

APPENDIX 5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

Introduction

This Appendix reports on the reflections of those projects where community engagement or community capacity building formed an integral part of the project. The processes and practices used to engage the community, and the time and resources required, varied considerably between the Good Practice projects and depended on the purpose of the community engagement. These purposes include: to develop, confirm and amend MPHP priorities (Bendigo, Brimbank, Campaspe, Moreland, Nillumbik, Shepparton, and Whitehorse); to confirm and gather information for indicator and health profile development (Colac Otway and Port Phillip); to match the project to community needs (Baw Baw); to gain support for an issue (Yarra Ranges); and to conduct action research (Cardinia/Casey). There was also one project (Dandenong) that focused on community capacity building through the use of the Council's community grants program. To obtain feedback and opinions to inform the development of a health status profile or MPHP typically required less time and effort than gaining community commitment, or accessing harder to reach groups.

Broad acknowledgment of the importance of community engagement was noted.

A number of other lessons were reported by the projects.

- Be clear on the purpose, form and scope of the community engagement process and communicate this widely to both the community and other stakeholders;
- Have an ongoing process of community engagement rather than a once off event;
- When accessing hard to reach community groups, putting more effort into finding who might already have access to the group. It can save a lot of time and energy.
- It is necessary to keep working with the community to build linkages, and help the communities feel that they have an important part to play in the decision-making within the municipality.
- Ensure community input is valued, acted upon and *seen* to be acted on.
- Strong connections and networking with key local identities and groups create collaborative partnerships.
- Engaging community members in creative and meaningful ways almost always pays big dividends. Consultation with more depth and purpose is generally worth the extra effort, as it helps spread the load of the implementation and improves the project's prospects for sustainability.
- Ensure you build in frequent communication and feedback to the community.
- An action research model helps to create an environment where stakeholders get value out of the experience rather than just being consulted.
- A community capacity building approach helps to create a perception of Council as a partner to provide support to the community rather than just an organisation that distributes grants.

The following Good Practice projects and their efforts at community engagement or community capacity building are described below: Baw Baw, Bendigo, Campaspe, Cardinia/Casey, Colac Otway, Dandenong, Moreland, Nillumbik, Port Phillip, Shepparton, Whitehorse, and Yarra Ranges.

Baw Baw - Mental Health – It’s Everybody’s Business

Baw Baw’s Good Practice project involved working in collaboration with a range of agencies that had an interest and/or involvement in improving the mental health and wellbeing of Kooris and young males. The community engagement process served to assist the development and implementation of the project, and to ensure that the project met the needs of the target groups.

Target group/s for the community engagement

The target groups for the community engagement process were: young males, parents, Kooris and those interested in improving the mental health and wellbeing of Kooris and young males.

Process of engaging the community

A number of steps were taken to engage the community:

- Council Staff and the steering committee provided community contacts. Plans had been set to conduct a community survey to determine what resources/services were available to assist young males, particularly in the mental health area. This was not done as the steering committee felt that there was already a lot of this information at hand. A list of services was compiled with the assistance of the Committee. Other documents were provided by some of the participating organisations.
- Young Boys: The ‘community’ was narrowed down to year 9 boys at one school. The staff at the school provided linkages to the young boys. The boys attended an interactive seminar ‘Just for Boys’. The boys’ parents, together with a wider audience of parents and teachers of other adolescent children, attended a ‘Helping your child through Secondary School’ seminar.
- Kooris: The project attempted to engage the Koori community through two Koori Elders and others with established linkages with the Koori community. This was the first time that the Council had undertaken any major project with the Koori community. The engagement with the Koori Community had occurred better than had been expected. This is due to the fact that the LAECG (Local Aboriginal Education Community Group) had established linkages with the community. Tapping into existing networks is recommended particularly for accessing harder to reach groups.

Some of the Good Practice project funds were used to fund smaller community projects that shared the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of young males and Kooris. Members of the community presented proposals for the mini projects to the Steering Committee that were then assessed and funded if they met the agreed selection criteria.

Outcomes of the community engagement process

The project reported a number of outcomes of the community engagement process:

- Stronger links with schools and Koori families in the community.
- Greater understanding of community needs.
- Greater understanding of cultural issues. The links developed with the Koori community have enabled a dialogue to commence with the Shire and a greater understanding of cultural issues.

Key lessons

The project reported a number of lessons:

- Access to some members of the community can be difficult. It is important to know who to speak or network with to gain access to a community. They could present you to that community as a credible person/organisation.
- The greatest achievement in the early stages was the opening of closed doors. Continue to work with the community and involve them in the process, not only to help maintain and develop further links but to help the communities feel part of the decision-making processes within the Shire.
- Have a clear understanding of what is to be achieved from the community engagement process.

Criteria used to define success with regard to the efforts towards community engagement

The project used the following criteria/activities to gauge their success with regard to community engagement:

- Participation on the steering committees;
- Participation in the seminars, leadership project, smaller funded projects;
- Attendance at meetings was noted;
- Evaluations/reports provided after the seminars

Practices now embedded in Council as a result of this initiative

As the project recognises the importance of maintaining relationships that have developed with the Koori community, a member of Council (from the Environmental Health Office) nominated to continue to attend the LAECG meetings to ensure these links remain open.

