PDF

Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program

Evaluation Report Number 4

2017 – 2019

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PDF Management Services Pty Ltd

for
Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania

November 2019

'A women in her 80's who has never been able to read is now starting to read after her involvement in the literacy program.'

Contents

1. Executive summary

This the fourth and final evaluation of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program conducted between 2009 and 2019 by Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania. This evaluation is for the period 2017 to 2019. The Program was funded through a $ 1.5 million grant from the Tasmanian Community Fund.

The Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program will leave many legacies, one of which being a Future Fund that has the capacity for ongoing investment in reading and writing initiatives.

The previous evaluation processes have been undertaken as part of a developmental and action learning approach. The ongoing refinements made to the program which have been monitored by the regular reviews have demonstrated continuous improvement and a maturation of the Program which now seeks reading, writing, numeracy, communication and language embedded as a consideration in the design and delivery of all House activities.

This evaluation involved intensive engagement with two Houses in each of the three regions; engagement with all Houses at the three regional meetings and the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Board; meetings with stakeholders and document reviews.

The findings of the evaluation are:

The activities during this evaluation period have continued to delivery significant and quality outcomes against all of the contracted objectives in the Program Funding Deed.

The broad scope of reading, writing, calculation, financial, communication and language projects have continued to meet demonstrated participant need and matched the values and place-based positioning of Houses within the community.

Professional development of volunteers and staff have been a feature of previous evaluations. During this evaluation period, funding was prioritised toward project activities this very little or no allocation toward professional development in the three final annual funding allocations. This remains an area of success for the 10 year funding period however, with significant evidence to increased capacity of the House Network. Maintaining currency and competency of volunteers and staff beyond the end of the funding period will be an ongoing challenge.

Like previous evaluations there is evidence of significant achievements and outcomes. Tangible outcomes such as employment, further study, drivers licences and citizenship are matched with a number of other less quantifiable improvements to quality of life through improved confidence and self-esteem and more functional relationships with family and friends. Analysis of sample of projects, which includes unit costing for the delivery of the Program, demonstrates substantial outcomes from relatively modest per participant costs.

National Simultaneous Story-time continues to be recognised as an important and valuable initiative for House participation and support. The general view of the Network is that this

activity should be funded from sources other than the Future Fund beyond the current funding commitment.

During the 2017 to 2019 evaluation period 18 Houses were funded $ 418,262 to deliver 37 projects. 21 projects were not funded, mainly because the project funding was fully expended and no longer available.

The distribution of funding across the Network varied with some Houses accessing additional funds from other funding sources. 16 Houses did not apply and/or were not successful in gaining funded projects. Other Houses were highly successful in obtained funding over multiple years. Smaller Houses, particularly in rural areas, has a relatively low success rate in accessing grants and generally these grants were small.

This evaluation period has seen the Network cement Houses as key players in place-based reading and writing support services in vulnerable communities and this is one of the many legacies of the Program.

The Neighbourhood House brand and profile has generally been increased with many anecdotes highlighting the increased reach of Houses and the new people who have connected to Houses through the reading and writing activities.

Another significant legacy of the Program is the suite of products and resources that have been discovered and/or developed which will hopefully be retained as future delivery assets.

It is unusual for a community organisation to attract secure funding for a program for a ten year period, with a Future Fund with potential for ongoing perpetual investment to be built into the design.

The benefit of long term secure funding has been realized in this Program and the vision and foresight of those involved in bring the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program to fruition should be applauded. Similarly, the Tasmanian Community Fund Board of 2009 and the subsequent Board members and staff are to be congratulated on their courage and commitment to making a real difference in a quality of life element which affects every community in Tasmania. The completion of the funding period warrants celebration and the parties deserve the opportunity to appreciate what they have collectively achieved.

The most significant challenge for the Neighbourhood House Network is maintaining the momentum and continually supporting positive change to the lives of people like those who have gained so much form the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program.

2. Introduction

Evaluation of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program was built into the design of the Program and part of the funding submission to the Tasmanian Community Fund in 2009.

The developmental nature of the evaluation process is reflected in the number and type of recommendations in each Evaluation Report.

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania welcomed the critique and embraced the development intent of the feedback and recommendations of the Program – generally accepting and acting on the findings in each report. This was evident in subsequent evaluation processes.

This evaluation of the remaining period of the Program does not contain operational and program improvement recommendations as the Program in its current form will cease with the completion of the Funding Agreement. Rather, observations have been developed to capture key findings of the evaluation period that may be used to develop future reading, writing and communication programs when funding is available.

The brief for this evaluation was to produce an Evaluation Report detailing:

- Analysis of project reports for the projects funded during the evaluation period
- Summary details of the evaluation period including details of projects funded and funding distributed; staff and volunteer professional development undertaken; number of participants; participant outcomes reported
- Case studies relating to projects delivered by two Houses in each region (to be mutually agreed) – including participant outcomes achieved (where possible), and feedback on the delivery experiences of each House
- Feedback on the Simultaneous Story-time Project
- Presentation of findings to The Tasmanian Community Fund Board in December 2019.

In addition, feedback from long term Managers should be sought in relation to changes that have occurred in relation to literacy issues in the House during their period of management, and in particularly how they believe the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities may have contributed to these changes. This information should be reported as potential information that Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Incorporated may include in their final project report and acquittal to the Tasmanian Community Fund.

3. Methodology

The evaluation was undertaken using the following stages:

Stage 1:   Project Scoping

A planning meeting involved Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania informed a project plan that was developed, based on the evaluation brief provided by Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania.

Stage 2:   Project Establishment and Preparation

Key program files and documentation were identified in consultation with Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and analysed against the evaluation objectives. These were:

- A sample of Project Reports completed by Houses
- A summary of funding distribution

Stage 3:   Evaluation and consultation

The evaluation involved the following stakeholder engagement and other processes:

- intensive face-to-face interviews with the six Houses involved in the application for and/or delivery of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities projects. The interviews were designed to explore the issues and implications of the overall Program and their project experiences both during the final evaluation period and for the whole 10 year funding period. These interviews included 6 House Managers and two staff members involved in delivering the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program

- consultation with Houses around Tasmania through facilitated discussion at the three Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Regional House network meetings

- meeting with the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Board

- face-to-face discussion with Houses during breaks at the State Neighbourhood House Conference seeking examples of stories from their experience delivering the Program

- face-to-face interview with the external independent financial advisor

- an interview with the Executive Officer of the Tasmanian Community Fund when the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities was funded in 2009

- face-to-face interview previous Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Chief Executive Officer

- interviews with the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Executive Officer and the everyday Literacy Program Administration Officer

- desktop review of a sample of Project Reports from Houses – to inform the evaluation discussion topics

- review of funding distribution to Houses data

- web research on literacy definitions and annual reports of the Tasmanian Community Fund

Topics discussed with the six Houses and at regional House meetings included:

- Program experience and outcomes for each House
- 'examples of participant outcomes
- Examples of reading and writing outcomes
- Feedback on National Simultaneous Storytime
- Long term manager's experience
- Other findings for Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Final Report to Tasmanian Community Fund and Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Board
- Changes that have occurred over the 10 years in relation to reading and writing and how has the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities contributed to these changes
- Tutor feedback
- Stories, examples and illustrations
- The Future Fund
- Reading and writing considerations becoming part of House practices

Stage 4:   Project reporting and presentation

A draft evaluation report was prepared and finalised following discussion with Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania.

This evaluation along with each of those previously undertaken were informed by contracted objectives in the funding deed between the Tasmanian Community Fund and Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania.

4. Defining literacy

In order to establish the context in which the outcomes of Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program were to be considered, a suitable meaning of 'literacy' was sought, to establish how broad or narrow reading and writing was defined.

