Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House

Social and Learning Needs
in Port Melbourne, South Melbourne
and Garden City

- 2006 -

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report is primarily based on qualitative, demographic, documentary and statistical data collected for *Positive Action: A Neighbourhood Framework*, a community research project by Jennifer Borrell for Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House (PMNH) in 2000, and the *Learning and Social Needs Analysis Research Report for Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House and Learn For Yourself* by Sally Bruen in 2005. Other data sources used are cited in the reference section at the end of the report.

This report was overseen and managed by Margaret O'Loughlin and Kate Kelly.

Margaret O'Loughlin co-wrote the executive summary, the background sections on PMNH, the conclusion, analysis of statistical and demographic data and of the survey responses.

Kate Kelly collated and analysed existing qualitative and documentary data from the sources above (Borrell 2000, Bruen 2005), and wrote sections 'Unpacking Disadvantage; Barriers to Participation', 'Changing Communities', 'Community Perception and Needs', and 'Recreational and Social Needs of Disadvantaged Groups'. In addition to this, she co-wrote the executive summary, background sections on PMNH, the conclusion, and analysis of statistical/demographic data and of the survey responses.

Acknowledgements

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All the volunteer research assistants, and participants in focus groups and interviews.

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PMNH Committee of Management, for their support and guidance.

The former Garden City Neighbourhood House and staff, particularly Lee Bower and Michael De Clifford for providing funding and support for the project.

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2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1. Background

The Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House's vision is to *bring the neighbourhood to life* and develop strategies to strengthen the local community. The Social and Learning Needs Study was conducted to gather information to assist us in planning and developing relevant services.

In 2005, Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House (PMNH) experienced several key events that have influenced the strategic direction of the House:

- PMNH relocated to the Liardet St site in Port Melbourne after an absence of two years.

- Garden City Neighbourhood House ceased operations in late 2005, with all funds and services to now be temporarily managed by PMNH.

The Port Melbourne, Garden City, Beacon Cove and South Melbourne areas have been significantly gentrified over the last five years, resulting in an increase in high-income earners in the resident population. However, these areas are characterized by pockets of public housing, and low-income residents remain a significant part of the community. PMNH is required therefore to respond to the many social issues emerging, and to be a key player in strengthening local communities.

The Committee of Management identified the importance of gathering current information about our neighbourhood, and the learning and social needs emerging from the catchment area accessing our services.

The Social and Learning Needs Study was also motivated by government policy initiatives within Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE), and the Department for Victorian Communities. New policies represent a change in funding criteria that is partially based on postcode of affluence, and redirecting funding to growth corridors. For PMNH to successfully advocate on behalf of disadvantaged local communities, we need credible and current information on local community learning and social needs.

Funding for the Needs Study was provided by ACFE.

2.2. Project Objectives

The Needs Study aims to gather and analyse quantitative and qualitative data to provide information on social and learning needs in Port Melbourne, South Melbourne and Garden City. This report will be used for:

- direction-setting for PMNH

- informing our stakeholders of demand for our services, and

- a phase of an evaluative cycle for PMNH.

2.3. Methodology

This report is primarily based on data collected for *Positive Action: A Neighbourhood Framework,* a community research project by Jennifer Borrell for PMNH in 2000, and the *Learning and Social Needs Analysis Research Report for Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House and Learn For Yourself* by Sally Bruen in 2005.

Throughout the research process, data was collected via the following methods:

- reviewing demographic data, documents and previous studies which provided information on local needs and trends

- face-to-face interviews with service providers, residents and course participants

- written questionnaires on local learning needs

- evaluation forms completed by PMNH participants, and

- focus groups held with local service providers, residents and key disadvantaged groups.

Research into social and learning needs was conducted in four phases:

1. **Stage 1**: acquisition of funding, development of project brief, preliminary collection of documentary data and conducting the first learning needs survey

2. **Stage 2:** employment of the first researcher, collection and analysis of qualitative data on learning needs through interviews and focus groups. The researcher wrote the first needs study report: *Learning and Social Needs Analysis Research Report for Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House and Learn For Yourself*

3. **Stage 3:** review of the first report by committee and recommendations made

4. **Stage 4:** further feedback sought, and completion of the second report, *Social and Learning Needs in Port Melbourne, South Melbourne and Garden City*

In order to discover the views, circumstances, and recreational, social and learning needs of people living in the study area, it is necessary to examine the context in which these needs occur. The first section of this report focuses on the Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House context; subsequent sections cover demographics, community attitudes, barriers to learning, and the social and learning needs of the community.

2.4. Key Findings

Despite new residents' affluence, pockets of disadvantage remain in Garden City, Port Melbourne, and South Melbourne

While there is an influx of new residents with high incomes, pockets of disadvantage remain in these areas. These disadvantaged areas contain a high percentage of lone householders on low incomes, high levels of local residents in public housing, many female-headed public housing

tenants from NESB backgrounds, high levels of unemployment and low levels of education.

Changes to the community have affected community cohesion perceptions and participation levels

The social cohesion of Port Melbourne/Garden City/Beacon Cove and South Melbourne communities is being affected by growth in population and gentrification. Some new arrivals say they feel isolated, disconnected, alienated and unaccepted by older residents. Conversely, some older residents perceive that sense of community and neighbourliness are decreasing, as upwardly-mobile people move in. Some older residents feel they are being "pushed out" by a different socio-economic group.

Pockets of disadvantage and community divisions have created barriers to accessing learning, and impede social cohesion

Many disadvantaged residents and support organisations report that social isolation, cost, lack of confidence, mobility, location, language and settlement issues and lack of access to space and resources affect participation in learning activities.

Survey participants across all suburbs and incomes had similar course interests and preferences. However, low-income residents preferred affordable courses, and working/student residents preferred outside work/study hours

Skills training and IT courses were the most preferred courses, closely followed by art/craft & fitness/relaxation courses. Work skills and skills training are also seen as important for unemployed low-income residents with lower education levels. Many respondents were willing to pay a variety of course costs, but over 50% preferred courses under $70.

Disadvantaged groups have specific learning and social needs

Disadvantaged groups require low-cost courses and activities to help reduce social isolation, assist with basic skills development and promote self-esteem and personal development.

Varying levels of knowledge and some confusion exist about the role of PMNH among some sectors of the community and organisations

Many organisations and some interviewees report that PMNH is not as well known as it should be among residents and local businesses, and confusion exists as to what PMNH should and can provide. However, a majority of survey participants report some knowledge of PMNH.

2.5. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: existing pockets of disadvantage in the local community require further research and strategies to overcome barriers to learning and participation

Further research is required in this area. PMNH must endeavour to keep up to date with research, and use this information to inform program development. PMNH needs to explore opportunities for funds to conduct further research, and advocate for further research opportunities to be provided.

Recommendation 2: investigate funding for programs to facilitate community cohesion, increasing community participation and reduced social isolation

Programs should be inclusive of all community participants to maximise community cohesion. Outreach and social activities designed to boost community participation—such as Open Days, community barbeques, forums, Community Cafés and other events—need to be investigated.

Recommendation 3: PMNH should develop flexible and responsive programs allowing for varied community interests, times, locations and affordability

Stimulating activities for people over the age of 55 need to be developed, along with evening and weekend activities, more IT courses, employment skills training and health-promoting activities.

Recommendation 4: seek and develop links with other community organisations and services

PMNH also needs to explore opportunities for partnership with local services and businesses.

Partnerships developed would enrich and increase the scope of the community engaged, and may enable activities to become feasible through joint resourcing.

Recommendation 5: PMNH needs to seek funding and resources to provide low-cost programs for disadvantaged groups

Research shows that these groups have specific needs—such as work and living skills, personal development, ESL/literacy and unstructured groups to reduce social isolation—that require additional program funding and staffing. As these programs need to be low-cost or free to ensure accessibility, PMNH needs to investigate funding options to provide these classes.

Recommendation 6: raise the profile of PMNH, and develop networking and entrepreneurial opportunities

A revised networking, promotion and communication strategy is required. PMNH also needs to develop some fee-for-service programs and other sources of revenue to cover core organisational costs.

3. BACKGROUND

The Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House's vision is t*o bring the neighbourhood to life*, and we are developing strategies to strengthen our local community. PMNH is aligning its services and connections to ensure it remains a sustainable organization integral to the community.

A snapshot of Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House (PMNH) activity participants in 2004 reveals:

- **86% of overall participants are female**
- **45.8% of participants are in the age range 40-60**
- **38% of users have a disability**
- **37.5% have not enrolled in any short courses before**
- **most users state they cannot pay more than $70 for a course**
- **62% earn less than $30,000 per year**
- **male participation rates can be as high as 30-60% in computer classes and Monday Drop-In**

Port Melbourne/Garden City, South Melbourne and Beacon Cove are experiencing rapid gentrification, huge population increases, and an increase in socio-economic disparities between residents. Many of the effects on individuals and families are similar to those seen in rapidly-developing new suburbs: social isolation and lack of information on what is available in the community.

3.1. What does PMNH deliver?

Most of our 30 programs are delivered in Port Melbourne, and in an effort to be accessible, and to engage with the broader community, we deliver services across the City of Port Phillip (South Melbourne, Elwood, Middle Park, Albert Park, as well as 'outreach' programs).

75% of our courses are targeted at people on low incomes who are marginalized or lack educational opportunities. PMNH provides "drop in" facilities for all residents, and has introduced a regular Community Cafe lunch with an open invitation to all residents. We conduct events such as the Open Day, and have established a volunteer program to offer pathways for all residents to gain a feeling of community connectedness.

3.2. Funding PMNH

The Department for Victorian Communities funds the coordination of neighbourhood houses. The City of Port Phillip provides facilities for PMNH and funds us to deliver certain services to people with disabilities and to disadvantaged families. From time to time we receive funding for specific community projects such as the volunteer program.

PMNH receives no external funding to cover core operational costs. PMNH has developed strategies to cover these costs: by conducting fee-for-service courses, and those where we take a management fee—all

making a small contribution to covering core costs in our annual budget.

ACFE continues as a major source of funding. The principal target group for this funding is people with limited mobility, due to physical and/or social isolation and limited prior learning experiences.

3.3. Previous PMNH needs research: findings and recommendations

In 2000 PMNH commissioned Jennifer Borrell to conduct community needs research, and she produced a report called *Positive Action: A Neighbourhood Framework*. The key findings were:

Community cohesion & trust

Rapid social and demographic change resulting in an influx of affluent, professional residents who may have limited time to connect with the community.

Widespread concern amongst long-term residents that the 'gentrification' process has increased the cost of living and of real estate, changed local character and restricted access to community space.

A lack of information held by council, local organisations and residents about new residents' attitudes, interests and living patterns.

Social support needs

Supported social and recreational opportunities are particularly needed for young people, single mothers, older people, adult men, newly-arrived migrants and unemployed people.

Barriers to participation should be overcome in the design and delivery of programs. These barriers include cost, physical access, fear and safety, literacy and cultural relevance.

New residents are interested in increasing local social contact through recreational activities such as pet-sitting clubs, roller-blade groups and group dinners, rather than through formal courses.

Perceptions around PMNH

A lack of knowledge of and confusion around the role and identity of the Neighbourhood House.

A perception that PMNH caters for marginalized and disadvantaged groups, and this is seen in a negative light.