Other Appendices where *Baw Baw* is noted

- Responding to a Health Issue
- Partnerships
- Workforce Development

Bendigo – Bendigo Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Community engagement was a secondary theme of Bendigo’s Good Practice project with the main focus being the development of a health status profile. The community engagement was limited to ‘leaders in health and well being’ and served to:

- confirm identified health and wellbeing issues through research;
- identify possible strategies for addressing the health and wellbeing issues;
- educate participants on the Social Model of Health.

Target group/s for the community engagement

The targets of the community engagement were: ‘leaders in health and wellbeing’ including members of the Bendigo Safe City Forum, Council staff, and the Executive of the Bendigo Loddon Primary Care Partnership.

Process of community engagement

A range of strategies was adopted to promote the involvement of ‘leaders in health and well-being’. These included: the use of information bulletins; invitations to attend workshop events with the relevance of the event outlined, and through word of mouth (e.g. by the steering committee to their respective organisations). Surveys and draft documents seeking feedback were also sent to key people.

Outcomes of the community engagement process

The project reported the following outcomes of the community engagement process:

- Confirmation of identified health and wellbeing issues and possible solutions.
- The provision of knowledge about Council’s role and function in health and wellbeing.
- Awareness of the Health and Wellbeing Framework.

Key lessons

A number of lessons were reported by the project:

- Be clear on the format of the workshop;
- Participants’ time is valuable so use time wisely;
- Be interactive and be sure to involve participants;
- Workshop activities need to be clear and concise; and
- An educative component to the workshop is beneficial.

Criteria used to define success of community engagement

The quality of participation and the data collected during the workshops was assessed by the project to determine if further information, and hence consultation, was required for the development of the Health and Wellbeing Framework. Workshop participants indicated their level of understanding of Council’s role in health and wellbeing. The number and representation of participants were analysed after the workshop to determine if there were any gaps.

Other Appendices where Bendigo is noted

- Indicators and Health Status Profile Development
- Integrated Planning
- Partnerships

Campaspe - Campaspe Murray Social Research Project

The Campaspe Good Practice project conducted community consultations to inform the development of a joint MPHP between the Shires of Campaspe (Vic) and Murray (NSW), and the Campaspe PCP.

Target group/s for the community engagement.

The project's target group included all members of the community.

Process of engaging the community

The project undertook the following steps as part of the community engagement process:

- A survey was sent to all community groups listed with the Shire of Campaspe and agencies involved in the reference group.
- Consultation sessions were undertaken for service providers, service reference groups and advisory committees.
- A 'Story Board' that collected comments and topics of concern was rotated throughout the Shire in public places such as libraries and football clubs.

Case Study #28: Training for community consultation

Consultants were employed to train managers across Council and relevant senior field staff in community consultation and the use of an effective tool called 'Story Boarding' to facilitate community consultation. Those who attended found it worthwhile.

As described in the Appendices on Integrated Planning and Workforce Development

Outcomes of the community engagement process

The project reported a number of outcomes from the community engagement processes. The response rate for the survey was 45%. The 'Story Board' sessions were well attended with a large volume of comments collected. The 'Story Board' comments were very similar to the survey comments. These results provided opportunities for cross referencing and confirmation of the importance of issues. Community and service provider feedback was positive with regard to the format of consultation.

Key lessons

According to the project, staff needed more support than was provided to conduct the community consultations. Despite the preference for staff to undertake the community consultations the external consultants were called upon to undertake these.

Practices now embedded in Council

As reported, the practice of 'Story Boarding' to seek community feedback received considerable Council support.

Time needed to conduct a similar project

The project found that approximately 6 months, with consultant support, is needed for such a project.

Changes the project anticipates will have sustained over 12 months

The project anticipated the following changes to occur over 12 months:

- Wide knowledge of the contribution of the MPHP at facilitating integrated planning and that it should be used to inform the corporate plan.
- Ability for staff to conduct more effective community consultation.
- A clear determination of Council's role in the facilitation of the community's health issues.

Other Appendices where Campaspe is noted

- Workforce Development
- Integrated Planning

Cardinia/Casey - Post Natal Depression in the urban growth corridor – better targeting our responses (Research with women themselves)

This joint initiative with the City of Casey was an action research project investigating the impact of, and responses to, postnatal depression (PND). Together these two Councils include the southeastern urban growth corridor of Melbourne, which has a large population of families with young children.

Target group/s for the community engagement

The target group for the community engagement included women who had previously or are currently suffering PND. This group had been identified as a high needs group in the 2001 MPHP.

Process of community engagement

Focus groups were undertaken to ascertain the needs of the target group. Cardinia/Casey provided a detailed description of the community engagement process in a separate report. This report is available either directly from Cardinia/Casey or through hyperlink to the tools and resources in the Appendix.

