

# Positive ibes Foundation

## Annual Report December 2021



## Chairman's Message

### Report from Chairman, Mario Rodrigues



It is my pleasure to present the Chairman's statement for the PVF Annual Report for 2021.

This is the second year the community has found itself in the midst of COVID, with QR code check-ins, PCR and Rapid Antigen Tests, followed by lockdowns, isolations and uncertainty around ever changing COVID rules. As a result, 15% of Australians aged 16-85 years experienced high levels of psychological distress with one in five for those 16-34 years. The role of organisations such as the Positive Vibes Foundation has been paramount.

Although there is still much work to be done in this area, awareness of mental health has improved over the years. The Foundation has therefore shifted its focus from removing the stigma of mental illness to promoting positive mental wellbeing. We have immersed ourselves in the Community, making Connections with other organisations and connecting people with the services they need, and encouraging them to have open Conversations about mental health issues. We have lived the 3Cs of our mission, whether it

is through activities and programs targeted at individuals or groups, both large and small, or by engaging with whole communities at major events such as UPmarket and the Bunnings Charity Christmas Night Market.

I am proud of the achievements the Foundation has made during 2021, despite the difficulties. We have reached out to the community at the grassroots particularly to ladies at The Hills Women's Shed, high school students through the Young Healthy Minds Forum, the elderly at aged care homes with our Positive Paws program, and diverse community groups through the Multicultural Mental Health Forum.

However, none of this could have been done without the passion and dedication of the directors of the Foundation and its volunteers and the generous support of corporations and individuals.

My thanks to all who have contributed to the Positive Vibes Foundation to bring about positive mental wellbeing in the community. In particular, I would like to thank Jay Bacik, who completed his tenure as Chair of Positive Vibes Foundation in March 2021, for his service and contribution. The Foundation was indeed strengthened by his leadership, to the benefit of the community. Jay continues to support us as our Ambassador.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Rodrigues', written in a cursive style.

## Our Mission & Values

Our vision is to promote positive mental wellbeing, encouraging people to access the individual support they need. We do this by changing attitudes towards mental health in *Communities*; making *Connections* with like-minded organisations; and through *Conversations* with individuals and groups to provide them with advice and guidance. We call this *our 3Cs*. In particular:

- we use community events to raise awareness and connect people with services;
- we collaborate and partner with like-minded organisations to drive better outcomes; and
- we embrace a holistic approach to address mental illness and wellbeing at home, work and in the community.

In all our dealings, we operate under the highest values of:

- Honesty, integrity and transparency
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing
- Being respectful and inclusive of all
- Passionate and committed to delivering on our goals
- Affordable and sustainable programmes
- Embrace innovation
- Approachable, positive and adaptive to the circumstances

To find out more, visit us at [www.positivevibes.org.au](http://www.positivevibes.org.au) or write to us at [info@positivevibes.org.au](mailto:info@positivevibes.org.au)



The Positive Vibes Foundation (ABN 67 602 797 660) is a registered charitable organisation with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission (ACNC) and has Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status.

## The Hills Women's Shed



The Hills Women's Shed had a challenging but nevertheless successful time in 2021. After the Christmas and New Year recess, the Shed re-opened in February 2021 only to be closed again from July to October due to Covid lockdown restrictions. Despite the Covid inconveniences, we were able to host a large number of activities including screen printing, broken pots with succulents, macrame, making face masks, glass painting, canvas painting, our painting, intuitive painting, cooking classes (including making dog treats), making whimsical gardens, mosaic coasters, a talk on nutrition and gardening.

In addition to the weekly drop-in days, we were also able to start an Op Shop at Balcombe Heights, trial a Garage Sale, Community Connections days and an International Women's Day lunch.



One of the most satisfying key highlights of the year was the Shed being able, just before Christmas, to offer practical help, in the form of items of clothing and goods from the Op Shop to members of the Afghanistan community who had recently arrived in Australia under very difficult conditions. This would be the forerunner of a number of such drop-ins in early 2022.

It is very encouraging to see the commitment of the Shed Team, led by Gaynor Challingsworth, who had continued to run Shed activities despite very trying COVID conditions. There is little doubt that the community had benefited from Shed activities and are looking forward to more in 2022.