In this report literacy is described as defined by the **MAM Helping Houston Advanced Literacy Program, as follows:**

> *Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak and listen, and use numeracy and technology, at a level that enables people to express and understand ideas and opinions, to make decisions and solve problems, to achieve their goals, and to participate fully in their community and in wider society. Achieving literacy is a lifelong learning process.*

5. Program outcomes

5.1   Characteristics of the Program success (State Network level outcomes)

The evaluation identified a range of characteristics that contributed to the success of the Program; these included:

- Low administration time and costs
- Simple and streamlines application and reporting processes
- The projects and learning activities were practical and could be applied to participant needs - not theoretical
- Provision of transport to enable access to the Program
- Provision of childcare to enable access to the Program
- Delivery methods that did not trigger memories of school classrooms – as many participants have not been in a formal learning environment for a long time
- Reading and writing by stealth
- Houses meet participants where they are at and respond to individual needs
- The place-based nature of project design and delivery
- High levels of individual and group support
- Partnerships with other providers such as 26TEN, employment services, migrant services and so on
- Value adding project funding with grants and funding from other funding bodies

5.2   Program design and delivery methods (State Network level outcomes)

Projects were delivered using a range of methodologies including needs based 1:1 tutoring; individual mentoring, support and in some cases advocacy; small group workshops and activities; larger group classes; open access support for short term assistance such as job applications; access to equipment and resources and provision of books, resources and activity materials.

Houses staffed projects with dedicated reading and writing volunteers and/or staff and in many cases activities were delivered by two House personnel – a subject area expert (such as a cook or chef) and a reading and writing expert.

5.3   Governance (State Network level outcomes)

Capacity for Board members and senior staff to read and comprehend governance material was identified as an internal issue for the House network.

The intent of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program is to respond to reading and writing needs of participants.

Volunteers have been recognised as beneficiaries of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program through the development of tutoring skills and building of confidence.

Volunteers are often members of the communities served by a House and some of the reading and writing skills developed by them have added to the governance capacity of the Houses.

Some resources have been developed to support governance capacity building – including the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Governance Handbook. The need for governance resources to be accessible, affordable available in multi-media forms was identified.

There may be scope to incorporate increased governance capacity initiatives which also have reading and writing outcomes at a State and/or House level.

Suggestions included exploring options to convert aspects of the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Governance Handbook into video form.

5.4   Reading and writing by stealth (State Network level outcomes)

Each of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities evaluations have found that advertising activities as 'literacy program' was not effective.

This finding remained consistent with this final evaluation. Promoting the topic areas, (computers, cooking, driver's licenses, and so on), and building in reading and writing skills in the design of the activities was recognized as more successful than promoting a literacy program.

'Activities included calculating and reading and writing recipes. Participants would master it, then go home and do it again in their own home.'

'One eleven year old rang a parent and gave a list of ingredients they wanted from the grocery shop so she could cook the things they had learned at the House.'

'It was a transformation of the classroom - taking the learning into the home'.

'Some of the men were struggling and the thought of being in a class was hard for them. We did not make a big thing of it or make it sound like a formal classroom thing.'

One evaluation participant commented, 'projects were small enough to do something and big enough to matter.'

5.5 Contracted outcomes (State Network level outcomes)

The evaluation of this period 2017 to 2019 finds that the Program continues to deliver against the contractual objectives – see Table 1 below.

Table 1: Performance against contracted objectives

Contracted objective	Performance
Prudently invest funds to meet approved purposes, while minimising the risk to capital	Return on invested funds protected and guaranteed agreed minimum level of funding to be distributed for projects and to undertake professional development, administration and evaluation requirements

	Return on investments exceeded expectations with unexpected outcome of purchasing property – with rent being an ongoing income stream for the Neighbourhood Houses Future Fund
Target Support for people who have already identified or begun addressing their literacy needs	Reading and writing support, and other more holistic support was provided to participants both individually and in group settings
Provide non-threatening literacy support for people with literacy needs who are not ready for overt or formal literacy support	This is the area of Houses core business and an area where the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities evaluation process has demonstrated how well Houses excel in this area. Similarly, Houses were quick to identify that formal approaches to addressing reading and writing issues in communities and marketing activities are reading and writing activities was not the way to attract participants. The more subtle inclusion of reading and writing in activities was successful and appropriate with significant unexpected life changing results being achieved with participants by what the Houses did and how they went about delivering the Program.
Improving understanding of literacy needs in the community	The nature of project design and the outcomes achieved by projects demonstrate understanding of the literacy needs in the community. The question 'Given your experience with the Project, what do you now think are the main literacy needs or issues in your community?' that is included in the Project Report form completed by Houses forces Houses makes Houses consciously consider literacy issues in their community. Project report responses such as the following demonstrate the level of insight and understanding Houses have about their communities: '*low parent awareness of the importance of reading to children at an early age'* and *'the suburbs that House encompasses is currently a high refugee settlement area. Those that settle here have expressed literacy assistance to better help them in their regular involvement in the community, i.e. shopping. We also get requests for assistance getting their licence and becoming an Australian citizen. Our more senior community members are concerned about being left behind in a constantly changing, technologically driven society and wish to have assistance using devices and internet options available to them.*

Contracted objective	Performance
	There is also a need for more affordable healthy option especially when it comes to feeding the family.'
Distribute funds to neighbourhood houses	Funds were distributed to Houses to the level contracted in the Funding Deed.
Increased provision and use of literacy resources in neighbourhood houses	This has been achieved to a high level, through purchasing resources, volunteers and staff developing delivery resources and products developed in projects. To an extent resources and project products have been shared between Houses and across the House Network. This remains an area for ongoing opportunities where planning for showcasing and sharing of experiences, information and resources can be facilitated.
~~Increased literacy levels in some or all of the six literacy key areas for adult and family participants in programs~~	Agreement from Tasmanian Community Fund to remove this objective.

5.6   **Financial skills and capacity** (House level outcomes)

Houses spoke of their experiences working with people with low income and experiencing poverty with many of the services provided being to families accessing emergency food relief.

This led to a number of activities within Everyday Literacy for Local Communities projects addressing household financial management and support needs. Examples include:

- Budget Blitz;
- Help with budgeting;
- 1:1 with the House financial counsellor;
- Developed cash up books – using money carefully;
- Talking about money and accessing the Smith Family money matters;
- No Interest Loans Scheme;
- Money Smart $ manager through the Australian Tax Office and Step up loans at the National Australia Bank;
- as well as increasing awareness of and access to other financial support services.

Many of the projects were designed to assist families to make their money go further and financial literacy was an area of literacy where skills and capacity building can demonstrate direct and ongoing benefits to participants and families.

5.7   Administration and reporting (House level outcomes)

The project report sampling process involved studying information from high quality and professional project reports – with comprehensive and insightful feedback. Every report also contained complete financial information with all budgets broken down into allocation categories which provided further understanding of how the project operated. The reporting templates that have been refined throughout the project provide accessible and meaningful feedback and project descriptions. House Managers reported the time and resource demands to complete the reports were reported as appropriate relative to the size of the grants.

5.8   Building confidence and assertiveness (Participant level outcomes)

The examples below demonstrate some of the less tangible outcomes that have been achieved in the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program.

> *Two Houses used the grant to develop a set of booklets under the theme 'get a better result when dealing with services'. The booklets and associated mentoring were designed to improve participant's ability to assert themselves with government and other service providers and put their case for the support they needed. One participant was looking for opportunities to get a job and approached a service provider to get free childcare and a subsidy to go to training. The person had been declined three or four times. After developing a formula of how they would again seek this support, with the assistance of the content of the booklet, the participant was successful in childcare and training subsidy they were seeking. As a result of this experience the participant's confidence grew and they went on to further study and employment.*

> *A local Housing Tasmania tenant had had their power disconnected. Ineffective communication between the participant and the service provider resulting in at least two conversations being terminated. The financial counsellor at the House assisted the participant use a less combative approach which led to an agreed payment plan and reconnection of the power (Extract from Project Report)*

> *Participant came in seeking assistance with Centrelink requirement. Person could not use computers and needed to sign-up for MyGov account to maintain payments. In order for this to occur an e-mail account was also required. Sessions included learning to use the Centrelink app on the phone so that they were independent. They are now able to do this themselves – and still come in to improve computer skills to increase employment opportunities. (Adapted from House Project report)*

> *Participant was elderly and with limited English speaking skills and no capacity to use e-mail. They were having an issue with Council where they believed they were being treated unfairly. Had brought issue to Council's attention on several occasions and decided to fight for their rights. Decided to e-mail politicians to state their case and seek assistance. Worked with the House to write e-mails. They said the issue had been going on for so long they felt helpless and felt they were not being heard. After several weeks, they came in to advise the Council had resolved the matter in the participant's favour. They said the relief was enormous and they felt supported by their community. (Adapted from House Project report)*

> *Self-confidence in literacy is easy to see in skills such as cooking. However, seeing participants self-confidence grow within a group/community is far more rewarding and*

telling. Social skills, personal interaction, self-acceptance, self-worth, these are the areas we see participants advancing in daily. Feedback received "I used new ingredients"; "I've never made a curry from scratch before"; "I learned new things I was not confident in before".

