fully equipped to study from home."

Jenna, School Fund recipient parent

Our volunteers

PPCG works with a number of remarkable people who volunteer their time to support our programs including information, referral and support, community activities, tax help, NILS, social meals, administration, and more recently the Share the Food program.

Our volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds. From local and international students to currently employed and retired professionals, we are proud of our volunteer culture at PPCG. In the past year volunteers included the newly unemployed, students, family groups, and those from hospitality and creative industries.

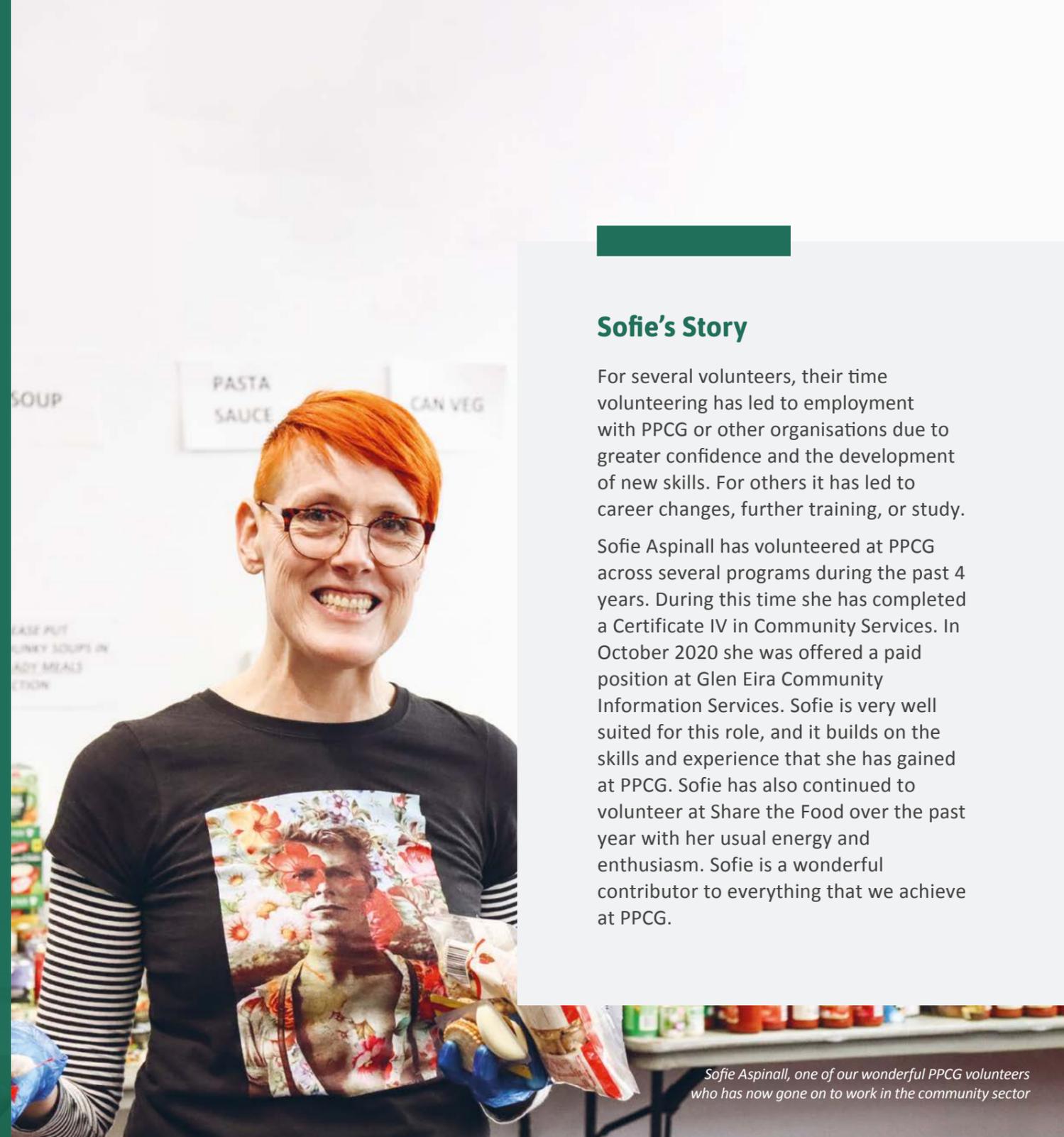
In excess of 100 volunteers supported Share the Food during COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, assisting with sorting, packing and the contactless delivery of food parcels and meals to residents in the City of Port Phillip and neighbouring LGAs. **Volunteers contributed over 18,000 hours between July 2020-June 2021, and were integral to the success of Share the Food.**

