



A plan for
Simpson

Community priorities for township development
2012 to 2022

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Prepared by the community of Simpson for the community of Simpson with the assistance of Corangamite Shire's *Building Stronger Corangamite Communities* project – a partnership between the Department of Planning and Community Development and the Corangamite Shire to support communities to plan and implement improvements to their towns.

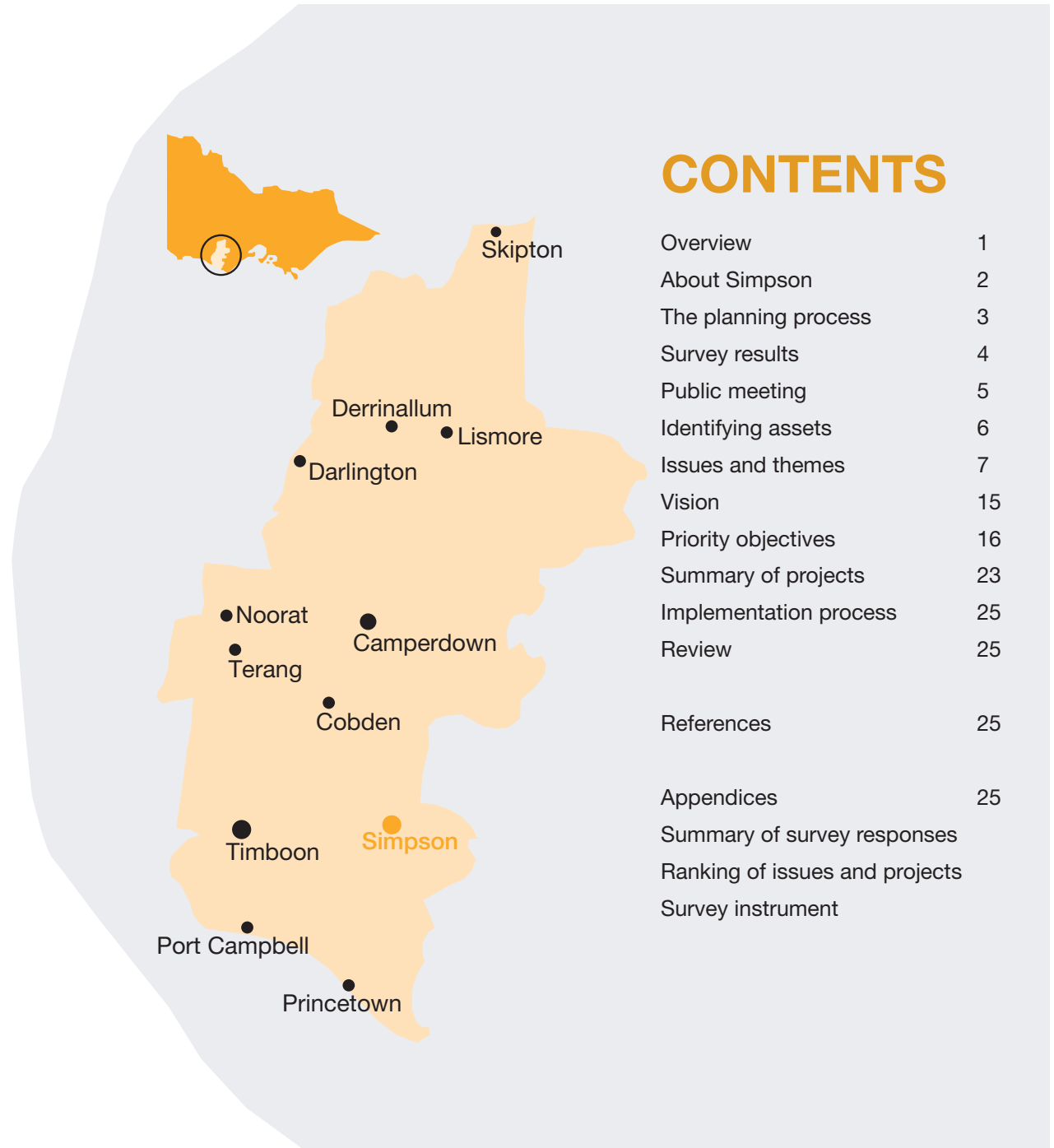


Overview

A Plan for Simpson is an outline of actions devised by the community to contribute to the liveability and future prosperity of Simpson. It outlines a range of initiatives to upgrade and extend sporting and other recreational facilities, to make improvements to town amenity and infrastructure and to support economic and business development, including through town promotion, tourism services and facilities.

