

Report on activities 2015—2016

www.mocs.org.au
4758-6811



MOCS has operated as a community managed organisation for over 30 years. We bring people together to strengthen community connections and resilience and provide support and services to families. We are funded through the Department of Family and Community Services and the Department of Education and Communities to provide a range of free or low cost services in a variety of locations across the Blue Mountains. These include:

- Parenting Young Project
- Brighter Futures Family Work Program
- Family and Community activities—Mid-Mountains Community Hub
- Reconciliation projects
- Supported Playgroups
- Occasional Childcare
- Community Development

MOCS VISION is to build a healthy interactive community

Where vulnerable and disadvantaged community members are well supported and their resilience and quality of life is improved.

Where individuals, families & communities participate in opportunities to build a sense of place, community connection and trust through shared experience, knowledge and strong respectful relationships.

MOCS VALUES:

We respect the knowledge, culture and custodianship of the Aboriginal communities of the Blue Mountains. We value diversity and advocate for social justice, equity and social inclusion. We value strengths based community development. We are core member of the Stronger Families Alliance and Blue Mountains Lithgow Integrated Neighbourhood Network and value these and other partnerships.

MOCS Staff Team in 2015—2016:

Manager: Lyn Bevington

Financial Administrator: Elaine Cameron

Community Development worker: Judith Hawkes

Children's Community Development worker: Liz Smith/Jane Marshall

Parenting Young facilitator: Sophie Corbett/Sally Weymouth/Tanya Clark

Brighter Futures Family worker: Sophie Corbett till 30/4/16 (Note: MOCS withdrew from the BM Consortium and the Brighter Futures program when Sophie resigned)

MMM team: Jane Marshall and Tanya Clark plus Meg Grunsell, Nadia Cameron, Jade Pyle, Louise Moar, Sarah Rees, Maria Scoubiev, Hazel Collins, Jeannie Elliot, Tess White, Nelda King, Sally Weymouth, Debra Dunn, Robyn Wright, Jeannie Elliott

BMOCCS team: Cathryn Ferreira, Simone Witherow, Cate Harrison, Emily McKay.

MOCS Management Committee 2015– 2016:

Chairperson: Julianne Abood

Vice-chair: Lyn Pagan

Secretary: Susan Ambler

Treasurer and Public Officer: Susan Pearce

Members: Jacqueline Miller, Loren Hayes-Marshall, Jillian Salz, Sandra Hill.

We acknowledge the Darug and Gundungurra people as the Traditional Custodians of the land we live and work on.

MOCS reconciliation work and support to the Aboriginal Community

For over 20 years MOCS has supported the reconciliation process in the Blue Mountains and has worked closely with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and residents including Darug and Gundungurra people on many projects and issues. We believe that many small steps across multiple platforms is how sustainable attitudinal change is built. This year we have worked on:

Indigenous PPP: In partnership with Raylee from ACRC, Liz co-facilitated this 5 week program which 6 parents attended.

Koori Playgroup and Family Fun Days: in term 1 2016 we started supporting Koori playgroup run by ACRC in Katoomba. Sally Weymouth, MMM has attended each week providing age appropriate toys and activities. We also provide activities at Fun Days run by ACRC which are always well received.

Aboriginal Artists in BM Schools Project: coordinated by Judith and in its 5th year. The 2016 NSW Schools Challenge theme was ALWAYS WAS, ALWAYS WILL BE We received funding from NSW Reconciliation which enabled us to provide workshops presented by Aboriginal artists in 8 schools: Katoomba Public, St Canice's, Kindle Hill, Wentworth Falls Public, Leura Public, Katoomba High, Springwood High and Winmalee High. With support from Aunty Carol Cooper and volunteers from BM People for Reconciliation, six local Aboriginal artists provided workshops—Jo Clancy, Lexodius Dadd, Jamie Murray, Jacinta Tobin, Leanne Tobin and Uncle Ed Walker. The student's art work was displayed at a Cultural Sharing day at Mid-Mtns Community Centre on Saturday 28th May to mark Reconciliation Week, before being sent to Sydney for Schools Challenge judging. Two of the 12 winning entries were by Winmalee HS students.

Ngarra Wingarru BM Aboriginal Education Consultative Group: MOCS is an associate member of this and where appropriate provides administrative support. MOCS is also a member of the Language Working Group formed to continue the work of the PACE project.

Children's Week 2015: Koori Songs and Stories: Aunty Jacinta Tobin visited Occasional Care at Blackheath when she taught the children some songs in Darug Language. Chris Tobin visited Hazelbrook Scout Hall Playgroup for a session of stories, songs and games.

Wagana Dancers: In March 2016 MOCS took on the role as auspice to Wagana . We are very much behind the scenes in the role and are proud and very happy to be able to support this wonderfully talented group of young women.

