



The 1970s

1973 – Duke Street Community House Inception

The Duke Street Community House Assoc. Inc (formerly the Tottenham Technical Schoolhouse) was established in 1973.

The development of the house was slow because of the difficulty in obtaining funding and the complexities encountered supporting a new and innovative project.

1974

During 1974, steps were taken to formalise the establishment of 27 Duke Street as a Community House

The Education Department leased the house at 27 Duke Street from Sunshine Council and work began to adapt the facilities so that classes could be held.

Initially teachers and the Coordinator went door knocking to explain to parents the purpose of the community house and the advantages it would provide for students, the school and the area.

1975 - The Official Opening

The centre was officially opened in this year, although records of the details as to specifically how that occurred are scant or non-existent. The house was beginning its career as a Community Learning Centre. Braybrook Rejoice!

1976

During school hours boys were able to elect to do activities at the house, which were mostly cooking lessons. Groups of boys were able to cook lunch for their form mates and teachers and invite them all down to the house for lunch.

A 'Youth Outreach Worker' and a worker from the Commonwealth Employment Service established offices and the first Adult Literacy program was established.

'After school Wednesday programs' became popular with Totty Tech students and teachers spending a couple of hours doing art, craft, and listening to records or tapes and talking.



duke street community house

community for life

One teacher and a few students usually cooked a meal, for around 16 people (of which 5 or 6 were staff) and everyone had tea at the house. It is said that after dinner, cards were played and the house closed around 10.00 pm.

1977

Throughout the years 1977 to 1979, activities offered to the local community and students continued to expand. The main development was the remedial assistance for students. Local teachers and volunteer tutors assisted with reading, writing and maths skills two evenings a week.

All groups were encouraged to participate in projects such as gardening, a community newspaper, a toddler's playgroup and to exchange learning skills.

A video recording called 'One Week at Duke Street' was produced.

The 1970's continued

1978

A massive boost was provided when the house was given some extensive interior renovation.

During the first 5 years of existence the house had proved to be an essential ingredient in meeting the needs of all age groups.

1979

The Community House became far more popular than anyone had anticipated, over 200 people enrolled and many others would drop in. One lovely student was eighty-nine years old, she would walk to the house each week to learn how to crotchet a shawl for her great-grandchild.

A program, which generated excitement amongst community members, was the camping program, the government gave a grant to buy a mini bus and the school's Parents and Friends Association donated money for tents. This was to help develop the social and educational well being of the students

New classes included painting and drawing, creative movement classes gave people the opportunity to explore fields in areas such as Jazz Ballet etc.



A building program was completed during this year with the addition of new classrooms.

The 1980's

A 'Woman's Discussion Group', focused on areas of women's health, fitness and discussion.

The 10th 'Braybrook Community Newsletter' was published at the Tottenham Technical School, informing the community of the activities conducted at the house.

The numeracy class consisted of simple arithmetic to computer programming. Help was offered to students having difficulties in maths and adults who needed a better understanding of metrics.

The Tottenham Technical School began to feel that the house should become more accessible to students and more informal groups were encouraged.

1984

A local Committee of Management replaced the Tottenham Technical School. This began another era for the house as it moved to management by the local community.

A full time Literacy Coordinator was appointed. In March, the City of Sunshine approved plans for further works to the house.

1986 -1988

The Sunshine Community Adult Literacy Program was developed, run by seven tutors who assisted adults with reading, writing and numeracy skills. There was also a scribe to help people to write letters, fill in forms and take minutes at meetings.

Students came from a variety of backgrounds including the Office of Corrections, disabled and ethnic communities. Intensive English courses were available to unemployed people, youth and migrants which were conducted three times a week.

The community house became incorporated and was supported by a part time Literacy and Basic Education Coordinator.



duke street community house

community for life

The house was registered as a T.A.F.E. provider after a public meeting was held. Because of the extremely socially disadvantaged community of Braybrook, Maidstone and Tottenham, there was a great need to provide a service for those wishing to enter the field of further education.

1988

The Tottenham Technical School Council relinquished the use of the house. The City of Sunshine then handed full control of the community house over to the newly formed Management Committee who set about establishing the Centre as a Community House for the Residents of Braybrook and Sunshine. Duke Street Community House Incorporated Association was born!