Recommendations and priorities have been identified through a community survey and a public meeting. They range across six broad themes covering economic and business development, sport and recreation, tourism development, town amenity and liveability, roads streets and transport, health education and community services and an 'other' category. In all, there were 101 ideas for Simpson proposed, plus another 29 ideas for town promotion. Sixty-eight community members contributed their ideas to shape the Simpson Plan, including 27 public forum attendees and 51 survey participants. The ABS 2006 Census estimated the residential population of Simpson at 128, so although that does not take account of residents living in surrounding farming areas, it is a significant turnout by the local community.

An appreciative enquiry into those aspects of Simpson most valued by the community identified the local sense of community as a clear and outstanding priority – expressed in terms of pride of place and the friendly and supportive nature of country life. The quality of local community services and facilities is highly valued by the local community, and mention was also made of Simpson's proud history and the strong sense of belonging this engenders.



Overview (continued)

A Plan for Simpson includes a list of 26 priority development or improvement projects and an outline as to how they might be shaped, financed and implemented. Some are quite small in scale while others are dependent upon the actions of external agencies or the specific support of the State or Commonwealth. Many projects link closely to the work of Corangamite Shire, and a number of partnership activities is proposed.



Heytesbury Show

Development of an indoor sporting complex (including a gymnasium and swimming pool) heads the Simpson community's wish list, closely followed by the establishment of a high-quality function centre at the Simpson Recreation Reserve. The future of the Factory and connection to natural gas are also top of mind issues for the people of Simpson, along with new and improved walking tracks and footpaths.

Three top priorities were identified for township improvements – moving the Recreation Reserve gate to Tomahawk Creek Road, constructing the missing link between Fisher and Murrock Streets, and improved street lighting in a number of locations.

The two clear priorities for promoting Simpson were more signage at town entry points and a project to advertise 'What's on in Simpson'. Arranging media coverage of the Heytesbury Settlement, relocation of the Community Centre to a more prominent position (to include a tourist access centre), and longer trading hours for food and fuel outlets were identified as secondary priorities.

The idea of promoting the local food loop from the Simpson end also received strong support, as did the idea of creating rodeo and B&S events for Simpson.

This plan is a product of a community planning process initiated by Corangamite Shire as part of its Building Stronger Corangamite Communities project. Each of the proposed development projects can be expected to have impacts on other projects and they therefore need to be understood as part of a package of interrelated measures.

About Simpson

'As early as 1875 families were moving into the Timboon district, which was covered in scrub and timber' – so opens Hec Fisher's 1997 book *Heytesbury: Once in a lifetime*. Settlement into the forest continued through the 1920s and 30s under the 'Bailey Settlement Scheme', but was located mainly west of the Cobden-Port Campbell Road. Some early settlement occurred around Coorimungle and in the Newfield area, and along the Eastern Creek Road.

A number of these settler families played an important role in practically supporting plans to settle the Heytesbury Forest – which was then relatively untouched – following the Second World War.

The story of Simpson is inextricably tied to the Heytesbury Settlement Project of the 1960's and 70's, which had its origins in the Soldier Settlement Commission. Indeed the town was named after then Commission Chairman J L Simpson. The township of Simpson grew up around the site of the Commission's depot and administrative centre on the Cobden – Lavers Hill Road, established in 1956. In 1947 the Rural Finance Corporation commenced experiments on pasture development plots cleared from the Heytesbury Forest, and their success established the viability of the Heytesbury Project.

Settlement formally began with Len Botterell and Max Bramley taking up Lots 1 and 2 with their families in 1956. From 1960 to 1976 a further 376 blocks were allocated under the Land Settlement Act (1959). The story of the Settlement is well told by Fisher (1997), including details on the lives and everyday experience of pioneering farming families who built the thriving dairy industry which Simpson serves.