Those familiar with the House view it favourably.

Key recommendations

Key recommendations of *Positive Action: A Neighbourhood Framework* were that PMNH should:

work to raise its profile in the community and raise awareness of programs and services provided.

provide programs for both mainstream and targeted groups of people who are disadvantaged or have special needs.

encourage local women to participate in activities by providing programs and services appropriate to their needs.

be more inclusive of young people in service provision.

provide programs for older people who are perceived to be interesting and stimulating, and are not currently being provided for in the area

provide programs that are appropriate and attractive for newly-arrived migrants

increase volunteer support and participation in the centre.

In 2001, PMNH commissioned Paul Greco to undertake an organizational review and develop operating strategies. He completed *Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House Organizational Review* which found that PMNH:

did not receive funding to cover core operational costs, and that many programs required to meet local need had no ongoing funding. The report also noted that funding provided to coordinate the Neighbourhood House for 20 hours a week was insufficient to meet all the requirements of the coordinator's role.

should seek new sources of funding to cover these costs: by increasing administrative fees by up to 20%, running fee-for-service courses, and fundraising.

In late 2005, PMNH and LFY (Learn for Yourself) commissioned Sally Bruen to undertake research into community and social needs. She produced *Learning and Social Needs Analysis Research Report for Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House and Learn For Yourself*.

This report recommended that PMNH needs to:

focus on partnership and network development

develop stimulating programs for new retirees

develop community development programs that break down community divisions and bring old and new residents together

develop drop in programs and improve access to public space

provide literacy and work skills programs for disadvantaged communities

develop new courses responsive to community needs. While many low-income groups reported cost as a major barrier, other groups were prepared to pay more, so varied programs with varied prices could be developed. Evening and weekend courses, and courses in other locations, such as the beach, could be developed

increase promotion of programs to the community and disadvantaged organisations, and that

meeting spaces for local groups could be advertised.

3.4. Implementation of recommendations & current directions

PMNH was relocated temporarily in 2002 due to renovations. While at the temporary location, activities and implementation of recommendations were restricted in the temporary location due to inadequate space and resources. The recommendations from the first two reports were due to be implemented after PMNH returned to the Liardet St Centre. The planned 12-month temporary relocation lasted for two years.

Some of the recommendations in these reports have been implemented since relocation was completed in late 2004. At its original location in 2005, PMNH completed a strategic plan and has expanded the range of programs provided.

3.4.1. Development of new courses

PMNH took the initiative to enhance the range of courses and recreation activities in response to interest in and demand from new residents. The program grew from 18 to 30 courses in 12 months. Enquiries about courses and activities came increasingly from newly-settled over-50s in the area (male and female), employed residents and students available evenings only, young mothers at home (resident for less than 5 years) and older women. Computer and IT classes were in high demand.

Computer courses were increased, more evening classes were scheduled: Market Your Craft, Creative Writing and dance commenced. Yoga for young mothers and babies/toddlers was started. Bridge and scrabble are now well-attended weekly activities. A choir, drama and more dance classes commenced in 2006.

PMNH has identified socially-isolated young mothers who are new residents as a target group. We launched a Mother and Baby Yoga class in Term 4 2005; word spread and demand has increased so now we have three classes a week. Participants are typically tertiary-educated, first-time mothers on maternity leave, having settled in the area less than 5 years. Snatches of conversations overheard are:

> "I'm enjoying the relaxation…"
>
> "I'll give you my number; we could catch up later this week…"
>
> "Gee, I'd like to do that course when I've got sorted…"

Young mothers are glad to be out taking care of their babies, meeting in a relaxed atmosphere and having a coffee in the PMNH lounge area, or talking with the Kitchen Skills class about what they are cooking today; they don't hurry away from class.

3.4.2. Partnerships

Over the past 12 months, Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House has developed a number of events in partnership with courses and

programs run by the House and with other local organizations. Some examples include:

Community Café and ACFE Kitchen Skills class partnership

PMNH obtained funds to run quarterly Community Café providing low-cost meals to the local community, and an opportunity for local people to meet and to reduce social isolation. The café is catered for by the ACFE Kitchen Skills class who, under the supervision of their tutor and with the assistance of volunteers, gain valuable catering experience. The first local Community Café was an event organized in partnership with another local organization, Daylinks, to raise funds for breast cancer, and was launched by the Mayor. Over 60 people attended and over 25 volunteers, students and staff were involved in organizing the event.

The PMNH Open Day/Turnabouts calendar launch

This project was conducted in partnership with other organizations including the City of Port Phillip, Southport Ministries Amongst Youth, Daylinks and Petlinks, and Port Phillip Community Group.

It was organized by PMNH as an outdoor street festival designed to raise community awareness of the newly re-opened centre, and of other community programs. The program included children's activities, demonstrations of courses, an Italian café, a pet parade, and the launch of the Port Phillip Community Group Turnabout anti-gambling calendar.

3.4.3. Connecting the community

In addition to the previously mentioned activities, PMNH has developed other strategies to encourage community connection and participation:

- "Housemates" strategy to increase membership
- employment of a volunteer coordinator, and an increase in volunteer recruitment, support and participation
- PMNH Open Day
- PMNH community forums
- social and learning needs research

Some of the outcomes of these efforts can be seen in the stories of participants mentioned below, and in section 9.2, Feedback from participants.

> Hartmut has been a senior executive and has lived in the area for 20 years. He came to our reception area and said: "Is there anything I can do for the House?" In 6 months he has become our "House handyman." A born problem-solver, he assisted with relocation and installation of our computer room, joined the community garden, and decided to join as a member of PMNH. Hartmut is now on our Committee of Management, also undertaking a computer course with us and is soon to be our webmaster! He still comes in each week to check on what else he can do; has brought his skills but also his own community connections to the House and has emerged as a strong advocate of our role in the community.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research into local learning and social needs was conducted in the four stages listed below. The final report *Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House: Learning and Social Needs in Port Melbourne, Garden City and South Melbourne* was primarily based on qualitative, demographic, documentary and statistical data collected for *Positive Action: A Neighbourhood Framework*, a community research project by Jennifer Borrell for Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House (PMNH) in 2000, and the *Learning and Social Needs Analysis Research Report for Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House and Learn For Yourself* by Sally Bruen in 2005. Other data sources used have been added to the reference section at the end of the report.

PMNH attempted to facilitate community and community feedback during all stages of research as much as possible, but extensive community consultation and feedback methodology were constrained. This was primarily due to (i) resource limitations imposed by a $6000 budget, and (ii) a limited two-month time-frame to collect qualitative data and write the first report *Learning and Social Needs Analysis Research Report for Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House and Learn For Yourself* by Sally Bruen in 2005. Much of the research and data collection and writing of the second report—*Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House: Learning and Social Needs in Port Melbourne, Garden City and South Melbourne*—was done by professionals working voluntarily or for little payment, supported by a group of volunteer research and editing assistants. Without their help this report would not have been completed.

The entire process was overseen by PMNH Committee of Management acting as a reference group.

4.1. Methodology

Data was collected via the following methods:

- reviewing demographic data, documents and previous needs studies
- face to face interviews with service providers, residents and course participants
- written questionnaires, and
- focus groups

4.2. Project Objectives

To gather and analyse quantitative and qualitative data that provide information on social and learning needs in Port Melbourne, South Melbourne and Garden City. This report will be used for:

- direction setting for PMNH
- informing our stakeholders about demand for our services
- the first phase of an evaluative cycle for PMNH

4.3.   PMNH social and learning needs research stages

4.3.1.   Stage one: preliminary demographic data gathering and survey (January-October 2005)

In January 2005, PMNH Committee of Management liaised with Adult, Community and Further Education who agreed to supply funding of $6000 to conduct research into local learning and social needs.

PMNH designed a short survey to obtain basic demographic data and learning needs of local residents. This survey was distributed along with a PMNH program leaflet to 6000 local residents in Middle Park, Port Melbourne, South Melbourne, Garden City and Beacon Cove. 51 survey responses were received.

PMNH also developed and distributed an evaluation form for participants in PMNH courses which also sought to obtain information about participant demographic background and learning and social needs. 80 responses were received.

PMNH with the assistance of COPP engaged three post-graduate research students to collect and analyse demographic data on residents of Port Melbourne, South Melbourne, Garden City and Albert Park. The research students also collated and analysed the initial survey and evaluation data: analysis was completed by October 2005.

4.3.2.   Stage two: engagement of a researcher, further research and production of first report

After further liaison with ACFE, and with local learning organisations (Garden City Neighbourhood House and Learn For Yourself), PMNH formed a partnership with Learn For Yourself in October 2005 to conduct further research on local learning needs, and to produce a report for PMNH and Learn for Yourself.

A research brief was developed and advertised, and a researcher was hired to

> "collect data...analyse and prepare a report that explores pockets and issues of disadvantage, social isolation and lack of access to community supports due to recent arrival, lack of knowledge, lack of connection/participation in the local community."

The researcher collected and analysed new and previously collected data, conducted a series of focus groups and interviews with local residents and organisations, and used the quantitative and qualitative data to produce the report *Learning and Social Needs Analysis Research Report for Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House and Learn For Yourself* which was completed in January 2006.

4.3.3. Stage three: review of initial report and recommendations for further research

In February 2006, the first report—*Learning and Social Needs Analysis Research Report for Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House and Learn For Yourself*—was reviewed and analysed by the PMNH Committee of Management, and it was decided that further research was required.

The PMNH committee recommended that:

Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House require a report to be written that is based on the data provided in the Learning and Social Needs Analysis Research project that was written by Sally Bruen in January 2006.

Development of an executive summary which includes:

- a key findings section including points clearly based on the data and research in the body of the report, and related to community needs and issues.

- a key recommendations section that emerges from the key findings and that is relevant to PMNH strategic plan and core business. Recommendations should be grouped, numbered and then headed by general strategies. Under each key recommendation, specific suggestions about specific classes or programs could be added.

The body of the report should include:

- a background section on Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House that offers a clear description of the core business of the organisation for the reader to readily understand context.

- analysis of the data from the demographic documents, results of surveys and interviews. This analysis should be organised and grouped into key themes, under headings such as information on socio-economic issues, learning needs, social isolation/participation, and any other themes/topics that are relevant. These theme headings can form the basis of the key findings.

Interview transcripts should be analysed for key themes, and relevant excerpts should be included in the body of the text.

A significant section of the report should include analysis of the learning needs identified in the surveys. Analysis and results from the surveys that indicate learning and social needs/issues should be separately documented by suburb where possible (i.e. Garden City, Beacon Cove, Port and South Melbourne) as well as key themes.

'Snapshot' demographic/statistical information of the key ACFE target groups in the area—including Koori, men over 45, people over 55, CALD, people with disabilities etc.—should be documented in a separate box in the body of the text.

Learn For Yourself was invited to participate, but decided not to do so in this and subsequent stages of the project. Any subsequent research and reports were produced by PMNH alone.

4.3.4. Stage 4: further feedback and second report (March–April 2006)

An executive summary was written based on the data collected for the first report *Learning and Social Needs Analysis Research Report for Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House and Learn For Yourself.* This summary was given to the committee and some key stakeholders for further feedback. Feedback was incorporated into the second report *Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House: Learning and Social Needs in Port Melbourne Garden City and South Melbourne.*

This report is primarily based on data that was collected for *Positive Action: A Neighbourhood Framework*, a community research project by Jennifer Borrell for PMNH in 2000, and the *Learning and Social Needs Analysis Research Report for Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House and Learn For Yourself* by Sally Bruen in 2005.