Factors which contributed to the success of the community engagement process

The project reported a number of factors that contributed to the success of the community consultation process. These include:

- Individual phone calls and meetings held between the project officer and every Maternal and Child Health (M&CH) nurse about how to recruit participants.
- Attention to detail by the project officer in the information provided to prospective participants (e.g. mailed information, personal telephone calls to interested participants where they were offered a choice in sessions to attend, child care, and transport if needed.)
- Childcare provided free by the project, at all the venues.
- Assurances of privacy and confidentiality given to research participants.
- Focus groups held in (non-threatening, non-medical) local community venues such as M&CH Centres, Neighbourhood and Community Houses.

Outcomes of the community engagement process

The project anticipated a final report to be produced and distributed together with specific information to service providers; community development workers and groups; and local government planners. The final report will include recommendations for actions to be taken. The main outcome envisaged from the project is that the views of the community members will be projected to a wider audience (i.e. service providers; community development workers and groups; and local government planners) which will hopefully contribute to changes the community perceive as necessary.

Limitations of the community engagement process

There may be an inherent bias in the research findings as most of the participants were clients of M&CH program. It is recognised that some families do not use the M&CH program or

community health services. The views of this group were not captured. This was acknowledged in the research report.

Criteria used to define success in the projects efforts towards community engagement

- Number of focus groups planned as compared to the number implemented;
- Number of participants who attended as compared to the target;
- Average attendance at focus groups;
- Participants obtained from different sources to gain better representation of target group and to avoid bias in results.

Case Study #29: Using the Environments for Health framework to guide the community engagement

The Cardinia/Casey Good Practice project considered the *Environments for Health* framework useful in framing the project proposal and its implementation. The framework was used to guide the research questions and ensure coverage of the social, built and natural environments (e.g. questions about the impact of the natural and built environment on mental health were asked.). It is anticipated that the four environmental dimensions will be used to direct the advocacy and implementation of the research findings.

As described in the Environments for Health Section of the Organisational Environment Appendix

Other Appendices where Cardinia/Casey is noted

- Responding to a Health Issue

Colac Otway – Community Health, Wellbeing and Social Capital Indicators

The Colac Otway Good Practice project used a holistic approach to develop a suite of indicators appropriate for measuring and evaluating community health, wellbeing and social capital which is to be used for the preparation of their MPHP. The purpose of the community consultation was twofold: firstly to gain confirmation on the selection of indicators, and secondly to gather baseline data on the indicators.

Target group/s for the community engagement

A wide cross section of residents from across the Shire was targeted.

Process of community engagement

Two methods were used by the project to gain information from the community: forums and surveys.

Three community forums were held to discuss the draft indicators in Colac and Apollo Bay. These were attended by a total of 25 community leaders consisting of school principals, health service agencies and community organisation representatives. Forums were promoted by press releases and direct invitations.

These forums were held to confirm the relevance and the level of understanding of the proposed indicators and to invite comments on additional indicators. These forums were conducted by Deakin University.

In late September 2004, 2,571 surveys were distributed to randomly selected households to better understand the qualitative and quantitative issues surrounding health, wellbeing and social capital. Results from the survey will be used to identify health, wellbeing and social capital priorities for the Shire. These will be cross-linked with current projects, such as the community capacity-building undertakings in the 'Be Active Eat Well' project for Childhood Obesity.

There were 680 completed responses to the survey, a return rate of 26%. Although this was a disappointing response rate, 429 (17%) surveys were returned unopened, most of which were from the coastal properties whose owners do not reside in the Shire. A high proportion of the coastal properties in the Shire are now holiday homes, which are only occupied by their owners for short periods of the year. Strategies will need to be developed to gain a higher response rate in future data collection procedures.

Other Appendices where Colac Otway is noted

- Partnerships
- Indicators and Health Status Profile Development

Dandenong – Case Studies for Capacity Building in Health

The Dandenong Good Practice project aimed to build community capacity by reviewing the process and outcomes associated with the Council's Community Strengthening Grants Scheme in such a way as to contribute to the ongoing development of the grants scheme process. This involved facilitation of a mentor process to support projects funded through the Council's grants scheme.

Target group/s for the community capacity building

An analysis was conducted of the health issues in projects funded by the Council's Community Strengthening Grants Scheme.

Process of community capacity building

The project undertook the following strategies to build community capacity:

- Grant application data and themes were analysed to identify and produce a summary of health issues raised by the community groups.
- Interviews and focus groups were held with Council staff to identify possible mentors and training needs. This was a reflective discussion with the staff involved with the projects.
- Interviews and focus groups were held with funded projects to identify support needs, further training, networking and grant process opportunities.
- Focus groups were also held with unsuccessful grant applicants.
- Workshops were held to provide feedback on the overall learnings of the project to the broader community and as well as those involved in the community projects.
- Case studies were developed on six of the grant projects.
- A final project report was developed with recommendations.

A number of strategies were not implemented during the project, although there is a commitment to implement these in the next round of the community grants scheme. Training community group representatives to be involved in Council planning processes was not undertaken during the project. There is an opportunity to build on this with continuous involvement of people in the funded projects and linking them into the training provided in the next grants round. The training of staff mentors did not occur due to the cycle of the community grants scheme not matching the funding of the Good Practice project. There will, however, be an opportunity to link staff training with the next round of community grants. Future staff mentors will also have the advantage of benefiting from the learnings gathered from the project.

