

SHNC Annual Report

2025-2026

Surry Hills
Neighbourhood Centre

Building a strong and inclusive community in Surry Hills since 1978

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Chair's Report

It was a year of continued service and change for Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre. As Chair, I valued working alongside a Board, staff team and community committed to equity, inclusion and responding to local needs.

Throughout 2025–2026, SHNC provided children's services and community programs that supported individuals and families and created opportunities for connection and participation. This work reflected the Centre's longstanding role in Surry Hills and the dedication of those who delivered and supported our services. I would particularly like to thank our dedicated Manager, Gillian Elliott, the outstanding efforts of Stephen Lunny, Spring Lai in the daycare and Victoria Baghos and Frankie Peterson in the after school and vacation care. The community is lucky to have such a caring and committed team.

We farewelled Cathy Lovell, and Ricardo Cheung, with sincere thanks for their time, expertise and contribution. Cathy's leadership as Chair, Ricardo's stewardship as Treasurer, their contribution to the Board and its connection with the community were greatly appreciated.

We welcomed Peter Harris, Susan Dobinson and Armen Gakavian to the Board. Their experience and perspectives strengthened our focus on sound governance, financial sustainability and responsive community services.

The Board of Governors provided diligent oversight, considered advice and commitment throughout the year. Gillian Elliott and the staff team demonstrated leadership and professionalism, supported by the continued contribution of our volunteers, members, partners and funding bodies.

As SHNC looked towards its 50th anniversary in 2027, our focus remains on maintaining accessible, inclusive services and a strong local presence for the Surry Hills community.

Peta Landman, Chair

Treasurer's Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2026

I am pleased to present the Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre for the financial year ending 30 June 2026. The Centre continues to operate at a targeted breakeven position with a small recorded a surplus of $5,880 for the financial year, compared with a deficit of $3,420 in the previous year.

Revenue increased by approximately 12% to $2,553,886, supported by growth in service fees and grant income. Interest income contributed a further $54,249. Employee expenses remained our largest expenditure at $1,916,908, reflecting the staffing required to deliver the Centre's children's services and community programs. These increased by 8.5% for the year compared to 17% in the prior year.

At 30 June 2026, the Centre held cash and deposits of $1,653,578, with net assets of $1,308,974 after accounting for liabilities. These reserves provide a sound financial foundation and support continuity of services. The modest annual surplus nevertheless highlights the importance of careful budgeting, monitoring expenditure and maintaining sustainable income.

The financial statements were independently audited by United Advisory Pty Ltd, which issued an unmodified audit opinion.

Our financial priority remains to balance the delivery of accessible, inclusive services with the Centre's long-term sustainability while ensuring the ongoing utilisation of both Long Day Care and Out of Hours School care which support the overall management and oversight of the Centre and its programs.

I thank the Board, Finance Subcommittee, management and staff for their contribution to the financial oversight and administration of the organisation, and acknowledge the continued support of our funding partners and community.

Revenue Source	FY26 ($)	FY25 ($)	% Change
Fees received	1,721,601	1,551,415	10.9%
Government grants and support	573,324	486,458	17.8%
Miscellaneous income	258,961	243,580	6.3%
Total Revenue	2,553,886	2,281,453	12.0%

Peter Harris, Treasurer

Secretary's Report

During 2025–2026, the Board of Governors oversaw the governance and administration of Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre Inc. Board members contributed their professional skills and experience to support the Association's objectives, accountable decision-making and service to the community.

The Board held six meetings during the reporting period to consider operational reports, financial performance, governance matters and strategic priorities. The Board and management worked collaboratively to support the effective administration and ongoing sustainability of the Association.

The Finance Subcommittee, comprising Cathy Lovell, Peta Landman, Ricardo Cheung and Effie Asafu-Adjave, also met six times to review financial matters and provide advice and recommendations to the Board. All Board members were invited to attend these meetings.

The contribution of all Board members to the governance of the Association throughout the year was acknowledged with thanks.