1989

A young woman who was to have a major impact on the house and its programs was employed in July 1989. Over the next 14 years Toula Karayannis provided the drive and innovation that was to take Duke Street Community House from a little known western suburbs neighbourhood house to statewide, then international educational / Information Technology platforms. The house participated in many local information technology initiatives that culminated in being asked to make a presentation at the Global Bangerman Challenge, held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1999.

Toula participated in local, regional and statewide forums and networks to seek provision of better resources for those using Duke Street's facilities and also for neighbourhood, community and learning centres across the western region

The 1990's

Funding difficulties were hindering the progress of Duke Street at this time and long term projects could not be initiated. Unlike other community centres Duke Street did not receive funding grants from the local council, this made the position of the house one of survival, rather than functional.

Programs continued to flourish but the condition of the house was poor, equipment was broken, funding was limited and the carpet was threadbare. A small facelift was given by painting which brightened the place up. In an effort to raise funds the assistance of local businessmen was sought. Confidence of success in this venture was high and the newsletter "Duke Street News" published bi-monthly acknowledged donations or contributions.



1994

The demand for childcare at Duke Street started to increase and the need for better and bigger facilities became evident. Funding was sought and granted from the Department of Recreation and the new extensions were completed. This soon became a very popular service. Today this facility caters for over 70 families per week plus a playgroup and is also used for classes and community groups. In 1997, a Brimbank City Council project called Greening Brimbank was started and the backyard of the house was re-landscaped with paving, a patio area and a BBQ.

1995

Western Women's Domestic Violence Support Network

The Committee of Management was approached by the Red Cross and asked to consider the auspice of a new group who would provide support to women who had left abusive family situations. The Western Women's Domestic Violence Support Network came into existence and brought together a most amazing group of women who for the past 8 years have become leading advocates in the struggle against domestic violence.

This dedicated group today provides support to over 100 women per year. The network continues to train over 20 volunteers each year and a number of these women have gone on to paid positions in the area of domestic violence support or to further study in the areas such as social work and community development.

The mid 1990's also saw some streamlining of Duke Street operations. A stable and committed Committee of Management completed changes and improvements. The house was now in the position to employ extra staff.

1996

Duke Street was connected to the Internet and an information technology program started to evolve. Students who were initially reluctant to even touch a computer were soon hooked into the technological age, surfing the net, creating web pages and chatting to people on the other side of the world. After many years of strong community commitment the house was experiencing a time of change. The committee began working as a team, lobbying council and other government bodies for better resources and funding. Since that time Duke Street has maintained a strong and dedicated committee that has achieved much for the house.



duke street community house

community for life

Over the past few years, Council has provided some much needed renovations.

1999

The culmination of a lot of hard work in the information technology area of Adult Education came in this year when the house became involved in the Bangemann Challenge, a competition held in Sweden. A visit by one of the Challenge's coordinators led to a nomination for the way Duke Street Community House used information technology in the community. Although the house did not win an award, Toulia Karayannis, Education Coordinator, was asked to make a presentation in Sweden at the exhibition held in conjunction with the awards ceremony.

The 2000's

2003

The house strives to maintain a reputation for excellence. The adult education program has grown and the information technology area has become one of our significant services. Local community members have joined computer classes, many of them have never touched a computer before. Individuals have increased their skills and have gone on to work or further study. Students, who have left, often drop in to report on their progress and let us know that their Duke Street experience has changed their lives.

Staff and volunteers have taken part in on the job training, professional development, and apprenticeship training schemes. People who have started out as volunteers have found new pathways opening up for them and have started new careers.

The committee and staff have dedicated themselves to quality improvement and are progressing through the Australian Quality Training Framework system. Quality has always been an important factor in any project or activity that the house has become involved in; and while we would all admit that we are not perfect and sometimes the wheels do fall off, it would have to be said that committee, staff and volunteers have given it their best shot.

The relationship between Duke Street Community House and our local council has greatly improved and at present council is considering a proposal for the redevelopment of the reception and administration areas of the house. This would provide better working conditions together with a more accessible front entrance.

Some of our planning goals for the future include:-



duke street community house

community for life

- Lobbying government for better resources and funding for occasional childcare, especially for special needs children.
- Working with council to redevelop the reception and entrance area of the house.
- Compliance with the Australian Quality Training Framework.
- Improving resources for Adult Education classes, English as a Second Language and Computers.
- Expand and offer more community building activities and programs.