

CREATING COMMUNITY

Social Connection, Community Wellbeing and Good Practice



SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING TOOL PROJECT

STAGE 2

Prepared by

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for the

Social Infrastructure Planning Tool Project

Reference Group

May 2012

‘We need to learn from past experiences...so that people who move into new housing developments do not just get a home, but also the prospect of building a future for the long term, supported by a flourishing community.....

If new homes do not become successful communities, the risk for the future grows of managing the consequences of failure.....

It is important to avoid the mistakes of the past.’¹

¹ The Young Foundation, *Never Again: Avoiding the mistakes of the past*, June 2010

Acknowledgements

This report has been made possible through funding and support from the following organisations:

- Shire of Cardinia
- City of Casey
- City of Hume
- Shire of Melton
- Shire of Mitchell
- City of Whittlesea
- City of Wyndham
- Department of Planning and Community Development
- Department of Human Services
- Stockland
- Australian Communities Foundation

In particular I would like to acknowledge *Belgin Besim, City of Whittlesea*, for her invaluable contribution to the SIPT project as a whole and her unlimited support to me in undertaking Stage 2.

I would also like to acknowledge the extensive contributions of *Fran Linardi, City of Whittlesea* and *Kate Murray, Stockland*, as well as all of those staff members (too many to mention by name) from Local and State government departments, NGOs, academic institutions and private land developers who gave very generously of their time, resources, knowledge and experience during the consultation phase of this Stage.

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Abstract

The objectives of this second stage included: to commence the development of a Good Practice Guide, extracting learnings from the examples to inform the future planning and development of the SIPT, and, to position the discussion of the social needs of new communities within an accepted and evidence-based framework and vision of community wellbeing. Wide-ranging consultations with major stakeholders have informed this stage.

In the lead up to those components there is a discussion on the correlation of social connection and individual and community wellbeing.

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Introduction

According to the Department of Planning and Community Development's *Victoria in Future 2012*, Melbourne's population will be rapidly growing to almost 5.5 million by 2031. Most of this growth is set to occur in the seven designated growth municipalities of

- Cardinia
- Casey
- Hume
- Melton
- Mitchell
- Whittlesea
- Wyndham

Council	2011	2031	% change
Cardinia	77,535	142,383	83.6
Casey	261,196	404,498	54.9
Hume	175,605	263,998	50.3
Melton	112,980	225,774	99.8
Mitchell	35,995	59,266	64.7
Whittlesea	163,538	287,568	75.8
Wyndham	168,550	340,724	102.1
Total	995,399	1,724,211	73.6
Melbourne MSD	4,137,429	5,411,938	30.8

More than 30% of Melbourne's population will live in these municipalities by 2031 and most of the growth will consist of families with children and young people while at the same time the population will continue to age in line with projections for Australia as a whole. These growth councils are also distinguished by having

- significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations
- a high proportion of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- pockets of significant socio-economic disadvantage.

Growth municipalities face many challenges including:

- responding to social disadvantage in the context of rapid growth
- inadequate social and physical infrastructure to cope with growth
- geographically large with both urban and rural areas
- tensions between addressing inadequate and aging social and physical infrastructure in older established areas and the requirements for new social and physical infrastructure in the rapidly developing Greenfield sites.

Many individuals and families are experiencing significant disadvantage without access to the services and supports they need in a timely fashion to assist in their health and wellbeing. Increasingly, community indicators are showing that residents of growth municipalities are geographically isolated from social support programs and present with the inevitable social consequences associated with this, including family breakdown, mental health issues, disengaged young people and socially excluded individuals and communities.

New models and timing of service and program delivery are needed that are appropriate and sustainable during the process of growth. Residents need support and opportunities to connect to each other and to access upstream social support systems and services. This is particularly important to prevent unaddressed issues from becoming long term and entrenched with the accompanying social and economic consequences.

Project Background

In 2009 the City of Whittlesea developed a project brief that was included in the Melbourne Community Foundation publication *Macromelbourne Initiative*. This publication was a compilation of projects needing funding that were relevant to addressing growth area issues. The Social Benchmarking Tool Project (as the SIPT was then known) had the following aims:

- 1 To develop a strengths-based, flexible and dynamic Tool to guide the building of strong communities and liveable neighbourhoods; and to
- 2 Outline for all stakeholders who have a role in building communities, what social resources are needed; when they are needed; how they should be delivered and by whom.

Social infrastructure (social resources) is defined as:

Those processes, programs, events, services, networks and activities that support individuals and families to meet their social and personal needs in a particular place through personal growth, social interaction, social services support and community development.

The SIPT Project received philanthropic funds towards completing a Literature Review (the first Stage).

While the Literature Review was underway, further fundraising was undertaken and interest for the project grew to encompass representatives from all major stakeholders including:

- The seven growth area councils of Metropolitan Melbourne (Cardinia; Casey; Hume; Melton; Mitchell; Whittlesea; Wyndham)
- National Growth Areas Alliance
- VCOS; Brotherhood of St Laurence; Melbourne Citymission; Kildonan
- Department of Planning and Community Development; Department of Human Services; Department of Health; Growth Areas Authority; VicHealth
- Stockland; Lend Lease
- University of Melbourne (Schools of Social Work and Urban Design) and RMIT (Centre for Design).

A reference group was established with representatives from the above organisations to ensure broad input from various perspectives.

Social Infrastructure Planning Tool Project (Stage 2)

For the purposes of this Project Social Infrastructure has been defined as:

those processes, programs, events, services, networks and activities that support individuals and families to meet their social and personal needs in a particular place through personal growth, social interaction, social services support and community development (Breen 2011)

The intention of the Project is to identify the processes, programs, events, services, networks and activities as listed above that will then inform the development of a Planning Tool for new communities with the aim of providing opportunities for social connection, community capacity-building and individual and community support.

The first stage of the Project involved a Literature Review entitled *There's Something About Community* that made the following recommendations:

- 1 Establish a benchmark standard for the funding of community development and community support services into Growth Areas
- 2 Develop a Good Practice Guide for community building practice in Growth Areas
- 3 Develop a model planning framework for Social Infrastructure Plans for Growth Area Councils
- 4 Provide organisational capacity building assistance to NFPs in Growth Areas

The objectives of this second stage included to:

- begin the development of a Good Practice Guide (Appendix 2)
- to extract learnings from the examples to inform the future planning and development of the SIPT and,
- to position the discussion of the social needs of new communities within an accepted and evidence-based framework and vision of community wellbeing.

In the process of embarking on the objectives of the second stage of the SIPT, it became evident that a discussion on the correlation between social connection and individual and community wellbeing was necessary.

Why is social connection important?

I believe that the community-in the fullest sense: a place and all its creatures-is the smallest unit of health and that to speak of the health of an isolated individual is a contradiction in terms.²

While we have an intuitive grasp that social connection is good for humans, there is now a growing body of evidence and research that serves to establish that social connection has very specific and measurable benefits for the wellbeing of individuals, communities and society as a whole. A popular

² Berry W., *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays*, p146.

concept that has gained traction over the past two decades in relation to socially connected communities is that of ‘**social capital**’. The social capital approach seeks to build civic and community engagement, networks and a sense of trust and belonging (Pomagalska et al 2009). While it is a term that does not have one undisputed definition it is generally accepted that social capital focuses on social relations that have productive benefits and is an outcome of processes of community engagement and connection and community capacity-building (Claridge 2004). The determinants of social capital include:

Family and kinship connections; wider social networks of associational life covers the full range of formal and informal horizontal arrangements; networks; political society; institutional and policy framework which includes the formal rules and norms that regulate public life; and social norms and values. (Pantoja 1999)

The benefits of high levels of social capital in a society include increased access to wide ranging resources including employment and education and also in assisting in the creation of safety and social cohesion in communities. Furthermore, it has also been argued that the development of high levels of social capital across all socio-economic cohorts can build the health and wellbeing of communities and can reduce inequalities and inequities. (Pomagalska et al 2009:7)

In her extensively researched paper for DPCD, *Indicators of community strength in Victoria: framework and evidence*, Pope examines how building social capital leads to family and community resilience and strength. In so doing she provides evidence of the value of three types of networks essential for individual and community wellbeing namely:

- Personal “bonding” networks of family and close friends;
- Broader “bridging” networks generated through participation in education, employment and public life (sport, volunteering, clubs, etc); and
- ‘Governance’ networks that link communities to decision-making institutions (Pope 2011:4)

Pope draws together research that supports the view that where communities have a balance of the three network types the following benefits are evident:

For individuals...

- Better physical and mental health
- Positive parenting and improved child development
- Success at school
- Better employment outcomes
- More positive aging: better health, less institutionalisation and better cognitive functioning in older people

For communities...

- Providing the information individuals, organisations and business use to make decisions and generate new ideas (the spread of information and innovation)
- Building social cohesion: a sense of solidarity and respect for others
- Increasing inclusive attitudes and respect

- Increasing a community's belief it can, and its willingness to, act collectively towards shared goals
- Improving community planning that results in solid long term agreements – reducing controversy and creating support for implementation
- Turning community assets into outcomes such as jobs, educational achievement, satisfaction, etc. (Pope 2011).

The relevance of this research for growth areas lies in the fact that growth area residents are generally moving away from at least some of their established networks of support and participation to areas where maintaining those bonds are made increasingly difficult by inadequate (or, often, non-existent) public transport and increasing fuel costs. If we add to this mix the 'time poor' factor that is becoming a prevalent issue in our society and the lack of adequate support service provision in outer suburban Melbourne, then it is unsurprising to find that social isolation and its attendant negative effects on individual and community wellbeing is being experienced by growth area residents in increasing numbers.

Consultations with growth council officers have revealed that there are emerging issues in the growth areas, which can be linked, to a significant degree to social isolation including:

- Mental health issues
- Family issues including family violence
- Youth disengagement
- Child developmental issues

The issues that have been raised relate to the particular phenomenon of the serious lack of support services and infrastructure in the outer suburbs. The recent *Inquiry Into Liveability in the Outer Suburbs*³ undertaken by the Victorian State Government received numerous submissions detailing, with great consistency, the need of significant investment in services and infrastructure, local employment opportunities and living affordability measures to contribute to the liveability of growth areas and thereby the health and wellbeing of residents.

VicHealth, in *Opportunities for Social Connection* provides strong evidence that social connection is a determinant of mental and physical health and wellbeing and refers to research that has found that individuals with adequate social relationships have a 50 per cent greater likelihood of survival compared with those with poor or insufficient social relationships. (VicHealth 2010).

The VicHealth paper details how the various *aspects* of social connection affect mental and physical health and wellbeing. Those aspects include social inclusion; social support; social participation; social networks and social or community cohesion and civic engagement.

A recent Grattan Institute report *Social Cities* also validates through evidence and research the centrality of social connection,

If we lack the full range of social connection, then our basic psychological needs are not met, putting us at risk of suffering from loneliness – a condition linked to poor health and

³ Inquiry Into Liveability in Outer Suburban Melbourne www.parliament.vic.gov.au/osisd/article/1348 (accessed May 2012)

wellbeing. It's now recognised that loneliness is up there with high blood pressure, lack of exercise, obesity and smoking as an indicator of shortened life expectancy. (Kelly 2012:49)

There is also evidence from international experience that the link between social connection and health and wellbeing is strong. An evaluation of 32 New Towns (growth areas of the UK that were developed in the 1950s-70s) has shown that those Towns that failed to provide community connecting activities and facilities developed into “lifeless places to live where residents suffered from ‘New Town Blues’” (Bennett 2006:28).

Another more recent example, again from the UK, reveals that residents from the growth area of Cambourne in Cambridgeshire were experiencing similar mental health vulnerabilities called ‘new town blues’ in large numbers due to the lack of social ties in a new environment.

The high levels of mental health problems among residents caused so much concern among local GPs and other service providers that an investigation took place resulting in the strong recommendation that:

*..decision-makers and developers must ensure that resources (including community facilities) are made available to promote social cohesion **at the same time** as building the physical environment. The report also argues for the involvement of existing communities in the planning of both new, and later phases of, housing settlements (Goh & Bailey 2007)*

These experiences and the evaluations that have been undertaken in the UK can inform our public policy and practice so that we are not in the position of having to try to redress issues with a crisis response that will always be more difficult and more costly (in all ways).