Factors which contributed to the success of the community capacity building process

The project reported on two overall frameworks which contributed to its success: project management and action research.

The project was resourced by having a project manager/coordinator, administrative support and a consultant for delivering specific components. This core group functioned as a working party which involved relevant staff at stages such as planning and to receive regular updates. Staff in the community and social planning team, in particular the community grants and community development officers, were involved on a regular basis. According to the project, this management of the project had a positive influence on the long term planning outcomes, as it avoided all of the knowledge and learnings being repositied within by one person

(whether it be project officer or consultant). It was felt that the driving force/person of the project needed to be located in the area where the project is going to have the most long term impact. In this case, it was the team responsible for running the community grants program.

The action research model was reported to be important for the creation of an environment where stakeholders got value out of the experience. This arrangement also provided the opportunity to alter the perception that Council is a funding agent to one where Council is seen to be a partner that provided support.

Outcomes of the community capacity building process

The project outcomes were reported to include:

- consultation with relevant stakeholders;
- preparation of six case studies of some of the funded projects;
- a workshop to share the learnings with the community, projects and Council staff;
- preparation of a final report with recommendations for Council to integrate ongoing development and planning of the grants program.

The Good Practice project was involved with and supported 13 of the 16 projects funded under the 2002/2003 Community Strengthening Grants Scheme. Representatives from the community projects attended focus groups, and workshops which provided support and network opportunities. The Good Practice project officer acted as a mentor and sounding board for the community projects and referred them on to other Council personnel for support and advice regarding their projects.

Case studies were also developed for six of the projects. The case studies were three pages in length and included information on what the project was about, getting it up and running, achievements, challenges, sustainability, accountability and key lessons learnt. The case studies have been used to promote the community strengthening projects and demonstrate outcomes to staff, Councillors, and the local community.

Case Study #30: Extract from the 'Weeding out the Generation Gap' Community Strengthening Project

One of the greatest challenges in our modern Australian society is how to keep the generations coming together, particularly with many elderly people living in residential care. For some, contact with the 'outside' world is limited and yet it is important for maintaining their health and wellbeing. It is also vital for the rest of the community to have strong links with older people as they have a lot to offer.

The project involved a partnership between a local nursery, local schools, and a nursing home. Students, under the supervision of nursery staff, came to the nursing home and undertook monthly gardening sessions for the residents.

A key lesson learnt was the importance of the process as well as the tangible outcome in terms of the benefits gained. While it took a long time for the hydroponics system to get up and running, it was clear that the monthly sessions (interacting with students, participating in the garden) were just as important for residents, as was the actual outcome of a functioning hydroponics system.

Extract from the City of Greater Dandenong Community Strengthening project case study

Limitations of the community capacity building process

The cycle of the community grants did not align with the timeline of the Good Practice project. Whilst this had some restrictions on what could be achieved within the project timeframe, the process generated by the project will continue in the next round of the community grants.

Key Lessons

Three lessons were reported by the project:

- It is important to be very clear about the objectives of a grants program.
- The community needs extra support in developing and managing their projects.
- The *process* of community capacity building is just as important as the *outcome*, and is integral to the project's success. Similarly, this concept needs to be applied to the process undertaken for the grants scheme within Council, on how it makes funding available to support the community, and how it maintains and continues this support.

Unexpected Benefits

Whilst the process established around the consultation phase of the project was intended to provide action learning opportunities for participants, these and the workshops provided key networking opportunities for community groups and the funded projects to make connections with others to learn and strengthen their own projects. The feedback from those who participated was very positive and therefore provides a model for Council to continue that will provide opportunities for networking, building partnerships and sharing learnings.

Changes the project anticipates will have sustained over 12 months

The project reported that its recommendations informed the planning of the next round of community grants, and decisions regarding the enhancement of the support provided. Additional support will be provided to groups at the application period, during project implementation, and at the end of their funding period.

Planning is already underway to incorporate the recommendations and learnings of the project to enhance the next rollout of the community grant program. Specific recommendations include: targeted workshops on the submission writing; supporting projects to get up and running; and undertake evaluation to identify further directions. Additional feedback will also be provided to unsuccessful applicants as to where their applications require further development and efforts will be made to link them into other funding opportunities.

Additional resources or materials needed to enhance sustainability of achievements

The project suggested that additional administrative resources would be required to assist with the preparation of these significantly new processes which will be negotiated within existing Council budgets.

Time needed to conduct similar project

To undertake a similar project, it is suggested that 0.6 EFT is required for administration and project coordination. In addition, a consultant is required for specific times over the project period which takes the total EFT over 1.0. Although the project was undertaken in the

required 12 month timeframe, given the longer term planning implications, the project recommends an extension to 18 months.

Other Appendices where Dandenong is noted

- Workforce Development

Moreland - Health Planning for Sustainable Progress: Population Health and Wellbeing Indicators

The primary objective of the Moreland Good Practice project was to develop indicators. Community consultation was not a direct part of the indicator process but was a part of the development of the MPHP, from which the indicators were later developed.

