



A plan for Skipton

Community priorities for township development 2013 - 2023

Prepared for the community of Skipton 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.



August 2013

OVERVIEW

This plan is a product of community consideration of three questions: What aspects of Skipton are most valued and need to be maintained and protected, What things need to be improved or changed? , and What needs to be created in Skipton to make it a more prosperous and liveable place? *A Plan for Skipton* outlines a set of initiatives which local residents see as important to Skipton's future, to be implemented over the next 10 years.

The planning process involved a written community survey (which drew 43 completed responses), a public 'Soapbox event' on 8 May 2013 (attended by 15 people), a Public Forum on 26 June 2013 (attended by 21 people), and a public Project Selection meeting on 29 July 2013 (attended by 25 people). In all, a minimum of 48 different people or 10.6 per cent of Skipton's estimated residential population of 452 (ABS Census 2011) participated in at least one of these three engagement activities.

Efforts were made to secure the involvement of a broad demographic (across age and gender), including an online version of the survey, but these met with limited success. Towards the end of the consultation cycle some of these absent voices were drawn into the conversation, but ultimately the actions represented in this plan have been mainly shaped by the older (and predominately female) members of the Skipton community. This plan might best be taken as a promising start to a community development process which will increase involvement and participation as it gathers momentum. Opportunities are available to involve more young people, more men and more adults in their middle years as listed projects are planned, scoped and implemented.

After the trauma of the floods, protracted assessments and reviews, recovery projects and rebuilding, Skipton residents might well have endured enough of 'planning' and 'consultation', yet the town is recovering its optimism. Community-minded Skipton residents are excited about the prospect of achieving long-held aspirations to improve local conditions and to develop key attributes of the town, in time for the town's 175th anniversary celebrations next year.

CONTENTS

Overview
History
Demographics
The planning process
The Soapbox
The Survey
Identifying assets
Public meetings
Issues and themes
Vision
Priorities
Implementation
Review



References
Appendices
Survey instrument
Ranking of issues and projects
Summary of survey responses
Detailed survey and voting results



This is the tenth plan to be developed as part of the *Building Stronger Corangamite Communities* project, which aims to produce a plan for each of Corangamite Shire's 12 towns.

The progress of these and other projects will depend upon the active involvement of community members, but many will also depend on the establishment of effective dialogue between and partnerships with community organisations, Corangamite Shire and the State Government and its agencies. Some projects will be dependent on the decisions of private business interests and/or commercial investment.

Recommendations and priorities listed in this plan have been identified through a community survey and three public meetings.

The plan also draws upon the work of individuals and community organisations. Further meetings and forums are foreshadowed to develop the scope of listed projects, as part of a continuous planning process which will create further opportunities for involvement and partnership formation.



The community planning process unearthed 117 ideas for Skipton, ranging across eight broad themes: Town development and maintenance; Town promotion; Town appearance and amenity; Access, safety and roads; Recreation and sport; Provision of services; and Business, industry and economic development.

A total of 20 projects have been identified across these themes,

which need to be scoped, costed, scheduled and implemented over the next 10 years. Of these 20 projects, five have been selected for early implementation. These are:

- Development of the Rail Trail terminus in Skipton,*
- Completing the long-standing Town Entrance Signage project,*

- Planting more trees and improving the town's landscaping,*
- Attracting more business and industry, and*
- Developing a Camping area and some limited caravan parking facilities adjacent to the Skipton Swimming Pool site.*



<p>HISTORY</p> <p>Skipton takes its name from the eponymous North Yorkshire market town on the River Aire, which wears a compound title derived from the Old English <i>scaep</i> (sheep) and <i>tun</i> (town). The name ‘sheeptown’ turned out to be a fitting one for the Antipodean Skipton, as the town built its early reputation on fine merino wool production and helped Australia play its part in restructuring rural life in Scotland and northern England.</p> <p>Skipton lies 52 kilometres south of Ballarat and 166 kilometres west of Melbourne on the Glenelg Highway’s strategic bridge over Mount Emu Creek.</p>	<p>The township is set on the banks of the river, which rises to the north of Beaufort and meets the Hopkins River just above Hopkins Falls to the north of Warrnambool. This land was of great significance to the aboriginal peoples of the district, including the local <i>Djab wurrong</i> tribe, for the food and wildlife it supported. Semi-permanent settlements were established around these rivers in the autumn as the clans gathered for the annual eel migration.</p> <p>Pastoral settlement in Skipton dates from 1839 when three inevitable Scotsmen, Alexander Anderson, William Wright and James Montgomerie settled on land by the Emu Creek in what is now the Skipton township.</p>	<p>They called their run ‘Bamgamie”, and built a hut on high ground at a place where it was possible to ford the creek. This spot is now marked with a cairn in Stewart Park. Over time Bamgamie was divided, firstly into ‘Baangal’ and ‘Langi Willi’, and later subdivided again into ‘Banongill’, ‘Borriyalloak’, ‘Mt Widderin’ and ‘Mooramong’.</p> <p>The township of Skipton was surveyed in 1852, following the separation of the State of Victoria from New South Wales in 1850. Its first Post Office opened in 1858, a year before Skipton held the first Agricultural Show in Western Victoria.</p>	<p>The early settlement of the area was characterised by vast land holdings by influential and sometime dynastic families. Mt Bute station, for example, was originally 63,000 acres in area, running 56,000 sheep in 1845. After the Great War, with its absentee landlord living in England, the then 43,000 acre estate was broken up in 1921 for Soldier Settlement – a total 123 allotments ranging in size from 279 to 789 acres. Tales of these times are of struggle to extract a living in trying conditions. Over the years farming has diversified, producing fat lambs, cattle, canola, wheat, oats and barley in addition to wool.</p>
---	---	--	---



Mount Emu Creek provides water and habitat to sustain abundant wildlife, and Skipton has chosen to style itself as 'home of the platypus'. Native birds include magpies, corellas, hawks, eagles, pardalotes, ducks and swans. Kangaroos, wallabies, platypus and a variety of farm animals can be found around the creek and across the surrounding land.