Community organisations

- Heytesbury Agricultural Society Inc
- Heytesbury and District Historical Society Inc
- Simpson and District Bowling Club
- Simpson and District Lions Club
- Simpson Cricket Club
- Simpson Football Netball Club
- Simpson Indoor Bowling Club
- Simpson Men's Shed
- Simpson Playgroup
- Simpson Public Hall
- Simpson Tennis Club
- Simpson Car Club
- Simpson Recreation Reserve Committee
- Simpson Dancing School
- Church Groups
- Catholic Women's League
- Uniting Church Ladies Guild

Church Groups

- Catholic Women's League
- Uniting Church Ladies Guild



County map, Heytesbury, c 1885

Community services and facilities

- Simpson & District Community Centre Inc
- Simpson Kindergarten Inc
- Simpson Maternal & Child Health Care Centre
- Simpson Primary School
- Simpson Recreation Reserve
- Simpson Rural Fire Brigade
- Family Day Care
- Simpson Playgroup

About Simpson (continued)

The early years of hardship, challenge and limited means have given way to a highly productive and prosperous farming industry. The children of the pioneering families which took up the first farms have grown up, had their own children and in turn have become grandparents. Some have moved away and the local population is now much reduced, but history is close to memory in the Settlement. Many descendants now operate larger, consolidated farms, often employing off-farm workers for seasonal or specialist tasks.

The Kraft Factory once provided significant local employment. The factory site is presently owned by Warrnambool Cheese and Butter P/L and currently leased to National Foods, which has announced plans to move operations to Tasmania in the near future. Simpson is still a social centre for the surrounding farming community, now providing education, health, recreation, retail, and farm supplies and services.



Early photo of Heytesbury Settlement



Farmers Market



Heytesbury Show

Businesses

Apostle Whey Cheese
Cecil Transport
Chris Walsh Electrical
D & D Shawcross Relief Milking
E & RA Parlour & Co Hardware
and Farm Supplies
George Jordan Livestock Carrier
GORGE Chocolates
Gum Valley Patchwork
Hawkes Transport
Heytesbury Fertilisers
Heytesbury Handyman
Heytesbury Stockfeeds
Ian White Electrical
Jenngard Busline
Kennedys Creek Beef

Mark Benton Machinery Repairs
Murray- Goulburn Trading Pty Ltd
NA & P J Newcome P/L Electrical
National Foods
Poustie Contracting
Settlement Supermarket
SIM-ENG Metal Fabricators
Simpson Hotel/ Motel
Simpson Newsagency/ Post Office
Simpson takeaway
Spencer Beecher Contracting
PR & KE Treble Agricultural Contractors
Vogels Motors
Wagstaff Contracting
Wayne Green Handyman

The Planning Process

The *Building Stronger Corangamite Communities* project sets out to develop community plans for the Shire's 12 townships. These are plans developed by each local community, for the community, and owned by the local community.

The project manages and facilitates an inclusive process that helps communities identify local priorities, set short, medium and long term goals and work with the Corangamite Shire Council and other levels of government to achieve them.

It provides structure, support, advice and administrative assistance to communities so that they can come to a consensus about what they value most about where they live and to work towards their preferred future.

As well as steering the development of local public assets, events and services, plans made by communities will also serve as a decision tool for Corangamite Council to better meet local needs and aspirations.

The creation of community plans is designed to build capacity within local communities. The process design relies on making best use of deep local knowledge, talents and skills to scope and implement local projects, and as necessary, to identify opportunities to access funding and other resources to implement priority projects.

This includes the establishment of relationships within and beyond communities and working with the Council on an ongoing basis.

There is no one planning model – the project is experimental and communities will shape their own process – however each plan will observe some fundamental principles. They will be inclusive of as many voices in the community as possible and seek to reflect local demographics, and transparent in the way priorities are identified and decided upon.

The Simpson community planning process commenced in July 2011, with soundings of some local residents, service agencies and business owners. This process did not lead to a ready identification of an organisational model which could link directly into an existing community organisation, and so it fell to the project to initiate a survey process to assemble community ideas to inform the proposed plan.