5.9   Employment and income generation (Participant level outcomes)

Employment and training related initiatives were delivered in the form of skills development and jobsearch support with resumes, applications and interview practice.

The capacity for Houses to provide this specialist writing and support expertise was more possible in Houses that received larger project funding which underwrote significant part-time staff who could often respond to assist needs of jobseekers at relatively short notice.

Houses who have been recipients of the larger grants highlighted the benefits of a staff reading and writing staff resource multiple days per week and noted the pressure to find resources from other sources to maintain the services they have been able to provide and believe had delivered substantial benefits to participants and communities.

> *One participant who had a very high skill level in cooking chose to use our 'food program' time to research how to start their own food business. They have since taken the action to update their home kitchen to commercial standards, to start their own home business cooking cakes and slices for local markets (Adapted from House Project report)*

> *One participant has increased their own confidence, self-esteem, socialisation enabling them to apply to and get into Drysdale House to complete a course in Catering they had previously not felt they could do. (Adapted from House Project report)*

> *Participant in 50+ age group left employment on mainland to return for family reasons. Had left school at 16 and working community services, disability services and Aboriginal community engagement. Person had limited computer skills and sought assistance to develop resume and job applications. Worked 1:1 with selection criteria and to support job seeking efforts. Employment not yet obtained, yet their confidence and job seeking skills/capacity has increased.' (Adapted from House Project report)*

6. Feedback on the National Simultaneous Story-time

Without exception, every House spoke of positive outcomes for children and families achieved by National Simultaneous Story-time. In terms of the program itself, there was no hesitation.

Aspects of the program that were recognised as working well included: quest readers; and books being given to children – including the purchase of assorted books for children of different ages.

Other comments from some Houses were concerned that their contribution may have been under-valued, particularly when the activity was delivered in partnership with another organisation and/or in another organisation's venue – such a Child and Family Centres.

Houses understood the intent of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program was for reading and writing initiatives for adults, and access and equity was also raised as an issue – given that not all Houses participated in the National Simultaneous Storytime activity.

Strong support exists for the continuation of National Simultaneous Storytime in many Houses with the suggestion that the focus could include reading for parents and children - not just children.

Some funding from the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program had been used to support National Simultaneous Story-time – particularly for the purchase of books.

In relation to funding National Simultaneous Storytime, the general feedback that this activity is achievable with other funding sources and the resources of the Future Fund should not be used.

In the event that a commitment has been made by the Board to use Future Fund money for this activity in 2020, the view was that this should not extend beyond any such commitment.

7. Project participation and delivery during the evaluation period

Eight projects completed during the evaluation period were analysed using the project report information along with other information provided by Houses during the interview process.

Funding for the eight projects totaled $ 137,085 (average of $ 17,135 per project).

A total of 275 participants commenced with 248 (90.2%) completing the projects. Of these 275 participants 154 (56%) were new participants, not having previously been involved at the House.

Five of the projects involving 138 participants identified 43 of them (31.2%) stayed involved with the House either through other programs and activities or by becoming volunteers.

Four of the projects identified eleven participants who went on to further reading and writing activities beyond the project with one House also identifying four participants who went on to further training/study.

A summary of the average cost of delivery of the projects is detailed below.

Table 2:   Participation and deliver costs for 8 sample projects from the evaluation period

House & Project	Funding	Started	Delivery cost per participant
St Helens	$ 16,500	11	$ 1,500
Risdon Vale Anything is Possible Together	$ 11,500	11	$ 1,045
Northern Suburbs Everyday Literacy in the Northern suburbs	$ 15,538	42	$ 370
Geeveston Everyday Literacy and Huon Valley Works Skill Building	$ 15,000	80	$ 187
Gagebrook	$ 15,000	37	$ 405

Taste Buds – Learn, Laugh, Cook			
Devonport and Ulverstone	$ 32,769	65	$ 504
More Money for My Family			
Burnie	$ 15,363	14	$ 1,097
Rokeby	$ 15,415	15	$ 1,027

The overall average delivery costs in the eight projects is $ 498 per participant.

The outcomes evidenced the achievements in the Program and case studies provided in this report demonstrate a significant return on the investment. Based on the other interviews and engagement relating to this evaluation period, it could reasonably be assumed that such a level of outcomes would be replicated in other projects.

Table 3 and the summary below provide details of the areas of activity that were delivered and the types of outcomes achieved for the ten year period of the Program.

The activities delivered and outcomes achieved in this final evaluation period are consistent with those achieved in from previous periods. The details provided in the eight sample reports detailed later in this report demonstrate the maturation of the Program and the increasing level to which reading, writing, calculations and communication continue to become more embedded in the operations of Houses.

Table 3:   Outcomes achieved by reading and writing project area

Reading and writing area	Outcomes
Food and cooking	Cooking and food handling skills; budgeting and accessing affordable and nutritious food; growing fruit and vegetable
Health	First aid training and certification; health literacy; connection to Diabetes Australia, eye testing (one had cataracts identified and subsequently removed, and other obtained spectacles following sight assessment) and Cancer Council (bowel, testicular and breast cancer) including use of interpreters in migrant health literacy activities; oral health
Technology	Phones and Apps; access to internet; access to computers; cybersafety; using computers safely and effectively; finding and sharing information; banking; filing; online shopping; using your credit card online; travel/holidays online; social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube); photo sharing on the Internet; privacy on social media; searching the Internet; databases; how to locate authoritative, trustworthy information; user groups; filing on your computer
Family and parenting	Resource booklets; drug and alcohol; domestic and family violence; child development and

	speech; reading to children; playing with children; playing as a family; parents, children and technology; books for children
Life skills and quality of life	Driver's licences; connection with disability support services; parenting activities including reading to children; development of friendships and connections which increase social connection
Employment, training and income	Driver's licences; job applications; interview practicing; registration and access to 'Seek' and other employment related web pages; vocational training; Food Handling Certification to meet Council's food preparation and selling requirements; access loans such as the No Interest Loan Scheme and the Smith Family education savings program
Confidence	Preparedness to assert needs and personal circumstances (for example, 'Ulverstone and Devonport House's Get a result when dealing with services'); Expressing needs appropriately - to get results
Language, culture and communication	Connection to Houses; integration with other participants; conversational English; preparing for citizenship test; driver's licences
Financial	Budgeting, accounts and payments; buying and selling on-line; loans and financing; getting the best deals and value for money; credit cards; running a car; savings; dealing with Centrelink and the Tax Office
Measurement and calculations	Weights, measurement and calculations – incidental to other activities such as cooking and following recipes (including involvement by children)
Meeting Government obligations	Access to MyGov to monitor Centrelink repayments; form filling – which often built capacity where the participant required less support and often became fully able to complete without ongoing assistance
Governance	Understanding the policies, procedures, systems, contract management and governance obligations to manage and operate and incorporated association

Many of the projects span multiple categories, such as cooking and technology; technology, employment and confidence, and so on.

As an example, a project involving hands on budgeting, credit cards, running a car, feeding the family, saving money, and dealing with bureaucracies delivered outcomes in the areas such as financial, technology, life skills and quality of life, and confidence building.

A sample of the type of projects that were developed and delivered to achieve the identified reading and writing outcomes for each area are detailed below.

Food and cooking projects

- Engage single men who eat alone to increase their knowledge and use of vegetables and fruit, budgeting, where and when to find quality food, reading recipes confidently, measure ingredients, safely storing cooked food, and sharing healthy meals with others
- Contribute simple, cost-effective, and healthy recipes in plain language, photos, and short stories/reviews around the selected recipes that will be collated into a cookbook
- Cooking that embeds numeracy and literacy including recipe books designed and created by the participants that narrate stories around favourite recipes; measuring, budgeting, estimating, and listing required ingredients; computer literacy
- Increase the health, wellbeing, practical and social literacy of individuals and families through healthy cooking and eating, food budgeting, smart shopping, and physical activity.

