



Serpentine/Jarrahdale

Community Resource Centre

*Your local connection*

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE  
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

# SJCRC COMMUNITY OP SHOP - CASE STUDY



[www.sjcommunityresourcecentre.org.au](http://www.sjcommunityresourcecentre.org.au)

# 1. Background & Context

## 1.1 About the Serpentine Jarrahdale Community Resource Centre

Located in Mundijong, WA, the Serpentine Jarrahdale Community Resource Centre (SJCRC) is a not-for-profit organisation within the WA Community Resource Network. Serving a region of over 905km<sup>2</sup>, SJCRC delivers vital services, resources, and support to a rapidly growing rural community on the brink of extensive urban development. SJCRC has a strong focus on inclusivity, connection, and empowerment and regularly has over 1000 community members walk through our doors each month seeking services, workshops, programs, referrals and support. We are the closest CRC to the City of Perth.

## 1.2 The Need for a New Income Stream

As the community of Mundijong and its surrounding areas continued to grow and with SJCRC rapidly expanding its reach during 2025, we have experienced a significant increase in demand for new and existing services. More foot traffic, higher program participation, and a greater need for administrative support has increased staffing requirements and ongoing operational costs.

Despite this surge in demand, rises in CPI and other costs, SJCRC has not seen a corresponding rise in its core funding. SJCRC remained heavily dependent on traditional grant funding—an approach that, while helpful in the short term, is not a solid long-term financial strategy. Grants are competitive, often project-specific, and subject to shifting funding priorities and restrictions, making them an unreliable foundation for sustainability.

SJCRC needed to sustainable, self-generated income stream that aligned with its mission, empowered the community, and could evolve over time.

This identification laid the groundwork for the creation of the SJCRC Community Op Shop—an initiative designed not just to generate an income stream, but to reinforce the values of affordability, sustainability, and local connection at every level of its operation.

# 2. Challenge & Opportunity Identified

## 2.1 The Challenge

The Mundijong community, along with neighbouring areas such as Jarrahdale, Keysbrook, and Serpentine, has long faced a lack of accessible and affordable second-hand retail options. This gap presents a significant challenge for local residents, particularly as cost-of-living pressures continue to escalate across Western Australia.

Families are increasingly struggling to meet basic needs, with the rising cost of groceries, housing, fuel, and utilities placing additional financial strain on household budgets. For seniors on fixed incomes, this can mean choosing between essential items such as clothing or medication. Children are also impacted, with many families unable to afford school uniforms, books, or suitable clothing — items that are often readily available at second-hand stores in better-serviced communities.

Compounding this issue is the absence of a central donation point in the region. Without a designated location to accept and sort donated goods, valuable items that could benefit local residents are either discarded or sent to donation centres in outer regions.

The lack of local infrastructure for second-hand goods not only limits access to affordable items but also contributes to increased waste and reduced community support networks. Addressing this challenge was vital to ensuring social equity, reducing environmental impact, and strengthening community resilience across Mundijong and its surrounding towns.

## 2.2 The Opportunity

The establishment of an op shop represented a significant strategic opportunity for SJCRC, offering multiple benefits aligned with our mission and long-term sustainability goals:

- **Maximising Underutilised Space:** The op shop was developed in a small but valuable space previously used as a boardroom, which generated only around \$50 per month through occasional hire. Despite its limited size, the room offered key advantages: it had a separate external entrance—ideal for retail use—and an internal connection to our facilities, including direct access to toilets, which conveniently supports customer needs such as trying on clothes. The Management Committee unanimously agreed to repurpose this underperforming asset to maximise financial return, community engagement, and accessibility.
- **Minimal Additional Overheads:** By integrating the op shop within our existing infrastructure, SJCRC avoids incurring significant new operational expenses. The building's daily costs are already covered, meaning the op shop can function without adding financial pressure to the organisation.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** With over 200,000 tonnes of textiles sent to landfill in Australia each year, the op shop contributes meaningfully to waste reduction by encouraging reuse and recycling—supporting our commitment to environmental responsibility.
- **Diversified Income Stream:** The shop introduces a new, self-generated income source, reducing SJCRC's reliance on grant funding and helping secure long-term financial sustainability.
- **Volunteer Engagement and Leadership Pathways:** The op shop creates new opportunities for volunteer participation, fostering community connection and developing future leaders who may eventually serve on the Management Committee or in other supporting roles within SJCRC.

- **Operational Independence:** Once fully established, the op shop would be designed to operate largely independently of paid staff hours, ensuring ongoing operation with minimal overheads.
- **Proven Market Demand:** Research shows op shops are one of the fastest-growing retail sectors in Australia, with few known failures—making this a low-risk, high-impact initiative.
- **Expanded Community Reach:** The shop serves as a welcoming entry point for local residents, many of whom go on to engage with SJCRC’s broader programs, services, and workshops—amplifying our reach and impact across the community.

## 3.0 Operational Model

### 3.1 Volunteer-Driven Philosophy

A core success factor was the decision to rely on rostered, trained volunteers, rather than paid staff, for daily operations. Volunteers were empowered through training, consistent shifts, and structured responsibilities.

