

## Getting Better Equipped

Leigh Cupitt left MCRN to take up a position in women's health in the Department of Health in March 1987. She was replaced by Alex Gooding.

*My strongest memories were of the building, it was small and cramped but a good place to work because everyone got along well. I have a strong memory of negotiating money from another government funded program to have the building painted as it was fibro and in a bad state. It was painted pink, we probably got a cheap deal on paint. It was also amazing how warm it was in Lawson compared to Katoomba.*  
(Leigh Cupitt, 2006)

The end of the CEP program meant that the Network, like many fellow organisations, was faced with problems with covering administration and clerical tasks. Alex was responsible for introducing real computerisation to MCRN and by example, to the community sector. This was seen as very up-to-date!

Funding for MCRN was picked up by the Department of Youth and Community Services (YACS).

Practical assistance continued in the form of the library which was substantially expanded, management skills workshops, a revamped *Mountain Link* and assisting with funding submissions.

*At the time we had some 6 months government assisted admin support. I can't remember the name of the scheme but there was a Spanish speaking woman who was a wonderful help keeping us organised.*  
(Leigh Cupitt, 2006)

## Making politicians accountable

State election candidates were surveyed regarding their community service priorities and the results were published in the Gazette. Meetings between community organisations and candidates were organised as a follow up. MCRN has continued to ensure that the community has the opportunity to better understand the policies of candidates and so that candidates are also well informed about local community issues and the contribution made by the community sector.

In a similar vein, MCRN has made a significant contribution in bringing the Mountains to the attention of State members. Alex says,

*I am also very pleased that the new Minister for Family and Community Services, Virginia Chadwick MLC, appears to have taken a special interest in the Mountains, and we hope that the positive relationship established prior to the election will continue.* (Alex Gooding, 1987)

## Developing new services

The Lower Blue Mountains Task Force was established as a coalition to address the growing needs of the area. This action was assisted with a

# 1987 1988

### Staff

Leigh Cupitt  
Co-ordinator  
Alex Gooding  
Co-ordinator  
Robert Duff  
Clerical Assistant  
Lorraine Masters  
Clerical Assistant  
Helen King  
Management Skills  
Trainee  
Helen Walker  
Community Transport  
Co-ordinator  
Kate McKean  
Clerical Assistant for  
Community Transport

### Management Committee

Chris Smith (now  
Marks) President  
Ian Hill Vice  
-President  
Matthew Isaacs  
Treasurer  
Lizanne Emery  
Secretary  
Alison Purcell  
John Tonkin  
Peter O'Connor  
Chris Magill (ex-officio)

*Comment from Leigh Cupitt  
2006.*

*As the second  
Coordinator, my role was  
to build on the work that  
Sandra had started.  
The major challenge was  
to interest the non  
government sector into  
being coordinated,  
especially in their  
dealings with the  
Government sector.  
The organisations in the  
Mountains responded  
very well to the idea of  
coordination.  
The Mountains  
Interagency had always  
been strong and had  
developed a culture of  
cooperation.  
Therefore the task of  
establishing the Network  
was not as hard as it  
could have been.  
We had a particularly  
good relationship with  
Bob Debus who was very  
supportive of the  
Network.*

*When I moved to work in  
Penrith and do  
consultancy work in the  
rest of Western Sydney I  
really understood how  
fortunate the Blue  
Mountains is to have had  
a culture of cooperation.  
Most other areas are not  
at all well coordinated  
which leave little room for  
cooperation on important  
issues.  
A considerable amount of  
the work at the time I was  
at MCRN was raising  
interest in new  
government policy which  
would impact on the  
sector and/or the  
Mountains. We would  
hold meetings to  
summarise the policy,  
seek input and prepare a  
response to government.*

submission for a lower Mountains community development worker. The position was funded by WSAAS and continues today.

## **Mid Mountains Community Centre Task Force**

Alex played a key role in the development of multi-purpose facility for the area. The Task Force insisted on community consultation as fundamental to good process. This work was to result in the construction of the Mid Mountains Community Centre.

## **Network development**

MCRN played a key role in the establishment of the Disabilities Network and Interagency (and its off-spring, the Access Committee). The Network also convened the Combined Interagency and the Coordinators Forum.

The Combined Interagency has evolved from strength to strength and has met under a variety of names (including the BM Community Forum, Community Interagency). The resourcing of this key interagency has continued to be a major responsibility for the Network.

## **Collaboration with Council**

Alex assisted Council with the compilation of the 1987 WSAAS profile and producing an Agency Contact List. Council and MCRN continued to partner in supporting operations of the Infovan and in producing fact sheets on issues such as public housing.

## **Western Sydney development**

Alex was involved in ITeC (Western Sydney Information Technology Centre) He also facilitated a Penrith / Blue Mountains meeting with the consultants reviewing the WSAAS program.

*I would particularly like to give praise and recognition to these two workers [Alex and Helen] whose professionalism, enthusiasm and vision for their work is ensuring that organisations and individuals in this City are being resourced, supported and assisted to develop effective services and programmes. They are also ensuring that Government at all levels are "hearing" the needs of the Mountains in coherent and well-presented documents and forums. I am proud of their efforts. (Chris Smith, 1987)*

## **Community Transport**

Development was well underway now with volunteer assisted shopping trips, volunteer medical transport and coordination of the Council access buses.

