



2007 Annual Report

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc.

*responding to community needs to deliver resources and
to empower individuals, groups and the community to
address issues that affect them*

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services – Annual Report 2007

Contents

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT	3
TREASURER'S REPORT	5
MANAGEMENT/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT	6
COURTHOUSE REFRESHMENT SCHEME REPORT	9
REGIONAL MIGRANT WORKER	13
MANNING VALLEY COMMUNITY GARDENS	17
MANNING VALLEY WOMEN'S GROUP	18
MANNING VALLEY MIDDLE EASTERN DANCE INC	19

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services – Annual Report 2007

Chairperson's Report

I joined the Management Committee of MVNS Inc. in 1997 and was just reflecting on the changes the service has made since. From a one employee service of Judith Johnston with the aid of a couple of volunteers, to what we are today. Then, like now, we gave small groups a helping hand. During Judith's time we started the U3A in Taree and had our first Migrant worker. Some of the projects like the Women's Action Group continue today. The Management Committee had an entirely different role. They also did fundraising for the service as money was very scarce for all the ideas we had. Jeanette was great in contacting local business houses and solicitors to contribute. Margaret and Joyce ran a catering service called CHEF, catering for conferences with homemade scones and sandwiches. It seems so far away now.

2006/2007 was in many ways an exciting but a very challenging year. It saw many changes. From a one-employee service we now have 8 paid staff soon to be 9. The recruitment of staff this year took a lot of time to find funding opportunities, to advertise, select, employ and train, as well as pick up the slack in the meantime.

Auspicing is an element of what we do as a community development organisation. I'd like to explain the reason why we auspice groups. We give small community groups a hand to get established until they are resourced enough to 'go it alone'. Some examples are the MV U3A, Neighbourhood Kitchen and the Modified Line Dancers. We are not a service that auspices groups solely to pay for insurance. We also take community events such as the Belly Dancing Festival under our umbrella as a way of ensuring that they continue to be viable which in turns enhances the community. We still run the Wingham Community Markets and have established new projects like Manning Valley Community Gardens.

MVNS Inc. was successful in tendering for "The Cottage" in the Bushland Housing estate in Taree. For the next 2 years this again will be a challenge for Caron as she has many ideas to run projects from there. It also gives us the opportunity for our service to have a presence in Taree. Another very well attended project were the cooking classes for young mothers. Caron's energy and ideas are ongoing. She has some new partnerships with other service in mind.

MVNS has had a great year with many new and exciting projects, but I think we also have to be careful not to take on too much. Staff have a big workload and give more than is required of them. We are also a service relying on many Volunteers and they are harder and harder to find.

MVNS Inc. staff now is: The Manager Caron, the DVCAS team of Victoria, Louise, headed by Debra, SGP worker Colleen, Kerry the bookkeeper, Annette our Markets coordinator and our frontline girl Monday to Thursday, Lisa.

And like in any Community Service the backbone of MVNS are our many Volunteers, both here in the office, at the Courthouse and in the Garden. I'd like to thank them all for their support and commitment in giving of their own expertise and time to MVNS.

Last, but by no means least the volunteer Management Committee. Their involvement and responsibilities have also changed. The days where one was co-opted by saying "you only have to attend a meeting once a month" is gone. I hope

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services – Annual Report 2007

this does not frighten any prospective Committee members off, because it can also be a very interesting and satisfying experience. With this I'd like to thank Bill, Margaret, Joyce, Gai, Barbara, Judy and Kevan for all their support, time and expertise, not only to MVNS but also to me personally. I am proud of being associated with MVNS Inc.

Lucia - Chairperson

PS: Margaret Duncan has decided after all this time to resign from the Committee. We are sorry to see her go. She has given many years to MVNS and the community. She served as Treasurer and Vice Chairperson and not to forget CHEF. Thank you!

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services – Annual Report 2007

Treasurer's Report

As Treasurer it is my pleasure to be able to report that MVNS Inc is managing its finances responsibly and efficiently. Our expenditure on providing essential services and community development programs remains consistent with our memorandums of understanding with funding bodies (to which we are accountable).