Included within the town boundary of Skipton is 'The Skipton Common'. Based on the English model, it is a 75 acre parcel of land that supports some cattle and horse grazing, but its most interesting aspect is the wide range of native grasses and wildflowers indigenous to the area.

The Skipton Rose Show is held in November on the first Saturday following the running of the Melbourne Cup.

From the earliest records of European settlement Skipton has been affected by flooding. Substantial floods were recorded in 1896, 1909, 1924 and 1933. Skipton experienced significant impact from flood events in September 2010 and again in the record flood event of January 2011. Homes and commercial buildings within the township experienced above floor flooding and debris damage, and the Glenelg Highway was closed.



Skipton flood, 1896

The *Skipton Flood Investigation Study* was completed in 2013. It describes five major sub-catchments and other tributaries which converge on Skipton in what is described as a 'partially confined channel'. As for other historic riverside towns, this landform



More than sheep in common: 1908 flood, Skipton Canal, UK. The West Riding town experienced flash flooding again in 1912.

determines a recurrent destiny. Short of implementing schemes to assist in relocating assets from the flood plain, Skipton remains exposed to the risk of future flood damage. Apart from the proposed early warning systems, low-lying land has been rezoned to guide and limit future development in flood-prone areas.

Sport and recreation are an important part of life for Skipton and District residents. The town has well-developed assets in the Recreation Reserve (home to the 'The Emus' in the Central Highlands Football Netball League), Stewart Park, Jubilee Park, Skipton Golf and Bowls Club, and the walking/ cycling Rail Trail which runs between Ballarat and Skipton.

DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the ABS Census 2011, the Urban Centre Locality (UCL) of Skipton had an estimated residential population of 452 people, a decrease of about 6.2 per cent on the recorded population of 482 in 2006. The 2011 count is almost the same as the population recorded for Skipton in 1996 – 453, but this count may have more to do with methodology than the recording of any genuine trend.

Skipton’s population has declined against historical records,

1966 – 536 people

1954 – 515 people

1933 – 535 people

reflecting a general population decline in the rural agricultural regions of Corangamite Shire.

Underscoring the declining population profile, the proportion of 5 to 9 year-olds is half the State average. While the average proportion of infants and young teenagers is comparable, Skipton generally has fewer people across the middle years from 15 to 39 years.

<u>Age</u>	<u>Skipton (L)</u>		<u>Victoria</u>		<u>Australia</u>	
		<u>%</u>		<u>%</u>		<u>%</u>
<i>People</i>						
0-4 years	26	5.8	344,733	6.4	1,421,050	6.6
5-9 years	16	3.5	326,121	6.1	1,351,921	6.3
10-14 years	27	6.0	327,939	6.1	1,371,054	6.4
15-19 years	20	4.4	345,339	6.5	1,405,798	6.5
20-24 years	14	3.1	375,108	7.0	1,460,673	6.8
25-29 years	10	2.2	388,669	7.3	1,513,236	7.0
30-34 years	18	4.0	372,214	7.0	1,453,775	6.8
35-39 years	13	2.9	383,415	7.2	1,520,138	7.1
40-44 years	26	5.8	391,197	7.3	1,542,879	7.2
45-49 years	32	7.1	372,367	7.0	1,504,142	7.0
50-54 years	28	6.2	354,110	6.6	1,447,404	6.7
55-59 years	34	7.5	317,438	5.9	1,297,244	6.0
60-64 years	41	9.1	293,812	5.5	1,206,116	5.6
65-69 years	22	4.9	224,911	4.2	919,319	4.3
70-74 years	30	6.7	177,316	3.3	708,090	3.3
75-79 years	31	6.9	140,338	2.6	545,263	2.5
80-84 years	27	6.0	114,020	2.1	436,936	2.0
85 years and over	36	8.0	104,995	2.0	402,681	1.9

Age-structure for Skipton compared to Victoria and Australia as a whole, derived from the ABS Census 2011.

The median age of people in Skipton was 54 years. The detailed profile shows that Skipton has fewer infants and younger people compared to the Victorian and Australian averages, and a larger proportion of people over 55 years and a greater proportion of elderly residents.

There is generally a greater proportion of older people living in Skipton. As a proportion of the population there are three times more elderly people 75 years and over compared to the Victorian average, a group which makes up more than a fifth of the town’s population.



Source: ABS Quickstats 2013

DEMOGRAPHICS (CONT.)

Like most Corangamite towns, Skipton is inhabited by persons of British extraction, with most of the population possessing English (38 per cent), Australian (35 per cent), or Irish and Scots (15 per cent) lineage.

While Skipton had almost double the level of recorded unemployment compared to the Victorian and Australian averages at the time of the 2011 census, the percentage of part-time workers (45.2 per cent of employed people) was more than double the State and national averages (around 29 per cent of the workforce). Full-time workers made up only 39 per cent of the workforce compared to the broader averages around 60 per cent. These lower levels of employment are reflected in the reduced financial circumstances noted in median weekly incomes. Personal incomes are at about two thirds of the Victorian average, and household incomes only half. Family median weekly income of \$812 compares to the State average of \$1,460.