The consultation process for the development of the 2003 MPHP engaged over 500 people, residents and professional stakeholders. Other resources supported this consultation stage. These include: discussion papers; periodic Council reports on progress; briefings for senior managers; and information and consultation sessions between key networks of services and local agencies. This consultation provided an opportunity for community and other stakeholders to identify the key elements of the MPHP and the measures of success.

Council's involvement in an earlier community indicators project (with Mike Salvaris from Swinburne University) had a considerable focus on community participation and helped with the current Good Practice indicators project.

Moreland Council staff, organisational partners and other key professionals were consulted on the first draft set of indicators. Again, as for other consultation projects, the time and resources required to engage the organisation and partners was underestimated.

As reported, follow up consultations and a web page that is planned for development should provide the opportunity for wider community feedback on the indicators.

Other Appendices where Moreland is noted

- Indicator and Health Status Profile Development
- Integrated Planning
- Partnerships

Nillumbik – Nillumbik Community Planning Think Tank – community consultation and capacity building

The aim of Nillumbik Good Practice project was to engage and support community members in consultation and action research for the continuing implementation of the Nillumbik Public Health Plan (MPHP). Genuine ongoing community participation and empowerment was achieved by building on the capacity building strategies employed during the early consultation phase of the MPHP's development.

Target group/s for the community engagement

To gain broad representative feedback across the Shire, community forums were held in each of the major townships: Eltham, Diamond Creek, and Hurstbridge.

Process of community engagement

The project reported four strategies in its development and implementation:

Strategy 1 Nillumbik's Community Planning Think Tank

The Community Planning Think Tank (CPTT) was supported in this project to assist Council 'Undertake public consultation on health and well-being issues of significance in local communities, to examine the feasibility of developing strategies which focus on the needs of separate townships within the Shire' (MPHP Action 1.1.7). This involved regular CPTT meetings plus extraordinary meetings to plan specific aspects and stages of the project, such as venues, themes, guest speakers, publicity etc.

Members of the Think Tank acted as a 'sounding board' for Council and disseminated relevant Council information back into the community via their networks. The Think Tank is officially represented on the MPHP Advisory Committee, to enhance communication and ensure participation at all levels of the MPHP's implementation.

Strategy 2 Community Forums

The Think Tank in conjunction with Council officers from the Social Planning and Health Promotion Units, jointly hosted three Community Forums around key health issues late in 2003. To encourage participation from residents across the Shire, a forum was held in each major township of Nillumbik's three geographical areas (as defined by the ABS):

- Nillumbik South (Eltham area) – the forum was held in Eltham
- Nillumbik South-West (Diamond Creek and surrounds) – the forum was held in Diamond Creek
- Nillumbik - Balance (the largely rural component of the Shire) – the forum was held in Hurstbridge.

The Community Forums utilised a framework based on the four environments for health to seek residents' comments, generate discussion to formulate community action plans, and measure outcomes in the community against the aims of the MPHP.

Strategy 3: Data Analysis and Follow-up Consultation

Collected data was collated, analysed and compared with previous consultation data, particularly qualitative information gathered earlier for the purposes of health planning in the Shire. Follow-up consultations were conducted using a variety of methods to check the accuracy of findings from the community forums. Face-to-face street

surveys (111 in total) were conducted in various locations in the three townships throughout April 2004. A representative spread of interviewees was targeted on the basis of gender and estimated age. In June 2004 all community forum participants who provided contact details were sent a copy of the Forums Report for further comment. In addition, a simple questionnaire detailing identified local community aspirations and suggested actions was mailed out to a random sample of households in each township (650 in total).

Strategy 4: Local Area Action Plans

The Forums Report included the development of proposed 'local area community action/activity plans' to address key themes from the Forums. Current and planned activities were identified, specific to each of the three local areas/townships involved in the pilot consultation. Key actions have been included in the MPHP's current annual Action Plan 2004-2005. It is intended that this type of local area consultation and the development of local action plans will form the basis of the new MPHP to be developed in 2005.

Case Study #31: Local Area Community Consultations

A series of three Community Forums was held in key locations across the Shire. The Forums had two main aims: to promote community connectedness (MPHP, Goal 1) and gather input on key health issues. The Forums included a number of strategies to increase participation by typically under-represented groups.

Responses from all three Forums showed participants valued the beauty of their natural environment and a strong sense of community above all. Minor differences indicated that Hurstbridge people enjoyed a 'friendly', rural 'village atmosphere'. Diamond Creek residents valued having 'the best of both worlds' with proximity to the city and the 'relaxed atmosphere' of a country town, and Eltham participants recognised and valued the diversity of their community with 'artistic', 'eccentric' and 'tenacious' residents.

When asked what could make their communities better, Hurstbridge people wanted basic services and facilities: a petrol station, safer footpaths and public transport. Diamond Creek people were keen to have more opportunities for social activities, sporting facilities and events, whereas Eltham residents were concerned about restricting further housing development and preserving current levels of open space. All areas wanted better facilities for young people.