The auditor's report shows last year's financial position as being very favourable and I have no doubt that we shall continue to be so in the forthcoming years.

During the last financial year, our core funding remained that from the NSW Dept of Community services, with other programs funded by other bodies such as Legal Aid Commission of NSW, Dept of Immigration and the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services. Other projects were self funded. Additional funding was received from Communities for Children for the development of appropriate projects within the Community Gardens.

Next year's budget will be tight (as usual) but this will not prevent us from providing expanded essential services and community development. Program plans for the 2007-2008 year are exciting and I am confident that the funding is there to support the successful delivery of both our on-going and new program objectives. Funding for the Neighbourhood Centre's on-going programs continues from our usual funding bodies. Additional funding has been obtained from the NSW Department of Housing to support the Bushland Cottage initiative and the Interagency Project Worker is funded by the Department of Community Services' Area Assistance Scheme.

Judy - Treasurer

Management/Community Development Report

I am not going to try to provide an in depth summary of our activities this year. It's way beyond that! However, I will attempt to encapsulate our achievements so that there is an indication of the amount of community development which happened, is happening or is in process. Firstly, I must say it wouldn't be possible without the commitment and input from volunteers and staff. Volunteers come and go and as usual we are incredibly grateful for their time and energy, in the office, on the Management committee and in other projects. Everyone fulfils an important role and therefore contributes to and shares our successes!

Without obtaining extra funding from a variety of sources to support our activities we would be unable to achieve much of our community development. For that reason I would like to acknowledge the following for providing those funds. We have received all funds applied for this year resulting in a requirement to look at our distribution of resources so that we can actually get the time to spend it!! Those funding sources are:

Department of Housing – Bushland Cottage

DOCS – Area Assistance Scheme – Interagency Project Worker

FRRR Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal – Nutrition workshops

FACSIA - Local Answers – Parenting Workshops

In total (including an increase in funds for our Emergency Relief Service) these funds equate to an extra \$110,000.

This year saw a lot of changes and requirements instigated by DoCs in terms of accountability and process. A CSGP (Neighbourhood Centre funding) Review was instigated by the Minister to focus on Neighbourhood Centres to determine how they fit within the new funding structures outlined in DoCs new funding policy. To receive funding, services must be able to demonstrate firstly, that the outcomes they seek to achieve fit within the framework agreed by DoCs and Treasury, and secondly that they do achieve the outcomes. Thirdly, there is an expectation that all services receiving funds will adhere to new Accountability and Good Governance policies. Hopefully the end result will be an allocation of more resources to Neighbourhood Centres - who haven't received an increase in core funding in 20 years. The other significant issue facing Neighbourhood Centres in this climate are the new structures around partnerships and competitive tendering for funds. This may have an impact in years to follow.

To continue to ensure that we will not be lagging behind when updated expectations are required to be in place, we have made a concerted effort to review and/or develop 10 policies along with reviewing most job descriptions this year. This is time consuming and not really a popular task, so thank you to those sub-committee members involved.

It has been an ambitious year in many ways, added to in part by staffing shortages. However, it has also been an exciting one with many new projects and activities on the horizon. While management and administration tend to overwhelm us at times, I must say that with the new staff, extra funds and the potential for activities at Bushland Cottage, I have a renewed passion for community development and look forward to what the new year will open up to us?

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services – Annual Report 2007

We also have some wonderful (outside the box) activities which we are extremely happy and proud to support for the wonderful element of community building they provide. For example: the Community Gardens, Belly Dance Festival Sahla Party, the Manning Valley Women's Group who held a self defence workshop this year for International Women's Day, our new auspice the Manning Environment Education Group who will hold the opening of their exhibition tomorrow in Taree! And it goes on.

Community Development activities have been wide and varied. The community garden has been slowly building with both volunteers and projects. Our newest ventures being the mural project and a joint project with funds received through FRRR to run nutrition and 'garden play' mornings for children from local pre schools. Last year we also ran a number of workshops around nutrition for parents with young children to encourage an education process around food and nutrition for parents and their children. The Women's Action Group convened earlier this year to create some publicity around candidates for the State election and their platforms in addressing issues for women. We participated in Information Days at TAFE and the Envirofair to raise our profile.

