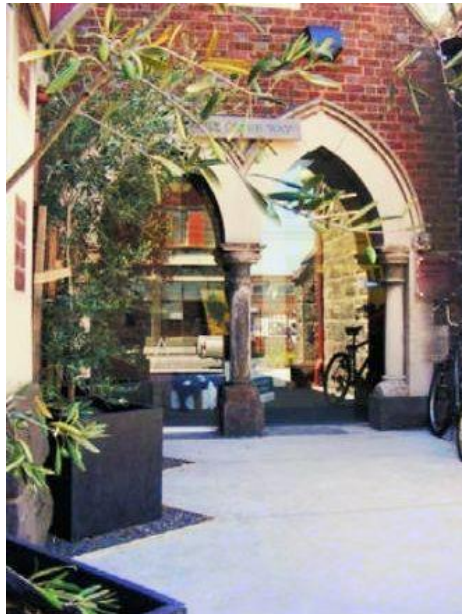




BRUNSWICK UNITING CHURCH

The Olive Way The Journey So Far: the Road Ahead A Review



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Executive Summary

This review has enabled us to reflect on the work of the Olive Way outreach mission over a period of eight years since its commencement. As revealed through questionnaires, interviews and in the words of people involved, the Olive Way is an integral part of many people's lives. Many have been attending for over five years and have formed connections with the space, the community and those who care for them through service, hospitality and a listening ear. The goals set by the foundation team in 2007 still resonate in 2015. The majority of interviewees report that The Olive Way is a place of acceptance, calm, non-judgmental care and generous hospitality in many different forms.

The review indicates opportunities for change or development in particular areas. A need for training and record keeping in safety and people skills has been identified. In addition, there is need to develop the Co-ordinator's role and there is an interest all round for a more overt expression of spirituality. There are good ideas which need further exploration about increasing activities offered yet balancing this with the unstructured nature of The Olive Way which is a strength of the initiative. Consideration was given to opening up other spaces in the church to facilitate activities and for more intentional networking with community groups.

It is clear that the Olive Way has been a highly valued initiative over a number of years. There is an option for the Church Council to discuss the possibility of a 'blue sky' exploration around the mission of Brunswick Uniting Church before future commitments are made. Alternatively, it may affirm The Olive Way as an ongoing mission of the congregation and explore the recommendations in this report that have been designed to improve the service.

Regardless of decisions about the future, the congregation and volunteers should be commended for the commitment, love and hospitality that has been offered consistently to the people whom God loves in their community.

Introduction

This report documents the information gathered over the last two months about The Olive Way program which has been running for eight years and has become an important part of the Brunswick Uniting Church's outreach mission and an integral part of the church community.

The Review of the Olive Way is an initiative of the Brunswick Uniting Church Council and the terms of reference it provided have kept the team on target from beginning to the end.

Terms of Reference

According to the Terms of Reference, the aims of the review include the following:

- Provide feedback on the extent to which the Olive Way is meeting its' goals.
- Feedback on programme management including staff, volunteer training and supervision
- Whether the programme is adequately resourced to meet its' goals
- Whether the needs for participants are being met
- Whether there are other community members who might benefit from the programme who are not currently engaged
- Whether there are alternative community projects also meeting some or all of these needs
- What are the intended consequences(both desirable and undesirable) of this program
- Any other relevant issues identified by the reviewers.

The review was conducted by a team comprising of two members of the Brunswick Uniting Church congregation (Ms. Leanne Salau and Ms. Ann Soo Lawrence), and two members from the Port Phillip presbytery,(Rev. Rose Broadstock and Rev. Dr Adam McIntosh), who were invited by Church Council to bring their expertise and wise perspective to the Review.

The process of the review has been a collaborative experience; enriched by important conversations with the participants, staff and volunteers of The Olive Way and informed by thinking from our congregational members.

The structure of the report

The report is structured as follows:

- An outline of the original goals of The Olive Way as set by the foundation team in 2007. An objective of the review was to see if the 2007 goals are still current in 2015 and if those goals are continuing to be met.
- A summarised profile of Moreland City Council residents/households from a recent census report. This information will provide the social context in which the Brunswick Uniting Church is situated and engaged with.

- The results of research into other programs/ services that are similar to The Olive Way in the local area are also provided as part of the review.
- The main body of the report aims to answer the questions and address the issues raised in the Terms of Reference.
- The core of the report is a detailed summary of feedback from participants, staff and volunteers and an analysis and evaluation of those results. In many ways, this part is about the journey travelled so far as we look back and reflect and learn from the experience.
- The latter part of the report will focus on emerging themes and recommendations as we turn our attention to the road ahead.
- Lastly but perhaps most importantly, we have interleaved the findings with the words of the people we serve at The Olive Way. These words reflect personal experiences which are ultimately, at the heart of the review.

