**UPPER MURRAY REGIONAL NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE NETWORK**

***NETWORK-WIDE STRATEGY FOR WORKING WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT***

**Introduction**

The relationship between Neighbourhood Houses (NH) and Local Government is becoming more of a focus across the State. There are a growing number of NHCP-funded centres that are auspiced by Local Government (we have three in the UMR Network) and many centres receive support from their local council through direct funding (eg recurrent and project) and/or in-kind funding (eg use of premises for ‘peppercorn’ rent).

With the introduction of rate capping in 2016/17 financial year, many councils are considering how funds are allocated. There is a concern amongst NHs that they may lose the support they receive, which for many places the ongoing viability of their centres at great risk.

Coupled with this is the growing scope of public libraries, which are usually run by Local Government through funds received from State Government and through rate revenue. Libraries are increasingly offering programs that are in direct competition with those run by NHs (eg craft programs, computer courses) and they are often offered for free.

A recent Round Table forum hosted by State Library Victoria highlighted the current movement of libraries into what has been the traditional space of NHs and Learn Locals. These are issues that are not going away!

**Purpose**

The purpose of this Strategy is to develop a Network-wide approach to building relationships between UMRNHN members and their local council to:

1. raise the profile of NHs in each LGA so they become a ‘go to’ partner for Local Government
2. build partnerships that will enhance overall program delivery, rather than duplicating, thus improving opportunities for participation for local communities

The Strategy recognises that many NHs have built, or are building, great relationships with their council on their own behalf. We do not want to interfere with what is already working well, but to use the strength of the Network, and the NH sector more broadly, to enhance work that is already underway.

**Strategy for UMRNHN**

1. Collect stories, examples and case studies of programs being run by NHs in the UMRNHN that focus on the impact and outcomes of programs
2. Develop presentation template based on State, Network and local data that highlights the impact of NHs
3. Facilitate planning meetings with NHs in each LGA to develop a local strategy and action plan
4. Find contact details for relevant Council staff (including library staff) and Councilors in each LGA
5. Arrange meetings with those staff/Councilors to talk about NHs and their value to the local community
6. UMRNHN COM write to NHVic to express concerns and request that NHVic work on behalf of members with Local Government representatives to raise the profile of NHs and to raise the issue of public libraries