This year saw the finalisation of our auspice with the Modified Line Dancers who found a home under the umbrella of a more appropriate group. This year will see us undertake the auspice of the A-koo-stik Festival in Wingham in October, and the management of the Bushland Cottage in Taree along with community development activities carried out from there. We also hope to partner with the Upper Lansdowne Youth Group to support them in developing activities for youth in that area, specifically around circus skills, drama and support groups. This can also develop into a partnership exercise with youth from the housing estate.

This year we also continued to provide a wide level of support to other services. Much of this is through our convening of the local Interagency forums, but also via our participation at other forums and meetings and sitting on Boards of other organisations. My Management Committee have been incredibly accommodating this year allowing me to continue my role as Chairperson for MNC Regional Council for Social Development, and on the Management Committee for the Local Community Services Association. Both have provided me with a broad perspective of regional and state issues along with insights into the complexities of community management beyond MVNS. However, it has also been time consuming and at times has meant that other matters have taken a back seat. I'm not sure that this is a negative, but it has been challenging to say the least!

MNC Regional Council partnered with DoCs to organise and host a conference this year around the aforementioned requirements which will be expected from DoCs. The 'Strengthening Our Practice Conference' was quite successful and a great launching pad for the revitalised Regional Council.

MV Interagency advocated and lobbied around a number of issues this year with varying degrees of success. We were successful in encouraging a focus from various bodies on concerns around the easy availability of credit cards for low income earners and the broad ranging social effects. We recently had success in lobbying around the lack of consultation by government with local NGO's for the provision of specific mental Health services (HASI – Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative) in the Taree LGA. At this point, they have now allocated approximately \$500,000 to this area and called for tenders to provide these services.

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services – Annual Report 2007

Emergency Relief – as a result of lobbying through interagency, there was a review of allocation of Emergency Relief funds from Family and Community Services resulting in most ER providers receiving an increase. This was quite a significant amount for us. However, there is always the overriding issue of lack of support to finance a worker to provide this invaluable service. It has proven to be rather an overwhelming year for meeting the demands of this service, and as usual, we can only imagine that the demand will continue to increase in the current economic climate.

This year, as usual, we held our annual Planning Day. We were lucky to engage the services of Brian Smith from LCSA to facilitate this for us. We also held a consultation with local key stakeholders in our LGA the night before as a prelude to Planning Day to provide fodder on local issues/priorities for the following day. As a result it was a successful day of input and planning, resulting in an ongoing process to develop a plan for the next 3 years. Already, many of the identified priorities are bearing fruit due to the successful tender of the community cottage (for example).

Insurance as usual continues to provide a headache for community groups wanting to provide community activities and we were happy to be able to support groups where possible. We are also lucky to have an insurance broker who understands the nature of community development and therefore provides us with a lot of scope to carry it out!

Training for our volunteers is something we try to provide within our means, and this year we were able to provide that opportunity around Mental Health First Aid, Case Management, Grief and Loss and Management Committee training.

We were also requested to sit on many other forums including the local Housing forum, development of new guidelines for Community Development Expenditure Scheme Funding and many more. This provides invaluable opportunities to keep up to date with the local issues.

It has been another challenging yet fruitful year. We don't often get to reflect on what the achievements have actually been and that is one of the advantages of writing annual reports! Thank you to everyone who provided support for myself and MVNS in an incredible variety of ways. You know who you are!

Caron Watkins
Manager

Courthouse Refreshment Scheme Report

The previous co-ordinator, Ern Hollebone, handed over the co-ordination of the Courthouse Refreshment Scheme in April, 07 with a good introduction to the Scheme and it's system of management.

Since my involvement the volunteers have continued on with their usual hardworking manner, serving soothing drinks, warm smiles and words of encouragement.

On Wed, 13th June, 07 the Volunteers, Caron Watkins and myself held a Morning Tea/Meeting at 'Verandah Express' in Taree. At this meeting we discussed the new folder and its contents to be held in the cupboard in the safe room. We touched on the importance of OH & S for the Volunteers and that they needed to sign on and off "shift" for insurance purposes. The communication book was continued as it is a good ongoing method for me to stay in touch with the volunteers.