The Review process

The review took place over an eight-week period with team members meeting regularly to divide work tasks, brainstorm and share information. Reverends Rose Broadstock and Adam McIntosh interviewed the church staff members. Leanne Salau and Ann Soo Lawrence interviewed volunteers and participants of The Olive Way respectively. The congregational views were surveyed through a questionnaire. The community research and interview was completed by Ann Soo Lawrence.

Methodology

- Questionnaire and interview for participants (Refer to Appendix A)
- Questionnaire and interview (on request) for volunteers (Refer to Appendix B)
- Questionnaire for congregational members (Refer to Appendix C)
- Interview for coordinator and paid staff of the Olive Way
- Internet research on local community projects similar to The Olive Way.
- Reading and referencing surveys and statistics collected and analysed by Moreland City Council.

Particular attention was paid to salient features pertaining to the review.

- Interview with Ms. Paula Jorgensen Community Development Programs Coordinator at Moreland City Council.
- Reference to previous Olive Way reviews in 2007 and 2008.
- Reading the Volunteers' handbook
- Reading the document 'The Olive Way – Managing Challenging Behaviour Policy'
- Reading the Uniting Church Safe Church policies and guidelines in consultation with Ms. Helen Rowe (BUC Safe Church implementation project).

Goals of the Olive Way

The Olive Way is an outreach program of the Brunswick Uniting Church that aims to provide a place for the local community to engage with the church by providing a drop in centre three days each week. The mission statement is as follows:

The Olive Way has been developed as a means for the Brunswick Uniting Church to engage the community of Brunswick, particularly those at the edges of the community. It will aim to reveal the love of God to all people. It will do this by offering hospitality and a listening ear, by providing an opportunity for people to give expression to their spiritual needs and by helping people to know and connect with the Brunswick community...The focus is an open house in which we provide hospitality, listening, community information and passive recreation. The church is also open for prayer and if required for sacramental purposes. (The Olive Way Volunteers Handbook, 2008)

The Handbook supports inclusiveness of all people and religious beliefs:

'We are not about traditional evangelism. We do not seek to change visitors' beliefs about religion; or to impress our own beliefs on to others. We see the love, conversation and food offered as a direct way of responding to Jesus' command to love our neighbour.'(The Olive Way Volunteer Handbook, 2008. page 1)

Participant's comments

"Everyone here is beautiful; People are friendly and it makes me relax. I am retired. I want to talk to others and there is trust. I can share thoughts and I am a listener to others"

"The Olive Way teaches me the right way of living. It is peaceful, people are decent. There is food on the table and new people to talk to"

"It is a reach out to those who are lonely and in need. It is achieving that"

"There are different people and it is a nice place for people to socialise. It is a café style environment and the home cooked meal is nice. I am being cared for by the meal"

Context and background information

The Olive Way at Brunswick Uniting Church is situated in the Moreland City Council Area. As part of the review and the question regarding the needs of the community, it was important that the review team had updated information about the Brunswick community. The following is a summary of the salient features as taken from the Moreland City Council website under 'statistics' (current at time of report, 2015).

Moreland City Council Census and Household Surveys (2013) identified the following:

- Increasing older age groups. 55% of population
- Increase in overseas born residents
- Main ethnic groups include Italian, Greek, Lebanese, Maltese, Sri Lankan
- Literacy: 86% English fluency
- 0.07% of population are indigenous
- 25% of population have long term disability
- 43% of population with children
- 6.9% of people attend volunteer/ welfare groups
- 1.8% of population receive a disability pension and another 3.9% on another form of Centrelink pension.
- 15% of households have at least one person who is a carer to allow another person to stay in the home
- 33% are providing over 40hours of care per week in caring for another at home.
- 51% of population use community support services
- 55% report needing community services within 5 years.

No particular community need was identified in discussion with community services development coordinator at the time of writing this report.

Research into similar services

The research was conducted by utilising the Moreland City Council website and analysing relevant documents. In addition, an interview and visit from Ms. Paula Jorgensen, Community Development and Programs Coordinator enabled us to engage with the local council and form initial contact. Ms. Jorgensen visited the Olive Way and spoke to Olive Way participants as well as those who formerly attended the now unfunded ArtsVictoria, Artstop program.