The value placed by residents themselves on social connection is supported by research that examines how residents of ten different Australian suburb types combined their home, work and communities. Four of these suburbs were outer urban housing estates. While noting the difficulties of time-poor working families to make their own connections in new communities, the interviews with residents found that

deeper social connection was evident in some planned communities especially where ‘community makers’ were resident – that is, people who went out of their way to create community, events or exchanges that built relationships.... In some cases, the developer or local government allocated resources that fuelled the activities of informal community makers, or formally funded initiatives that brought people together (for example, new arrivals meetings, mother’s groups and community events). The addition of these resources created community connections which many residents valued highly’ (Williams et al 2009:15)

An understanding of the benefits of social connection and community capacity-building underpins, to a significant degree, the frameworks and case studies that have been collated for this report and also assists to articulate a view about what community wellbeing might look like.

Community Wellbeing

One of the elements that is vitally important to guide planning for new communities is an articulation of what it is we are aiming for and what components we need to address to ensure the wellbeing of individuals and communities. There is wide-ranging research on this topic and many models from which to choose. Rather than launching into what would become an overly academic study for the purpose of this report, it is appropriate to build on the work that has already been done by local State authorities in this field. In 2008 the Growth Areas Authority released *A Strategic Framework for Creating Liveable New Communities* in the recognition that planning for new communities needs to be proactive and involve all stakeholders as partners from the outset

The creation of a new community provides a unique opportunity to 'get it right' - to build in opportunities at the outset that will enhance the future liveability of an area. 'Getting it right' requires government agencies, the private sector and the non-government sector to work together. This report marks the beginnings of interagency dialogue about liveable new communities and it is anticipated that the ideas put forward in this report will continue to evolve as the dialogue continues. (GAA 2008:3)

The GAA Framework, prepared by the McCaughey Centre with a broad range of advisors from academia, the PIA, HIA, MAV, Heart Foundation and State government departments, establishes four essential components of liveable new communities:

1. High quality job opportunities and thriving local economy

2. Healthy, safe and socially connected communities

3. Affordable living

4. Sustainable natural and built environments

Clearly, the second component is the focus of the SIPT in its objective to identify what is required for the social wellbeing of residents. The GAA Framework goes some way in identifying what 'healthy, safe and socially connected' might mean by highlighting the following

- Strong networks
- Early delivery and good access to integrated services and facilities
- Strong sense of place and belonging
- Safe, inclusive, friendly
- Social and cultural diversity
- Empowered, active citizens (GAA et al 2008:10-12)

However, the practical work of the GAA has focused on land use planning and the physicality of new areas through Precinct Structure Plans, and has not evolved the planning for social connectedness or social support services to any meaningful degree.

It is a widely held view amongst the stakeholders that were consulted for this report, that the elements required for healthy, liveable communities need to be planned for and delivered concurrently and that this would fit within the scope of the work of the Growth Areas Authority.

A second framework that has strong synergies with the above and can provide further guidance to the development of the SIPT is the *Victorian Community Wellbeing Framework* (VicHealth et al 2006). It is also a local model, comprehensive, evidence-based and goes some way in establishing measurable indicators for evaluation purposes.

The Framework covers the following domains and their respective goals:

A. Social

Healthy, safe and inclusive communities

B. Economic

Dynamic, resilient and fair local economies

C. Environmental

Sustainable built and natural environments

D. Cultural

Culturally rich and vibrant communities

E. Democratic

Healthy democracy and active citizens

While it is uncontroversial that all of these elements are vitally important for new communities, the scope of the SIPT project is limited to social connection, community capacity-building and support making the Social, Cultural and Democratic domains the most relevant for this project. More specifically:

A. Social: Healthy, safe and inclusive communities

A vibrant, resilient and sustainable community recognises the efforts of its volunteers and seeks equality for its citizens. Its members are physically and mentally healthy, have a sense of wellbeing, are connected to others and have access to a range of services. It is a community that nurtures its children and young people and embraces learning. Attributes such as meaningful work – be it paid or unpaid – or spending more time with the family are important to such a society. The social dimension reinforces the desire to have a society built on mutual respect, self-restraint and generosity of spirit, one that creates opportunities for people to participate in community life and self-realisation.

- Personal health and wellbeing
- Community connectedness
- Early childhood development
- Personal and community safety
- Lifelong learning
- Services availability

D. Cultural: Culturally rich and vibrant communities

Our culture and leisure activities shape our community identity. Art, film and literature reflect and comment on the social issues of the times. A culturally rich community protects heritage sites, preserves social knowledge and provides opportunities to participate in sporting and recreational activity – all of which assist in creating a better work–life balance. It is also a community that celebrates diversity and is welcoming to people of diverse cultures.

- Arts and cultural activities
- Recreational and leisure activities
- Cultural diversity

E. Democratic and Active Citizenship: Healthy democracy and active citizens

In a democratic community, people participate in decision-making and local government processes are transparent and accountable. People have confidence that government will make good decisions and run for elected positions. Because they are engaged they feel empowered, that they have personal political efficacy and that they are in control of their destinies. People feel that they have equality before the law and fair and equal access to the justice system. Media ownership is shared, government is accountable and events are reported accurately.

- Healthy democracy
- Active citizens (VicHealth et al 2006)

These domains and related goals form an entirely appropriate framework to guide the identification of the components that will inform the Planning Tool and many of the practices currently underway across the growth areas can be situated within it.

The Planning Process

Currently, planning for new communities is focussed on land use and the physical requirements of outer urban residential estates led, in the main, by the Growth Areas Authority with input from a variety of stakeholders. It is becoming increasingly evident from local and international research, however, that there are elements of community-making that are necessary to be planned for **at the same time** as the physical environment to ensure the mental health and wellbeing of the residents of these new communities.

As a result of the evaluation of the New Towns and further research undertaken in the UK, the following text box is an example of an articulation of the elements required in the planning of new communities specifically around social connection suggested by the *Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Improving Health Partnership* as a result of the ‘Building Communities that are Healthy and Well Report’ (2008:3):

Those responsible for the establishment of New Towns have a responsibility to influence developers to ensure they recognise and provide resources for social cohesion as well as the physical environment.

In new developments they should:

- Ensure that the concept of social and community development is considered alongside physical developments.
- Ensure community facilities are available from the start, alongside schools and health provision.
- Build the infrastructure for social cohesion and social capital into the framework e.g. ensuring development workers are part of the framework.
- Require partners in the development to agree measures of social cohesion and build these into routine monitoring indicators.
- Require regular review and evaluation of such indicators as part of a continuous improvement programme, with the local community as partners.
- Ensure sustainability (resource, management and delivery).

In addition, for existing developments they should:

- Require developers and planners to review existing provision of the infrastructure for social cohesion
- Require developers and planners to remedy deficiencies during the later phases of the build.
- Involve existing (adjacent) communities in the planning of new/the next phase of development.

Learnings from Current Practice

The consultations⁴ undertaken with Growth Councils; private developers; State government departments/authorities; NGOs and academics in addition to the desk-top research conducted have revealed a rich body of knowledge and practice that can be drawn on to inform the development of the SIPT. This has been drawn from local and international sources and has taken the form of evidence of need; parallel initiatives; frameworks; individual programs; service delivery models and case studies including the respective learnings. These learnings will now be presented along with recommended principles to guide the planning of social infrastructure.

1. Partnerships

Central to almost every case study is that a formation of partnerships and the development of collaborative working relationships between stakeholders are key for the success of projects. Bringing stakeholders together increases the pool of resources in terms of funding, knowledge and experience and creates the conditions to provide a coordinated and comprehensive response.

The major challenge to the formation of Partnerships according to many of the case studies is the time required to build a shared understanding across stakeholders with differing priorities. However, it is widely accepted that the beneficial outcomes for communities make the time and effort to build partnerships worth it.

⁴ See Appendix 1 for list of organisations consulted for this stage of the SIPT

Example:

The values of Selandra Rise partnership are:

- **Openness** collaboratively sharing of information
- **Teamwork** sharing the workload and playing a role in the outcomes
- **Leadership** delivering a blueprint and educating along the way
- **Commitment** to improved community health and wellbeing outcomes
- **Innovation** testing new ideas that make a difference to the health and wellbeing of the community

The Selandra Rise Community Wellbeing Project is a partnership project between:

- the Growth Areas Authority
- the Planning Institute of Australia,
- Stockland
- City of Casey
- VicHealth/RMIT (evaluation)

The Partnership has been critical in focussing on shared objectives and outcomes. The shared agenda and the creation of shared ownership has been central to the successful delivery of the demonstration project to-date. Importantly, the community have been involved in co-creating Selandra Rise, with partners empowering residents to shape and inform how the project is delivered.

2. Adequate funding for growth

It has been noted by all Councils and NGOs consulted that funding levels for growth area service provision are inadequate to meet the current needs of the population let alone to service the demand as growth area numbers increase. The more communities are left unsupported, the more need there will be for increased and more intensive service provision and in its absence people will suffer.

Adequate funding to support social connection, community capacity building and service provision with a prevention focus is crucial to creating community wellbeing and resilience and, in the long term, far more cost effective than attempting to redress issues that have become entrenched (SGS Economics 2009).

Example:

The Servicing Growing Communities Demonstration Project is a model of human service delivery that has a strong early intervention and prevention focus in the recognition that through better self-management of family problems and increased family resilience in the local area, a dramatic reduction in long term service provision would eventuate.

The specific objectives of the project were to:

- Identify and implement a process for the active engagement of communities, SMR DHS staff and external stakeholders in planning, service developments and practice

- Design and pilot an innovative family outcomes model for service support across programs to build resilience and increase self-management
- Increase opportunities for family and community connectedness and engagement
- Increase community awareness of available prevention and early intervention services
- Trial the planning framework through the development of an action plan that responds to one or two identified community priorities.

3. Community engagement

Local and international examples stress the importance of engaging residents as partners to the planning process. Engagement with surrounding existing communities before new residents arrive is also essential as it serves to bridge the physical and psychological divide that is apparent between older communities that are often rural in form and the new housing estates.

Example:

The **Mernda Community Conversations** conducted by a partnership of Stockland, the City of Whittlesea, and MADRA (Mernda and Districts Residents' Association). The Mernda Community Conversations were created with the following objectives in mind.

- To encourage residents of Mernda and the surrounding districts to unite to discuss their aspirations for the community's future;
- To bridge the gap between new and existing members of the Mernda community;
- To establish clear pathways for Stockland and the City of Whittlesea to support the efforts of the community via a residents' group;
- To increase the membership of the Mernda and Districts Residents' Association (MADRA) to provide a strong community support network, and
- To connect the community, enhance sense of belonging, and foster community spirit.

Outcomes

The Mernda Community Conversations were successful because the process empowered and inspired residents to work together. The process developed a sense of community spirit and an interest in contributing to the future of the community. The Residents' Association provided residents with the organisational and legal structure to advance their own priority initiatives, with support from key stakeholders.

The City of Whittlesea and Stockland now have a clear avenue through which to support grass-roots community development in Mernda. Other local organisations have also collaborated and supported the initiatives of MADRA including churches, the County Fire Authority, Neighbourhood Watch, Bendigo Community Bank and the Men's Shed.

4. Early delivery of social infrastructure

A recurring theme in the literature and raised in all the consultations is the need for early delivery of social infrastructure including the need for a community meeting place through which information, programs, support services can operate. Early community engagement through a community development officer, for example, can begin the process of

- linking residents to each other and to local programs and services;
- ascertaining residents aspirations and strengths
- establishing a sense of belonging

There is an important role for agencies in providing support, especially in the early years to work with local people to generate the social and cultural infrastructure that is essential to foster a sense of identity and belonging. Experience shows if this does not happen, there is a danger that residents will feel alienated from their homes, mental health problems increase, people do not invest for the long term and move away when they have the chance. (Woodcraft et al 2011:32)

Example

Selandra Community Place

The Need

Without a place and programs through which to connect, residents can feel socially isolated and disconnected from their community. Such a situation often negatively impacts residents' satisfaction with their neighbourhood and their personal well-being. Selandra Community Place was explicitly developed to provide early amenity for the first residents of the growing Clyde North community. By proactively providing the space, and good reasons for residents to meet and be actively involved in local activities, the hub is key to an engaged and healthy community from the onset.

It is anticipated that SCP will foster an inclusionary environment that offers something of interest to all. This robust social foundation will then lend itself to a vibrant community where residents feel safe and a sense of belonging.

Selandra Community Place (SCP) opened in March, 2012 within 4 months of the first resident moving in. It launched with a full calendar of classes, drop-in socials, business networking sessions and sports and fitness activities scheduled. SCP has been designed and resourced to allow residents to connect, learn and truly embrace the essence of community from the beginning. Capitalising upon its prominent and accessible position at the front corner of the Display Village, SCP also provides an opportunity for visitors and residents to connect and learn about how to save money while living more sustainably.