<u>Ancestry, top responses</u>	Skipton (L)		Victoria		Australia	
		%		%		%
English	219	37.9	1,614,911	23.5	7,238,533	25.9
Australian	205	35.5	1,606,233	23.3	7,098,486	25.4
Irish	50	8.7	522,025	7.6	2,087,758	7.5
Scottish	39	6.7	436,976	6.4	1,792,622	6.4
Dutch	10	1.7	96,450	1.4	335,493	1.2

The most common ancestries in Skipton (L) (Urban Centres and Localities) were English 37.9%, Australian 35.5%, Irish 8.7%, Scottish 6.7% and Dutch 1.7%.

<u>Employment</u>	Skipton (L)		Victoria		Australia	
		%		%		%
<i>People who reported being in the labour force, aged 15 years and over</i>						
Worked full-time	61	38.9	1,583,266	59.2	6,367,554	59.7
Worked part-time	71	45.2	791,836	29.6	3,062,976	28.7
Away from work	9	5.7	155,530	5.8	627,797	5.9
Unemployed	16	10.2	144,844	5.4	600,133	5.6
Total in labour force	157	--	2,675,476	--	10,658,460	--

[View the labour force fact sheet](#)

There were 157 people who reported being in the labour force in the week before Census night in Skipton (L) (Urban Centres and Localities). Of these 38.9% were employed full time, 45.2% were employed part-time and 10.2% were unemployed.

<u>Occupation</u>	Skipton (L)		Victoria		Australia	
		%		%		%
<i>Employed people aged 15 years and over</i>						
Technicians and Trades Workers	27	18.6	350,758	13.9	1,425,146	14.2
Labourers	26	17.9	227,185	9.0	947,608	9.4
Sales Workers	22	15.2	245,334	9.7	942,140	9.4
Community and Personal Service Workers	19	13.1	234,381	9.3	971,897	9.7
Clerical and Administrative Workers	16	11.0	364,498	14.4	1,483,558	14.7
Managers	14	9.7	332,929	13.2	1,293,970	12.9
Professionals	13	9.0	564,781	22.3	2,145,442	21.3
Machinery Operators And Drivers	8	5.5	154,543	6.1	659,551	6.6

The most common occupations in Skipton (L) (Urban Centres and Localities) included Technicians and Trades Workers 18.6%, Labourers 17.9%, Sales Workers 15.2%, Community and Personal Service Workers 13.1%, and Clerical and Administrative Workers 11.0%.

DEMOGRAPHICS CONT.)

As well as reflecting the town’s age structure (with a greater proportion of retirees on fixed incomes), the income profile of Skipton residents also relates to its occupational structure, where there are fewer professional (9 per cent compared to 22 percent) and managerial (9 per cent compared to 13 per cent) employees than the State average. On the other hand, Skipton has proportionately more labourers, sales workers, trades and technicians, and community and personal care workers.

Sheep, cattle and grain farming make up the largest industry employment sector (9 per cent) followed by hospital sector workers (7 per cent). Education, supermarket and local government workers are the next largest industry employment sectors. In all, these sectors employed 49 workers at the 2011 census.

<u>Industry of employment, top responses</u>	<u>Skipton (L)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Victoria</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Australia</u>	<u>%</u>
<i>Employed people aged 15 years and over</i>						
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Farming	13	9.0	23,883	0.9	120,143	1.2
Hospitals	10	6.9	99,286	3.9	361,011	3.6
Supermarket and Grocery Stores	8	5.6	59,698	2.4	235,773	2.3
School Education	8	5.6	111,140	4.4	467,373	4.6
Local Government Administration	7	4.9	35,287	1.4	136,792	1.4

Of the employed people in Skipton (L) (Urban Centres and Localities), 9.0% worked in Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Farming. Other major industries of employment included Hospitals 6.9%, Supermarket and Grocery Stores 5.6%, School Education 5.6% and Local Government Administration 4.9%.

<u>Median weekly incomes</u>	<u>Skipton (L)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Victoria</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Australia</u>	<u>%</u>
<i>People aged 15 years and over</i>						
Personal	367	--	561	--	577	--
Family	812	--	1,460	--	1,481	--
Household	615	--	1,216	--	1,234	--



Skipton’s acknowledged community spirit is also captured in Census statistics. Of the total population of 452 in 2011, 129 people of 15 years and over (39 per cent) undertook voluntary work as part of a group or organisation over the previous 12 months. This compares to the State average of 17.7 per cent.



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 shape their own process – however each plan observes some fundamental principles. They are inclusive of as many voices in the community as possible and seek to reflect local demographics, and are transparent in the way priorities are identified and decided upon.

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 as to 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 also serve

THE SOAPBOX

Fifteen people attended the Skipton Soapbox event held at the Skipton Mechanics Institute Hall on Wednesday 8 May 2013, with most people present either putting forward their ideas for Skipton’s future or joining in the animated conversations that followed.

The format of the evening involved a brief outline of the community planning process in train, followed by an invitation for individuals to come forward and speak for between three and five minutes on any of the questions outlined in the town survey. At the conclusion of the meeting there was a general question and answer session, with both questions and answers offered by members present.

The Soapbox format was designed to generate discussion and interest to build the number of completed surveys returned. It attracted the interest of a mature demographic, including a number of local community leaders, but younger people were also in attendance.



Mindful of the trauma of the 2010 and 2011 floods and the long recovery process which followed, it was decided to schedule Skipton as late as possible in the Building Stronger Corangamite Communities planning process. This also helped to minimize overlap with community consultations around the many

projects funded through the State Government Flood Recovery Project. Those who are disappointed with the evident low level of participation in planning for Skipton’s future would do well to remind themselves of the history of planning for the town. The Skipton Urban Design Framework produced by David

Lock Associates undertaken between July 2001 and April 2002 (for example) documents many issues and opportunities which are still current today. The difficulty of committing to planning yet being unable to realise simple and long-standing aspirations drains confidence and makes for measure of skepticism.