A new initiative was developed in the form a joint venture between the Department of Health and Community Transport in which a bus service ran from the Mountains to specialist medical services at Nepean Hospital. This signals the start of a long period of variously smooth and sometimes troubled relationship with Health in the continuing endeavour to provide health related transport.

## Staff changes

Alex left MCRN in 1989 to take up a position at WSROC. He still works there. Judy Finch started in May 1989, fresh from LCSA.

## WSAAS

Alex worked intensively with lower Mountains groups to ensure that targeted WSAAS submissions were prepared. This cooperative approach saw several WSAAS applications being funded including the Lower Blue Mountains Development Worker and the Youth Cottage at Mount Riverview.

## Mid Mountains Community Facility

Work was still ongoing on developing a community facility for the Mid Mountains. The Network justified its involvement in what was panning out to be a time consuming issue because of the need for this facility in the area and in order to "preserve the principle of community involvement in planning decisions". The consolidation of this principle would be confirmed as a worthwhile investment in later years.

## Western Sydney

WSCF, in conjunction with the Network, produced submissions on issues such as FACS funding policies and the future of Section 94 developer contributions. This was to be the source for much neighbourhood development in new release areas across Western Sydney though the Mountains itself did not benefit substantially because of the nature of existing development). The freezing of YACS funding for community groups meant an effective 7% cut in funding.

## Survey for proposed mid-Mountains centre

Community, welfare, recreational and cultural groups will be given an opportunity to have some input into the planning of the proposed Mid-Mountains Community Centre.

This will be done through a survey being conducted by the Mountains Community Resource Network in conjunction with Blue Mountains City Council and other organisations.

The survey, which is being conducted on behalf of the Mid-Mountains Community Centre Task Force, is seeking information on whether the groups would use the new centre, and, if so, their estimates of how often and how many people would be involved.

The groups are also being asked what facilities they would like to see included.

The new centre is planned as a replacement for Lawson Hall, which is to be demolished to allow for the widening of the highway.

The survey form, along with a covering letter, is being sent to groups that currently use the Lawson Hall, or who operate elsewhere in the Mid-Mountains, as well as to Mountain-wide organisations that might wish to use the new facility.

"We have tried to distribute the forms as widely as possible, but if anyone has missed out

they should contact us," said Mr Alex Gooding, the network's co-ordinator.

Mr Gooding stressed that the form was not in itself an application to use the centre, and that there was no commitment involved in completing it.

"It is meant only to indicate the probable usage patterns for the facility, and the range of facilities that groups might require. The purpose of the survey is to make recommendations on the 'mix' of facilities, such as meeting rooms, office space, kitchen, etc — as well as the hall — that would best suit the community," he said.

Mr Gooding also pointed out that proposed funding for the centre included a contribution from the Department of Education.

This meant that the centre will be built adjacent to Lawson Public School, which would have priority access during school hours to the centre's hall.

"The proposal has the potential to be a real focus for both the school and the local community, and would complement any redevelopment of the Lawson Shopping Centre. It is a very exciting concept," Mr Gooding said.

"As well as interested groups, we hope at a later stage to be able to give local residents an opportunity to comment and be involved."

Groups who have not received a form, or who would like further information, should contact Alex Gooding on 59-1982.

Haythe 1/6/88 p3

# 1988

# 1989

## Staff

Alex Gooding

Judy Finch

Co-ordinator

Lorraine Masters  
Clerical Assistant

Sue Snelling — Management  
Skills Trainee

Helen Walker — Community  
Transport Co-ordinator

Kate McKean — Clerical  
Assistant for Community  
Transport

## Management Committee

Ian Hill — President

John Tonkin

Matthew Isaacs

Gary Thornell

Matthew Isaacs

Glenda Host

Maureen Evans

Anne Hobbs

Leonarde Olden

Greg Thompson

Chris Magill (ex-officio)

*I'd like to say that the Network's strength lies in the mandate and support provided to it by its management and its constituency.*

(Ian Hill, 1988)

## Community Transport

The Community Transport service was now providing transport for over 500 people per month. The medical transport service to Penrith continued with the cooperation of WAHS, doctors and Katoomba Hospital. Helen says,

*This service has proved itself invaluable, because many of the specialist medical services are situated in Penrith and are difficult to reach without transport. Another asset is the fact that the bus that we use has a wheel-chair hoist and so transporting people in wheelchairs is no longer a problem". (Helen Walker, 1988 Annual Report).*

A significant step ahead was made in the acquisition of a service owned mini-bus with a paid driver, thus taking some pressure off volunteers. The service expanded to transporting people to centre-based meals, respite care and recreation outlets.