## The Young Healthy Minds Forum



Mental health has been a major issue for high school students due to COVID isolation, with challenges from home study and perhaps family pressures. April 2021 saw the return of the Foundation's annual Young Healthy Minds Forum which was cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID lockdown. The Forum is an interactive and engaging event which aims to break the stigma of mental illness and promote positive mental wellbeing.

The Forum was held at the Australian International Academy who provided us with the venue and attended by 140 high school students from schools throughout the Hills Shire and was facilitated by Burn Bright. Dr Michelle Byrne, Mayor of The Hills Shire Council and Patron of Positive Vibes Foundation, addressed the students, encouraging them to make the most of the day. There were activities to help students get to know each other, videos on mental health and a talk by a lived-experience speaker, Mitch Farrell, who spoke about his mental health journey. This was followed by a Q&A session where students asked questions concerning mental health to a panel of mental health specialists, including a psychologist and psychiatrist from The Hills Clinic.



The Forum not only helped the students to cope better with their mental health, but they presented initiatives which they would bring back to their schools to promote positive mental wellbeing in their communities. The students did their schools proud!



## Positive Paws

It is proven that dogs play an important role in promoting mental and physical health in humans. In June, the Foundation reached out to the community for more volunteers for our Positive Paws program where we take our pet dogs to aged care homes, and was met with very strong responses.

Many of the residents had dogs before they entered the home and were delighted to pat, cuddle and speak to

our dogs when they visited. Staff were also happy to meet our pups.

We currently visit aged care homes in Oatlands and North Paramatta but look to visit others also. This is a great way to give back to the community. If you can spare one or two Saturdays a month and would like to volunteer to take your pet dog to visit the elderly, contact us at [info@positivevibes.org.au](mailto:info@positivevibes.org.au)





## Connecting with the Community

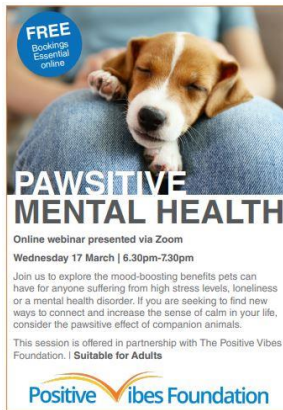
### UPmarket



In 2021, we continued our successful partnership with UPmarket, a family and dog-friendly arts and crafts market held on the fourth Sunday of each month at Castle Hill Showground. There was plenty to buy, food to eat and music too.

The Foundation's stall sold items made by The Hills Women's Shed (succulents were particularly popular) and provided information on mental health services.

### Mental Health Talks



Arranging for talks is one of the ways to promote positive mental wellbeing. Together with the Castle Hill Library, we held online seminars including how dogs help with your mental health, given by Roger Allen, a certified dog trainer; and on raising resilient children given by Stephanie O'Hare, clinical psychologist. The Foundation also arranged for Dr Tanveer Ahmed of The Hills Clinic to give a mental health talk to a corporate.

Positive Vibes is grateful for the support of the speakers.

### Multicultural Mental Wellbeing Forum



Following the 2020 Zoom conference necessitated by Covid, the Foundation was pleased to participate in a face-to-face Multicultural Mental Wellbeing Forum on 29 May at the Toongabie Community Centre. The 2021 Forum, in collaboration with Anglicare, hosted 10 community groups with nearly 60 participants. The Forum was aimed at breaking the stigma of mental health and raising public awareness. Dr Poonka Govintharajah, the key speaker, shared useful tips on

keeping healthy mentally. The Forum led to a working group to explore the sustainability of the project. One of the tangible outcomes was the establishment of a resource for community leaders to help increase their capacity to influence good mental health. The Foundation continues to collaborate with Anglicare, Transcultural Mental Health Service and other organisations on this community beneficial project.

## Bunnings Charity Christmas Night Market



The Foundation was thrilled to accept an invitation by Bunnings Castle Hill to participate in its inaugural Charity Christmas Night Market. Although the number of stalls and attendees was somewhat hampered by Covid hesitation, a night of fun was had by all who turned up at the Castle Hills Bunnings Store. Children had free face-painting, and free hot-dogs and soft drinks were handed out to all whilst being serenaded with lovely carols

presented by the Hills Harmony men's choir.