Selandra Community Place plays an important role in the broader objective of the Selandra Rise demonstration project. The following key outcomes guided the development:

- To proactively engage residents by employing a place-based Community Development Officer full-time at SCP
- To create a space to facilitate community interaction, inclusiveness, and sense of belonging
- To encourage the community to enjoy a healthier lifestyle by taking advantage of the features of Selandra Rise, and the SCP health and fitness programs
- To educate visitors and residents about saving money using engaging media to provide sustainability tips about how to save water, decrease energy use, minimise waste, and improve their health and wellbeing
- To display superior design that improves energy and water efficiency using the latest technology.

The Innovation

The demonstration project provided an ideal opportunity to deliver a community hub in a new and different way, much sooner than the standard model. A number of organizations rallied behind the concept including the City of Casey, Stockland, Henley Homes and the South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA).

The Display Village offered the opportunity to have a dual purpose for the hub, that of resident community centre and visitor demonstration home. The combination of these two audiences created an ideal opportunity to collaborate not only with the developer, but also with a builder; Henley Homes who were able to demonstrate their commitment and capacity to build more sustainable homes. The City of Casey also forged a relationship with SECCCA, who were drawn to the opportunity to provide sustainability education and programming to influence household habits and decision-making amongst both audiences.

5. Community development model

Growth councils, developers and NGOs, to varying degrees, have community development/strengthening/place-making staff working with new residents. Without exception they reported the value and need of developing a framework to underpin their practice and a coordinated approach that would avoid duplication, extend the reach of available resources and deepen the work through the experience and knowledge of the various stakeholders.

The Councils of the South-East, Casey and Cardinia, were the first of the current growth areas to experience rapid population growth and recognised the need to develop strategies to guide their community development practice in the new estates.

Examples:

Cardinia Neighbourhood Development Framework 2011-2015

Creating a Connected Cardinia is a collection of four papers that comprehensively outline Cardinia Shire's approach to neighbourhood development in its growth areas. They consist of:

- 1 **Background Paper** – provides an overview of neighbourhood development theory and practice, an overview of the key factors influencing Cardinia Shire's communities currently and into the future, outlines relevant Council and State Government policy and provides an overview of key stakeholders involved in neighbourhood development.
- 2 **Strategic Directions Paper** – sets out the approach to Neighbourhood Development at Cardinia Shire Council, the key outcomes sought and a program logic model for moving towards these outcomes.
- 3 **Action Plan** – sets out a program, of activities and initiatives related to neighbourhood development in Cardinia Shire that Council has committed to delivering between 2011-2015.
- 4 **Implementation and Evaluation Plan** – compiles the actions from the other three documents sets out an implementation and evaluation plan. It also includes activities by other areas of Council that are relevant to neighbourhood development.

The Neighbourhood Development Framework has been developed under the four key dimensions of resilience, connection, respect and support. The Actions identified include:

- New resident information kits and evenings
- Getting to know the Neighbours and the local area events
- Community resilience programs
- Family Leadership/Mentoring Programs
- Community leadership programs
- Poopy seed grants programs
- Support for residents-led initiatives
- Programs/spaces to connect diverse groups

City of Casey New Estates Community Development Program

The New Estates Community Development Program (NECDP) was developed in response to the rapid residential housing estate and population growth in the City of Casey. The program aims to; build a strong sense of community, encourage active citizenship, assist in the development of strong local networks, welcome new residents and introduce them to local services and programs.

The NECDP is aimed at both larger scale and smaller scale audiences, informal and formal settings and also by targeting new residents across the municipality, as well as focusing on existing estates.

Core themes:

1 Building active citizenship and empowerment

Knowledge - building empowerment through provision of information (newsletters/info evenings)

Opportunities and a supportive environment - offering friendly environment to meet, link to local groups and become involved in community life

Skills development - building confidence and skills to advocate for individual and community needs

2 Development and sustainability of local social capital

Building strong local networks - supporting development of new groups and networks; recognising value of local community's identities

Working to overcome barriers - mobilising new communities and unmasking social capital; control over decision-making

3 Building a strong sense of community

Building vibrant, active and diverse communities - sense of belonging and ownership; opportunities to meet one another; recognising the value of local community's identities

Providing a supportive environment - better responding to the needs of new residents; encouraging community development.

Community capacity-building example:

Strong Communities: A Social Infrastructure Plan for Voluntary and Community Action in the MKSM Growth Area

An important element of community development work in new communities is community empowerment and capacity-building where individuals and communities are enabled, through information, skills development and other support to become decision-makers and take control of their futures.

A six stage community capacity-building process for new communities

- *Shaping* – community information and consultation with existing communities regarding the formation of development briefs etc
- *Planning* – continued community consultation, detailed planning of social infrastructure
- *Engaging* – information/signposting as part of welcome service; provision of initial community facility/ies, initial community development work; grants for development of new community groups; support to/from existing communities to build bridges to new residents.
- *Growing* – development of community groups; community development work; volunteering; grant funded projects helped to develop; community services/support established
- *Maintaining* – community-run services and support to meet existing and new residents needs; development of long term social infrastructure facilities including income generation and social enterprise opportunities; ‘external’ community development support reduces

6. Flexible and inclusive response

Growth area residents face similar issues in some respects, however, there are significant differences across and within growth areas that need to be identified and responded to. For example,

- socio-economic profile
- age profile
- extent of cultural diversity
- residents with a disability
- size of estate

It is also necessary to be mindful of the changing needs of populations as they age. In the initial stages many housing developments are characterised by families with young children whose needs, ten years down the track, will be significantly different. The planning and delivery of social infrastructure requires a flexible response.

An example of a program to proactively address issues of the changing cultural demographics comes from Cardinia Shire.

Example:

Building Harmony in the Cardinia Growth Corridor

Cardinia Shire Council and Monash University formed a partnership for this project and then developed the Steering Committee consisting of five schools: Berwick Grammar School, Maranatha Christian College, Minaret College, Officer Primary School and St Brigid's Catholic Primary School. The overall objective of the Project is to conduct research and implement programs that aim to build cultural and religious harmony in the emerging growth corridor of Officer in Melbourne's South East.

This project aims to build the capacity of young people from diverse backgrounds, and that of their families', to live harmoniously in the emerging community of Officer, where it aims to prevent crime based on race and diversity in growth corridors based on preventative interventions. The overall project objectives are to develop:

- knowledge about cultural diversity
- a diverse perspective outlook in which students learn that knowledge is a social construction which is intrinsically linked to culture and experience
- knowledge about social equality, racism, gender and discrimination
- skills and values to preserve cultural diversity
- a broad social competence around respect and empathy
- a governance model where participating schools continue to collaborate on identified project objectives.

7. Innovation

Through research, collaborations and partnerships creative and innovative approaches to delivering social infrastructure can eventuate. There are numerous examples of innovative approaches in the good practice examples. One of them is the following.

Example:

Playgroup in a Residential Aged Care Facility

The aim of this project was to establish and evaluate a playgroup in an aged care facility that promoted greater intergenerational understanding and facilitated meaningful individualised social inclusion for people living in the residential aged care service and for members of the playgroup.

Funding for this project was received from the Victorian government, Department of Health Aged Care Branch "Count Us In!" social inclusion for people living in a residential aged care facility.

Findings

The major findings of the impact of the playgroup on the playgroup participants were:

- Enjoyment
- Intergenerational Interactions
- Reflection and reminiscence of childhood and parenting

- Changes in attitudes/expectations and perceptions of different generations and aged care facilities

The project has had social and community benefits to residents, families and the facility as a whole. All residents are hoping the playgroup will continue into the future.

“The intergenerational program has moved the whole facility and they all look forward to the children coming. A breath of fresh young air.” (Staff).

“It’s the nicest thing that could happen, thank you to whoever had the brainwave, hope it will keep going.” (Resident).

“We have been so lucky to of been involved with Percy House and the residents. We have met so many new friends. Every week has been wonderful and fun. It would be wonderful to keep it going.” (Parent)

Example:

Screen Stories and Community Connections

Social media has a role to play in connecting new residents as a study in Cardinia has shown. This study investigates how children and their families use information communication technologies (ICTs) in their everyday lives, and how one’s relationship with and through technology can impact and influence an individual’s experience of social inclusion and exclusion. The study takes place in the new outer-urban growth corridor of Cardinia, Victoria, which has been identified as one of the State’s fastest growing areas, and a community facing particular changes resulting from rapid development (Robson and Wiseman 2009). Particularly the area has seen significant private development of new commercial, residential and social spaces.

The study found that technology is increasingly becoming a necessary means of communication, social connection and inclusion, information access and economic participation. Limited access to technology can contribute to social exclusion particularly for vulnerable communities such as lower socioeconomic or geographically isolated groups.

Social Infrastructure Planning Principles

These recommendations for planning principles are, in the main, drawn from the good practice in the previous section and from the literature.

Community engagement

Consultation needs to occur as early as possible in the planning process.

Asset-based community development

Engaging residents on the basis of their aspirations, strengths and capacities and building a social infrastructure model around that asset base.

Flexible and inclusive

Communities are diverse (new, culturally diverse, all ages; all abilities) and also change over time requiring a flexible and inclusive response to social infrastructure provision.

Prevention focus

Prevention-focus programs delivered through or adjacent to universal services arrests the development of issues that can become entrenched and difficult and costly to reverse.

Early delivery of social infrastructure

The early delivery of social infrastructure (including a community facility) is essential.

Partnership approach

Community wellbeing is the responsibility of the three tiers of government; developers; NGOs and the community itself. A partnership approach involving all stakeholders is required.

Innovative

Innovation, 'thinking outside the box' to be encouraged.

Sustainable

Sustainable models of social infrastructure delivery need to be sought and developed in the current funding climate.

Evaluation

Evaluation processes need to be embedded in the SIPT

Appendix 1 Consultations conducted between December 2011 and April 2012

Growth Councils:

City of Wyndham

Shire of Melton

City of Whittlesea

City of Hume

Shire of Cardinia

City of Casey

Shire of Mitchell

State Government Departments/Authorities:

Department of Planning and Community Development

Department of Human Services

Department of Health

Growth Areas Authority

VicHealth

Private developers

Stockland

Lend Lease

Satterley

NGOs

VCOSS

Brotherhood of St Laurence

Melbourne City Mission

Kildonan

Academics

School of Social Work, University of Melbourne

School of Urban Design, University of Melbourne

Centre for Design, RMIT

Appendix 2 Good Practice Examples

Frameworks

Design for Social Sustainability- A Framework for Creating Thriving New Communities

Woodcraft, S., Hackett, T. & Caistor-Arendar, L. *The Young Foundation, U.K., 2011*

Social sustainability in this paper is defined as

A process for creating sustainable, successful places that promotes wellbeing, by understanding what people need from the places they play and work. Social sustainability combines design of the physical realm with design of the social world-infrastructure to support social and cultural life, social amenities, systems for citizen engagement and space for people and places to evolve.

This paper first establishes the need to plan and design for the social needs of new communities and then develops a framework for the incorporation of social design under the dimensions of

- Amenities and social infrastructure
- Social and Cultural Life
- Voice and Influence
- Space to grow.

Within each of these dimensions there is a further breakdown where the local services, support and physical infrastructure that are deemed essential for creating flourishing socially sustainable new communities are identified under the categories of:

- Social practices
- Social architecture and support
- Built environment and public space

For example:

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

Built environment & public space	Social architecture & supports	Social practices
People-friendly layouts eg car free areas, speed reductions, eyes on the street, well-lit areas.	Timebanking-promoting mutual exchange and development of social capital through peer to peer timebanking or people-to-agency timebanking	Neighbourhood-based groups eg Neighbourhood Watch, Residents/Tenants Associations, Pledgebank.
Distinctive architecture/landscaping to reinforce/create sense of local identity.	Community projects to encourage inter-generational/inter-group mixing.	Inter-generational, cross-cultural events and activities eg Under One Sun, The Big Lunch.
Public and congregational spaces eg open spaces, parks, wide pavements, benches.	Neighbourhood Charter, Community Design Statement.	Local celebrations-eg festivals, street parties, fetes, family days, artists in residence.
Third spaces (eg cafes, pubs, shops), playgrounds and play spaces.	Local rules and norms eg Home Zones, Car free streets, neighbourhood agreements, local taxes or fundraising.	Local oral history projects like East Midlands Oral History
Connections to neighbouring communities to avoid isolation eg pathways and shared public spaces.	Informal local currencies eg Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS)	Local events-eg litter picking, planting, fundraising
Flexible working spaces to encourage home-working, local enterprise (eg spaces in a community centre or café.		Neighbouring activities eg household network, loanables.