SURVEY RESPONSE

The Town Survey attracted a total of 43 responses. These contributions represent a response rate of 9.5 per cent of the estimated residential population of the Urban Centre Locality (UCL) of Skipton– (452 persons at the ABS Census 2011). The response rate for the broader Skipton and district (ABS State Suburb – 927 people) was 4.6 per cent.

The gender distribution of respondents was typically uneven, with almost three times as many females responding as males. All but two respondents provided age group information, and three did not provide any gender information. Thirty-seven of the 43 respondents gave 'Skipton' as their Postcode and four did not provide any Postcode information.

A comparison of the response profile with current ABS data on age distribution of the township population shows an over-representation of 65-74 year olds in the survey sample, good

Gender	Age grouping								Total	Postcode	
	1 – 14	15 – 24	25 – 34	35 – 44	45 – 54	55 - 64	65 - 74	75+		Postcode	Count
Male	1			1		1	5	1	10	3324	1
Female	1			3	5	8	7	5	30	3361	37
Unknown								1	1	3373	1
No info									2	None	4
Total	2	-	-	4	5	9	13	6	43	Total	43
Percent	4.7%			9.3%	11.6%	20.9%	30.2%	14.0%	100%		
Census*	15.1%	7.5%	6.2%	9.7%	13.3%	16.6%	11.6%	20.9%	100%		
Count1*	69	34	28	39	60	75	52	94	451		
Census#	19.9%	8.0%	8.3%	10.4%	15.9%	14.5%	9.5%	13.4%	100%		
Count#	184	74	77	96	147	134	88	125	925		

NOTE: Some survey respondents did not supply any 'gender' or 'age grouping' information, hence the discrepancies in totals.

* ABS Census 2011 for Skipton (Urban Centre Locality) estimated residential population is 452.

ABS Census 2011 for Skipton and district (Skipton State Suburb) estimated residential population is 927.

Survey response rate is 9.5 per cent of Skipton urban area (ABS Skipton UCL), or 4.6 per cent of Skipton and district (ABS Skipton State Suburb).

representation of persons in the 45 – 54, 55 – 64 age groups and limited representation of the 75+ age groupings. The big gap in the survey is the non-participation of children, teenagers and younger adults. In the critical 15 to 34 age range there were no respondents.

The conduct of the survey was advertised in and editorially supported by the Skipton Community Newsletter. The survey opened on 15 April and closed on 17 June 2013 and was mailed directly to all Skipton and district residents by Australia Post through the Skipton Post Office.

Additional copies of the survey were made available at the Skipton Post Office and the Skipton UFS Pharmacy Depot. An on-line version of the survey was provided in association with the Skipton Primary School and it drew a limited response. Notices were also placed in the Skipton Community Newsletter to encourage participation, with the Skipton Post Office and Pharmacy Depot acting as collection agencies for completed surveys. Some completed surveys were returned by post to Corangamite Shire.

Presentations were made to, and advice sought from, the Skipton and District Residents' Association on the timing and conduct of the survey. Despite efforts to reach some of the recognised 'difficult to reach' groups, the survey response is no doubt skewed to the literate, socially-connected and perhaps more comfortably placed members of the community. The sample included people with a passionate interest in their town and their community, but did not secure the involvement of many younger members of the community.

IDENTIFYING ASSETS

The first item on the survey asked the question ‘What things do you most value about Skipton, which need to be maintained or protected?’ The clear consensus was a cluster of attributes relating to the community – the people of Skipton, the town’s community organisations and infrastructure and the services provided to the community by both public institution and local businesses.

Top of the list of most valued aspects of Skipton are the towns Recreation Reserve and sporting clubs, and the count for this would be even higher if mentions of the Golf and Bowls Clubs and

What things do you value most about Skipton?

		S	
RECREATION RESERVE AND SPORTING CLUBS	Recreation Reserve; Sporting clubs; Sporting groups and facilities	15	
HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL SERVICES AND PHARMACY	Hospital, Fantastic health facility, Health promotion, Medical services and chemist	14	
MECHANICS INSTITUTE HALL	Hall; Public Hall (in top condition); Mechanics Hall and War Memorial;	13	
SKIPTON’S BUSINESS AND SERVICES	The many businesses and services – Supermarket, Post Office, two banks, UFS, two stock and stations companies, wool broker, tradesmen, pastoral companies;	13	
COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND FRIENDLY PEOPLE	Strong community spirit; Friendliness of the residents; Welcoming community to new arrivals; The way of life – friendly people and many community involved; Wonderful community; People look out for each other; Skipton’s people;	11	
PRIMARY SCHOOL	School; Primary School; School and children’s services;	11	
SWIMMING POOL	Swimming pool	9	
KINDERGARTEN	Kindergarten; Kindergarten and childcare; Playgroup	8	
RESERVOIR	Reservoir; Lake and surroundings; Family facilities around Lake;	6	
PARKS AND GARDENS	Parks and gardens; Park areas; Emu Creek and associated reserves; Stewart Park	6	
HISTORIC BUILDINGS	Historic buildings; Heritage buildings and stone walls; Older buildings	5	
STREETSCAPE, TREES AND NATURAL FEATURES	Streetscape of the town (well-maintained); Beautiful streetscape; Beautiful setting/ vista; Natural features; Trees	5	
EMERGENCY SERVICES	CFA, Ambulance, Police, etc	4	
QUIET, COUNTRY FEEL	The peace and quiet of Skipton; Country feel to town; Tranquillity	3	
COMMUNITY GROUPS	Lots of groups to join; Lively service groups – Lions, RVIB Auxillary, Red Cross, etc;	3	
HOTEL	Hotel	3	
GOLF COURSE	Golf Course	3	
BOWLS CLUB	Bowls Club	3	
ROADS AND AMENITIES	The main road and amenities; Roads,	3	
TENNIS COURTS	Tennis courts; Tennis and playground	3	

S means survey mentions (N=43)



tennis courts were added. It may be that following the closure of the Skipton Hotel following the 2010/11 floods, the Recreation Reserve and sporting clubs have taken a prominent role as a community gathering place and social support. The Recreation Reserve served as the town’s emergency support centre during the flood crisis, and was the place where all manner of local people, local organisations, volunteers,

agencies and services (including the Shire) came together to assist residents and businesses at a time of need. The survey showed that local people value their community and the way local people look out for one another and welcome new arrivals. In turn, the services provided by local businesses and other agencies are also greatly valued by the Skipton community.