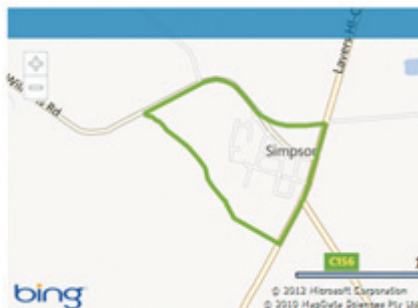
Michelle and Adrian Fratantaro from the Settlement Supermarket/Newsagency and Post Office agreed to become to

focal point for Simpson in the distribution and collection of the community survey, supported by Debbie Smith at the Simpson and District Community Centre Inc. Progress was slow, and the initial survey distributed collected only 15 responses.

By November a small survey group had been assembled, and the group's advice was to simplify the survey down to one question – 'What does Simpson need?' the group actively sought out links into local networks and community organisations, including the School, securing an overall response of 51 written surveys.

The group met again in January and finalised arrangements for the community meeting on the date and at the time and venue it selected – 7 February 2012 and 7.30pm at the Simpson Recreation Reserve. Catering was arranged by the Simpson Lions Club. The Public Meeting was promoted through the local community and through local newspaper advertisements.

Demographic profile



Simpson: Selected demographic data, ABS, Census of population and Housing, 2006

Key statistics

Simpson 2006

Usual residence data	number	%	Regional Victoria
Males	80	51.9	49.2
Females	74	48.1	50.8
Total population	154	100.0	100.0
Australian citizens	146	94.8	91.4
Australian citizens aged 18+	107	69.5	68.2
Indigenous population	6	3.9	1.2

Age structure

Simpson 2006

Usual residence data	number	%	Regional Victoria
Infants 0 to 4 years	24	14.8	6.1
Children 5 to 17 years	21	13.0	18.9
Adults 18 to 64 years	90	55.6	59.1
Mature adults 65 to 84 years	24	14.8	14.0
Senior citizens 85 years+	3	1.9	1.9
Total persons	162	100.0	100.0

Birthplace

Simpson 2006

Usual residence data	number	%	Regional Victoria
Australia	140	88.6	84.3
Overseas born	15	9.5	10.0
Mainly English speaking countries	9	5.7	5.0
Non-English speaking backgrounds	6	3.8	5.0
Total persons	158	100.0	100.0

Education

Simpson 2006

Usual residence data	number	%	Regional Victoria
Attending pre-school or primary school	18	47.4	35.5
Attending secondary school	6	15.8	24.9
Attending a tertiary institution	7	18.4	13.3
Total persons attended an education institute	38	100.0	100.00

Demographic profile

Families

Simpson 2006

Usual residence data	number	%	Regional Victoria
Couple without child(ren)	13	31.0	40.7
Couple with child(ren)	18	42.9	42.7
One parent family	11	26.2	15.4
Total families	42	100.0	100.0

Dwelling structure

Simpson 2006

Enumerated data	number	%	Regional Victoria
Separate house	59	88.1	74.5
Medium density	0	0.0	8.3
High density	0	0.0	0.1
Caravans, cabin, houseboat	0	0.0	1.0
Other	3	4.5	0.4
Not stated	0	0.0	0.0
Occupied private dwellings	62	92.5	84.3
Unoccupied dwellings	5	7.5	15.7
Total dwellings	67	100.0	100.0

Labour force

Simpson 2006

Usual residence data	number	%	Regional Victoria
Total employed	65	87.8	94.4
Total unemployed	9	12.2	5.6
Total labour force	74	100.0	100.0

Housing tenure

Simpson 2006

Enumerated data	number	%	Regional Victoria
Owned	26	40.6	38.8
Purchasing	20	31.3	32.4
Renting	18	28.1	22.4
Total dwellings (OPDs)	64	100.0	100.0

Proficiency in

English (overseas born)

Simpson 2006

Usual residence data	number	%	Regional Victoria
Speaks English only	9	100.0	68.1
Speaks English well or not very well	0	0.0	25.2
Not fluent in English	0	0.0	5.5
Total overseas born	9	100.0	100.0

Religion

Simpson 2006

Usual residence data	number	%	Regional Victoria
Christian Total	108	69.7	64.9
Non Christian Total	0	0.0	2.1
No Religion	31	20.0	21.6
Total persons	155	100.0	100.0

Public Meeting

The community of Simpson came out in force on Tuesday evening 7 February 2012 to participate in a planning forum held at the Simpson Recreation Reserve.

