



WAVERTON HUB EVALUATION REPORT – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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PREPARED FOR WAVERTON HUB BOARD



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This is the report on the independent evaluation of the Waverton Hub, conducted by Urbis. Developed from the US Village Model, the Waverton Hub is the first of its kind in Australia. Established in 2013 by community members from across the North Sydney suburbs of Waverton and Wollstonecraft, the key aim of the Waverton Hub is to enable its members to age well, meaningfully and affordably in their own homes and neighbourhoods for as long as possible. As such, the Waverton Hub represents a truly community-based approach to supporting older Australians to age in place. As of 30 June 2019, the Hub had 351 members who together have organised 40 or so diverse activities and programs in the local community which operate on a regular basis. These include:

- **Physical activities:** walking groups, exercise classes, pilates, Tai Chi and yoga
- **Social activities:** game days, coffee mornings, Sunday safaris, trivia nights, and dinner evenings
- **Learning activities:** a guest speaker program and education classes on computing, technology, investing
- **Arts and cultural activities:** art classes, a book club, and the Hub singers.

The Waverton Hub also strives to promote a strong community culture through building an informal network of residents who provide informal support to one another in the form of friendship, domestic help, house-sitting, pet-minding, assistance with transport etc. The Hub further supports this by linking its members to information, services and formal sources of support as and when needed.

THE EVALUATION

In 2019, the Waverton Hub Board engaged evaluation specialists from Urbis to conduct an independent evaluation of the first six years of the Hub's operation. The purpose of the evaluation was to:

- assess the social and community impacts of Waverton Hub since its establishment
- document key learnings about establishing a Hub
- identify any unintended impacts of the Hub
- suggest improvements to the design and operation of the Hub, and
- identify factors impacting on the replicability/scalability of the model to different community settings.

A Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis was also conducted by Urbis to assess the social, economic, and environmental value that the Waverton Hub generates for the wider community. Valuing outcomes through an SROI approach seeks to quantify the value for money of the Hub model at a time when the cost of supporting Australia's ageing population is significant and rising. The evaluation methodology included in-depth consultations with current and founding members of the Waverton Board, Activity Leaders, Hub members, local services, local businesses, and other stakeholders including the Mayor of North Sydney Council. An online survey was conducted of all Waverton Hub members and program and financial data were analysed as part of the SROI. The evaluation was co-designed by Urbis and the Waverton Board and was conducted from June to December 2019.

KEY FINDINGS

The Waverton Hub has generated significant value for members and the local community

The social and economic benefits that members derive from regular participation in the Hub's physical, social, learning, arts and cultural activities are significant. The Waverton Hub has:

- Created a total social and economic impact of \$7.32 for every \$1 invested in the organisation through real or in-kind funding (membership fees and members contributing their time)
- Generated a net benefit of \$813,853 per annum to the Waverton community.

These are very significant benefits and are in excess or equivalent to the benefits derived from similar successful models elsewhere in the world with similar aims and objectives.

The Waverton Hub has successfully attracted a stable and growing membership

Since it started in 2013, the Hub has grown from strength to strength and, as of June 2019, had 351 members. This represents some 10% of the local Waverton population of people aged 60 years and over and exceeds the Hub's target membership number. Most members renew their membership annually, and a healthy number of new members join the Hub each year, as other members leave the area, are less able to participate in Hub activities, or reach the end of their life. The Hub has attracted both male and female members, people who live in Waverton as well as neighbouring suburbs such as Wollstonecraft, and people who live alone as well as those who live in family households. Importantly, the Hub has also successfully attracted people from a broad range of age groups, including those in their 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s, with the average age of Hub members being 74 years.

The Waverton Hub has established an impressive array of regular and reliable activities which meet the varied interests of Hub members

The Hub now operates up to 40 types of activities, encompassing physical, sport, social, intellectual, educational, music, arts and leisure pursuits. These activities variously run weekly, monthly, every few months, or annually. There is something of interest for most people, and the program reflects the kinds of activities members are interested in attending. That so many and such a diverse range of activities are on offer in one small community is an impressive achievement and a tribute to the many Hub members who have worked together to make this happen.