According to Paula Jorgensen, The Olive Way is unique as a three day a week drop in centre in the area. There may be opportunities in the future to consider if The Olive Way is eligible for a community grant via the council. Ms Jorgensen was keen to learn about the grass roots nature of the programme and will confer with her team of eleven members to think of what could be offered in the way of ideas for support of The Olive Way.

In researching on the Moreland Council website other similar services in the area include:

- The Salvation Army: offering breakfast five days a week, lunch three days a week, a recreational programme and emergency relief
- St Ambrose Church: weekly food bank
- Coburg Community Drop in Centre: Holy Trinity Church Hall on Fridays only (10.30am-2.30pm)
- East Coburg Community House offering skills based courses on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- Fawkner Community House offering social skills groups with a multicultural focus.
- Our Lady of Christian Help, East Brunswick: Lunch available on Thursday.
- Brunswick Neighbourhood House: offering dinner (1st Sunday of every month)
- St Mary's House of Welcome, Fitzroy: Participants need to register. Structured activities including yoga, computer classes, cooking, haircuts, showers etc.

It is the review team's recommendation that the incoming community outreach worker continue to keep updated on local services, familiarise and make contact with these services as a matter of priority.

"The Olive Way is here for everyone but people who come here are those that society have cut off. There is a feeling of acceptance, seeing people that have emerged as friends"

"The Olive Way is trying to provide a space for the needy. It is an open door"

"It is always a welcoming place, friendly – the basic ingredients"

Participants' views

Findings from questionnaire and interviews

Approximately 40 people attend the Olive Way. There were eleven respondents in the review process.

- Majority of respondents in this group lived in the Moreland Council area i.e. 75% of people who completed the questionnaire.
- 41% of respondents were aged between 51-70 years of age.
- All respondents found out about the Olive Way through community information. 50% by word of mouth, 40% by signage and 10% from other organisations like The Salvation Army or Merri Community Health.
- Over 80% of respondents attended weekly or more. Some attended three days a week.
- 59% of respondents have been attending for over five years and another 25% attending for two to five years.

- 58.33% believe that the Olive Way is creating community for people who may feel isolated in the community. 33% of that group believe the Olive Way is offering hospitality to everyone. Most people stated that the Olive Way was a safe, caring and welcoming place for them to meet others and forge friendships over time.
- In regards to the positives experienced while at The Olive Way, 75% of respondents verbalised enjoyment in spending time with each other. The remaining 25% felt that the Olive Way served a purpose for those in need who otherwise, may have nowhere to go and be accepted.
- For many participants, the unstructured nature of The Olive Way is a positive aspect of the drop in centre. There is no case review, no evaluation or formal monitoring. People feel they can 'be' themselves and completely accepted by staff and volunteers. This ethos is generalised to how participants treat each other. There is in general a positive culture of informal care and respect for each other.
- Many participants cited they enjoyed and were nurtured by the hospitality of fresh food served to them by volunteers and staff.
- 100% of respondents said there were positive aspects about the Olive Way.
- 66.6% of respondents thought the Olive Way should remain the same in how the drop in centre is run. 33.3% could see that some changes could be made. Some of those ideas included: having a live guest musician occasionally, dining outdoors during the warmer months, talks about general self care. Some thought a talk from the minister would be interesting and perhaps, offering food and followed by a church service.
- 50% of respondents thought there could be more spiritual input given while the other 50% had no objection to others taking part in this opportunity. The majority of those who wished to have some spiritual input, liked the idea that they could gather inside the church and perhaps, be lead by the minister in a reflective time or prayer
- 41.67% of respondents went to other places as well including The Salvation Army in Brunswick for breakfast and St Ambrose for food parcels.
- In terms of a vision for the future, 50% could envisage some changes in spiritual input, broadening the service to assist other people and creating a larger space. The other 50% would like The Olive Way to remain as it is in the future (i.e. in five years time)

Emerging themes and analysis of data (participants)

1. The initial goals set for the Olive Way are continuing to be met and participants believe their needs are being met.
2. Even those who wished to have quiet time, enjoyed being alongside other people and to be supported by the care offered by Olive Way staff and volunteers
3. Given that the majority of participants discover the Olive Way either by word of mouth or by street signage; there may be a percentage of the community who has not heard about The Olive Way.

Recommendation: It is recommended that if The Olive Way is to broaden its service, that increasing the catchment could be achieved by making more links with community services (both government and non-government) and to strengthen its profile through advertising. E.g. Merri Community Health and NEAMI (mental health referral service, Brunswick)

4. The Olive Way is a highly inclusive service although the 'down side' of the open door nature of the program was around safety concerns. Participants felt the co ordinator manages unpredictable situations and challenging behaviours effectively. However, some participants would like more information about a clear emergency/safety plan while at the Olive Way.