Results of the community survey conducted over the past three months were presented, with community members adding a further 13 proposals to the list of 88 ideas for Simpson and the 45 suggestions for town improvements.

The meeting also heard an outline of 29 ideas for promoting Simpson and encouraging more visitors to the town, before voting on the priorities to be included in the Simpson Community Plan.



Identifying assets

An exercise was conducted at the public meeting to identify those attributes of Simpson which are most valued by the local community. This was couched in terms of 'What's the best thing about Simpson?'

Seven groups of three or four people were each asked to list three things they value about Simpson which need to be retained into the future. Some had difficulty limiting themselves to just three things.

What valued assets need to be retained?		
Table	Verbatim commentary	Summary
1	Very attractive town, a town with a proud history, being part of a close tight knit community	Attractiveness, History, Community
2	small businesses, family environment, community spirit, our history and keeping it for future generations	Businesses, Families, Community History
3	location, close to regional centre and coast, safe and secure area for kids to grow up, excellent community facilities, school, kindergarten, childcare, maternal, community spirit and support, history	Location, Community Facilities, Community support
4	close knit community, friendly environment, as lions, great pride in school, kindergarten, prospering our young people	Community, Friendly, Pride in young people
5	history, the social belonging, social events that go with history, sportint events and facilities, community facilities and services, quiet country life we enjoy	History, belonging, social events, sporting events, Community facilities, Country life
6	A strong sense of community, Pride we all take in everything, Amenities and facilities, unique history	Community, Pride, Facilities and amenities, History
7	great school, kindergarten and playgroup, tourist parks, community spirit, sporting groups, lions club and others, great shopping and facilities, great services, we service a large area, cheap housing/ small mortgages, employment opportunities	Facilities for young people, Tourist facilities, Community Sporting groups, Community groups, Shopping facilities, Services location/catchment, Low housing costs

Identifying assets (continued)

What valued assets need to be retained?

Summary of mentions Count

Community: Community spirit, community support, sense of community, Community groups, Social events	8
Facilities and services: Community facilities, Facilities for young people, Tourist facilities, Shopping facilities, businesses	7
History: History, belonging	4
Friendly: Friendly, Family friendly, Country life	4
Location	2
Sport	2
Pride (in young people)	2
Attractive town	2
Low cost housing	1



Issues and themes

What does Simpson need and how can Simpson be improved?

What's needed?	Broad themes	Survey (15 years and under)	Survey (16 years plus)	
Q1	Moving forward	Businesses, shops and economic development	71%	71%
		Sport and recreation	58%	58%
		Tourism development and promotion	17%	17%
		Walking tracks	20%	20%
Q2	In the longer term	Businesses, Shops and Economic development	61%	44%
		Sport and recreation	59%	35%
		Tourism development and promotion	27%	56%
		Walking tracks	0%	22%
Q3	In the short term	Street furniture and lighting	70%	38%
		Businesses, shops and Economic development	22%	13%
		Sport and recreation	17%	-
		Town Signage	17%	17%
		Natural environment	0%	13%
		Walking tracks	-	21%
		Tourism	-	34%
		Cleanliness and town amenity	-	8%
Q4	Improvements	Street furniture and lighting	5%	17%
		Businesses, shops and economic development	50%	17%
		Sport and recreation	35%	-
		Town Signage	0%	11%
		Natural environment	20%	11%
		Walking tracks	-	4%
		Tourism	-	61%
		Cleanliness and town amenity	-	28%

What does Simpson need and how can Simpson be improved?