Position	Member Name	Attendance
Chair	Cathy Lovell	4
Deputy Chair / Chair from June / Secretary	Peta Landman	6
Treasurer	Ricardo Cheung / Peter Harris	4/2
Public officer	Narelle Clark	4
Member	Melanie Hayden	4
Member	Karina Kreminski	2
Member	Caroline Christian	4
Member/Minute Taker	Effie Asafu-Adjave	4
Member	Armen Gakavian	2
Member	Susan Dobinson	2

Peta Landman, Secretary

Centre Activity Report

Throughout 2025–2026, Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre continued to be a welcoming place where people come together, find support and feel part of their community. With increasing pressures on individuals and families, our work has become more important than ever. Whether through affordable food, shared meals, creative activities, community gatherings or simply a friendly conversation, we strive to make everyday life more meaningful, joyful and connected.

Much of this work happens quietly, through the dedication of our small team, wonderful volunteers and community partners who care deeply about the people of Surry Hills. We are proud to continue nurturing the relationships and connections that make our neighbourhood such a wonderful place to belong.

Highlights of the Year – Community Development and Engagement

Friday Café and Northcott Café

"It's our gathering day" – Social Housing tenant explaining the Northcott Café to a fellow tenant.

Our Friday Café and Northcott Café continue to play an important role in bringing local people together, providing welcoming, accessible and inclusive spaces for community connection.

Established over a decade ago, the cafés have become valued community gathering places where people can meet, share a meal, build friendships and connect with local services. With affordable food available for purchase, alongside free food options, the cafés ensure that cost is not a barrier to participation. They offer a reliable and familiar place where everyone is welcome, with a particular focus on supporting social housing residents and strengthening neighbourhood connections.

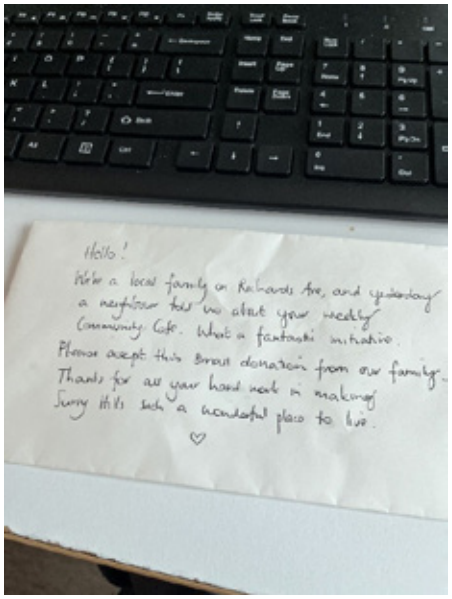
The cafés are funded through the City of Sydney Grants Program and supported by the Local Drug Action Team (LDAT). Beyond providing food, these programs contribute to community wellbeing by reducing social isolation, fostering a sense of belonging and building supportive relationships. This aligns with the LDAT's focus on strengthening protective factors that help prevent alcohol and other drug-related harm.

We are proud to continue providing these much-loved community spaces and to see them remain an important part of local community life.

On-site at both cafés is a strong suite of community services and activities, including:

- The City of Sydney Food Support Program, offering bread, fruit, vegetarian meals and other no-charge menu items;
- Computer support and access;
- Services Australia services onsite;
- Kirketon Road Centre drop-in support;
- Creative activities and volunteer opportunities;

- A vibrant volunteer program where community members can engage, learn employment-skills, and become part of something meaningful—our heartfelt thanks go out to them.



Low-Cost Community Food Pantry

One of the important new initiatives introduced this year is **Low-Cost Community Food Pantry**.

As living costs rise, we recognise the importance of providing practical, affordable support to our community. The Pantry responds to this need by offering everyday essentials, including bread, milk, eggs, fresh fruit and vegetables, and other food staples at low cost.

The Pantry is **open to everyone**, reflecting our commitment to creating an inclusive and welcoming space that all can access without barriers or eligibility requirements.

Since its introduction, the Pantry has been warmly received by the community. We are proud of this new service as part of the Centre's ongoing commitment to responding to emerging community needs and supporting the people of Surry Hills.











LGBTIQA+ Afternoon Community Tea Dance

The LGBTIQA+ Afternoon Community Tea Dance is a free, inclusive afternoon disco that challenges traditional narratives around partying, socialising and the use of alcohol and other drugs within LGBTIQA+ communities. The project incorporates health promotion and harm reduction messaging in a welcoming, community-led environment.

