

**Community Networks Wanaka and LINK Upper Clutha
Managers' Annual Report
to the Alpine Community Development Trust
covering January 1 – December 31 2020
AGM April 13 2021**

2020, indelibly marked by the Covid 19 pandemic, brought challenge and opportunity for the Alpine Community Development Trust. The year started with a busy slate of planned activity; Community Networks was providing its usual spectrum of social wellbeing support and LINK had a Connection Café scheduled for mid-March along with a number of Neighbours Day activities. We had a strong presence at the A&P Show, with LINK coordinating the community-focused stalls within the Council tent, including Civil Defence who was promoting its community response plans. The following week the emergency response team was activated and the next week we were in lockdown.

COVID RESPONSE

The size and shape of the crisis wasn't yet apparent on March 14 when the Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) along with Civil Defence established its Emergency Operations Centre Response Team, including logistics, planning, intelligence, public information, etc. It soon became apparent that welfare needs were going to require the largest and longest sustained response, and require cross-community collaboration. The Welfare Response Team comprised established non-profit community focused organisations, QLDC staff, Civil Defence, contracted event managers, and hundreds of volunteers.

ACDT was involved in the response from the beginning, with Community Networks Manager Kate Murray and LINK Manager Kathy Dedo on the district-wide welfare response team, and on the cross-functional Wanaka team. Covid response was the organisation's sole focus for the next few months, requiring seven-day-a week presence on multiple daily calls/meetings coordinating and executing the welfare support. In the beginning the work involved system design and planning; then using the system to assist individuals in need.

Community Networks connected people with support including food parcels, supermarket vouchers, firewood, clothing, bedding, counselling, and health information. Across the district, the welfare team handled 23,342 requests for welfare support from 7377 individuals between late March and June 30. A total of 14,053 food vouchers were issued in Queenstown and 1,392 in Wanaka. Even while the Wanaka Community Hub was closed during lockdown, Kate and Nova continued to answer the Community Networks phone and distributed food parcels and other essentials from the Hub with health and safety protocols in place.

POST-COVID RECOVERY

In July the DIA and Red Cross took over welfare support for migrant visa holders (the majority of the welfare registrants during lockdown) and MSD/WINZ continued their support of New Zealand citizens and permanent residents. ACDT operations slowly returned to a "normal" focus, but in a

Covid-affected world this looked different. There was a steady increase in social support requests at the Community Networks front desk, and LINK was asked to get involved with recovery-focused work.

Going beyond the short-term response, we have also played a key role in recovery:

- LINK partnered with Council to conduct a major research project on social sector capacity in July/August 2020.
- With an increased focus on mental health provision and an increasing number of providers emerging, CN and LINK have facilitated key hui to encourage collaboration and clarity of pathways.
- LINK has been a member of the Mayoral short-term tourism and economic recovery task force and the longer-term Regenerative Recovery Advisory Group, charged with re-imagining the district's economic diversification and wellbeing.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY

Following this report is the strategic plan as it looked in the last quarter of 2020. Our operational plan included the following service areas:

1. Provide information and support

- a. Connect people to social support information and services (e.g., arrange appointments and referrals – social work, JPs, IRD, Community Law, Budget Advice)
- b. Coordinate local community support services (e.g., Community Foodbank, Wheels to Dunstan, Meals on Wheels)
- c. Access point for information on community groups, community opinion, and needs
- d. Participate in key community networks (e.g., Wanaka Alcohol Group, Champion for Older Persons Group, local and regional mental health locality networks, Chamber of Commerce, etc)
- e. Advise community groups in their development and evolution (e.g., structure, direction, marketing)
- f. Provide effective communication channels to inform and support (e.g., email newsletters, social media, website with resources, community database)

2. Enable connection and collaboration

- a. Host regular Connection Cafes, a free networking session on different community topics
- b. Facilitate collaboration among social sector groups
- c. Facilitate collaboration across community segments
- d. Mentor community groups in their collaboration
- e. Support effective engagement to ensure community voice is heard

3. Build resilient community and individuals

- a. Facilitate group and individual capability development (e.g., coordination of subsidised counselling)
- b. Raise awareness of community wellbeing
- c. Enable youth engagement and citizenship

Following is just some of the 2020 year in numbers:

- 5566 people received a service from Community Networks in 2020 (of these 3271 were face to face)
- 431 food parcels and 80 Christmas Hampers were given to local families struggling to make ends meet. Post-lockdown an average of 57 food parcels were given out each per month compared to 23 per month pre-lockdown.
- The Wheels to Dunstan shuttle service, coordinated by Community Networks and operated by volunteer drivers, has completed 215 trips and transported 280 clients to and from hospital appointments.
- Community Networks has assisted 101 families with subsidised counselling services and supported another 40 with general costs of living such as fuel and firewood.
- Meals on Wheels drivers have delivered approximately 5,000 meals throughout the community. The drivers are volunteers and Community Networks coordinates the service.
- The Justices of the Peace have stamped, signed and witnessed in response to 1012 enquiries and appointments. JPs volunteer their time and Community Networks coordinates the appointments.
- LINK hosted two Connection Cafes, on the topics of neighbourhood resilience and youth services – both well attended and with community-led action resulting from connections made.
- LINK completed a fourth year of engaging with high school students through its Life Skills course on community and citizenship
- CN/LINK-hosted Interagency meetings were increased in frequency during Covid and continued to attract increased numbers of attendees throughout the year

FUNDING IMPACT

The demands of Covid stretched our resources to the maximum, but it soon became clear that regional and central government funders were going to support community needs in new and different ways. A variety of grants became available, many with a Covid response or recovery focus. Food security was a big focus, as was support for centralised social service coordination and delivery. ACDT, with its strong history of work in this area, was positioned well to use these new opportunities to grow our community support capacity.

We received an expansion of the Ministry of Social Development Heartlands contract, a new MSD Food Security contract, and a contract to deliver the MSD Community Connection Service. The MSD also supported the organisation with funds to increase our infrastructure and capability.

The ACDT Chairperson's Report lists our other funders, to whom we are grateful and without whom we could not operate.

The Finance and Funding subcommittee has worked to build a budget for 2021 and beyond; taking into consideration the current increased funding level but also being cautious about sustainability and starting a longer-term, multiyear budgeting approach.

OTHER OUTCOMES

ACDT conducted an organisational review in late 2020, increasing its capacity and capability of delivering in response to increased needs and opportunities. This has resulted in re-aligning existing positions and hiring new staff to expand the breadth and depth of our community connection and support centre.

ACDT continues to build relationships with other tenants and the landlord of the Wanaka Community Hub, leading the effort to maximise collaboration and the potential of this building to become a welcoming and effective community centre.

Community Networks and LINK Upper Clutha could not offer the diverse range of support and services without our amazing team of staff and volunteers. Volunteers offer JP services, deliver the Meals on Wheels, drive clients on Wheels to Dunstan, support our marketing/communications, coordinate the foodbank , and help out with other front desk functions and events.

Throughout 2020 we had Nova Knippers, Kim Baker and Arda Booiman helping to keep the show on the road on the front desk, delivering Community Networks services.

We have a strong team of trustees on our governing body, the Alpine Community Development Trust providing robust leadership to the organisation. We are fortunate to have an enthusiastic team of trustees, staff and volunteers and thank them for their time, energy and expertise.

Submitted by:

Kate Murray
Community Networks Manager

Kathy Dedo
LINK Upper Clutha Manager