



**Wyndham**  
Community &  
Education Centre Inc.  
*Improving lives - Strengthening communities*

# WYNDHAM COMMUNITY & EDUCATION CENTRE

Improving lives –  
Strengthening communities

CELEBRATING  
**50** YEARS



ANNUAL REPORT  
**2024**



*Improving lives –  
Strengthening communities*

# INTRODUCTION

Wyndham CEC is proud to present its 2024 Annual Report, marking a significant milestone—our 50th anniversary. This report reflects not only a year of achievements but also five decades of dedication to learning, inclusion, and community impact. As we celebrate this remarkable journey, we acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our community, stakeholders, and partners, whose support has shaped our success.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Wyndham CEC respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which we operate and deliver our programs and services. We honour Elders past and present and recognise the emerging leaders of tomorrow. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and pay tribute to the deep wisdom, knowledge, and resilience of First Nations peoples in caring for Country and community since time immemorial.

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## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

2024 marked the 50th Anniversary for Wyndham Community and Education Centre. For half a century Wyndham CEC has served the communities of Western Melbourne and in more recent years, regional Victoria.

Our 50th year was marked by continued growth across programs in education, settlement and community services. Most exciting is how rapidly additional resources available to Julia Gillard Community College have impacted students. Now commencing its second year of operation, Julia Gillard Community College was officially established as a school in late-2023, realising a long-term vision of both the board and senior management for our senior secondary program.

I was fortunate to be given an opportunity to interact with two brilliant students in the lead up to our 50th Anniversary celebrations. It was a privilege to see first-hand the impact that the school has had on young people who had otherwise struggled to thrive within the confines of the mainstream system.

Our 50th Anniversary celebrations also coincided with the unveiling of our new multi-million dollar building at 12 Synnot Street. The building will provide much needed space for our ever-expanding suite of services offered to the community and for the team of staff members who ensure such services are delivered effectively.

For the very first time, the top level of 12 Synnot Street was opened to guests, members, staff and community as part of our 50th Anniversary celebrations. We were honoured to have the 27th Prime Minister of Australia, The Hon. Julia Gillard attend as our guest speaker. Having previously attended both our 25th and 30th Anniversaries, she spoke of Wyndham CEC's impact across the past five decades and our deep connections with the community. We were also privileged to have the Treasurer of Victoria, Tim Pallas, officially unveil our new building at 12 Synnot Street.

The board is excited about what the next 50 years will have in store for the organisation as we continue our impact across the West of Melbourne and regional Victoria.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our community, partners, members and most importantly staff and volunteers for your ongoing support. Five decades of continued impact would not have been possible without it.

**Jeffrey Lai**  
*Chairperson, Board of Governance*



## CEO'S REPORT

As Wyndham Community & Education Centre Inc. (Wyndham CEC) marked its 50th anniversary in 2024, I take great pride in reflecting on our extraordinary journey over fifty years in the community; a journey of resilience, creativity, and unwavering commitment to education and community services.

Since its early days as Werribee Community Centre in the 1970s, Wyndham CEC has consistently evolved to meet the changing needs of the community. The expansion during the 1980s set the stage for a broader scope of services into the 1990s including introducing technological advancements and a focus on vocational education and employability skills. The 2000s saw the implementation of innovative programs and strengthened partnerships that extended our reach beyond Wyndham and into other regions of Victoria. These are the early days of the growth that continues to define us now.

One of the most significant milestones was the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) in 2005. Designed for students struggling in traditional school settings, this program has empowered thousands of young people to complete their secondary education, reinforcing our commitment to inclusive learning. In our 50th year, we took this commitment even further with the establishment of an independent school dedicated to helping young people realise their full potential. 2024 saw the cohort of inaugural students of Julia Gillard Community College (initially Werribee Community College) complete their Year 11 or Year 12. We also welcomed Meg Cotter as Principal of the school in May 2024.

The mid-to-late 2000s were marked by sustained growth and diversification. The expansion of settlement services, digital literacy, and employment support programs further solidified our role as a key provider of education and community services. We also developed strong partnerships through networks such as the Wyndham Humanitarian Network and the Wyndham Interfaith Network, allowing us to enhance our impact and better serve the region.

Our physical presence grew significantly during this period, with the use of Wayaperri House in Werribee since 2006, the purchase of 20 Synnot St in 2017 and most recently, our three-storey community services hub at 12 Synnot St, which we officially opened in October 2024 and will become operational in 2025. Expanding our services and strengthening partnerships remain core principles of our business model.