Technology projects

- Learn skills in email, Microsoft Office (Word and Publisher), internet browsing, basic iPad use, Pinterest, and selling online through Gumtree and EBay
- Technology and computer support/training in areas such as MS Office suite, MyGov, internet banking, and other areas of technology need
- Promote learning and improve confidence in parents and carers of young children through producing a lasting memory of their children using technology
- Provide simple, healthy cooking opportunities, and develop computer competencies through the creation of a recipe booklet using Microsoft Publisher.

Family and parenting projects

- Produce a resource booklet written in plain English that provides information on a range of drugs and the support for those who misuse drugs and their friends and family who are impacted
- Integrating early childhood development and education, adult literacy, parent education and interactive parent and child literacy activities, with the support of an occupational therapist and a speech pathologist
- Families coming together with their children by reading a story to them and engaging their imagination, build comprehension and listening skills, developing recall of events, using drama to bring the book into reality. Activity stations will be provided so that the story can be retold by children and families in different ways
- Extend parents ideas and understanding of oral language and literature by modelling the reading of stories and the use of puppets in playgroup.

Life skills and quality of life projects

- Provide authentic and practical numeracy and literacy through landscaping a children's playground
- Assist multicultural community members in obtaining their Learner Driver (L1) qualification
- Design, buy, construct, plant and care for a kitchen garden
- Complete a basic family tree using a computer program.

Employment and income projects

- Increase job seekers abilities to understand and complete paper and on-line forms, selection criteria, internet job searches with the use of an interactive whiteboard
- Become competent in resume building, job seeking and interacting with Centrelink by support from project worker in prose and document literacy and in using computers
- Obtain employment and improve skills to enhance work choices or promotion in the workplace and assist parents and families deal with literacy requirements of everyday life
- Support small groups by taking them through all the stages of job seeking, including online searching, resumes, preparing applications, mock interviews.

Confidence projects

- Support attainment of Certificate 3 in Community Service, the LIFT program, the Link Up! Project, ongoing food and health literacy programs
- Engaging young parents to make their own calendar using online tools, gaining computer skills using their own stories and photos to add meaning and increase confidence of Aboriginal participants
- Write and publish a brief autobiographical accounts of participant's lives with instruction from a professional author
- Deliver a series of circus workshops, where participants are led through games and team building activities to generate cohesion within the group and make equipment using written and pictorial instruction sheets.

Language, culture and communication projects

- Develop oral communication to enable them to successfully express themselves in appropriate contexts
- Provide literacy and conversational skills to a group of older Bhutanese migrants and assist them making meaning of everyday social interactions
- Assist migrant community members to gain Australian citizenship through being helped with language skills and to understand the Citizenship test
- Assist Sudanese community members to obtain their Learner Driver (L1) qualification thus increasing access to work opportunities and improving road safety.

Financial projects

- Understand their bills, pay them online, and sell goods on websites
- Provide skills for people to live within their budget and provide healthy low cost family meals
- Use ATMs, sign names, recognise street signs, understand pricing, weights and quantities, compare prices
- Hands on budgeting, credit cards, running a car, feeding the family, saving money, and dealing with bureaucracies.

Quotes from Houses

> *'The Literacy program assisted migrants to prepare for their citizenship test – with a number of participants having now obtained Australian citizenship.'*

> *'The Literacy program assisted participants, particularly young people, to prepare for their learner driver test. The House is a licenced test site and 8 participants have obtained their 'Learner's Licence' at the House with another 3 successfully completing at Service Tasmania.'*

> *'The Literacy Program supported one participant who wanted to sell food at a Council event to obtain their 'I'm Food Alert' Certificate which was a Council requirement of stall holders. A number of other participants also achieved food handling accreditation.'*

8. Details of projects funded and funding distribution

Tables 4 to 6 below provide a summary of funds distributed and the type of project applications developed during the funding period.

Table 4:   Summary of funding distribution during the evaluation period

House	# of funded projects	# of projects not funded	Grants received
Geeveston	6		$ 69,941.68
Northern Suburbs	3		$ 44,125.92
Gagebrook	3		$ 44,120
Starting Point	3		$ 43,999.75
West Moonah	3	1	$ 41,996
St Helens	2		$ 30,000
Risdon Vale	2		$ 25,500
Ulverstone	2	4	$ 20,000
East Devonport	2	5	$ 19,614.99
Bucaan	1	1	$ 14,920
Rokeby	1	1	$ 11,800
Devonport	2	1	$ 5,412
Rosebery	1		$ 4,541.75
Burnie	2		$ 3,008.20
Clarendon Vale	1		$ 4,925
Okines	2		$ 2,875
Zeehan	1	3	$ 3,000
Goodwood	1		$ 1,408
Dunalley Tasman		1	$ 0
Deloraine		1	$ 0
George Town		2	$ 0
	37	20	$ 391,188.29

Table 5:   Summary of project applications for the 2017-2018 financial year

Year 2017-2018	House	Category	Project	Summary	Amount
1	Zeehan	General Literacy	Chat and Choose		Not approved $ 1,000
2	Bucaan	Food and cooking	Famous Foodies	Employ a staff member to increase capacity to use produce grown in the community garden and build general literacy and numeracy skills	$ 14,920
3	Bucaan	General Literacy	Our Story		Not approved $ 5,000
4	Dunalley Tasman	General Literacy	DIGnity Supported Gardening - Seasonal Package		Not approved $ 14,764.25
5	Gagebrook	Food and cooking (including computers)	Taste Buds – learn, laugh, cook	Supporting adults and young adults to improve literacy and food habits through practical cooking targeting healthy eating and nutrition on a limited budget	$ 15,000
6	Gagebrook	Food and cooking	Fast Foodies - Eat Right 4 Less	Support practical literacy, budgeting, work skills, and health and nutrition by working with parents to support children; supporting jobseekers build new skills; and combating chronic disease	$ 15,000
7	Geeveston	General Literacy	Everyday Literacy and Huon Valley works	Employment of a Literacy Co-ordinator one day a week to provide general, computer and financial literacy through workshops and 1;1 sessions and expand support to jobseekers identified as needing literacy support by Huon Valley Works.	$ 15,000

Year 2017-2018	House	Category	Project	Summary	Amount
8	Okines	Technology		Basic skills in email, Microsoft Office (Word and Publisher), internet browsing, basic iPad use, Pinterest, and selling online through Gumtree and EBay	$ 1,550
9	West Moonah	Technology and General literacy	Technology - How To & Adult Literacy	Online activities like downloading and searching; assisting mature aged people with smartphones and Windows 10; filling in forms, job applications, and literacy on and offline; understanding basic accounts, bills, and letters: iPads and apps; basic internet; Adult literacy, covering spoken language, reading, writing, and numeracy	$ 14,962
10	Northern Suburbs	General Literacy	Everyday Literacy for the Northern Suburbs	1;1 and group work support for general literacy and numeracy for migrants and refugees	$ 15,000
11	Starting Point	General Literacy	Study Bubby	Employ staff to support, co-ordinate and enrich study such as Certificate III Community Service, the LIFT program, the Link Up! Project, and ongoing food and health literacy programs through 1:1 and group work activities	$ 14,500

Table 6:   Summary of project applications for the 2018-2019 financial year

Year 2018-2019	House	Category	Project	Summary	Amount
1	Burnie	General Literacy	Reset-Renew-Recycle	Participation and engagement in a team based community development project that aims to transform a park into a place that informs the broader Burnie community with resources and learnings together with the opportunities to live in a sustainable way through a number of digital and other platforms to develop and distribute information.	$ 16,115
2	Devonport	Capacity Building	Understanding the Lingo	Identify and provide suitable cues/signage and educate key people at local pharmacies and doctor surgeries how to sensitively identify and refer people who may benefit to literacy support programs	$ 5,412
3	Devonport	General Literacy	Stories from Around Devonport		Not funded $15,000 Insufficient Funds
4	East Devonport	General Literacy	Nutritional Words from Community Leaders		Withdrawn $ 4,600
5	East Devonport	Food and cooking	ABC of Family Meals		Withdrawn $ 15,000
6	Ulverstone	Food and cooking	Step Up	Build on Red Cross FoodRedi course – budgeting, meal planning and preparation, healthy food choices, food safety, vocabulary, mathematics	$ 5,000
7	Ulverstone	General Literacy	Dealing with Services		Not funded $ 4,918.50 Insufficient Funds