In order to discover the views, circumstances, and recreational, social and learning needs of people living in Port Melbourne, South Melbourne and Garden City, it is necessary to study the context in which these needs occur: the first section of the report focuses on the neighbourhood house context; subsequent sections cover the demographic and community context, barriers to learning, and social and learning needs of the community.

5. LOCAL RESIDENTS, CHANGES AND COMMUNITY ATTITUDES

5.1. Demographic information

Population data for Port Melbourne (10,580) and South Melbourne (6,933) (2001 Census) demonstrate that these neighbourhoods have distinct communities and issues. A snapshot reveals:

- **Port Melbourne's population has increased by 31% in seven years**

- **between 1996 and 2000, the number of residents aged 35-64 years has increased by 47.6%**

- **22% of residents are over 55 years of age**

- **30% of births (2001) in Port Melbourne were from dwellings in Beacon Cove. The birth-rate in Port Melbourne is almost double that of other Port Phillip suburbs**

- **public housing households make up 15% of South Melbourne, and 10% of Port Melbourne**

- **8.6% of households pay $100 or less rent per week, and 4.7% pay more than $500 per week**

- **as at 2001, 37% of households earned over $1500 per week, and 22% less than $500 per week**

- **43% of residents are without post-high school qualifications**

- **20% of the Port Phillip Koori population is found in Port Melbourne: the Koori population has doubled from 1996 to 2001**

- **36.7% (1380) of households in Port Melbourne consist of one person**

- **41.2% of lone person households in South Melbourne and 33.2% of lone person households in Port Melbourne earn less than $300 per week**

5.1.1. Adult, Community and Further Education target groups in Port and South Melbourne

ACFE target groups	Port Melbourne	South Melbourne
Males >45 years	Not available	Not available
People >55 years	2152 (20.3% of pop'n)	1757 (25.3% of pop'n)
CALD	2127 (20.1% of pop'n)	1330 (19.2% of pop'n)
People with disabilities	511 (4.9% of pop'n)	433 (6.2% of pop'n)
Koori	49 (0.46% of pop's)	Not available

- 43% of the Port Melbourne population are without post-high-school qualifications.

- 55% of those surveyed have not undertaken a short course before.

5.1.2. Culturally and linguistically diverse populations

The CALD population is a very settled proportion of the community. The Greek-speaking residents are the predominant group in the older age ranges; the Chinese-speaking population has increased; across the study area, minimal numbers of newly-arrived settlers from the Middle East and Africa are evident; the Koori population has doubled in the area.

However, Public Housing data reveal a small but significant group of newly-arrived African and Middle Eastern residents in Port and South Melbourne. Many of these residents may be living in female-headed households.

- of 685 Public Housing households in Port Melbourne, 64% of primary tenants are female, and the majority are receiving the Sole Parent Pension.

- 56% of Public Housing households had a tenant born in another country, and 53% had a tenant born in a non-English-speaking country.

- however, only 22 Public Housing households had tenants who were born in Southern Europe (including Greek & Italian). Most Greeks & Italians living in the area are NOT in public housing.

- of Public Housing households, 172 (25%) have a tenant born in North Africa or the Middle East.

5.1.3. Age range of residents

For Port and South Melbourne neighbourhoods, the largest proportion of residents falls into the middle years categories. Across Port Melbourne and South Melbourne, the 25-34 years category comprises the largest age group, at approximately 25% of the population of these areas.

However, persons over 55 years of age in Port Melbourne and South Melbourne still comprise approximately 20% of the population (City of Port Phillip, 2003).

25 - 34 Years Old (In Percentage)

Over 55 years old
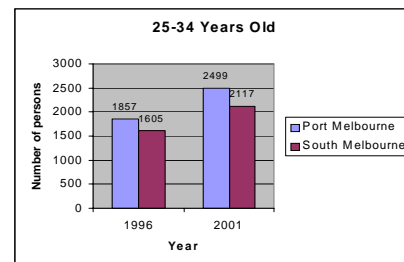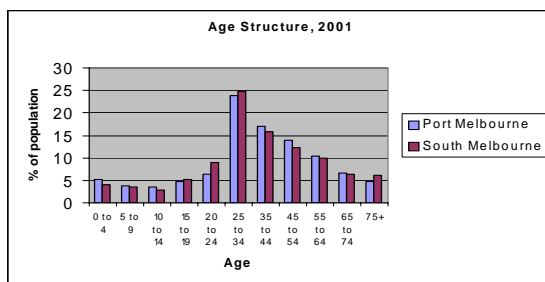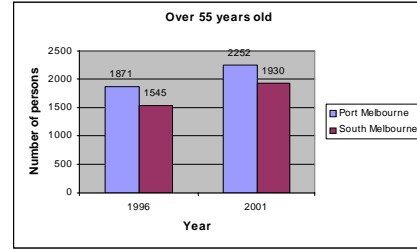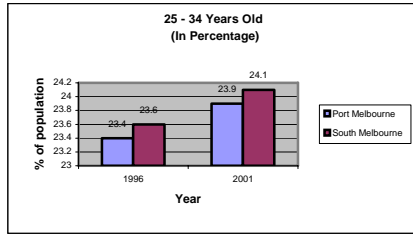
Source: COPP website 2006

5.1.4. Education levels

South Melbourne has a relatively low proportion of people with formal qualifications, with 58.4% having completed post-school education compared to 62.8% in Port Phillip. While the overall proportion of Port Melbourne residents without higher education is still relatively high (43.4% compared to 37.1% in Port Phillip), it has decreased dramatically since 1996 (56.2%).

Post-School Education, 2001. South Melbourne vs Port Phillip

Post-school education, 2001. Port Melbourne vs Port Phillip
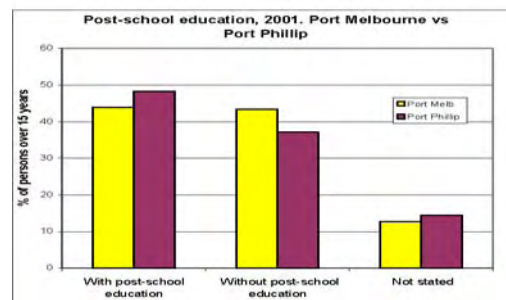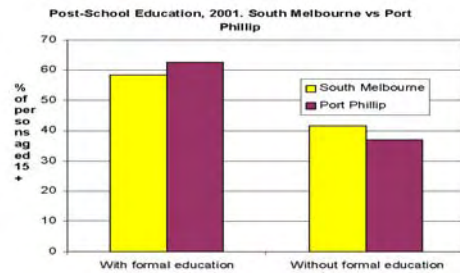
(COPP, 2003)

5.1.5. Disability

511 (4.8%) Port Melbourne residents and 433 (6.2%) South Melbourne residents are receiving disability pensions (ISEPICH 2002).

Table 4

	Port Melbourne	South Melbourne
People with disabilities	511 (4.8% of population)	433 (6.2% of population)

5.1.6. Housing

Port Phillip has a significantly higher proportion of public housing dwellings than Stonnington and Glen Eira, mostly located in Port and South Melbourne (ISEPICH 2003). South Melbourne has 832 public housing dwellings (22.2% of all dwellings) and Port Melbourne 674 (12.6 of all dwellings) (COPP 2003). The average percentage of public housing dwellings for City of Port Phillip is 4% of all dwellings.

Table 5: Office of Housing Dwellings at June 30, 2002 by LGA (ISEPICH 2003)

LGA	Separate House	Semi-det House	Medium Density	Flat, Low rise	Flat, High Rise	Movable Units	Room. House	Other	Total
Glen Eira	49	17	209	217	0	21	24	0	537
Port Phillip	81	119	511	1106	724	1	590	5	3,137
Stonnington	16	2	141	505	950	4	52	4	1,674

5.1.7. Unemployment

The average unemployment rate (5.8%) for the City Of Port Phillip is lower than the average for the Southern Metropolitan Region (6.0%) and Melbourne metropolitan area (6.3%). However, in areas such as Port Melbourne, Garden City and South Melbourne, the unemployment figure—7% or more—is higher than average (ISEPICH 2003).
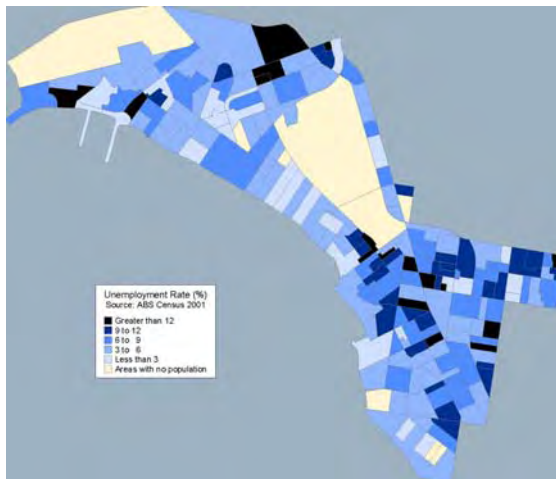
(Kilmartin 2003)

5.2. Socio-economic issues

Both South Melbourne and Port Melbourne have significant groups of residents in both the highest and lowest income brackets. We find relatively fewer households in the middle-income brackets in both suburbs.

Weekly Household Income, 2001. Port Melbourne vs Port Phillip

Weekly Household Income, 2001 South Melbourne vs Port Phillip
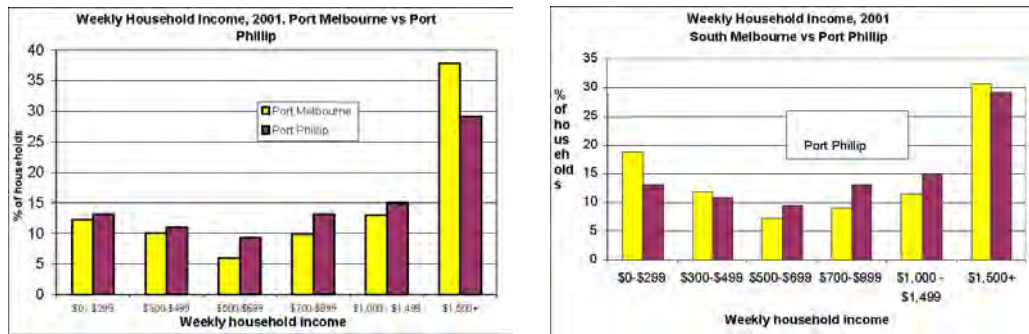
(COPP 2003)

Port Melbourne (37.8%) and South Melbourne have higher proportions of households earning above $1500 per week than the whole of Port Phillip.

However, the highest concentration of residents with weekly income less than $300 is also in South Melbourne (19%) and Port Melbourne (12%). In the western part of Port Melbourne (Garden City), 19% of households had a weekly income less than $300 and 7% less than $200 (City of Port Phillip 2001-2005a, 2001-2005b).