	What's needed?	Broad themes	Survey (15 years and under)	Survey (16 years plus)
Q5	To promote Simpson	Advertising Improved signage More tourism services More retail	84% 16\$ 11% 11%	54% 39% 31% 23%
Q6	To encourage more visitors	Advertising Improved signage More tourism services More retail	40% 5% 40% 25%	73% 9% 37% 18%



Priority objectives

Priority	Development/improvements projects	Survey A	Survey B	Voting	'Gold'
1	Better town entry signage/ Welcome at four entrances/exits of town highlighting services available/ Install large advertising sign to promote all functions and events/ Advertise local businesses on signboard into town / Better signage for tourist attractions/ Advertise 'Last food and fuel before 12 Apostles'		10	30	3
2	Indoor sporting complex/ including gym, pool		19	23	4
3	Make/ improve walking/ bike tracks around Simpson/ Build bush walking track through back of School		16	17	
4	Retain, takeover/ re-purpose Kraft Factory		5	19	3
5	Dirt bike track/ Motorbike Club			21	2
6	Move Recreation Reserve gate to Tomahawk Creek Road			18	
7	Promote gourmet food loop from Simpson end/ Promote and advertise local foods			18	
8	Connect to natural gas		9	12	2
9	Establish fully-licensed high-quality Function Centre at Recreation Reserve to cater for up 150 people			16	6
10	Build more/ improve footpaths/ Build footpath from Bowls Corner to Kinder, also from Vogel's Motors to the road		3	14	

Survey A refers to mentions by persons of 15 years of Age or under

Survey B refers to mentions by persons of 16 years of Age or over

Voting refers to 'sticker votes' applied at public meeting

'Gold' refers to the one priority each voter wants to see addressed

Priority objectives

Priority	Development/improvements projects	Survey A	Survey B	Voting	'Gold'
11	Rodeo and B&S type events for Simpson			15	
12	Connect Fisher Street to Murrock Street as per town plans			14	
13	More/ better street lighting (at the back of town/ central park, solar back-up)		9	10	1
14	Advertise 'What's on at Simpson'			10	2
15	Accommodation / Motel/ B& B/ Cabins/ Camping facilities/ Create caravan sites at the Football ground		9	9	
16	Organise media coverage on Heytesbury Settlement with website blog			9	
17	Get young people involved in Simpson's future			9	
18	Longer trading hours for food and fuel stops			8	
19	Community Centre relocated to more central position and include tourist information/ access centre			8	
20	Install zebra crossing from toilet block to ball and chain	8			
21	Consolidate the housing of community organisations in combined premises/ Buy Uniting Church for community use/ More visible location		6	3	
22	Establish Op Shop and recycling centre		3	6	
23	Establish a sit down/ eat in Cafe/ Bakery		6	1	
24	Improve access to internet services			6	
25	Better public toilets at Recreation Reserve			6	
26	Seal Murrock Street to Polonia Road			6	

Survey A refers to mentions by persons of 15 years of Age or under

Survey B refers to mentions by persons of 16 years of Age or over

Voting refers to 'sticker votes' applied at public meeting

'Gold' refers to the one priority each voter wants to see addressed

Summary of projects

Projects relating to the 26 priority objectives can be summarised into five categories. The first of these are projects which can be included within the Building Stronger Corangamite Communities initiative.

A second category concerns those initiatives which will need to be implemented through a Community/ Council partnership.

Works associated with the formal responsibilities of Corangamite Shire council make up a Third category.

Two projects relating to State and Commonwealth government responsibilities make up a fourth category.

A fifth category concerns those initiatives which will essentially depend upon the business decisions of private commercial interests or possibly through some social enterprise initiative.

Category 1 projects (BSCC)

		2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
1	Better town entry signage/ Welcome at four entrances/ exits of town highlighting services available/ Install large advertising sign to promote all functions and events/ Advertise local businesses on signboard into town / Better signage for tourist attractions/ Advertise 'Last food and fuel before 12 Apostles'	\$10,000	\$4,000	
2	Dirt bike track/ Motorbike Club	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$1,000
3	Promote gourmet food loop from Simpson end/ Promote and advertise local foods	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
4	Rodeo and B&S type events for Simpson	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
5	Advertise 'What's on at Simpson'		\$1,000	\$1,000
6	Organise media coverage on Heytesbury Settlement with website blog			
7	Get young people involved in Simpson's future			
8	Community Centre relocated to more central position and include tourist information/ access centre			
9	Consolidate the housing of community organisations in combined premises/ Buy Uniting Church for community use/ More visible location			
10	Establish Op Shop and recycling centre			
		\$15,000	\$10,000	\$5,000

Summary of projects

Category 2 projects will involve a partnership where community advocates of the four proposed projects will need to work alongside Council staff to make plans to further develop local recreational facilities.