Year 2018-2019	House	Category	Project	Summary	Amount
8	Ulverstone	Food and cooking	FoodREDi		**Not funded $ 12,642.24** **Insufficient Funds**
9	Zeehan	Technology	Let's Keep It Simple	Basic computer skills	$ 3,000
10	Gagebrook	Food and cooking (including computers)	Taste Buds – learn, laugh, cook	Supporting job seekers to build food literacy to combat chronic disease through 4 sessions tailored to their individual needs - 3 computer skills and 1 lesson in a cooking session.	$ 14,120
11	Geeveston	Facilities	Literacy and reading room	Refurbish annex as reading and literacy area	$ 5,000
12	Geeveston	General literacy	Literacy for Life	Employment of a Literacy Co-ordinator one day a week to provide general, computer and financial literacy through workshops and 1;1 sessions	$ 15,000
13	Geeveston	General Literacy	Literacy for Life - in the Huon Valley	Employ a Literacy Co-ordinator one day a week to cover a range of literacy based content including computer and financial literacy	$ 15,000
14	Risdon Vale	Food and cooking	Food for thought - Affordable & Nutritious	Bring community members together to build practical literacy budgeting, and writing so that they can create affordable and healthy family meals every day.	$ 15,000
15	Rokeby	Food and cooking	Cooking with Literacy and Numeracy	Learning basic literacy and numeracy through basic cooking, nutrition, reading and writing recipes and practical budgeting	$ 11,800
16	Rokeby	General Literacy	Cutting the Apron Strings Booklet		**Not approved** **$ 5,280**

Year 2018-2019	House	Category	Project	Summary	Amount
17	West Moonah	General literacy	Wellness 360	1:1 and group work for general community (mainly migrants and refugees) for healthy cooking, budgeting, work skills and general literacy	$ 12,034
18	George Town	General Literacy	Literacy Training		Not funded $ 5,000 Insufficient Funds
19	George Town	General Literacy	Family and Adult Literacy		Not funded $ 14,999.80 Insufficient Funds
20	Northern Suburbs	General Literacy	Everyday Literacy for the Northern Suburbs	1;1 and group work support for general literacy and numeracy for migrants and refugees	$ 15,000
21	Starting Point	General literacy	Study Buddy	Access to support for numeracy and digital literacy	$14,999.75
22	St Helens	Food and cooking	THRIVE Garden to Plate		Not funded $ 15,000 Insufficient Funds

The distribution of funding varied across the Network. Some Houses applied for projects that were not funded and did not reapply and apply again in subsequent rounds; some Houses did not apply at all during this evaluation period – with six Houses not applying at all during the 10 year grant period.

There was evidence of some Houses undertaking reading, writing and other communication projects with external funding including 26TEN and other grants programs.

There were also examples of Houses who were successful in grants (often larger grants) in multiple years during the evaluation period. Houses with high levels of activity and participation; a capacity to develop projects; and skills to write compelling funding applications had a high success rate.

Smaller Houses, particularly in rural locations had a low success rate for grants both by number and by value. There did not appear to be any specific strategies to identify Houses that have more challenges in preparing funding applications and/or proactive strategies to encourage and support those Houses who would benefit from application preparation assistance and/or those who submitted applications that were not successful.

9. A sample of project reports from the evaluation period

Sample reports from eight projects completed during the evaluation period have been analysed. Observations from these project reports are detailed below.

There were a range of **barriers and enablers that influenced project participation**.

Barriers to participation included: transport; childcare; participant feedback forms; low income – need for food relief at difficult times; illness; working around requirements of other programs such as Work for the Dole; not having the right person delivering sessions; personal and family issues and crisis; and space limitations, such as the kitchen area for cooking activities.

Enablers for participation included: a desire to make life changes; experiencing small positive outcomes that motivated further participation; delivering the project during school hours; providing a fairly private delivery environment; use of interpreters with migrant and refugee participants; make activities fun to be involved; programs being free; providing palliative care nurse support to enable participant to attend project; valuing every participant's contribution and ideas; workshops and sessions that are interactive, fun, informative and responsive; diversity of activities; developing products and resources that participants own and are proud of; meeting participant needs; and learning activities that had visual components.

Many of the projects involved **personal goal setting** and support to achieve them.

Many projects involved **accredited qualifications** and/or certificates of attainment, for example in one project eight of the eleven participants completed certificates in community services – five at Certificate II level and three at Certificate III. Seven of those participants have **successfully gained employment**.

Reports of **increased confidence** was consistently reported across all sample projects. One project used the Counting Confidence Tool to measure changes between project commencement and completion which quantified significant positive change. Similarly, one project measured change in oral communication skills which also confirmed improved ability.

Houses commonly commented on **social outcomes** in the form of participants being less isolated, less shy and/or establishing friendships and connections, many of which continued beyond the project and in the community. As an example, one participant was described as disengaged and often involved in conflict with family and friends – they would not answer the phone and found it difficult to go into shops and attend appointments. At the end of the project they had a friendship network that they engage with daily, have a more positive relationship with their family, makes and answers the phone and now volunteers weekly at the Child and Family Centre. One project reported five participants set up e-mail for the first time.

One project reported positive skill development in the area of **emotional intelligence**. A participant described as lacking confidence and having difficultly interpreting the meaning of and responding appropriately to others communication. After completing a hospitality course as part of the project and with support to continually reflect on their different experiences they were observed as developing increased confidence with capacity to identify when they were experiencing particular emotions and understanding how this was impacting on them. This participant has now successfully gained employment.

Houses indicated they had **benefited** from delivering Everyday Literacy in Local Communities Program. Some examples of the outcomes achieved at a House level include: greater community understanding and awareness of services and activities provided by the House; ongoing participation of project participants in other House activities; positive word-of-mouth promotion of Houses to the community by project participants; engaging with people we haven't engaged with before; and participants becoming volunteers at the House and in the community; producing a health and harm prevention booklet we own and are able to share.

New participant skills and experiences **extended beyond the project** – with many Houses reporting participants taking information home and sharing with their family or going home and practicing and continuing to use recipes used in the project.

Some **participants bought their own equipment** such as tablets once they had experienced them and learned to use them in the project.

The involvement of **partners and other presenters** in projects was a major success factor that led to outcomes. For example one project involving health literacy with migrants (with interpreters) included an optometrist who picked up cataracts in one participant that led to treatment as well as spectacles for other participants; an otologist who checked hearing; Diabetes Australia who talked about healthy eating; and the Cancer Council who talked about breast cancer, prostate cancer, skin cancer and healthy eating.

An **extensive range of project partners and supporters** were involved in projects including: Child and family Centres; community services organisations; health and medical services; employment services organisations; Local Government; schools; youth organisations/centres; State Government (Transport; Housing Tasmania); education and training providers; Tennant's Union; other literacy support providers; No Interest Loans Scheme; and local newspaper and radio.

Understanding of the reading, writing and communication needs in House communities was one of the sections in the project reporting process. Houses demonstrated their understanding of needs through feedback such as: meeting the needs of refugees including capacity to shop, drive, conversational English and become Australian citizens; difficulty accessing traineeships; writing official documents; general spelling and numeracy; computer skills for older people; resume writing and job ready skills for younger people, job seekers and parents returning to work; confidence is a major issue in our community and we need to show people they already have knowledge and skills; financial literacy; and pamphlets and resource material available to the community are consistently difficult to read and are a barrier to obtaining information and support; pamphlets are also crowded with jargon and technical terms, have too much content, are in small print, are clinical, do not provide clear information and direction and involve complicated technical or automated referral processes to access support.

Projects assisted participants **meet their personal obligations**. For example, one participant obtained the necessary support to complete two years of overdue tax returns.

Resources were developed and shared across the House Network, such as the 'Know Your Risks – and Choose Well' booklet designed to assist communities increase knowledge and awareness in regard to legal and illicit substances.

Participant **awareness of resources**, was increased, for example, one House reported 'participants were totally unaware that there were so many apps available for free download to their phone that could assist and support them to make positive life choices.'

Increased House capacity was achieved through tutoring skill development and achievement of literacy qualifications by volunteers and staff.