5.2.1. Pockets of disadvantage in Port & South Melbourne neighbourhoods

Among the seven neighbourhoods of the COPP, South Melbourne is the most disadvantaged area, followed by Port Melbourne/Garden City.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) produces the SEIFA (Socio-Economic Indexes For Areas) which indexes—based on 2001 Census data—the level of 'disadvantage' in any given area. An area with a score below 1,000 can be considered relatively disadvantaged. The SEIFA indexes for the whole suburbs of Port Melbourne (1044.56) and South Melbourne (1008.83) show them to be relatively advantaged.

However, further analysis of these neighbourhoods using census data reveals that pockets of high disadvantage exist in these suburbs. The map below shows those areas in Port Melbourne and South Melbourne with a SEIFA Index of Disadvantage score well below 1,000. Pockets of extreme disadvantage are to be found in South Melbourne and Port Melbourne, and further pockets of disadvantage in South Melbourne, Port Melbourne and St Kilda (COPP 2001-2005c).
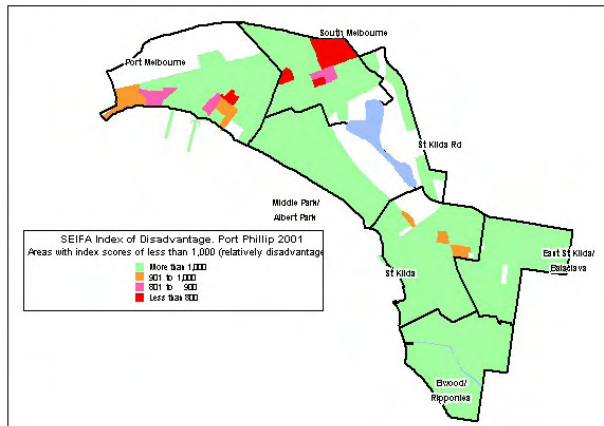
(COPP 2001-2005c)

5.2.2. Lone person households

Port Phillip has a higher than average proportion of residents living in lone person households in comparison to other areas. A significant proportion of these households is in Port and South Melbourne. More than a quarter of people living alone in Port Phillip earn less than $300 per year (27.2%). Port Melbourne, and especially South Melbourne, have high proportions of low-income earners living alone, with 41.2% of South Melbourne's and 33.2% of Port Melbourne's lone households earning less than $300 per week.
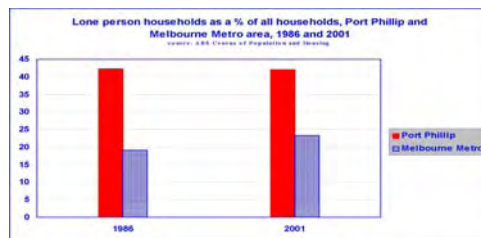
(Kilmartin 2003)

(COPP 2003)

5.3. Changing communities

5.3.1. Population growth

In general, Port Melbourne and South Melbourne share common characteristics in their population structure and trends. However, some specific features differentiate these two neighbourhoods. Compared to other areas, Port Melbourne has the second highest rate of its population growth. From 1996 to 2001, the Port Melbourne population increased by 31.6% (COPP, 2003).

At the same time, statistics collected by Council's Maternal and Child Health Service report a significant rise in births from the Beacon Cove area: from 11 in 1996 to 36 in 2000 (to mid-November). It is recorded that almost 30% of births in Port Melbourne are to families residing in

Beacon Cove. This trend probably reflects the higher proportion of younger families resident.

In 1996, Port Melbourne had on average one birth for every 37 dwellings. In 2000, Beacon Cove had one birth for every 24 dwellings. (COPP 2001).

Development sites - Port Phillip
(Table 10.1)
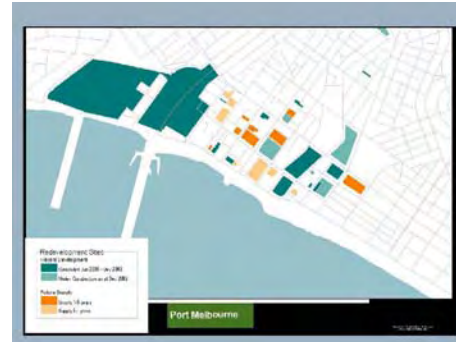
Development sites- Port Melbourne
(Table 10.2)   (Kilmartin 2003)

5.3.2. Rapid change in dwellings

Port Melbourne has experienced a massive growth in dwellings with an extra 1,569 built between 1996 and 2001 (COPP 2001-05a & COPP 2001-05b). 666 of these new dwellings in Port Melbourne are flats, units and apartments. Almost twice as many flats were built in 2001 as in 1996. At the same time in Beacon Cove in 2001, 400 apartments were built, and 100 additional apartments are planned, subject to approval. More than half of the total number of apartments in Port Melbourne is located in Beacon Cove

5.3.3. Changes in demographic composition

Researchers indicate that the large influx of higher-income newer residents to the area has planning implications for local government:

"The recent and ongoing trend towards dramatic population increase in PM is characterized by an influx of new residents of higher socio-economic status, and the increasing polarization in terms of income and occupation obviously has implications for the design and provision of community infrastructure".' (Borrell 2000. *Positive Action: A Neighbourhood Framework*)

"The age structure shows Port Melbourne as a neighbourhood in transition: from a traditional inner-suburban working-class area to a sought-after bayside recreational and leisure area...with an influx of young professionals and managers, as well as empty nesters in the 50-54 age group'. (COPP 2000) It has been forecast that this trend will continue at the Beacon Cove estate, along with medium density residential development sites in Pickles St/Esplanade areas.

5.4. Community perceptions, issues and needs

5.4.1. Perception of 'community' in Port Melbourne and Garden City

Research indicates that local residents see "community" as fragmented, or having different or much smaller boundaries than their LGA. "Communities of interest" may also exist in the local area.

> "People's sense of what constitutes their sense of community is fragmented. However it is predominately an area no broader than a suburb, or even more limited. There are few who think of their community in terms of Port Phillip or even the old council boundaries". (Newman Wayman Research 1997)
>
> "People consider their community to be defined by their more immediate local area. This is very much the case with long-term residents of Port Melbourne— even to the extent that many people in Garden City consider themselves as a separate community from Port Melbourne as a whole". (Borrell 2000)

Additionally, observers report there are also "communities of interest" in the local areas:

> "There are distinct and sometimes opposing segments of opinion in the community, more so than in other communities. They will need to be understood and recognized in planning...differences are based on 'location' (Port Melbourne, Albert Park etc.)...however they also reflect age groups and lifestyles' (Newman Wayman Research, 1997)

5.4.2. Reactions to new developments/gentrification

The fast pace of development in Port Melbourne and South Melbourne affects the social and cultural characteristics of the area. Rapid changes to the area have affected community perceptions and attitudes in the following ways:

> "There has [sic] been some disenchantment and feelings of alienation rising from the Beacon Cove development; feelings of powerlessness about changes, a perception that new housing is out of character with the area, though a couple expresses happiness and pride in the Beacon Cove and Station Pier developments". (COPP 1999b)
>
> "There is a perception that the sense of community and neighbourliness is decreasing as upwardly-mobile people move in, and there is no longer a focus on families with children [which is] increasing gentrification, and at the same time people are becoming less friendly (COPP 1999b)
>
> "There is concern that local government does not have enough control over housing developments, [and] concern about a rise in the cost of goods and services. Feelings of insecurity for long-term residents, i.e. that they may not be able to afford to live in Port Melbourne in the future. There was also concern expressed that families which have lived in the area for several generations feel pushed out as the cost of living rises". (COPP 1999b)

Some residents interviewed for *Positive Action: A Neighbourhood Framework* (Borrell, 2000) expressed concern that long-term residents were feeling "squeezed out" and were being given the message that they no longer belonged, in the process of gentrification in PM:

> "...I feel there are changes making people feel a bit threatened...pubs with changing clientele...style shops appearing. Some of the people at the school said they wanted us out. Tenants on one [Public Housing] estate felt targeted as the area is becoming desirable."

> "a number still identify as a community but there are extremes...kids are getting kicked out of Albert Park College as they are uplifting the image...A lot of them are from public housing and are on a low income..."

Some excerpts from the City of Port Phillip's *Friendly Neighbourhood Survey* (Tutchener 2005) capture how the changes in Port Melbourne are perceived and experienced by its residents. When asked for comment about the friendliness of their streets, several Port Melbourne residents replied as follows:

> "It's really changed in the last few years. The yuppies keep to themselves."

> "It's all right I suppose. We oldies stop to have a chat when we meet"

> "Some of the people that have lived here for years are always friendly, but the new ones don't bother."

> "It's not like it was. It would be good if something like this would make people think about being friendly—I'll start smiling first again and see what happens!"

Interviews with younger residents indicate the beginnings of new neighbourhoods:

> "Don't know anyone in my street."

> "It's good, but my friends live in the same street. I don't know the other people but I've lived there for a few months."

> "Don't know anyone here, but where I used to live, everyone had lived there for years, so you knew everyone. It was really good."

PMNH research also indicates that these changes are also felt by Garden City residents:

> "We feel like we are caught in a time machine—before and after Beacon Cove, the old residents and new. The locals call it Baghdad: it used to be a little village and now it is full of people who don't bother to talk to you. I find the people to be arrogant, not like in the old days when people used to talk to you. It has been a working-class area for many years and now it is all up-market. In terms of things that people like to do here, I'm interested in boxing but it is hard to get people to do stuff."

These changes, and continuing community reaction to change, indicate the need for future investigation into the characteristics and needs of long-standing residents of Port Melbourne and newly-arrived residents, as well as the impact of changes on the community.

5.4.3. Social divisions and perceptions of community cohesion

Social divides, and polarization between new and old residents, are significant issues, and these are partially due to increased gentrification and socio-economic disparities. Many interviewees spoke of different communities and populations in Port Melbourne, with

different lifestyles, interests, neighbourhood focus, and varying levels of community cohesion. A strong level of community was seen to be associated with the established residents who come mostly from working class backgrounds, and whose families have been resident for several generations.

In comparison, newer residents were seen as an "unknown quantity" with an "air of mystery" and it was perceived that they were yet to become part of the community. It was assumed that many were living apart from the "old" community due to lifestyle, socio-economic factors, and busy work or other schedules. In addition, the positioning and design of the new buildings enforced the "gated community" and social divisions already apparent.

> "There is a real conflict between the old and new residents in the area, some of the new residents have really tried to 'take over'."
>
> "...there are increasing social and class divides in the area, the kind of population turnover experienced over the last decade probably hasn't been seen for the last couple of generations."
>
> "The school has two distinct communities: (i) parents who have had a bad school experience themselves and don't feel comfortable coming into the school;. (ii) unemployed families with 2-4 kids who get the kids to the school, but don't get involved in any extra curricular activities with the kids."
>
> " It isn't the same around here anymore, people don't stop and talk to you."
>
> "Housing: people have been pushed out of the area as they can no longer afford the rents; however they still see this area as their community, and they travel into the area to receive support and services."
>
> "The new Parent Committee at the school don't want the us at the school because they are concerned that people will see the school as a welfare school. This is perception-based only."
>
> "I can't afford all of the things in these shops; there is nothing here for us anymore."