Indicators of Community Strength in Victoria: framework and evidence. Why Social Capital can build more resilient families and communities

Jeanette Pope, DPCD July 2011

This report provides the underpinning framework and evidence for DPCD's community development work and its Indicators of Community Strength that track elements of this work (DPCD 2010). The indicators measure aspects of the Victorian's ability to get help when needed, community participation, satisfaction with amenity in their local areas and select community attitudes (such as feeling safe).

The framework is based on three types of networks that this review demonstrates are important for generating outcomes for both individuals and communities:

- 1 Close personal 'bonding' networks of family and close friends;
- 2 Broader 'bridging' networks generated through participation in education, employment and public life (sport, volunteering, clubs, etc);
- 3 Governance networks that link communities to decision-making institutions (Woolcock 1998).

Communities need a balance of the three networks types because each generates different benefits: individual resources; positive social practices; and better decision-making for whole communities or societies.

DPCD's community development activities focus on building and supporting:

- 1 The community participation that promotes networks and connectedness in communities; and,
- 2 Collaborative governance that ensures robust community planning matched to different communities' demography, economy, interests and needs.

This report provides the international evidence that these network building activities can have a significant impact on social and economic outcomes including:

For individuals...

- Better physical and mental health
- Positive parenting and improved child development
- Success at school
- Better employment outcomes
- More positive aging: better health, less institutionalisation and better cognitive functioning in older people

For communities...

- Providing the information individuals, organisations and business use to make decisions and generate new ideas (the spread of information and innovation)
- Building social cohesion: a sense of solidarity and respect for others
- Increasing inclusive attitudes and respect
- Increasing a community's belief it can, and it's willingness to, act collectively towards shared goals
- Improving community planning that results in solid long term agreements – reducing controversy and creating support for implementation
- Turning community assets into outcomes such as jobs, educational achievement, satisfaction, etc.

The benefits generated are so significant they make community development an important focus for government, DPCD tracks this work through a set of Indicators of Community Strength, collected in Victoria since 2001 (DPCD 2010).

Building Strong Communities: Draft Redlands Social Infrastructure Strategy 2009

Redland City Council

Vision for Redlands:

Building strong communities where a strong community is a connected community with access to a full range of options required for a rich community life and an active attachment to place

Definition of Social Infrastructure:

“Social infrastructure refers to the community facilities, services and networks which help individuals, families, groups and communities meet their social needs, maximise their potential for development, and enhance community well-being” Services and networks are also included, recognising their crucial role in developing and supporting strong, well-resourced, connected communities. (p1)

An audit conducted by Redland Council found the following relating to **networks and community development support**

- The pivotal role of networks, service inter-agencies and other collaborations in maintaining and attracting services, programs and funding for the city
- A need for administration and operational planning support for non-government organisations (NGOs)
- The need for access to credible information on local needs and future growth for local service providers’ planning activities as well for community building and people’s participation in civic and community life
- Absence of community development capacity and targeted funding to undertake community building activities in new/changing communities and early intervention work with vulnerable families and individuals

Some of the major changes in approaches to social infrastructure that have influenced this Strategy include:

- More emphasis on investing early in greenfield communities
- More emphasis on prevention and early intervention
- Emphasis on supporting service systems
- Creation of hubs
- A shift to place management and joined up government
- Increased use of schools as community centres
- Emergence of research about age friendly and child friendly cities
- Move to sustainability and thinking locally
- Use of partnerships and alliances to deliver infrastructure

Strong Communities: A Social Infrastructure Plan for Voluntary and Community Action in the Milton Keynes & South Midlands Growth Area.

By Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire on behalf of the MKSM Social Infrastructure Group and the Bedfordshire and Luton Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Consortium, September 2006.

Social Infrastructure is defined here as:

Building strong communities through the continuing development and delivery of activities, resources and support to strengthen the skills and confidence of people and community groups to enable them to take effective action and play leading roles.

Strong communities are defined as:

Active – Organised – Participative – Accepting – Connected - Fair

This document identifies a number of social infrastructure components as essential to building strong communities in new growth areas:

- Community development work
- A community base/facility
- A representative community/residents group
- Grants for start up and development of community and voluntary associations
- Community learning/leadership development
- Volunteer development

The expected results of investment in social infrastructure as outlined in this document are:

Better design – improved design and functioning of developments created in the growth areas through active participation of existing and new residents and local VSC infrastructure bodies in the planning process

Better relationships – the creation of positive relationships within a community and between it and neighbouring communities (both of place and interest)

Better self-help – people who are actively involved in supporting other people in the community

Better government – residents who are self-confident and have the skills to be actively involved in the governance of their community and its relationship with outside agencies and organisations

Better services – the creation of locally-based, viable activities and services run by and for the community

Better health and wellbeing – individuals who are generally healthier, better able to recover from ill-health or withstand challenges to their personal circumstances and who are able to participate in a range of cultural, recreational and sporting activities.

This document outlines an investment model for social infrastructure made up of three components:

1 A six stage community capacity-building process for new communities

- **Shaping** – community information and consultation with existing communities regarding the formation of development briefs etc
- **Planning** – continued community consultation, detailed planning of social infrastructure
- **Engaging** – information/signposting as part of welcome service; provision of initial community facility/ies, initial community development work; grants for development of new community groups; support to/from existing communities to build bridges to new residents.
- **Growing** – development of community groups; community development work; volunteering; grant funded projects helped to develop; community services/support established
- **Maintaining** – community-run services and support to meet existing and new residents needs; development of long term social infrastructure facilities including income generation and social enterprise opportunities; ‘external’ community development support reduces

2. A capacity profile of the scale and mix of social infrastructure that is likely to be needed at different stages in this process for a typical new development together with judgements about the variations in quantity and mix needed for different scales of development)

3. Cost assumptions for these elements of social infrastructure (£700 per household)

There is also a section on the responsibilities for the various stakeholders and recommendations for implementation.

Social Infrastructure Planning Framework for Waitakere City, Waitakere City Council, NZ 2007

The Framework sets out a range of principles, processes and tools to help Council (and other infrastructure providers) to plan for the social infrastructure needs of growth areas. The Framework is focused on both facilities (such as halls and meeting places) as well as community-based processes like networking and events.

Facilities including:

- Education facilities and services-schools, early childhood centres
- Police facilities and services-including community policing stations, victim support
- Health services and facilities-GPs, plunket clinics, specialists
- Justice services and facilities-court, community probation centres, restorative justice services
- Social services and facilities-eg Department of Work income offices, Housing NZ
- Emergency services-fire, ambulance.
- ‘Formal’ community meeting spaces and places-centres, halls, marae, churches
- ‘Informal’ public meeting spaces-parks, open spaces, cafes, etc
- Active leisure facilities-swimming pools, recreation centres, sports fields etc
- Parks and playgrounds
- Learning and informative centres-libraries, CABx

Community Processes including

- Sense of place, identity, safety and cultural expression
- Community connectedness and interaction
- Networks of people (such as friends, neighbours etc) and organisations who support each other at the local level and are involved in local affairs
- Events, celebrations and programs designed to promote local interaction
- Community building, brokering and development programs and program leaders

The Framework is then developed under five Cluster headings of:

- 1 Physical wellbeing
- 2 Human development-education
- 3 Cross-community support
- 4 Community interaction
- 5 Physical environment

Community Development

Cardinia Neighbourhood Development Framework 2011-2015

Creating a Connected Cardinia is a collection of four papers that comprehensively outline Cardinia Shire's approach to neighbourhood development in its growth areas. They consist of:

1. **Background Paper** – provides an overview of neighbourhood development theory and practice, an overview of the key factors influencing Cardinia Shire's communities currently and into the future, outlines relevant Council and State Government policy and provides an overview of key stakeholders involved in neighbourhood development.
2. **Strategic Directions Paper** – sets out the approach to Neighbourhood Development at Cardinia Shire Council, the key outcomes sought and a program logic model for moving towards these outcomes.
3. **Action Plan** – sets out a program, of activities and initiatives related to neighbourhood development in Cardinia Shire that Council has committed to delivering between 2011-2015.
4. **Implementation and Evaluation Plan** – compiles the actions from the other three documents sets out an implementation and evaluation plan. It also includes activities by other areas of Council that are relevant to neighbourhood development.

The Neighbourhood Development Framework has been developed under the four key dimensions of resilience, connection, respect and support. The Actions identified include:

- New resident information kits and evenings
- Getting to know the Neighbours and the local area events
- Community resilience programs
- Family Leadership/Mentoring Programs
- Community leadership programs
- Poopy seed grants programs

- Support for residents-led initiatives
- Programs/spaces to connect diverse groups

City of Casey New Estates Community Development Program

The New Estates Community Development Program (NECDP) was developed in response to the rapid residential housing estate and population growth in the City of Casey. The program aims to; build a strong sense of community, encourage active citizenship, assist in the development of strong local networks, welcome new residents and introduce them to local services and programs.

The NECDP is aimed at both larger scale and smaller scale audiences, informal and formal settings and also by targeting new residents across the municipality, as well as focusing on existing estates.

Core themes:

1. Building active citizenship and empowerment

Knowledge - building empowerment through provision of information (newsletters/info evenings)

Opportunities and a supportive environment - offering friendly environment to meet, link to local groups and become involved in community life

Skills development - building confidence and skills to advocate for individual and community needs

2. Development and sustainability of local social capital

Building strong local networks - supporting development of new groups and networks; recognising value of local community's identities

Working to overcome barriers - mobilising new communities and unmasking social capital; control over decision-making

3. Building a strong sense of community

Building vibrant, active and diverse communities - sense of belonging and ownership; opportunities to meet one another; recognising the value of local community's identities

Providing a supportive environment - better responding to the needs of new residents; encouraging community development

Strategies to achieve:

- New estates information evenings
- Community directions newsletters
- Community activities including Casey People in Parks events
- Building Better Communities forums
- Point of contact, information and referral
- New Group Development and support
- Collection of local community stories

Current programs:

Casey Neighbourhood BBQ's

Casey Neighbourhood BBQs (CNB's) are small scale activities which involve residents nominating their street as a location for a BBQ. Successful applicants work collaboratively with Council to plan the BBQ, with the City of Casey providing a trailer BBQ, sausage sizzle supplies and two officers facilitating the activity.

Evaluation of Neighbourhood BBQs

The findings of the evaluation undertaken revealed residents who attended the CNB activities enjoyed their experiences and interactions with their neighbours they knew or met for the first time and also with Council officers. Most were highly satisfied with how the activities ran, the hygiene/safety aspects, and how the opportunities for interactions were supported and facilitated. The residents wished more such activities could occur with the help and support of Council. Their comments and observations suggest that residents' main expectations were met and even exceeded in some instances. The key findings identified through this process of evaluation will now be discussed in more detail.

The findings from the evaluation data showed that the CNB activity

- Built stronger relationships between community members
- Enhanced residents' perception of Council and the range of services on offer
- Increased perceptions of safety and security
- Met or even exceeded resident expectations in its delivery.

In terms of meeting the short, medium and long term outcomes of the evaluation framework the following data supported the attainment of these objectives.

Short term outcomes

By merely participating in the CNB activity residents met the short-term objectives of initiating contact between residents/neighbours. Also, by providing three CNB activities at each street location, residents who were unable to attend one or another due to personal reasons were still provided with the opportunity to meet and connect with their neighbours. Also, the high rating participant's gave the program, shows they were satisfied with what was provided.

Medium term outcomes

The medium term objectives sought were improved communication, interaction and social/support networks through participating in the CNB activity. The data showed that 94% of residents believed that the activity helped to strengthen and build relationships with their neighbours. Also, a number of residents exchanged details and planned to keep in touch. Residents also noted that their perceptions of safety and security had been enhanced now that they knew their neighbour. An increased perception of safety and security and knowing your neighbours means that residents have developed improved social and support networks.

The Case Study also shows a 'real world' example of how relationships were built amongst neighbours to support one another in a time of need. This case study was just one example of the types of support and social networks developed through the CNB activity.

Long term outcome

It can be difficult to measure social capital and community "connectedness". However, a logic model framework suggests that if short term objectives and medium term objectives are met, then this feeds into the long term outcome, – "that each step in the outcome hierarchy is likely to imply that the next step will occur"⁵. What is required is that activities like the CNB are delivered widely across the Casey community to allow for full community participation and therefore "connectedness".

People in Place

"People in Place" are activities staged at a community facility closest to the targeted estates with an optimum capacity to house around 100 people. These activities aim to provide an informal afternoon of entertainment, information provision and the opportunity to meet other residents in the community, as well as highlighting a community venue to residents. At People in Places" feedback from residents has indicated their gratitude at being given the opportunity to learn more about local facilities and how to actively participate in the programs and services on offer.

