Connecting communities through spaces

Aspirational Community Hubs Strategy 2019

Baw Baw Shire Council, Version 5, 29 January 2019

Region six – Yarragon and surrounds

Section 3.6

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Geographical and social context

Geographical context

Region six is comparatively a mid-sized area characterised by small townships in the south of the region, and more urbanised areas located in the north. Yarragon, the region's largest town, is located on the M1 highway which splits the region. As such, the region has ready access to Warragul and Drouin. The townships to the south of the region are comparatively remote farming communities, located in hilly nature reserves, with poorer access to commercial and service centres.

Demographic snapshot

This region has a combined population of 3775. The age profile is comparatively similar to other regions, but with slightly less people aged between 25 and 34 years. There is a high percentage of car ownership with 18 per cent of dwellings with four or more cars. This is reflective of an area with few public transport options and urban centres.

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

Existing level of provision

Most community spaces in this region are located in Yarragon, including a community hall, post office, community garden, health centre, maternal and child health centre, school and kindergarten. The Yarragon Primary School was relocated in 2012 to a new facility that can meet projected growth. The old site has been identified as surplus for education purposes. The community has been advocating for Council to purchase the site for community use. Council also received funding for a skate park in Yarragon that has been constructed at Howard Park.

Policy review findings

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

- Council's Community Service Planning Framework (2013) discusses that in the long-term, provision of a library service should be considered as part of a multi-function space, integrated with other community facilities, virtual libraries, partnerships with private enterprise and co-location with other services be considered for the South-East region of the municipality (includes region's 4, 7, and 8).

- Kindergarten provision in Yarragon is expected to be adequate for 2050 (Community Service Planning Framework, 2013).

- Although outside of region six, the community services centre in Trafalgar provides a range of health services for the south-east of the municipality. Health care services should also be provided on a mobile basis and virtual and remote access may emerge with increasing use and availability of technology (Community Service Planning Framework, 2013).

- 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 is recommended for Yarragon, Nilma/Nilma North and Darnum.

- Council's *10 Year Infrastructure Plan 2017-2027* identifies a potential indoor sports hall (with Yarragon Primary School) as a capital works project.

Community plan findings

Two community plans were developed for towns in Region six. The community plans were developed with the assistance of Council; however, the plan's projects are the responsibility of the community. The key findings from these plans are detailed below.

- Darnum Community Plan 2008 – 2013

The vision of the plan aimed to maintain a safe and quiet rural feel and to welcome visitors to the town. Key issues were focussed on a lack of town identity, centre and no farmers market. Projects aimed to improve signage within the town, infrastructure in public spaces and to run more community events.

- Yarragon Community Plan 2008 – 2013

The plan's vision is aimed at maintaining a small country town feel and access to services. Issues and challenges concern the lack of healthcare and education services while key projects involve developing co-located education facilities with child care services.

Community engagement findings

In total, 22 community members participated in the engagement by completing the connecting communities survey either online or at one of the community pop-ups.

Figure 1 provides a summary of the age profile of the community engagement participants from this region.
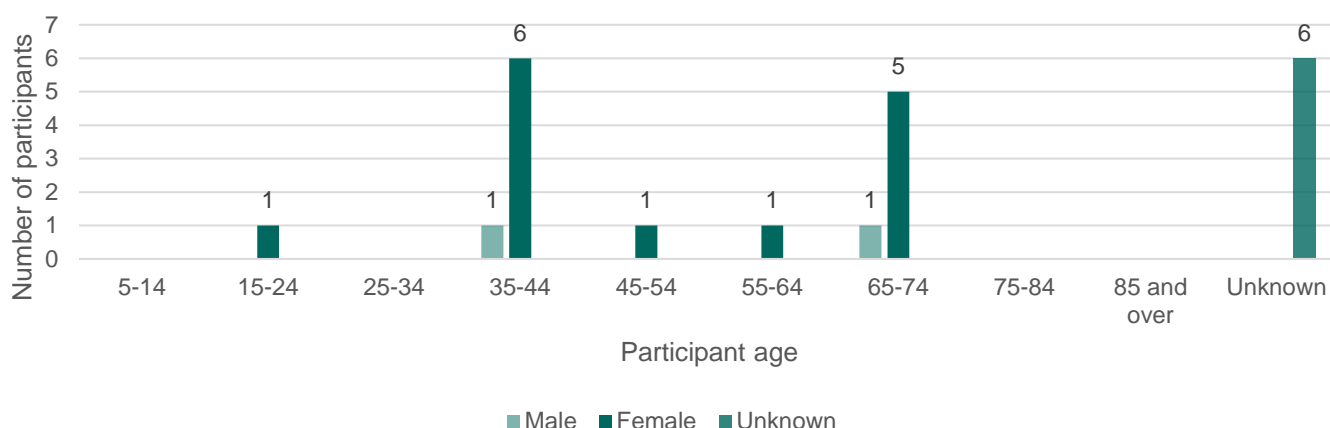