Now in its fourth year of delivery, this growing initiative provides a vibrant, alcohol-free space where community members can connect, celebrate, dance and enjoy themselves without the expectation of consuming alcohol or other drugs. Through music, entertainment, Devonshire tea and alcohol-free refreshments, the event demonstrates that partying can be fun, socially connected and enjoyable without alcohol.

The continued growth of the event over four years demonstrates the value of innovative, accessible health promotion that meets people where they are, challenges stigma and creates positive alternatives to alcohol-centred socialising.





Recognising and Responding to Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Workshop



On Thursday 2 July 2026, Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre, in partnership with Kirketon Road Centre and the Surry Hills Community Drug Action Team (CDAT), hosted a free, one-day workshop focused on recognising and responding to alcohol and other drug (AOD) use in the community.

Facilitated by Annie Bleeker, an experienced practitioner in the HIV/AIDS and AOD sectors since 1990, the workshop provided an opportunity for community workers and community members to strengthen their understanding of AOD-related harms, including overdose recognition and response. The session supported greater awareness, confidence and practical skills in responding to people who use alcohol and other drugs.

The workshop brought together participants from community services and the broader community, encouraging shared learning and collaboration. This initiative reflects Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre's ongoing commitment to community education, harm reduction and building the capacity of local workers and community members to respond to health and wellbeing needs in an informed, compassionate and non-judgemental way.

Supporting Local Creative Community

We remain committed to supporting Surry Hills' vibrant creative community, working collaboratively with local artists to bring their projects and initiatives to life, celebrate local talent and contribute to the neighbourhood's rich cultural life.

Love Letters – Community Installation

Love Letters was a participatory activity project where local artist and the Centre's friend Kasane Low led conversations and letter writing activities with the community to explore the many facets of affection.

The goal was to gather 20,000 diverse answers onto paper 'Love Letters.' These paper messages were hand-rolled and tied, suspended like Chinese firecrackers to symbolize celebration, joy, and protection. The artwork was displayed 23-25 Oct at East Sydney Community & Arts Centre in Darlinghurst as part of the City of Sydney's Art & About program 2026.





A letter to our community from Kasane Low:

"Dear Surry Hills Community 💗💛💚🧡🩵

A big heartfelt thanks for your support on the Love Letter Community project!

Around 7000 thoughts of LoVe were contributed over 3 months and I couldn't have done it without your support!

Special thank you to our leader Gillian, who runs such a beautiful centre and rallies such great people to work with!

Also a special Thank You to Stephen for your super support linking the Love Letter Community project seemlessly into SHNC programs and linking also into external community! Loved the Do Drop In days and Northcott days - so great to reconnect and catch up with community members who had also helped on the original popping pom poms project 10yrs ago!

Thanks to Victoria for OSHC support & Crown st Public School - I really loved all the drawings and thoughts of what the children love to do on the wknds and holidays!

Thanks to Alice and Ally for market table inclusion - a super high engagement day with lots of thoughtful letters written. Thanks also to Stephen for setup and Emmanuel for afternoon support and packdown 💗

The artwork is up! Looks far denser then I expected and you really get a sense of the volume - thousands of Love thoughts floating altogether!

Thx to all who contributed thoughts on Love 🥰*"*

At the Edges – Writing Studio

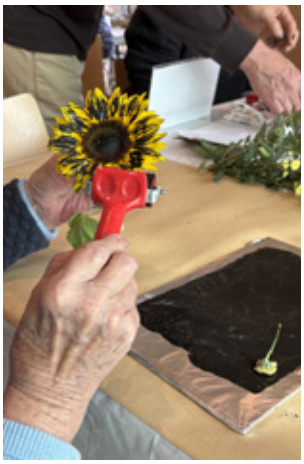
Every week, local writers and poets come together at the Centre to write, share their work and inspire one another. The Studio offers a friendly and inclusive space encouraging emerging writers to build confidence in their voice, while more experienced writers can exchange ideas, explore new perspectives and enjoy the company of fellow creatives. Run by Karina Kreminski and Armen Gakavian, who both have been members of our Board, the Studio is a wonderful example of local creativity and its communal spirit.

