



Connecting communities through spaces

Aspirational Community Hubs Strategy 2019

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Region three – Hill End and Willow Grove

Section 3.3

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Baw Baw
Shire Council

–
T +61 3 5624 2411
F +61 3 5622 3654

–
E bawbaw@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au
W bawbawshire.vic.gov.au

–
PO Box 304
Warragul
Victoria 3820

Region three – Hill End and Willow Grove

Geographical and social context

Geographical context

Region three is a comparatively small area comprised of farming communities and small townships spread along Willow Grove Road that runs between two national parks, the Sweetwater Creek Nature Conservation Reserve to the west and the Bull Beef Nature Conservation Reserve to the east. The townships have good access to commercial and service centres such as Trafalgar and Moe in Latrobe Valley.

Demographic snapshot

The region has a combined population of 762. A slightly higher proportion of households are single family at 84 per cent. The region has a lower rate of migration, with 67 per cent of people living at the same address as five years ago. There is a higher rate of car ownership within the region, with 45 per cent of households owning three or more cars.

All data presented in this section has been collated from the 2016 Census of Population and Housing unless otherwise stated. See Appendix one for a set of comparative data.



Existing level of provision

Willow Grove hosts most of the community facilities in the region, with a relatively good supply of facilities. Facilities include a primary school, kindergarten, maternal and child service, sports complex, recreation reserve, community centre and health service.

Policy review findings

A review of Council's policies and strategies identified the following important considerations for this region:

- A community hub style development in existing or proposed facilities incorporating a range of static, outreach and/or 'virtual' education, learning, library, seniors, health, disability, family services and recreation and leisure services in Willow Grove (Community Service Planning Framework, 2013)
- Hill End is considered in the catchment of Willow Grove (Community Service Planning Framework, 2013)
- Willow Grove Recreation Reserve Master Plan recommends improved connectivity from the reserve to the Blue Rock Lake Trail, new housing estate and adjacent Willow Grove Primary and recommends considering the provision of a community garden, subject to future demand (Baw Baw Shire Council Rural Recreation Reserve Master Plans Stage 2, August 2016)

Community plan findings

One community plan was developed by the community in this region. The community plan was developed with the assistance of Council, however, delivering each plan's projects are the responsibility of the community. The key findings from this plan is detailed below.

- **Tanjil Valley District 2008 – 2013 Community Plan**

The top priority project was to liaise with Southern Rural Water about the future of Blue Rock Lake. At the time Tanjil Valley Landcare group was working with Southern Rural Water. Further, the main priority was getting roads sealed.

Community engagement findings

In Region three, 11 community members participated in the engagement by completing the connecting communities survey at one of the community pop-ups.

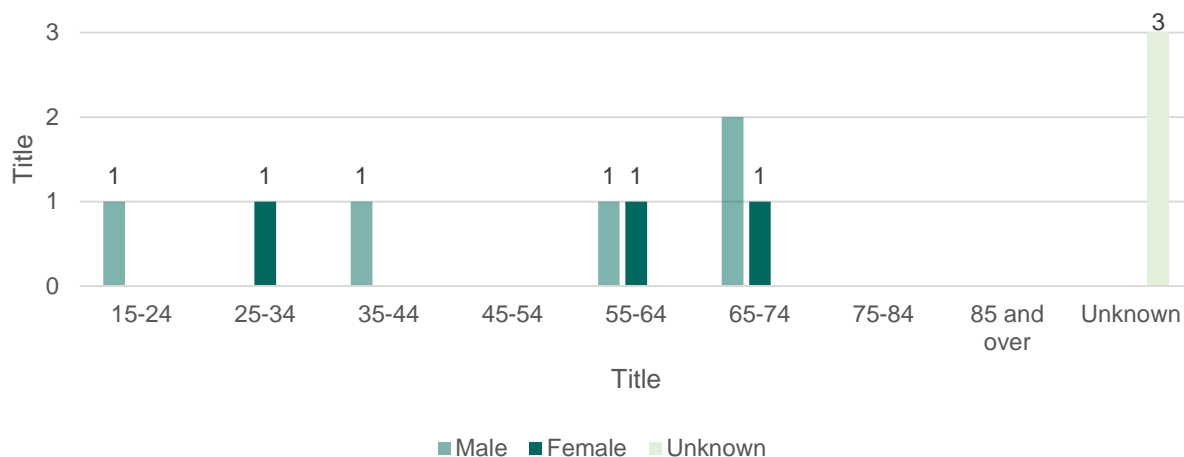


Figure 1. Region three community engagement participants - age profile

The suburbs and towns represented by participants were:

- Willow Grove, seven participants
- Hill End, one participant
- Tanjil South, three participants.

