

# **PORT CAMPBELL COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE - 22 March 2016**

## **Summary**

This report provides advice to Council on progress in implementation of Port Campbell's community plan – Port Campbell Action Plan.

## **Introduction**

The Port Campbell Community Plan was scheduled for preparation in 2014, as part of the Building Stronger Corangamite Communities initiative; a partnership between the Corangamite Shire and the State Government of Victoria. At the request of the newly-formed Port Campbell Progress Group, this work was brought forward so that it could serve as an agreed 'Action Plan' for the town, which would provide Port Campbell with a united voice and bring the community together in pursuit of some shared goals and projects. A survey was conducted in 2012 along with some public meetings, leading to the setting of community priorities on 23 January 2013. That process involved an estimated 40 per cent of the adult population of Port Campbell. The Port Campbell Action Plan was finalised in March and presented to Council in April 2013. Council seed-funding towards the Plan became available in July 2013.

The process of Plan formulation achieved some important milestones for Port Campbell, in that it brought together many local interests to transparently arrive at a common appreciation of the unique 'village' community and outstanding environmental attributes such as the ocean, the beach and the National Park, that give Port Campbell its compelling identity and charm. Most of the 30 top project proposals arising from the planning process link back to this notion of valuing 'place'. The wider interests that define Port Campbell as a tourism destination have made for additional complexity in implementing those priority projects identified by the local community.

An update on Port Campbell's community plan was provided to Council on 24 March 2015. This report provides advice on further progress, prior to the scheduled review of Port Campbell Action Plan priorities in the latter part of 2016.

In line with community development fundamentals, most progress has been made where partnerships have been formed between the community and Council. In Port Campbell's case, these partnerships have been demonstrably mutually beneficial and have improved outcomes and strengthened relationships across a range of organisations, businesses and agencies.

Another key community development outcome has been the maturation of the Port Campbell Progress organisation, which has managed leadership transitions, inclusion of additional interests and strong meeting attendances founded on sound and consistent community consultation practices. 'The Progress', now in its fifth year, continues to provide a forum for raising and representing community issues as well as supporting township initiatives.

## **Issues**

The proximity of Port Campbell to the Twelve Apostles and its nature as a 'tourist town' gives rise to complex issues for the township community. Balancing commercial and environmental values was one of the most obvious ones raised through the formulation of Port Campbell's community plan. Another issue is planning for the township itself, where the limited capacity of local residents to influence broad-scale planning strategy and decisions of the State and its agencies has provided delays, obstacles and frustrations to achieving larger-scale community project aspirations. The divided land tenure within and around Port Campbell assigned to Parks Victoria and Council provides another layer of complexity, so that a local solution to financing the upgrade of foreshore and streetscape amenity, for example, is also

complex. Extending the Rail Trail and improving public transport services are other examples where action by local influences has yet to achieve their stated goals.

Whereas the issues listed above have discouraged some community members, others are still at work on overcoming these difficulties. Members and sub-committees of Port Campbell Progress are also working on those projects which they can directly influence.

The value or of the Port Campbell Action Plan can be assessed with reference to two types of outcomes; community development outcomes and project/development outcomes. It can be observed that these different kind of outcomes accompany each other, hand in hand.

#### Soldiers Memorial

The repair and upgrading of access to the Port Campbell Soldiers Memorial was not envisaged in the original Action Plan, but became a township priority in the lead up to commemorations for the 'Centenary of ANZAC'. This was a remarkable community project on many counts – many believed it was an impossible one in the available timeframe – and a credit to everyone involved. The Memorial is a 'Soldiers Memorial' not a 'War Memorial' and it holds special significance to the Port Campbell community, and longer-term residents in particular. Established as a sub-committee of Port Campbell Progress, the Project Committee received strong support by local volunteers and tradespeople, the RSL and Council officers, as well as financial contributions from local people, Origin Energy, the Commonwealth and the Shire. Those who were privileged to attend the opening ceremony on 24 April 2015 and the subsequent community function witnessed the satisfaction of members of the local community in respectfully acknowledging those who have gone before them. Others can read the printed account of the project and those who contributed to it.

