

**Report to General Manager**Attachments:
Nil**SUBJECT:** Neutral Bay Senior Citizens Club - Plans for its Future**AUTHOR:** Camelia Tobia, Access and Inclusion Co-ordinator**ENDORSED BY:** Martin Ellis, Director Community and Library Services**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

There are two community facilities in the North Sydney's north-east: Cremorne Community Centre (a child health centre staffed by NSW Health); and Neutral Bay Community Centre, which has four rooms: two rooms housing two small services and two rooms for hire.

This report provides an overview of the current status of one of the small services: Neutral Bay Senior Citizens Club, which is at a serious cross road, with declining numbers in their Management Committee. It is located on the Ground Floor (Military Road level). This report provides a history of the service, describes the contributions made by volunteers since it was established in 2000 and makes recommendations to develop the service into the future.

Council supports five community based aged focused services. Its principle service for the aged is the much larger Crows Nest Centre (CNC), managed by paid staff qualified in aged care and in receipt of significant State Government funding. Council too makes a major contribution to CNC, in kind and in funds.

A third local aged service made possible by Council is the Men's Shed in Wollstonecraft, which since its inception has had a small operating budget. Like Neutral Bay Seniors, the Men's Shed is managed by a volunteer Board, supported and advised by Council's Community Development Department.

In this respect Neutral Bay Seniors is structurally identical to the Men's Shed, excepting for an operating budget, of which it has none.

The fourth and fifth services for the aged supported by Council are James Milson Village and the Waverton Hub.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

It is recommended that Council consider support for Neutral Bay Seniors in the 2020/2021 Subsidies and Grants program, placing them on the same footing as the North Sydney Men's Shed.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** Council's Access and Inclusion Co-ordinator works with the Centre to develop a greater capacity to serve the needs of the active aged community east of the Freeway.
 2. **THAT** Council consider support for Neutral Bay Seniors in the 2020/2021 Subsidies and Grants program.
 3. **THAT** internal painting be scheduled for the Centre in 2020/21 and new furniture be purchased for the Seniors Room.
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LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

- Direction: 2. Our Built Infrastructure
- Outcome: 2.2 Vibrant centres, public domain, villages and streetscapes
 4.1 North Sydney is connected, inclusive, healthy and safe

BACKGROUND

Neutral Bay Community Centre is a multi-purpose facility located at 190-192 Military Road Neutral Bay owned by Council; two levels facing Military Road and three levels facing Grosvenor St Car park. Neutral Bay Seniors have a lease over one room and an outreach of a local women's service occupies another. Both these rooms are accessible. On the top floor of the Centre are two rooms for hire; neither meet access standards. The building also contains public amenities and several small Council-owned shops.

In 2019 improvements have been made to the externals of the building: a new façade on Military Road, refurbished amenities and external painting.

Demographics

The number of older people living in North Sydney is increasing. Between 2011-2016, seniors aged 70-84 represented the third largest growth group. In 2016, older persons (aged 70+) comprised 9.4% of the total North Sydney population. 33% (2,081) of all older persons living in North Sydney were located in Neutral Bay and Cremorne.

The Beginning

The Neutral Bay Senior Citizens Club (originally known as the Computer Club) was established in 2000. Its purpose was to provide computer tuition to older people. Initially, the group hired a room at the Crows Nest Centre, however as the service grew, with the support of Council's Aged and Disability worker at the time, Neutral Bay Community Centre was identified as a suitable venue to accommodate the growing number of volunteers and members.

Neutral Bay Senior Citizens Club has attracted a number of long-serving volunteers, many of whom have offered their time in excess of ten years. For most of its life, up until April 2019, the coordination of Neutral Bay Seniors was shouldered by three volunteers who sat on the Board and were responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Club.

In April 2019 one of the longest serving volunteers and management committee members passed away. Her death impacted significantly on the centre, on both a practical and emotional level. As a result, another long-serving volunteer and management committee member recently made the decision to retire from her role and will be concluding her service at the end of 2019.

Currently the Club is in a position at present where there are no other volunteers able to take over these roles and responsibilities.

Since it was established, Neutral Bay Seniors has been largely independent in their service delivery. The Access and Inclusion Coordinator has supported the Board members to identify opportunities for the Club’s growth, discuss and resolve challenges experienced in service delivery, whilst also assisting with the recruitment of volunteers and programming of workshops and events.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement will be undertaken in accordance with Council’s Community Engagement Protocol.

SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

The following table provides a summary of the key sustainability implications:

QBL Pillar	Implications
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Centre is well served by public transport.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Centre is crucial to the well being of many in the community.
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Centre has been self-sustaining for 20 years.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This report recognises and supports the community initiated nature of the management structure.

General

Community Centres in North Sydney are valuable spaces for community members. They promote social connection, reduce social isolation, encourage creativity and foster wellbeing. They also promote learning, whilst providing much needed services for different community groups, such as migrants and refugees, older people, people with disability, children and families, as well as people experiencing homeless or financial hardship.

There are nine community Centres in North Sydney, each with their own unique function and model for service delivery. Some of these are major Centres with considerable resources. Two services (one, a Centre: the Men’s Shed; and another a service: the Waverton Hub) are comparable in scale to Neutral Bay Seniors

The Waverton Hub

The Waverton Hub, established in 2012, provides services and activities for older people in the Waverton and Wollstonecraft areas. The Hub was formed by local residents as a means of providing assistance to each other in order that, as they aged, they could enjoy life, stay in their own homes longer and maintain their health. The Hub does not receive financial assistance from other levels of government but does receive a small grant (\$3,300) from Council’s Subsidies and Grants program. The Hub also generates income from their membership subscriptions. The Hub has no physical facility and depends on no-cost premises when activities require an indoor venue: mostly the uniting Church Hall. The Hub was created by and is still sustained by the energy and intellect on an individual who had significant high-level management experience before her retirement.