The Waverton Hub has encouraged its members to contribute to the management and operations of the Hub

The Hub successfully engages up to 80 members (about one in four of its membership) in any given year to contribute their time and skills to govern, manage and operationalise the many and varied Hub activities and events. Together, these members contribute close to 3,000 hours of time annually (or over 55 hours a week) which is outstanding achievement given the modest membership base. Success has bred success, and the more successful the Hub has become, the more engaged and motivated people are to contribute so it can continue and succeed.

Members are strongly connected through Hub activities, which foster new friendships

Members of the Waverton Hub meet one another in a variety of ways and in a range of settings, for example in local restaurants, the community hall, local parks, local public places such as the Coal Loader facility, and in members' houses. The frequency of activities and events provides an environment where members can regularly meet like-minded individuals and form friendships quickly. People socialise after Hub events, come across one another in the street, and connect informally.

“

You meet people in your own age group that you might not have otherwise met

The Hub has entered into MoUs to formalise relationships with local organisations

These include Memoranda of Understanding with the Crows Nest Centre (which assists Hub members navigate the aged care system and provides access to community aged care services); local Community Transport; Greenwich Hospital (part of Hammond Care) which provides palliative care in people's own homes; and a local maintenance organisation that provides qualified tradespeople to members at reasonable rates. The outcomes and impact of these relationships was not able to be ascertained in the evaluation and would need further enquiry. However, it was suggested in consultations that the relationships with Community Transport and the local maintenance organisation could be strengthened.

Members are extremely positive about the Hub and highly value its activities

In consultations and in the online survey, Hub members were overwhelmingly positive about the Hub and its activities. Words commonly used by members to describe the Hub include “wonderful”, “great”, “positive”, “brilliant”, “marvellous” and “fantastic”. There was hardly a word of criticism in feedback from members. A Word Cloud was drawn using the words most commonly used by the 100 members surveyed who described the Hub in their own words. These words go to the heart of what the Waverton Hub is aiming to achieve and speak to the strength and the consistency of members’ views. This revealed what members most like and value about the Hub. It is seen as:

- an opportunity to do new things, learn new skills and meet new people
- a friendly and caring network
- a means of enriching the local community
- a community-led initiative
- a link to information, services and informal supports
- a social innovation they feel proud to be part of.

There is a high level of community participation in Hub activities

The survey of Hub members (completed by one in three members, a very high response rate to a community survey of this kind) revealed that many members take part in Hub activities once or more a week, and that members typically engage in more than one type of activity. Many members are attending Hub activities once or more a week. This is especially notable amongst the 70% of members who participate in Physical Activities. As many as 76 % of this group attend physical activities *once or more a week*. This suggests that involvement in Hub activities is not a one-off event: for many members it has become a regular part of their weekly or monthly routine. Members made many positive comments about how the Hub has provided structure and motivation for them to lead healthier and more interesting lives, which for some has become integral to their daily or weekly regime.



I’m sure if I was left to my own devices and I didn’t have the support of the Hub I would never have started doing yoga and continued on every week for the last three years.

Members consistently report many positive outcomes from the Hub

By far the strongest outcome from participating in the Hub is an increase in members’ **sense of belonging** to their community, with as many as 91% of members surveyed reporting this outcome.

A further 90% reported **making new local friends** through the Hub and 67% said they had **developed new skills or interests**.

Half of the members said they were **more confident** and also **feel safer** in their community. Close to half also said they had **improved or maintained their independence** as a result of the Hub. These are extremely positive results which speak to the achievement of key aims of the Hub.

Hub members are more aware of, and have been linked to, local services

The great majority (80%) of members said that, through the Hub, they have **greater awareness of the local services** in their area and more than one in four (28%) said they had been **connected to local services**.

