

# Case study: Experience and impact of inclusion

## Inverloch Winter Soup Café

**Inverloch Community House, nestled in the coastal town of Inverloch, is dedicated to creating a supportive environment that fosters learning, skill-sharing, and community connection.**

The house operates within the Community Hub, a multifunctional space housing various facilities including a library, visitor centre, sports and recreational areas, and early childhood programs.

The Community House has developed many volunteer projects with a community favourite being the Winter Soup Café. The project was put together to provide an experience for volunteer community groups and Community House volunteers to create an inclusive space for community members to come together to eat and tell stories.

The Winter Soup Café project engages various local community groups, such as school groups, disability organisations like Interchange and Yooralla, the local Men's Shed, and walking groups. The program typically involves four to ten volunteers from each café. The main aim was to use the universal appeal of comforting food and engaging conversations to bridge the community together.

The Community House successfully fostered inclusion by partnering with local disability groups (Interchange and Yooralla). These groups actively participated in the café, assuming roles such as maître d', waitstaff, and collaborating with their caregivers to cook and serve meals.



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The initiative embraced a "pay as you feel" payment approach, ensuring accessibility regardless of economic circumstance. Additionally, the Community Hub's facilities, including the kitchen and dining area, were designed to accommodate all abilities.

While the program was conceived with the intent to promote inclusion, it wasn't without challenges. The organisation of the community groups and their development posed hurdles that required creative solutions. However, these challenges became opportunities for growth. The Community House team recognised the potential to unite the community through shared experiences and meaningful activities.

The implementation of the Winter Soup Café produced numerous positive outcomes for both participating organisations and volunteers including:

- **Improved Group Dynamics:** Through the development of skills like delegation, preparation, and teamwork, the participating groups reported enhanced group cohesion and communication.
- **Leadership Development:** The initiative provided opportunities for individuals to step up and exhibit leadership qualities, contributing to personal growth and empowerment.
- **Storytelling and Bonding:** The program encouraged storytelling, allowing volunteers to share their experiences of cooking for large groups, fostering deeper connections.
- **Skills Enhancement:** The community groups developed new skills in food handling and found an alternative avenue for fundraising.
- **Volunteer Skill Growth:** Community House volunteers acquired skills in event management, planning, and time management, enriching their experience and capabilities.

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### Recommendations

For organisations aiming to replicate the success of the Winter Soup Café, key recommendations include the following:

- **Clear Expectations:** Clearly outline expectations and responsibilities for all participating parties.
- **Foster Fun:** Encourage a light-hearted and enjoyable atmosphere to ensure an engaging experience for all.
- **Continuous Feedback:** Provide regular feedback to the community groups, sharing information on the number of people served and the allocation of funds.
- **Structured Feedback:** Employ feedback forms to gather insights for improvement.
- **Regular Check-ins:** Maintain regular check-ins to ensure the community groups remain on track throughout the event's lifecycle.

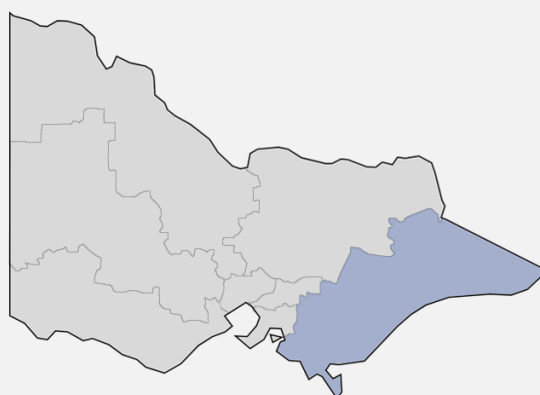
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**Author:** GippSport, Inc

**Consortium region:** Gippsland

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<https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/leading-volunteers/vma-2022-2026/>



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*Volunteering Victoria acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.*