

TERANG COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE – September 2015

Summary

This report provides advice to Council on the progress of the implementation of Terang's community plan – *Realising Terang*.

Introduction

Terang's 10 year community plan was prepared over the 12 month period from June 2012 to May 2013, and received by Council on 23 June 2013. The plan lists some 22 township priorities. These priorities cover a range of social and infrastructure issues, and (in common with other initial community plans prepared by Corangamite communities) they include a range of more or less practical or aspirational priorities.

Substantial progress has been made, particularly on the top six priorities which received widespread community support. Council's community planning process has also supported two additional community projects which have emerged over this two year period. At the time of settling on the plan, an effort was made to identify the agency through which the project priorities would need to be conducted, including Council (7), community (4), State Government (3), private commercial interests (3), and various partnerships between these agencies (5). The most interesting thing to note is the relationship between outcomes and agency, and the role of partnerships in advancing local causes.

Over just two years of implementation a remarkable amount has been achieved. These achievements highlight the essential role played by Council in supporting community aspirations, with Council heavily involved in the planning and/or realisation of the 10 priority projects (listed below) where progress has been made. They also highlight the value of partnership formation to effective project planning, design, financing and delivery.

Issues

1 Clean up Shopfronts

This is Terang's highest priority, attracting twice as much support as the next closest one. Thirty thousand (\$30,000) of the \$100,000 Council has provided as seed-funding for Terang's community plan was allocated to this priority; to wash, clean, paint, fix and mend the facades of shops in High Street. Various efforts were made to obtain quotes and explore ways of creating some movement on this front, but apart from discussions and information gathering, no tangible outcomes have been realised. One of the more controversial issues to arise was to find a way to bridge the public-private divide. That is where Council has stepped in to champion an initiative to unlock public and private investment to renovate the fabric of Corangamite township's central business districts.

Corangamite Shire's innovative Retail Area Façade Improvement Program has taken two years to put in place, coming into effect this 2015-2016 budget year with total Council funding of \$30,000 to provide for matched grants of up to \$3,000 per business premises. The first round of applications closed on 31 August 2015, drawing 37 applications across the Shire's 12 townships, with a total of \$160,000 of matching private investment. There were 14 applications from Terang businesses. A funding application is also being prepared to match the \$30,000 in Council funding. It is anticipated that this will help finance other eligible improvement projects. It is worthwhile noting that a substantial amount of in-kind support has been provided by Council staff in advising and assisting applicants. Works approved for the first round of the Retail Facades Improvement Program are to be completed by May 2016. Overall, this round is expected to involve a proposed total investment of above \$200,000 across the Shire.

2 Terang Lake Development

The Terang Community Plan identified Terang Lake as a highly valued public asset both as a natural landscape providing public open space and as an outstanding recreational and sporting precinct. It comes in as Terang's second priority, linked to the 'Vision' for Terang 'to retain and build its residential population based on its lifestyle advantages'. The logic follows that if Terang can protect, maintain and develop its assets in a way that enhances the lifestyle opportunities it can offer its residents, and if it can communicate these advantages in a genuine way to those who value the town's lifestyle offering, then it can continue to retain and build its population in a virtuous cycle which will improve its viability and enhance its future prosperity.

The sum of \$30,000 in Council seed-funding has been allocated to this project, and a further Planning Grant of \$30,000 has been secured under the former Putting Locals First Fund. A community based project committee is working with Lake Trustees and other organisations and Lake users to develop a long-term master plan to conserve and develop the site. A key idea has been to return water to a small area of the site and work has been undertaken with soil testing and securing scientific advice on this subject. Landscape architects Thomson Birrell P/L were appointed in 2014 and have gathered community ideas and outlined a preliminary concept. It is expected that a set of draft concepts will go on public exhibition before the end of 2015, with public guidance sought to refine the master plan.

The project was to be completed by the end of September 2015, but soil issues have moved the completion date out to December.