Volunteers remain the backbone of PPCG and are invaluable to our organisation and the community.

Volunteers provided direct support, time and expertise, conservatively valued at \$366,000 (estimated at the minimum hourly rate) which is an increase of 50% in volunteer time than the previous year.

"I volunteer every week with PPCG because I feel valued and appreciated for my efforts whilst also feeling satisfied that I have an opportunity to contribute to the well-being, safety and happiness of others. I get to meet people in my community that I likely would never cross paths with otherwise."

Sara, PPCG volunteer



Sofie's Story

For several volunteers, their time volunteering has led to employment with PPCG or other organisations due to greater confidence and the development of new skills. For others it has led to career changes, further training, or study.

Sofie Aspinall has volunteered at PPCG across several programs during the past 4 years. During this time she has completed a Certificate IV in Community Services. In October 2020 she was offered a paid position at Glen Eira Community Information Services. Sofie is very well suited for this role, and it builds on the skills and experience that she has gained at PPCG. Sofie has also continued to volunteer at Share the Food over the past year with her usual energy and enthusiasm. Sofie is a wonderful contributor to everything that we achieve at PPCG.

Sofie Aspinall, one of our wonderful PPCG volunteers who has now gone on to work in the community sector



Thinking of volunteering?

We would love to match your passions, skills and available time with one of our program areas.

Information about volunteering with PPCG is available on our website: ppcg.org.au. Give us a call on **03 8598 6600**, or email us at info-support@ppcg.org.au

Partnerships and innovation

Underlying all that we do at PPCG is maintaining and strengthening relationships and partnerships, and identifying opportunities for innovation and collaboration to better assist clients, service users and the community.



Karen Sait, PPCG, Susanne Birks, Alfred Health, Paulo Reid, Uniting 101, and Angie Jamieson, Star Health connecting at PPCG in between lockdowns

Partnerships and networks

Maintaining connections and networks during these challenging times continued to be important even when it felt like our working days were all about online meetings, emails and phone calls. Our networks provided us with a better understanding of what COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns meant for everyone, and also provided shared and innovative responses, and new collaborations and partnerships.

We continued to facilitate the Inner South Rooming House Network with support from the City of Port Phillip. This group maintained strong and supportive connections during a time of otherwise increased isolation not only for our clients but also for many community workers. A revised version of the *Port Phillip Go To Guide* was published by Housing First in close collaboration with our team and with input from the network. This guide can be downloaded at ppcg.org.au/the-go-to-guide/

We also continued to participate in a range of community networks including: City of Port Phillip COVID Relief and Recovery Coordination Group, Port Phillip Zero (addressing homelessness), Park Towers Community Hub in South Melbourne, Inner South Multicultural Network, High Risk Accommodation Response to COVID-19 facilitated by Star Health, Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, Community House Network Southern Region, and the Extreme Hardship Support Program Network through the Brotherhood of St Laurence.



Share the Food: Helping those in need

PPCG implemented the Share the Food Program to directly support our community during COVID-19.

In addition to ensuring food security for vulnerable members of our community, the program has enabled the City of Port Phillip Council to fulfill its obligation under the State COVID Relief Plan to provide food relief for persons needing support to isolate due to COVID-19. This includes support for individuals and residents in social and public housing who are required to quarantine.

PPCG provides food staples, fresh food, meals, toiletries, and hygiene products as well as COVID-19 information and personal protection items to people facing financial hardship, isolating and quarantining.