*When I look back at my time at the Network my first memory is one of profound gratitude. I came to the job stressed out after a rough time in my previous position and to be working back in the community sector in the Mountains was almost complete bliss. The fact that New Street was five minutes walk from home didn't hurt either.*

*Several other memories stand out. One is the pink cottage itself - I liked working there, but as an office it could have hardly been less suited. In winter you had the choice between freezing to death or putting on the oil heater, which turned the meeting room into a furnace but did nothing for the rest of the house. In summer it was not so much hot as very stuffy.*

*I'm not sure that I could claim to be solely responsible for any great achievements but a few things I was involved in during that time stand out. One was the construction of the Mid-Mountains Community Centre. This seemed to be an unending saga of meetings, negotiations, fights and crises, the story of which could easily fill a book (one day I'll write that book but I'll have to engage a good libel lawyer first). My strongest memory was the bizarre spectacle of the then former Minister for Education Mr Terry Metherell, looking shell-shocked after escaping from a demonstration of irate teachers and parents at Hazelbrook, as he "planted" a tree to commemorate the commencement of the Centre's construction. This was purely a photo opportunity - the fact that the hole was directly under where the steps would go, the tree was still in its pot as he shovelled dirt over it and that the building was already at waist-height didn't seem to faze anybody. Anyway, the Centre was eventually completed, much to everybody's relief.*

*Another project was the computerisation of the Network. I spent a long time sorting out the specifications and then investing what is by today's standards an enormous amount of money in purchasing the Network's first computer, printer and software. I opted for a standard IBM-compatible PC and I remember having to beat off several of Apple Macintosh fanatics who tried to convert me to the one true faith (they haven't spoken to me since). Buying a computer in those days also involved training everyone else to use it. This included people who could actually type, who had to be persuaded not to press the return key at the end of every line.*

*During my time at the Network I also served a term as President of the Western Sydney Community Forum. I really enjoyed my work with the Forum - I think organisations like the Network and the Forum play an important complementary role in developing strategic responses to issues and I guess that is what eventually attracted me to work at WSROC.*

*I was sad to leave the Network in 1989 and it wasn't just because I knew I'd never work that close to home again! As well as meeting a great and very diverse bunch of people, I learnt a lot in my time there. I'm very pleased that the Network has not only survived but gone on to bigger and better things. (Alex Gooding, 2006)*





*I joined the Network MC when first got on to Council and I stayed on it until after I retired from Council. And a couple of years after that. I remember there was the worker for the non English speaking people, the disabled worker. We set up the Mid Mountains Neighbourhood Centre – that was one of the reasons that I got on in the first place. We had terrible trouble finding a place to move from the cottage.*

*I thought the role of the Network was coordinating all the community groups in the Mountains but it was starting up new groups, I think this is a very important role.*

*I think that it was important for Council to be involved in the Network. Councils should be involved in community things. That was one of the things that I used to have arguments with the other Councillors. They wanted rates, roads and rubbish.*

*(Joy Anderson)*

Initiatives from here on included the establishment of a NESB task force, a worker training workshop on cross cultural work and the organisation of the first Mountains Carnivale celebration.

*Simply the raising of the issues [for NESB people] in an area renowned as a multicultural desert has already had positive spin-offs with services talking about multicultural advertising and consideration of new culturally relevant programs. (Judy Finch, 1989 Annual Report.)*

### Information out

The Network continued to produce *Mountain Link* and Council, through Meg Hines, assisted with the compilation of the Contact List. Says Judy,

*Mountain Link remains the easiest and one of the most useful ways of keeping groups working for the Blue Mountains community informed about what's taking place in the area and also what's happening abroad. Isolation is certainly not a figment of an over-worked community mind when the Mountains is concerned. (Judy Finch, 1989).*

### Premises issues begins to hot up

1989 identified the issue with premises as now having some urgency with some groups facing imminent homelessness and others with exorbitant market rents.

And from the Network's own perspective:

*When I first started, the oil heater was my desk. (Lyn Reynolds, 2006)*

### Western Sydney as a region

The Network participated in WSCF as part of the Management Committee and through the new Management Training Unit. This resulted in "enhanced links with the FACS regional office".

*Network workers have almost all been involved in the WSCF – mostly through its management committee. In fact, the position of chair has often been held by a Network person. This has been a fantastic contribution made to regional development. There no doubt has been a two way benefit! (Fiona Christian – development officer for the WSCF in the 2000s)*

### Debate - the future of community work

Under the broad auspices of the WSCF, Judy and Liz Reedy from the North Penrith Neighbourhood Centre organised a debate which was held in Penrith. It was attended by an astounding 150 people who listened with amazement as two teams of speakers debated the future of community work. The teams included Philip Rees, Marg Barry (now deceased), Michael August and Chris Marks ... and 2 others, of course! While all the speakers' contributions were roundly applauded, Philip Rees' oratory, all in unprepared but perfectly rhyming verse, was the stand out!

## Blue Mountains Community Plan

The Network continued to be involved in the development of a social/ community plan for the Mountains. Judy and Wayne Wilson were representatives on a joint Council / Community committee that was set up to establish a framework for the creation of a community plan. The committee provided an on-going mechanism for community consultation, needs assessment and social action. Rosemary Dillon had been employed as a social planner at Council and she managed the process. It was new ground for everyone!