In interviews done by Borrell in 2000, these views were also expressed:

> "there is no connectedness with the community as this takes time. People who have been here a long time are definitely part of the community. The needs of different groups are different. There has been dramatic changes in Port Melbourne. Bay St is completely different and more upmarket than it was 10 years ago. Public housing tenants and new residents are notably different."
>
> "People don't identify as a community as much as they used to. The 'old culture' is dispersing and there is a new yuppie culture. People in the street are not as friendly or helpful as they used to be. New groups in the area include a group of 'harassed mothers' who are starting their families later and are in the paid workforce."
>
> "there is a mystery around Beacon Cove and who the new residents are. There seem to be separate pockets in Port Melbourne...I am not sure how the separate pockets see each other. The design of Beacon Cove encourages community within that housing."
>
> "...there is a high level of community among residents. It is a myth that there isn't. New people don't mesh with the community, so we are finding two separate

communities...the high level of community is becoming more difficult to maintain as the population becomes more diverse and the rich/poor gap grows."

However, six persons interviewed in 2000 for *Positive Action: A Neighbourhood Framework* perceived a high level of community cohesiveness in Port Melbourne (Borrell, 2000). Many participants spoke of a deep-felt sense of well-being and connection with their community. This was seen especially with the residents of Garden City, who variously described it as being like a country town, a family place where residents are friendly:

"Port Melbourne has been a real community, like a village. That's why people come here—even with the change and the variety, with low income people....and the professionals who are working...Port Melbourne really was a community— back in the 1950s, though it has changed. The variety brings real challenges to those neighbourhoods such as ours."

5.4.4. Lack of participation and engagement in community activities

Research and feedback indicates a drop in participation across the board from all groups in the community. A numbers of theories exist as to why this has occurred, but further research is required. Further evidence of concern for the participation of the area emerges from the report *Indicators of Community Strength in Port Phillip* Department for Victorian Communities 2002:

Port Melbourne and South Melbourne had the lowest proportion of residents who were members of organized groups (sport, church, community or professional).

Port Melbourne/Garden City scored the lowest of the seven neighbourhoods for participation in groups that have taken local action and being on decision-making boards and committees.

A review of membership numbers identified [that] many recreation groups are experiencing similar problems; declining memberships and low participation rates...particularly youth (Melvin Recreational Management 1997)

Added to this, there is an under-utilization of some facilities in COPP. This may reflect modern trends where people are unlikely to make a commitment to a club or team in favour of one-off activities (Borrell, Boulet & McKenna 1999).

Other organisations and workers had noted the lower than expected levels of participation in community activities:

"Lots of Daylinks clients have built up relationships in the transport vans going shopping, to doctors etc.; they don't want to participate in groups but the contacts in the bus are very positive for people."

"We put on a BBQ every Tuesday and that is good, but it is hard to get people involved in our tenant group: it always falls to the same few."

Garden City has been identified as an area with a particularly low rate of participation:

Garden City is well provided for in terms of quantity of open space, however the provision of recreational activities is relatively poor (Thompson Berrill Landscape Design 1998; 56)

> "We work with a lot of clients in Garden City who live in public housing and we have tried to get various programs going, but have had no success."

> "We tried to link people into the Dig In garden: we went door-to-door to tell people about the project and we held a public meeting, and only two people turned up."

5.5. Social support needs and loss of local services

Several key informants spoke of social support needs in the context of social and demographic changes occurring in Port Melbourne. Comments included:

> "In the past there were many supports through churches, social workers, Salvation Army and various committees – this has gone of course. The people left in the area have to work even harder and this brings a challenge. It is a very big load sometimes. Different organisations were there to give practical help. Nowadays there is very little help for those who are struggling. I believe that many are struggling financially and in other ways. The needs are greater. That is the reason it is vital that we have a well-catered for neighbourhood house—to bring the community to see we area caring community."

> "The key barriers to participation in activities offered by the Neighbourhood Houses are low self-esteem amongst the families we work with, isolation and a lack of information about the house's activities."

> "current issues include drug and alcohol addiction, domestic violence and problem gambling. No matter how affluent there is enormous need amongst all age groups..." (Borrell 2000, *Positive Action: A Neighbourhood Framework*

A DHS study found that many children in Port Melbourne (51%) were living in chronically poor families as a percentage of total children. This contrasts with the figure of 35% for South Melbourne (Department of Human Services 1997).

Many comments of those consulted focused on the young as having special needs that have to be addressed:

> "...one failing is the lack of facilities and funding for young people. Nothing in Port Melbourne is addressing their needs and nothing is being done for them."

> "...there is not much for kids not interested in mainstream sport."

A widespread perception exists that Port Melbourne was given scant attention in terms of service provision by the council and other agencies. These comments were often qualified with comments that Port Melbourne was very well serviced in the past & that local residents were "spoilt, so the present circumstances were a stark contrast" (Borrell 2000).

> "...many services have been relocated to St Kilda. People feel put out by the move. There is a feeling of a lack of communication with the council. that is why I see Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House can be a central point to bring trust to people of Port Melbourne."

> "...there is a lot of resentment that services are not as good as they used to be. Not all of this is in Council control, and there is confusion about what the Council can control and what it cannot. There is a lot of resentment that Port

Melbourne is treated as the 'end of the line'; personally I find the Council open to negotiation and suggestions. I get support and immediate action if something is wrong. Most Council workers are fantastic."

"...during the Kennett years the trust in the Council waned as Port Melbourne lost a lot of infrastructure."

5.6. Safety and security

Safety and security featured as a key requirement and an issue of importance for residents of the City of Port Phillip (Newton Wayman Research Pty Ltd 1997). Similarly, concern about a lack of feeling of safety at night was discussed by Port Melbourne Residents (COPP, 1999b).

6. UNPACKING DISADVANTAGE: BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION IN THE AREA

A number of reported issues impacted on learning and participation by disadvantaged and local residents groups.

6.1. Social isolation

Social isolation within areas of Port Melbourne was widely reported in literature and in interviews and focus group feedback. *Port Phillip in Profile* (2003) shows 15,002 lone person households in Port Phillip, comprising 41.9% of all households. In 2001, in Port Melbourne there are 1,366 lone people (33.6 % of Port Melbourne's population). This number is 228 higher than the 1996 figure. Meanwhile, in South Melbourne, in 2001, 1,380 people (36.7% of South Melbourne's population) live alone, which means 299 higher than the 1996 figure.

In the study *Creating A Healthy And Safer Port Phillip*, some of the residents of Port Melbourne expressed feelings of social isolation, including a new resident who felt alienated and unaccepted by older residents. Another resident who had lived in PM only for a short time (6 months), and was working outside the area, stated she had not explored the neighbourhood yet: this may be typical of many of the 'newer' professional residents (COPP, 1999)

"Daylinks primarily service frail aged and younger people with a disability. There is a lot of social isolation."

"People feel isolated and they are afraid to be with other groups because they can't communicate with others in English."

"Social isolation is a significant problem as a result of death and relationship breakdowns, especially amongst older residents."

"The key barriers to participation in activities offered by the Neighbourhood Houses are low self-esteem, isolation."

"New residents are socially isolated: things that would be good would be a writers' workshop, screenplay writing, historical drawing and walking tours."

"Lot of newly-arrived people who need an orientation of the area, need mentors as they want information on how to get cheap furniture, cheap places to shop, buy whitegoods etc.."

"Need things to connect people e.g. the school garden was great, and people came along just because it was something to do, especially older people who are new to the area who don't know how to connect."

6.2. Cost and economic barriers to participation

As indicated in the demographic data, pockets of disadvantage exist in Port and South Melbourne, and socio-economically disadvantaged

groups are major participators in PMNH activities. These groups indicate that cost continues to be a major barrier to participation.

> "Activities need to be under $5, otherwise we can't afford to do them, and people who are unemployed can't afford to do them either. We think that a pay by donation scheme is a good idea such as a gold coin donation, so that people can come and try activities on a casual basis and not have to be committed."

> "Anything that the tenants get involved in will need to be cheap if not free, because people don't have the money."

> "Need to have classes that are cheaper, and a clear focus for people on low incomes."

> "People will participate in things that are FREE: it is a great motivator around here for participation."

> "People need information on managing on a budget, living on the cheap, handy hints for retirement and living on benefits."

> "We would also like day trips, but cost is a major barrier for us…fortnightly trips —the groups currently do this."

> "We have previously had classes here about 18 months ago. It was held twice a week and was basic English and the classes were free. People won't attend unless it is free or very cheap."

6.3. Barriers to participation—perceived intimidation or stigmatisation

Many may be reluctant to participate because they may believe they may feel uncomfortable, shunned, excluded or be unfairly treated:

> "The community ball is great every year, but sometimes people without disabilities can feel intimidated or don't know how to come into that environment."

> "Learn for Yourself focuses on people who are frail; one of their key barriers is that people don't like to have people with disabilities in their classes."

> "There is a perception that the Neighbourhood House is for unemployed, less affluent families and this has a negative stigma."

6.4. Barriers to participation—mobility and location of services

Many people in South and Port Melbourne have disabilities, health issues or other issues that make accessing learning and social activities difficult. Location and appropriate transport are important issues to consider.

> "The position of Dig In isn't good for our clients as they have to travel too far; the public access to the site isn't good."

> "People at this school would be most likely to access Garden City Recreational Centre."

> "Daylinks used to come and pick up people to take them to things; they don't do that anymore and older people have a problem getting to things."

> "A lot can't drive anymore, so they need to learn alternative ways to get around to the essential services and social activities."

> "It would be best to have the English lessons at Park Towers as people are too frail to travel a distance. Transport would need to be provided if the classes were held elsewhere and we have the space here."

> "Issue—no supermarket in the area, they are closing down Coles in the New Year and we will have nowhere to go. The community bus is good but elderly people can't get onto it. The route is also confusing."

> "Most of our group are disabled and therefore we are restricted in the things that we can do. People don't go out because of : lack of English, movement problems, health issues such as arthritis, diabetes and heart problems."

> "We would like to have tai chi and things that can happen in the public housing grounds, we have the space."

However, some said they were well-supported by certain groups in South Melbourne.

6.5. Barriers to participation—health

Health is also reported as a barrier preventing access to recreational activities:

> "The biggest challenge that we see is that our clients don't know what they want, and their health can significantly vary from day to day, which can often prevent them from participating in an organized activity."

> "My needs change all the time due to my illnesses and a vast array of interests that I have, therefore I like short courses and I think that the neighbourhood house suits me better than going to the CAE."

6.6. Language and settlement issues as a barrier to participation

The previous needs study *Positive Action: A Neighbourhood Framework* (Borrell 2000) indicates more supports are needed for newly-arrived migrants from Africa and the Middle East :

> "…the social support, recreation and leisure needs of migrants include community health…accessible information and how to access resources…issues with childcare, access to ESL classes—especially for women—and translations…"

> "I have experienced contact with Africans, Iranians and refugees. The new groups are from different countries, lack of food and shelter and experiencing great loss and trauma. Many are political refugees."

> "African women from Eritrea and Somalia usually shop everyday, and leave their children with extended family; illiteracy is high amongst African women…and English classes must be geared to this."

> "…participants commented on enjoying the class and when their English improves said that they would like to do classes that provide opportunities for them to meet people and practice English. One mother said that she feels isolated but doesn't have the time to do extra classes."

> "We also have families of different ethnic backgrounds and it would be good to have some kind of forum/space for them to get together."