Houses were asked to reflect on **what they would change** if they were to repeat the project. Areas of responses included: more promotion; have a separate girls groups and separate boys groups rather than running them together; offer dedicated citizenship training outside projects; increase awareness of available reading and writing support services within partner organisations and fee-for-service clients that assist sustain the reading and writing service within the House; take more time to ensure the quality and effectiveness of contracted tutors and presenters; increase the number of venues in the area to improve participant access ; provide childcare or playgroup activities for parents with young children; improve time management; and incorporate more visual activities in the learning activities.

10.   Professional development of volunteers and staff

Specific learning and development and/or Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania facilitation of showcasing and sharing learning and experiences did not occur during this evaluation period as the emphasis moved to promoting program activity - to ensure the volume of project funding achieved the requirements of the 10 year Funding Deed.

Some volunteer and staff development has occurred at a House level, through induction training of volunteers and staff; preparing and supporting new volunteer and staff tutors; and training such as literacy tutor training through external providers like Linc. This has been ongoing throughout the evaluation period. There was also one example of a staff member from a House in Launceston providing tutor training and sharing of experiences for a House on the North West Coast.

Resources and products used by Houses and/or developed through projects acted as tools for professional development. These resources and tools continue to be shared on an informal basis between Houses and across the Network. For example, ten sets of a three booklet series titled 'Get a Better Result when dealing with Services' developed by a joint project of two Houses were recently sent to every Neighbourhood House. Project reports indicate many of these resources will continue to used on an ongoing basis.

Volunteer development was broader that the Program or their tutoring roles.

House Co-ordinators highlighted to positive impact the program had had on volunteers which was described as creative and supportive of the volunteer base.

A number of volunteers have taken on tutoring and/or program co-ordination and administration roles, with many completing nationally accredited training as literacy tutors. House Co-ordinators also spoke of the confidence developed by volunteers as a result of the training and the work they undertook in their tutoring roles. This has been ongoing throughout the evaluation period.

There were also examples where volunteers obtained paid employment and House Co-ordinators felt the confidence developed through tutoring contributed to success in gaining work.

In some cases, reading and writing program participants went on to become volunteers and involved in Houses and their communities in a number of ways.

> *The literacy program was the start of a pathway from health-checks to volunteering, then becoming a learner driver mentor, volunteering in the local fire brigade to employment as a school bus driver.*

Showcasing and sharing learning and resource development across Houses has been a feature of the Program in past evaluations. This was not evident in the period of this evaluation.

Houses expressed a desire to continue to build the capacity of the Network through professional development, reflective practice and creating opportunities to share and showcase learnings, resources and stories in the future. Suggestions on how this could occur included: reading and writing experts facilitating workshops and conferences and conducting regional forum activities.

This is particularly relevant when there are changes and new additions to staff and volunteers at Houses.

11.   Case studies

Houses were asked to provide two case studies to illustrate project activity and the impact for participants. A summary of case studies from the eight sample reports are detailed below.

Case study A

House quote: *'Participants exceeded project expectations'*.

On commencement:

Participant living with mother and working casually in local food business. Difficulty in managing money. Aggressive and high degree of conflict in their life. 'Find myself in toxic friendships'. Binge drinker and socially isolated.

Achievements:

Moved from 2 to 5 on the Confidence Tool rating. Gained driver's licence. Reached savings target and bought car. Obtained employment. Completed training course and a number of short courses. Attends weekly exercise group. Completed Certificate III in Community Services. Currently enrolled in pre-University Course.

Life changes:

Described changes as healthier, more positive about themselves, eat and sleep better, healthier relationships with family and friends, better problem solver, less aggressive, more able to make challenging decisions and good decisions.

Case study B

On commencement:

23 year old referred by Job Network agency. Addictive behaviours; extreme social anxiety; self-harming; felt hopeless; aggressive communication; felt unable to engage with services and the broader community.

Achievements:

Identified barriers and vulnerabilities that were impacting on their life. Moved from 0 to 4 on Confidence Counting Tool. Set goal of being drug free – to get regular custody of their children. Set tasks each week, to achieve between session – make phone calls, attend appointments. Practices conversations with doctors and lawyers in the sessions.

Now has phone and is confident to use it; makes and attends appointments; complete detox and is drug free; attends the Linc; part-time employment in desired area; has driver's licence and has purchased a car; forklift licence and white card; participant in Certificate II Course.

Life changes:

Weekly access to children; no longer self-harming; can control anger; better eating and sleep; good friendships.

'if I stayed like I was, I would be dead. I see my kids, I have a partner. I talk to my father and have developed a relationship with my stepmother. And I am much nicer to my mother which makes me feel good.

Case study C

House quote: *'We said at the beginning of the project we would work with girls and we did but the boys also wanted to get involved, which was great'.*

On commencement:

Very low literacy levels.

Achievements:

Recipe book was developed the enable participants to share the knowledge they gained about healthy eating and preparing healthy food on a budget.

Life changes:

Became Council Citizen of the Year and is now regularly attending College and has improved relationships with family members.

Case study D

On commencement:

Limited or no volunteer involvement in delivering structured reading and writing support.

Achievements:

Now eight volunteer reading and writing tutors who are now able to provide an ongoing tutoring option for those coming to the House and requesting assistance.

Life changes:

The House now runs an after school homework centre using the volunteer tutors to deliver reading, comprehension and creative numeracy activities.

Case study E

House quote: *'We have many who come to us seeking assistance with their citizenship training, many of whom are now proud to be Australians'.*

On commencement:

Parent with adult child with acquired brain injury and wanted to engage the child in activities. They wanted to be part of the community and have an influence on it, as there were aspects of the community that they were concerned about and were affecting the child. Had applied to do an aged care course and was not accepted because of low reading and writing skills.

Achievements:

Registered with Job Network Provider; resume to assist with job searching; obtained learner driver's licence. With the support of the House, approached a training provider that assisted with formal literacy, numeracy and technology support. Was then offered training course in aged care which they declined as they had developed a taste for computing.

Life changes:

'They are now excited as to where their life can take them and has totally come out of their shell. Speaking with them now, I see someone who knows where they are going, who is also a lot more confident and happy than the person who I first met.'

Case study F

On commencement:

Refugee from Bhutan about 7 years ago who wanted to strengthen English to be better able to communicate their needs to the community. Also wanted to be more able when shopping. Had become connected to the House through the 'Multicultural Craft Group.'

Achievements:

Has now extended vocabulary of English names and ingredients they use when cooking. Increased capacity for vegetable gardening through understanding planting times and treatment of fungi and insects. They have expressed interest in studying aged care in the future.

Life changes:

Gained Australian citizenship; and become a cultural elder at the House – where she has invited many of her community and friends to become involved.

Case study G

House quotes: *'Having a literacy co-ordinator or suitable volunteer available for drop-in support has been the biggest factor as to whether people participate or not'.*

"the clincher for me was when the participant said – I don't just have to guess at the supermarket any more.'

On commencement:

Household background of not working with both parents on disability support. Participant left school in Grade 10 and had caring role for grandparent for a number of years. While volunteering at the House, expressed interest in being able to add darts score quicker.

Achievements:

Undertook numeracy activities which were then applied in a business and employment context. Completed homework. Interested in further study and training.

Life changes:

Now discussing self-employment options. Last year joined the Volunteer Fire Brigade and has made a new set of friends as well as learning new skills. Further boosted self-esteem.

Case study H

House quotes: *'when we tasted dishes and asked – would you pay for this in a restaurant and they answered yes – it let them know they had made restaurant quality food. The confidence they got from making something at that level was amazing'.*

On commencement:

Had good cooking skills.

Achievements:

Researched what was needed to start their own food business.

Life changes:

Have updated their home kitchen to commercial standards to enable them to start their own food business cooking cakes and slices for local markets.

Case study I

On commencement:

Never cooked a roast before.

Achievements:

Learned how to cook a roast.

Life changes:

Now cooking roast at home for their family.

Case study J

House quotes: *'the No Interest Loans and Payday Lender session had the greatest attendance and Nils loans enquiries and applications spiked following the session'.*

On commencement:

Housing Tasmania tenant without power due to complicated payment and disconnection issue. Social skills were a barrier to discussing rationally with service provider – with two phone conversations terminated by the provider.

Achievements:

Financial counselling support developed less combative approach and more productive ways of dealing with service providers. Payment plan was agreed.

Life changes:

Substantial improvement in quality of life.

Case study K

On commencement:

Discovered House accidently through contact with their neighbour – when talking about a stressful financial issue.