#### Arts Hub

The community of Port Campbell has retained its oldest building – the little wooden Old Baptist Church – by relocating it to the town's Public Purposes Reserve and refurbishing it as an Arts Hub. This \$275,000 project was made possible through leveraging Council seed-funding provided to obtain an \$180,000 State grant. The building itself was generously donated to the community by the Baptist Church, as part of its own refurbishment plans. The old church has been given a new lease on life with a restoration incorporating a new roof, weatherboard cladding and new wooden arched windows. Council assisted the community to obtain necessary approvals and in meeting regulatory requirements. Following years of detailed planning and negotiation to rescue the old building, the Arts Hub is now nearing completion, providing local artists with a venue to display to visitors a range of artworks inspired by the Port Campbell National Park and Southern Ocean. (It has already been booked for two weddings.)

#### 'Celluloid by the Sea' film festival

Planning is advanced for the running of the third Celluloid by the Sea Film Festival on 21-22 May 2015. This follows on from the success of the second festival last year, which was a celebration of the Port Campbell community and the town's history. The event was well supported by local community groups, including the Surf Club and Board Riders Association. Both festivals have enjoyed the support of the Corangamite Shire and its mobile cinema equipment.

#### Town Entry signage

Seed-funding was been allocated to this project back in 2013, however initial work on the design of this project lost impetus. Since then a town survey has been conducted and some decisions arrived at regarding the form, content and location of simple signage structures. Another dimension of this project was to come up with a 'design language' for other way-finding and interpretive signage in Port Campbell, but that scope now overlaps with the potential broader project of upgrading the towns streetscape and foreshore.

### Way-finding signage review

A sub-committee of the Progress Group worked with VicRoads and the Port Campbell Visitor Information Centre to carry out a review of the town's signage. VicRoads has used this work as a model for other Victorian communities to follow. The idea was that the recommended changes would be implemented progressively, as funding became available. Those funds are still awaited, and it may be that this necessary work will be given some priority through the Shipwreck Coast Master Plan implementation process.

### Walking Trails

Work on the Port Campbell community's top project priority, the establishment of a series of connected walking trails, has been captured in the Shipwreck Coast Master Plan (SCMP). The Port Campbell community engaged with the project's consultants, McGregor Coxall P/L, in a joint planning workshop to ensure that these trails (and their alignment) are now documented in the SCMP. The inclusion of this project in the SCMP will make for fewer regulatory obstacles when the opportunity arises to commence work on these trails.

### Suspension Bridge

The Port Campbell community is undertaking work to advance this third priority in the Port Campbell Action Plan, in partnership with Council and other parties. The project has strategic alignments with the Shipwreck Coast Master Plan and the proposed Twelve Apostles Trail. That this work is occurring and crucial partnerships have been formed to advance this project is a demonstration of community planning principles in action. Further discussions are required with Parks Victoria.

### **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 Port Campbell Action Plan process gives expression to Council's Values and Behaviour 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'.

### **Internal / External Consultation**

The matters outlined in this report are an outcome of extensive and ongoing community consultation. They include several public meetings, establishment of community working groups, regular meetings of community organisations, surveys of local opinion and articles in The Beacon newsletter.

### **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 \$50,000 in initial seed-funding by Council provided the impetus and the means for the local community to identify and pursue projects to strengthen the Port Campbell community, to build public participation in decision-making affecting Port Campbell's future and to improve the liveability of the township through development projects. The community of Port Campbell has also secured significant external funding to contribute to community projects, by itself and in partnership with Council.

**Conclusion**

The community of Port Campbell has made important progress on its township priorities. While the necessity to engage in wider planning processes has limited progress on other key priorities, important groundwork has been laid for future action. In the meantime, the Port Campbell Action Plan has brought about significant achievements in regard to local community development.

**Source: Extract from Minutes of Ordinary Council Meeting 22 March 2016**