> "The Port Phillip Community Group Classes that were held here in the past were very good. We have 9 computers in a room here at Park Towers but with no tutor, people don't use the computers. When we had the classes we played games and things that helped people improve their memory and to become familiar with English in a supported environment. That stopped about six months ago as the Port Phillip Community Group didn't have the funding to continue."

6.7. Lack of access to space and resources

Residents value their local neighbourhood very much, the places where they shop, dine recreate and socialize. However, Lack of access to space and resources to engage in social activities are experienced by participants.

> "People living in the high rises don't have anywhere to go, and in Port Melbourne if you don't have money, then there is nothing to do."
>
> "We have a computer room but no tutor: it is hard to communicate with Office of Housing and they have changed things, so we don't meet new residents since they took the allocation of laundry keys off us."
>
> "If you want young mums to go there you will need to have a special Mum's day once a week, and if we are to do some kind of course we will need child care. One child-care worker equals 5 kids."
>
> "...commercial spaces are increasingly seen as 'no go' youth zones, creating invisible barriers and antagonisms. There is a potential for locals to be excluded from communal areas when the areas are also commercial zones generated by economic imperatives." (VUT, 1997)
>
> "Port Melbourne has a range of reasonably-sized open spaces, but many lack facilities and are underdeveloped compared with open space in the rest of the City." (Thompson Berrill Landscape Design, 1998)

Neighbourhood Centres are important because they provide a sense of place and service the needs of the local Neighbourhood (COPP, 1998).However organisations also face barriers such as lack of resources such as space and funding which prevent them from meeting local needs to provide classes and to childcare are faced by participants and learning providers

> "The Neighbourhood House needs to consider issues of sustainability and how to position services to the local community. ...There is the opportunity to think more broadly and laterally, how can you think beyond the idea of a 'proper' neighbourhood house only existing under one roof? For instance, why can't the concept of a neighbourhood house be virtual, and develop online communities, or why can't other public or community spaces be utilised? It's as much about conceptualising where your interaction with community needs to happen, and how planning with other service providers is perceived as a resource to the local community. I don't think it's about negotiating room hire."

7. SURVEYS: WHAT DID RESIDENTS SAY ABOUT THEIR LEARNING NEEDS AND INTERESTS?

In the latter half of 2005, two surveys asked participants for broad demographic information and preferences for courses and modes of delivery.

7.1. Survey responses: September 2005

The first survey was sent with our Term 4 2005 program leaflets to 6000 households. The response of 53 surveys was disappointing, but provided some information to help us plan courses. As no specific data are available for the neighbourhoods of Garden City and Beacon Cove, this survey at least gives some indications of those residents' interests.

7.1.1. Who responded to the survey

There was a significant response (31%) from both male and female over-50 year olds. Participation rates (30% from each suburb) from Port Melbourne, Garden City and Beacon Cove were roughly equal. Less than 10% of respondents were from South Melbourne.

The majority of respondents were women.

A higher proportion of respondents from Port Melbourne (55%) had been resident for more than 5 years, whereas a higher proportion of Beacon Cove respondents (60%) had been resident for less than 5 years.

Roughly equal proportions of respondents from Port Melbourne, Garden City and Beacon Cove were waged or pensioners.
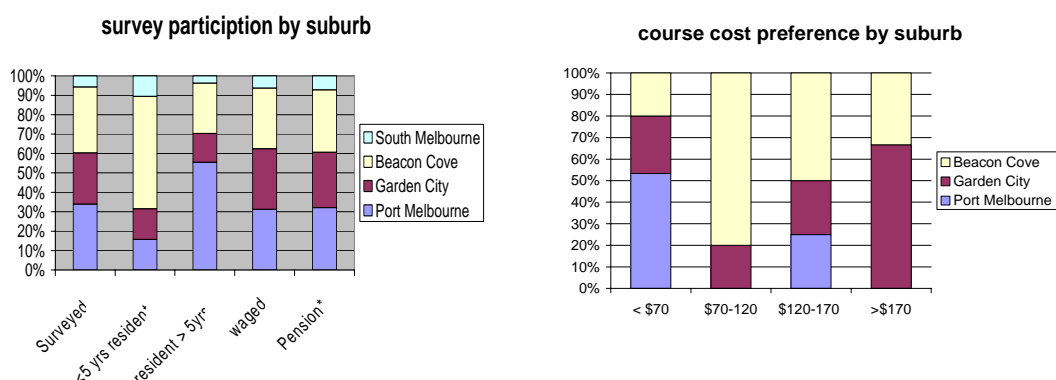

7.1.2. Fee preferences by suburb

A majority of Port Melbourne residents surveyed (50%) did not want to pay more than $70 for a course, whereas a majority of Beacon Cove and Garden City respondents (80%) had paid between $70 and $170 for a course.
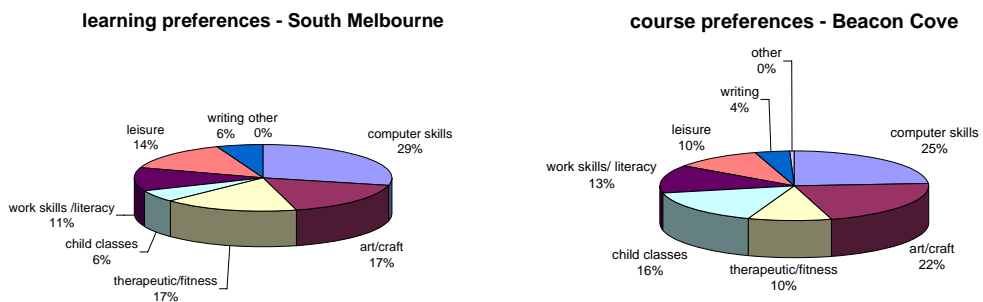
A majority of Port Melbourne respondents earned less than $30,000 per year, whereas Beacon Cove had more respondents with incomes between $30,000-60,000 per year.
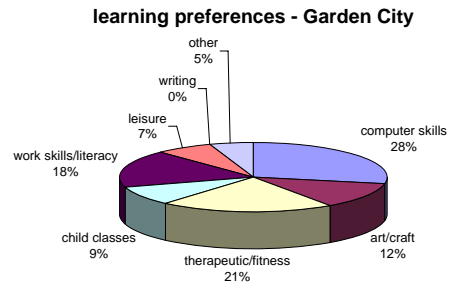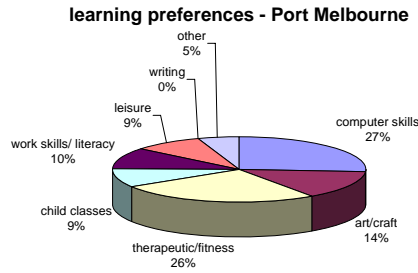
7.1.3. Income of participants
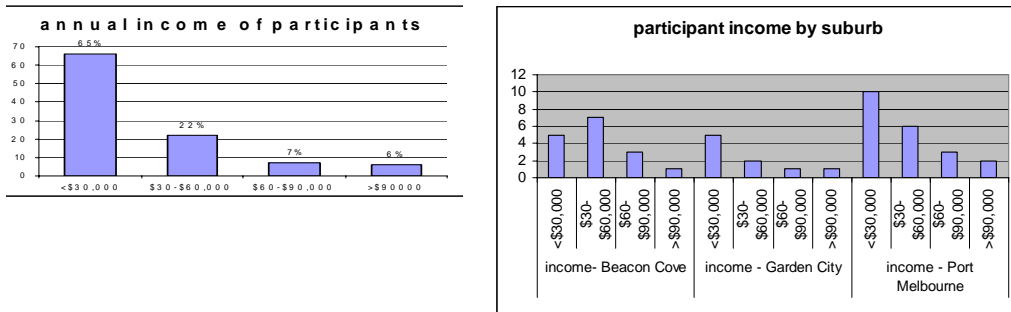
7.1.4. Course interests by suburb

Computer skills were the most preferred course by South Melbourne (29%), Beacon Cove (25%) Port Melbourne (27%), and Garden City (28%) respondents. However, art/craft, and fitness/therapeutic classes were also preferred by 10-20% of all population groups. Children's classes were more preferred by Beacon Cove residents. Therapeutic/ fitness classes were more popular for Port Melbourne and Garden City residents, and work skills/literacy classes were more popular for Garden City participants.

learning preferences - Port Melbourne

other
5%

writing
0%

leisure
9%

work skills/ literacy
10%

child classes
9%

therapeutic/fitness
26%

computer skills
27%

art/craft
14%

learning preferences - Garden City

other
5%

writing
0%

leisure
7%

work skills/literacy
18%

child classes
9%

therapeutic/fitness
21%

computer skills
28%

art/craft
12%

Flexible delivery times emerged as important, with evening and weekend scheduling showing strong support.

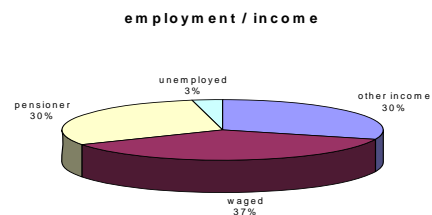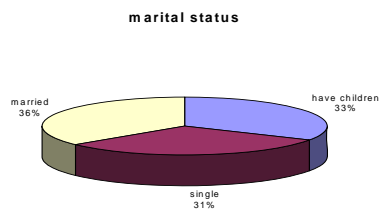## 7.2. Open Day survey: December 2005

PMNH held an Open Day on 10 December 2005, the event being well publicized in local newspapers and community notices. Participants were asked to fill out a written questionnaire identifying interests in courses and activities. The respondents were not necessarily representative of those who attended the day, as some public housing residents assisted on the day with activities; also, no older persons were surveyed, although numbers were present.

7.2.1. Participant profile

gender

male
23%

female
77%

age range

under 20 years
13%

20-30 years
7%

30-40 years
7%
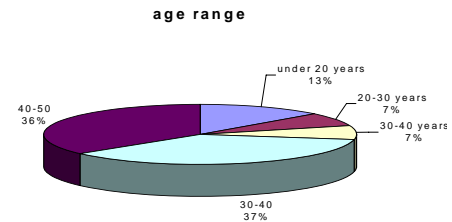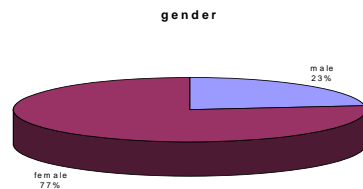
40-50
36%

30-40
37%
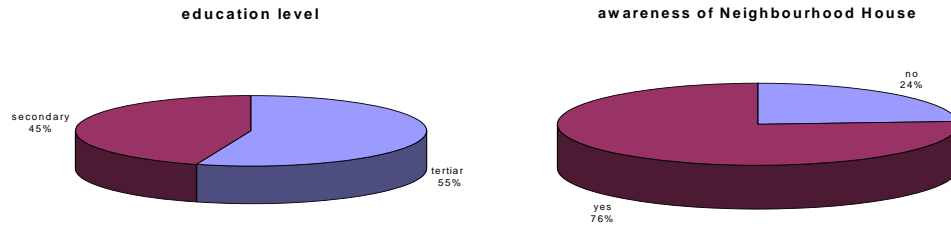
The majority of respondents were female (77%) and fell into the 30-40 and 40-50 age grouping.