Factors which contributed to the success of the community engagement process

The project indicated that there were three key factors that contributed to its success:

- Involvement of the Community Planning Think Tank in the planning and implementation of the Forums;
- Strong connections and networking with key local identities and groups, to create collaborative partnerships;
- Frequent communication and feedback to community and volunteers.

Case Study #32: The Community Planning Think Tank

The Community Planning Think Tank, which commenced in September 2000, is made up of local residents who are interested in social and community planning for the local community. The group works in partnership with Council providing an opportunity for participation in key social planning, health and community projects and is based on the principles of cooperative planning, participation and consultation.

Currently the group has a membership of about 70 people. A core group of about 10 people attend regular monthly meetings, the remaining members either attend on a less regular basis or are just on the mailing list and receive the minutes of meetings. Other than their role with the MPHP, the Community Planning Think Tank has been involved with consultation regarding Council's waste minimisation scheme, the introduction of a new Council website, planning for the Commonwealth games, and acting as community surveyors for the annual Council satisfaction survey. They have also provided comment on a range of Council plans and policies.

Although there is not a strong representation of young people on the group, there is a mix of men and women, and a spread of people from across the Shire including the urban and more rural parts of Nillumbik.

The Community Planning Think Tank Terms of Reference:

- Not a single issues group;
- Cooperative generalise community-planning group to resource and advocate for Council;
- Relationship building, advocacy and participatory group;
- Enhance local planning processes;
- Build an ongoing connection between Council and community ;
- A forum for consultation;
- Link with Social Planning unit.

Outcomes of the community engagement process

A model for sustainable, township-based community consultation had been developed and piloted, and the reported outcomes from the project were:

- improved connectedness of community members to each other and to Council;
- reduced isolation for people in remote locations on the rural fringe;
- greater numbers of people involved in the MPHP consultation process;
- improved processes for disseminating Council information and gaining feedback from the community; and
- creation of a model for a sustainable process of community engagement and participation, with a focus on including the geographically / socially isolated.

The project was reported to have achieved these outcomes by engaging and empowering community representatives to consult the wider community. The process sought to engage people and address their needs specifically within local communities (townships). Success had been evidenced by the numbers of residents involved in various aspects of the project and consultation processes, specifically numbers from the different geographic areas involved in each forum or engaged in follow-up consultations via street surveys and mail-out questionnaires. The project elicited good participation rates from Nillumbik's more geographically isolated areas. In addition, approximately 30 additional volunteers have been recruited to assist Council with future consultations.

There are 48 residents/households on the Community Planning Think Tank mailing list, with 12 to 14 members actively involved in the Good Practice project's development and delivery through regular attendance at planning meetings, assistance at Forums, etc.

Number of residents involved in the community consultation:

	Hurstbridge	Diamond Creek	Eltham	Total
Attendance at Forums	25	46	77	148
Follow-up consultations:	32	31	48	111 people interviewed
1. Street interviews				
2. Mail out questionnaire to random households	15	15	31	800 sent out, 61 responses
3. Mail out responses from Forum participants	5	1	4	48 sent out, 10 responses
Totals:	77	93	160	330

Unexpected outcomes

The development of 'Local Area Action Plans' emerged from the project process and Forum findings. Implementation of the 'Local Area Action Plans' has been included as a strategy of the MPHP and will be reported in the context of the annual action plan review.

Council recently conducted its annual Customer Satisfaction Survey using a community consultation model based on volunteer peer action researchers conducting face-to-face surveys in local communities. This survey was previously conducted via a random telephone survey conducted by outside consultants, and was criticised as being unrepresentative and prone to bias. The change of consultation method was a direct result of this project.

In addition, information gained from the Forums has been used across Council as an identifier of community need and to inform policy and service development.

Key lessons

The project reported a number of lessons which it found useful in conducting community consultations:

- Work collaboratively.
- Ensure community and volunteer input is valued, acted upon and *seen* to be acted on.
- Strong connections and networking with key local identities and groups create collaborative partnerships.
- Frequent communication and feedback to the community and volunteers.

Changes the project anticipates will have sustained over 12 months

The project anticipates it will have provided key strategic direction for developing the new MPHP in 2005. It could also provide a foundation for development of a 'Community Vision' for Nillumbik, which is currently under consideration. The proposed Community Vision for Nillumbik will detail the community's vision for the future of Nillumbik. If the Community Vision is developed, Council's policies and plans (including the MPHP) will be linked to the documented community aspirations.

Practices embedded in Council as a result of this initiative

As a result of the project, the Shire of Nillumbik will continue to use local area (township-based) planning and consultation, as well as the use of volunteer peer network ‘trees’ in their consultation strategies.

Time needed to undertake a similar project successfully

The project reported that it was only possible to be completed within 12 months because the Nillumbik Community Planning Think Tank was already well established, providing access to extensive community knowledge and networks.

Additional resources or materials now needed to enhance sustainability of project achievements

For further enhancement and sustainability of the project aims, the project reported that resources need to be allocated to:

- Enhance Council’s consultation with the community by identifying barriers to participation and think about new ways to engage those who are less likely and or able to be involved.
- Implement the Local Area Action Plans.
- Provide support and training to new and existing volunteers.