In addition to survey participants, one community member provided feedback via the mapping tool. Demographic information was not collected from this participant.

Community connection

The participants discussed the different ways they typically connect to their community, these included connecting through organised community groups, associations and sport clubs. Community facilities and services including the community hall, early years learning, education and parks were also identified as ways participants connect with their community. Incidental interactions at the local pub and shops was another way they connect.

The main challenges for community connection identified by participants were individual barriers. These include:

- being time poor.
- lack of motivation and confidence to engage.
- lack of access to transport.
- the cost of activities.

The participants believed there are several opportunities to improve community connection, including:

- support from the Shire, such as communication about events and activities, provision of funding and supporting community groups with advice.
- improving community cohesion by supporting each other and local groups more.
- provision of more activities other than sport.

Facilities and spaces

There are a variety of facilities and spaces that are used, according to participant responses, including:

- sporting facilities, specifically Willow Grove Recreation Reserve.
- parks and open spaces such as Blue Rock Lake for swimming.
- trails and paths, specifically the track around Blue Rock.

- community centres and halls, specifically the Old School, Willow Grove Public Hall and Fumina House.

The participants recognised sporting facilities as being highly valued by their community. The recreation reserves, football grounds and clubs are valued because they are a place where the community gathers and communicates. According to one participant, the football clubs are heavily valued by the older members as it presents a social opportunity.

The lake and walking tracks were also spaces valued by the community more broadly.

According to participants the following services, programs and spaces could be improved or are missing:

- Facility standards could be improved, such as lighting and football infrastructure.
- The diversity of activities offered could be increased, including activities that cater to younger people.
- Community facilities, such as a community garden, market space and men's shed, are missing.
- The Old School in Hill End was identified as a community space that could be utilised more. It has technology set up and could therefore be utilised for computers or technology classes.

Information on hub and service provision

The following suggestions were provided by participants to improve understanding of what is currently available:

- online information via:
 - a website that lists spaces people can use
 - social media, for example, community Facebook pages
- printed information in community newsletters
- access to information led by Council, letting the community know what's going on and with sufficient time

Community hub principles

The participants from Region three believe that a community hub includes the following elements and principles:

- It is a **meeting space or place** where people can meet and gather
- It is a **multi-purpose space** for people to do different things
- It is a **space for programming**, the provision of activities
- It provides the community **access to information**
- It is a space with **support services**, particularly family and health services
- It is inclusive, a place:
 - to involve and include people
 - where people get together and enjoying each other

"It's teaching people what it used to be like, going back to old values of what commonly used to be – interrelated, meeting place. It's a place to come together and talk and spend time. A place to involve and include older and newer residents. More use of the school – needs to be activated." (Resident)

According to their responses, it should not be:

- commercially focussed
- exclusive

Recommendations

For Region three, Council policy recognises Willow Grove as the central location with the other townships falling into its catchment. A masterplan for Willow Grove Recreation Reserve has already been developed which aims to improve connection to surrounding communities and facilities. Community engagement findings suggest that community would like Council assistance to better utilise the community spaces in townships such as Hill End.

Accordingly, the recommendations for this region include:

- Council to support the community in the **activation of existing spaces**, particularly the Old School in Hill End to respond to community need. This may include a community garden and men's shed program, both identified through the community engagement as programs missing from this region.
- Continue to support provision of local level facilities such as the kindergarten¹, maternal and child health services and the local hall in Willow Grove.
- Explore the **multi-use functionality** of the Old School to also accommodate mobile service provision and programs. Mobile services travel to different locations to provide their service in offsite venues and include services such as medical clinics.
- Continue to support the Willow Grove Recreation Reserve improvements.

¹ Note that the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning owns the Willow Grove Kindergarten site.