*Amongst many other extraordinary initiatives, the MCRN led the development of the first citywide Community Plan for the Blue Mountains. I remember working with Judy Finch who was on the steering committee for the project and visiting the cottage which was always a hive of activity. In some ways the pink cottage was like Dr Who's Tardus - on the outside it looked fairly small but on the inside it magically was able to house many workers in various nooks and crannies as well as a pretty good library resource area. (Rosemary Dillon, BMCC, 2006)*

## Research into the needs of people of NESB

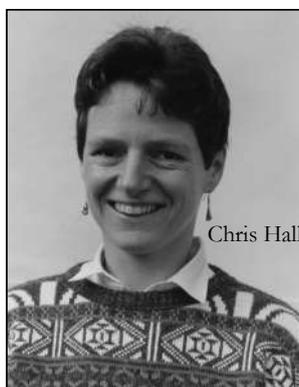
This research was successfully completed in early 1991 and then launched in May. The report was widely circulated and was highly influential, setting a base line and catalyst for future NESB development, including the establishment of the Blue Mountains Multicultural Network.

MCRN submitted for Grant-in-Aid funding to employ a migrant worker and this was successful following a delegation to Canberra. Antigone Coutsonicas from Nepean Migrant Access Project (located in Penrith) was based with the Network one day per week to progress migrant issues and to assist with establishing the Multicultural Network.

*I've worked with and met some great people over the years at MCRN and a lot of very worthwhile projects have happened during my time here including the disability research. (Lyn Reynolds)*

## Disabilities research project

After much lobbying, a grant was achieved from the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services to conduct research into the needs of people with disabilities. Chris Hall was contracted. The project aimed to develop a five year strategic plan. One of the agendas was to locate a way to improve the standard of care being provided in institutional settings (the Hall for Children and Rainbow Lodge were still in operation at this time).



Chris Hall

*We also got funding from a Commonwealth source to run a disabilities research project. We'd been attempting to get funding for a disabilities development worker. It was a really, really long process looking at how to facilitate developmental work with people with disabilities including how their needs might be serviced. (Judy Finch)*

# 1991 1992

### Staff

Judy Finch



Lyn Reynolds



### Management Committee

Wayne Wilson - President

Ian Hill

Karen Taylor

Mark Andrews

Mary Waterford

Christine Mifsud

Philippa Coleman

Terry Ryan

Grace Tooth

Ald Joy Anderson

(ex-officio)

## WSAAS

In this year, an attempted abolition of the program was met with a huge and successful community campaign to save the scheme. Particularly through WSCF and regional partners, the Network collaborated on the campaign which resulted in the reinstatement of the scheme. Michael August was the team leader at the WSCF at this time and he orchestrated a massive community response that gained wide media coverage.

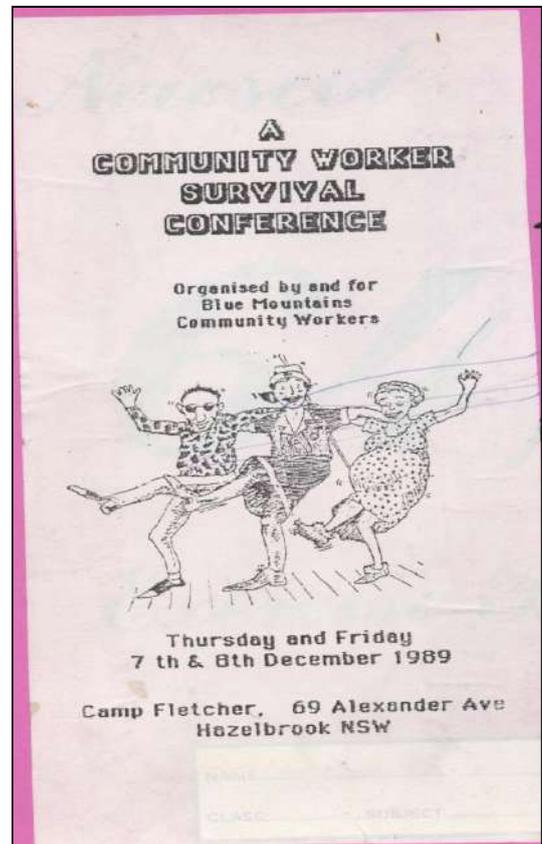
*There were significant learnings for us all in this time. One is that residents will come together to protect a scheme that directly relates to the welfare of the area in which they live – and that politicians will recognise that they have made a mistake. (Judy Finch Annual Report 1991/2).*

However, although the Scheme was reinstated, it was without the previous system of funding pick ups. The loss of pick-ups meant that projects were now only guaranteed for the life span of the WSAAS funding itself.

## Workshops

Workshops were held on local government processes, providing advice and assistance, planning sessions for individual services and management committees.

The second two day community worker conference was held in the Royal National Park. Less mosquitoes and a great success!



From left: Kassandal Toohey, Patricia Darvall, Helen Mountford and Moira Hickman



## Coalition Against the Recession

In the height of the recession, a number of projects were initiated from a public meeting and workshop attended by over 60 people. These included research documenting the impacts of the recession on local people, food collections from local shops and changes to agency services to better meet the needs of low income and unemployed people (NILS to follow in later years). A directory of services was later produced and banks of emergency food were to later develop into Food Bank projects.