37% of participants were waged, 30% were pensioners and a third reported another income (possibly dependant spouse or self funded retirees).

marital status

married
36%

have children
33%

single
31%

employment / income

unemployed
3%

pensioner
30%

other income
30%

waged
37%

education level

awareness of Neighbourhood House

secondary
45%

tertiar
55%

no
24%

yes
76%

55% of respondents were tertiary educated, but a significant minority (45%) were not.

A significant number of respondents (76%) said that they were aware of the Neighbourhood House.

67% of survey participants had lived in the area for more than 5 years.

Most survey respondents were property owners, and low numbers of public housing tenants participated in the survey. However anecdotal evidence indicates that at least 10 low-income public housing tenants were present as volunteers on the day but were not surveyed.

years in area

housing

1-2years
10%

2-5 ye
23%

5+ years
67%

public housing
16%

rent
18%

own home
66%
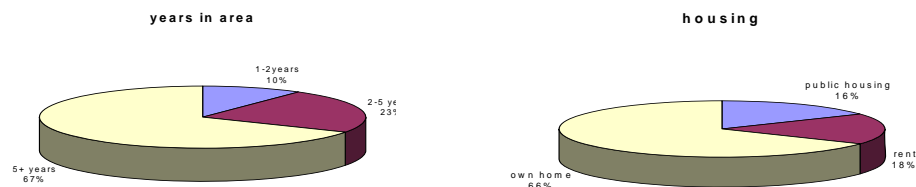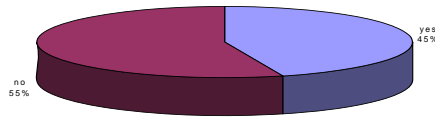
The majority (41%) of participants was from outside the area, or from Port Melbourne(43%) rather than Beacon Cove and Garden City (which have smaller populations).

suburb of participant

Garden City
10%

Beacon Cove
6%

not from area
41%

Port Melb
43%
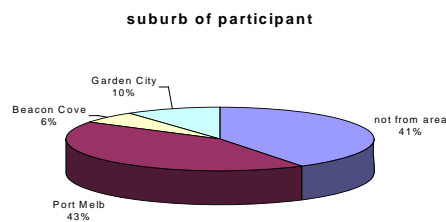
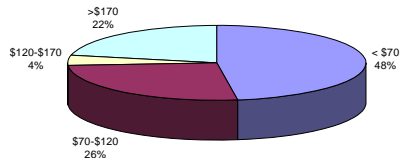### 7.2.2. Previous short courses experience

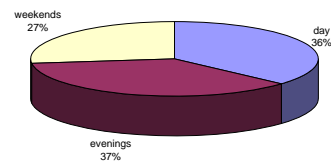A small majority of respondents had not undertaken a short course.

7.2.3. Fee preferences

Nearly half had paid below $70 and stated that they were not willing or able to participate in more expensive courses. However, the remaining respondents had spent over $70, indicating some opportunities to develop programs aimed at different market segments.

7.2.4. Preferred course times

Of those surveyed, 72% preferred weekend times, 16% evening and 12% daytime. This distribution reflects the profile of people attending the day: significant numbers of employed, younger age group. Of those that said they were unable to attend classes, reasons listed were childcare 43%, cost 36%, and 21% needed transport.

7.2.5. Course preferences

Skills development (44%) and hobby courses (43%) were priority interest areas, whereas social activities were preferred by some 20%.

A variety of courses was preferred within the fields of computers and art and craft. However creative writing, and leisure activities such as cooking and gardening were also preferred by some participants.
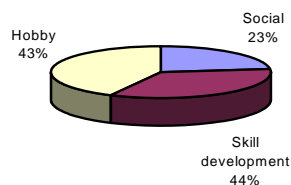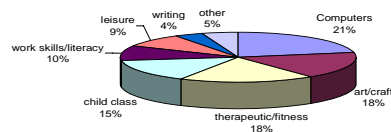
art & craft course preference

other art/ craft
11%

life drawing
14%

mosaic/pottery
18%

sewing/knitting
28%

painting/drawing
9%

jewellery making
20%
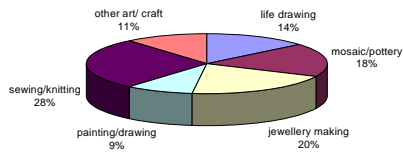
computer course preferences

beginners
computers
17%

digital photography
44%

internet & email
17%

advanced
computers
22%

children's classes

other
11%

dancing
38%

drama
16%

singing/ music
35%

fitness & wellbeing

walking
18%

other
3%

fitness 50+
9%

massage
12%

aromatherapy
4%

yoga
13%

tai chi
16%

pilates
13%

meditation
12%

writing & literacy

VCE & tertiary
preparation
8%

ESL
15%

literacy
15%

creative writing
62%
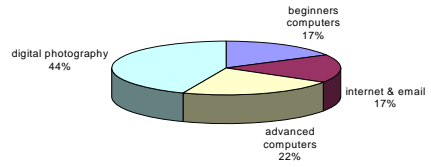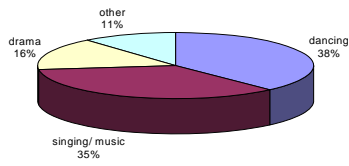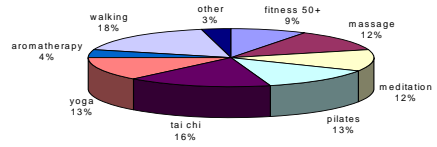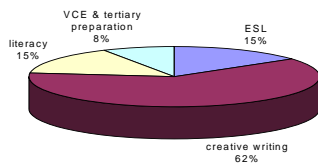
work skills & living skills

gardening skills
35%

work skills training
24%

career planning
6%

cooking skills
35%
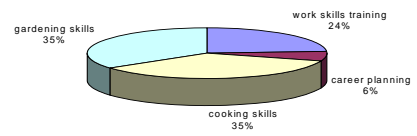
8. LEARNING, RECREATIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Information was gathered from identified stakeholders including City of Port Phillip staff, local service providers, individual groups and local residents. The methods used to gather this qualitative information included face-to-face interviews, focus groups and listening posts. Resultant information is not always comparable across all issues or categories. The process was nonetheless useful and important in identifying issues and developing recommendations.

8.1. Skills training

Most of those interviewed individually and in focus groups indicated the importance of skills training for disadvantaged groups. Major areas of need were: employment and work skills; computer skills, literacy training, and living skills such as cooking, budgeting and shopping:

"Disability clients—people need help getting back to work"

"Young mothers and sole parents in public housing need returning to work skills."

"High levels of illiteracy, needs a children's development program."

"Residents expressed a desire to learn basic cooking skills to enable them to take advantage of the self-contained facilities in their individual rooms. This concept idea was also positively supported by staff at the facility."

"People need to study computers to learn return-to-work skills, and learning how to communicate in workplace settings and interviews, and how to use the Internet as a resource."

"Literacy levels—there are very low levels of literacy amongst the client group, and they need training to assist them to negotiate services."

"Transition programs for people back into the workforce[,] for people who are in alcohol recovery programs is also very important and needed."

"Mentoring programs: people participate in employment training programs, however if they haven't gained employment during the time of the project they find themselves feeling more isolated than when they began the program. A process to help then continue on is important as many can fall further backwards than where they were before."

"We would like to learn intermediate computer skills. I have a computer at home but there are lots of things I don't know and I have Internet but I could make better use of that."

"Budgeting would be good: I manage to live on my pension but lots of people don't and it is a real problem."

8.2. Recreational and creative needs

Many individuals from disadvantaged groups also spoke of the importance of accessible and affordable hobby, recreational and social groups to reduce isolation and promote wellbeing:

> "Woodwork and fishing would also be good."

> "In addition to cooking, people also expressed interest in arts and craft activities and fishing recreational activities."

> "We need low-cost activities, things $5 and under; we are also interested in life drawing, painting, knitting, creative stuff: we could afford around $2 per session."

8.3. Teen and 20-something preferences

Teenagers expressed an interest in art and craft activities. In addition, some workers thought that some existing groups for older people—such as drama, and art and craft—should also be provided for 20-30 year olds:

> "We would like the opportunity to do more arty things including performing arts and creative arts like making lamp shades for example. We would also like to see sewing, pottery and art classes: people could also bring along food to the classes to make them more sociable."

> "People aged 15-30 are not accessing programs as they are currently targeted at over-30 years, and a program needs to be designed that targets a younger age group."

8.4. Homework and learning programs for school-age children

The need for school homework and learning programs was expressed by a couple of individuals and groups:

> "Homework program—currently happening in libraries, [and] could be extended to PMNH."

> "PMNH should be part of the Community Schoolyard: they are conduits to the ACFE target areas."

> "We also need help for young parents to help their children with school-work, especially mathematics: I can't understand the way my kids do it, and therefore can't help them."

> "Look at running a computer program for kids which would link into parents."

8.5. Groups for older people

The first PMNH needs study—conducted in 2000—clearly articulated a local need for stimulating programs for people in their fifties and sixties. This has been reflected in feedback from interviews last year.

Many people are at retirement age, but are not interested in what retirement centres offer:

> "We used to take stacks of people to the Mary Keogh Centre to play bowls etc., but people who are 60 now want very different things. Need to develop things for recently retired people, for people who have recently moved into the area."

> "Day trips for the elderly would be good."

> "People aren't interested in bingo and bowls. There is a bit of community spirit starting up at Beacon Cove; they have started their own book club."

> "An idea of Yvonne's—grandparent playgroup—my idea or a way to engage the 60-plus in a casual capacity."

> "...topics that were suggested to me today by my painting group. Topics suggested were: tai chi, meditation, book discussion groups, ball-room dancing, writing e.g. family histories, creative writing etc, studying languages, Asian cooking class—e.g. Thai cooking—drawing/painting, discussions on current affairs, modern cake decorating, cinema/theatre outings, bus trips around Victoria, travel tips for the elderly, calligraphy and health and physical activities."

Some interviewees expressed interest in health-promoting activities such as yoga, stress management, walking, and tai chi. Two focus groups also expressed interest in self defence:

> "...we could do (tai chi) it in our grounds: it is a nice, easy gentle exercise for us."

> "We would like to learn self defence and martial arts."

> "People around here are joiners and doers. Tai chi on the beach would be a great thing; we have been trying to get tai chi on the beach for four years. People want a program of exciting activities."

8.6. Social and drop-in groups to reduce social isolation

Workers spoke of the need for casual programs for disadvantaged groups:

> "People with psychiatric disabilities find it stressful to be in organized groups: I see people who aren't very well, so they need an encouraging and affirming activity...Activities that enable people the opportunity to socialize whilst they are also doing something else."

> "Years ago there was a big drop-in component and people felt safe and secure."

> "People with mental health issues need activities that are casual, and that they can participate in them as they are comfortable to."

Many of those interviewed indicated less formal social activities would help reduce social isolation. Access to space and resources are primary needs. A number of drop-in programs exist in the area: Monday Drop-in at PMNH, and Friday BBQ Drop-in at a Port Melbourne church three days a week. One solution would be to compile and circulate a list of social drop-in programs. However, these drop-in programs attract mainly older participants, and some have commented that a drop in program for younger people is needed. Another solution would be to analyse the gaps in the drop-in system.