Demand caused by COVID-19, saw PPCG go from feeding hundreds of people a week to feeding thousands in the Port Phillip community.

Over \$1.3 million worth of food and essential items has been delivered to residents since the beginning of the pandemic to 30 June 2021. From just July to September 2020, we distributed over 8,000 food parcels or meals, plus provided hundreds of kilos of fresh food that community agencies used to cook meals for their communities.

The Share the Food report from April 2020 to March 2021 is available on our website: ppcg.org.au/programs-and-services/food-distribution/

"I'm very grateful there's still good people out there... thank you so much for what you are doing. The lady that delivered it to me was so nice and asked me if I was OK, and the package had everything I needed, even things I didn't expect like deodorant."

John, Share the Food recipient

David's Story

Port Phillip Council staff also work alongside our staff and remarkable volunteers. One example is David Clerehan, Council's Social Support Program Facilitator, who would normally be transporting residents on the Council's community bus. Instead he uses the community bus to help deliver food parcels, doing the rounds three days a week.

"it's a great group of people down there, I felt instantly welcomed from my first shift. There was a callout for a driver and now I've been there for five or six weeks and there's always such a positive vibe in there."

David, Share the Food Supporter



David Clerehan, helping with Share the Food

Pathways to Education and Employment

Those who are vulnerable or marginalised often have poor education which frequently results in limited career choices, job insecurity and financial hardship. As a Learn Local Education Hub we provide supported courses and classes that create pathways to better lives through employment, further education and social connections.

Our place-based and dynamic partnerships continue to grow and diversify. Our education partners include: City of Port Phillip, South Melbourne Community Chest, Park Towers Community Hub, Access Inc., Wild at Heart, Aspect Autism, Galiamble Men's Recovery Centre, Space2b, Uniting 101, Christ Church Community Centre, and Star Health.

30 targeted courses of 20-30 hours duration each were delivered in computer and digital literacy, art therapy, podcasting, blogging, gardening, hospitality, financial literacy, songwriting and music production. From July 2020 to June 2021 this included:



151 students
373 enrolments
9,319 hours of training

**These outcomes are lower than the previous year due to a full year of COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns throughout 2020-2021. These have interrupted face to face training for approximately six months during 2020-2021. However, again we successfully moved up to 70% of our face to face education courses online, and provided additional one on one online training and support as required.*

New initiatives

Notable initiatives that progressed during 2020-2021 despite the many lockdowns and restrictions include:

- > Our partnership with Christ Church Community Centre, Uniting Employment Services and an Industry Working Group, to provide an employment pathway program called **'Work this Way'**
- > Expanding our collaboration with Star Health to provide **digital literacy training to public housing residents** across Port Phillip
- > Exhibiting art pieces at the 2020 Linden Postcard Show by **10 of our participants from 'Art Attack'** resulting in sales of their art, and
- > **Be Connected (Good Things Foundation) Grants** to purchase digital devices for students to improve access to digital literacy training for people 50+ years.



Participants in 'Work this Way' learning to cook as part of hospitality module

Community engagement and social inclusion

We continued to be an active voice in our community throughout 2020-2021 through a range of activities that included:

- > **80 visits to rooming houses supporting COVID-19 safety and food security** measures.
- > Providing **3,000 face masks, 3,000 hand sanitiser dispensers, and information in multiple languages** to vulnerable and at risk individuals quarantining or in isolation.
- > **Over 14,000 people were reached through PPCG Facebook and Instagram** during 2020-2021. Our top three posts included **tips and tools to cope during lockdowns, information about COVID safety and vaccines, and the City of Port Phillip Food Relief Guide.**
- > A rolling series of videos on our website with information, tools and contacts for dealing with debt, borrowing money wisely, getting help with energy bills, staying positive and connected, accessing mental health and other key supports during these challenging times.

> **Homelessness Prevention Week and Anti-Poverty Week** with two key universal messages:

- Increase income support above the poverty line - "Raise the Rate"
- Increase investment in public and social housing - "Origami House Campaign."