On Monday 10th September, I assisted a volunteer to 'man' the trolley, seeing first hand how the scheme works. It was decided that a new urn was needed due to the malfunction of the current urns and the obvious danger of a burn/scald. A new larger plug-in urn was sourced from the local Retravision (with a discount) and delivered for the next mornings shift. The wheels on the trolley also need to be changed to prevent any injury and will be attended to this week (13-14th September)

In conclusion, the scheme is an ongoing community service, that is well received by the general public and I would like to use this forum to 'Thank' all the volunteers for their time and effort so graciously offered.

Linda - Coordinator

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services – Annual Report 2007

Taree Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme

The past 12 months have seen lots of change at WDV CAS. Adrienne Greene left the scheme in February after eight years as service Coordinator. Adrienne moved on to Taree Community Health to take up a sexual assault counsellor position. Assistant Coordinator, Deborah Smith became Coordinator, and a new Assistant Coordinator, Louise Webber was employed in July. Victoria Colebrook continues in her role as Aboriginal Specialist Worker.

WDV CAS assisted 237 women in 2006-07. The vast majority of these (82%) were supported in court for AVO Mentions or Hearings. At Taree Court 64% of women were granted final AVOs and at Forster 61% were granted. We saw very few women from CALD backgrounds (4). 16.8% of clients were Aboriginal. 90% of defendants in AVO matters were male and 10% were female. 16.5% of clients had children aged less than 16 years, and 18.6% had children under 3.

Whilst there have been some ups and downs in our ability to provide the 'seamless' service delivery specified by the Attorney Generals Department, good progress has been made in developing partnerships and a cooperative approach to assisting clients. Two very experienced police Domestic Violence Liaison Officers (DVLOs) left during the year. This had a dramatic effect on both referrals from the police and expert follow-up and support for women. Their positions have now been filled, with one female officer working part-time and another to return after Christmas.

WDV CAS and the Women's Refuge/Police Domestic Violence Project are currently developing a Memorandum of Understanding between the two services. One of the outcomes will see staff from the Project acting as seconded workers for WDV CAS. The arrangement will enable them to access WDV CAS training and other resources. This service will benefit by having experienced workers to assist in Court when necessary, and a more efficient referral system from within the police station.

All staff from WDV CAS, the Project and the DVLO attended the WDV CAP Conference recently in Sydney. The stimulating, neutral environment provided an opportunity to enhance communication and to develop strategies to improve work practice and avoid duplication of service delivery.

Community development activities by WDV CAS last year included a 6- week program, Positive Changes, for women who had experienced trauma and abuse. The program was run in collaboration with Taree Community Health. The Aboriginal Specialist Worker and Aboriginal worker from the Project organised a Wallis Lake cruise on the Free Spirit for women from the Cabarita community in Forster, after a murder in that community. Women described the day as being a healing and unifying one for their community.

WDV CAS assisted with the organisation of Reclaim the Night and the 16 days of Activism for DV. We had a stall at TAFE's Community Services Expo, and Forster's NADOC celebrations.

WDV CAS has gained permission from the Legal Aid Commission to expend some of our budget surplus on furnishings and resources for the Cottage. We plan to conduct a range of formal and informal programs, targeting women and other service providers over the coming year

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services – Annual Report 2007

Staff have attended WDVCS Network forums and a range of training opportunities including New Coordinator training, Mental health First Aid, Changes to the Family Law, and Practical Strategies for assisting Women experiencing Domestic Violence. It's been a year of change and consolidation. We look forward to building on the progress made, working in partnership to provide assistance for women and children experiencing domestic violence in the Manning Valley and Great Lakes.

Deb - WDVCS Coordinator

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services – Annual Report 2007

Wingham Community Markets

This year saw a change in coordinator of the markets with Peter following his passion to work with other endeavours. Annette O'Rourke came on board early in 2007.

The markets received a rather intensive review last financial year after a consultation with stallholders around how we could better promote the markets and provide a regional focus along with how best to ensure that our guidelines reflect best practice and meet insurance and OHS requirements.

With more and more expectations around food stalls and appropriate certification from council it is making it difficult to obtain and retain food stalls.