Submissions will be made to external funding bodies to assist with this process from organisations such as DHS and the Community Support Fund.

Port Phillip – Healthy Environments to Look Forward to

The Port Phillip Good Practice project engaged community members to monitor and evaluate the health and sustainability of their social, built, natural, economic and cultural environments.

Target group/s for the community engagement

Although all residents were welcome to participate, the project targeted groups who would institutionalise the monitoring, so that the sustainability of the work depended on an organisation, such as a school or housing estate, rather than on individuals.

Process of community engagement

Most organisations were directly approached, either to become involved in a fresh project or to add the monitoring into their existing project (e.g. Walking School Bus or a butterfly count). Other people became involved in the project through informal contacts.

The number and type of organisations involved are varied and increasing. They include: an older person's high rise accommodation unit; the Ecocentre who have assessed air quality and counted birds; local schools who count butterflies and track children's methods of travelling to school; Earthcare who count penguin eggs; the Citizen's Monitoring Network who oversee the cleanliness of particular areas; and local residents who check out the cost of a typical lunch in their shopping strip. The Council is about to employ an additional part-time staff member to help facilitate more community measurement.

Outcomes

The project had established a mechanism for community members to monitor the sustainability of features of their neighbourhoods that promote their health and happiness. Additional mechanisms plan to be developed to support opportunities for the community to take appropriate remedial or preventive action wherever possible.

Practices now embedded in Council

This process built upon established practices in Port Phillip.

Other Appendices where Port Phillip is noted

- Indicators and Health Status Profile Development

Shepparton – An Effective Community Development Approach to Public Health Planning

The primary objective of the Shepparton Good Practice project was to engage the community to raise awareness and understanding of the Greater Shepparton Public Health Plan and to encourage feedback and comment on issues for further consideration by the Health Plan Advisory Panel. The main mechanism for these consultations was through ‘Road Shows’.

Target group/s for the community engagement

The target groups for community consultation were all Council officers, community members and community groups e.g. Youth Workers, Rotary, Probus, TAFE Community Workers, Council staff/Councillors.

Process of community engagement

The community engagement process involved a number of steps:

- Advertising the ‘Roadshow’ presentations. A number of avenues for advertising were adopted including personal contacts and public advertisements.
- Undertaking the ‘Roadshows’. The ‘Roadshows’ involved a power point presentation of key elements of the Greater Shepparton Public Health Plan. The ‘Roadshow’ was presented by a member of the Greater Shepparton Health Plan Advisory Panel who was also able to provide further background information as required.
- Further ‘Roadshows’ are planned as part of an ongoing annual community consultation and communication process.

Outcomes

Melbourne University School of Rural Health undertook a formal evaluation. A survey was distributed to participants. This survey examined group profile (e.g. type of community group/service, gender ratio, age) and feedback on the Shepparton Public Health Plan (e.g. agreement with priorities, and other health issues of importance). These are documented in an evaluation report of the Road shows that can be obtained from the City of Greater Shepparton (See table of Resources in the Appendix)

Practices now embedded in Council

The ‘Roadshow’ program will be ongoing as a means of informing the community and facilitating feedback for consideration in reviewing the Plan, on an annual basis.

Other Appendices where Shepparton is noted

- Integrated Planning
- Partnerships

Whitehorse – Teaching an Old Dog New Tricks: Building the Capacity of Council Staff to adopt new Public Health Practices

The Whitehorse Good Practice project attempted to build organisational capacity, and explore new consultation methods in the development and implementation of their MPHP.

Target group/s for the community engagement

Residents and community groups in the Whitehorse municipality.

Process of community engagement

The project reported a range of strategies used to gain community feedback during their MPHP development process.

The City of Whitehorse engaged a consultant to conduct the community consultations and aggregate data collected into emerging themes. The consultant met with the reference group to determine questions that would be asked at community consultations.

Four public consultation sessions were held at different times (including weekends and evenings) in three different suburbs, including a Whitehorse Women's Forum in October 2003. Three specialist sessions were held with young people, older people and the multicultural community and three consultation sessions were held with Council staff, including a breakfast consultation with ParksWide, City Works and Commercial Operations staff located at the Depot. Interpreters were offered to assist multicultural communities to participate in the consultation process. However, no participants attended the consultation session that was scheduled at the Migrant Information Centre and the social health officer subsequently visited diverse senior citizens clubs to gain input from multicultural clubs. In addition, a consultation session with members of the MPHP Reference Group was held in November 2004.

Those not able to attend a consultation were able to provide input by completing a feedback form. Available in hard copy at Council, the form was distributed at the Whitehorse Children's Festival attended by 1,000 parents and caregivers, through mail-outs to community organisations and at the Whitehorse Spring Festival with a reply paid envelope. In addition, the Community Development team ran a competition at the Whitehorse Spring Festival. The prize was a family pass to a cinema and a dinner voucher valued at \$50.00 at restaurant in Whitehorse. To enter, participants completed their details as well as completing a MPHP feedback form. The competition entry form also asked whether participants wished to be notified when the draft MPHP was available for public comment. Forms distributed at different events were colour coded to enable some analysis of response rates.