3 Natural Gas

In the lead up to the State Government election in November 2014, then Minister Terry Mulder announced funding for the supply and connection of natural gas for Terang among a number of Victorian towns. Contracts have been signed with Brookfield Infrastructure Group to truck natural gas from its 'mother' storage in Derrimut to 'daughter' storage facilities to be constructed on the outskirts of Terang. It has been reported that pricing of the natural gas delivered under this arrangement is to be comparable to gas delivered to other Victorians through conventional high-pressure pipes. A series of public meetings is to be held in Terang by Brookfield to inform locals of the status of project development, with construction on the storage facility reportedly to commence in Spring 2015.

Connection of natural gas is priority five in the Terang community plan. State Government was the identified agency, where the project task was one of advocacy. As noted by Mayor Chris O'Connor, this has been a long-term aspiration for Terang, championed by residents, businesses, Councillors and former Councillors for decades.

4 New Playground

A new playground for Terang was priority six on the list of 22 projects, with \$30,000 in Council seed-funding allocated through the community planning process. Council Facilities and Recreation staff led a community consultation process which delivered a \$150,000 project. Funds contributed by Terang Resources (\$20,000) and Terang Rotary Club (\$5,000) were combined with Council funding to secure a matching State Government grant of \$70,000. The new playground was opened in December 2014.

5 Footpaths and Drainage

Number 10 on the *Realising Terang* priority list was a program to improve footpath and drainage in Terang. The budgetary difficulty of fixing all these issues at once was acknowledged, however Council staff prepared an application to the National Stronger Regions Fund (Round 1) to finance a 'Connecting Corangamite' program to upgrade footpaths across the Shire. This application was not successful, however works have proceeded to address these issues in an incremental fashion.

The Terang Streetscape project (see below) has addressed major drainage issues in the town centre, as well as improving footpaths and connection across the Princes Highway and through the Avenue. New footpaths have been constructed elsewhere. One is being built on the northern side of the highway between Seymour Street and St Thomas School. Paths, outstands and pedestrian treatments have been completed in Dow Street to address the needs of Cooinda clients. Funding has been allocated to extend the Promenade footpath to connect with May Noonan Hostel.

6 Terang Children's Centre

Terang's new Children's Centre is nearing completion. Installation of buildings is being completed, leaving only the completion of car-parking, road works, landscaping and footpaths to finalise the \$1.94m project on the Dow Street corner of the Terang College site.

The concept of combining kindergarten, maternal and child health and playgroup function in a new facility was listed as Priority 11 in the Terang plan. Many individuals and organisations have come together to advocate for the Centre as well as contributing funds, including the Terang Kindergarten Committee (\$14,000), Corangamite Shire (\$1.15m), and the Victorian Government (\$776,000).

The new Centre has been designed to provide a consolidated space for four year old and three year old kindergarten, maternal and child health services, playgroup, parent groups, family support services, a community meeting area and space for visiting early year's services and professionals.

7 Terang Streetscape (Stages 1 and 2)

Following a troubled gestation period over several years and some funding setbacks arising out of contested opinions (mainly around the design of car-parking) the first two stages of the Terang Streetscape were completed and officially opened on 13 June 2014. The \$1.85m project was funded by Council and RDV over two years, \$902,000 in 2012-2013 and \$951,000 in 2013-2014, with VicRoads also contributing to the cost of asphaltting works.

The project achieved a major upgrade to drainage in the town centre to overcome annual flooding issues and greatly improved pedestrian access and circulation issues. Enlarged outstands and pedestrian connections across the highway enhanced the presentation of the shopping centre, as did extensive paving and landscaping works in the central median strip area. At the launch, Council and local businesses recorded their satisfaction with the conduct and quality of the works completed by R Slater & Sons.

Stage 3 of the Terang Streetscape is scheduled in Council's forward capital works plan for 2016-2017, and will concentrate on the south side of the highway.