*We have seen community groups striving to maintain services to a growing populace of unemployed and people facing daily hardship as the general economic environment becomes tighter. (Judy Finch).*

*Passion, Commitment, Principles, Energy, Caring, Vocal...and fun. These are some of the words that spring to mind when I think about my time at MCRN, not to mention a small cottage crammed and with poor heating and cooling and shoestring resourcing. Yet from this humble cottage lots of important local issues were discussed, submissions planned, funding sought, positions taken and most importantly...things achieved.*

*For a small organisation with limited resources we were seen as a credible contributor to the development of the mountains community at both a service and political level. It was a team effort all the way even when we had our passionate discussions. Ultimately everyone on the network shared a commitment to a better Mountains for all residents. I am proud to have been a part of the Network team.  
(Wayne Wilson, 2006)*

### Disabilities research project

This research project managed by Chris Hall was completed in this year and the report was called *Directions for Disability Services*. It made a number of important recommendations.

### Staff changes

Judy left for the Fairfield Family Resource Centre in May. Suzi Hewlett, who had been the youth worker at Council, held the job for 6 months before leaving for the Executive Officer position at YAPA. Lyn held it all together! Roger started in early 1993.

*Some of the work that I am pleased with in my time was getting the pressure on Council about social planning because at the time it lacked any kind of formal documentation that today has become completely routine. (Judy Finch, from the Pink Cottage history).*

### Coalition Against the Recession

An Out-of-Work survivors kit was launched as part of the umbrella group called the Coalition Against the Recession formed the previous year.

### Training

Training sessions for people interested in volunteering for HACC services were organised as well as management committee training held in policy development, planning and evaluation, chairing meetings and team building were favoured topics.

### New regional service

MCRN was heavily involved in the early establishment of TRI Community Exchange in Penrith (this was an area project funded under the federal Family Resource Centre program).

TRI was to cover the LGAs of the Blue Mountains, Penrith and Hawkesbury and at this stage the funding had been determined but local groups were able to decide upon the service model. This was the first significant area project and potentially had ramifications for the Network and its resourcing role.

# 1992 1993



#### Staff

Suzi Hewlett

Roger Horton

Helena Virtanen-  
Pienemann

Lyn Reynolds

#### Management Committee

Wayne Wilson  
(President)

Mary Waterford

Chris Marks

Mark Andrews

Christine Mifsud

Philippa Coleman

Ian Hill

Libby Ryan

Sister Maria O'Shea

Judi Anderson

Rosemary Dillon  
(ex-officio)



Carolyn Leigh

*The house was always going to be demolished from the day I walked in. It was going to be demolished tomorrow; it was always going to be demolished tomorrow ... and people's tenancy was perilous; the building was perilous as well!*  
(Judy Finch)

*In 1992 Community Transport moved out of the Cottage and into premises in Hay Street.  
(From the Pink Cottage history researched by Cheri Brandon and Robert Coutts)*

**CONNECTING CULTURES IN THE MID MOUNTAINS**  
international residents.

Connecting Cultures is a friendly group of international residents.

We meet twice a month. The group meets for both social gatherings and open talks on different topics.

Some things Connecting Cultures did in 1992 were:

- \* meet socially for morning teas
- \* held an exhibition
- \* "Treasures from our countries"
- \* French wine tasting
- \* Open talks on the history of the Cox's Road and Japanese culture
- \* Organise a concert in the Mid Mountains of Peruvian and Flamenco dancers
- \* organise a library of foreign language books for loan.

**Why don't you join us in 1993!**  
All ages and interests are welcome!

You can be part of our planning for 1993 by coming along to our next meeting on the 14th February 1993 at 12 noon. The New Street, Leura.

For more information please phone Steve on 59-3115 or The Mid Mountains Community Project on 592-492.

## Advocacy

Advocacy in this year included: WSAAS and pick ups campaign; organising a Blue Mountains response to challenge DoCS' agenda to introduce needs based planning; development of a mechanism for improving consultation protocols between DoCS and community groups; and, drafting performance indicators for the CSGP.

*The Network, through its community worker/co-ordinator has been intimately involved on Council's Social (Community) Plan since its inception—being a member of the Steering Committee, facilitating meetings, organising seminars, writing papers and providing support to workers. This has been a major project of Council which will have a major effect on the lives of Blue Mountains people for years to come.” (Roger Horton, Annual Report 1992).*

## NESB research findings

The Grant-in-Aid program was established following extensive consultation to further identify needs. Needs identified included: language needs (English classes for adults, English for specific purposes, ESL support in schools, better use of interpreters); needs for information on existing services (both in community languages and in English); need to break down social and geographical isolation (transport, groups, activities; need for bi-lingual / bicultural workers on community health services; employment; special needs for NESB youth and ethnic older people; general community education of migrant issues, anti-racism and a directory of services for NESB people.

The program was developed also through direct information and referral service, running workshops such as an information workshop for Spanish speaking volunteers, a JET workshop, a forum on the NESB section of the Community Plan, multicultural lunches, contributing the ESP and TAFE Outreach classes, supporting social groups and their activities across the Mountains, establishing a Spanish speaking women's group, co-ordinating a European style Christmas market, running a weekly Radio 2Blu FM program, representing the Mountains in consultations.