Recommendation: There are documents about safety regarding The Olive Way written by church safety officer. It is recommended that these plans are known to all staff and volunteers of The Olive Way. Participants need to know of emergency safety plans in cases of managing distress or emergency. This should be ongoing and regularly visited with all individuals especially newcomers.

Recommendation: Informal conversations with participants can assist in regularly reminding participants of positive aspects of friendship, self care and managing boundaries. Reference to the safety aspects in working with vulnerable adults in The Uniting Church safety guidelines to be discussed and implemented as appropriate.

5. The initial Olive Way goals have clearly stated that it does not provide counselling and it appears that this has been followed through. However, many respondents commented that the staff and volunteers were very supportive and offered a listening ear to all. In order to provide the best support for our participants by knowing when to refer them on to specialist service.

Recommendation: To strengthen the resources to refer people onto counsellors in local area (if required and in consultation with participant) and to help make those connections.

6. The questionnaires have shown that there is a general openness to some reflection, prayer, bible reading or message being given and shared in the church space. The opportunity for the expression of spiritual needs is a documented goal along with a non-traditional evangelical approach.

Recommendation: It is recommended that this area be explored more thoroughly and a planned response to this interest. To be discussed in collaboration with members on the Church Council, Olive Way staff and volunteers and participants of the Olive Way.

High majority of participants were extremely satisfied with Olive Way as it exists as a program now and the way it is run. 100% felt there were positive aspects to the program. Some were attending

other programs but felt the Olive Way offered them a relaxed and non pressured environment which created a safe and accepting space for them to be.

Staff perspectives:

Feedback from interviews with staff members of the Olive Way

Community Outreach Worker (Carlynn Nunn)

Overview:

The purpose of The Olive Way is to offer people a place where people feel loved, accepted and welcomed. There is no set program (which is important), however an art program has been established which has been popular.

The major clientele is comprised of disability pensioners, residents from housing flats and supported accommodation and some people with mental health issues. An average weekly attendance is 20 regulars plus 10-15 others who attend infrequently.

Policy and training:

There are some policies or community guidelines, including volunteer training, opening and closing procedures, behaviour guidelines, and procedures for emergency situations. It is unclear whether procedures for managing emergencies are comprehensive and whether they respond to an analysis of risk.

There is some training of volunteers. Most training and assessment of volunteers is 'on the job'. Police checks occur but better systems are needed for ensuring checks occur, are current and records are kept.

Areas for change or clarification

- What is the role of the Community Outreach worker?
- There is significant dependence on this worker which impedes the availability of any paid time for training or exploration of ways the Centre could develop.
- The Olive Way would benefit from greater connections with the congregation – more church volunteers, more communications between the congregation and The Olive Way, and greater oversight and participation of the church in the management of the program.
- Also greater clarity in the budgeting of the program and the efficiency of access to funds.
- In order to expand the space for activities, and to connect more with the church physically, opening up the space into the hall could be an advantage.

Spirituality:

Prayer stations; soft-spirituality; religious arts could be incorporated in a gentle not confrontational way.



Support Worker (Paul Toms)

Overview:

The Olive Way is a space of welcome and hospitality for anyone who comes; an attempt to embody the Kingdom of God; a place to socialise; somewhere to find community and belonging. Carlynne is very talented in providing welcome, and has done a fantastic job in her role. The connection with the student house has been very positive. Preference is for a free unstructured program, and this is the design.

Areas for change or clarification:

Look at connections with other service providers, and consider partnerships (like with Art Access) where value can be added this way rather than providing programs ourselves. Also find out the possibilities of dovetailing in with other programs opening times and offerings. Partner with others and all do one thing well.

Consider pushing out into the hall and look at a larger and better use of the space. This creates possibility for different spaces and not just one space, e.g. a reflective space, a loud conversation space, an activity space. Consider ways to broaden who fits in, perhaps opening for different purposes on different days, e.g. low key activity days, breakfasts, games etc

Look at leadership accountability and support of the work. Perhaps a mission committee that could support/challenge/supervise the team.

Volunteer workers need more training, and shaped according to their interests and talents. Times could be created for volunteers to contribute ideas and insights, perhaps even the development of a missional community.

Spirituality:

Invite guests into the church space – explore the church? Use the projector to watch movies?

Greater connection with the church through more volunteers from the congregation.

Note: Interview was conducted after Paul had moved to another role.

