

**Neighbourhood House Policy**

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## 1 Policy alignment

This policy aligns with the following Council policies.

### **Council Plan 2021-2025**

The four year strategic plan includes five key priority areas and outcome success measures. Neighbourhood Houses contribute greatly to many of these priorities, particularly to the Stronger Communities priority - empowering our communities to be healthy, connected and resilient.

### **Cardinia Shire’s Liveability Plan 2017-2029**

Neighbourhood Houses contribute to the outcomes identified in Cardinia Shire’s Liveability Plan (Council’s Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan). Neighbourhood House programs link to the domains of Education, Employment, and Health and Social Services as well as supporting the equity and inclusion of all community members.

## 2 Purpose

The Neighbourhood House Policy outlines Cardinia Shire Council’s commitment to Neighbourhood Houses and acts to:

- reinforce the partnership between Cardinia Shire Council and the Neighbourhood Houses
- recognise the importance of Neighbourhood Houses’ role in community strengthening
- clarify how Council supports the Neighbourhood House sector.

## 3 Scope

This policy extends to all Neighbourhood Houses in Cardinia Shire funded through the State Government’s Neighbourhood House Coordination Program. Where applicable and agreed upon, it may also be applied to un-funded Neighbourhood Houses.

There are currently eight Neighbourhood Houses operating in Cardinia Shire who receive Neighbourhood House Coordination funding from the State Government:

- Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre
- Bunyip and District Community House
- Cockatoo Community House
- Emerald Community House
- Lang Lang Community Centre

- Living Learning Pakenham
- Outlook Community Centre
- Upper Beaconsfield Community Centre

## 4 Context

Neighbourhood Houses are at the forefront of service provision, playing a positive role in community development. They place great emphasis on social equality addressing educational, social and health needs and Council acknowledges the important role they play in strengthening communities.

Neighbourhood Houses receive funds from a range of sources including the State Government Neighbourhood House Coordination Program, Cardinia Shire Council, Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE), other government grants and through their own fundraising initiatives.

Cardinia Shire Council assists Neighbourhood Houses through the provision of a council building or rental assistance, and an annual operational funding allocation. Council's annual budget allocation for Neighbourhood Houses will be divided across all Neighbourhood Houses based on community needs. There are additional opportunities for Neighbourhood Houses to obtain funding through a variety of Council annual grant and support programs.

Cardinia Shire Council is dedicated to developing and maintaining a partnership with the Neighbourhood Houses. The partnership that Council has with local Neighbourhood Houses is through both direct and indirect liaison. The support provided will be aligned with the individual needs of each Neighbourhood House. Neighbourhood Houses and Council will be bound by the Neighbourhood House Policy, a Funding Agreement, a Lease/Licence Agreement where applicable, and the Buildings and Facilities Maintenance Policy. Council will work collaboratively with Neighbourhood Houses to support responsive program delivery for our diverse community.

Neighbourhood Houses are defined by the following principles:

- They are accountable to the community, operated by a Committee of Management, or an alternative governance model as approved by the State Government, with an employed coordinator/manager who is responsible for Neighbourhood House operations.
- A Committee of Management/governance group oversees the organisation and consists of a broad representation of the community.
- The centre is a 'not for profit' and incorporated organisation.
- They deliver a diverse range of programs and services that are informed by, and accessible to all sectors of the local community.
- Programs and services delivered, link and contribute to relevant State and Local Government policies and plans including Cardinia Shire's Liveability Plan.
- They encourage volunteers to support their programs and overall service delivery.

The different roles Neighbourhood Houses play may include playgroups, childcare, training delivery, public internet access, provision of recreation, cultural and social activities, health and wellbeing activities and information and resource centres.

Neighbourhood Houses are a unique organisation in that they provide a service which caters for people throughout their lifespan. Moreover, Neighbourhood Houses provide an informal support network for people who may otherwise be isolated and may assist in the delivery of other local initiatives depending on the needs of the community.