*It was probably easier in those days to get programs up and running. People were ready and there was a lot of positivism about being a community worker. People would feel that here was this BIG challenge and that they were the ones needing to carry it. I think there were two sides to this.*  
(Judy Finch)

*The Migrant Community Worker position commenced while I was working there. This position was established through the joint efforts of all community services in the Mountains.*  
(Tracy Morgan, 2006)



Antigone Coutsonicas

## MCRN philosophy, as revised in this year

The Network reinforced its stance on social justice and modelling best practice in the workplace through a revised objective. It read:

*The Mountains Community Resource Network's actions are founded on social justice and community development principles, consulting with and responding to the community, in harmony with the integrity of the Blue Mountains social, cultural and physical environment.*

*We are a pro-active, process oriented organisation which creates opportunities; and we influence, challenge and change structures to meet the needs of our community.*

*We are a workplace which models co-operation and Equal Employment Opportunity principles which respect the diversity of the community.*

## Chris Marks as Chair on the organisation and the space

*"All of the Committee and staff have participated in a series of planning days and worker appraisal processes that have assisted in better understanding and cooperation within the organisation. In an extremely poor physical environment (I would sincerely encourage Blue Mountains Council to provide better premises as a matter of urgency), the workers manage to create a warm, if cramped, atmosphere".*

## Partnerships with the Department of Community Services - establishing joint planning processes

A restructuring of the Nepean Consultative Committee (NCC) was undertaken so that the NCC could be more representative of the range of community services in the Nepean area and more responsive to needs. MCRN contributed to developing a planning process for the HACC program across the Nepean area.

## Disability development

*Directions for Disability Services*, prepared by Chris Hall (now Wolfe), was launched in May 1993 with series of recommendations including the plea for a Disability Development Worker to be funded. Continuing disability development work included initiating a day options project to address the needs of people with severe disabilities who have left school and are unable to access living skills programs or employment. The Network also assisted with preliminary work involved in the establishment of WESDIS, a Western Sydney Disability Information Service.

## Planning and review

In this year the Network expanded its role as a facilitator in the planning exercises of local groups. From this point on, the Network set a priority of a number of facilitated sessions per year for local groups. This has been a boon to service development for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Network provides a fee free service (affecting affordability). Secondly, the Network is able to utilise its broader perspective and

# 1993

# 1994

## Staff

Roger Horton  
Co-ordinator

Helena Virtanen-  
Pienemann Migrant  
Community Worker

Tracy Morgan  
Office Administrator

Esther O'Sullivan  
Migrant Community  
Worker

## Management Committee

Chris Marks (Chair)

Marie O'Shea

Mary Waterford

Ian Hill

Denis Golding

Maria Lang

Carol Gaul

Joy Anderson (ex-  
officio)

Rosemary Dillon

*Male Councilors  
don't want it [to be  
the Council rep on  
the MCRN  
Committee]. They  
don't realize that  
community groups  
have a lot of  
influence.  
Joy Anderson,  
2006.*

*LETS – standing for Local Employment Trading Scheme – was a scheme within which local people could trade skills and goods. The model had been applied across Australia and it was met with great interest in the Mountains, developing committed memberships and profile over the following years. The scheme was disbanded in the early 2000s.*



*Helena Virtanen-Pienemann*



**A Nepean wide working party organised an Access and Equity Conference for the Nepean region under the auspices of TRI. The Network played a key role.**

knowledge base to assist agencies that then become close partners. While in this year resources were set to allow for five sessions with agencies, it was noted that there about 100 other organisations with a similar need.

*MCRN has had an absolutely pivotal role in co-ordinating and advocating on behalf of the sector. I have a long community services employment history within the Mountains and worked alongside a number of the Co-ordinators including Judy Finch, Suzy Hewlett, Roger Horton, Martin Ryman and Mary Waterford. (Maurice Brady, Blue Mountains City Council – taken from the Pink Cottage history)*

### TRI

In this year, TRI Community Exchange was establishing its separate job as a resource organisation for the Nepean region and this necessitated the Network to clarify its complementary role and to establish communication strategies to avoid duplication. This set a firm and on-going and mutually beneficial partnership in place. MCRN staff still continue to be involved in the management structures of TRI.

### Promoting programs to reduce the impact of unemployment

With the recession still “biting hard”, the MCRN worked with the Coalition Against the Recession Employment Forum to promote the LETS Scheme and to lobby Social Security to preclude LETS in-kind earnings from income criteria. This was won and facilitated a wider participation in LETS as an income generating alternative.

*We at the Mountains Community Resource Network, have been intimately involved in the fight to place Social Justice issues on the agenda of governments and other organisations. This fight is even more necessary because government policies are actually contributing to the widening gap of resource inequality between the richest and poorest in our society eg the push to implement “User Pay” systems means that people, whether they can afford it or not, are being forced to pay for basic services. (Roger Horton, from the 1993 Annual Report)*

### Men’s issues

Following an approach to set up a forum for men, Roger took a lead on this development and the Men’s Network was established in November. The first newsletter was published the following April, inciting strong discussion about gender.