Figure 1 Region six community engagement participants - age profile

The suburbs and towns represented by participants were:

- Yarragon, 18 participants
- Nilma, two participants
- Nilma North, one participant
- Shady Creek, one participant

In addition to survey participants, approximately four community members provided comments and ideas regarding specific facilities and spaces in this region. Demographic information was not collected from these participants.

Community connection

The participants discussed the different ways they connect to their community, these included connecting through organised community groups, associations and sports clubs, community events, involvement in schools, volunteering and incidental interactions, for example at the local shops.

Participants recognised a variety of challenges for community connection in their region. The main challenges were people's individual barriers and the level of provision of community facilities and activities.

Individual barriers include:

- the motivation and confidence to participate.
- the affordability of meeting spaces.
- access to transport.
- Affordability of meeting spaces was an issue for several organised community groups. A few participants discussed the challenges they had faced when trying to find an affordable space for their men's shed.
- The level of provision of community facilities and activities was also identified as a challenge. Participants felt that the main issue was a lack of infrastructure. They believed there is nowhere they can have a community

garden, men's shed, library or learning space. Many participants felt that as a community they would benefit from a multi-purpose space to hold activities and accommodate existing groups.

- Several participants felt there was a strong sense of community cohesion, but that they needed more support from the Shire.

Facilities and spaces

Despite participants feeling there was a lack of community infrastructure to meet and hold activities, the following are spaces and facilities that are currently used:

- Community centres and halls such as:
    - CFA meetings room, used for community group and association meetings.
    - Yarragon Hall, predominately for the market.
    - Station Gallery, Yarragon.
    - Shady Creek Hall.
    - Church Hall.
- Parks, open spaces and playgrounds such as Dowton Park and Howard Park were commonly referenced and recognised as valued green spaces.
- Trails and paths.
- Sporting facilities, such as leisure centres and skateparks.
- Several participants used community facilities and spaces outside of the region, particularly in Warragul.

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

- A community facility that is:
    - a centralised space for services and activities.
    - a space people can meet.
    - a learning space and information centre.
    - financially accessible.
- Activities and spaces are missing, particularly for young people.
- Support for community groups could be improved.
- Indoor sporting facilities, such as netball and basketball courts, are missing.
- Provision of more community events and get togethers.
- Several participants discussed the opportunity of developing the old school site to include community facilities.

Information on hub and service provision

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

- printed information via local newspaper and mail.
- online information via a webpage.
- centrally located information.
- better use of the community notice board in Yarragon.
- a welcome package for new residents.
- more information from Council.

Community hub principles

The participants from this region believed a community hub includes the following elements and principles:

- It is **inclusive**, in that it is:

- accessible to everyone, all abilities and ages.
- financially accessible.
- promotes inclusiveness and involvement.

- It is **community-driven** and supported by the local community, residents, groups and businesses.
- It is a meeting space or place:
    - for people to meet and socialise.
    - that provides a meeting space for community groups.
- It is a multi-purpose space or place for:
    - learning
    - youth activities
    - men's sheds
    - meetings
- It provides the community with **access to information.**
- Its location is **central** to the community.
- It includes the provision of support services such as health and transport.

"A place where many people of different ages can access and gain something in their life, that brings people together, that brings people from far and wide, that provides opportunities for clubs to raise money, that different groups use and share resources. A place that improves people's health both physically and mentally. It could include a meeting place." (Resident)

According to their responses, it should not be:
- commercially focused
- exclusive
- unsafe

Recommendations

The region has a relatively stable population and is well serviced by community infrastructure. Council policies acknowledge this, however, suggests there is scope for a new multi-purpose facility in the region. Community engagement findings also suggest people in the region have a variety of community spaces to utilise. Like Council policy, participants feel there is scope to improve the multi-use functionality of the available spaces. Within the community, there is a significant level of support to activate the old Yarragon Primary School site which would function as a multi-use space.

Accordingly, the recommendations for this region include:

- Consider opportunities to **improve the multi-use functionality of existing spaces**, such as the Yarragon Public Hall to accommodate mobile programs and services.
- Consider opportunities to support community-led activation of the old Yarragon Primary School site. Some of the programs identified as needed in the community include a men's shed, historical society and library/learning space.