WRF

Your Warrawong Community Centre

# JUNE NEWSLETTER

**Warrawong Residents Forum Inc (WRF)**

Based in the Warrawong Community Centre in the Illawarra Region, we support one of the area's most under resourced communities (SEIFA Index: 2%). With 1.5 staff and volunteers, we provide emergency relief interventions including information, referral services, and advocacy.
Our initiatives like community lunches, food hubs, and service hub address basic needs, fostering trust for deeper engagement and resource connections.

IN JUNE WE RESCUED APPROX. **1,270KG'S OF FOOD**
AND SERVED / ENGAGED **1,169 PEOPLE**
782 ADULTS AND 387 CHILDRENCHILDREN

## OUR FOOD INITIATIVES

Our food initiatives rely on donations, grants, and gifts. We extend gratitude to Oz Harvest for their weekly efforts in partnership with Woolworths and Aldi. Thanks to Green Connect, local community members, businesses, sponsors, and champions for their contributions that sustain our essential food services. For more information and/or if you would like to get involved please feel free to get in touch via our website or direct to us via contact details below.

## KEEP THE HEART OF WARRAWONG BEATING

Councilor's at Wollongong City Council unanimously passed a motion to pursue federal funding and state support to ensure the continuity of the essential resource we provide the community as well as an extended tenancy at Warrawong Community Centre until September 2024.

This breathing space allows for the community to be confident that our essential resource and support will not be interrupted whilst WRF continues to advocate and apply for funding to create a safe and secure temporary base of operation.

**WARRAWONG RESIDENTS FORUM** It's only temporary and still needs funding for its new space

### Reprieve for service helping vulnerable

Natalie Croxon

AN ORGANISATION supporting some of Wollongong's most vulnerable residents has been given a late-hour extension to its tenancy, but is still seeking support to continue delivering its services in the future.

Warrawong Residents Forum (WRF) was due to leave Warrawong Community Centre at the end of June so the building could be demolished to make way for the suburb's new library and community centre.

Manager Ash Castro has secured a temporary site around the corner but needs $180,000 to fit out the space in order to continue providing the same services.

**No money**

The electricity has been switched on but the premises remains empty.

Mr Castro launched an appeal with the hopes of raising the necessary funds but said that while it had generated a lot of awareness and positive feedback, that had not translated into money.

At Wollongong City Council's meeting this week, councillors unanimously supported a motion from Cr Cath Blakey to show its support for WRF, including an extension of the tenancy at the community centre until September.

Variations to call on the state government to contribute to the costs of the temporary premises were also moved.

The council has already committed to paying the rent of the temporary premises.

The extension to the tenancy gave the organisation some breathing space, Mr Castro said, but the efforts to ensure its ongoing operation during the construction of the new centre was an ordeal that had started almost two years ago, in September 2022.

**Treading water**

He said the situation represented "a lot of treading water".

However, Mr Castro said WRF would continue on with business as usual until it announced otherwise.

WRF provides such services as drug and alcohol support, Centrelink assistance, mental health services, emergency food relief, free meals and laundry services, with government services also operating from its premises, in what is the most socio-economically disadvantaged suburb in the Illawarra.

Visitors have previously spoken about how vital the organisation has been to them. More information on WRF's campaign can be found at wrf.org.au.

# MEET KEVIN

Kevin grew up in the Community Services System as he, and subsequently his 8 younger siblings were not safe living at home.

At the age of 20, Kevin was homeless and not engaged in support.

Kevin was brought to our service by a community member who noticed him sleeping in the stairwell.

That day, Kevin ate lunch with us, he was withdrawn and a bit prickly to engage in conversation and reluctantly agreed to take some dignity products and food away with him.

Kevin returned regularly, and after 2 weeks began a conversation with us about his circumstances.

Among being disconnected from his siblings, he struggled with reading and writing, a $40K debt with state revenue, and low sense of worth.

He told us about his dis-trust for support due to his experience with services and individuals either letting him down or taking advantage of him throughout his life.

Kevin agreed to support in accessing accommodation, which we were able to secure for him.. and..6 months on. Kevin is safe and stable in housing, is enrolled in a Cert 3 course through TAFE which is working off his debt with state revenue.

More importantly, he has reconnected with some of his siblings and in seeing his dream of being a 'big brother to be proud of come true.

# UPDATES

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## GRATTITUDE FOR THE MEANINGFUL IMPACT ON FOOD INSECURITY IN REPORTING PERIOD JULY 2023 - JUNE 2024

To address the growing rumble of food insecurity in the Illawarra WRF established partnerships and resources provides individuals and families groceries and meals each week. We rely heavily on our partners, small business, community champions and volunteers that collect, deliver, sort, cook and pack up to 55kgs of food each week. We are extremely proud and grateful for the team of people that make this possible each week!

**15,840KGS OF FOOD RESCUED**

Thank you!

**16,081 PEOPELO FED AND ENGAGED**
**11,075 ADULTS / 5006 CHILDREN**

## NAIDOC FAMILY FUN DAY 09/07/2024

Join us this school holidays for our 10th Anniversary Warrawong NAIDOC Family Fun Day. WRF and friends have been proudly hosting a free local event each year celebrating culture, community and togetherness - Since COVID 19 this event has bounced back enormously! This year we are keeping the fire burning! Black, Loud and Proud alongside community with a range of activities, food, dance, storytelling and so much more...

## WANT TO KNOW MORE? OR TO GET INVOLVED.

admin@wrf.org.au
02 4275 1875

**Donate**
Help us to bring our vision to life.

**Join Our Board**
Be a part of our meaningful cause.

**Volunteer**
Help us to provide supportive services.

**Sign our VOW**
Voice of Warrawong Statement.

**Community Champ**
Give back to your local community.