The North Sydney Men's Shed

The North Sydney Men's Shed is in Smoothey Park and is a single-storey former Scout Hall. Since 2008 the Hall has been the Men's Shed, a fully equipped workshop where both skilled and unskilled men can come to design and construct timber products. Initial fit-out was a joint Council and Rotary project, managed by Uniting Care. Uniting Care eventually withdrew and the Men's Shed incorporated and is now managed by a volunteer Board, supported and advised by Council's Community Development Department. They receive a small grant through Council's Subsidies and Grants program (largely for tool and equipment replacement) and are otherwise sustained by a membership fee of \$100 annually. Despite a small membership of around 40 the Men's Shed is flourishing, perhaps because the office holders' personal creative and social needs are being met by their activities (both mentoring and working on personal projects).

Service Delivery of Neutral Bay Senior Citizens Club

Neutral Bay Senior Citizens Club has approximately 130 active members. The centre is open three or four days per week between 9am and 2.30pm, dependent on availability of volunteers. Since it began Neutral Bay Seniors has been coordinated by three volunteer management committee members who assumed various roles, including:

- Administration (banking, insurances, professional memberships);
- WH&S and Fire Evacuation procedures;
- Recruitment and training of volunteers;
- Program and lesson scheduling; and
- Publicity and promotion.

Since the passing of one volunteer earlier this year these roles and responsibilities have fallen primarily to the other two volunteers. As noted above, one of these volunteers will be resigning at the end of 2019 and the other spends six months of the year travelling.

Although Neutral Bay Seniors was originally established to provide computer lessons, it has developed with time and provides a range of service and programs. The formation of these activities and programs has evolved out of community interest and requests:

- One-on-one PC, iPad and iPhone lessons;
 - Internet access;
 - Healthy ageing classes (Tai Chi, New Vogue and Line Dancing, Falls Prevention);
 - Scrabble Club;
 - Creative arts (knitting and paper craft);
 - Film screenings;
 - Japanese conversation classes;
 - Japanese computer lessons;
 - Book and puzzle library;
 - Drop in service with tea and coffee; and
 - Restrooms, including accessible toilet and baby change facilities.
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The interior of Neutral Bay Community Centre has had minimal upgrades or refurbishments in recent years. Blinds were installed approximately five years ago. Additional minor cosmetic upgrades, such as painting and new furniture, would improve the visual aesthetic of the space.



The restrooms located in the community centre are used frequently, not only by the community centre users but also the general public.

Military Road Planning Study

The results from Stage 1 of the Military Road Planning Study led by the City Strategy division identified 69% of the population over 50 were in favour of an upgrade to the existing community centre. Whilst it is understood this study and the future development of the area is a long-term Council project, minor upgrades to the centre would be of benefit to current users and potentially attract new users.

As part of the Military Road Corridor Planning Study one of the findings was that there was “an immediate need for a modernised community centre”. Additionally, the Analysis Paper 1 prepared as part of the Military Road Corridor Planning Study identified “By 2036 Neutral Bay Town Centre’s community facilities will make a great contribution to a creative, social and active community for workers and residents”.

Finances of Neutral Bay Seniors

Neutral Bay Senior Citizens Club users are required to become members to access the service. A fee of \$10 is charged annually, providing access to the programs, activities and events offered at the centre, whilst also utilising the computers, printers and access to the internet. In 2018, \$885 was derived from membership fees.

Additionally, the centre charges a fee of \$50 for six one-on-one computer lessons. The income from lessons is the second largest source of income for the centre, deriving \$2975 in 2018. The highest income stream came from a combination of other programs offered throughout the year (e.g. healthy ageing classes, scrabble, Japanese conversation classes and hall hire costs for dancing classes).

The two halls located on the second floor of the community centre are used during the week to run activities and programs offered by Neutral Bay Seniors. Additionally, the Club has generated a small income (\$1,800 per annum) from venue hire costs paid for by a long-term hirer who offers dance classes to the community. Steps have been taken to bring this activity under Council’s hall hire agreement in order to clarify public liability and insurance issues.

Whilst Neutral Bay Seniors has received ad-hoc funding and support from Council during their period of operation, these are often through Council’s small grants or Clubs grants programs and are tied to specific project or events. In 2018, Neutral Bay Senior Citizens Club received a Council grant of \$600. An additional donation of \$139.70 was made by an unknown donor.

The table below provides a summary of the financial position of Neutral Bay Senior Citizens Club in 2018:

Income	Expenditure	Profit/Loss
\$8,462	\$8,349.36	\$112.64

Without a volunteer Management Committee it will be difficult to keep the doors open and this balance sheet will not be repeated.

Future of Neutral Bay Senior Citizens Club

The Centre has been self-sustaining since it was established, relying solely on volunteers to maintain all aspects of the service. As of the beginning of 2020, Neutral Bay Seniors will have lost two of the three volunteers instrumental in maintaining its ongoing operation. It is necessary to review the current service delivery model and explore how the community Centre and its features can be improved to serve the Neutral Bay community.

Whilst these developments are being considered in the future planning of Neutral Bay, the following suggestions are presented as options for the Centre in the short to medium term:

- **Community engagement** with local residents, members and volunteers of Neutral Bay Seniors to identify the community’s aspirations for the Centre and what additional services and activities could be offered to the community utilizing the Centre.
- **Refurbishment** of community centre to improve the visual look and feel of the space and improve its usability and attract new hirers and members.
- **Review** of service delivery model to identify opportunities to maintain the centre’s long-term sustainability without sole dependency on volunteers.
- **Establishment of new Board** to replace existing board and maintain the Club’s status as an incorporated body.