8 More Seating

Priority 17 in the Terang Plan was to provide more seating in the town. This issue was addressed through the Streetscape project (see above), where existing seats were replaced and new seating and tables installed in the Avenue amongst new garden plantings.

9 War Memorial

The \$40,000 project to restore and upgrade Terang's War Memorial did not come up in the consultations around preparation of Terang's community plan, but was put forward later as part of the various proposals to commemorate the Anzac Centenary. Soundings were taken across the community to test whether community planning funds could be allocated to help secure the finance for this project. Support was widespread which allowed for an allocation of \$12,760 to top-up funding provided by the Federal and State Governments, Corangamite Shire, Terang Resources and Terang Progress Association. The project involved monument treatment, lighting and interpretive signage and was managed by Corangamite Shire on behalf of the community of Terang.

10 Public Art

Terang's 'Leaves in the Breeze' public art sculpture was unveiled on 13 October 2014, following a community-led selection and commissioning process leading to the appointment of sculptors Glen Manning and Kathy Daly of The Niche Design. It too was not a part of the community planning process, yet the project was firmly rooted in the engagement principles reflected in Council's Community Planning Initiative and outlined in the Council Plan 2013-17 (page 7). The project also contributed to the Streetscape project (listed above).

Policy and Legislative Context

Recognising the many benefits of community planning and supporting its delivery in the Shire is consistent with the following Council Plan 2013-2017 commitments:

Corangamite Shire's communities are welcoming and provide support and a sense of belonging. Council will work to improve and enhance community health, wellbeing and connectedness. Council has an important role in planning to ensure townships grow in a sustainable manner.

Provide opportunities to improve and enhance the health and wellbeing of our community.

Provide and advocate for a range of services, facilities and support to our people to enable them to fully engage and participate in the community.

Importantly, the Terang Community Plan process gives expression to Council's Values and Behaviour (page 3) embodied in the overriding principle applying across all themes in the Council Plan, namely the Cultural Change Program within Council and Council's 'commitment to continually improving the way we listen to our communities' (page 7).

Internal / External Consultation

Consultation and engagement activities to develop Terang's 10-year community plan, *Realising Terang*, occurred over the twelve month period from June 2012 to May 2013.

As noted in the report (page 16) there were a number of issues operating against successful community involvement at the time, and additional targeted initiatives were employed to broaden the demographic spread of inputs into the plan. Based on a town survey, a soapbox activity, meetings with community organisations, a Terang Primary School letter-writing project and an additional invited consultation, the Terang Plan was received by Council on 23 June 2013, with input from just under 200 people, an estimated 7.4 per cent of the adult population.

Financial and Resource Implications

This report is for information only and does not entail any recommendations relating to increased or reduced financial and other resources. The provision of more than \$100,000 in seed-funding by Council has provided the impetus and the means for the local community to identify and pursue projects to strengthen the Terang community, to build public participation in decision-making affecting Terang's future and to improve the liveability of the township through development projects.

Conclusion

The community of Terang has made remarkable progress over the first two years of its 10 year community plan, with works completed or proceeding on nine of the 22 listed priorities. The greater part of this progress is a product of Council's efforts to support and partner with the local community and other levels of government.

Community planning in Terang has been challenging, for a number of reasons, yet it has been very rewarding for the township in terms of progress on major projects. Much essential work on planning and financing projects remains invisible to most apart from those involved, yet is to be hoped that due recognition is conveyed given the commitment of Corangamite Shire and the many partners mentioned in this report who have come together to support the priorities outlined in Terang's Community Plan 2013-2023.

A review of the *Realising Terang* plan is scheduled for the first half of 2016. The timing will be established in consultation with local people, but will hopefully follow the completion of several major projects. The completion of these projects will provide unequivocal evidence of the value to communities of committing time and effort to Council's community planning initiative. This value not only relates to project outcomes for communities and for Council, but to the building of the trust which is essential to productive partnerships to enhance the liveability and prosperity of Terang.

Source: Extract from Minutes of Ordinary Council Meeting 22 September 2015