Achievements:

Discussed financial issue with Financial Counsellor. Participant could not relate to Financial Counsellor and was dissatisfied with House engagement. Encouraged to and acted by discussing dissatisfaction with House Manager. Led to confidence to attend another financial counselling service.

Life changes:

Positive result to financial difficulties.

Case study L

House quotes: *'The group were shown the vision and the framework for the project and were then given the green light to design and deliver the project outcomes. This proved to be an extremely successful strategy with lively debate and conversations around everything from the name of the (addictive substances and harm reduction) booklet, the choice of substances to be included, format, graphics and every other detail. The group bonded together while working on quite sensitive and polarising topics. They delivered a high quality resource booklet and a plethora of positive personal outcomes'.*

On commencement:

Jobseeker with negative attitude and hostile approach. Had an eye for detail and a thirst to research information thoroughly.

Achievements:

Became a key driver of the project. Has become an integral member of the House. Skill and interest in community development has been recognised.

Life changes:

Employed by House on traineeship completing Certificate III in Community Services and has become the go-to personal assistant in the House. Now looking at another qualification in the youth and drug related field.

Case study M

On commencement:

Family and friends were using drugs and other addictive substances. Was hostile that the House was providing the needle exchange service. Reluctant to join the project – although motivated by the aim of producing a substance use and harm prevention booklet.

Achievements:

Knowledge of illicit drugs was expanded and their awareness of the damage caused by tobacco and alcohol.

Life changes:

Have reported to the House they 'have ceased smoking and drinking more thoughtfully'. They have also stopped purchasing energy drinks for themselves and their family.

Case study N

House quotes: *'After the project, one of the participants became a volunteer at the house and they are now running programs'.*

On commencement:

Family environment dominated by take away food.

Achievements:

Learned to measure and read instructions. Observed increased confidence.

Life changes:

'My dad only bought take-away food and now I am showing him how to cook. We made a health pizza and we are going to keep cooking at home.'

Case study O

On commencement:

Senior who had lived live with low literacy and been reliant on partner for support. Partner had died.

Achievements:

Learned to read recipes and cook healthy meals and also budgeting for food. By the end of the project participant was writing down recipes and bringing them to the classes.

Life changes:

"I wanted to write down my recipes and share them for years.

12.   House reflections on literacy issues in their communities and how they have changed during the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program.

House Managers were asked to reflect on reading and writing issues in their communities over the past ten years. Long term Mangers were also asked how the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities may have contributed to or influenced any changes to the needs and issues that may have occurred.

This evaluation included in-depth discussions with several key stakeholders to capture their observations of the ten year program. Several themes emerged including:

- Neighbourhood House Brand
- Action learning and development approach
- A legacy of products and resources
- Ten year funding security
- Independent financial advice
- Finances and the Future Fund
- Relationship building
- Increasing use of Houses
- Children and young people
- Embedding reading and writing in Houses
- Other potential State-wide and whole House Network needs and issues
- The need to recognize and celebrate achievements and success

12.1   Neighbourhood House brand

The values and positioning of the Neighbourhood House Network are arguably clear and strong. This was demonstrated when interviewing the person who was the Executive Officer of the Tasmanian Community Fund at the time the Everyday Literacy Program was considered in 2009.

Although these deliberations and the selection process was some ten years ago, he spoke about it as if it was only yesterday.

The Tasmanian Community Fund was looking for proposals that were:

(a) state-wide;

(b) broad scale;

(c) mainly localised;

(d) longer term;

(e) address a significant social issue, and

(f) clear opportunities for building capacity in the community - from the ground up.

What was more interesting was the depth he was able to speak about in regard to the characteristics of Neighbourhood Houses that made the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities attractive to the Fund.

The characteristics he described were an illustration of the strength of the Neighbourhood House brand, namely:

- place-based design and delivery model
- houses being trusted and safe places in communities
- governance and contract management by a credible and established State-wide peak body - with delivery and engagement at a local level
- community management and involvement in the local management of Houses and programs
- local people involved in determining local priorities
- good match between delivery locations and demographic of vulnerable and people experiencing disadvantage
- emphasis on grassroots impact on multi-generational issue, and
- capacity to customise for local communities
- project's 10 year longevity, (many of the other applications sought funding for projects for three to five years)
- targeted significant issue of literacy which was supported by State data;

The Tasmania Community Fund Board also needed demonstration of the delivery model, structure, accountability and reporting capacity, which the House network was able to provide. The Fund Board also liked how supportive the Houses were of community members – which enabled connection with people with support needs in a safe and welcoming environment.

These characteristics of the Neighbourhood House network identified by an external stakeholder provide great insight into the strengths of the organisation and the benefits which Houses and the network may promote in future proposals.

Managers in this evaluation suggested that Houses were now more known for supporting participants with reading, writing, communication and language and they were keen to continue to build the brand recognition of Houses to include literacy, communication and language..

Houses reported some increased awareness and recognition of their local community reading writing delivery and support activities.

This awareness has been achieved through advertising projects and activities (which in some cases has been through marketing funds included in Everyday Literacy for Local Communities funding), and through applications for reading and writing support funds from other funding bodies.

In addition, first hand promotion of Neighbourhood House activities through participants and increased awareness of House's reading and writing projects by partners and referral agencies was reported. Word-of-mouth referrals was a recognised as an important recruitment process for participants – particularly within migrant and refugee communities where Houses were recommended as safe and trustworthy places.

12.2   Action learning and a developmental approach

Regular checking, refining and in some cases re-design and refocus occurred through-out the 10 year Program

The design elements have been continually refined over the 10 year period of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program.

Regular review and evaluation enabled an objective external third party to identify areas for improvement and an opportunity to make recommendations to improve systems, processes, operations and governance.

The success of the evaluation is demonstrated by the high degree to which recommendations were implemented whereby the identified areas for improvement were largely not raised again in subsequent evaluation reports.

12.3   A legacy of products and resources

Houses reported an accumulation of reading and writing resources and delivery activities for volunteers, tutors and participants in the form of board games, books, handouts, worksheets, activities and other learning support materials. Guides and practical resources such as recipe books, computer activities and software and reference materials such a planting and harvesting guides for fruit and vegetables have also be acquired.

A number of Houses also reported the development of products through reading and writing projects. Examples include: recipe books (particularly where participants know recipes that are not written down and they make the dish whereby the recipe is documented); and booklets – such as the set of three – 'Get a result when dealing with services' developed by a joint project by Ulverstone and Devonport Neighbourhood Houses.

Examples of resources developed and/or accessed include:

- eBooks, physical books, four tablets, and related accessories
- a resource kit for volunteers to educate community members on effectively communicating with government agencies, utilities, job service providers, banks and councils in order to achieve results
- a Learner Driver training DVD for distribution State-wide and a "Train the Trainer" program to be rolled out to Houses, and other interested trainers and organisations
- Samsung Galaxy tablets, apps, and a selection of books

- computer games with a theme where words are integral to the game. Create game teams to provide literacy support. Purchase a book and DVD parenting course for loan and provide laptops for running the program
- a collection of resources and skills in literacy, including a literacy library with reference books and Quick Read novels
- measurement and assessment tools such as Counting Confidence Tool

Managers were hopeful that the range of products and resources to support the delivery of literacy, numeracy, communication and language activities would continue to grow and be shared around the House Network.

12.4   10 year funding security

Managers spoke of the difficulties associated with attracting and keeping volunteers and staff for short term and highly prescriptive funding – and funding where the projects and activities have onerous application and reporting requirements for relatively small grant amounts.

The characteristics of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program that was noted and appreciated by Houses included:

- The funding was only for Neighbourhood Houses and there was an alignment of values and objectives across the whole Network
- There was limited or no restrictions on the types of projects and activities Houses proposed in relation to the identified needs in their community
- Local needs and issues could be taken into account tin the design and implementation of projects
- Awareness that the funding had been committed for a 10 year period and there was scope to think strategically about a reading, writing, communication and/or language issue over a longer period
- Houses could combine funds with other funding sources to increase program delivery initiatives
- Streamlined application and report processes that were commensurate with the level of funding being sought

The capacity for a long term funding program to create dependence on the funds for wages to create security of a staff member(s) was identified as a risk – whereby a staff asset to the House may not be able employed beyond the funding period.

