



Phillipstown Community Centre Charitable Trust AGM 2022 – Report from the Manager

Thank you for allowing me this year to report the Office point of view.

The last year and 8 months have been challenging in many ways. And challenging doesn't necessarily mean negative, something was challenging in a difficult way, something was excitingly challenging.

Let's start from the root of all evil: the Pandemic of course. And the difficulties of maintaining a fine balance between keeping everybody safe, community, staff, volunteers, and being here and available to address the needs, support our people and be present as a community organisation and a community Hub. In 2021-2022 we had one H&S Plan after the other: Level 4, Level 3, Traffic Light, colour red, orange, phase 1, phase 2... Store all the cups and dishes away, re-equip the community lounges with cutlery and crockery. Put everything again away. It was frantic, intense. And then there was the rush to vaccinate as much people as possible, the need to be creative on the ways to make the vaccination available for the most marginalised and vulnerable ones. Then there was the mandate and a new H&S that was managing different needs: safety and inclusion. We had to deal with the effects of the mandate on social cohesion with members of our community feeling – rightly or wrongly – marginalised and rejected, being angry and vocal about it. An issue that, I am sure, we will have to keep dealing with for months to come.

2021 is also the year of the dissolution of the Phillipstown OSCAR programme. Although it was an inevitable decision, this did not make it less painful. It was hard, especially for the staff whose position was disestablished. But on the other hand, the closure of our OSCAR programme (and MaryAnn's retirement) enabled some interesting changes in the Trust structure and in its priorities. We gained awareness that the Hub is just a tool in our hands, an amazing one of course, and a beautiful and welcoming home, for sure, but the Trust is not just the Hub and the Hub is one of our services. This awareness pushed us to get out the Golden Fortress and to be more present in the neighbourhood, using the pocket parks around Phillipstown for our events, organising community conversations on local issues, planning Phillipstown walks to discover the hidden gems in our neighbourhood, for example.

This was facilitated by another important step in our journey. In 2021 we openly recognised that collaboration is difficult and not for everyone: it requires a lot of commitment, a common vision, a shared effort. Partnership and collaboration are still our values and the principle guiding our work. However, we acknowledged that some of the groups based at the Hub do not have the capacity or the interest to be collaborative. And stating that cooperation was the principle underpinning the relationships at the Hub wasn't admitting a failure, it was being realistic and pragmatic. It was very



relieving and refreshing: it allowed us to be partners with those who wanted and want to partner with us, without wasting energies, time and commitment in imposing a one fits all model to all the groups, and it allowed us to focus on the Trust core priorities.

2021 was also the year of the immense disappointment in Council. I come from Italy, I have had millions of experiences with the Italian bureaucracy which is formed by layers of rules, procedures and legislation piling up in hundreds of years of history. I have experienced the lack of care and the apathy and indifference of governmental officers. But believe me, the engagement on the redevelopment of Lancaster Park has been the most frustrating and disappointing experience in my whole life. But this experience rather than discouraging me has just increased my pugnacious attitude on having the voices of my community heard, listened to and activated on.

But after this negativity let's finish with a positive note, my personal assessment of the last year and 8 months is very positive: I am proud of what we have achieved and the way we have worked. I am proud of the team who have contributed to our success: I mean last November we are organised a Gala Day for vaccination purposes in 7 days! The first event in 2022 happened on the 16 January! We never rest! We are proactive, responsive, operative, focused. The Team is just amazing: we are available working days and weekends; we enjoy experimenting new ideas and learning from all the experiences. I am so proud of the team, a group that includes paid staff and volunteers. Because without Sarah, Jacinta, Anna, Graham, Stephen, all the Leadership Group, without Veg, Gerry, Jazz, Izzy, the volunteers from Salisbury St. Trust, Hohepa, Skillwise, Sarona, without our team from WINZ, Stephen, Shannon, who are here tonight, but many others, without our interns from ARA or University of Canterbury, Saarika, Aaron, Raido, without them all, Natalie, Simon and I (and whoever has worked for the Trust in the last year) wouldn't have been able to organise and run all the events and programmes that we have organised so far as well as maintain this place so beautifully.

One of the most important achievements in 2021-2022 is that we, the Trust, have really proven to be an enabler of local assets and resources, a scaffolding that holds the space for community led initiatives, a safe space for people to feel supported in sharing and leading their ideas and projects.

There is so much still to be organised and activated, more still needs to be done, but I think we are on the right path and the future is exciting.

Viviana Zanetti

Manager of the Phillipstown Community Centre Charitable Trust