



# Connecting communities through spaces

Aspirational Community Hubs Strategy 2019

Baw Baw Shire Council, Version 5, 29 January 2019

Region seven – Trafalgar and surrounds

Section 3.7

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Baw Baw  
Shire Council

–  
T +61 3 5624 2411  
F +61 3 5622 3654

–  
E [bawbaw@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:bawbaw@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au)  
W [bawbawshire.vic.gov.au](http://bawbawshire.vic.gov.au)

–  
PO Box 304  
Warragul  
Victoria 3820

# Region seven – Trafalgar and surrounds

## Geographical and social context

### Geographical context

Region seven is a comparatively mid-sized region split in half by the M1 highway. The region's largest town, Trafalgar, is centrally located with good access to Moe in the east and Warragul and Drouin in the west. The towns to the north and south of Trafalgar are small townships and farming communities. Most townships, however, have reasonable car access to a commercial and service centre.

### Demographic snapshot

The region has a combined population of 5,453. The age profile is similar to other regions. The region has a similar level of labour force participation to other regions, with 42 per cent employed. It has a comparatively lower percentage of disengaged young people and people with need for assistance.

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.

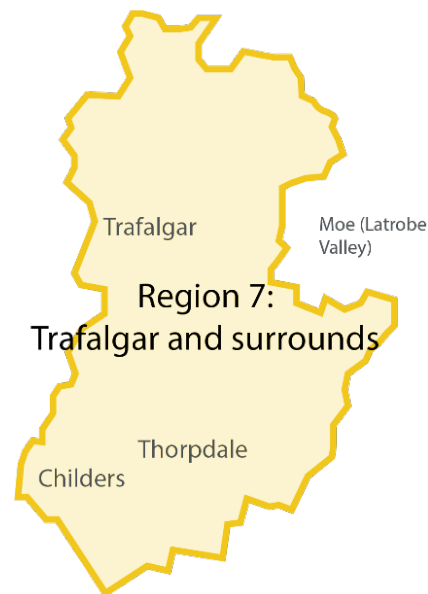
### Existing level of provision

This region has relatively good provision of services and community facilities, particularly in Trafalgar which acts as the main service centre to the region. Most of the region is also relatively close to the two major centres, Moe and Warragul. However, engagement with the community identified that most people travel to Moe over Warragul. The kindergarten in Trafalgar was identified as being at capacity and with a wait list, forcing families to travel to Willow Grove for kindergarten. Trafalgar also has a youth resource centre and internet café and a community services centre.

## Policy review findings

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

- A community hub style development is recommended for Trafalgar in existing facilities that incorporates a range of static, outreach and/or virtual education, learning, library, seniors, health, disability, family services, and recreation and leisure services (*Community Service Planning Framework, 2013*).
- There is medium population growth expected in Trafalgar due to its proximity to the highway and the need to protect the character of the town and its surrounding agricultural land.
- Trafalgar has a relatively good level of provision of recreational spaces and facilities. The Trafalgar Recreation Precinct Master Plan recommends several improvements including a new oval, a new multi-use complex, and an adventure playground.
- The *Draft Municipal Early Years Infrastructure Plan (2018)* recommends that one early years' service hub is required in Trafalgar.



## Community plan findings

A community plan was developed for Thorpdale. The community plan was developed with the assistance of Council, however, delivering the plan's projects are the responsibility of the community. The key findings from this plan are detailed below.

- **Thorpdale Community Plan 2008 – 2013**

The plan's vision focused on maintaining a sustainable agricultural future. The key issues detailed in the plan are on keeping the town 'alive'. Projects involved encouraging people to get involved, developing a store at the heart of town and ensuring businesses and services do no close

## Community engagement findings

In total, 21 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.

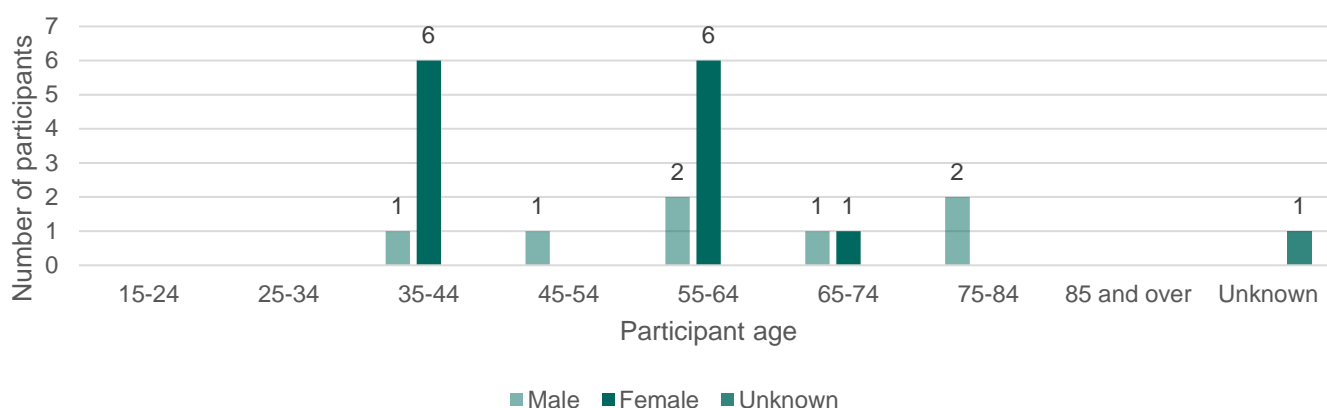


Figure 1. Region seven community engagement participants age profile

The suburbs and towns represented by the community were:

- Trafalgar, 14 participants
- Thorpdale, five participants
- Trafalgar East, one participant
- one participant did not provide their town or suburb

In addition to survey participants, approximately two 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 sport clubs. They also identified community events, volunteering, the school, church and community spaces as other ways they connect to their community. Some participants said they connect through employment and incidental interactions at local cafes.

Many participants felt that the main challenge for community connection was individual barriers, including:

- time poor.
- cost of activities and services.
- motivation and confidence.
- access and transport; the highway is a physical barrier to people connecting.

Another challenge referenced several times was the issue of available information. Some participants felt they did not have access to information about what is currently available in the community.

## Facilities and spaces

There are a variety of facilities and spaces that are used according to participants, these are outlined below:

- Parks, open spaces and playgrounds such as:
  - playgrounds for kids and parents to connect
  - Thorpdale Park
- Trails and paths for:
  - walking and running
  - walking the dog
- Sporting facilities such as:
  - recreation reserves
  - tennis courts
  - netball courts
  - football fields
  - swimming pool
- Community centres and halls such as:
  - Trafalgar Public hall which is run by the community, for the community.
  - community hall for gatherings, markets and activities.
  - community centre
- Other facilities and spaces mentioned included:
  - community garden
  - the schools, specifically Thorpdale
  - early years
  - the mobile library
- Participants also recognised the men's shed and church as spaces valued by the community more broadly included.
- The Thorpdale pub prior to being burnt down was also valued by the community, according to a few participants.

The participant responses regarding what services, programs and spaces need improvement or are missing were focussed on community facilities. These included:

- early years; the kindergarten in Trafalgar is in high demand and local families are having to travel outside of town for kindergarten.
- education; the school in Trafalgar is popular and operating out of portables.
- an off-road walking/running tracks and cycling tracks, with opportunities to connect to Trafalgar east.
- missing a library or community hub that includes civic services, computer access and meeting space for community groups.

Participants from Thorpdale and Trafalgar believed that their communities are missing infrastructure to help them connect. The facilities and services are scattered, identifying the need to bring them together like a hub. Connecting services such as the kindergarten and maternal health were considered priorities.

Improving the connections between existing facilities and spaces, such as the recreation reserve, was also discussed.

## Information on hub and service provision

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

- online information via:

- social media
- improved Council website
- printed information via:
  - local newspapers
  - community newsletter
- Council to lead dissemination of information
- community noticeboard

## Community hub principles

- The participants from this region believed the following elements and principles are included in a community hub:
  - It is **inclusive**, such as:
    - activities are inclusive and not focussed around one activity.
    - inclusive and open to everyone.
    - respecting different views.
  - It is **people-focussed**, in that it:
    - fosters social connections between people in the community.
    - is about the community supporting each other.
  - It is **an anchor facility or activity** such as community garden or a pub.
  - It is **a meeting space or place**, providing opportunity for informal interactions.
  - It is a space with a **diverse offering**, such as:
    - a wide range of activities.
    - a space for learning and socialising.
  - It is a **space for programming** of activities and events that bring the community together.
  - It includes the provision of **support services**, bringing services to the people.
  - It provides the community with **access to information**.

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*“A place where community members can meet, collaborate and learn from each other and where community building can take place.” (Resident)*

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According to their responses, it should not be:

- exclusive.
- commercially focused.
- a space that focuses on alcohol.
- disconnected spaces and places.

## Recommendations

Council policy recommends a multi-use community hub style development for Trafalgar in existing facilities and that one early years’ service hub is required in Trafalgar by 2019. These policy drivers are reflected in the community engagement findings that suggest families are having to travel to outside of Trafalgar to find available kindergarten places. Similarly, many participants identified barriers to accessing different services or community spaces. Feedback from the community suggested there is scope to improve physical connections between hubs and services in Trafalgar to improve the accessibility of these spaces and places.

Accordingly, the recommendations for this region include:

- Improve access and connectivity between existing spaces and places in Trafalgar. There are several existing community spaces located near one another that could form a community precinct with improvements to the public realm, such as between the kindergarten, CFA, scout's hall, community garden and men's shed.
- If Council was successful in advocating to state government for the relocation of the kindergarten to the primary school site in Trafalgar, consideration should be given to repurposing the existing kindergarten facility to a space for community groups to operate from, a library/learning space, and a space to accommodate mobile services and programs.
- The community identified the need for improved connectivity between Trafalgar and Trafalgar East with off-road trails. Additionally, improved connectivity to the sports reserve was identified.