After 50 years, Wyndham CEC continues to leave a legacy of transformation. Education has always been at the heart of our vision and mission as a pathway to lifelong learning, employment, personal growth, and civic contribution. A student once summed up the essence of Wyndham CEC by saying, "It's more than just an education." This sentiment captures the spirit of our work—providing holistic support and opportunities for the communities we serve.

Looking ahead, fifty years is a remarkable achievement, and just as we articulated at our golden jubilee in October 2024, we remain committed to the principles that have guided us thus far: targeted programs and services, inclusivity, and a steadfast dedication to community empowerment and capacity building. With a strong foundation and an eye toward the future, Wyndham CEC is poised for continued growth and impact in the years to come.

Our 50th celebration in October 2024 was a joyous occasion, graced by Julia Gillard herself along with many other dignitaries, special guests and former staff and Board members.

Thank you to our Board, staff, volunteers, stakeholders and funding bodies for your ongoing support. May we continue to transform lives and strengthen communities for generations to come.

**Dr Jennie Barrera**  
*CEO, Wyndham Community & Education Centre Inc.*



# YEAR OVERVIEW

In 2024, Wyndham CEC remained committed to supporting local communities by delivering a diverse range of educational programs, employment services, and community development initiatives



OVER  
**130 staff**  
and  
**43 volunteers**



SERVICES DELIVERED  
FROM  
**39 venues**  
across 6 local  
government areas



STUDENTS FROM  
**87 countries**  
speaking  
**84 first languages**



OUR EMPLOYMENT  
SERVICES TEAM PLACED  
**142 local people**  
in sustainable jobs, supporting  
over **35** businesses across  
Melbourne's west



SETTLEMENT SERVICES  
had on average  
**500 client contacts**  
**per month**  
and conducted **188** information  
sessions across the year



IN AN AVERAGE MONTH  
**Junubi Wyndham**  
had **105** client contacts, issued  
**55** family support packages  
and delivered **12** community  
programs



**585 students**  
WERE  
**learning English**  
in an average week



**48,190 hours**  
OF PRE-ACCREDITED TRAINING  
were delivered, with a total of  
**1,626** student enrolments

## 2024 CELEBRATIONS & EVENTS



LAUNCH OF  
**Julia Gillard Community College**  
as an independent and specialist  
senior secondary school by the  
Hon. Julia Gillard AC, 27th Prime  
Minister of Australia



CELEBRATION OF  
**Wyndham CEC's 50th anniversary**  
Including the launch of the  
book '50 years of Wyndham  
Community & Education Centre'



LAUNCH OF  
**Wyndham CEC's new building**  
12 Synnot St by Tim Pallas MP,  
Member for Werribee



LAUNCH OF THE  
**Our World in Wyndham**  
song composition in collaboration  
with Play It Forward



WINNER OF  
Wyndham CEC's Exceptional  
Performance Award  
**Jacinta Stafford**



DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON,  
**Margaret Campbell**  
acknowledged by Wyndham City  
for 25 years as a volunteer at  
Wyndham CEC



**Paul Rawlinson**  
recognised as a finalist in the  
VICTORIAN LEARN LOCAL  
LEADERSHIP AWARD



**Hae Mu & Ah Myang**  
receive 2024 Lalor Hero  
Awards from  
JOANNE RYAN MP



WYNDHAM CEC RECEIVES  
**AAFRO Ubuntu  
Humanitarian Impact  
Award**



## EDUCATION & TRAINING

In 2024, Wyndham CEC continued to expand and enhance its education and training programs to meet the needs of the community.

The vocational training team broadened its VET Delivered in Secondary Schools (VETDSS) program. Through the WynBay LLEN Hobsons Bay VET Cluster, two Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care classes were delivered at Emmanuel College in Point Cook, while three classes from the Business Services Training Package were offered to students at Julia Gillard Community College.

As a Learning for Employment (Lfe) partner, Wyndham CEC contributed to the preparation of Lfe tenders for the Skills for Education & Employment (SEE) program and the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). The SEE program tender was successful, securing a new five-year contract commencing on 1 July 2024. The outcome of the AMEP tender is expected to be announced in mid-2025.

Demand for AMEP classes remained strong in Wyndham and Barwon, with a 13.5% increase in student numbers compared to 2023 and a 20% rise in student hours attended. This included the re-establishment of an AMEP Youth Class in Wyndham, led by experienced teacher Chris Moxham. The program engaged young people (18-24) in activities beyond the classroom to support their English language development. A key highlight was the partnership with the Werribee Tigers Football Club, which provided students with sport and recreation opportunities at Avalon Oval during their scheduled class times.