These projects all involve the use of public land managed by the Council directly or through a Council-appointed management committee. Whereas project 3 is relatively straightforward, the other three projects are substantial initiatives which will require complex planning before funding might be secured.

There is potential for the pool project to be included in the proposed feasibility study proposed to be undertaken in Timboon in association with the Timboon Health Service.

Category 3 projects involve improvements which will need to be included in the Corangamite Shire Works budget over the next 10 years. Some are minor in nature and could be readily implemented, whereas others will involve significant outlays.

Projects 1 and 3 will rely on advice from the community regarding the identification of priorities which might be addressed in a rolling work schedule spanning a number of years.

Category 2 projects (BSCC)

1	Indoor sporting complex/ including gym, pool
2	Make/ improve walking/ bike tracks around Simpson/ Build bush walking track through back of School
3	Move Recreation Reserve gate to Tomahawk Creek Road
4	Establish fully-licensed high-quality Function Centre at Recreation Reserve to cater for up to 150 people

Category 3 projects (BSCC)

1	Build more/ improve footpaths/ Build footpath from Bowls Corner to Kinder, also from Vogel's Motors to the road
2	Connect Fisher Street to Murrock Street as per town plans
3	More/ better street lighting (at the back of town/ central park, solar back-up)
4	Install zebra crossing from toilet block to ball and chain
5	Better public toilets at Recreation Reserve
6	Seal Murrock Street to Polonia Road

Summary of projects

The two projects listed in category 4 relate to the responsibilities of State and Commonwealth governments. Recent advice regarding the structural separation of Telstra suggests that substantial improvement to local internet access will be achieved in a relatively short timeframe with the rollout of the NBN fibre and fixed wireless plans, although access in areas bordering the Otways may be of a lesser standard than that enjoyed by larger towns.

The case for township connection to natural gas already provided to the National Foods factory might be examined through the feasibility study proposed to be undertaken in regard to Timboon and perhaps other Corangamite towns.

National Foods announced move of local factory operations to Burnie in Tasmania within the next three years is a significant concern for Simpson residents, who would like to see some work done on the takeover, retention or re-purposing on the former Kraft factory currently owned by the Warrnambool Cheese and Butter Factory Co Ltd.

Like the other 3 projects listed in Category 5, it is recognised that such initiatives are essentially dependant on the business decisions of private commercial interests. Projects 2 and 4 could potentially be initiated through some social enterprise arrangement by local community interests.

Category 4 projects (State and federal governments)

1	Connect to natural gas
2	Improve access to internet services

Category 5 projects (Private commercial interests)

1	Retain, takeover/ re-purpose Kraft Factory
2	Accommodation / Motel/ B& B/ Cabins/ Camping facilities/ Create caravan sites at the Football ground
3	Longer trading hours for food and fuel stops
4	Establish a sit down/ eat in Cafe/ Bakery

Implementation process

A priority goal of the *Building Stronger Corangamite Communities* initiative is to strengthen communities through the establishment of linkages within communities, between community organisations, and between local communities and government agencies, including local government.

Development of local capacity may be achieved through the sharing and utilisation of talents and skills within the community as well as linkages to expertise not readily accessible to local organisations. This will include access to assistance from local and State government agencies to seek out financial and other resources to support local initiatives.

The implementation of the projects outlined in this plan will seek to support and strengthen local organisations, not the least through activation of local interest and involvement in projects deemed to be of high priority by the local community.

References

ABS, Census 2006, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

Hec Fisher (1997) Heytesbury: Once in a lifetime, Spectrum Publications P/L, Melbourne

Rosamund Duruz, (1974) Death of a Forest: A Story of the Heytesbury Shire, Lowden, Kilmore, Victoria

Appendices

Summary of survey responses

Ranking of issues and projects

Survey instrument



Review

It is proposed to review *A Plan for Simpson 2012-22* after a period of two years, perhaps towards the end of 2013 or early 2014, to assess project achievements against objectives and to formulate revised objectives as required.