### NESB

Examples of initiatives in this year included: Healthy women’s program for German speaking women; Sunday services in Spanish followed by afternoon tea at Springwood Baptist Church; setting up International Friends at Springwood NC; acting as a resource for the Connecting Cultures Social Group; gentle exercises for the Dutch community; Spanish speakers craft group; and, workshops on making your service accessible to people of NESB.



## WSAAS campaign

Headline! **“WSAAS in crisis! ... Yet again”**. The Network was responsible for ensuring local media coverage of the issues. It says, *“Since 1991 funding to WSAAS annually has dropped from \$1.8 million to \$1.2 million. Funding for recurrent projects has dropped from \$900,000 to \$500,000”*. The campaign was tagged as “Stop the Rot Restore the AAS!”

In conjunction with Western Sydney, a campaign was set underway to reinstall WSAAS to former funding levels and to remove the sunset clause that restricted ongoing funding for new services. This was not to prove successful though there is no doubt that the pressure mounted would have impacted positively on the decision to continue the Scheme. While funding was restored to WSAAS as an outcome from this campaign, the sunset clause was only partly removed. From now, only two projects per region was to receive on-going funding, contrasting with a previous 18-20 across Western Sydney. Certainly this was a turning point for the WSAAS scheme and Western Sydney development.

## Emergency relief funding campaign

In this year emergency relief funding was provided to Blue Mountains Family Support Service, Springwood Neighbourhood Centre and St Vincent de Paul for people in “extreme financial difficulty”. This was a new grant program.

Services administering Emergency Relief across the Nepean notified the Network that funds had run out and there was to be a period of four months without funding. The result of high level meetings with the Dept of Human Services and Health were that the Blue Mountains Family Support Service was given a one-off grant to cover needs until other funds came through, the criteria for allocations was changed, the Blue Mountains was granted an increase in funds and administering organizations were allowed to use some of the monies to cover overhead administration costs. A win!

## Community services in crisis campaign

A public meeting was held in which local agencies working with people facing crises discussed the issues in limited emergency relief funding. Funds provided the families under stress were too small (\$25 per year per family being set as a limit). 1 in 6 families in the Mountains were estimated as facing financial stress.

## Disability development

Roger worked on the Blue Mountains Day Options project. He was responsible for the development of a proposal for a day activities social learning centre for people with severe to profound intellectual disabilities. The steering committee submitted this proposal to DoCS but there was not a clear source of funds for this initiative. Roger continued to develop the WESDIS project as an attempt to bridge the gap in information access for people with disabilities through a computer linked information service that would be accessible by telephone.

# 1994 1995

### Staff

Roger Horton  
Esther O’Sullivan  
Tracy Morgan  
Phil Davey

### Management Committee

Chris Marks (Chair)  
Marie O’Shea  
Mary Waterford  
Ian Hill  
Denis Golding  
Maria Lang  
Carol Gaul  
Joy Anderson  
Stephen Macintosh  
Rosie Smith



Rosemary Dillon (ex-officio)



*Roger Horton*

*The Pink Cottage was incredibly cold in winter as the oil heater was in the MCRN offices and we at MCRN would die of asphyxiation so that the rest of the building would heat up.  
(Roger Horton)*

*I worked alongside MCRN in 1994 when I co-ordinated MOCS: it was a test of worker resilience and tolerance and good humour to be so squashed in that you could overhear conversations throughout the building.  
(Dianne Jacobus)*

As Chris Marks said from her position as Chairperson:

*I feel a little more comfortable in my understanding of the complexities and the struggle of a small organization that is funded for resource and advocacy, with a mission to 'change the world'.*

### **Campaign to increase DoCS funding**

A campaign was mounted to increase the CSGP by at least 10%. As part of this effort, a seminar on the NSW Government's priorities with regards to families and how these relate to the Community Services Grants Program was held with Jim Longley MP as special guest. The result was that the State government promised to increase funds to the CSGP by \$10 million over 4 years. This effectively meant a 2.5% increase.

### **Full-time funding for migrant worker**

The Network achieved funding at a full time level for the migrant worker in this year. The project was funded at Level 3 (previously 20 hours per week and funded at Level 2).

This year was a very productive one for the Migrant Project. Some initiatives included:

- Development of clustering projects for elderly dependent NESB people in nursing homes.
- Information sessions were held in schools, nursing homes, health centres, Department of Social Security forums and neighbourhood centres as well as to professional and volunteer bodies such as diversional therapists, child care workers and volunteer carers.
- Two newsletters were produced and translated into 5 community languages.
- A German speakers group was convened in conjunction with the Australian-German Welfare Association. A Blue Mountains branch was established.

The Project highlighted the complexities they were facing to the Ethnic Affairs Commission. These included the semi-rural nature of the area (distance and isolation combined with the lack of other positions focusing on migrants (ie peers).

### **Crunch time for operational funds for the Network**

This was the first time that the limitations in the Network's core funding really hit and the Network was forced to reduce the operating hours of the coordinator / community development worker in order to meet increments and to pay a salary more commensurate with experience. Hours were reduced from 35 to 33 hours per week.