## 5 Policy description

### Council's Commitment to Neighbourhood Houses

Cardinia Shire Council works at a strategic level with State and Federal Government and the community, on ways to maximise and develop long-term benefits for a sustainable community. Council's role is to:

- Identify changing needs and support Neighbourhood Houses to address these needs through access to demographic and other data, assistance with engaging the community and developing responsive programs and services.
- Advocate on behalf of Neighbourhood Houses both internally and externally, as appropriate, on issues raised by individual Neighbourhood Houses and the Cardinia Shire Neighbourhood House Cluster.
- Strengthen relationships with major stakeholders including Federal and State Government.
- Provide financial assistance through the provision of an annual operational funding allocation to Neighbourhood Houses.
- Promote the Neighbourhood House sector as a model for community learning and social participation through Council's communication channels.
- Assist in sourcing training opportunities for staff and volunteers.
- Assist in the establishment of new Neighbourhood Houses where required.

### 5.1 Responsibilities

#### 5.1.1 Council's annual operational funding allocation and eligibility

Cardinia Shire Council acknowledges that Neighbourhood Houses play a significant role in the local community providing a diverse range of community strengthening activities. As a growing interface municipality, Cardinia Shire Council is committed to supporting Neighbourhood Houses through an annual operational funding allocation.

#### Eligibility

To be eligible for annual operational funding from Council, Neighbourhood Houses must be:

- Community based and not-for-profit
- An Incorporated Association
- Operating by a Committee of Management, or an alternative governance model as approved by the State Government, that represents a cross section of groups within the community.
- Providing programs and services that benefit the Cardinia Shire community
- A member of the Neighbourhood House Network
- Recognised under the State Government Neighbourhood House Coordination Program

#### Neighbourhood Houses must also have both:

- A signed Funding Agreement
- A signed lease/licence agreement if occupying a Council owned building

#### 5.1.2 Funding Agreements

Subject to annual budget approval processes, Council will provide annual operational funding to each Neighbourhood House as outlined in the Funding Agreement.

A Funding Agreement outlines the specific duties and expectations that must be met in exchange for Council operational funding and support.

The Neighbourhood House Funding Agreements:

- Outline the relationship between Council and the Neighbourhood House and the role of each
- Define the organisation and service delivery conditions that must be met and,
- Specify the reporting requirements that must be adhered to in order to receive operational funding.

### 5.1.3 Lease/Licence agreements

Where a Neighbourhood House operates in a Council facility they will enter into a Lease or Licence Agreement.

A Licence agreement is a formal agreement in which Council permits the use the property, or parts thereof, under a specific set of parameters.

A Lease agreement provides exclusive possession of the premises.

The type of occupancy agreement to be entered into will be determined between Council and the Neighbourhood House.

A Buildings and Maintenance Policy usually accompanies these agreements which defines the responsibilities of Council and the Neighbourhood House. It relates to the ongoing maintenance and minor upgrade of Buildings and Facilities which are provided by Council for use by the Neighbourhood House.

In occupying a Council facility, it is recognised that Neighbourhood Houses contribute greatly to the upkeep and improvement of these facilities by seeking grants and utilising their own funds.

## 6 Review

Cardinia Shire Council will review this policy every 3 years or annually as required.

## 7 Related documents

| Type of document                   | Title and/or RMC link   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Commonwealth/Victorian legislation | Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019–2023                  |
| Strategic directions paper         | N/A   |
| Policies                           | Council Plan 2021-2025<br>Cardinia Shire’s Liveability Plan 2017-2029 |
| Strategies                         | N/A   |
| Guidelines                         | Neighbourhood House Coordination Program                              |
| Procedures                         | Neighbourhood House Funding Agreement                                 |

## 8 Glossary of terms

### Council

Refers to Cardinia Shire Council.

### State Government

Refers to Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

**Community**

A group of people living in the same geographic location (locality, township or suburb) and/or a group of people having common interests and needs.

**Neighbourhood House**

Neighbourhood House organisations are known by a variety of names, including Community Houses, Community Centres, Neighbourhood Centres, and Learning Centres. The defining attribute and common thread is that they are all not-for-profit organisations which focus on providing activities, programs and services that respond to diverse community needs.

Neighbourhood Houses provide a place where members of the community are able to access support, information, learning opportunities, and participate in social programs or in the operation and management of the Neighbourhood House as volunteers.

**Neighbourhood House Cluster**

The eight Neighbourhood Houses in Cardinia Shire who come together as a representative group.

**Committee of Management**

A group of volunteers who are members of the organisation and elected to govern the organisation.

**Governance Group**

In the absence of a Committee of Management, the Governance Group refers to another entity which has legal control and responsibility for the organisation.