Creative Arts Table at Friday Café

Our Creative Arts Table has become a lovely part of the weekly Friday Café, offering community members a welcoming space to explore their creativity, share ideas and enjoy each other's company. Run by a dedicated volunteer who brings materials, inspiration and gentle encouragement, the table is open to everyone, regardless of their artistic experience. Over the past year, participants have particularly enjoyed experimenting with collage, using colours, images and textures to create something of their own. While art provides the starting point, the real value lies in the conversations, friendships and sense of belonging that grow around the table.













Community Playgroup and Rhyme Time

Our weekly playgroup continues to bring together a wonderful mix of local families with children aged 0–5, offering a welcoming space for little ones to play, explore and make friends, while parents and carers connect, share experiences and build their own friendships.

The playgroup is a lovely example of collaboration across our Centre. Our community programs team coordinates the sessions, while Spring, our Long Day Care Coordinator, provides toys and play resources, adapting activities in response to families' interests and feedback. Whether it's more musical instruments, pretend play or new activities to explore, families help shape the playgroup into a space that works for them.

Each session is followed by the much-loved Rhyme Time, delivered by a librarian from Surry Hills Library. With songs, stories and plenty of enthusiastic participation from children and adults alike, it creates a space for children to learn and grow, for families to feel connected, and for our Centre to build lasting relationships with the families in our community.





Service Collaborations and External Representation

Our Programs Officer, Stephen Lunny, has made a significant contribution to the community development efforts this year, including being acknowledged via:

- Attendee at Parliamentary LDAT Report Launch, including SHNC program showcase, in Canberra in September 2025
- Presenter at ACON Honours Awards in October 2025
- Attendee at World AIDS Parliamentary Breakfast in Canberra on Thursday November 27th 2025
- MC at AIDS Candlelight Memorial on Sunday 17th May 2026
- Chair of Surry Hills CDAT for 2025/26 financial year
- President of Positive Life NSW for 2025/26 financial year

Admin Officer's Report



Hi everyone, my name is Ella, and I joined the wonderful team at Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre around four months ago.

Originally from the coastal town of Coffs Harbour, moving to Sydney has been a big change. Coming from a small town, I was worried I might lose that strong sense of community and connection I had always known. However, the opposite has happened. I feel incredibly fortunate to have found Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre, where I have been welcomed with open arms. I feel truly blessed to work alongside such an amazing team who do so much for the Surry Hills community. Over the past four months, I have learnt so much and met so many wonderful people who are helping this place feel like home. For me, the Centre is more than just a workplace; it is a place of meaningful conversations, genuine connections and a strong sense of belonging.

One of the highlights of my time at the Centre so far has been running the Wednesday playgroup. Each week, I see new mothers, returning families and regular attendees come along with their little ones. It has been so rewarding to watch parents grow in confidence, families build connections with one another and children learn and play together. I have also loved seeing families feel comfortable enough to ask me questions, share their experiences and talk openly about the challenges they may be facing, including questions about their child's development. The playgroup has created valuable opportunities for social connection within the community, and it has been just as meaningful for me personally.

I have also really enjoyed building relationships with the OSHC team through my work supporting the staff at Crown Street Public School OSHC that our Centre runs. Working alongside the team has given me opportunities to collaborate, share ideas and contribute to discussions about OSHC. I value being part of a team where everyone can bring their experiences and ideas together to support the children and families we work with.

Overall, my first four months at Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre have been such a rewarding experience. I feel very lucky to be part of a team that genuinely cares about the community and the people who walk through our doors. It has been wonderful to see firsthand the difference the Centre makes in bringing people together, building confidence and creating meaningful connections. I am really enjoying being part of the team, learning from those around me and contributing to a place that is helping me feel at home in Sydney.

Ella'blu Goodman

Events and Celebrations

Gadigal Gatherings and NAIDOC Celebration

Gadigal Gatherings is an SHNC project that focuses on celebrating and acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history through storytelling and art.

SHNC collaborated with Life for Koori Kids to host a NAIDOC Community Breakfast and bring children, families and local community members together to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and achievements. The event began with a smoking ceremony to create a sense of spiritual safety and to provide an opportunity for children to learn about Aboriginal cultural practices and their significance.

The activities reflected the NAIDOC theme, 50 Years of Deadly, through cultural learning, creativity and community participation. A highlight was a local community member showcasing their cake decorating skills with a cake celebrating "50 Years of Deadly". This contribution recognised local talent and added a personal community touch to the celebrations.