> **Promoting the Origami House Campaign – 7,000 houses for 7,000 homes**, through active engagement with our community including rooming houses, and schools, to raise awareness of the need for more social housing. Many people wrote personal messages on their origami houses with words like **safety, love and care.**

Thousands of colourful and creative origami houses have now been made into an installation and will be displayed across metropolitan Melbourne, including the City of Port Phillip in 2022.



Student Luca, holding his origami house to raise awareness of everyone needing a home.

Community member Neville, holding his origami house to raise awareness of everyone needing a home.

Origami house installation created by Community Information Services, Victoria (CISVic) leading the Origami House Campaign.

Social meals

In partnership with community housing organisations - Housing First, St Kilda Community Housing and South Port Community Housing Group, we provided a mix of onsite and take-home meals as well as weekly fresh food boxes of fruit and vegetables equating to 2,270 meals or food packages for residents of local rooming houses.

During this challenging year of on-again-off-again restrictions and lockdowns, this initiative enabled us to maintain connections with people who were otherwise isolated, and to ensure that nutritional food and meals were readily accessible. Despite the interruptions caused by lockdowns and restrictions, the positive benefits of social meals is seen in these observations by our passionate Social Meals' Facilitators David and Fiora:

- > At one of the houses, the residents would hang around long after the food was all consumed and the cleaning up was done. It really was a social event, and great to see everyone chatting with each other and the staff
- > At another rooming house on quite a few occasions, some of the residents introduced themselves to each other at the meal as they hadn't met at all up until then. They soon settled into a friendly familiarity, and one resident used to practise his cello as the meal was being prepared, and
- > One woman would say each week "that's the best meal I've had since last week."

"I enjoy providing the meals at each location and, along with the food turning out OK, I am always pleasantly surprised by the residents and their stories. Preparing food for nice people is the best job I've ever had."

David De Roach, PPCG Social Meals Facilitator

Alma Road Community House (ARCH)

As a Neighbourhood Hub, ARCH in East St Kilda is a light-filled house surrounded by a playground and includes a street pantry, a 'little library', a barbecue, and garden beds with fresh produce. ARCH provides opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to come together to participate in creative activities, computer and digital literacy, and special interest groups such as art, chess, rummy tiles, meditation, playgroups, and yoga. ARCH is also frequently used for one off community events and activities.

While all activities were somewhat hampered over this last year, in the intervening periods we were still able to welcome new groups to ARCH, including the St Kilda Bike Kitchen that brings like-minded people together for free demonstrations and advice on how to repair common bicycle issues.

"Everyone enjoyed the meeting and the venue was perfect. From our perspective it was simple to book, the staff was helpful and prompt in responding. We will certainly be back."

ARCH activity participant feedback



St Kilda Bike Kitchen participants learning bike maintenance skills



Rosemary Wise, PPCG staff and Ellen Frajman, Mazon coordinator

Street Pantry

The street pantry at ARCH in collaboration with Mazon and the community, increased its importance during restrictions and lockdowns with its 'give what you can and take what you need' ethos to support residents in the vicinity of ARCH. Particularly in this time of food insecurity and food poverty, the street pantry has united residents to support one another, connect and to prevent and alleviate hunger.



New gym class held via zoom video conferencing

Recreation Access Groups for Social Engagement and Connections

This program provides low cost, supported access to a suite of activities that enhances wellbeing, social connections and inclusion for people of all abilities.

The program was paused for much of 2020-21 due to restrictions and lockdowns. We therefore took the opportunity to conduct a series of in-depth qualitative interviews with 27 community members to determine what the program could look like in the COVID recovery phase.

The bushwalking group resumed in late 2020 with limited numbers in line with restrictions. Led by our dedicated bushwalker Peter Mildenhall, participants again enjoyed walks in beautiful locations like Westerfolds Park, Eltham, and Wantirna, as well as locally along the Port Phillip foreshore.

"Walking is one of the easiest and best forms of exercises that anyone can do... bushwalking is so beneficial for my mental health and wellbeing."

Neville, bushwalking participant

We also have a new partnership with PCYC St Kilda, working together to provide a local gym group. A few sessions took place at the gym, then the activity was moved online during lockdowns. This helped participants maintain their fitness and connections.