One House noted a three day per week reading and writing support staff member – where the funding for their position was made up of multiple funding sources.

> 'We just obtained our third $ 50,000 grant through 2610 to employ a staff member two days per week. This would not have been successful without the Everyday Literacy funds. We also have accessed a MyState Credit Union grant for English as a Second Language, digital literacy and workplace literacy and a Hydro grant for financial literacy.
>
> We now have five times the level of funding we initial obtained for reading and writing support through the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities project. The reading and writing support person would not have been employed and continued to be viable without the initial Everyday Literacy for Local Communities funding.'

Another risk for the House Network where a House funds reading, writing, communication and language activities from multiple sources is the loss of viability of that whole area if one of the funding sources is taken away. This includes a risk of losing companion activities and/or fee-for-service income where the Program is not sustainable.

12.5   Independent Financial Advice

The process of engaging and working with an independent external financial advisor to develop the financial strategy and oversee the investment of the funds.

This created a development opportunity for the Board members at the time and increased the number of people in the House Network who have an understanding of financial management and investment options along with ethical investment.

The financial advisor developed and implemented a model which invested a portion of the Grant at a known interest rate that would guarantee the required program delivery funds prescribed in the Funding Deed.

The balance of the funds were invested for shorter periods and in some cases at a higher level of risk. The investment strategy adopted delivered a higher return than general interest rates at the time.

The return on the balance of the funds enabled the purchase of the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania office premises which has created an ongoing Neighbourhood Houses Future Fund income source through rent.

The independent external financial advisor expressed his congratulations to the Board for the courage they had to adopt a strategy and not change course during the ten years – even though they were nervous at times.

Members involved with this investment strategy highlighted the benefits of having an independent external financial advisor in the ongoing management of the Future Fund.

12.6   Finances and the Future Fund

Houses expressed a desire for Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania to explore tax deductibility for donations status under the education stream, to assist access future philanthropic and other community donations for major community issues which affect the whole House Network.

The level of funding available for distribution from the Future Fund in 2020 and beyond is significantly less than the amount available over the 10 year funding period from 2009 to 2019. Ideally Houses would like the Network to be able to continue to fund a range of significant reading, writing, communication and language projects. In order to do this additional funds for projects would need to be sources and/or grow the Future Fund funds available for investment. This could include using some of the funds for Future Fund distribution to generate additional income for the Future Fund.

12.7   Relationship building

Some of the literacy tutor training was delivered as a combined activity for Neighbourhood House, 2610, Child and Family Centres and other providers which provided opportunities to develop relationships with other providers and referral organisations.

> *Two TAFE students on placement were given the task of working with staff and volunteers to develop and submit the grant application for a literacy grant for the House. The grant was successful and experience of working on a real proposal and applying their learning was one of the students' highlights of the placement at the House.*

12.8   Increasing use of Houses

The Everyday Literacy for Local Communities created a new stream of activity across the House network.

Some participants were already involved in a House. Others became new participants through promotion of activities, word-of-mouth recommendation and/or referral from other services.

Many of the new participants maintained their association with a House though other programs. Friendships that between participants that developed meant some groups of people stayed in contact and kept their groups together for other House activities.

> *'Having a literacy program has increased visitors to the House. Community members who have not been accessing the House before are now come in for support and we have seen them join in other activities within the House which is fantastic for us and for them'. (Extract from House Project Report)*

> *'The two main things that impacted on how people participated where; their desire to make changes to their lives and the support provided to them to make those changes. Once they experienced small positive outcomes they gained motivation to continue further in the project and achieve larger goals.' (Extract from House Project Report)*

This has included high levels of participant commitment.

> *'I have been positively surprised at the level of commitment the participants have showed. Some of the people that have come to see me, on occasions have days where it is just too hard to try and they feel overwhelmed by everything, but come their appointment day they are here and ready to work hard, towards improving their situations.' (Extract from House Project Report)*

12.9   Children and young people

Reading and writing is now embedded in the practices of Houses (to varying degrees). Houses work with participants in a holistic manner and are inclusive of families, children and young people.

Children were not eligible to participate in the everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program.

Some Houses noted the need for reading and writing support of children and young people in their communities and the benefits of Houses providing applied and practical learning to this cohort.

There were multiple requests for any future funding guidelines to include eligibility for children and young people.

Benefits of adults and parents attending activities as a family including children also had benefits.

> *Participant attended the drop-in play session with some concerns regarding participation in pre-literacy activities. During the session, it was identified that their child may have a developmental disorder. Referrals were made to appropriate services. Attending the drop in session meant the needs of the child were identified prior to them reaching school age and opportunities for early intervention were created (Adapted from House Project Report)*

12.10   Embedding reading and writing in Houses

Evaluation participants highlighted major advancement in how reading and writing is recognised, understand and addressed Houses between the start of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program commencement in 2009 through until now.

Discussion with one House Co-ordinator further demonstrated the depth of understanding about reading and writing needs and issues in communities where they spoke of, *'using the Hemingway App to measure the reading levels of information the House produces to make sure it is accessible for the community – aiming for Grade six level language; thinking about fonts; using a maximum of three syllables; not using ALL CAPITALS; doing calendars differently using three colours or less. As they put it, - we are learning to communicate more effectively in everything we do.'*

Houses noted the courage of the Tasmanian Community Fund to resource the Program which enables a diverse group of Houses to design and adapt projects to suit their communities noting 'the Tasmanian Community Fund were brave enough to try and fix literacy in our community. This has allowed us to solidly embed reading and writing in the House.'

It was also noted that the project grants were good for smaller Houses that found it harder to get external funding and this had contributed to the overall increased capacity of the whole House Network to embed reading and writing as a core element in how they operate around the State.

12.11   Other potential State-wide and whole House Network needs and issues

Reading and writing was acknowledged as a significant community need that affects and needs to be taken into consideration by every Neighbourhood House in Tasmania.

The evaluation discussions explored what, if any, other support areas also had a universal impact on every House. A number of topics were discussed such as homelessness, in-home violence and so on.

In addition to reading and writing, an area that was identified was food – specifically food for people who are hungry and assisting people to buy the maximum value for money and healthy food for their available budget.

Another area identified as universal across Houses was parenting and child development.

In the event that there are opportunities for Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania to apply for funding for the whole House network, these areas were identified for consideration.

12.12   The need recognise and celebrate achievement and success

Houses highlighted the need for Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania to end the Program well - with the Tasmanian Community Fund. The joint and noteworthy interest of both parties in this long and significantly funded Program deserves a planned closure and celebration.

Tasmanian Community Fund took a calculated risk to work with 35 Houses that they believed would provide most beneficial place-based activities across the broader Tasmanian community over a ten year period.

The legacy of the funding has the potential to be one of perpetuity. Even though the funding relationship between the House network and the Tasmania Community Fund ends in 2019, Houses expressed a desire to continue to report outcomes to the Fund on an annual basis to remind the Fund Board and staff of the ongoing performance and perpetual benefit of their investment.

Equally, Houses were keen to see ongoing annual reporting of the performance and achievements of the Future Fund to be reported to the House Network.

Given the perceived significance of the 2009 Tasmania Community Fund decision to fund reading and writing support through Neighbourhood Houses was launched in Parliament House, it may be worth exploring opportunities for the ending of the funding period to be celebrated in an equally significant manner.

There may be an opportunity for Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and the Tasmanian Community Fund to showcase the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program at an international Community Development Conference in Sydney in 2020, to recognize and acknowledge the achievements and outcomes of the initiative.

13.   Acknowledgements

PDF Consulting would like to thank all the people involved in the evaluation consultation for their willing and open participation in this review process and congratulate the House Network and all involved in the design and delivery of substantial outcomes and achievements over the ten year funded Program.

This process has confirmed the maturation of Houses as significant stakeholders and providers of literacy work that is being undertaken by the Network at a community level and again has substantiated volunteer and staff commitment to achieve outcomes for individuals and families.

More intensive engagement occurred with six Neighbourhood Houses and PDF are very grateful for the insight and contribution of these Houses who have added significantly to the quality and depth of the evaluation – particularly the longer term observations of long serving Managers.

PDF wish Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and the House Network best wishes in in achieving ongoing results through the Future Fund. PDF also congratulate the Tasmanian Community Fund for backing this project which has clearly improved the lives of many people.