Kitchen/hospitality (Peter Murphy)

Overview

- The Olive Way is of high value, particularly for people who don't fit into the mainstream opportunities to belong.
- It is a non-threatening, accepting place
- The food component is important as it supplements some guests' food supply

Areas for change or clarification:

- More volunteers to relate to guests and provide that special time. Otherwise guests will go without that.
- More activities would be good as long as they weren't too structured and they were offered as a choice e.g. jigsaw puzzles and Uno have worked well. Occasional outings would be good.
- Art group has been effective but may create an unwanted exclusiveness within The Olive Way

Spirituality:

- Would support some thinking/planning around an informal offer
- Expectation that opportunities to use prayer stations for example, would be well used and perhaps by the least likely
- Capable of producing major impact on people's lives
- Presence of the minister could be part of this focus due to the understanding at The Olive Way that clergy are trustworthy.
- More presence of congregational members would be a significant part of providing a spirituality there.



*"Sometimes, there are celebrations. Everyone is respectful, there is no conflict and no fighting.
It is not overwhelming and the music is relaxing"*

"I like the food, the people, service, the attitude the music and I can relax and do the puzzles"

Volunteers' perspectives

Findings from questionnaires from the volunteers' viewpoint

- 50% of respondents who completed the questionnaire live in the Moreland Council area and 50% live in other local council areas
- 30% of respondents in the 21-30 age group and 30% of respondents in the 51-70 age group
- 100% of respondents see their main involvement in The Olive Way as a volunteer
- The Olive Way was heard about at a Brunswick Uniting Church Service by 50% of the respondents
- Volunteering weekly or more by 70% of the respondents
- 70% of the respondents have been coming to or involved in The Olive Way for two to five years and 20% for more than five years
- The Olive Way is seen as primarily trying to 'create community for people who may feel isolated in the local community' by 50% of the respondents and 20% of the respondents answered 'generally offering hospitality to all'
- 50% of respondents feel an 'opportunity to spend time with the people who come there' was what they most like about taking part in the service. 30% of respondents stated that 'I feel I'm part of the church connecting with the community'
- 100% of respondents agreed that there were positive aspects about The Olive Way
- Respondents believe that volunteers should be provided with training opportunities such as mental health first aid. Training could include how to handle difficult and explosive situations; general knowledge about the backgrounds of the participants
- 30% of volunteers would like to participate in different activities
- 50% of respondents would enjoy more interaction from the Brunswick Uniting Church minister. This could be through the telling of 'faith stories'. Ian Ferguson, the minister, regularly attends The Olive Way Community Lunch. The volunteers believe that having members of the church dropping by for a casual chat is important. Whilst this is seen as beneficial for 50% of the respondents, this may be limiting the service to those who do not follow a religion.
- 80% of the volunteers surveyed have a vision for the future of The Olive Way. These include:
 - Participants have access to a psychologist
 - Shorter operating hours on Tuesday

Emerging themes and analysis of data (volunteers)

- Current and past volunteers affirmed strongly that the Olive Way is meeting the focus as set out in the Mission Statement.
- A number of volunteers travel from beyond Moreland council area to participate in Olive Way.
- Commitment from our current team of volunteers is very strong. This is indicated by 70% involved in The Olive Way for two to five years and 20% for more than five years.
- 80% of volunteers have ideas or a vision for the Olive Way in the future.
- Repeatedly stated through survey and conversation that volunteers see The Olive Way as a friendly, safe community for marginalised people
- Volunteers build relationships with participants – One respondent stated that they “show me how to live with challenges gracefully”.

Suggestions for improvement (volunteers)

- New furniture
- Professional cleaning services
- Shorter operations hours on Tuesday
- Live music or sing a longs
- Dance classes
- Weekly board games
- Table tennis competitions
- A monthly evening meal that can be a whole community event. Spill out from Olive Way into front entrance. Lights on the fence. Live music and singing. May attract different participants and volunteers and passers-by.
- Think more creatively about the space we have- rotate different types of music playing in the church People could go in and relax on cushions.
- Sing a long in the church hall or outside on a sunny day. Encourage people to sit outside by setting up tables near the Olive Way entrance. Use the art space at end of the hall for different activities.
- Outings
- Community lunches. Have a theme of food from a particular country and invite people with flair for cooking that type of cuisine to assist. Perhaps Sam and Roozbeh could tantalise our taste buds with an Iranian feast.
- Savers visit. Encourage participants to save some money if interested and pick a day to walk to Savers. A few people from the congregation are great op shoppers and may be able to give their time for a couple of hours.
- Gardening. Perhaps a participant interested in gardening could plant, care for and maintain plants that could be used for cut flowers on the table

- It is clear that congregational availability to be members of the volunteer team is limited due to working hours and other constraints. It could be of value then to consider a social enterprise model. This is a system whereby an increased involvement by the congregation occurs by encouraging a sharing of skills as required from time to time. (HR advice, training expertise) but more onsite volunteers are found through the development of a partnership with an employment service. In this way, job seekers are offered work experience in a community agency or in hospitality and Olive Way to be paid for this service.