We continue to provide insurance coverage for 'casual' stallholders under our own policy so that we encourage a broad range of stalls. Other markets held on the same day as Wingham is impacting on the number of stallholders we are attracting. This is unfortunate however, it is also an indication that the 'profile' of the markets may need a significant overhaul in terms of what types of stalls are being represented. I think many of us have a 'vision' of the potential for these markets to develop into something much more significant given the right circumstances. (Think BIG – like Bellingen!!)

While MVNS can see the value and community development perspective of auspicing the markets, we continue to undertake discussions as to whether it may be better off in the hands of the stallholders who have a stake in the continuing viability of the markets. This is a decision we need to review and will have to make over the coming 12 months.

Wingham Community Markets Coordinator



Regional Migrant Worker

The 2006 to 2007 year saw a change in workers for the position of Regional Migrant Worker with the leaving of Barry Dorizas and the hiring of the new Regional Migrant Worker, myself, Colleen McGowan, after funding for the 2007 – 2008 year was granted. MVNS would like to extend their sincere thanks to Linda Fraser who filled in as RMW following Barry's departure.

The 2006 -2007 also saw the completion of two major projects along with some smaller achievements and the ongoing work of the Regional Migrant Worker (RMW). The major projects were the two Milestones, which are part of the Work Program for workers in the Community Settlement Services Scheme (CSSS).

The first Milestone centred on the development of a Needs Analysis. The Needs Analysis, whilst defining the target group also provided useful information and an understanding with regards to the needs of this target group. It has proved a valuable tool for identifying and meeting these needs.

The second Milestone called for the facilitation of a settlement support group initially in the Hastings LGA but this was later varied to the Taree LGA. This is an effective way of assisting CALD residents in the LGA to assist each other with settlement in Australia and to raise awareness of Australian culture and society whilst developing important social networks within their community.

Other notable events were the CSSS Rural Workers Conference in Sydney and the launch of the Global Friendship Group (GFG), both in May 2006. Below are the outcomes for 2006-2007 as listed in the Work Plan.

Information Referral

The RMW has been available for clients at the Neighbourhood Centre on Mondays and Tuesdays of each week. More recently, the RMW has been available through the new outreach base on alternate Fridays at Port Macquarie.

Establish and maintain an Outreach base at Port Macquarie

The Info Shop in the Port Macquarie CBD was identified as the most appropriate venue for the establishment of an information Hub at Port Macquarie. This is a one-stop-shop for information about services in the Port Macquarie-Hastings area and is run by the Port Macquarie Neighbourhood Centre.

More recently, with the new funding grant for the 2007-2008 year, the Info Shop, being centrally located in the Port Macquarie CBD, has been identified as a suitable venue to use as a base for outreach services to the Hastings LGA on alternate Fridays.

The establishment of the base at Port Macquarie to provide outreach services is seen as a vital project for the RMW as Port Macquarie statistically has a higher number of CALD residents in its LGA than any of the other LGA's serviced by the RMW.

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services – Annual Report 2007

Although in the initial stages it is projected that with the ongoing promotion the service will be utilised more.

News From the ESOL Classes at Port Macquarie Community College

A 'Morning Tea' was hosted by the ESOL students at the Port Macquarie Community College. The RMW attended and met with the tutors and the students. The RMW spoke to the students regarding the role of the RMW and provided information and brochures to the students and tutors. The RMW liaised with Janette Jones, a tutor at the college to identify needs that were not being met in the area. Transport was raised as an issue for students and in particular the need for translations for RTA publications in the Thai language to assist people from a Thai background to obtain their driver's licence.

News From the Multicultural Women's Group in Taree

A relatively new CALD 'support' group has formed in Taree. The group is being facilitated and supported by the Women's Refuge, Lyn's Place in Taree. Leizel from the refuge is assisting the group. The RMW accepted an invitation to meet with the group at a social 'get together' at Taree Ten Pin Bowl. The group was very receptive and interested in the role of the RMW and has asked for the RMW to attend further meetings with the group. The RMW intends to follow-up this opportunity and make regular contact with the group to discuss any issues or concerns members of the group may have.