Further development appropriate single-session or pay-as-you-go activities can be investigated.

> "The people I work with are not into learning: the key thing that motivates them is social activity, they want to be part of a group."
>
> "Elderly Russian lady doesn't want to participate in structured classes: language and cultural barriers . The Community Garden in the school acted as a great connector, we need to look for informal ways for people to connect: this is a major need."
>
> "Conversation hours: Kildonian has developed a successful conversation hour where people who are marginalised can just come and talk and sit."
>
> "One of the key things that we need is a space for people to 'get together'. Groups of parents congregate outside the school, but they don't have another space."
>
> "Starting up a drop-in BBQ would be a good idea: they do food vans in the area but people don't like to be seen."
>
> "We would like to see more community festivals; things to get involved in on the weekends are important for us."

8.7. CALD groups and the need to reduce isolation

A legitimate need exists to provide ESL courses focussing on literacy and living skills, as well as social groups:

> "We would like to learn more about Australian culture and to go on excursions that could teach us about that, as we would like to improve our English. [All participants had very minimal English]. We need to Learn English for Life to help us with our shopping and everyday needs; we would like to learn more about what is around us, such as the Immigration Museum and the Multicultural Museum."

9. FEEDBACK ON PMNH

9.1. Feedback from other service providers

Many service providers remarked that they were unaware of courses and programs offered, and that they would like to know more about the House's activities.

Some of this lack of information can also lead to confusion about the core business of PMNH:

- two service providers commented that the House was less friendly than it was a few years ago, when the drop-in program was in operation
- PMNH was seen as a place for disadvantaged groups, and this was seen as not inclusive of the rest of the community
- the Get Out Of Town program (holiday program for disadvantaged families) was seen as a positive program by local providers.

9.2. Feedback from PMNH participants

In general, feedback by participants was overwhelmingly positive.

Evaluation surveys report a more than 98%-positive response from respondents in the period July 2005 to the present (April 2005).

> "I've had depression and anxiety, and that has stopped me from participating in courses, as I get exhausted; I couldn't do the part-time jobs that Centrelink suggested as I get too exhausted. I have an honours degree, but due to my illnesses I can't participate in main-stream employment. I find the CAE difficult as I suffer panic attacks, and therefore it has been good for me to come to the Neighbourhood House: it is a safer, secure environment for me. I also like that the course is only for a couple of hours, I wouldn't want it to be any longer as I wouldn't be able to manage it."

> "...overall we are very happy with all that we currently get in the program here at Sol Green."

The community connections built by participants house activities can also be told through their stories:

> "John is over 60 years old, recently settling in Port Melbourne after a serious illness. He came to the house to join our Kitchen Skills class, and after our Open Day in December he got interested in other activities at the House. He is now enrolled in the computing and gardening classes, and is anxiously awaiting the allocation of a gardening plot at the 'Dig In' community garden. John comes to the house at least two or three days a week: he knows everyone, and has a smile on his face and is looking like he enjoys his life in his new community...and making daily visits to see when that allotment is coming, so he can get to do community gardening."

9.3. Networking and partnerships opportunities

Many interviewees spoke of the need for PMNH to build partnerships and networking opportunities with local organisations and businesses.

> "One interviewee was concerned that PMNH had not initiated any partnerships with their organisation. This interviewee suggested partnerships could also be initiated with other organisations such as Learn For Yourself."

> "Another useful suggestion was that local learning organisations get together and audit those learning and recreation programs being provided and to whom. This would prevent duplication of programs, and also allow gaps to be identified."

> "Integrated service delivery is needed and [they] also need to develop new opportunities and partnerships."

Networks with local businesses and entrepreneurial opportunities were also discussed:

> "Business/community relationships: work needs to be done with the business community to educate them around the issues facing people with multiple barriers trying to re-enter the workforce. Schweppes have developed a good model where they are working with ex-offenders. At a community level we need to look at how corporate organisations can get involved with the community."

> "Businesses may be interested to know that there is a room for hire and catering available in such a good proximity to Bay Street: for example I recently used the Historical Society as a venue for a launch."

> "The Neighbourhood House needs to develop flyers to send to business. Morning is a key time for businesses to participate, as many start later and trade later. It would be good to develop activities before 10am. Many businesses operate from 10-6 or 2-12pm."

The need for a community development focus in program design and content was also suggested by some participants:

> "Leadership: we need community talk etc. on transformational leadership and ways that people are consciously empowering people to be able to take their own path. A holistic model that empowers individuals and the community."

> "The Neighbourhood House needs to develop a Community Development Function."

10. CONCLUSION

Findings from the Learning and Social Needs Study indicate that legitimate areas of need in the local area require ongoing development by Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House in delivering courses and activities.

The central themes we have investigated are:

- the neighbourhood: community change, attitudes and social cohesion

- socio-economic issues, disadvantage and barriers to participation

- learning and social needs

- PMNH's role in meeting learning and social needs.

The learning needs identified are congruent with the range of activities which can be delivered by PMNH pending sufficient funding. Information gathered has confirmed that skills development and recreation/hobby activities are seen as priority needs by all ages and income groups. Hobby/recreation activities are also important for all segments of the population. However, income and ability to afford courses are quite varied amongst local residents. The significant feedback from service providers and disadvantaged groups is that they can participate in free or very low-cost activities. To provide these courses at little or no cost would require PMNH to seek external funding.

Community change, and perceived social divisions reported occur for many reasons. Different factors influence new and older residents' ability to connect. Concerns expressed by new and old residents about the changing neighbourhood are indicators of emerging divisions. However, opportunities exist for PMNH to help build community cohesion: New residents are acknowledging their need for connections. New retirees are looking for meaningful activities that will aid their transition to a new lifestyle. A significant group of new mothers is casting about for activities and potential connections with others which will form the foundation of their role in the community.

Social isolation and disadvantage are complex issue in our communities. Indicators of social isolation are commonly defined as income, cultural barriers, age, and health conditions. Our community has significant groups who have one or several of these factors in the range. Further understandings of the effects of social isolation will be accessed when the City of Port Phillip's Community Health Plan is finalised and will give PMNH greater insights. In summation, research shows clearly that the cumulative affects of social isolation and lack of connection are barriers to participation in learning activities and resources need to be obtained to develop programs that overcome these barriers.

PMNH's role in meeting community social and learning needs is crucial. The first step—obtaining comprehensive knowledge of these needs—

has been achieved through this research project. However, the next phase is the development of strategies and programs to address these needs. The extent of PMNH's ability to develop these strategies and programs will also depend on the availability of sufficient human and monetary resources.

10.1. Key Findings

Despite new residents' affluence, pockets of disadvantage remain in Garden City, Port Melbourne, and South Melbourne.

While there is an influx of new residents with high incomes, specific needs and interests, pockets of disadvantage remain. These disadvantaged areas contain a high percentage of lone householders on low incomes, high levels of local residents in public housing, many female-headed public housing tenants from NESB backgrounds, high levels of unemployment and low levels of education.

Changes to the community have affected community cohesion perceptions and participation levels.

The social cohesion of Port Melbourne/Garden City/Beacon Cove and South Melbourne communities is being affected by growth in population and gentrification. Some new arrivals say they feel isolated, disconnected, alienated and unaccepted by older residents. Conversely, some older residents perceive that sense of community and neighbourliness are decreasing, as upwardly-mobile people move in. Some older residents feel they are being "pushed out" by a different socio-economic group.

Pockets of disadvantage and community divisions in local areas have created barriers to accessing learning.

Many disadvantaged residents and support organisations report that social isolation, cost, lack of confidence, mobility, location, language and settlement issues and lack of access to space and resources affect participation in learning activities.

Survey participants across all suburbs and incomes had similar interested courses interests and preferences. However, low-income residents preferred affordable courses and working/student residents preferred outside work/study hours.

Skills training and IT classes were the most preferred courses, closely followed by art/craft & fitness/relaxation classes. Work skills and skills training are also seen as important for unemployed low income residents with lower education levels. Many respondents were willing to pay a variety of course costs, but over 50% preferred courses under $70.

Disadvantaged groups have specific learning and social needs.

Disadvantaged groups require low-cost courses and activities to help reduce social isolation, assist with basic skills development and promote self-esteem and personal development.

Varying levels of knowledge and confusion about the role of PMNH exist among some community sectors and organisations.

Many organisations and some interviewees report that PMNH is not as well known as it should be among residents and local businesses, and confusion exists as to what PMNH should and can provide. However a majority of survey participants report some knowledge of PMNH.

10.2. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: existing pockets of disadvantage in the local community require further research and strategies to overcome barriers to learning and participation

Further research is required in this area. PMNH must endeavour to keep up to date with research, and use this information to inform program development. PMNH needs to explore opportunities for funds to conduct further research, and advocate for further research opportunities to be provided.

Recommendation 2: investigate funding for programs to facilitate community cohesion, increasing community participation and reduced social isolation

Programs should be inclusive of all community participants to maximise community cohesion. Outreach and social activities designed to boost community participation—such as Open Days, community barbeques, forums, Community Cafés and other events—need to be investigated.

Recommendation 3: PMNH should develop flexible and responsive programs allowing for varied community interests, times, locations and affordability

Stimulating activities for people over the age of 55 need to be developed, along with evening and weekend activities, more IT courses, employment skills training and health-promoting activities.

Recommendation 4: seek and develop links with other community organisations and services

PMNH also needs to explore opportunities for partnership with local services and businesses.

Partnerships developed would enrich and increase the scope of the community engaged, and may enable activities to become feasible through joint resourcing.

Recommendation 5: PMNH needs to seek funding and resources to provide low-cost programs for disadvantaged groups

Research shows that these groups have specific needs—such as work and living skills, personal development, ESL/literacy and unstructured groups to reduce social isolation—that require additional program funding and staffing. As these programs need to be low-cost or free to ensure accessibility, PMNH needs to investigate funding options to provide these classes.

Recommendation 6: raise the profile of PMNH, and develop networking and entrepreneurial opportunities

A revised networking, promotion and communication strategy is required. PMNH also needs to develop some fee-for-service programs and other sources of revenue to cover core organisational costs.

11. POSTSCRIPT

In response to the findings and key recommendations, and after analysing our core business and strategic plan, PMNH has developed a series of actions which could be used to respond more effectively to community needs.

Recommendation: raise the profile of the Neighbourhood House

Action: continue to promote the activities of the house through advertising courses in local media, by conducting an annual open day and through other community events.

Action: develop other strategies to raise the profile of the Neighbourhood House.

Recommendation: focus on community strengthening and reducing social isolation through House activities

Action: focus on partnership, networks development and business partnership to continue a leadership role in strengthening the local community.

Action: develop innovative models for residents to be involved in our volunteer and membership programs.

Action: continue to assess the needs of local residents, and implement programs and responses to these needs where possible.

Recommendation: develop courses responsive to community needs

Action: develop programs for "new retirees" and new arrivals – this group is seeking local connections and can enhance the community with their skills, experience and resources.

Action: continue to deliver virtual house programs across City of Port Phillip to remain responsive and attuned to requirements of residents.

Action: provide courses and activities with a range of fees and times to suit participant needs.

Action: provide courses to develop skills aiding "return to work".

12. REFERENCES

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