Perspectives from the congregation

40 people responded to the questionnaire on survey monkey.

- 47% of congregational respondents attended the Olive Way weekly; 5% attended 2-4 weekly; 27% rarely or never attended; and 20% attended occasionally.
- 65% of respondents stated that The Olive Way was creating community for those who felt isolated and 20% emphasised the hospitality component of the outreach.
- 37.5% of respondents stated that it was an opportunity to spend time with others and this is what they liked the most about attending. 97% of respondents agreed there were many good aspects to the Olive Way.
- 42.5% believed that some changes needed to be made in the Olive Way. Another 35% didn't know if changes were necessary and the remaining 22.5% stated it should remain unchanged.
- 50% of respondents had ideas for change (please see later section for more details)
- There were mixed yet thoughtful responses about increasing spiritual input in the Olive Way. Some felt that the minister visiting for the community lunch was adequate; others thought that a gentle introduction would work whilst others felt the Olive Way and good listening was spirituality in action. Some stated that spiritual input was unnecessary.

Emerging themes and ideas (congregation)

- Strong correlation between what participants, volunteers and congregational members state about the purpose of the Olive Way and its goals.
- Many respondents believed that the Olive Way provided a safe space for the vulnerable in our community and for congregational members to give practical expression to their faith.
- There were concerns about ensuring the safety for those who attend and for more in depth training for the volunteers e.g. annual training day for volunteers and/or meetings to refresh those who serve at the Olive Way.
- Only 12.5% of respondents contributed to other places apart from the Olive Way.
- 57% of respondents had a vision for the Olive Way in the future.
- The majority wanted the Olive Way to continue as a place of hospitality for all and a safe space where people can share their stories and feel valued. In addition, suggestions for the future included:
 - Having the input of a psychologist
 - Shortening hours on Tuesday and Thursdays and providing more varied meals and perhaps, an evening meal
 - More partnerships like Artstop
 - To broaden the care to include reaching out to participants in their time of need
 - Purchasing a bus and going on outings.
 - Encourage the skills of participants and to have their sense of ownership enhanced
 - Feedback and review should be considered on a regular basis
 - Increasing congregation's involvement by way of regular updates and what is happening in the Olive Way to reduce any sense of disconnection between congregation and those who attend the Olive Way
 - Offering an easy and safe way for participants to access advice e.g. with practical matters like understanding changes to pension because of budget reviews, reading accounts etc
 - Clarity about whether the Olive Way is a mission or a service.
 - Broaden and increase our connection with similar services in the area.

Summary and Recommendations

The following are recommendations to assist in mapping the road ahead for this important service to continue thriving and being relevant to those whom it serves:

Recommendations for Co ordinator Role

1. The role of coordinator is pivotal to the success of The Olive Way. This role needs to be reviewed and clarified and given supervision on a regular basis as part of that role.
2. Clear accountability as to whom The Olive Way coordinator reports to in regards time off for training, sick days and taking annual leave. Clarify system as to how this role is to be covered during those times.
3. The introduction of a day book to be initiated by the coordinator for volunteers to record events or incidences of the day eg participant upset, noticing absent participants, attendance numbers, who attended etc . This collection of data could be useful in funding applications in the future.
4. Develop pastoral care for participants eg phone call or visit if absence in the future.
5. The Olive Way coordinator can develop an ecumenical group comprising of workers/volunteers from other programs in Brunswick to meet occasionally. This network could provide support for each other and as a way of understanding and exchanging information about what programs each church community offers to the wider community of Brunswick. A first step could be visiting other services in the area including non church organisations such as Merri Community Health and NEAMI in Brunswick.
6. As part of The Olive Way coordinator's orientation, a meeting with the finance committee and a formal process for devising and operating The Olive Way budget is important. It could be helpful to establish a system whereby a budget item for the program costs is determined and allocated by the coordinator by way of a debit card which is in turn accounted for by way of regular Olive Way reports.
7. It is also recommended that staff overseeing community lunch have a separate budget to the coordinator's budget.
- 8.