Facilitation of CALD Services by Other Agencies

The RMW:

- Attended a meeting at Hastings Council regarding the Hastings Social Plan, providing input about settlement and CALD issues.
- Sent brochures for display at a services expo in Gloucester and attend the expo for part of the time.
- Facilitated Migration Agent visit and interviews in Taree and Port Macquarie.
- Referred clients to Northern Settlement Services for migration assistance.
- Talked to clients at Comboyne Women's Information Day and networked with numerous agencies at Comboyne Women's Information Day.
- Discussion with Area Health re interpreter and training needs in Port Macquarie-Hastings.
- Produced a discussion paper on strategies to improve service to clients in this region and distributed it to agencies, including those not in attendance, along with the Needs Analysis
- Attended Regional Multicultural Network meetings and Interagency meetings throughout the year to promote the RMW project and advocate the facilitation of services for CALD residents in the community.
- Continued contact with the ESOL classes at Forster-Tuncurry, Taree and Port Macquarie TAFE Colleges.
- Attended various community events including, Comboyne Women's Information Day, Residents Information Days at both Port Macquarie and Wauchope, Community Education Days at both Port Macquarie and Wingham Fire Stations.

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services – Annual Report 2007

(Milestone 1) Needs Analysis

The RMW developed a Needs Analysis to assess the needs of CALD residents in the local government areas. The Needs Analysis along with a discussion paper was distributed to other agencies, many at interagency meetings.

Data was sought from various agencies, including DIMIA, Centrelink, TIS, Medicare, Hunter New England Health, the Multicultural Health Unit at Newcastle and the Mid North Coast Health. Some of the data obtained was either very limited or irrelevant and was not able to be used, however the rest of the data was collated and analysed and the relevant information extracted.

Community feedback on issues of concern was obtained using pre-existing groups as focus groups. These included the English classes at Port Macquarie and Taree TAFE along with those at Taree Community College. The students completed surveys to glean information about issues of concern, however, as these students were people that are accessing services more effectively than others, the data was analysed keeping in mind those who were not represented in the surveys. The feedback data was collated into databases and then analysed in the report.

The completed Needs Analysis was used to develop strategies in conjunction with other agencies in the local community.

(Milestone 2) Facilitation of Settlement Support Group

This Milestone changed from Hastings LGA as the Hastings Settlement Support Group (SSG) was found to be still operational whereas the Taree SSG was in the process of re-forming. The SSG has become established as a group and is known as the Global Friendship Group (GFG). There are 57 group members who are kept informed by email and post. The group meets monthly and although not all the members attend each meeting it is hoped that as the SSG develops a more public profile through media releases and word of mouth the number of members will continue to grow. The monthly meetings are held as lunches at either a restaurant where individuals pay for their own meal, or where members bring a contribution of food that reflects their cultural background.

To avoid the onus of the responsibility and workload falling to one or two members of the group, which was seen as an issue by the members, the GFG members have adopted a structure whereby the role of coordinator is rotated for a month at a time. The coordinator is responsible for taking names for booking venues and answering queries about the group's activities.

Financial and insurance issues were avoided by the group by members joining the auspicing organisation, MVNS Inc, so as to be covered for public liability insurance and to cover the cost of photocopying and postage.

Unfortunately, in conversations with the new RMW, the founder of the GFG, Lucy Bokulic, has mentioned that the group has lapsed somewhat in more recent months. One of the issues mentioned is that without the consistent input from the founder of the group, the group begins to stagnate. However, the issue of the group's reliance

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services – Annual Report 2007

on one or two persons for its organisation was the reason behind choosing the system of rotating the co-ordinator. The RMW will consult further with the founder, Lucy Bokulic on the group's future.

Participate in the Multicultural Network (MCN)

The RMW continued the role of facilitating the MCN and participated in meetings. Meetings in Taree were facilitated by the RMW along with the networked information sharing. The RMW plays an active role at meetings, taking and distributing the minutes, and advising network members of issues and meeting venues. Meetings alternate between Port Macquarie and Taree.