### **Interagency support**

At this stage there were 11 interagencies and forums operating across the Mountains. An extremely important function of the position of co-ordinator continued to be to resource these networks and to ensure that there is a high level of cooperation.

## Core focus responding to changing environment

The impact of TRI Community Exchange was now being felt. This meant a shift of focus from resourcing, supporting and training within the sector to a higher profile in social action and advocacy. TRI was Commonwealth funded and the discrepancies between federal and state funding levels were being felt keenly on the ground. Similarly, the Grant-In-Aid project was also better resourced than the DoCS funded core project. In other agencies, differences between HACC and DoCS funded projects impacted on internal industrial relations.

## Special projects -some examples from the year

- Community Worker support meetings were initiated.
- WESTNET computer bulletin was supported.
- Public forum called Skills for Heart politicians with Fran Peavey was held.
- A joint community responses to the NSW Community Health Future Plan was tendered.
- A joint submission to Blue Mountains City Council document on "Classification of Council owned land" was organized.
- Worked with Council on the six community plan working papers and the development of benchmarks for service and facility provision.
- The Blue Mountains Men's Network continued under the joint resourcing of the Network and MOCS.
- A Nepean Area Co-ordination grant was developed to work with DoCS to gain better consultation and co-ordination across the region.

## Indulgence Days

Indulgence Days were established as a light hearted and honouring tradition by Dianne Jacobus from MOCS. Dianne later reminisces:

*Roger, who was tall and gangly, dressed up as a two year old in a nappy! After lunch, we had to go to a meeting at the Neighbourhood Centre and Roger walked over there nappy and all, pulling his toy train behind him! (Dianne Jacobus, now Manager at Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre, 2006)*

## Information services to the sector

Information services included the production of a multicultural newsletter and *Mountain Link* was still under production though less regularly. The Network also produced a telephone list of agencies and a list of forums and interagencies.

## Blue Mountains Access and Equity project

This initiative arose from the Multicultural Network and the Disabilities Interagency who were both interested in access and equity issues being better addressed. The first start was to look at access and equity in children's services through a survey to community organisations.

*The Mountains Community Resource Network has a fundamentally important role ... in assisting organizations to work collaboratively to meet identified needs in the Blue Mountains. The Mountains Community Resource Network is to be congratulated. (Jim Longley, Minister for Community Services at the 1994 AGM).*



Jim Longley & Reina French

*The lean tiger image that MCRN wants to project focuses our vision of campaigning more specifically on issues of social justice. (Chris Marks)*



Denis Golding

# 1995 1996

## Staff



Roger Horton

Phil Davey

Esther O'Sullivan

Tracy Morgan

Elly Franchimont.

## Management Committee

Chris Marks /

Denis Golding (Chair)

Mary Waterford

Kate Johnson

Stephen Macintosh

Joy Anderson

Philippa Coleman

Carol Gaul

Ian Hill

Sister Marie O'Shea

John Pascoe

Rosie Smith

Rosemary Dillon (ex-officio)

## Forums in 1995

The Network continued its important role of supporting co-ordination between services through the HACC Forum, Housing Forum, Men's Network, Nepean Consultative Committee, Area Co-ordination Project – Nepean; Western Sydney Community Forum, Gay and Lesbian Community Liaison Committee and the Youth Services Network.

## Advocacy on premises

Premises was not only a priority issue for community services in the Mountains but there were commonalities with agencies from across the Nepean area.

*Management Committee meetings were very tough. I remember the twelve of us crowded around the kitchen table trying to conduct a meeting and pass refreshments. Patience and tolerance regarding working spaces and interactions with people was learnt very quickly because of the cramped conditions. (Roger Horton)*

## Regional development

A formal statement of the Network's working relationship with TRI was developed as an attempt to maximize the resources available to the community sector and to ensure that the potential for duplication was avoided.

## Disabilities development

A submission was prepared for WSAAS for a disability development worker. This had been one of the recommendations from the disability research completed by Chris Wolfe two years previously. Although this application was not successful, a revised application in a later year was to be so.

*I have had the privilege of working closely with MCRN for 13 years in my capacity of CDW at MOCS. I shared office space with the organisation in the Pink Cottage when Roger Horton was co-ordinator. I look back on those times with great fondness as Roger, Tracy, Helena, Ester, Jonathan and Phil were all great people to share premises with and we had many interesting discussions and funny times including indulgence days. MCRN was a hub for active community members and there were always people coming to meet with one or other of the workers to plan events/meetings or talk through issues/ideas. MCRN led on so many things including migrant issues, men's issues (which became a major focus when Martin Ryman was co-ordinator) and held so many things together including interagency and other planning processes. MCRN has greatly enriched community life in the BM for workers and residents alike. (Lyn Bevington, 2006)*



Lyn Bevington

## Migrant development

Phil Davey brought a particularly strong political focus. He negotiated regular quarterly meetings with state and federal members. Phil said: *"These meetings have been of great value and continue the Network's initiative of 'mainstreaming' our sector"*.