Recommendations for Direct Service Delivery

1. Increase profile and knowledge of safety planning through training volunteers and disseminating clear information to participants about how to stay safe and calm and offering a clear emergency plan. This needs to be revisited on a regular basis. Visual cues and display posters would be useful here.
2. Safety training is essential and increasing volunteers' competence and confidence in this area.
3. First aid training identified as a priority; safety evacuation plans and drills to be made clear and overt; incident reporting to be part of best practices and system to be implemented by staff. Training in recognising early warning signs and managing

challenging behaviours to be sourced from church community and from external trainers.

4. In cases when participants require more support such as specific counselling, referral to another service is important. Having a file on local services offering this at low cost or through Medicare should be kept, updated and used.
5. At least half of respondents would be open to more spiritual input and this is an area to continue further discussion. Recommendation of small sub committee or working party to develop this idea. Consult with Reverend Ian Ferguson as he has established good rapport with participants.
6. Increase drive for more volunteers to share the care but also to enable increase of congregation to interact with participants. A clear training program would assist this to empower and invigorate new members but also existing volunteers. Consider opening up opportunities for volunteer pool to be sourced from other congregations.
7. Maintain communication day book to facilitate planning.

Recommendations for Management and Oversight

1. Appoint a Steering Group (as a new sub-committee of Church Council) to oversee the operations of the Olive Way and manage its staff, providing both support and oversight/accountability.
2. The Steering Group should include people with the following skills/roles:
 - Someone on the Justice and Mission Committee
 - Someone on Finance Committee (not necessarily to attend every meeting, but to be available for orientation and liaison/assistance as needed)
 - Someone with specific knowledge of the Olive Way (but not a current volunteer)
 - Someone with experience in managing/supporting staff (potentially Church Council's Staff Support Officer)
3. The Steering Group (or some members of it) should meet roughly monthly with the Co-ordinator, and also offer support as needed for any other staff.
4. The Co-ordinator should report and be accountable to the Steering Group.
5. While its fundamental task is overseeing the Olive Way staff and operations, the Steering Group might also be asked to carry forward this report's recommendations around the future evolution of the Olive Way.

Final comment

It is clear that the Olive Way has been a highly valued initiative over a number of years. There is an option for the Church Council to discuss the possibility of a 'blue sky' exploration (visions and dreams) around the mission of Brunswick Uniting Church before future commitments are made. Alternatively, it may affirm the Olive Way as an ongoing mission of the congregation and explore the recommendations in this report that have been designed to improve the service. Regardless of decisions about the future, the congregation and volunteers should be commended for the commitment, love and hospitality that has been offered consistently to the people whom God loves in their community.

"I have felt bad in other places but not here. There is no judgment and it doesn't matter who anyone is. The Olive Way is not just here but it branches out".

***'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.'* John15:12**

'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it'. Hebrews 13:2

"The beginning of June 2014 marked 7 years since the Olive Way opened its doors for the first time on 5th June 2007. To celebrate we decked her out in streamers, balloons and bunting and partied all week long. Wednesday's official lunch time party went right off, with over 50 attending to enjoy a feast of fried chicken, chips and gravy and gorgeous birthday milkshakes. It was a lovely time for reflection and gratitude at the survival of such a simple and important program. I personally am so proud to be involved in a place that does such a profound thing as offering a place of welcome. We're hearing a lot about funding cuts leading to the closure of really important programs and centres that do similar work to us which leaves a lot of vulnerable people with less places to go to connect with their community, to feel loved, to sit quietly and in comfort. These are things that we take for granted but they are vital and actually really hard to come by for a lot of people around us.

I often underestimate what we do in the OW, so our birthday came as a timely reminder that in an age that seems to be praising self indulgence, narcissism and meanness, there more than ever needs to be room for compassion, coffee and a smile."

Happy Birthday Olive Way. Carlyne Nunn x



Appendix A: Guide questions for the Participants of The Olive Way

The interview will commence with an introduction to the purpose of the interview:

- *To review the Olive Way program and reflect on the changes since its inception.*
- *To consider if the goals are being met and if so, how this is being delivered.*

The interviewee will be informed that their opinions are important and valuable given their participation in the program. Their identity will remain anonymous and feedback will remain confidential to the reviewers and to the committee responsible for the program.