Case Study #33: Launch of Community Consultation

A community launch and afternoon tea was held to commence the consultation process. The purpose of the launch was to invite community leaders to attend a session to raise awareness of the Municipal Public Health Planning process so that they could, in turn, involve their local communities in the consultations and encourage attendance. In conjunction with Council's Public Relations Department, a CD soundscape with pictures was developed that outlined the Environments for Health framework. The CD voice over was professionally produced and accompanied a powerpoint presentation with visual images of Whitehorse and its people. This was followed by a formal welcome from a Councillor and a presentation by the Manager Community Development outlining what a Municipal Public Health Plan is, the four Environments and social determinants of health, and the broader context of health. Participants were provided with an information pack containing a consultation schedule, the Council Plan, a MPHP feedback sheet; and Council postcards with website details attached.

For the first time at the City of Whitehorse, an interactive feedback form was also available on-line. This meant people could type in their responses via the Whitehorse website and submit the information directly online. It also allowed people to respond without the need for an email address or printing off a form and sending it back to Council. This process provided a confidential avenue for people to raise issues they may not have discussed in public forums.

Outcomes of the community engagement process

Over 1,000 comments from 233 people were obtained from all consultation sessions. In total, 173 participants attended consultations and 56 written feedback forms were received. Only four comments were received via the website on-line form.

In January 2004, all participants who had attended consultation sessions were provided with a summary of collated themes. Specific findings from the Whitehorse Women's Forum and Council staff consultations were collated and presented separately. This methodology was intended to be a meta-analysis and provide an opportunity for people to confirm or otherwise their feedback.

In February 2004, the draft MPHP was presented to Council for endorsement for a further four weeks consultation. The draft MPHP was circulated widely throughout the community for public comment and was made available on Council's website and at all customer service centres. In addition, the draft MPHP was mailed to all members of the reference group with a letter inviting further comment. Three additional community submissions were received and comments made were incorporated into the final document scheduled to be presented to Council for adoption in April 2004.

All strategies were considered very successful by the project, with the exception of the interactive feedback form. A poor response rate to the website on-line form was reported. This was the first time that the City of Whitehorse had made an interactive feedback form available. It was suggested that greater publicity and marketing of this method of input could improve the response rate. It was felt that as communities become more accustomed to technology, on-line consultation may become increasingly popular, particularly for people who work full-time and those whose time is limited.

The best response rates from consultations was observed for the Whitehorse Women's Forum; followed by those held for Council staff and written consultation feedback forms distributed at the Whitehorse Spring Festival, Children's Festival and direct mail-outs to community organizations. Response rates were lower for the general public and older person's specific

consultation while the worst response rate was observed for the consultation session held at the Migrant Information Centre. Views from culturally and linguistically diverse communities were sought through other means. The project raised the need for local government officers attempting to engage CALD communities to go out to these communities and not to expect CALD community members to ‘turn up’ to consultation venues, even if they are held at a venue that the communities are familiar with (e.g. the Migrant Information Centre).

At each consultation, participants were provided with an evaluation form with a reply paid envelope. The results of the evaluation conducted by the project revealed that the community highly valued the meta-analysis feedback sheets. After attending the consultation, 98% of all respondents indicated they would be more likely to attend another consultation session. The project considered this a very positive result. The community consultation process developed by this project is planned to be replicated for the Whitehorse Municipal Early Years Plan.

Other Appendices where Whitehorse is noted

- Integrated Planning
- Workforce Development

Yarra Ranges – Integrated Planning and Health: Wastewater in the Dandenongs Project

Community engagement was a strategy used by Yarra Ranges to achieve their objective of better wastewater management. This served to increase awareness of wastewater management and provided support for advocacy by Council to promote action on the issue from a political and administrative perspective.

Target group/s for the community engagement

The community engagement was targeted at:

- The entire community through press articles and an information flier.
- Local environment groups, in particular the UYDEC (Upper Yarra and Dandenongs Environment Coalition) who have a strong influence on Council's environmental policy, strategy and direction.

Process of engaging community

The UYDEC was invited to an evening meeting to scope out the issues of the project from their perspective. They also had the opportunity for input in a stakeholder workshop. General community interest was generated through press releases to local newspapers.

Outcomes of the community engagement process

The reported outcomes of the community engagement process included a better understanding of the issue of wastewater management, and a clearer understanding of the roles and responsibilities of various government departments and business and community groups with regard to wastewater management. Feedback received at meetings and informal discussions, and in response to press articles was obtained.

Key lessons

The project emphasised the need to:

- Time the release of information to fit into the overall initiative and allow for proper community and stakeholder consultation.
- Recognise the importance of community engagement when addressing a community issue.

Factors that contributed to success

Community interest was reported to have raised the profile of the issue, and hence project within Council. Community feedback during Council's 'Vision 2020' consultation process was also reported to have contributed to the project being recognised as important and relevant.

Other Appendices where Yarra Ranges is noted

- Partnerships
- Integrated Planning