Pre-accredited programs continued to play a vital role in supporting learners across Wyndham, equipping them with foundational skills to transition into further education and employment. In 2024, these programs were delivered across 24 community centres and schools, with seven new sites added to extend accessibility to more learners. The expansion enabled Wyndham CEC to reach a broader demographic, ensuring that individuals from diverse backgrounds had the opportunity to engage in tailored, skills-based learning. The increased demand for these programs was reflected in an 11% rise in delivery hours compared to the previous year, highlighting the growing need for flexible and community-based education.

After 18 months, the AMEP team was able to return to a new site at Corio Village, providing a convenient and welcoming location for English language learners in northern Geelong. The new space allows for a supportive learning environment, where students can access complementary programs such as settlement and employment support.

The Wyndham Learning Festival remained a highlight of the year, with Wyndham CEC leading 11 events. These included a Cultural Learning Showcase, the Pacific Werribee Jobs Fair, the Learning for Business Conference, and eight Short Course taster programs, further reinforcing the organisation's commitment to lifelong learning and community engagement.

The Education & Training unit is led by Managers - Alex Findlay & Lidia Pivato.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES

Wyndham CEC's Community Services unit continued to deliver a wide range of impactful programs across settlement, community development, and employment services throughout 2024.

The unit comprising 14 dedicated staff members, remained focused on empowering individuals, building community connections, and supporting social and economic participation across Melbourne's west, Geelong, and Ararat.

A major milestone for the year was the commencement of a new three-year Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) contract in July. Under this expanded contract, Wyndham CEC provided services across multiple regions, with the settlement team actively engaging with newly arrived communities. A collaborative approach remained central to this work, as demonstrated through partnerships with other organisations to deliver culturally responsive programs such as Culture Konnect, Tuning into Teens, and Parenting in a New Culture. These initiatives supported families in navigating life in Australia while strengthening their capacity to thrive.

The organisation celebrated Cultural Diversity Week through several initiatives, including the launch of the Peace Choir's song, Our World in Wyndham, at the Wyndham Cultural Centre. Wyndham CEC also partnered with Ararat Rural City Council to co-host a Harmony Day celebration at Ararat College, further demonstrating its reach and commitment to regional community engagement.

The Diverse Horizons project, continuing from 2023, fostered cross-cultural connection among young people. In June, a highlight, was a friendly soccer match between young people from South Sudanese and Burmese communities. The event featured cultural performances and shared food, and was supported by Wyndham City, Victoria Police, and Wyndham FC. It served as a powerful platform for community building and celebration of diversity.

Employment services remained a key focus throughout 2024, with Wyndham CEC facilitating local job placements through a range of programs. These included Reconnect, the Victorian African Community Action Plan (VACAP) Employment Broker program, the Women's Micro-business Project, and two Local Jobs Recovery Fund projects: Linking to Careers in Healthcare & Social Assistance and the Ararat Resettlement Project. These programs not only placed jobseekers into meaningful employment but also contributed to long-term economic resilience for individuals and communities.

Wyndham CEC acknowledges the continued efforts of the Community Services team and the support of its partner agencies and stakeholders. Their dedication ensures that the organisation remains responsive to the evolving needs of its diverse communities.

The Community Services unit is led by Manager, Robert Hughes.





## JUNUBI WYNDHAM

In 2024, Junubi Wyndham continued to strengthen its role as a vital support and engagement program for South Sudanese young people and their families. Through a combination of outreach, mentoring, education, sport, and community events, Junubi Wyndham remained committed to promoting social inclusion, cultural identity, and positive life outcomes for young people and their families.

The year saw the establishment of a Homework Club for secondary school students in Werribee, providing a supportive learning environment that enhanced students' academic engagement and success. The Homework Club quickly became a valued resource for families and was further expanded with the support of additional funding from the Magistrates' Court of Victoria.

Junubi Wyndham's School Holiday Activities were a major highlight, attracting over 300 young people per term to a wide range of programs designed to build confidence, social connection, and skills development during the school break.

In April, the Junubi Stars Basketball Clinic—delivered in partnership with the Ben Simmons Family Foundation—drew over 200 participants. The high-energy event gained significant media attention, with coverage on SBS News and in the Wyndham Star Weekly, shining a spotlight on the program's positive community impact.

Junubi Wyndham deepened its collaboration with the Department of Justice and Community Safety in 2024, providing support to young people exiting the Youth Justice system. Tailored case management, community connection, and wraparound support remained key strategies to assist these young people in successfully reintegrating into education and employment.

In response to the needs of young families, Junubi Wyndham also established a South Sudanese Playgroup at the Mainview Boulevard Family Learning Centre in Truganina, offering a safe and welcoming space for early childhood development and peer connection for parents and caregivers.

Cultural celebration and visibility remained a priority, with Junubi Wyndham partnering with CoLocal to deliver the Kaleidoscope African Festival in Point Cook—a vibrant community event that celebrated African cultures through music, food, and performance.

Throughout the year, Junubi Wyndham remained actively engaged in sector collaboration, including with a range of local schools and contributing to key networks including the Multicultural Multifaith Advisory, the South Sudanese Access and Participation Network (SSAPN), the Wyndham H3 Alliance, Target Zero, and the Wyndham Humanitarian Network.

Junubi Wyndham acknowledges the commitment of its youth workers, project officers, partners, and community members whose support and leadership have enabled another year of growth, inclusion, and positive impact.

**Poly Kiyaga**  
Junubi Wyndham Program Manager



## JULIA GILLARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

(transitioning from Werribee Community College)



2024 marked a historic milestone: the inaugural year of operation as an independently registered senior secondary school for Wyndham CEC. Our evolution from a community-based VCAL provider since 2005, into a registered educational institution, reflected our deep roots in alternative education and our unwavering commitment to young people seeking a different pathway to learning.

We are proud to now be known as *Julia Gillard Community College*, changing our name following registration - a name that reflects both our values and our vision.

Julia Gillard, our former local member, Australia's 27th Prime Minister and the first woman to hold the position, is internationally recognised for her lifelong commitment to education, social justice and equity. As a former Education Minister, Julia Gillard championed reforms that aimed to improve access, accountability, and opportunity within Australia's school system. Her legacy aligns deeply with our own story: a school born from the need to provide alternative, inclusive, and high-quality education to young people who had previously felt excluded from mainstream schooling.

What began in 2005 as a small VCAL program at the former Werribee Community Centre grew into a vital educational lifeline for hundreds of young people. The initial program—sparked by rising demand for Year 10-level study and concerns about disengagement from mainstream schooling—was a bold, community-driven initiative. Championed by Jennie Barrera, with early support from Anne Mitchell and Shannon Cullen, the first full-time VCAL class was established.

By 2008, our growing student numbers and formal registration as a Non-School Senior Secondary Provider (NSSSP) through the VRQA signalled our deepening role in the alternative school community. From one class in 2005 to more than 100 students by 2013, our program expanded across Foundation, Intermediate and Senior levels of VCAL, including a dedicated EAL VCAL stream from 2009. Under the leadership of Teresa Vizintin from 2010, the program flourished both academically and culturally.





In partnership with Federation University, the innovative BA@Wyndham program launched in 2015, demonstrating that our students, though once disengaged, were highly capable of succeeding in tertiary education. This initiative won a Victorian Government Learn Local Award in 2016 and supported 35 students into university-level learning before its conclusion in 2017.

We are proud to have supported students financially over the years through:

- The Anne Mitchell Memorial Scholarship (since 2010)
- The Sandy Mein Scholarships (from 2015), in memory of a beloved teacher

In 2023, the school transitioned to the VCE Vocational Major (VM) and the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC), in line with reforms from the Firth Review. These changes, aimed at creating a more unified and inclusive senior secondary system, were embraced by staff and students.

The same review prompted us to consider a bold future: independent school registration. After extensive preparation, the application was submitted in June 2023 and approved on 29 December 2023. We had a few short weeks to open our new school for students in January 2024.

We opened the year as Werribee Community College, welcoming 42 students across VCE VM and VPC levels. As interim Principal, Wyndham CEC's CEO began the search for a school Principal along with Assistant Principal Teresa Vizintin. Meg Cotter was appointed Principal in May 2024.

By August we had 60 students enrolled and finished the year with 53. Notably, in 2024, Jaymie Dowell was celebrated as the Anne Mitchell Scholarship recipient.

In October, we were honoured with a visit from Julia Gillard herself who met staff and students.

After a big year, we celebrated our inaugural students with a lovely Presentation Evening. Our end of year results was pleasing with 88% of satisfactory VCE completions and 89% of VET units completed.

We thank our staff, students, families, partners, school council and broader community for their ongoing support during what was an exciting new chapter. We are indebted to staff and Board of Wyndham CEC for their ongoing support.



# NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE



## A 2024 SNAPSHOT

- **5,000** people used Wyndham CEC services in an average week
- Programs and services were offered across **118** hours per week
- Assisted **66** different community groups per month
- Worked in partnership with **128** organisations and agencies
- **43** volunteers contributed an average of **254** volunteer hours per week

### The following Neighbourhood House activities were offered:

- Services Australia outreach
- Tax Help services
- Justice of the Peace services
- Co-location of Djerriwarrh Community and Education Services' Parent Pathways program
- Room hire to **52** community organisations
- Coordination of an organisation-wide volunteer program
- Auspice of three community organisations

### In addition to on-going Neighbourhood House activities the following days/weeks of significance were recognised by Wyndham CEC through organised events:

- International Women's Day
- Cultural Diversity Week
- Harmony Day / International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- National Volunteer Week
- Neighbourhood House Week
- Reconciliation Week
- NAIDOC Week
- Homelessness Week
- Refugee Week
- Adult Learners Week
- MoVember
- 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence
- Senior's Month





## TREASURER'S REPORT

It has been an honour to serve as Treasurer of Wyndham Community and Education Centre throughout 2024. The steadfast dedication and professionalism demonstrated by our staff in advancing the mission of the organisation continues to be both commendable and deeply appreciated.

Wyndham CEC remains in a good financial position, ensuring the organisation is well-equipped to pursue sustainable growth and respond effectively to emerging opportunities and challenges. Our disciplined and strategic approach to financial management and service delivery has reinforced our standing as a dependable and respected place-based organisation. This enduring stability enables continued investment in our workforce, programs, and strategic partnerships, thereby enhancing the positive impact we deliver to the community.

In keeping with established practice, the Audited Financial Statement will be presented separately as part of the Annual Report. I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the management team and staff for their unwavering commitment, expertise, and integrity. I remain confident that Wyndham CEC is well positioned to maintain its financial health and operational strength in 2025 and beyond.

**Matthew Hillier**  
*Treasurer, Board of Governance*



## FUNDING & SPONSORS

Wyndham CEC would like to thank the following funding bodies and sponsors:

### Australian Government

- Department of Employment & Workplace Relations
- Department of Home Affairs

### State Government of Victoria

- Department of Family, Fairness & Housing
- Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry & Regions
- Department of Premier & Cabinet

### Local Government

- Wyndham City Council
- Ararat Rural City Council

### Wyndham Learning Festival sponsors

- Victoria University
- Pacific Werribee
- Borrow Box
- Kip McGrath
- Southern Rural Water
- ME Bank

### Philanthropic / Other

- Pratt Foundation
- Magistrates Court of Victoria
- Sandy Mein Scholarship Fund

## PARTNERS

Wyndham CEC acknowledges the following partners:

Comfort Care & Community Services  
Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services  
Energy & Water Ombudsman (Victoria)  
Foundation House  
Fresh Select  
Gambler's Help  
Institute for Sustainable Industries & Liveable Cities, Victoria University  
IPC Health  
Junubi Stars Basketball Club  
Laverton Community Integrated Services  
Laverton Youth Foundation  
Mackillop College

Manor Lakes P-12 College  
Mercy Health Victoria  
MiCare  
Network West  
Pacific Werribee  
Play It Forward Inc.  
Prace  
Services Australia - Centrelink  
Shaab Soccer Team  
SYC  
The Gordon Institute of TAFE  
Utopia Refugee Health  
V/Line  
Victorian Multicultural Commission  
Victoria Police

Werribee Football Club  
Werribee Open Range Zoo  
Werribee River Association  
Werribee Secondary College  
Westjustice  
Wynbay LLEN  
Wyndham Central Secondary College  
Wyndham City Council  
Wyndham FC  
Wyndham Park Community Centre  
Wyndham Park Primary School  
Yarraville Community Centre  
Youth Projects

Wyndham CEC also acknowledges as partners the members of the following consortia and networks:

H3 Alliance  
Learning for Employment (Lfe)  
Network West  
North-West Compliance Community of Practice  
Opportunity Wyndham  
Wyndham Anti-Racism Support Network  
Wyndham Humanitarian Network  
Wyndham Interfaith Network

Wyndham Neighbourhood Hubs  
Wyndham School Community Hubs  
Wyndham Workers with Young People  
Wyndham Youth Senior Alliance  
Wyndham & Hobsons Bay VET Clusters





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