The Foundation's stall was well-attended with Coco the Dog dolls being the best-seller of our goods and merchandise, including beautiful succulents made up by The Hills Women's Shed ladies. We look forward to joining this great community event again next year.



## Financial Report

After a most trying and difficult 2020, the COVID experience for many organisations, The Foundation included, in 2021 did not really get much better as the subsequent waves of Corona virus swept through the country, including the very highly transmissible Omicron strand.

This had put a real strain on the ability of Positive Vibes Foundation to run its programs and also to raise funds in 2021. Despite this, through very strong community support, careful management of expenditure and support from the government and local council, the Foundation managed to see through 2021 with a small operating net deficit of only \$632.

The strong support of the State government is gratefully acknowledged. A grant of \$18,700 was received in March which covered the costs of much-needed building repairs and renovations (see separate report below). Community support was overwhelming. So many gave so generously during a hastily organised Online Fundraiser Raffle in October when it became clear that the Annual Fundraiser Dinner was not a viable option in the circumstances.

On the expense side, The Hills Shire Council again provided valued financial relief in the form of rent waiver for The Foundation's Balcombe Heights premises which house, amongst other things, the regular meeting place for The Hills Women's Shed.

We would like to express our appreciation to Rothsay Audit & Assurance Pty Limited for their continued pro-bono support as the Foundation's Auditors.

## Building Renovation

The Balcombe Heights premises required some much needed tender loving care. In particular, the meeting rooms were hot and uncomfortable during the summer months, and the community garden at the back was not well utilised due to the lack of shelter.

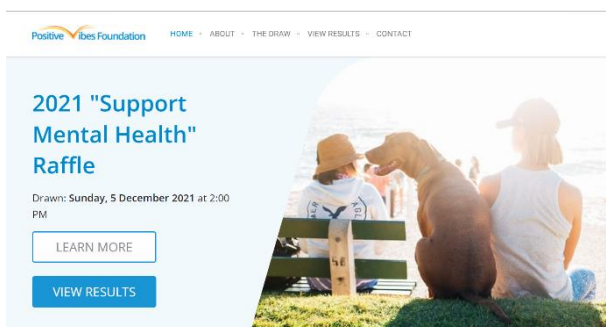
In March 2021, \$18,700 was received from the NSW Community Building Partnership Grant. The funds were applied to:

- Install 3 air-conditioners in the kitchen-hall and 2 offices. This has provided essential comfort for The Hills Women's Shed ladies who met when Covid social distancing rules permitted.
- The old dilapidated garden shed was replaced with a larger new one which now provides great storage space for garden equipment as well as a work bench.
- A new pergola was erected in the backyard, facilitating the regular open-air activities in the community garden.
- Essential equipment such as a lawnmower, whipper-snipper, hedge trimmer and new garden beds were also purchased. The produce from the garden, which were then sold at the monthly UPmarket, included lovely succulent plants and 'broken pots' arrangements.



Positive Vibes Foundation acknowledges the generous support from the State government for this much-appreciated building improvement.

## Fundraiser



The constant social distancing and lockdown rules in 2021 meant that it was very difficult to organise, with any degree of certainty, the Foundation's Annual Fundraiser Dinner. This event is very important as it typically raises a substantial part of funds to cover the annual operation costs of our activities.

Nevertheless, through sheer resolve and determination, an Online Fundraiser Raffle was hastily organised in October and through the very generous and overwhelming support of the community over \$12,000 was raised, including \$7,000 of cash donations. The Online Raffle was very successful with all 1,000 tickets being fully purchased by the closing date. Generous raffle prizes were donated by so many of our corporate supporters and sponsors, for which we are very appreciative.



## Our Team



*Jeanette Farrell OAM, Director*



*Mercedes Durante,  
Director*



*Andrew McIver, Director*



*Nalika Padmasena,  
Director*



*Albert Seah, Treasurer*



*Dr Juanita Ruiz,  
Community Liaison Officer*

## Our Patron



*Dr Michelle Byrne,  
Mayor Hills Shire Council*

## Our Ambassador



*Jay Bacik*



## Our Sponsors and Supporters

The Board of the Positive Vibes Foundation wishes to thank everyone who had supported us in 2021, including our many individual benefactors.