SHNC and Life for Koori Kids held this event to provide an opportunity for local families and community to show respect for Country and take part in learning across generations. The creative arts project also encouraged participation and expression, providing an accessible way for community members to engage with the celebrations.

Together these activities supported the Gadigal Gatherings' aims of strengthening cultural understanding, celebrating First Nations knowledge and achievements, and building community connections.







Surry Hills Market

For many years, Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre has proudly organised the Surry Hills Market, a much-loved local tradition that has become part of the neighbourhood's identity. Held on the first Saturday of every month at Shannon Reserve, the market is full of vintage treasures, handmade goods, local art and unexpected finds. Alice and Alli continue to bring together a wonderful mix of stallholders, making each market a little different from the last. Over the years, the market has provided a welcoming space for local artists, makers and small businesses, while giving pre-loved treasures a new home.

More than just a place to shop, the Surry Hills Market has long been a gathering place for our community. Locals, visitors, families and friends come together to browse, discover something unexpected and enjoy the lively, welcoming atmosphere that makes Surry Hills so special. Live performances by emerging musicians through Playground Gigs add another wonderful dimension, filling Shannon Reserve with music and giving local talent an opportunity to connect with new audiences. We are proud of the role the Neighbourhood Centre has played in nurturing this much-loved community event over the years, and of the connections, creativity and sense of belonging it continues to bring to the heart of Surry Hills.








Volunteers, Students, and Interns

We are deeply grateful to the volunteers, students, and interns who support our work each year. Their talents, skills, and time are essential to our mission, and their contributions make a significant impact. To each of you, we extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation.



Children's Services

Long Day Care

Our family-focused Long Day Care Centre continues to operate under the confident leadership of **Spring Lai**, who has dedicated over two decades of her career to providing high-quality care to generations of local children. Many of our educators have also been with us for many years, building lasting relationships with children and families. Through fluctuations in enrolments, changing demographics and challenges facing the early childhood sector, this continuity has remained one of the Centre's greatest strengths. It reflects our longstanding presence in Surry Hills and our commitment to supporting local families.

Over the past year, we undertook a collaborative review of our Centre's philosophy, inviting feedback from educators, families, children and our Board. Families expressed their appreciation for the kindness, dedication and genuine care of our staff. The children's contributions were open and sincere, with children saying that what matters most to them is interesting things to do, playing with friends, and caring adults they can turn to for support. Our updated philosophy reflects these priorities, alongside our commitment to inclusion, respect for diversity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, and strong partnerships with families.

Alongside this work, we have continued to strengthen our commitment to children's safety, quality education and continuous improvement. This important work is carried out in close collaboration with Spring and the team of educators, drawing on their considerable professional experience and knowledge. Through all the changes and challenges, our focus remains to provide a safe, nurturing and inclusive place where children can thrive, grow and play and families feel supported through the times when they most need the village.



Out of School Hours Care

Our Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) service at Crown Street Public School continues to be a busy and important part of school life for many local families. Led by Coordinator Frankie Peterson, our strong team of Responsible Persons and educators brings together experience, professional knowledge and care for the children who attend. Many of our educators have been with the service for a long time, watching children grow from their first days in Kindergarten through to final years of primary school. The team works closely together, sharing ideas, knowledge and responsibilities to provide a consistent and caring service.

OSHC continues to maintain strong enrolments, with our Vacation Care program regularly booked out. Children particularly look forward to the wide range of excursions, creative activities, sports and special events organised by our educators. Alongside an engaging recreational program, we remain strongly committed to children's safety and wellbeing. Over the past year, the team has continued to review and strengthen our policies, risk assessments, emergency procedures and supervision practices in response to changes in legislation and regulations.

We have also placed a growing emphasis on diversity, inclusion and meaningful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Children have had opportunities to learn about First Nations traditions, including participating in a Smoking Ceremony, and have begun a collaborative artwork project with two Aboriginal artists. These experiences encourage curiosity, respect and a deeper understanding of the Gadigal Country on which our service operates.





Surry Hills
Neighbourhood Centre

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Our partners:

We would also like to thank and acknowledge Surry Hills Social Housing Tenants, the Neighbourhood Advisory Board and The Langton Centre.