People in Parks

Casey "People in Parks" is a series of local activities held throughout summer for new and established communities across the City. The activities are intended to welcome current and future residents. These activities have something for the whole family with music, performances, demonstrations, activities, displays, local information and give-a-ways.

These activities are a great opportunity to meet other local residents, and gather information on local social and recreation groups, facilities and developments in a relaxed and social environment.

Meet the Streets

"Meet the Street" is an informal afternoon held for residents in a parkland area of the targeted smaller estates consisting of between 200 and 450 households. The activity includes the provision of free food; a sausage sizzle or an alternative and light entertainment. Residents are encouraged to bring down their fold out chairs and enjoy the casual atmosphere in the comfort of their own estate before the start of another working week'.

Neighbour Day

National Neighbour Day encourages people to create relationships with the people who live next door and across the street as a way of strengthening their communities to create safer, healthier and more vibrant places to live. Neighbour Day was celebrated on Sunday 28 March 2010.

⁵ Duignan, P. (2001). 'Introduction to Strategic Evaluation: Section on Evaluation Approaches, Purposes, Methods and Designs'. Retrieved from www.strategicvaluation.info/se/documents/104f.html

A 'Get to Know Your Neighbour' kit was developed to support residents to run their own activities on the day. The kit includes:

- Hello Postcards
- Get to Know Your Neighbour brochure
- Information about Neighbour Day and ideas for activities
- Street Party permit information
- Name stickers
- Blank poster to advertise an activity
- The opportunity to mail a positive Neighbour story to Council

Park Avenues & Carlisle Park Estates Resident Group

From the New Estate Information Evenings held for Park Avenues and Carlisle Park estates in 2009, it was identified that a number of residents were interested in forming a residents and/or Neighbourhood Watch group in the area. Council officers have facilitated meetings since August 2009 to support the formation of this group. The group now has a set venue, identified issues and prioritised actions to work together as a neighbourhood network to deliver on these actions, as Council officers' step back from their facilitating role in 2010.

Community Engagement

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS - MERNDA (Whittlesea Growth Area)

The Project Overview

Mernda residents were encouraged to "get the conversation started" with the introduction of a new collaborative workshop initiative, called the Mernda Community Conversations in May 2011.

In partnership with the City of Whittlesea, Stockland invited actively engaged residents from its Mernda Villages project, as well as households from the surrounding area to participate in a series of interactive community visioning sessions. The sessions were designed to engage local residents who wished to shape Mernda as a sustainable and vibrant community and to empower them to work together with the support of key partners. The events also allowed like-minded locals to meet, make new friends and collaborate with their neighbours.

The outcome of the sessions, identified four agreed priorities which featured in the mural including Youth, Infrastructure, Community Life and Communications.

As the mural illustrates what residents believe is essential for building a great community and providing a pathway for the growth and development for the community, it now serves as a reference, guiding the activities of the Mernda and Districts Residents Group (MADRA).

Key Objectives

The Mernda Community Conversations were created with the following objectives in mind:

- To encourage residents of Mernda and the surrounding districts to unite to discuss their aspirations for the community's future;
- To bridge the gap between new and existing members of the Mernda community;

- To establish clear pathways for Stockland and the City of Whittlesea to support the efforts of the community via a residents' group;
- To increase the membership of the Mernda and Districts Residents' Association (MADRA) to provide a strong community support network, and
- To connect the community, enhance sense of belonging, and foster community spirit.

Project partners

Mernda Community Conversations were developed and implemented by the following key project partners:

- **Stockland** - Guided by its Community Development Manager for Victoria,
- **City of Whittlesea** – Guided by its Community Development Officer based at the Mernda Village Community Activity Centre and
- **Mernda and Districts Residents Association (MADRA)** - Sourcing of relevant development information

Outcomes

The Mernda Community Conversations were successful because the process empowered and inspired residents to work together. The process developed a sense of community spirit and an interest in contributing to the future of the community. The Residents' Association provided residents with the organisational and legal structure to advance their own priority initiatives, with support from key stakeholders.

The City of Whittlesea and Stockland now have a clear avenue through which to support grass-roots community development in Mernda. Other local organisations have also collaborated and supported the initiatives of MADRA including churches, the County Fire Authority, Neighbourhood Watch, Bendigo Community Bank and the Men's Shed.

As a result of the Mernda Community Conversations workshops, MADRA now has four sub-committees of residents working on initiatives, events and resources in each of the priority areas of Youth, Community Life, Infrastructure and Communications.

MADRA meets regularly as a group and has successfully hosted several events and activities in the local community. Examples include:

- In November 2011, MADRA was awarded a \$5,000 Community Grant from the City of Whittlesea to organise and host a Mernda Community Fair. MADRA are currently organizing the fair, which is scheduled for June 2012. Stockland pledged to match the funds granted by the City of Whittlesea, for future MADRA initiatives that align with the priorities selected from the mural.
- In December 2011, MADRA successfully hosted the inaugural Mernda Carols night. The organisation worked closely with the Mernda CFA, Valley Presbyterian Church, Plentylife Anglican Church, Northside Christian Church and Mernda Primary. The event drew over 150 families.

This collaborative approach between Stockland, the City of Whittlesea and motivated residents has provided a replicable framework for Stockland to work with residents and Councils across Victoria to empower and support growing communities.

Service System Models

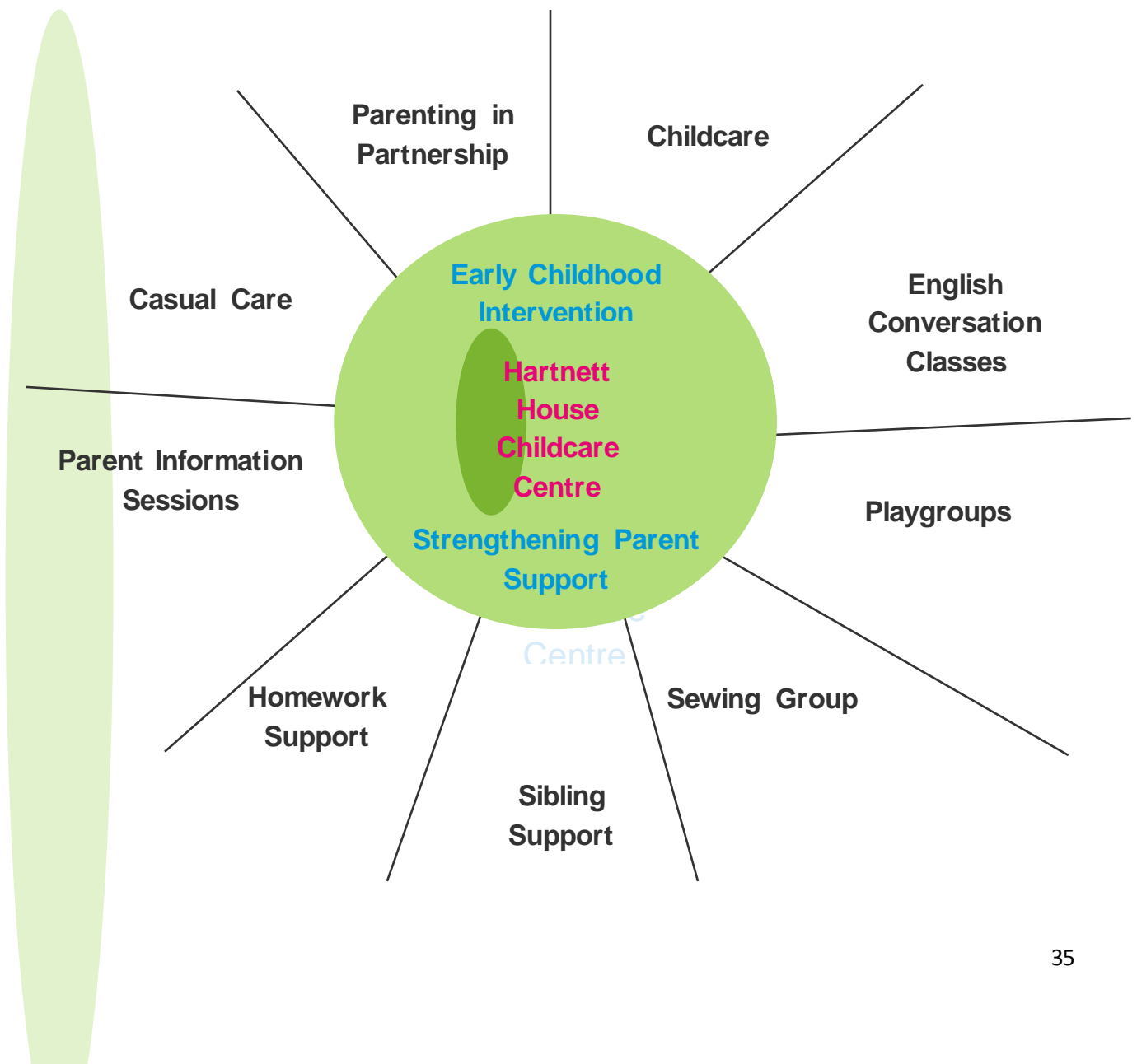
Melbourne Citymission Family & Community Links Model

Introduction

Melbourne Citymission's Family & Community Links Model at Hartnett House provides client focused, place based services to families with children living in Brunswick and surrounding areas. Family & Community Links is based around the Children's Centre, a universal service, and also incorporates Melbourne Citymission programs for families with a child with a disability or developmental delay.

Community Links' - would become self-supporting within two years.

Diagram 1



The model has three elements:

Core service: A place based service such as a school or childcare centre. The core service here is Hartnett House Childcare Centre.

Interrelated services: These services are directly linked to the place based core service, often collocated with it, and compliment / extend its range. The interrelated services here are Early Childhood Intervention Service and the Strengthening Parent Support Program.

Innovative responses: These services are based on needs identified by the community or by workers in the core and interrelated services. They are built on a community development model and are often short-term, designed to meet particular needs or (as for example with casual child care) to support other initiatives. The innovative responses developed at Family & Community Links are shown in the outer ring.⁶

This basic framework of core and interrelated services, and innovative responses, when implemented using a community capacity building approach, can structure service models in a variety of contexts and with any population group.

Principles of the Model

The Vision document envisaged the development of a centre that would 'offer a range of child and family focused services that meet the needs of the local community and reflect a culture of learning and support'. A recurring theme is that this model is part of a broader resurgence of community development. The core principles are:

1. Developing services based on the needs of families and in partnership with the community

The defining feature of the model shown in Diagram 1 is the innovative services, which have been developed in response to consultation with the community. It is intended that these initiatives should become self-sustaining while in operation. However they are not expected to last indefinitely, since they respond to specific needs at specific times.

Innovative services will be different in different areas due to the varying needs of communities. A sound understanding of local demographics and community needs has therefore been crucial to the development of the model.

2. Empowering community members for participation in their communities

The focus of the model for Hartnett House is not just about offering support. It is about empowering people and giving them the confidence and skills to actively participate in their community'.

3. A one-stop shop with a range of services

Hartnett House is 'a "one stop shop" where people from the local community with all abilities, all incomes, all cultures and all faiths can come together in a safe, inclusive, learning

⁶ *Model for provision of client focused, place based services to people living with disadvantage*, Melbourne Citymission, 2005

environment'. The existence of a range of services in one building, with multiple points of entry, is designed to increase opportunities to identify and meet people's needs and to provide them with opportunities for personal development and social interaction.

4. Bringing together population and place-based programs and approaches

The Children's Centre is a universal, place-based program. 'Population-based programs' include Strengthening Parent Support, for parents with children with disabilities, and Parenting in Partnership, for parents with a learning disability. The aim is inclusion for all and a mixing of different groups within the various activities.

5. Fostering learning

The emphasis on providing opportunities for learning is apparent in the early documents for the model, such as the Community Development Project Brief, the Steering Committee Terms of Reference, and the Media Release, which all speak of creating a 'culture of learning' for children and their parents. Specific opportunities for parents have included English classes. Children's learning is fostered through their participation in the range of childcare services, including the Early Childhood Intervention Service.

Success Factors

Some of the success factors identified by staff include:

1. The critical role of Child Care Links

Child Care Links funding uses a community development model to foster child friendly communities, by improving service coordination and enhancing opportunities in childcare centres for community activities.

2. Physical space for innovative projects

For the redevelopment to succeed, the existing programs needed to be willing to share or give up space in order to create new opportunities at the centre. This can Flexibility around space is a prerequisite for success, and an indicator of culture change at Hartnett House.

