
9.2 Review of Darlington Community Plan

Author: Garry Moorfield, Community Development Officer

File No:

Previous Council Reference: Nil

Declaration

Acting Chief Executive Officer – David Rae

In providing this advice to Council as the Acting Chief Executive Officer, I have no interests to disclose in this report.

Author - Garry Moorfield

In providing this advice to Council as the Community Development Officer, I have no interests to disclose in this report.

Summary

This report provides advice to Council on the review and updating of Darlington's community plan *Spotlight on Darlington*, which was developed through March and April of 2014 and received by Council on 21 May 2014.

Introduction

Darlington was the last of Corangamite Shire's 12 townships to engage in Council's community planning initiative, through the past *Building Stronger Corangamite Communities* partnership with the State Government. The township is sited on an historic crossing of the Mount Emu Creek, half in Corangamite Shire and half in Moyne Shire. The estimated township population is around 80 people, but there are no publicly-available figures from the ABS Census on the population of the Gazetted Locality of Darlington, as it contains fewer than 200 people.

A lot has happened since Darlington's first Community Plan was assembled in early 2014. The 16 initial town priorities were gathered around six themes. The first theme was improving the appearance of the town. The second cluster of priorities was concerned with improving the experience of the town through walking tracks and a picnic area on Nuggets Flat. Another group of priorities centred on upgrading aspects of the Recreation Reserve. The other three themes were reopening the Elephant Bridge Hotel, improving town services and assuring the future for Darlington's Mechanics Institute Hall. Good progress has been made on each of these themes, except for improving township services. A scorecard report on each of the 16 priorities is given in the attached paper. That report also catalogues the major achievements of the township community, a remarkable list of social activities and events which have brought together the local community and the larger Darlington district.

A township survey was conducted in February and March of 2019 in close partnership with the Darlington Community Association. The results of the survey (involving 23 respondents) have recast the township priorities. Most of these priorities continue the aims of the previous formulation, except that some have been given a sharper focus.

To date Council has provided \$30,000 in seed funding for Darlington Community projects, a figure that has been augmented through the community's own fund-raising efforts over the past five years. Over the past two years Corangamite Shire has negotiated with GPG P/L (Berrybank Wind Farm) and signed a contract for an amount of \$40,000 to be provided for the re-roofing of the Darlington Hall as a 'community benefit' contribution. This work will be completed over the coming 2019–2020 financial year.

Issues

Through the township community survey Darlington now has a clear set of priorities for the next four years. Setting aside a number of completed projects, comparisons with survey mentions and voting between 2014 and 2019 reveal a fairly stable set of interests. They are all practical, except that four priorities (6, 10, 16, 17) will require the assistance of State Government agencies and may be beyond the immediate influence of the local community.

Priority		2019
1	Re-roof the Darlington Mechanics Institute Hall	16
2	Upgrade the Mechanics Institute Hall toilets	12
3	Upgrade the kitchen at the Hall	12
4	Continue to prepare an annual calendar of community events	11
5	Install historic timeline notice at the Hall	11
6	Continue to maintain the town's CFA presence	11
7	Develop a town walking track including historic features	11
8	Construct a short track to a platypus viewing platform	9
9	Continue work to clean up town	8
10	Alter the entry road to the speedway to make it safer	8
11	Survey and construct a walking track along Mount Emu Creek	8
12	Enforce regulations of building permits, rubbish and grass removal	7
13	Plant more nature strip trees and water them	6
14	Provide for camping at the Speedway	5
15	Build toilets at the Recreation Reserve	5
16	Arrange a new bus shelter with Public Transport Victoria	5
17	Continue to lobby to reduce township speed limit to 60 KM	5

Note: 2019 survey support mentions (N=23)

Darlington Mechanics Institute Hall

The top five priorities (1 to 5) in the revised community plan centre on the Darlington Hall. A considerable amount of work has already been completed to make the Hall serviceable, including repairs to tanks and toilets, interior painting and installation of equipment. Corangamite Shire has negotiated funding through the Berrybank Wind Farm to re-roof the building and a tender specification has already been prepared. The community has so far raised some \$10,000 to fund other Hall improvements. Investment in the Darlington Hall underscores the investment in the local community through a rich and varied program of inclusive social activities.

Walking tracks

Three township priorities (7, 8 and 11) call for the establishment of walking tracks. The short track to the platypus viewing platform is under construction. Some groundwork has been done on a township walk highlighting historic features of the town. The Mount Emu Creek track is a bigger project which for now is a lower priority.

Town appearance and presentation

The local community is still keen to continue working towards cleaning up the town (priorities 9 and 12) and improving the appearance of the town through additional tree-planting and maintenance (priority 13).

Recreation Reserve

Darlington has continued to strengthen its relationship with the Moyne Shire Council, and received a small amount of funding to commence the upgrading of the public toilets at the Speedway. (An initial investment that is a step towards addressing priorities 10, 14 and 15, which are sited within Moyne Shire.)

Policy and Legislative Context

The Council Plan 2017-2021 outlines Corangamite Shire's community planning initiative and describes how, over the past six years, it has systematically surveyed local residents and assisted them to develop Community Plans.

The review is also consistent with the following Council Plan 2017-2021 objectives:

Council will advocate strongly in relation to roads, cost shifting, and other Council and community priorities.

Engage with and listen to our communities.

Internal / External Consultation

This review of Darlington's Community Plan was conducted in close partnership with the Darlington Community Association, which has overseen most aspects of the Plan's implementation since its priorities were set in April 2014. Discussions began in July 2018 and continued over several months at Community Association meetings and included reflections on what had been achieved, what remained to be done, and new directions for the township. By the end of 2018 a detailed chronology of activities and events had been compiled and a list of 'project ideas' assembled. A four page summary of achievements (in words and pictures) was printed and distributed to all Darlington households by Association members. This was designed for people to keep (see copy attached) and a survey form was included for people to return. The survey was promoted locally over several months through meetings, events, media and Facebook. It was delivered in person, door-to-door, by members of the Association. The 23 completed survey forms were collected through February and March 2019 and results compiled in April. The revised set of township priorities was reported back the Community Association in May 2019.

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.

Options

Council may choose to receive the revised Derrinallum Community Plan review or not.

Conclusion

The community of Darlington has extracted great value out of Corangamite Shire's community planning initiative as can be seen from the amazing list of achievements for such a small community. Notably the town has kept its focus on bringing community members together through a range of social activities. This program has drawn out the interests and

talents of local people who have made the most of a variety of partnerships to deliver truly remarkable outcomes.

While Darlington has had some success with its priority projects (such as the Mechanics Institute Hall and Nuggets Flat), it has been hard to get any movement on larger scale issues requiring the intervention of the State. Rather than lament that lack of progress, instead the community has focussed on what it can do. This self-reliance has rewarded the community over and over again.

It is evident that the talented and capable members involved in the Darlington Community Association value each other, enjoy each other's company and are keen to pitch in for their community. There is a grounded model of goodwill, purpose and pragmatism from which others could well take lessons.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Receives the review of the Darlington Community Plan.**
- 2. Provides a copy of the revised plan to Moyne Shire Council.**

Attachments

- Darlington Community Plan Review - Under Separate Cover