1. What is your age bracket?
2. Do you live in the Moreland Council Area?
3. What best describes your accommodation?
4. How did you find out about The Olive Way?
5. How often do you come to The Olive Way? E.g. once a week etc
6. How long have you been coming to The Olive Way? i.e. weeks, months etc
7. What do you think The Olive Way is trying to achieve?
8. What do you like about taking part in The Olive Way?
9. What are some good things about The Olive Way?
10. What do you not like about The Olive Way?
11. Can you think of how The Olive Way can be different?
12. What other changes would you like to see? Eg music, groups, guest speakers
13. What do you think about more spiritual input at The Olive Way? Eg going into the worship space, prayer, bible reading
14. What other places like The Olive Way do you currently visit?
15. What ideas or vision do you have for The Olive Way in the future?
16. Other thoughts

Thank you for your time, interest and effort in being interviewed in regards to The Olive Way.

Appendix B: Guide Questions for Volunteers of The Olive Way

The interview will commence with an introduction to the purpose of the interview:

- *To review the Olive Way program and to reflect upon the changes since its inception;*
- *To gather information from volunteers past and present regarding The Olive Way.*
- *To consider if the initial goals have been met and if so, how this is delivered.*

The interviewee will be informed that their opinions are important; as their work at The Olive Way is essential to the life of the program. Their identity will remain anonymous and feedback will remain confidential to the reviewers and to the committee responsible for the program. A written report will be submitted to the Church Council by end of the year.

1. What is your age bracket?
2. Do you live in the Moreland City Council Area?
3. What best describes your involvement at The Olive Way?
4. How did you find out about The Olive Way?
5. How often do you come to The Olive Way? eg once a week etc
6. How long have you been coming to The Olive Way? ie weeks, months etc
7. What do you think The Olive Way is trying to achieve?
8. What do you like about taking part in The Olive Way?
9. What are some good things about The Olive Way?
10. What do you not like about The Olive Way?
11. Can you think of how this can be different?
12. What other changes would you like to see? Eg music, outings, guest speakers, more participation from our consumer group
13. What do you think about more spiritual input at The Olive Way? Eg going into the worship space, prayer, bible reading
14. What other places like The Olive Way do you contribute to or volunteer at?
15. What ideas or vision do you have for The Olive Way in the future?
16. Other thoughts?

Thank you for your time, interest and effort in being interviewed and/ or completing the online questionnaire.

Appendix C: Survey Monkey Questionnaire for Congregational Members

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. Your input will help the Olive Way, and the mission of Brunswick Uniting Church to develop. Your responses cannot be traced back to you so please be assured of confidentiality.

* 1. My age is

- 12 - 20
- 21 - 30
- 31 - 50
- 51 - 70
- 70+

* 2. Do you live in the Moreland City Council area?

- Yes
- No

* 3. What best describes your main involvement in the Olive Way?

- A volunteer
- A congregational member
- A user/guest of the Olive Way

* 4. How did you find out about the Olive Way?

- I heard about it at a Brunswick Uniting Church service
- I was told about it by a Brunswick UC member
- I heard about it at a Brunswick Uniting Church meeting
- I read about it on the Brunswick Uniting Church website
- I heard about it in the local community

Other (please specify)

* 5. How often do you come to the Olive Way?

- Weekly or more
- About every two to four weeks
- Occasionally
- Rarely or never

* 6. How long have you been coming to, or involved with the Olive Way?

- Just started in the last few months

- More than a few months, less than a year
- A year or two
- Two to five years
- More than five years
- I'm not directly involved

*** 7. What do you think the Olive Way is primarily trying to achieve?**

- Generally offering hospitality to all
- Helping people understand something of the Christian faith in word and/or action
- Creating community for people who may feel isolated in the local community
- Helping build community in the Brunswick municipality
- Providing a meal
- A connection between the church and the local community

Other (please specify)

*** 8. What do you most like about taking part in the Olive Way?**

- I feel I'm part of the church connecting with the community
- An opportunity to spend time with people who come there
- Being part of a team
- It gives my life greater meaning and purpose
- An opportunity to share the gospel in word or actions
- I'm not directly involved
- Other (please specify)

*** 9. Are there some good things about the Olive Way**

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Please comment

*** 10. Are there things that you believe need to change about the Olive Way?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Please comment

*** 11. Can you think of how this could be different?**

- Yes
- No

Please comment

*** 12. Are there any other changes you'd like to see at the Olive Way? e.g**

- More music
- Speakers
- More participation by the consumer group
- Different foods
- Different activities
- Different culture
- Other (please specify)

*** 13. What do you think about more spiritual input? e.g.**

- Prayer stations
- Symbols or visual expressions of faith or spirituality
- Studies
- Minister relationship
- Telling of faith stories
- Particular music

Other (please specify)

*** 14. Do you contribute to any other places like the Olive Way?**

- Yes
- No

*** 15. Do you have any ideas or vision for the Olive Way in the future?**

- Yes
- No

Please comment

16. Any other comments?