### 3.2 Leadership and Oversight

- A dedicated Sub-Committee provided strategic oversight.
- An appointed Op Shop Manager coordinated day-to-day operations and volunteer support.
- SJCRC staff provided limited backup and compliance support.

### 3.3 Physical Space and Stock Management

Operating in a small footprint, the Op Shop implemented a highly selective stock strategy:

- Only clean, quality, high-turnover goods were sold.
- Volunteers managed a live restock system, rotating items daily based on sales.
- Unsellable items were responsibly diverted to rags, a \$1 rack or waste.

### 3.4 Target Audience and Engagement Strategy

The Op Shop successfully engaged a broad demographic — from seniors and families to individuals experiencing hardship — by focusing on:

- Fair and affordable pricing, benchmarked to nearby stores
- Inclusive customer experience, with dignity-first policies
- Community engagement via email, newsletters and social media

It also attracted customers from nearby Byford, expanding its reach and impact.

### 3.5 Scheduling and Community Synergy

Operating days were carefully aligned with existing SJCRC programs and community patterns to maximise foot traffic:

- **Monday:** Coincided with the Foodbank and Seniors meetings
- **Wednesday:** Linked to "Meet and Eat" community lunches
- **Friday:** Tapped into local "op shop day" culture where people travel op shop to op shop on Fridays
- **Saturday:** Benefited from the SJ Farmers Market and onsite café

This scheduling allowed the Op Shop to integrate into the rhythm of the community, increasing visibility and uptake.

### 3.6 Technology and Financial Systems

To keep operations accessible and manageable:

- Simple sales systems were used (cash register and EFTPOS)
- Separate bank accounts ensured clean financial reporting
- Basic inventory and pricing tools enabled consistency without complexity

These systems allowed volunteers of varying skill levels to confidently participate in retail tasks.

### 3.7 Financial Performance and Outcomes

The Op Shop's financial performance has significantly exceeded expectations:

Despite its small space, minimal staff hours, and lean operations, the Op Shop generated a strong profit margin and quickly became a critical income stream for SJCRC.

#### **Operational Costs:**

- Volunteer consumables: <\$25/week
- Staff time: ~\$60/week (absorbed into existing capacity)
- Bookkeeping: ~\$25/week
- Supplies: ~\$5/week

**Result:** A sustainable, low-cost income generator that contributes to SJCRC's financial resilience.

## 4.0 Key Success Factors

- **Volunteer ownership:** Volunteers felt valued, trusted, and connected — leading to high retention.
- **Selective stock strategy:** Fast turnover and high-quality presentation improved both sales and reputation.
- **Strategic opening hours:** Leveraging community programs amplified foot traffic.
- **Clear governance:** Sub-Committee oversight ensured consistency and accountability.
- **Cost efficiency:** Existing infrastructure and lean staffing kept expenses exceptionally low.
- **Sponsorship:** Submitting a formal Sponsorship Request to a local estate developer to fund \$15,000 for the set up of the op shop with “Platinum Sponsorship” rewards in exchange.

## 5.0 Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenge	Response
<i>Volunteer burnout risk</i>	Split shifts and capped numbers preserved morale
<i>Stock overflow</i>	Implemented strict curation and sorting shed protocol
<i>Role confusion</i>	Developed clear shift roles and communication channels
<i>Theft/security</i>	Developed incident reporting and safe access protocols
<i>Financial tracking</i>	Set up dedicated bank account and weekly reconciliation

**Lesson:** Structure and an induction pack — paired with community trust — created a sustainable balance between flexibility and control.

## 6.0 Social Impact

Beyond financial outcomes, the Op Shop has delivered strong social and community benefits, including:

- Reducing barriers to essentials for low-income families
- Providing a social outlet and leadership path for volunteers
- Increasing awareness of SJCRC’s broader services
- Offering dignified, non-stigmatising assistance to people in need
- Enabled additional needs adults with support workers to learn meaningful skills and community connections as new volunteers to the Op Shop.
- Support to other not for profit organisations with excess donations

## 7.0 Conclusion: A Scalable Model for Social Enterprise

The SJCRC Community Op Shop is a compelling case of how a micro-retail space, led by volunteers and supported by strategic planning, can deliver strong financial returns and community impact. By embedding itself into the local ecosystem, staying lean, and placing trust in its volunteers, the Op Shop has demonstrated a replicable model for community-led income generation — particularly relevant for not-for-profits seeking sustainability without heavy overheads.

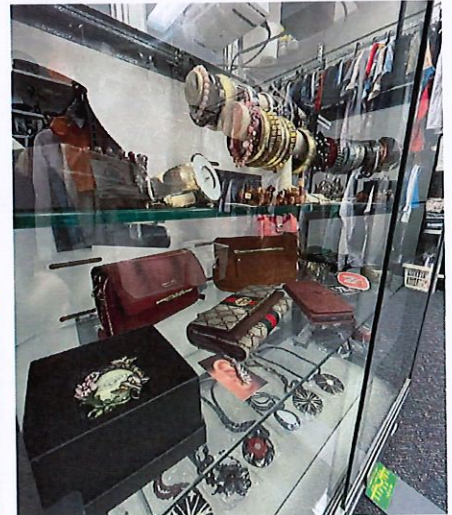
A key lesson from the development of this social enterprise has been the importance of thoroughly considering staff capacity at every stage — from setup, to delivery, and into ongoing operations. In the early stages, the project intentionally dedicated significant staff and subcommittee hours to ensure every element of the enterprise was well-considered and strategically planned. Rather than rushing to open, the focus was on building a solid foundation that could support long-term success.