Colleen – Regional Migrant Worker

Manning Valley Community Gardens

The Community Garden was started over a year ago and we are still developing new aspects of the project. The area at the back of the Old Courthouse in Wingham housing the Community Centre - provided to us by Greater Taree City Council, has been planted out with a variety of vegetables, herbs, and several fruiting trees. We would only be able to further expand the garden onto the remaining grassy area of the backyard with Council approval and greater community interest and support.

A small but 'growing' gardening group now meets on the third Saturday morning of each month. Members of the group regularly bring in seeds and seedlings from their own gardens and are encouraged to share in some of the garden's modest harvest. It is a very social morning as well as getting some gardening done. We hope that anyone curious about the garden will come by on these occasions and find out what we are up to.

Local Wingham primary schools have been invited to be involved in the garden, and more recently, in the Mural Artworks Project. An invitation is still open for anyone to submit a drawing of what they would like to have included in the mural to be painted on the garage behind the Centre. Get in touch with someone at the centre if you would like more information.

We have also begun to involve local preschools in the garden by inviting them to come and have a play in the garden followed by watching a cook prepare food for them to enjoy, thereby providing some insights into the world of nutrition and fresh food and what a wondrous environment a garden can provide.

A new outdoor garden table and seating has been purchased recently and installed under the old clothes line. The clothes line is being converted into a shade cover for the table and seats.

Hope to see you there.

Kevan - Manning Valley Community Gardens Coordinator

MANNING VALLEY WOMEN'S GROUP

This has been a quiet year for Manning Valley Women's Group (MVWG). This is predominantly due to the fact that in January, we came under the auspice of the Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services. This has meant that the tired members of the group have had a bit of a rest from financial issues, OH&S issues Etc. ! Joking aside, the group is trying to reinvent them selves and are looking for projects that best suit the MVWG and the women of the Manning Valley.

The only event that was held in the year, has been for International Women's Day, in which the group were successful in obtaining a grant from Greater Taree City Council to run a Self Defence class for women. This was facilitated by Penny Gulliver a consultant in her field. 20 women attended on the day. We hope to run more of these in the future. Next year for International Women's Day we are looking at having meals prepared from around the world (still in planning and feasibility stage).

Thanks to MVNS for their support of our little group

Mary - Chairperson MVWG

Manning Valley Middle Eastern Dance Inc

4th Mid North Coast Belly Dance Festival, 2007

SUNDAY SAHLA BOLLYWOOD PARTY DAY, 26TH AUGUST, 2007

The Sunday Sahla Bollywood Party Day was auspiced by the Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc. as it has been for our annual event, in the previous two years.

The main performers at our event, the Bollywood Band, Gajanan, were paid by a Festivals Australia grant, which was applied for in January, 2007 by Festival Director, Dekyong Sun.

It was determined by an analysis of our previous three festivals, that local participation at our three events, was minimal and that the bellydance network provided the main participants. The committee decided to promote the festival, through an exciting local event, the Moulin Rouge held in the Wingham Town Hall on June 30.

The organizers and performers on this night, were largely the organizers and local performers in the Belly Dance Festival. The Moulin Rouge event was hugely successful and another result was a much larger participation of local people in the gala concert and Sunday Sahla Bollywood Party Day.

Over 200 adult people attended, and many children were given free admission. The Wingham Town Hall was the chosen venue and it proved to be a wise choice. After a week of heavy rain, the outside grounds had drained well and this allowed many stall holders to set up their wares.

The verandah of the Town Hall was used by two food providers. Many more stalls were established within the main hall, with half the available space set aside for entertainment and audience dancing. Gajanan performed on two occasions on the hall stage. A specialist photographer was in attendance, taking photographs not only for festival records but for both MVNS Inc. and Festivals Australia. As well, two workshops in drumming and Bollywood dance were held in the hall's supper room.

The day was a huge success on many levels. Not only with attendance by locals and members of the bellydance network, tourists in the Manning Valley, but also the cultural development provided to our community. The organisers take pride in their presentation, talent and community involvement. The most important aspect of the day, was the wonderful enjoyment of the day by all concerned and the lovely and harmonious energy generated.

The Manning Valley Middle Eastern Dance Inc. wishes to thank the Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc. for their continued support.

Coordinator – Manning Valley Middle Eastern Dance Inc.