The Skipton Heath Service – the hospital, medical services and the pharmacy – are highly valued by the community, especially by the many older people for whom they are critical to their continued residence in Skipton.

The Skipton Mechanics Institute Hall is a much-loved feature of the town and its well-maintained facilities a source of pride for the local community.



Members of the public then voted on priorities from the 117 listed ideas that had been identified through the survey.

The process of voting involved each attendee being given five coloured stickers and one gold sticker. Instruction was given that the coloured stickers should be applied to the five ideas people would like to see implemented, with the single gold sticker to then be applied to each individual's top priority. This was expressed as – if there was only one action to be implemented out of the community planning process, what should it be?



Following the voting period, attendees returned to their chairs and an informal verbal summary of voting patterns was described, highlighting the transparent priorities to emerge.

Considering those 'most valued' aspects of Skipton identified in the survey responses, it was explained that a 'vision' for Skipton would be drawn.

It was reported that the next steps would be to add up the meeting votes and combine them with survey results to obtain a ranked list of priority projects. This list was subsequently circulated (by Australia Post) to every household in Skipton with a covering letter outlining the community planning process and inviting residents to another public meeting to select initial priority projects for implementation. On the advice of those present this meeting was rescheduled to Monday 29 July 2013.

PUBLIC MEETING

A public forum was held at the Skipton Mechanics Institute Hall on Wednesday 26 June 2013, with 21 people attending. This figure represents 4.6 per cent of Skipton's township population. Some of those present expressed disappointment with this turnout.

The evening commenced with an outline of the community planning process and reference to work completed in eight Corangamite towns.

The outcomes of the Town Survey were presented, based on the 43 completed returns. It was explained that all the survey ideas had been summarized and grouped under a number of broad headings. Similar ideas were grouped to give a summary of the most frequently mentioned proposals for change or action.

This representation of all the survey advice was posted around the room on large-print A0-size sheets, with room for attendees to add any further ideas which had not been mentioned to date.



SELECTING PRIORITY PROJECTS

A second public meeting was held at the Skipton Mechanics Institute Hall on Monday 29 July 2013, with 25 people attending. The meeting commenced with a quick run through the planning process to date, which revealed that 12 of those present had not been present at the previous public meeting. This resulted in a questioning of the priorities arrived at to date, and a rehearsing of many of the issues discussed at length at the previous meeting.

A number of those present took the opportunity to elaborate on their views of things that needed to be changed, and took issue with the account of which agencies had responsibility for certain assets. Questions were asked as to why the Shire did not see it had an interest in developing camping and caravanning facilities for the township and the necessity to rely upon commercial business interests to advance this proposal. Others present who were newly involved did not appreciate some practical limitations on the scope of local government to influence

A simple count of all preferences recorded for each project gives the following ranking:

- 1 Rail Trail Development (18)
- 2 Town Entrances (15)
- 3 More trees/ Improve landscaping (13)
- 4 Attract more business and industry (12*)
- 5 Caravan park/ Camping (10)

A simple count of only the first three preferences recorded for each project gives the following ranking:

- 1 Rail Trail Development (15)
- 2 Town Entrances (10)
- 3 More trees/ Improve landscaping (9)
- 4 Caravan park/ Camping (8)
- 5 Attract more business and industry (7*)

Applying an exhaustive ballot approach yields the following ranking:

- 1 Caravan park/ Camping
- 2 Town Entrances
- 3 Rail Trail Development
- 4 More trees/ Improve landscaping
- 5 Attract more business and industry

*Note: Votes recorded for the priority 'Re-open shops' have been added to the 'Attract more business and industry'.

the practices or decisions of property owners in regard to the use or condition of private assets.

Ballot papers listing the 20 projects were issued and 23 of the 25 people present marked their top five priorities (from 1 to 5) on their ballot paper. Papers were then collected and set aside for later counting. The meeting then considered the scoping dimensions of some of the top ranking projects on the list of 20.

Three different counting methods of vote counting were used – all preferences, top three priorities, and exhaustive preferential count. They all yielded the same top five priorities, although a different order or priority.

ISSUES AND THEMES

Survey responses were categorised under 8 key themes and an 'Other' category. Adding the public meeting 'votes' and 'gold sticker' priorities provides a rough map of the major issues of concern to participants, with 'Business, industry and economic development' the standout issue, in terms of ideas, survey mentions and votes. 'Provision of services' came in second overall, just ahead of a ruck of other concerns.

Sifting through the detail of proposals and commentary contained within these themes uncovers some key concerns which are at the heart of a variety of proposed 'solutions' around given topics. There are three broad concerns which provide context to the 20 priority objectives which follow. These themes are inter-related.

Local business and economy

The attraction of new businesses and industry is a core idea, linked to the need to secure additional population to ensure the future viability of the town and the retention of current services, but

	Themes	Ideas	Survey mentions	Votes	Gold
1	Town development and maintenance	13	36	16	6
2	Town promotion	10	36	11	3
3	Town appearance and amenity	12	36	2	3
4	Access, safety and roads	14	20	7	-
5	Recreation and sport	14	34	7	-
6	Culture and arts	7	9	3	-
7	Provision of services	21	34	11	2
8	Business, industry and economic development	20	88	17	2
9	Other	6	8	1	-
	Total survey responses = 43	117	301	75	16

proposed actions related to this idea begin with existing conditions.