This deliberate, front-loaded investment of time and energy paid off. It allowed for deep collaboration, strong community engagement, and thoughtful design of processes that would require minimal staff involvement once operational. The ultimate intention was for the Op Shop to stand on its own with limited ongoing staff hours — a goal that has successfully been achieved.

This approach underscores the value of balancing upfront staff commitment with long-term sustainability, ensuring that social enterprises are both impactful and manageable within existing organisational capacity.

# Community OP-SHOP

# Before & After GALLERY



# Community OP-SHOP

# Social Shares GALLERY

Serpentine Jarrahdale CRC  
July 1 · 🌐

Love People? Love a Chat? Love a Bargain? 🤗

Why not volunteer at our community op-shop and café! ☺️

It's the perfect way to meet new friends, share a laugh, and give back — all while surrounded by great vibes, vintage finds, and the smell of coffee! ☺️

Whether you're a sorting superstar, a hobby baker, or just love helping out — there's a spot here with your name on it!

Click the link below to register your interest today.  
🔗 <https://form.jotform.com/251728500677057>

Serpentine Jarrahdale CRC  
August 12 · 🌐

📍 It's here! 📍

After weeks of hard work, we're so excited to officially open the doors to our SJCRC Community Op Shop TOMORROW!

From clothes to homewares, books to bric-a-brac — our new Community Op Shop is packed with pre-loved gems ready for their next chapter. Shop second-hand, reduce waste, and help provide community programs — all in one visit.

📍 SJ Community Resource Centre  
2 Paterson Street, Mundijong WA 6123

🕒 Opening Hours:  
Monday's: 9.30am - 4.00pm  
Wednesday's: 9.30am - 4.00pm  
Friday's: 9.30am - 4.00pm  
Saturday's: 8.30am - 11.00am (alongside the **SJ Farmers Market**)

👉 Our shop is run entirely by amazing volunteers who give their time, skills, and smiles to keep it thriving.

👉 Now accepting donations of good quality items on drop off days ONLY!

🚫 No bulky items or furniture as we have limited space, Thank you!

🌟 Every Purchase Makes a Difference 🌟

When you shop at our community op shop, you're helping more than just one cause. Proceeds support essential SJCRC programs, workshops, and equipment — and also enables us to support additional not-for-profit organisations in the SJ Shire.

With over 1,000 people walking through our doors each month, your support helps us deliver a wide range of services that make a real impact in our community.

Thank you for supporting local people, programs, and possibilities. We can't wait to see you! ❤️

**OPEN FOR VOLUNTEERS!**  
We are looking for persons who are passionate about community.

**Positions Available:**

- SJCRC OP-SHOP (Shop front)
- SJCRC OP-SHOP (back of house, sorting, pricing & packing)
- SJCRC CAFE
- SJCRC BOOKSALE (once a month)

**JOIN US!** 08 9503 2967  
[www.sjcommunityresourcecentre.org.au](http://www.sjcommunityresourcecentre.org.au)  
[help@sjcommunityresourcecentre.org.au](mailto:help@sjcommunityresourcecentre.org.au)

👍 You, Kay Williamson and 6 others 2 comments 19 shares

Serpentine Jarrahdale CRC  
August 7 · 🌐

📍 WE'RE NOW TAKING DONATIONS! 📍

Our SJCRC Community Op Shop is now accepting good quality donations – and we'd love your help stocking our shelves!

- 👕 Clothes (all sizes)
- 👜 Accessories & Bags
- 🏠 Homewares & bric-a-brac
- 🧸 Toys & baby items
- ...and more!

📍 Drop off at:  
SJ Community Resource Centre  
2 Paterson Street, Mundijong

🕒 Donations accepted on Monday to Thursday during opening hours.

📝 Please note:  
❌ No furniture or bulky items – space is limited  
✅ Items must be clean and in good condition

Your donations help support local programs and keep our community thriving. Thank you for giving back! ❤️

**Community OP-SHOP**

Thank you.  
Every Purchase Makes a Difference

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Visit us at  
Serpentine Jarrahdale  
Community Resource Centre  
2 PATERSON STREET  
MUNDIJONG WA 6123

**WE ARE NOW TAKING DONATIONS**  
ON DROP OFF DAYS:  
MONDAY - THURSDAY  
9.00AM - 4.00PM

👍 Dawn Langridge, Jessie Hoffman and 69 others 24 comments 44 shares

**REDUCE REUSE RESTYLE!**

**WE ARE NOW TAKING DONATIONS**  
ON DROP OFF DAYS:  
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9.00AM - 4.00PM

Serpentine/Jarrahdale  
Community Resource Centre  
Your local connection



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