3. Staff commitment to joined up working

A critical factor for success has been having people in management or other influential positions who are committed to the model especially around staff working together.

4. Resources for casual childcare

Casual childcare has had a vital role in enabling parents to participate in innovative programs such as the Sewing Group and English Conversation Classes, since they can be reassured that their children are being well cared for on the same premises. The funding of this through Child Care Links has thus been very important to the success of Family & Community Links.

5. Viable core and interrelated services

In order to provide stability for the model, the core and interrelated services have needed to be or to become viable. It is also important that the innovative programs become self-sustaining.

6. Connection with the local population

Building stronger connections with the local community has been a critical factor for success, particularly because it is linked to the viability of services. Local community members using the Children's Centre and paying standard fees effectively subsidize the programs provided to more disadvantaged groups, as well as broadening the mix of populations using Hartnett House.

7. Effective community engagement

Input from local, state and federal governments and community organisations has led to the identification of particular needs and responses, such as the playgroups. The needs survey with families using the centre helped to identify potential areas for development during the Scoping Project. Ongoing community engagement has occurred through informal conversations between staff and people using the various services at Hartnett House. This has led to the development of new programs (eg sewing group; Spanish-speaking playgroup).

Servicing Growing Communities Programs

DHS Southern Metropolitan Region

Background

In 2007, the Servicing Growing Communities Demonstration Project was launched by the Southern Metropolitan Region of the Victorian Department of Human Services in response to dramatic population growth in the City of Casey and Shire of Cardinia.

The emphasis has been on developing a partnership approach to provide early intervention support, build community capacity and increase family resilience while learning about the impacts of rapid population growth and flexible and responsive service planning and delivery for each growth area in the region. The approach has aimed to engage a broad number of stakeholders, including a number of State government departments, local government authorities, community service agencies and residents.

The key elements of the Southern Metropolitan Region Demonstration Project are:

- Developing Partnerships
- Community Engagement and Participation
- Early Intervention
- Family Resilience
- Capacity Building and Social Capital
- Sustainability

Lessons learned from the SMR DP that can be applied to other growth areas:

Leadership

- Ensure that any similar project involving servicing growing communities, there is buy-in at the top of the organisations that are engaged in the initiative, as well as the provision of a well-resourced Project Officer to facilitate meetings and follow up actions
- If there is a committee governance structure involved, ensure inclusion of a wide variety of people representing all sectors of the local community

Partnerships

- Cross sectors and inter-departmental (Whole of Government) partnerships should be encouraged
- Governance Departments and LGAs should form partnerships with local community service providers and work with them to apply for philanthropic funds to support local service development
- Well constructed formalised partnership agreements which outline responsibilities for each project partner and clarify specific roles and responsibilities should be encouraged
- Participation of other major stakeholder groups which can contribute particular expertise (eg industry bodies) should be encouraged

Communication

- Develop a communication strategy which ensures that up-to-date project information is delivered to the full range of key stakeholders regularly, and that the initiative is promoted to the broader community

Community Engagement

- A variety of strategies is need to engage community members
- Liaise with major local property developers to ensure that proactive and responsive community outreach strategies are commenced as families move into the area
- Needs identified through community consultation should be addressed as far as possible and feedback provided for those who have contributed their ideas.

Financial Stress in Growth Areas (FIGA)

A Partnership Project with State and Local Governments; Community Organisations; Financial Sector; Community

The Southern Metropolitan Region's data and service provision indicators from across the partnership indicate that many families in the growth areas of Casey and Cardinia are experiencing financial stress, often for the first time, due to high mortgages, other credit lines and increased costs of travel.

In 2010, the partners identified and explored initiatives to improve the service system response to financial stress through enhancing the existing systems and evolving the capacity of the system. The following Action Plan has been adopted.

Key Priority Area One: Establish a sustainable and effective cross agency governance arrangement

- Objective 1.1 Develop a multi-disciplined leadership group
- Objective 1.2 Identify engagement and reporting pathways that will maximise opportunities for success

Key Priority Area Two: Develop and understanding of the existing service sector

- Objective 2.1 Develop a service mapping system
- Objective 2.2 Develop an understanding of critical indicators of financial stress

Key Priority Three: Enhance capacity of existing and future workforce

- Objective 3.1 Identify capacity of existing workforce to respond to financial stress
- Objective 3.2 Establish process for sustainable sector engagement and action

Key Priority Area Four: Increase community awareness with a focus on prevention

- Objective 4.1 Establish social change and acceptance of the need to ask for help at the earliest stages.

Planning for Community Wellbeing: Case Study

Selandra Rise - Selandra Community Place

Introduction

Selandra Rise is an estate development that is a demonstration project of an integrated approach to health and planning, through a strategic partnership between the Growth Area Authority, the Planning Institute of Australia, Stockland and the City of Casey. This partnership enables residents' wellbeing to be placed at the forefront of planning and in so doing aims to create a healthier and more engaged community.

To achieve this, three core objectives are being addressed at Selandra Rise:

- 1 How do we increase local employment opportunities?
- 2 How do we create diverse and affordable living solutions?
- 3 How do we encourage an engaged and healthy community?

The Partnership is striving to deliver one of the most liveable communities ever developed in Victoria. Selandra Rise has been developed to ensure this blueprint is commercially viable and can be replicated without the need for special funding for future residential developments. The principles and learnings from this project can be applied to Melbourne's newest communities through future precinct structure plans.

Partnership

The collaborative partnership between the GAA, the PIA, Stockland and the City of Casey has been critical in focussing on shared objectives and outcomes. The shared agenda and the creation of shared ownership has been key to the successful delivery of the demonstration project to-date.

Importantly, the community have been involved in co-creating Selandra Rise, with partners empowering residents to shape and inform how the project is delivered.

The Values of the Partnership

Openness collaboratively sharing of information

Teamwork sharing the workload and playing a role in the outcomes

Leadership delivering a blueprint and educating along the way

Commitment to improved community health and wellbeing outcomes

Innovation testing new ideas that make a difference to the health and wellbeing of the community

Delivery

The availability of amenities and services early in the development process is a key mechanism for creating a healthy liveable community. Too often in today's development context, the first residents wait a year or more before the first park, shop or school opens. At Selandra Rise, this norm was challenged, and key amenities have been or are scheduled to be delivered months or years sooner than would be typical. These features include a school; display village car sharing; a park; a community orchard and garden; a town centre and a community facility.

Addressing one of the Pillars (relevant to the SIPT)

An Engaged & Healthy Community

Well established principles of urban design such as physical identity and diversity, social cohesion and richness of experience underpin successful places and healthy communities. Planning for health outcomes means people have more choices locally. Well-designed open spaces near every home increases the opportunities for participation in active recreation and the likelihood of incidental social interaction. Lighting, signage and other infrastructure helps people to feel safe in their neighbourhood and encourages them to be out and about.

Selandra Rise has been planned to ensure all homes are within a pleasant walk or ride of key amenity such as the kindergarten, schools, shops and community centre. Every home is within 300m of parklands, plus residents will enjoy 2km of bike paths, fitness stations, playgrounds and much more.

Community engagement has been central to the development of Selandra Rise. The community was named by the existing City of Casey community long before sales had even started. Residents of Selandra Rise are regularly consulted to assist in designing their community; by empowering residents as place makers, it is anticipated that community members will develop an appreciation of place and a sense of belonging quite early and will be more inclined to shape and be actively involved in community life.

Selandra Community Place

The Need

Without a place and programs through which to connect, residents can feel socially isolated and disconnected from their community. Such a situation often negatively impacts residents' satisfaction with their neighbourhood and their personal well-being. Selandra Community Place was explicitly developed to provide early amenity for the first residents of the growing Clyde North community. By proactively providing the space, and good reasons for residents to meet and be actively involved in local activities, the hub is key to an engaged and healthy community from the onset.

It is anticipated that SCP will foster an inclusionary environment that offers something of interest to all. This robust social foundation will then lend itself to a vibrant community where residents feel safe and a sense of belonging.

Selandra Community Place (SCP) opened in March, 2012 within 4 months of the first resident moving in. It launched with a full calendar of classes, drop-in socials, business networking sessions and sports and fitness activities scheduled. SCP has been designed and resourced to allow residents to connect, learn and truly embrace the essence of community from the beginning. Capitalising upon its prominent and accessible position at the front corner of the Display Village, SCP also provides an opportunity for visitors and residents to connect and learn about how to save money while living more sustainably.

Selandra Community Place plays an important role in the broader objective of the Selandra Rise demonstration project. The following key outcomes guided the development:

- To proactively engage residents by employing a place-based Community Development Officer full-time at SCP;
- To create a space to facilitate community interaction, inclusiveness, and sense of belonging;
- To encourage the community to enjoy a healthier lifestyle by taking advantage of the features of Selandra Rise, and the SCP health and fitness programs;
- To educate visitors and residents about saving money using engaging media to provide sustainability tips about how to save water, decrease energy use, minimise waste, and improve their health and wellbeing;
- To display superior design that improves energy and water efficiency using the latest technology.

The Innovation

The demonstration project provided an ideal opportunity to deliver a community hub in a new and different way, much sooner than the standard model. A number of organizations rallied behind the concept including the City of Casey, Stockland, Henley Homes and the South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA).

The Display Village offered the opportunity to have a dual purpose for the hub, that of resident community centre and visitor demonstration home. The combination of these two audiences created an ideal opportunity to collaborate not only with the developer, but also with a builder; Henley Homes who were able to demonstrate their commitment and capacity to build more sustainable homes. The City of Casey also forged a relationship with SECCCA, who were drawn to

the opportunity to provide sustainability education and programming to influence household habits and decision-making amongst both audiences.

To ensure the financial viability of an interim community hub, each partner contributed to the delivery of SCP by drawing upon their organizational capacity, assets and expertise. Firstly, SCP has been built as a home, and with minor refurbishments will be a remarkable residence. Once the Community Activity Centre is open in the Town Centre, the home will be refurbished and sold; an arrangement underpinning the financial capacity of the partnership to provide a community centre years in advance.

Stockland owns the land and building and will continue to do so throughout the operational period of SCP. Henley Homes contributed substantial expertise in the design, construction, testing and demonstration of the 8-star home. The City of Casey also allocated a Strategic Planning resource to manage the planning and delivery of SCP.

The City of Casey now operate Selandra Community Place under a Management and Use Agreement with Stockland, on a peppercorn lease. The City of Casey fund a full-time Community Development Officer, who is crucially based at SCP full-time. The CD Officer's hours include evenings and weekends to ensure a presence when many residents are home.

A number of programs run from SCP were drawn from City of Casey services that could be reallocated and extended to incorporate the new hub; others have required additional funding to provide. SECCCA secured a grant to develop the self-guided sustainability tour and to allocate place-based staff on a part-time basis.

The collaborative nature of the partnership, underpinned by a spirit of cooperation and shared purpose, were able to deliver a place for the community to thrive and a sustainability demonstration house to share knowledge with visitors and residents alike. One of the most popular programs for residents has been the Tuesday morning Coffee, Cake & a Chat drop-in session, that has introduced neighbours and seen the start of some new friendships.

Blueprint for Future Communities

Selandra Rise is setting a world-class benchmark, and comprehensively implementing best practice initiatives that will positively impact the design of future residential communities across Australia. The demonstration project partners are committed to creating healthy, vibrant communities, and along with the project's supporting partners, Vic Health and RMIT University, are conducting a 5-year benchmark longitudinal study to understand the effectiveness of the initiatives implemented at Selandra Rise. An additional benefit of the study is that it provides residents the opportunity to proactively shape their community, and together we'll work to improve and enhance Selandra Rise as it evolves.

Community Building Initiative

Port Phillip Small Poppy Neighbourhood Grants

This grants program helps local people have a positive impact on the look and feel of their neighbourhoods by providing a matching grant to support their efforts.

Small Poppy Neighbourhood grants supports new projects that:

- Improve the appearance or use of shared space
- Build social connections
- Share resources and ideas; or,
- Support neighbourhoods to adapt to climate change.

The eligibility criteria are that the group must

- Be a grassroots neighbourhood group of local volunteers who will benefit from the project;
- Be actively seeking involvement from others in the neighbourhood; and,
- Have a minimum of three individual households in the neighbourhood actively contributing to the project.

Lifelong learning

Victorian Learning Towns 2000-2007 “How Learning Towns Build Social Inclusion” A model of community governance to build strong cohesive communities 2008

Victorian Learning Towns were a Victorian Government demonstration program in ten rural and regional towns and cities. Launched in 2000 the Learning Towns Program was funded through the Adult, Community and Future Education Division (ACFE).

Learning Towns developed collaborative learning partnerships between education providers, business, local government and community activity to improve economic and social development.

Victorian Learning Towns were the first in Australia to receive funding to support lifelong learning as an approach towards achieving improved sustainable economic development and social inclusiveness.

Outcomes expected:

- to build communities where residents feel in control of their lives and that they have a role in making decisions that affect them
- communities where barriers to participation are removed and where local residents feel a sense of community ownership
- learning communities where every person feels that learning is important to them and relevant to their lives.

Key features of Victorian Learning Towns:

1. Driven by ACE: skills and experience
2. Partnership model: typically include local government; business; Health; LLENs; chambers of commerce; schools; Universities; TAFE; community organisations.

Cohort-specific initiatives

Culturally diverse populations

Building Harmony in the Cardinia Growth Corridor

In 2009 Windemere Child and Family Services submitted a project proposal to the Melbourne Community Foundation for the Building Harmony in the Cardinia Growth Corridor project. Upon the success of the application, Cardinia Shire Council and Monash University formed a partnership and then developed the Steering Committee consisting of five schools: Berwick Grammar School, Maranatha Christian College, Minaret College, Officer Primary School and St Brigid's Catholic Primary School.

The overall aim of the Project is to conduct research and implement programs that aim to build cultural and religious harmony in the emerging growth corridor of Officer in Melbourne's South East.

The Shire of Cardinia currently has a very small culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) population. However, predictions founded on the migration patterns flowing south-eastward from Melbourne's centre suggest that the Shire is likely to experience an influx of CALD population groups, as the neighbouring municipalities City of Casey and Greater Dandenong have already experienced (Forecast ID 2011). Furthermore the establishment of various multifaith schools will undoubtedly attract increasingly diverse community members into the Shire.

Ensuring social connectedness within a diverse society requires social insight, moral development and intercultural skills. The effective response to an increasingly diverse society needs to be handled with absolute diligence and sensitivity. This can be achieved by creating a community that is socially aware and understanding of culturally diverse community members.

This project aims to build the capacity of young people from diverse backgrounds, and that of their families', to live harmoniously in the emerging community of Officer, where it aims to prevent crime based on race and diversity in growth corridors based on preventative interventions.

The overall project objectives are to develop:

- knowledge about cultural diversity
- a diverse perspective outlook in which students learn that knowledge is a social construction which is intrinsically linked to culture and experience
- knowledge about social equality, racism, gender and discrimination
- skills and values to preserve cultural diversity
- a broad social competence around respect and empathy
- a governance model where participating schools continue to collaborate on identified project objectives.

Evaluation Summary

All the different evaluation methods were able to show positive change. The schools were able to list specific changes in policies and programs that had occurred as a result of their involvement in the Project and felt that students showed an increased respect towards children from other cultures. The pre and post student surveys reinforced this perception as there was an increase in the number of students that agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of and could learn from other religions and cultures.

Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD)

A major project aimed at reducing race-based discrimination through improving community understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity is being undertaken by the City of Whittlesea, with funding from VicHealth. The four-year pilot project, Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD), is being piloted through two local councils in Victoria.

The Project focuses on building positive attitudes and behaviours towards diversity in the wider community and supporting local organisations, such as retailers, workplaces, schools and Council, to create fairer, more welcoming and inclusive environments for all.

LEAD has been developed in response to VicHealth research which shows despite widespread support for diversity in Victoria, people from Aboriginal, migrant and refugee backgrounds continue to experience high rates of race-based discrimination in everyday life.

The City of Whittlesea was selected based on our strong track record in working to support diversity and our ability to trial new and innovative approaches to complex social problems.

The Project's emphasis is on addressing discrimination against people from Aboriginal, African, Asian, Indian and Muslim backgrounds, as research indicates these people experience higher rates of discrimination.

LEAD is working in a range of settings where state-wide research shows high rates of discrimination exist.

Project partners include a large local employer (Costa Exchange - Mushroom Category), a local retailer (Coles, Westfield Plenty Valley), three local schools (Lalor East Primary School, Thomastown West Primary School and Lalor Secondary College) and a local newspaper (Whittlesea Leader). The project includes extensive activity within Council itself.

Project strategies include:

- Partners being supported to undertake an assessment of their policies, practices and procedures, e.g. Council working through the Racial Diversity Workplace Audit Tool, developed by the University of Melbourne, and developing an action plan to address gaps
- Providing Equal Opportunity and LEAD anti-discrimination training for staff (e.g. teachers, retail staff, Council Executive, Managers and customer service staff)
- Creating opportunities for people from different cultural backgrounds to come together to foster friendships and inter-cultural understanding (e.g. Costa Exchange – Mushroom Category Celebrating Diversity Team Lunches and Dinners)

- Implementing a social marketing campaign, See Beyond Race, involving mainstream advertising, supporting communications and a media partnership with the Whittlesea Leader, to break down stereotypes and support attitude and behaviour change in the wider community.

Extensive and ongoing consultation and engagement with key communities affected by race-based discrimination is achieved through a governance structure that includes a LEAD External Advisory Group that meets quarterly.

The project is based on VicHealth's Building on our strengths: A framework to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity in Victoria which outlines the themes, actions and strategies that are most likely to have a positive impact, based on the best available evidence.

Both LEAD Projects are being evaluated by the University of Melbourne. The lessons learned and resources developed through these pilot sites will be shared with other Victorian local councils through a partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria.

The LEAD Project is a proud partnership between VicHealth, the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, the Cities of Whittlesea and Greater Shepparton and the Municipal Association of Victoria.

Disability/Carers

Families Growing Communities: A Partnership Initiative

Engagement with community provides people with a sense of belonging. Being part of a strong community assists individuals to develop the skills they need to work through the problems that life throws at them.

Current research suggests that families that include a person with a disability are at risk of increased stress and isolation due to the pressures that are placed on the family in providing daily support and care for the person who has a disability.

Southern Metropolitan Region (SMR) is experiencing rapid, large growth in both population and number of households. This ongoing increase provides a number of challenges for both the private and public sector to overcome in managing for the future.

In partnership with Life Without Barriers, Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, Department of Human Services and Chisholm Institute of TAFE, this project aims to identify a range of opportunities that will support the following outcomes:

- Decrease isolation of carers and individuals with a disability ('caring families')
- Promote engagement of individuals with a disability and their families with all facets of community.
- Assist private enterprise to be more inclusive in their practices.

Initially the 'Families Growing Communities' project aims to work with individuals and groups within the SMR growth corridor, to identify and implement ways to support individuals with a disability and their families to engage more fully with the community.

The pilot will commence within the City of Casey and, as the project progresses, it will move outwards to include Cardinia and other areas in the southern growth corridor.

Eventually, we would like to incorporate discussion and action around how the community can engage with individuals and groups (other than 'caring families') that are marginalised and/or vulnerable.

Building a strong community voice that is actively engaged in working towards increased opportunities for 'caring families' is not a quick and easy job.

For the project to be successful it must be driven by the community and involve a range of people with different skills, knowledge and experiences.

Our first objective is to support contact between 'caring families', supporting the development of a network able to share experiences, information and physical and emotional support.

Building on from there, the initiative aims to support the network members to identify ways in which they can work with the community to facilitate changes in attitude and practice.

In the longer term the program will support network members to identify initiatives that the group could implement with a view to supporting a more inclusive community. Working with local government, businesses, schools and other community organisations, the group would aim to promote awareness through a process of challenging perceptions and supporting changed practices. Additionally, the activities that make up this project will assist individuals to build confidence, to maintain old skills and develop new ones, to make new friends, to feel valued.

In finding ways to support community engagement the project is focused on reducing the isolation and exclusion that is experienced by these vulnerable groups within the community.

This initiative is part of the 'Families Growing Communities' project (a project that sits under the Servicing Growing Communities Initiative). The partnership includes the VET sector, disability service organisations, and government. The partnership has provided some start-up funding for the initiative and a 'project manager' for 3 years to support the initiative.

C.A.P.S: A Carers Initiative

Within the City of Casey a small group of 'carers' has given birth to a support group with a difference. Their key focus is to connect 'carers', regardless of the type of disability that they are managing.

The group has, to date, developed a web page (with email), a facebook page and a secure online social network called 'Carers Online'.

The small committee is working in partnership with a number of organisations to develop the appropriate levels of governance, and to set up a structure that will support a variety of communication methods.

As a group of very busy individuals, with complex responsibilities they are amazingly motivated to make a difference. They have big ideas of where their online and face to face meeting spaces could

go...including a number of specialised online spaces for young mums who are carers, and a 'virtual men's shed' (online) to support the guys.

A newspaper article is in the planning stages, as is a series of face to face morning coffee meetings. These meetings will be at various locations across the local government area to encourage families to interact with people who live close to them.

The group has identified a range of benefits that they feel are important to 'carers'. These include emotional and physical support, reduced levels of isolation, a combined voice for carers in the southern metropolitan region of Melbourne, and the development of a central location for information to be posted.

Already a number of organisations are sending in their newsletters and schedule of events to be posted online.

In the longer term the group is planning to strengthen engagement with the private sector and support the development of more inclusive business practices. Whilst this is not a new idea, often business can require tangible incentives to engage. C.A.P.S. aims to use the online membership as a marketing opportunity for businesses/organisations that are keen to engage with this (often) overlooked and undervalued section of the community.

The initiative is encouraging the group (C.A.P.S) to develop a number of partnerships within its own right with a view to ongoing sustainability.

Ageing populations

Ageing in the Growth Corridors-building on the HACC service system

This is a two-year Department of Health initiative to build HACC service system capacity in growth areas. The future system needs to deliver an appropriate mix of rapidly growing HACC services to support the Active Service approach. Each of the four local government areas in the NWMR growth corridors is targeted (Melton, Wyndham, Hume and Whittlesea).

The project structure is intended to facilitate actions informed by local knowledge and experience, quality data and research and a whole of HACC perspective including an Active Service approach. The project is intended to deliver sustainable HACC service growth and innovation, including a preventative approach to support people to maintain their abilities, confidence and independence.

LGA projects are resourced by project roles with each Council and the relevant PCP in targeted Local Government areas. Contemporary research and evaluation practice will be provided by the University of Melbourne to inform and support service system planning and innovation. A Regional Project structure and process will be developed to support the inter-LGA projects, shared learning and minimisation of duplication.

Intergenerational programs

Evaluation of an Intergenerational Playgroup in a Residential Aged Care Facility - National Ageing Research Institute April 2012

Background

The aim of this project was to establish and evaluate a playgroup in an aged care facility that promoted greater intergenerational understanding and facilitated meaningful individualised social inclusion for people living in the residential aged care service and for members of the playgroup.

Funding for this project was received from the Victorian government, Department of Health Aged Care Branch “Count Us In!” social inclusion for people living in residential aged care project.

Methods

The evaluation included a literature review, resident, parent and staff surveys, a focus group with residents and review of the playgroup notes of the playgroup facilitator and lifestyle officer.

Findings

The major findings of the impact of the playgroup on the playgroup participants were:

- Enjoyment
- Intergenerational Interactions
- Reflection and reminiscence of childhood and parenting
- Changes in attitudes/expectations and perceptions of different generations and aged care facilities

Information was also gained about the practicalities and implementation issues related to establishing and running a playgroup in an aged care facility. A resource booklet, “Playgroups in Aged Care Facilities” has been developed from the findings of this project.

Recommendations

For those involved in the playgroup at Percy Baxter Lodges, the following recommendations are made:

- Continue a playgroup at Percy Baxter Lodges
- Ensure this evaluation is available to all interested parties
- Ensure effective communication about all aspects of the group particularly related to safety
- Provide appropriate training for all staff involved in the playgroup
- Consider a formal evaluation of the transition from supported to community playgroup

For those interested in establishing and running a playgroup in another aged care facility, the additional following recommendations are made:

- Ensure appropriate planning prior to the establishment of a playgroup
- Consider establishing a resident playgroup committee
- Ensure appropriate enclosed space with an outdoors area and storage available nearby
- Ensure effective communication about all aspects of the group particularly related to safety

- Commence with a supported (facilitator-led) playgroup model
- Allow interactions to be directed by the participants and expect change over time
- Encourage residents to have particular roles (if desired) prior to, during or after the playgroup
- Provide appropriate training for all staff involved in the playgroup including modules in aged care and early childhood development
- Be aware the age of the children will impact on the types of activities possible

Distribute the booklet “Playgroups in Aged Care Facilities” to all aged care facilities in Victoria and community groups who are seeking venues or are interested in this model

Conclusions

The project has had social and community benefits to residents, families and the facility as a whole. All residents are hoping the playgroup will continue into the future.

“The intergenerational program has moved the whole facility and they all look forward to the children coming. A breath of fresh young air.” (Staff).

“It’s the nicest thing that could happen, thank you to whoever had the brainwave, hope it will keep going.” (Resident).

“We have been so lucky to of been involved with Percy House and the residents. We have met so many new friends. Every week has been wonderful and fun. It would be wonderful to keep it going.” (Parent)

Children and Young People

Scouts Victoria’s Growth Area Strategy Framework

Purpose

The purpose of the Scouts Growth Areas Strategy Framework (SGASF) is to provide a blueprint for Scouts Victoria to:

- Implement a Region-based approach to establishing new Scout Groups in new communities, and
- Raise Scouts’ profile as relevant and influential providers of youth and community development through partnerships with local community, Municipalities and State Government Agencies.

The SGASF will assist in addressing two Scouts Victoria’s Priority Strategies and Goals:

Youth membership growth, and

- Societal recognition as relevant and contemporary
- The Strategy will focus on the growth areas encompassing the municipalities of Whittlesea, Hume, Mitchell, Melton, Wyndham, Cardinia and Casey.

The SGASF will also integrate with respective Scout Regions’ revitalisation programs for existing Scout infrastructure, programs and services.

Background

A key Strategic Priority in Scouts Victoria's Strategic Plan is "youth membership growth"; -to design and implement policies that will drive youth membership growth.

In line with this key Strategic Priority, the Scouts Growth Area Strategy Framework outlines a Region-based approach to establishing new Scout Groups in new communities through partnerships with local community, Municipalities and State Government resulting in increased youth membership and recognition of Scouts as a relevant and influential provider of youth development services.

The SGAS embodies the belief that Scouts can make a major contribution to youth and community development in newly established and yet to be developed communities across as Scouts are one of the few volunteer organisations that can provide structured tailored programs outside of school hours, for all young people aged 6 to 25 years, 40 weeks a year.

Situational Analysis

Informed by Plenty Valley Region Pilot

An evidence-base has been developed to inform the SGASF through the implementation of a Plenty Valley Region Growth Areas Strategy pilot launched April 2011. The pilot initially is focused on the Mernda and Doreen communities in the City of Whittlesea and is managed through a Plenty Valley Region Taskforce comprising representatives from Scouts Region, Branch and key local organisations and Government agencies.

A detailed project plan has been developed using the Plenty Valley Pilot as a baseline and resource estimate.

The Pilot was undertaken in four phases including:

- Feasibility: -scoping, resourcing and planning,
- Partnerships:- building local support,
- Establishment: -new Scout Groups and new Scout Leader pool, and
- Transition: -move from Region support to becoming a functioning Scout Group within the existing District structure.

Key recommendations from the Pilot include:

- Critical need for the development of a LGA-specific strategy to develop Scouting in new communities and the revitalisation of existing Scout groups in traditional areas,
- Requirement for a full time resources to provide capacity in building localised partnerships, raising community awareness as to the community benefits of Scouting and establishing new Scout Groups in new communities,
- Establishment of a dedicated Region team of experienced Scouting personal to support the engagement of local volunteers as new Scout Leaders and or members of Parent Committees in new Scout Groups, and
- Implement ongoing research and evaluation as to the impact developing Scouting in growth areas in particular the value-adding to community development.

Youth Membership Growth Potential

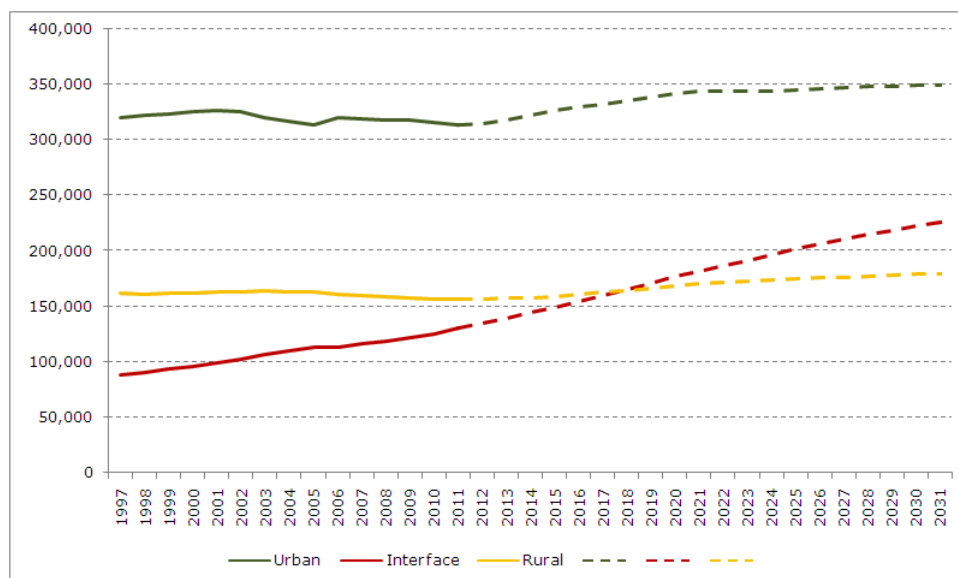
Growth areas presents an excellent opportunity for Scouts to establish itself as a relevant and influential provider of youth development services through the development of new Scout Groups, owned, managed and resourced locally through community partnerships.

For example the graphic below indicates in the Growth Area Councils (Interface Councils as depicted), the number of Scout youth members, Joey, Cub and Scout equivalent aged young people aged 6 to 14 years, will be:

2012 135,000* young people

2026 200,000 young people

Graphic below shows the Joey, Cub and Scout equivalent aged young people for Metro, Rural, and Interface Councils, both ABS actual and DPCD projections.



Recognised as Contributing to Community Development

In establishing a footprint in new communities, Scout programs will build community capacity and social infrastructure through:

- Provision of personal and leadership development for youth,
- Building relationships between individuals and families,
- Creating opportunities for volunteerism, and
- Constructing multi-purpose facilities for all community

Key benefits for community through Scouting include:

- Building social infrastructure through provision of programs and activities resulting in social interaction, personal growth in particularly for young people and community development,
- Engaging young people in structured after school-hours programs resulting in reduced anti-social behaviour often exhibited by young people at loose ends or disengaged,

- Delivering programs that address current needs of young people in areas such youth mental health, leadership development, building resilience and provision of recognised and relevant training,
- Engaging young people from Multicultural and CALD communities,
- Growing community participation in volunteerism such as providing tailored training for Scout Leaders and members of parents committees as well as engaging retirees as mentors,
- Providing additional multipurpose community facilities to support the diverse needs of young people and community as well as assisting in reducing the pressure on overburdened community infrastructure,
- Providing a conduit to new business opportunities, community partnerships, funding, advocacy and support resulting in increased community capacity, and
- Participating in Region Youth Policy Development

What has been achieved?

Scouts Victoria in implementing a development strategy focussed on growth areas (SGASF) has achieved:

- Participation in the SIPT research
- Partnerships with State Government Departments including Planning, Office for Youth, Education and Sport and Recreation regarding Scouts Growth Area Strategy,
- Ongoing partnership with the Growth Areas Authority in the roll-out of three Demonstration Projects in municipalities of Whittlesea, Melton and Wyndham,
- Establishment of regular with Growth Area Councils resulting in joint “working groups” currently with Whittlesea, Cardinia and Wyndham municipalities to facilitate localised Scout growth area development strategies,
- Partnerships with Catholic Education including Catholic Regional Colleges, Melton Council in establishing a Scout footprint within the CRCs,
- Establishment of new Scout Groups in Laurimar and Mernda and replacement of existing Scout facilities in Pakenham with three shared Council constructed multipurpose Scout-community facilities,
- State Government funding to address Scouting in Multicultural communities; -implementation strategy has been developed that includes training Multicultural community members as Scout leaders, tailoring Scout program to meet needs of Multicultural youth and communications strategy to promote the benefits of Scouting,
- Proposal to State Government for the establishment of a Laurimar Scout-community Multipurpose Facility and Scout-community Youth Activities Centre at the closed Mernda Primary School (currently waiting on State Budget outcomes)

Young People

Baseline for Young People-City of Whittlesea Youth Services

The work of the City of Whittlesea Youth Services is concerned with all issues that affect young people through the complex transition of childhood to adulthood. Youth Services aims to facilitate the development of individual, family, community and structural factors that enable young people to reach their full potential.

All practices endeavour to be culturally appropriate and inclusive.

Area work

All Youth Development Officers have a geographical area of the municipality that they are responsible for. The overall aim of Area Work is for the Team to develop in depth knowledge and connections with designated areas within the municipality. This enables the voice of young people to be heard from a local level and responded to by Council.

Portfolios

Members of the Youth Services Team have issues based portfolios from which they are responsible including:

- Renewal/Growth Areas
- CALD Young People
- Indigenous Young People
- Youth Club Development
- Youth Participation
- Family Strengthening
- Young People with Disabilities and many more

EDGE-Youth Facility

Council's Youth Services Team is based at Edge. A range of local service providers are also located at Edge with a practicing ethos based on human rights; participatory; social justice; community development and community strengthening activities. Council's commitment to Edge is that it will continue to evolve as a space for young people to participate in civic engagement action, skills training, personal development programs, recreation, art and cultural activities.

New Parents

Baby Makes Three

Project rationale

The stage of family formation is a key time for intervention to prevent violence against women. It is a time of increased risk, as violence often intensifies during pregnancy and in the period following the birth of a child. It also offers a 'window period' during which men (and women) are open to receiving information and skill development. It is a time when men are accessing support and are focusing on family relationships, and a time when attitudes to gender roles and gender equality become increasingly important to the choices they make about how they live their lives.

The *Baby Makes 3* project closely adheres to the VicHealth (2007) framework guiding the primary prevention of violence against women, and responds to *Action Theme One: Promoting equal and respectful relationships between men and women*. The project seeks to prevent violence before it occurs by:

- supporting men and women through the transition to parenthood,
- altering traditional attitudes to gender roles,

- raising awareness of the importance of maintaining gender equality during family formation, and
- providing practical skills and strategies for maintaining equal and respectful relationships.

To prevent violence against women it is crucial to target men, and targeting first time fathers not only acknowledges that men have a positive role to play in helping to end men's violence against women, but they also play an important role in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of children. As a collaboration between antenatal and postnatal health services, *Baby Makes 3* presents a significant opportunity to work with men (and women) during their transition to parenthood – a time when issues of gender roles, gender equality and family relationships are relevant and likely to be given proper consideration.

The *Baby Makes 3* team will be established within the Primary Health Care Program at Whitehorse Community Health Service. A *Baby Makes 3* team leader will be employed to plan and organise project activities with line management from the Manager of the Primary Health Care Program.

A reference group made up of representatives from the partner organisations and other key stakeholders was established during phase 1 and this reference group will continue during phase 2 to provide direction for the running of the program.

Project objectives and strategies

Objective 1: To engage men and women attending antenatal clinics, or childbirth

education classes at Birralee Maternity Service in individual, couple or group work that increases their awareness of how attitudes to gender roles and gender equality can influence the health of their relationships and their family's wellbeing.

Objective 2: To engage men and women attending 'new parents groups' at Maternal and Child Health Centres in the City of Whitehorse, in at least two group sessions aimed at promoting equal and respectful relationships during early parenthood.

Objective 3: To engage midwives and Maternal Child Health nurses in partner organisations in professional development workshops that increase their skills and understanding of preventing family violence by promoting equal and respectful relationships between men and women during the transition to parenthood.

Expected outcomes

The *Baby Makes 3* project closely follows the VicHealth (2007) framework to guide primary prevention of violence against women. As such, the expected outcomes are closely aligned to those outlined in the framework. Intermediate outcomes are expected at individual/relationship, organisational and community levels.

Outcomes at the Individual/Relationship Level:

- Enhanced ability of families to cope with relationship and lifestyle changes, and greater awareness among new parents of how attitudes to traditional gender roles can affect relationship equality
- Increased capacity of families to manage the stresses that arise during family formation

- Respectful and equitable gender relations
- Men behaving responsibly, respectfully and in non-violent ways towards their partner
- Improved skills in non-violent conflict resolution
- Improved connections to resources and support

Outcomes at the Organisational Level:

- Greater awareness among health professionals of how attitudes to traditional gender roles can affect relationship equality
- Increased capacity of services to respond holistically to first time families
- Greater collaboration across sectors to address family violence
- Expanded knowledge as to the effectiveness of family violence prevention programs
- Promotion

Good Practice examples to be continued.....

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