Sharing the Journey Elders Lunch 2015: The 18th Annual Lunch was held on 21 October at Mid Mountains Community Centre. 121 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Elders enjoyed lunch and the day's activities. As usual, Aunty Carol Cooper was Master of Ceremonies and entertainment was provided by Col Hardy and Jacinta Tobin. Department of Fair Trading, EWON, Aboriginal Healthy for Life and the Pop-Up Library joined us with information stalls. As always, the elders enjoyed an excellent lunch provided by the staff and volunteers of BM Food Services and there were raffles, lucky door prizes, the annual colouring competition and lots of talking, catching up with old friends and meeting new people. Everyone went home with a gift bag loaded with information and goodies. We were ably assisted on the day by the Prefects from Katoomba High School.



The annual lunch is a partnership between MOCS, Mid Mountains Neighbourhood Centre, BM Food Services, BM Aboriginal Culture and Resource Centre, Gilgai Aboriginal Corporation and Merana.

Commemorating Diggers from Macquarie electorate project: we received an ANZAC Centenary Local grant to research Aboriginal participation in WW1. We partnered with Katoomba RSL for their 2016 ceremonies and honoured 6 soldiers with the telling of their stories and laying of wreaths. For the descendants of Olga Cecil Locke it was very significant to have their father (Winifred was 94), grandfather and great grandfather finally recognised. All information is on a website <http://www.aboriginaldiggersWW1.com>.

Reconciliation Promotion: We promote our events and those of partner organisations that relate to reconciliation and Aboriginal issues, services and events on MOCS website and Facebook ([facebook.com/BlueMountainsReconciliation](https://www.facebook.com/BlueMountainsReconciliation)). Our publications 'Aunty Joan Cooper: through the front door', 'Fun and Games in Gundungurra' and 'Sing You Brave People' continue to sell steadily both within the Blue Mountains and from orders outside the LGA.

Work with Children and Families:

Mid-Mountains Community Hub grew out of a previous MOCS project called Hazo Happenings which had provided services, supports and activities for local families since 2003. MMCH is a community development project responding to community needs by offering a range of programs for families, adults and children. The Hub works closely with other services and schools to cater for all families and in doing so reach vulnerable families with specific needs.

Courses offered: partnership with TAFE Outreach—*First Aid, Triple R: Re-use, Re-create, Re-design*; partnership with Gateway Family Services: *123 Magic*, partnership with Relationships Australia: *Encouraging Children's Development and Self-Esteem; Managing Children's Behaviour* presented by Helen Mann; monthly *Baby Time* at Heatherbrae partnership with Connect plus we ran a Sole Parent Group and 3 very successful school holiday fun mornings during the year. Through a Fundability Grant

we ran 5 disability inclusion school holiday workshops across the year. During term time, **three supported playgroups:** Play in the Park in Hazelbrook and Bullaburra and Scout Hall playgroup continue to be popular. In terms 1 and 2 84 parents and 117 children enrolled with a total of 323 attendances. 55% of these families live in Hazelbrook and 65% of the children attending are aged 0-3. In term 4 we ran a 9 week Transition to School playgroup at Lawson PS which 15 children attended.

Paint the Blue REaD—the Blue Mountains early learning community project <https://www.facebook.com/PaintBlueREaD> Our key message is: *Stories, rhymes and play—every single day*

Paint the Blue REaD is the Blue Mountains early literacy project which and is part of the Stronger Families Alliance. Billy Booksie, and his sister Billie, made appearances throughout the year at a variety of community events, community festivals and community Fun Days and was a regular visitor at a variety of supported playgroups. PTBR is an active member of the national Paint The Town Read network.

Reading Week 2016: Billy Booksie's recognition continues to grow and so does Reading Week. Held each year in June in the week leading up to the Winter Magic Parade. Once again the 'week' lasted nearly two weeks with 11 events over 12 days in 6 townships. Around 170 children and 65 parents or carers attended the events and every child was given a Billy Booksie Rhymes Booklet and a Reading Week Bookmark. The highlight of the 'Week' was Billy Booksie's appearance in the Winter Magic Parade, where he was widely recognised and greeted by children watching the parade. Billy was especially glad that children aged 6-10 years, who have grown up with him, were not 'too big' to greet him enthusiastically. We were ably assisted by 3 Early Childhood students from Nirimba TAFE, Angela Jangoshian, Jordana Clare and Gail Richardson. Because the Monday of Reading Week was a public holiday, the students made a video with Billy reading his featured book for Reading Week, 'The Magic Hat', which was posted on the Paint the Blue REaD Facebook page on the public holiday (instead of there being a reading event). This proved very popular and Billy plans to have an occasional series of story videos posted on his Facebook page in the future. The students also helped Billy develop a new rhymes booklet to give out during Reading Week and toured the mountains with Billy taking a series of photos in well known spots. Billy plans to post these "Where's Billy" photos on his Facebook page during his summer hibernation! Judith is also posting a 'Weekly Early Learning Tip' on the Paint the Blue Read Facebook page with weekly reach growing from 40 to over 100 by the end of June.