"I joined the online PPCG gym classes and now the gym is reopening. I'm looking forward to getting active, and finally meeting my new Zoom friends in person."

Irene, gym group participant

Despite the restrictions and lockdowns, 19 group activities were attended by an average of 6 people per group, with seven new individuals joining the regulars. **Participants continue to self-report that these activities have increased both their social connections and physical fitness, which they appreciate more than ever in these extra challenging times.**

PPCG by numbers

2020-2021 financial year

50,755 Direct Client Contacts



36,586
Information, Support
and Referral

6,317 Financial Counselling
4,832 Social Inclusion Activities
3,020 Education and Skills Development

\$1,000,994 Food Distribution for COVID-19 relief

23,759 Food Parcels
and meals



48 Agencies
supported



\$130,771 Payments for Assistance



\$92,771
Emergency
Relief

\$35,000
No Interest
Loans Scheme

\$3,000
Back to
School Fund

Education



9,319 hours
with 151 students

Volunteers



18,000+ hours
by 100+ volunteers

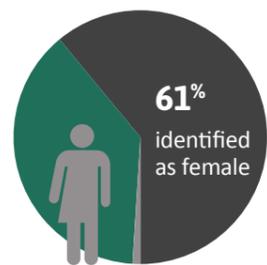
Digital Reach



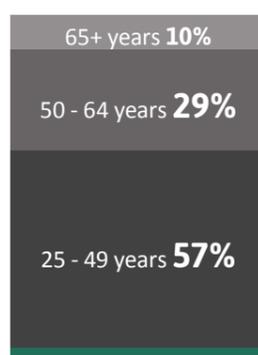
20,600 people
reached through our channels

Client Demographics (31% New Clients)

59% Single 41% Families 27% With dependent children



38% identified as male
1% identified as non-binary



< 25 years **4%**



Top nationalities:
Vietnam, Russia,
Ukrainian, Indian,
Chinese *Culturally And
Linguistically Diverse



52% Public Housing
28% Private Rental
15% Homeless
5% Home Owners

Looking Forward

As the pandemic grinds on, everything feels uncertain. Except for the power of community.

With the pandemic we have seen and experienced firsthand hope, compassion, acts of random kindness, incredible generosity and glimpses of a better future. It is therefore imperative that PPCG remains strong and steady for our clients and the community, and that we move through this current crisis and into a brighter future for everyone.

It feels difficult a lot of the time to comprehend a future post COVID-19, given the circumstances of the last almost two years of restrictions and lockdowns. No doubt this will be another year that no one will forget, but we continue to push forward and hope for a more positive and unambiguous 2022.

In a time when it feels like everything has moved online and we are all subject to more and more emails, endless updates about COVID-19, more acquittals, and online meetings than ever before, we want to re-connect face to face with each other and with our clients. We are also keen to get a better understanding about what COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns have meant for everyone, and how a new COVID-19 normal world could look and feel.

In addition to what a new COVID-19 normal world will bring, there are mounting concerns about the impacts of climate change with more harm predicted in the near future. It is known that extreme heat causes health and harm-related issues that are sometimes fatal. These issues tend to impact more isolated and vulnerable community members who often live in small or substandard housing without adequate cooling or respite from the heat, and of course those most at risk are people sleeping rough.

Going forward this is an opportunity for all of us to build the social and economic infrastructure needed to support individuals, families and communities, sustain local businesses and prepare for ongoing challenges, including climate change.

All of us at Port Phillip Community Group (PPCG) remain committed to strengthening our service effectiveness and coordination, building individual and community capacity, and continuing to strengthen our organisation.

We invite you to join us in our journey, whether it is as someone using our services, supporting our work or partnering with us. We look forward to continuing to be an integral part of this diverse, creative and welcoming community for another 50 years to come.



You can help make a difference

Give now - make a donation online
ppcg.org.au/donation, email info-support@ppcg.org.au,
call 8598 6600, or drop into our offices.

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.



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**PORTPHILLIP
COMMUNITY
GROUP**
Working for
Social Justice