The re-opening of the Skipton Hotel emerged as the clear top priority, especially in regard to survey mentions, but this subject has more than one dimension.

The Hotel is important to Skipton's social life and identity as a 'town', but its current state also exerts a psychological influence— a depressive and constant reminder of the floods and the need to recover lost opportunity. There are four other proposals on this topic, including the reopening of shops (second top priority) and ideas for new businesses. The use of former

retail premises as storage spaces is also seen as a blockage to new business development. (Interestingly, since the commencement of this planning initiative, activity is occurring on four potential new business ventures.)

Upgrading and integrating assets for locals and visitors

There is a firm view that more can be made of Skipton's infrastructure and recreational assets though closer linkages, both for the benefit of locals as well as creating (and improving) visitor experiences and interaction with local enterprise. Part of this involves promotion of the town's attributes and tourism offering.

Improving town appearance and amenity

Whereas the Skipton community values and appreciates efforts taken by Shire staff to maintain the town's public realm assets, residents would like to see more trees planted and improved landscaping of the town in key locations. This attaches to the idea that the appearance of the town speaks to both visitors and locals as to its desirability as a place to live. Taking a long-term view, involving 'baby steps', the presentation of the town within the boundaries of the bluestone town entry signage to be constructed holds promise to signify the town as a leafy oasis on the surrounding plain.



There was a time when rural Victorians outnumbered their city counterparts, now we are less than a quarter and reducing fast.

Incongruously, just as there is less space for people in the compacting capital cities of 'the Asian century', so too there is less room on the land for people.

Could it ever occur to people in number that there is a spacious life to be lived in the townships of the province?

VISION

Frank Hudson's old bush poem 'The Pioneers' spoke of the passing of 'the old world people', and as they have done before, his words will ring true of another generation that will pass from Skipton in not so many years – people who grew up without electricity, television, computers and air conditioning. Bred for tough conditions (like merinos) there was joy alongside the sorrows of their lives and hardships were mostly counted later – glimpsed in the rear view mirror. There may be a romance in that generalization, but through all those baking summers and the windswept winters how else could they have endured what they did?

Skipton has much to offer, as its community appreciates, particularly to retirees. The town's hospital, medical and pharmacy services are highly valued, as are Skipton's assembly of businesses and other service agencies. Opportunities for community involvement in sporting, social and recreation activities are also extensive. Nearby Ballarat provides access to those special services and interests which no small town could be expected to provide, as well as connection to the wider transport network.

The challenge for Skipton is to tell those who would listen just what the town has to offer, at the same time working on an incremental program of place-making measures which builds an appealing story drawn out of an appealing reality. In its future, Skipton will appear like an oasis

on the vastness of the open plain, leafy, sheltered and shady. It will speak of an older Australia. Somewhere in this venture an idea for Skipton will be uncovered which ignites a collective enthusiasm which will draw new resources and new people to the town.

What then will become of Skipton? That is a question that tends to invite speculative reflection rather than an active program of becoming. The message of 'The Pioneers' was a call to the next generation to 'nourish and guard' the legacy that had been won. Just as the siren call of adventure and discovery drew generations of young people away from Skipton, there are those who would come home if they could. A time may come when a legion of others will choose to release their capital for a new life in an old land.

PRIORITY PROJECTS

The product of the Town Survey and voting at public meeting is a list to 20 priority projects for Skipton, to be implemented over the ten-year span of *A Plan for Skipton*. This list is based on the involvement of 48 locals – just over 10 per cent of the township population. While it would have been desirable to have at least a third of Skipton residents contributing their ideas and advice, it is appreciated that there were a number of factors operating which didn't help in achieving that aspiration. The limited turnout in this planning process holds consequences for the low counts recorded in support of some of the 20 listed projects.

Projects 11 to 20 may well have wider community support, but this exercise has captured evidence that they are demonstrably supported by only about one per cent of the township population. This would suggest that efforts be initially concentrated on the top ten projects, and that the other listed projects need to be tested in a

PRIORITY PROJECTS AND ACTION AGENCY

	PRIORITY PROJECTS	DESCRIPTION	S	V	G	AGENCY
1	RE-OPEN PUB	Get the Hotel going; Re-open the hotel; Need Hotel open or licensing for Recreation Reserve	28	2	-	PRIVATE BUSINESS INTERESTS
2	RE-OPEN SHOPS	More businesses in the main street; Restore main street – don't use shops for storage	17	2	-	PRIVATE BUSINESS INTERESTS
3	CARAVAN PARK/ CAMPING	Provide for caravan /camping area by the pool, Small caravan park	15	8	2	PRIVATE BUSINESS INTERESTS
4	TOWN ENTRANCES	Construct town entrances as previously planned and approved	9	1	1	COMMUNITY PROJECT
5	MORE TREES/ IMPROVE LANDSCAPING	Plant more trees, Improve landscaping of town; Maintain parks and streetscapes	8	1	1	COMMUNITY/ COUNCIL PARTNERSHIP
6	RAIL TRAIL DEVELOPMENT	Make the end of the Rail Trail more attractive; Relocate the Rail Trail to create a 'circuit'	7	8	2	COMMUNITY PROJECT
7	ATTRACT MORE BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRY	Provide encouragement and support for more businesses and industry; Attract small industries	7	5	-	COMMUNITY/ COUNCIL AND PRIVATE BUSINESS INTERESTS
8	INDOOR/ HEATED POOL	Indoor pool; Upgrade pool facilities and change rooms and toilets; Heated pool	7	5	-	PRIVATE BUSINESS INTERESTS
9	TAKEAWAY/ COFFEE SHOP	Takeaway; Coffee shop, Another sandwich bar	7	-	-	PRIVATE BUSINESS INTERESTS
10	PAINT AND MAINTAIN TOWN CENTRE BUILDINGS	Repaint town in heritage colours; Provide assistance to owners, Shopfronts need attention	6	-	-	PRIVATE BUSINESS INTERESTS

