

When 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.



# what next for Darlington?

Back in April 2014 the community of Darlington came together to decide upon the priorities for the township's Community Plan, which was prepared as part of the Building Stronger Corangamite Communities initiative.

People voted on the ideas identified through a Town Survey, to settle on a ten-year plan with 16 priorities. These 16 project ideas that made up the Darlington Community Plan 2014 – 2024 were clustered around six key topics.



## CLEAN UP THE TOWN

Improving the poor and unkempt appearance of the town was identified as the highest priority by the Darlington community. This was about cleaning up rubbish and cutting long grass (1), exploring the idea of organising a garbage collection service for the town (14), enforcing existing regulations to do with building regulations and fire hazards (15), as well as planting more street trees and watering them until established (16).

## EXPERIENCING DARLINGTON

This involved creating a picnic spot down on Nugget's Flat (4) and putting up a noticeboard pointing out historic sites and walking tracks around town (4), including the construction of a walking track along the Creek (11).

## RECREATION RESERVE UPGRADES

There were three main ideas centred on the Speedway/ Recreation Reserve. The first was about building new toilets (3), the second about altering the entry road to the Speedway to make it safer (5) and the third to provide camping facilities at the reserve (12) which included facilities associated with the upgraded toilets.

## REOPENING THE ELEPHANT BRIDGE HOTEL

While it was recognised that achieving this priority would rely upon private business investment, reopening the Pub (7) was a high ranking community priority.

## DARLINGTON HALL

Another cluster of ideas centred on assuring a future for Darlington's historic Mechanics Institute Hall. This involved assembling funding for the Hall (8) for repairs and improvements, and organising a program of community get-togethers (10) to make sure that it is well-used, and therefore worthy of investment.

## TOWN SERVICES

Improving the town water supply (6), maintaining the Darlington CFA presence (9), and reducing the speed limit through town to 60 kilometres (13) are all ideas that involve the intervention of the State Government and its instrumentalities. The alignment of the Speedway entry road (5) also fits into this category.



CORANGAMITE  
SHIRE



**It is amazing what the community of Darlington has been able to achieve over the past five years, in partnership with Corangamite Shire.**

Back in 2014 the Pub was closed. There was little movement to disturb the bats in the Mechanics Institute Hall, which had been seldom used for many years. The bills were being paid then by a dedicated local person – out of her own pocket. The Hall didn't appear to have much of a future and there was talk amongst the Committee (which met once every three years) that it would have to be sold.

### IMPROVING THE PRESENTATION OF THE TOWN

From 2014 the Darlington community has come together for working bees to clean up and beautify the town. Roundabouts were weeded, covered with mulch and colourful gazanias planted out. The Nugget's Flat picnic area was established, with BBQ, seating and tree-planting. The area around the old bridge abutments was cleared, grass areas regularly mowed, and new street trees planted. Work has commenced on a short walking track along the Creek to a platypus viewing platform.

### WORK ON THE HALL

An important priority the Darlington community set to work on was to rejuvenate the Mechanics Institute Hall. The interior of the Hall has been painted, the roof repaired, toilets fixed and tank water connected. Ramps and trestles have been purchased, along with a commercial fridge, coffee machine and instant hot water. An external aerial is installed and large signs erected outside announcing up-coming events. The Peace Bell has been restored, its commemorative plaque renewed and a new flagpole erected.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS

The extensive restoration, refurbishment and reopening of the historic Elephant Bridge Hotel in 2015 was an exciting event for the people of Darlington and district, and the Pub quickly resumed its role as a gathering point for the local community as well as a destination for people from nearby towns as well as the travelling public on the Hamilton Highway. The other key institution in Darlington is the Mechanics Institute Hall, which now hosts the Darlington Art Group, regular bush dances and film nights. It has been the venue for several events celebrating Darlington's history, and these have attracted audiences of up to 150 interested participants.



### 2014

- 3 March** Town Survey opens
- 16 April** Public meeting priority setting
- 21 May** Corangamite Shire seed funding allocated  
Darlington Community Association formed
- 14 November** Darlington hard waste project concluded
- 2 December** Town clean-up and planting completed
- 15 December** Completion of Nugget's Flat  
Community Christmas 2

### 2015

- 10 February** Darlington Art Group (DAG) commences
- 20 February** 'World's Fastest Indian' screening
- 4 March** Darlington Water Committee project ends
- 20 March** Restoration of Peace Bell/ Flagpole
- 21 March** Monthly markets commence
- 30 March** Installation of Events Notice signage
- 4 April** Inner Varnika Festival fundraising 1
- 2 May** Darlington Country Dance
- 26 April** History Day/ ANZAC Centenary
- 2 May** Square Dance evening at Hall
- July** Painting of interior of Hall commences  
Opening of Elephant Bridge Hotel
- 31 October** Darlington State School No 777 reunion  
Community Christmas 3

### 2016

- 26 February** Film night 'The Dressmaker'
- 19 March** End of Harvest Dance 2
- 4 April** Inner Varnika Festival fundraising 2
- 19 May** Robbie Burns Satellite Concert
- 26 August** Corangamite Film Festival launch event  
Community Christmas 4

### 2017

- 24 February** Film night 'What we did on our holidays?'
- 15 April** Inner Varnika Festival fundraising 3  
Bush Dance 3
- 11 August** 'