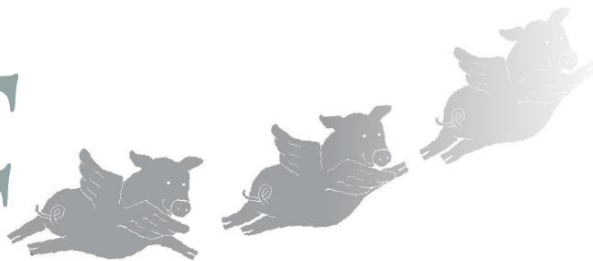


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Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program

Evaluation Report Number 2

2012 – 2014

Prepared by
PDF Management Services Pty Ltd

for
Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania

December 2014

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1. Executive Summary and list of recommendations

1.1 Executive Summary

The Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program is delivered through the Neighbourhood House network in Tasmania using funds provided by the Tasmanian Community Fund.

The program was funded for a period of 10 years, with external program reviews to be conducted every two years.

PDF Management Services Pty Ltd were engaged to undertake the initial review for the 2009-2011 period and have been re-engaged to complete the second review for the 2012-2014 period.

Given the longer term nature of the program, both reviews have been undertaken using a developmental – action learning approach.

The recommendations from the first review have largely been implemented with positive results being reported – with many of the observations and judgements reported in the first review being re-enforced.

A number of people in the community, particularly those communities served by Neighbourhood Houses, with very low literacy skills are unlikely to use more formal literacy programs being offered by other providers.

This evaluation shows however, that some of these people are willing to access literacy projects provided by Neighbourhood Houses. This is particularly the case using a soft entry approach where literacy outcomes are combined with activities that meet personal interests and other needs of participants and contribute to their broader life skills development.

There is an opportunity for Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and the Neighbourhood House network to capitalise on this informal, soft entry community based literacy approach. This approach not only improves confidence around reading and writing practice, but also achieves more holistic, personal, family and community outcomes in a much broader context - not offered by other literacy providers. That is, increased interest and capacity to read books, read to children, apply measurement and maths at home and so on, are legitimate outcomes and there is anecdotal accounts that participation in the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities achieve such results. It also fits well with the unique positioning of the Neighbourhood House network within the community and builds on their effectiveness in engaging isolated and vulnerable people.

Many participants in other literacy programs are engaged in the community; are committed to improving their literacy skills; and are ready for one to one tutoring. In the case of Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program, many participants are not engaged in the community; would not commit to a literacy project if it were described as such; and will only become engaged in a literacy project where literacy outcomes are an adjunct to meeting other practical needs or are associated with other activities of Houses such as cooking, community gardening or computer training, where participants are already involved.

It is the view of this evaluation, that this participant group should be the primary target of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program. The Program is designed to provide support for a range of literacy levels and needs – many of whom may be less likely to enrol in more formal and structured literacy programs offered by other providers. The program does this by providing resources for projects that include participants exhibiting a wide range of literacy levels.

Not surprisingly, the first two years of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities has focussed on establishing the Program – what could loosely be described as 'the here and now' needs. This has included developing program guidelines and funding processes; establishing policies, processes and reporting frameworks; increasing awareness and promoting the Program to Neighbourhood Houses; and encouraging and supporting Houses to apply for funding.

This establishment phase is now complete and a solid foundation for future development and growth has been built. The Program has clearly developed a model that has credibility and is achieving results. The next stage of development of the Program should focus more strongly on strategic thinking and long term planning.

The significant funding of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program (which covers a 10 year period, with provision of an interest investment trust fund to continue beyond that) provides a framework to make a real difference to people with low literacy skills and their families. Developing long term targets and strategies provides the potential for larger and higher level outcomes than would be achieved by focussing solely on an annual funding process.

In order to construct a long term direction, Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania has a pivotal role and must:

- take a proactive strategic leadership role
- build the capacity of each Neighbourhood House to think and act strategically
- pursue the development of skills and expertise of staff and volunteers
- galvanise a culture that delivers this larger vision and delivers value for this substantial investment in the Tasmanian community.

This report contains a number of recommendations that are designed to inform and drive the next stage of evolution and development of the Program.

The major findings and recommendations of this review involve (a) a shift in focus of the Project Officer position from administration to field work and House capacity development and (b) trialling funding options with funding process to prepare for the reduced level of funding anticipated for year 11 of the Program and beyond.

1.2 List of recommendations

Recommendations are provided through-out the report, along with the observations and rationale which has led to the recommendations. Listed below is a summary of the recommendations detailed through-out the report.

Recommendation 1:

That the policy of holding back 10% of the grant until the project report was received be ceased.

Recommendation 2:

'That Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania re-establish face to face meetings of the Everyday Literacy Program Assessment Panel meetings at a frequency to be determined in consultation with the Assessment Panel.'

Recommendation 3:

That the application and reporting process be simplified as follows:

Design the application form as a single form to reduce duplication – with the form be in three parts to be completed at different stages in the process.

Recommendation 4:

That Houses that submit projects for funding that are not approved due to the application details not meeting the required level continue to be encouraged and supported to re-submit their application if funds remain available.

Recommendation 5:

That Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania trial regional workshops where Houses develop project ideas and draft applications under the support and guidance of Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania staff.

Recommendation 6:

That Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania review the Project Officer position with the view to it being re-designed as a House Development Officer position with a greater emphasis on field-based work to further develop the Literacy Program and the capacity of Houses to deliver it.

Recommendation 7:

That appropriate funds be budgeted to support field work by the Project Officer.

Recommendation 8:

That the Project Officer design and implement a professional development and House capacity building strategy for the Everyday Literacy Program in consultation with the Houses.

Recommendation 9:

That Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania allocate \$ 15,000 each year from the budget for the next 5 years to develop and trial options for an ongoing and sustainable grants program for 11 years and beyond for the everyday Literacy Program.

2. Introduction

The Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program is delivered through the Neighbourhood House network in Tasmania using funds provided by the Tasmanian Community Fund.

The funding deed requires Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania to undertake an evaluation of the Program every two years. The Program has now been operating for four years and this is the second evaluation to be undertaken.

The Program

The Program is co-ordinated by Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania, through a 10 year funding agreement which provides \$ 1.5 million for program delivery, professional development and administration.

A provision in the grant allows for the Program to continue beyond the initial 10 year period. The grant includes the establishment of a perpetual fund in which the interest from the grant funds (the full ten year grant was paid up-front), is to be invested. At the end of the initial 10 year grant period, the interest from the perpetual fund is to be used for the ongoing funding of literacy projects in the future.

One of the consequences of this funding model, is that Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania must not only deliver the program for 10 years, it must also prepare and plan for the ongoing delivery of the program in year 11 and beyond – with a much smaller funding pool – unless additional funds can be accessed.

Defining Literacy in a Neighbourhood House Context

In order to understand where the Everyday Literacy Program fits within Neighbourhood Houses, it is useful to have a working definition of Literacy in a Neighbourhood House context.

Literacy skill development in Neighbourhood Houses is different to most mainstream literacy programs and the definition helps with this understanding. The definition has been developed by Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania, using a number of sources which are referenced below.

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania define literacy as follows:

'Literacy is a broad concept. Being literate is about making sense of the world around us. Literacy includes the traditional skills of reading, writing, speaking, spelling, grammar and numeracy, and encompasses much more. These skills occur within and across a growing range of contexts that enable sense to be made of the increasingly complex perspectives encountered. Engagement with

the world includes technology, emotional well-being, financial management, social expression, among many forms of engagement. Negotiating these contexts, being literate in them, is necessary to participate fully in society.

Literacy is an acquired ability to understand, observe, analyse and critically respond to, and respond appropriately where required. It fulfils the need for information so that people can function effectively in society.

Literacy begins with the needs and actions of the learner. These needs change over time, so the focus needs to be less on the digestion of facts and more on learning how to learn.¹

The spirit of this definition is illustrated in a comment from one of the Houses at a regional meeting 'Everything we do around here involves literacy – right through from teaching volunteers to answer the phone.' This typifies how embedded the literacy need is in the House communities.

Houses contribute to the social and emotional well-being of participants at a number of levels and build confidence through easily accessible, user friendly and non-judgemental activities. This culture of working with people at whatever level they are functioning means a 'one size fits all' approach is not appropriate, and the Program needs to be responsive and individualised. In most cases it also means being more basic than other mainstream literacy programs and the literacy skill development being applied in very practical activities and tasks required in general day-to-day living.

¹ Hull, GA 2003, "At last: youth culture and digital media: new literacies for new times", *Research in the teaching of English*, Vol 38, No. 2, pp229-233

Keefe, EB & Copeland, SR 2011, "What is literacy? The power of a definition", *Research and practice for persons with severe disabilities*, Vol 36, No. 3-4, pp 92-99

Reder, S 2013, "Lifelong and life-wide adult literacy development", *Perspectives on language and literacy*, Vol 39, No. 2, pp18-21

Reder, S 2011, "The longitudinal study of adult learning: challenging assumptions", retrieved from <http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/sites/default/files/CFLRsrchBrief_Chllngng_Assmptns.pdf>, 23 Dec 2014

UNESCO 2005, *Education for all: literacy for life*, UNESCO Publishing, France (retrieved from <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001416/141639e.pdf>>, 23 Dec 2014)

Tasmanian Adult Literacy Action Plan, 2010, Tasmanian Department of Education.

3. Evaluation Objectives

This is the second evaluation of the program that has been undertaken, and the objectives of this evaluation are slightly different that those of the first evaluation which were:

- *Determine the appropriateness of the Program aims, rationale and assumptions, and policies.*
- *Review management, administrative and technical capacities of Tasmanian Association of Community Houses to deliver the Program*
- *Review the processes and efficiency of operation of the Program*
- *Review the effectiveness of the delivery of the Program*
- *Recommend any improvements to Program design and delivery.*
- *Review how Projects identify local literacy needs*
- *Determine the suitability of Projects for addressing identified literacy needs*
- *Review the capacities of Houses to manage, administer and provide appropriate skills to deliver literacy Projects*
- *Review the processes and efficiency of operation of Projects*
- *Review the literacy and other outcomes from the delivery of Projects*
- *Identify gaps in local capacities and resources*
- *Recommend any improvements to the design, delivery and data collection of Projects.*

The previous evaluation considered the program with a focus on the effectiveness of the initial two year establishment phase including the systems, processes and administrative arrangements which had been established.

The focus of this second evaluation involved assessing the level and effectiveness of implementing the recommendations from the previous evaluation; identifying areas of improvement and modifications to further develop the program; and to consider issues relating to the transition from year 10 to year 11 of the program which will see a significant decrease in resources at that time.

The objectives of this evaluation are:

- *Review systems and processes used to allocate grants and report on projects by Houses*
- *Review the actions and implementation of recommendations from the first evaluation report*

- *Recommend any improvements to Program design and delivery*
- *Recommend actions for the remaining six years of the ten year funded project in preparation for the ongoing and less resourced program for year eleven and beyond.*

4. Methodology

The evaluation was undertaken using the following stages:

Stage 1: Project Scoping

A project plan was developed, based on the evaluation brief provided by Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania.

This was finalised in discussion with the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Executive Officer and the Everyday Literacy Program Project Officer.

Stage 2: Project Establishment and Preparation

Key program files and documentation were identified in consultation with Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and analysed against the evaluation objectives. These were:

- ❖ Funding Guidelines
- ❖ Funding Application forms
- ❖ *Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania / Tasmanian Community Fund Deed of Grant*
- ❖ *Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania / House Project Funding Agreement*

The *Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania* web site provides a number of other reference materials and links to assist Houses in the development projects, which demonstrate the systems and processes are comprehensive and transparent.

This material provides great insight into the context, structure and the strategic direction to address adult literacy needs in Australia.

This stage of the evaluation also involved the selection of the six Neighbourhood Houses for intensive interviews in the consultation stage of the evaluation.

Stage 3: Evaluation and consultation

The evaluation involved the following stakeholder engagement:

- ❖ intensive interviews with the six Houses involved in the application for and/or delivery of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities projects. The interviews were designed to further explore the issues and implications of their project approach, processes, administration and skills and to discuss their experience of the overall Program's administration and effectiveness.

- ❖ consultation with Houses around Tasmania through facilitated discussion at the three *Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania* Regional House network meetings
- ❖ interviews with one of the independent members of the funded projects assessment panel
- ❖ interviews with the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Executive Officer and the everyday Literacy Program Project Officer

Stage 4: *Project reporting and presentation*

A draft evaluation report was prepared and finalised following discussion with Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania.

5. Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program Findings

5.1 Overview

The first evaluation found that the Everyday Literacy Program had been well established and a solid foundation had been built for the remaining eight years of the funded program and the ongoing activity that would follow in year 11 and beyond.

This evaluation, not surprisingly, found that the outlook regarding the program by Neighbourhood House Tasmania (Tasmanian Association of Neighbourhood Houses at that time) was short term.

Whilst the activities of the program have moved from a strong focus on establishing the program to more established delivery and implementation issues this evaluation finds that the outlook for the program still remains relatively short term.

In part, this results from the design of the Project Officer position which is very administrative.

Given that similar funding levels will remain for the next six years, and then a significant decrease in the available funding (unless other funding is accessed), planning for and trialling options geared toward the likely funding in year 11 is required to ensure the program is sustainable.

It is also important to reduce the level of administration of the program. The current level of administration cannot be sustained beyond year 10 and any redirection of administrative funds into capacity building and/or program delivery is an investment in the longer term outcomes of the program.

The two main areas of change recommended in this evaluation are increasing the focus on longer term strategic thinking regarding the program and redesigning the Project Officer position with greater emphasis on House development and capacity building with a significant field work role and decreasing the administrative processes and activities.

There still remain a number of Houses who are not accessing the Everyday Literacy funding. One of the aims of the refocus of the Project Officer position is to also increase the number of Houses accessing funding and developing and implementing effective literacy initiatives.

This evaluation reaffirmed the findings of the first evaluation which found that 'the Neighbourhood House network is providing a community based response to literacy that does not appear to be being delivered by other literacy providers. This is largely due to the effective manner in which Houses engage vulnerable people within their communities and to the nature and style of the literacy projects and activities being offered.'

Given the original quote, 'Everything we do around here involves literacy.....', it makes sense for the Everyday Literacy Program to concentrate on building a sustainable model which adds value and embeds literacy support into all/most House activities.

This requires longer term planning for the Everyday Literacy Program beyond the initial 10 year funding period, and refocussing some of the available funding for the remainder of the initial 10 year funding period on House capacity building and professional development as well as funding projects.

A set of principles has been developed to guide the analysis of this evaluation. These principles are as follows:

- a) Ensuring equity of access to funding across all regions and every House
- b) Determining the level of administration and accountability being based on an assessment of benefits and risk
- c) Planning and trialling options during the initial 10 year funding period for the Everyday Literacy Program in year 11 and beyond
- d) Increasing House's capacity to improve literacy and improve quality of life of families through effective engagement
- e) Capturing good stories and other experiences to build the capacity of Houses to improve literacy
- f) Reducing the isolation of Houses by communication, information sharing, and access to ideas and support

The findings from this evaluation are presented under the following areas:

- The Grant Application Process
- Role of the Project Officer
- Professional development and House capacity building
- Program modifications
- Implementation of Recommendations from previous Evaluation Report

5.2 The Grant Application Process

Feedback from some Houses suggests *Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania* consider reducing the level of administration and bureaucracy associated with the funding and reporting processes to enable greater resources to be allocated to supporting Houses to tackle literacy skill development.

This suggestion has been considered within a benefits and risk management framework.

That is, what are the benefits and the risks associated with a reduction in administration and accountability for grant projects.

Identified risks include:

- Wasting money – if the application process was simplified and/or removed the chance of Houses wasting money
- Mis-use of funds – easing the accountability and compliance could mean funds were used to cross-subsidise another activity
- Reputation – in the event that either of the above two situations eventuated (wasting money or is-use of funds) this could damage the reputation of the Houses and *Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania*
- Accountability – if the accountability requirements for the project grant application and reporting processes was reduced, over time there could be a reduced of focus on outcomes
- Small grants – the size of most of the grants allocated are small – 24 of the 33 grants funding in rounds 5, 6, 7, and 8 were for \$ 5,000 or less; 8 were for \$ 15000 or less and one was for \$ 28,000 which was shared across 3 Houses.
- Refunding – in the event that any or all of the above occurred, the chances of re-funding or sourcing alternative funds may be reduced.

Houses do not have a track record of wasting money – quite the opposite as Houses are widely recognised as providing extraordinary levels of services and support to the community from the funding they receive.

In the event that a some literacy funding was used to cross-subsidise another program, arguably there is a strong possibility that it would be contributing to literacy skill development anyway - 'Everything we do around here involves literacy.....'.

If a reduction in accountability and administration is deemed to create a level of risk that is not acceptable at some point, then a thresh-hold could be determined above

which additional information needs to be provided in the application process. For example, there may be a couple of extra pieces of information required for applications between \$ 10,000 and \$ 15,000.

It is also useful to look at the benefits of reducing the administrative requirements of the program. At the moment, the consequences of a relatively intensive administration process for the grants process include:

- Choosing not to apply for grants – there is a view by some Houses that the application process is too time consuming and complex and therefore they chose not to participate and some communities are missing out on these funds/projects
- The time and resources that the Project Officer needs to administer the program is at the expense of professional development and House capacity building which would have a longer lasting contribution to changing literacy skills and quality of lives
- The level of application and reporting processes required to administer the current grants process is not able to be resourced beyond the initial 10 year funding program without additional funding

Feedback regarding the application process was mixed. Some Houses indicated the current process was straight forward and relatively simple. Other Houses suggested the process was too onerous – given the amount of funds generally being sought, with some of these indicating the process actually discouraged and stopped them applying for a grant.

In particular the requirement to provide session outline details was an aspect of the application process that was criticised. Comments included criticism of the requirement to provide detailed delivery planning prior to the grant being approved and a suggestion that this information could be provided after the grant was approved – if it was needed at all. Similarly, there was a feeling that there was duplication across the three application/reporting forms.

The application forms and process are seen as an attempt to teach Houses about the delivery process and delivery planning and the view was that there were better ways to do this through training, professional development and support. Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania were using the application forms and process in a twofold way to provide a project planning tool, as well as get more detail about successful projects and their processes to share with other Houses. This is necessary but the current documents have not been able to achieve that purpose and present a barrier, from a House's perspective.

Some Houses suggested the reporting process was more onerous than the application process, and Houses felt that holding back 10% of the grant until the report was received did not act as a motivator for them to complete the reports.

Current practice is that completion of the Project report is a pre-requisite to grants being funded from any subsequent funding rounds. Houses felt this was an adequate motivator to complete reports.

Recommendation 1:

'That the policy of holding back 10% of the grant until the project report was received be ceased.'

There have been times when applications have not been successful and funding allocation for the funding round has not been fully expended. In some of these cases the proposed projects appear to have been appropriate and the application has not been to the required level. In such cases, the suggestion has been that if funding remains available at the end of the round, that the Project Officer work with the House to re-work and re-submit the application for funding. Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania have previously made this offer to unsuccessful Houses, however given Houses have mentioned this to the evaluator suggests that alternative approaches may need to be considered. This Report is proposing a role of the Project Officer be modified to include field work and regular House visits. This modified role should assist with the process of communication and support for Houses to revise and resubmit unsuccessful applications.

Other suggestions include conducting regional workshops and information sessions annually where Houses are supported to refine their project ideas and drafting their application forms on the day with support and assistance from the Project Officer.

Following the previous evaluation the funding process was changed to accept applications on an ongoing basis rather than fixed date funding rounds. This modification was well accepted and Houses indicated this had improved the funding process.

A positive of the current program was seen to be the ability to reapply to run the same project where it had proven to be successful.

Modifications have also occurred in relation to the manner in which the assessment panel receive and assess applications. Applications are now placed in a Dropbox and the panel are advised of this. The Panel then assess applications and provide their individual feedback and support (or otherwise) for each application. If at least two of the three panel members support a project it is deemed to be approved.

Feedback from one of the Assessment Panel confirmed this process was effective and supported the model of Houses being able to submit applications at any time, they reflected they felt more divorced from the loss of contact and engagement through the

applications being assessed in relative isolation. They also felt there was value in applications being discussed and hearing firsthand the analysis of applications by other panel members.

The email process was instigated to have a “rolling round” of funding as a result of the last evaluation, and an ongoing email decision-making process was put in place rather than face to face meetings. On reflection, whilst there is a capacity for information to be shared by panel members via e-mail, there is still a desire by Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and the Panel Members, for face-to-face meetings.

The Panel Member reported the consistently high quality of projects and acknowledged the consistently impressive intensions that underpinned the projects and activities. They were also keen to see processes introduced which could better communicate the opportunities for good projects that have been developed to be shared and implemented by other Houses. Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania advise they have attempted to use the revamped application process to capture information and experiences to share with other Houses however, it has not yet achieved the desired end with Houses. Again, the proposed change in role of the Project officer should increase the capacity to identify useful experience and learning and share this throughout the House network.

There appears an opportunity for the Assessment Panel to meet as well as assessing applications via e-mail. One option is for the Panel to meet (say 2 to 4 times per year – the frequency to be determined in consultation with the Panel), with applications able to be assessed via e-mail between meetings where the timing requirements of a project did not align with Assessment Panel meetings.

This would also create deadline and motivation for Houses to submit applications. That is ‘the Panel is meeting in 4 weeks, so please submit you applications’. This is not suggesting a return to funding rounds and closing dates for submissions.

Recommendation 2:

‘That Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania re-establish face to face meetings of the Everyday Literacy Program Assessment Panel meetings at a frequency to be determined in consultation with the Assessment Panel.’

Recommendation 3:

‘That the application and reporting process be simplified as follows:

Design the application form as a single form to reduce duplication – with the form be in three parts to be completed at different stages in the process.’

Part 1: Application – including House details; a description of what the application is for – details of the identified need and how this been determined; the objectives of the project; proposed activities. Numbers, start and end dates; funding requested and what the funding is for – wages, resources, and activity costs.

Following the assessment process, approved projects would then complete Part 2.

Part 2: Delivery – including how are the project will be delivered; resources required; delivery methodology; who will deliver the project and details of their relevant skills; participant recruitment; and how project outcomes will be measured and reported.

Then following the project, Part 3 would be completed.

Part 3: Reporting – details of what was delivered and how; description of what was achieved; details of actual resources used; case studied and narrative of the outcomes.

Recommendation 4:

'That Houses that submit projects for funding that are not approved due to the application details not meeting the required level continue to be encouraged and supported to re-submit their application if funds remain available.'

Recommendation 5:

'That Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania trial regional workshops where Houses develop project ideas and draft applications under the support and guidance of Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania staff.'

5.3 Role of the Project Officer

The feedback in relation to the Project Officer was consistently positive around the State with comments noting the approachable manner and desire to provide information, guidance and support.

Comments also suggested the role of that position was focussed on office-based paperwork and Houses sought a more visual and actual presence in the field – visiting Houses and projects. In one *Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania* regional meeting one House commented 'We don't see Steve often enough' and the question was asked as to how many days he works per week?

Houses reflected their isolation – particularly the regional ones, where their capacity to visit, share and initiate their own professional development and capacity building with other Houses was limited.

The hunger of Houses to have access to a bank of good ideas; to hear stories of what had worked in other Houses; and get access to examples of resources used, outcomes and products developed from other project and so on was consistent and strong through-out the State. The Project Officer was identified as an effective mechanism for this – by visiting Houses and projects and sharing the experiences and resources was seen as a desirable and effective part of the role. This has been a focus of the role over the last two years, however Houses have not availed themselves of this support as Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania hoped. It is important that Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania even more assertively outreaches with these resources and support to Houses in the next few years

This would be a major shift in the position from predominantly and administrative role to a development role.

It was seen as important that the Project Officer facilitate the sharing of what other houses are doing (both in Tasmania and in other States) along with the results being achieved and what Houses have learned in areas such as how to effectively recruit participants. Sharing information would also include activities and approaches that may not have worked to limit the chance of the same outcomes being repeated, and examples of literacy programs delivered by other organisations around Australia and overseas.

The ELLC program regularly has articles and advertising in the current eNewsletter, but Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania data shows that not all Houses are accessing this information. Some Houses suggested a specific eNewsletter on the literacy grant program incorporating reporting from the Project Officer on the various programs as a way of sharing ideas and learning. Some Houses prefer other methods of sharing information to eNewsletters – highlighting the need for multiple communication and information sharing processes.

Another suggestion that is worth further investigation is the idea of the Project Officer working with one House in each region each year in a more intensive way to focus on capacity building and showcase the outcomes of this support to other Houses in the region.

The timing of the Project Officer involvement was also considered important – to go out to the houses earlier in the funding process to share and seed ideas for projects.

Based on the benefits and risks discussed above, there would appear capacity to reduce the administrative time of the Project Officer and re-direct this time to a field based House and Literacy Program development role.

It is recognised that there are financial implications in moving a largely office-based position to a field position. This cost should be seen as an investment and the necessary

funding to support the travel and associated field costs be included as legitimate Program budget expenses.

This development role could also include accessing other funding and resources to increase the funding available to Houses in the short term and in particular for years 11 and beyond. This should include the private and philanthropic sectors – not only literacy grant programs.

Some Houses are already accessing literacy funding from other sources. These source include:

- State Government (26:10)
- Inger Rice Foundation (Children's literacy)
- Education Department in conjunction with LINC (for example, Chainsaw, First Aid)
- The Tasmanian Community Fund

Other sourced have been approached without success. These include: the Ian Potter Foundation and the Sidney Myer Foundation.

Recommendation 6:

'That Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania review the Project Officer position with the view to it being re-designed as a House Development Officer position with a greater emphasis on field-based work to further develop the Literacy Program and the capacity of Houses to deliver it.'

Recommendation 7:

'That appropriate funds be budgeted to support field work by the Project Officer.'

5.4 Professional development and House capacity building

Given the nature of the Everyday Literacy Program and its uniqueness to the Neighbourhood House setting, not surprisingly one of the most significant sources of professional development and capacity building was seen as the Neighbourhood House network.

And as noted above, there needs to be a number of mechanisms to facilitate professional development and House capacity building in relation to literacy project development and delivery – one being the re-defining of the Project Office role. Given the suggestion of increasing the Project Officer's role in this area, achieving significant professional development and capacity building outcomes in the next 2-3 years

becomes a priority, as the Project Officer position is only allocated resources until then – at this stage.

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania advise that professional development and capacity building was offered by the Project Officer to Houses including suggestions of utilising funding process to resource Houses, but there has been low take up to this point. Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania is aware it needs to continue to assertively reach out to Houses with capacity building.

Areas identified for professional development and capacity building included: accredited staff and volunteer literacy training; equipment, resources and computer software; skills development regarding specific projects such as homework groups for adults or parents reading to their children; showcasing literacy initiatives at the *Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania State Conference*; and 'mystery bus tours' for Houses to visit other Houses and literacy initiatives of other organisations.

There were other specific areas identified where specific coaching and mentoring of Houses or facilitation of structured sharing and co-design of activities would be beneficial.

Examples include information and strategies to teach parents how children learn and how to successfully recruit adults into literacy projects, such as

What are the tricks you have found to be successful in recruiting participants?

- Always serve food
- Child care
- Free programs
- Provide transport
- Be creative
- Set program up so that it is mutually supportive – we help you and you also help us
- Run accredited courses for example, first aid so participants get something concrete out of it
- Do not name them or refer to them as literacy programs – it is the 'cooking program' or the 'computers for seniors program'
- Use programs like cooking, computers, community garden and so on to build the trust and relationships that enable participants to be recruited for tutoring and other more specific or intensive literacy support

There were a number of other examples of successful and innovative literacy projects and activities identified during the evaluation. These include:

Food for Thought computer classes (Rosebery)

Computers for the Terrified (Rosebery)

Recipe Book – about food, computers and people (Rosebery)

Broadband for Seniors (Rosebery and Maranoa)

Story books (Ulverstone)

Family Tree on-line (Zeehan)

Working with migrants to get citizenship application, writing resumes, Work for the Dole applications, Centrelink forms and applications (Southern region Houses)

Build on English as a second language training (Northern Suburbs)

Digital literacy (Exeter)

Recipe book written about things cooked from produce grown in House garden (Deloraine)

Partnerships with Colony 47 and Second Bite (Deloraine)

Support accredited training – all participants completed and obtained employment (Ravenswood)

Link to community garden (Geeveston)

Volunteer mentoring (Geeveston)

Partnered with Child and Family Centre for 2 hours child care support (Geeveston)

Use of Facebook in recruitment (Geeveston)

After-work hours tutoring (Geeveston)

Multi-cultural cookbook (Maranoa)

Literacy in woodworking program (Maranoa)

Childcare for literacy activities (Maranoa)

There are numerous examples where the literacy program created pathways for vulnerable people to access other vital support.

These and other activities that are/have been delivered provide a useful starting point for some of the professional development and capacity building activities that could be considered.

There has been a range of professional development activities in the past, which need to be continued and built upon. The proposed change in role of the Project officer also

will provide further opportunities to engage Houses and develop innovative responses to their professional development needs, as well as creating mechanisms for capturing and sharing good ideas and initiatives that have proven to be successful.

Recommendation 8:

'That the Project Officer design and implement a professional development and House capacity building strategy for the Everyday Literacy Program in consultation with the Houses.'

5.5 Program modifications

Assuming no additional funding becomes available, the amount of annual funding that is likely to be available beyond the initial 10 year funding period is reasonably predictable. At this stage, the interest available from the perpetual trust fund established from the grant interest over the initial 10 year funding period is estimated at approximately \$ 15,000 or around \$ 500 per House per year.

It is also known that in year 11 and beyond the administrative and project officer support will be minimal unless other funding is secured,

Therefore it is proposed that \$ 15,000 per year be allocated to trials over the next 5 years to develop and implement a stream of activity designed to continue in year 11 and beyond.

Options that have been canvassed with Houses and the *Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania* Regional meetings in this evaluation include:

- A process to grant \$ 15,000 to a single House each year
- A process to grant \$ 5,000 to 3 Houses – one in each Region each year
- A \$ 500 grant to each House each year – where they select a project, equipment or resources from a pre-approved list
- A \$ 500 grant to each House each year for them to use discretion on how they would add value and additional literacy support to other House activities

The preference of Houses was that a system of granting \$ 500 per House be explored as this was equitable and potentially easier to administer. It was also felt that every House doing something in relation to literacy for \$ 500 each year would achieve more than \$ 5,000 once every few years.

Some of the options that might be on a pre-approved list could include:

- Books
- Books for parents to read to children
- Photo book templates to record projects

- Games such as Scrabble
- Subscribe to things like ansestory.com
- Internet access for seniors
- Staff and volunteer training
- Attendance at relevant conferences

Options to add value to other programs could include:

- Increasing the literacy support and content of other programs such as cooking, community garden, computers, family tree, 'simultaneous story time' and so on
- Aligning the distribution of the funds with a specific time of year, such as 'Neighbourhood House Week' or naming up a 'Neighbourhood House Literacy Week.'
- Allocating an additional sum of say \$ 500 or \$ 1,000 as an Award to be presented at the *Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania State Conference* for Houses who write up the literacy outcomes they have achieved

One of the disadvantages of a small allocation per House is that the capacity to use the finding for wages is not very practical. The reality however, is that a \$ 5,000 grant every few years also provides limited capacity for wages and it is not sustainable beyond that particular project.

In some cases however, such a grant is potentially very useful – particularly in isolated areas. For example, a grant of say \$ 5,000 could mean a computer tutor travelling to Rosebery or Zeehan and running a program over a short period. This may create opportunities for participation in such a program where the specific tutoring skills are not available in the region.

There is also scope to give each region choices about how \$ 5,000 be used in their region each year, and the ways it gets allocated could vary between regions based on need and circumstances.

Recommendation 9:

'That Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania allocate \$ 15,000 each year from the budget for the next 5 years to develop and trial options for an ongoing and sustainable grants program for yoears11 and beyond for the everyday Literacy Program.'

5.6 Implementation of Recommendations of Previous Evaluation Report

The recommendations detailed in the previous Evaluation Report have been reviewed. The degree to which they have been completed and/or implemented is as follows:

Recommendations fully implemented and/or completed:

Recommendation #	Recommendation details
Recommendation 2	<i>'that a process be developed to enable the assessment panel to engage with applicants where additional or clarifying information is required'</i>
Recommendation 4	<i>'that the TACH Executive Officer and the TACH Project Officer provide input as required and appropriate to the discussion section of the assessment panel meeting and leave the meeting for the decision-making part of the meeting'</i>
Recommendation 5	<i>'that TACH work with the Houses receiving Everyday Literacy for Local Communities funding and the project assessment panel to develop and implement an outcomes reporting template'</i>
Recommendation 6	<i>'that TACH explore/consider a grants structure which includes a final payment being conditional on receipt of the project outcomes reporting template'</i>
Recommendation 7	<i>'that TACH incorporate features to add value and flexibility to the current funding model designed to increase outcomes from literacy projects in line with the long term strategy for the Program'</i>
Recommendation 8	<i>'that TACH adopt a funding model of an annual grants round, supplementary grants and small grants with the funding thresholds for each of these streams to be determined by TACH (in consultation with the project funding assessment panel) on an annual basis'</i>
Recommendation 9	<i>'that TACH expands upon its project reporting and acquittal framework to match the required type and amount of effort for Houses with the relative size and risks of the project or activity'</i>
Recommendation 10	<i>'that TACH review and where appropriate modify the annual allocation of project funding for the remainder of the 10 year program'</i>
Recommendation 12	<i>'that TACH develop and implement capacity building initiatives to assist Houses identify and develop potential projects to maximise literacy and other related outcomes in line with the overall strategy for the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program'</i>

Recommendation 13	<i>'that TACH design and staff a literacy development officer position'</i>
Recommendation 14	<i>'that TACH determine the roles and functions it will provide within the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program – and to what level'</i>
Recommendation 15	<i>'that a plan be developed to deliver/provide the TACH roles and functions'</i>
Recommendation 16	<i>'that TACH develop a communication strategy to engage, consult and inform key stakeholders of the next stage of development of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program – including priorities, participant target groups and new initiatives.'</i>
Recommendation 24	<i>'that information to encourage and support Houses including sufficient funding for project support and administration in addition to funding for contact hours be emphasised in the Program Guidelines and funding/capacity building activities'</i>
Recommendation 28	<i>'that TACH determine the level of investment to be allocated to capacity building and how this will be funded'</i>

In relation to Recommendation 21: *'that TACH explore the possibilities of people expressing interest in literacy skills development through the Literacy Hotline, being given their local Neighbourhood House Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program provider as an option'*, TACH has engaged with the new Literacy Hotline associated with the Tasmanian Government's 26:10 program.

This contact has identified areas where the system could be improved to provide additional opportunities for community members wanting options in regard to literacy support. These options include referral to Neighbourhood House literacy programs and activities. There appears to be little change in procedures following the feedback from TACH. A decision needs to be made in regard to further follow up in this area.

In regard to Recommendation 26: *'that the year 4 evaluation of the Program include a focus on partners and partnership development'*, consideration was given to this being included in this evaluation and it was felt that further engagement of Houses and the TACH network was a greater priority at this time. This recommendation will be considered again for the next evaluation in two year's time.

A number of the other recommendations in the previous report were such that the nature of their implementation was ongoing and actions have occurred in these areas.

Most of these recommendations relate to professional development and capacity building of the Houses. The progress in these areas needs to be acknowledged, and considerable work have been undertaken to build systems to share experiences and capture the outcomes of the program.

It is also an observation that the work done in relation to professional development and capacity building has been constrained by the administrative responsibilities of the Project Officer.

The observations and recommended change in the direction of the Project Officer position as detailed in this report are designed to enable much more engaging and supportive activity to occur in order to realise the professional development and capacity building recommendations listed below.

Recommendation #	Recommendation details
Recommendation 3	<i>'that examples of funded and/or completed projects be provided to all Neighbourhood Houses with the funding application pack for each funding round'</i>
Recommendation 18	<i>'that TACH facilitate capacity building activities for Houses involved with the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program to assist these Houses develop a longer term strategy and an action plan for their communities. Such plans should include the long term outcomes to be achieved for the remainder of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program'</i>
Recommendation 19	<i>'that TACH include marketing and promotion skills and strategies to recruit and engage literacy participants in the capacity building program - including Houses sharing their experiences of what has worked and what hasn't'</i>
Recommendation 20	<i>'that the TACH literacy capacity building program include consulting with Houses to develop a framework and tools to better understand and record outcomes from literacy initiatives embedded in other projects '</i>
Recommendation 22	<i>'that TACH incorporate further understanding and development of project success factors and suitability of projects into capacity building and information sharing between Houses'</i>

<i>Recommendation 23</i>	<i>'that TACH build the capacity of Houses to measure the outcomes and success (or otherwise) of specific literacy products and software and other resources and tools'</i>
<i>Recommendation 25</i>	<i>'that TACH develop and implement a State Neighbourhood House capacity building program, in consultation with the three regional Neighbourhood House networks'</i>

<p>Recommendation 27</p>	<p><i>'that TACH develop and implement a capacity building plan for the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program, incorporating project staff and tutors, project volunteers and Neighbourhood House Co-ordinators'</i></p>
<p>Recommendation 29</p>	<p><i>'that the professional develop plan include areas to increase the efficiency of literacy projects such as long term time tabling of activities, calendar development, marketing and staffing'</i></p>
<p>Recommendation 30</p>	<p><i>'that TACH, in consultation with the Houses, develop and implement a narrative framework to assist in recording and reporting outcomes from the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program'</i></p>
<p>Recommendation 31</p>	<p><i>'that TACH determine and implement the necessary capacity building and systems development required to implement a narrative outcome reporting framework'</i></p>
<p>Recommendation 32</p>	<p><i>'that TACH facilitate the sharing of information, resources and experiences as part of structured capacity building processes'. This may include the production of a resources and equipment directory'</i></p>

There were also some recommendations yet to be actioned. These include:

Recommendation 1

'that TACH develop a strategy and action plan for the remainder of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program grant period which identifies the long term change and outcomes to be achieved with the funding and details of how this will occur.'

Recommendation 11

'that TACH develop an annual project funding budget allocation for years 11 to 15 to be funded from the interest investment trust fund.' (This would be used to inform the review in recommendation 10).

Recommendation 17

'that TACH develop an overall evaluation strategy for the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program which reflects the long term strategy for the Program.'

6. Acknowledgements

PDF would like to thank all of the people involved in the evaluation consultation for their willing and open participation in this review process.

Subjecting an organisation to an independent and objective review can be a cause of anxiety or concern. The amount of information provided and level of generous and frank contributions by all concerned. This process has been a demonstration of the passion for the literacy work being undertaken by the Neighbourhood House network and the commitment to continually improve the services and support to achieve the best possible outcomes for individuals and families.

PDF would specifically like to acknowledgement and extend our thanks to John Hooper and Steve Cooke from Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania who have not only provided a major contribution to the evaluation - they have also embraced the developmental and action learning nature in which we have approached the evaluation process.

More intensive engagement occurred with six Neighbourhood Houses and PDF are very grateful for this insight and contribution of these Houses who have added significantly to the quality and depth of the evaluation.