S means survey mentions, V means votes at public meeting, G means 'gold sticker' applied to top individual priority.

later community consultation process to gauge support for them. This fits with the idea that this plan should be reviewed in two or three years time, and is in line with the priorities the community has chosen to address in the first instance. The prospect of an improvement in the participation rate in the future

can be seen to be dependent on three things. Firstly, a recovery of optimism in the capacity of the local community to influence its destiny is a pre-requisite to increased participation, reliant as it is on the dubious premise that there will not be further damaging flood events. Secondly, a demonstration that chosen

priority projects can be successfully completed in the immediate term will prove that there is value in investing time in the community planning process. Thirdly, greater involvement of community organisations in actively canvassing and securing the participation of individuals will strengthen process outcomes.

**PRIORITY PROJECTS
(CONTINUED)**

Private business interests

Nine of the 20 listed projects could be conducted through the agency of private business interests. (For example, advice has been received that the owners of the Skipton Hotel expect to re-open their premises by Christmas 2013.) Private business interests could also include social enterprise initiatives the Skipton community might put in place. The Shire has indicated that it has no interest in taking on further caravan park operations, so this might be a case in point.

Council agency projects

Only one proposal fits solely with the responsibilities of Council – the public toilet upgrades listed as Project 11.

State Government agency projects

Cleaning up the Mount Emu Creek (Project 13) and slowing down truck traffic (Project 19) fit with the responsibilities of State Government agencies.

PRIORITY PROJECTS AND ACTION AGENCY

	PRIORITY PROJECTS	DESCRIPTION	S	V	G	AGENCY
11	UPGRADE TOILETS	Upgrade/ fix the main toilet block in town, Upgrade both sets of toilets	5	5	-	COUNCIL
12	SEWERAGE DUMP SITE	Develop sewerage dump site for caravanners – grey nomads	5	3	-	COMMUNITY GROUP WITH COUNCIL
13	CLEAN UP MOUNT EMU CREEK	Clean up the area along the mount Emu Creek and maintain the Creek banks	5	1	2	GLENELG HOPKINS CMA/ COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP
14	RETIREMENT ACCOMMODATION	Establish retirement Village, More respite beds at the Hospital	5	-	1	PRIVATE BUSINESS INTERESTS
15	SKATE PARK	Skate Park near tennis courts; Skate Park including BMX track	5	1	-	COMMUNITY GROUP WITH COUNCIL
16	INDOOR GYM/ STADIUM	Build indoor sports centre; Gym/ Stadium (like Linton)	5	1	-	COMMUNITY GROUP WITH COUNCIL
17	BAKERY	Establish town bakery	5	-	-	PRIVATE BUSINESS INTERESTS
18	LAND FOR DEVELOPMENT	Open up land for development – housing and industry	4	1	3	PRIVATE BUSINESS INTERESTS
19	SLOW DOWN TRUCK TRAFFIC	Slow down truck traffic; Reduce speed limit in town to 50km	4	3	-	VICROADS/ STATE GOVERNMENT
20	UPGRADE TENNIS COURT AND FACILITIES	Upgrade tennis court facilities; Upgrade of tennis courts	4	-	-	COMMUNITY GROUP WITH COUNCIL

S means survey mentions, V means votes at public meeting, G means 'gold sticker' applied to top individual priority.

Council/ Community partnerships

The development of a local Sewage Dump Site (Project 12), Skate Park (Project 15), Indoor Gym/ Stadium (Project 16) and Tennis Court and Facilities Upgrade (Project 20) are all projects which could potentially be carried out by the Shire but would not commence without strong community leadership and involvement.

Community/ Agency partnerships

The planting of more trees and improved landscaping (Project 5) provided an opportunity for community leadership where the execution and maintenance issues are closely connected with the Shire's responsibilities. Business and industry attraction (Project 7) could connect with a variety of agencies, including the Shire's Economic Development Unit.

Community projects

The Town Entry Signage (Project 4) and the Rail Trail Development (Project 6) are the sole two projects identified which the community could take on, making use of available funding. In both cases approvals would be needed from Vic Roads, and assistance obtained from the Shire in regard to permits, project design and delivery.

IMPLEMENTATION

The initial focus of implementation of the Skipton Community Plan will be on those five priorities identified through voting at the public meeting held on 29 July 2013. Early effort will be concentrated on scoping and costing each of these projects with a view to completing at least some of them prior to the townships 175th anniversary celebrations in 2014. Whereas the intent of four of these projects is clear, the one concerned with 'attracting more business and industry' to Skipton could take on many different forms. There will need to be further public consultations to determine which aspects should be pursued first.



**RAIL TRAIL DEVELOPMENT
BSCC seed funding \$30,000**

The Ballarat- Skipton Rail Trail crosses the Rokewood- Skipton Road, curves around the southern edge of the Golf Course, and peters out next to the disused grain silos at the back of the Recreation Reserve where the old train line once terminated.

It has long been held that Skipton needs to make better use of this recreational infrastructure asset but plans and commitments have been made previously which came to nought. For the benefit of the town's residents as much as visitors, it is proposed to link the Rail Trail to the centre of town though a town walking circuit. With leveraged BSCC seed funding it is proposed to

construct a granitic sand track along the northern side of the Rokewood- Skipton Road to provide the link to the town centre, the Jubilee Park walking track and connection to a new camping/ caravan park site to the south of the Swimming pool. Advantage will be had of new footpath construction to complete a loop back to the current Rail Trail terminus. Improvements might

also be made to the current Trail amenity. This project is potentially the most substantial of the five initial priorities, depending on its scope. It will involve an examination of opportunities and constraints, after which a preliminary costing and implementation plan will be developed.