Importantly, 60% of Hub members feel more **optimistic about being able to live in their own home** for longer and 45% said the Hub had helped them **improve, enhance or maintain their independence**.

Members report many benefits from contributing



It allows me to continue and perhaps build on skills acquired from my working days.

I have been able to develop stronger relationships volunteering alongside others.

Members cite numerous personal rewards from contributing their time, skills, knowledge and ideas to the Hub. Many spoke of the benefits of being involved in joint activities with others, which has both strengthened relationships between contributors, and cemented existing friendships. Some say they enjoy being able to apply their work skills and experience to a new initiative, post retirement, whilst others say that contributing to the Hub has given them an opportunity to learn new skills. Members also spoke of the satisfaction gained from the act of contributing which is valuable in and of itself.

More people are looking out for one another

A key aim of the Hub is to build an informal network of “buddies” who can look out for one another. There is strong evidence that this has occurred. Approximately three quarters (74%) of members say that, as a result of the Hub, they now **look out more for people living in their local community**. In addition, almost two-thirds (63%) say they now have **more people they can rely on** if they need help with anything. These are very significant results which denote an increase in trust, connection and neighbourliness amongst Hub members. This is a significant finding given that one in five of those surveyed do not have family supports available in Sydney and over a third (37%) live on their own.

Some local businesses and services have benefited from the Hub

Local businesses and services have distributed pamphlets and posters about the Hub. The local Bowling Club (until its recent closure) and a local cafe regularly host members engaging in Hub activities (e.g. weekly games days) as well as a quarterly dinner evening for male members attended by about 30 people. Regular coffee gatherings of members often take place in local cafes after Hub activities and one local business provides a 15% discount for Waverton Hub members. Services have also benefitted from the Hub, especially the Crows Nest Centre, which has been connected to older people in the community requiring information or in-home support. The Centre has also received assistance from individual Hub members who volunteer at the Centre.

The Hub has strengthened the local community

A strong theme emerged in the consultations and surveys that members perceive Waverton to be a stronger community than before. This includes not only the community of older members but also strengthened links with younger people in the community, particularly parents with young children who have attended family days or events organised by the Hub which have been open to the whole community. Local businesses too commented on the stronger community identity that has been formed through the Hub.

The Hub has played an active role in informing members about important things happening in the community and gathering views and ideas about local facilities e.g. the future of the recently closed Bowling Club. It has also been an active participant in bringing to life local parks and facilities which were previously underutilised.



The Hub has turned Waverton from a suburb into a village.

The Hub is challenging social norms about ageing and retirement



I think the Hub has made our community much more age friendly... accepting that older people have capability and being more respectful of older people.

The Hub is actively challenging concepts of ageing, including outdated notions of what older people are capable of doing and what they want to do with their lives. Many members consulted for the evaluation were enthusiastic, keen and excited about the Hub and what it offers. They want to be able to use their skills and experience in different ways after retirement and many are also keen to develop new skills. Some have appreciated that the Hub has taken them out of their comfort zone and encouraged them to do new things such as exploring parts of Sydney for the first time, trying new cuisines, using public transport instead of their usual mode of transport, the car.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

The following factors were identified as being important in the Waverton Hub achieving its goals:

- strong leadership, governance and financial systems
- continuity of a core group of committed people
- clear and consistent vision
- affordable and inclusive approach
- early “runs on the board”
- organic and developmental approach
- staying true to its community development basis and principles
- community-owned and operated model
- being realistic about the amount of time people are willing and able to contribute
- regular communication with members
- close relationships with local businesses and services
- alignment of the model with local values and aspirations
- availability of local resources and infrastructure

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

In the course of the evaluation, a number of issues were identified that may pose a challenge for the Waverton Hub in the future. In addition, there are opportunities for the Hub to strengthen aspects of its management or operation to ensure its ongoing success and viability. A series of options for consideration have been developed which fall under three headings: Strategy, Planning and Operations.

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