Parenting Young continues to be a warm and inviting place for young parents to meet and support each other. We have had a number of services and visitors to our group including Headspace, the Pop up Library and Billy Booksie, Housing workers from Mountains Support, Lex Dadd (one of our Aboriginal elders and cultural educators), to name a few. We have received feedback from young parents that meeting workers face to face at the group is really helpful for them. While they may have heard of a service before it is not until they get a chance to speak directly with one of the workers that they really appreciate what that service does and how it could be helpful in their situation. The Working Party includes workers from Mountains Youth Services, Platform Youth Services, Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District and these workers regularly attend the playgroup.

Blue Mountains Occasional Child Care provides low cost, flexible education and care to families with babies, toddlers & preschool age children in family grouping. The mobile nature of the service enables us to provide access to families in Blaxland, Lawson and Blackheath once a week. Our educational program is designed by an Early Childhood Teacher and team of qualified educators using the National Curriculum, Early Years Learning Framework.



Our biggest demand for places continues to be 12 mths to 3 1/2 years age group. We still remain affordable and flexible, for all age groups, and many children stay with us from babyhood to the end of their year before school. Older preschoolers in the 4 year range continue coming to BMOCCS to get extra days of a preschool experience at our affordable 4 year old rate. Family grouping attracts many families with more than 1 child as we can provide an enriching baby and toddler program, complemented with a stimulating school readiness program for older children. The core of our philosophy is our deeply passionate belief in the Circle of Security approach to giving care to children as they transition from home to care, from mother to carer, from family to the wider community.

124 children were enrolled this financial year many of whom identify our service as their child's first early childhood educational experience. We are active in assisting families with a sensitive transition to care and education. We have been able to support families who needed care for children while they attended cancer treatment, parents working from home to earn an income, providing support to parents that do not have extended family in the immediate area and need respite from their children enabling them to return at the end of the day refreshed, support to older first time Mum's who have been career women and find motherhood a complex role. We have a number of families using 2 venues, and are prepared to travel, as they found our service and team caring and sensitive to their children's needs, in preference to using 2 separate Early Childhood settings, as they preferred to have consistency of carers for their children.

Mobile Minders continues to provide quality low cost childcare to a range of Service Providers within the Blue Mountains. The flexibility and mobility of the service enables us to support parents & carers to access a range of community education groups, meetings, playgroups & community events. This year MMM provided childcare & children's activities to 15 different community groups & organisations including Gateway Family Service, Nepean/Blue Mountains Local Health District, Brighter Futures, Enrich, Aboriginal Culture & Resource Centre, Australian Breastfeeding Association, Connect Child and Family Services, Blue Mountains Women's Health & Resource Centre, Family Worker Training & Development, Mountains Community Resource Network, West Connect Domestic Violence Service, Uniting Care, Mid Mountains, Katoomba & Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centres. Session numbers have been varied from term to term. In Term 3 there were 91 sessions, term 4: 104, term 1: 82 and term 2: 98 sessions were completed, some sessions required 2 or 3 workers. The total of sessions attended by MMM workers this year was 375. MMM continues to support BMOCS with additional staff when needed.

Family Connections Bushfire Preparedness Project funded under the BM Flexible Community Grants program Round 1 & Round 2 by Commonwealth & NSW Government Dept of Premier & Cabinet. We used Round 1 funds to hold a Preparedness Family Fun Day in August 2015 at Camp Fletcher, Hazelbrook attended by 60 adults & children. With the Round 2 funds we conducted research which 123 adults with children completed. We found that 69% said they had talked about what to do in an emergency and 50% had talked with their children about it; while 52% said they had an emergency plan, only 15% had practiced it. Focus groups and individual interviews were also conducted and the major finding was that parents had not thought through what they would do in a bushfire situation if they could not leave early. Meet Your Street (MYS—model developed by Mid-Mtns Neighbourhood Centre) was identified as the preferred way to access information and it has the benefit of enhancing social cohesion. Four MYS events were held in September & October 2015 between North Katoomba & Hazelbrook with most attendees being locals. In total 124 adults & 133 children attended & 83 surveys were completed. The local Rural Fire Service (RFS) units were present at each location to provide information for adults and activities for children & there was a BBQ at each event. At each MYS, two community workers engaged parents in completing surveys which were used to open discussion about preparedness plans. We found the survey to be an excellent discussion starter with parents then going to talk to RFS personnel or to other families who were in attendance about being prepared. The survey data indicated that MYS event draws families and younger age groups more than other preparedness events such as 'More than A Fire Plan' with the majority of attendees being families with children. 74% said they had talked about a plan to leave early but less than 50% had other items in place, except for preparing house and grounds which 56% said they had in place. Only 24% said they had practised emergency plans and 34% had planned for an event where it was not possible to leave the house. Having the contact details of neighbours and created an emergency kit were in place for 44% and 43% respectively.