TOWN ENTRY SIGNAGE (No additional seed funding needed, possible grant application required)	MORE TREES/ IMPROVED LANDSCAPING (BSCC seed funding \$10,000 plus other resources)	CAMPING AND CARAVAN PARK SITE (BSCC seed funding \$10,000 plus other resources)	ATTRACT MORE BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY (BSCC seed funding \$10,000)
<p>The Lions Club of Skipton has done some work to advance the long-standing priority of Town Entry Signage, including the securing of funds. Change to costings arising from an extension of scope suggests that a review of the project's design and costing is warranted. This might involve public exhibition of the proposed designs prior to an application to the <i>Putting Locals First Fund</i> (PLF) being made to finance the adopted scheme. The historic worked bluestone bridge material is in storage at the Skipton Shire Depot. Following the obtaining of VicRoads approval this project will be contracted out to a stonemason. The intention is to complete this project in 2013, ahead of Skipton's 175th anniversary in 2014. BSCC seed funding should not be needed and available funding could be leveraged through a PLF grant application if necessary.</p>	<p>Some preliminary advice has been offered by individuals for additional tree planting and improvements to the landscaping of the urban centre of Skipton. Preliminary consideration of this request by the Shire has provided support for implementation, subject to some matters being clarified. A community working group is needed to settle on a plan of works listing selected tree species and localised landscape improvements. The proposal developed by this group would best be placed on public exhibition prior to adoption. Once agreed upon, BSCC seed funding could be applied to sourcing tree stock and arrangements made for planting, mulching and summer watering to establish them. This project could involve an incremental implementation plan across a number of years, including support from and by the Corangamite Shire.</p>	<p>This project is linked to the proposed Rail Trail Development to improve visitation to Skipton and support of local businesses. It does not envisage a fully-fledged caravan park, but rather a site where visitors to Skipton could camp in tents or stay overnight in caravans. The project might involve installation of access to power, lighting and (existing) toilet facilities (located at the Swimming Pool). The site could be similar in form to that to the east of Inverleigh, and might include some seating, picnic tables and shelter. A working group is needed to develop a specification for this project, its proposed location and component parts. A plan might be developed for a number of agencies to be involved in the site's construction and ongoing maintenance. This will also need to include the Shire, which has responsibility for the management of the town's Swimming Pool facilities.</p>	<p>It is recognised that the competitive attraction of business and industry is a difficult task for small rural townships, but this project will seek to influence some critical issues relating the town's long-term viability, including town promotion and population attraction. Other towns have developed co-operative initiatives, 'buy local' campaigns, town promotion initiatives (including events), 'town prospectus' and town branding materials. For Skipton, the issues of limited availability of rental premises, the use of existing (potential) retail spaces for storage, and the availability of adequately zoned land have been raised as obstacles to attracting business and industry. These themes could be explored through community workshops to identify actions the township recognises hold potential to influence business and industry attraction.</p>
A plan for Skipton	Community priorities for township development – 2013 to 2023		August 2013 20

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

A primary 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. This is on the premise that development of local capacity may be achieved through the sharing and utilisation of talents and skills within the community as well as through linkages to expertise not readily accessible to local organisations. This includes access to assistance from local and State government agencies to seek out advice and 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.

Having arrived at a ranked list of project priorities it is evident that a deal of detailed work is required to specify and scope these shared objectives. For this reason it may be necessary to countenance a more fluid and continuous planning approach in place of the stepped Plan/Implement/ Review process. This will provide opportunities to include additional voices in the conversation about how these priorities can be realised, and in which order.

REVIEW

It is proposed to formally review the *A Plan for Skipton* after a period of two years, perhaps towards the middle of 2015, to assess project achievements against objectives and to formulate revised objectives as required.



REFERENCES

About Skipton, at www.skiptonaustralia.org.com

David Lock Associates (with Thompson Birrell Landscape Design, TTM Consulting and Authentic Heritage Services), (2002) *Urban Design Framework for Skipton*, Corangamite Shire, Camperdown, Victoria

Skipton Historical Society, *The Story of Skipton*, at www.skipton-historicalsociety.freehosting.net/

Skipton Victoria, at en.wikipedia.au/wiki/Skipton_Victoria


Water Technologies (2013) *Skipton Flood Study*, Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, Hamilton Victoria

APPENDICES

- Survey instrument
- Ranking of issues and projects
- Summary of survey responses
- Detailed survey and voting results

If you think about it, the best things about local communities didn't just happen – they were made to happen – by energetic and committed people with a belief in each other and a shared idea of what they could achieve.

This is your chance to get involved and to get active in building a better future for your town and your community.




what does Skipton need?

Building Stronger Corangamite Communities

The Corangamite Shire has partnered with the Department of Planning and Community Development in a four-year project to support communities to plan and implement improvements to their towns.

The project provides access to funding and support to enable each of the Shire's 12 towns to prepare a Town Plan to protect those assets most valued by local communities and to make changes and improvements to secure their future prosperity.



KEEP THESE DATES FREE

SKIPTON SOAPBOX FORUM
Wednesday 8 May 2013, 7.30 pm
Skipton Mechanics Institute Hall

SKIPTON COMMUNITY MEETING
Wednesday 26 June 2013, 7.30 pm
Skipton Mechanics Institute Hall

PROJECT SELECTION MEETING
Wednesday 24 July 2013, 7.30 pm
Skipton Mechanics Institute Hall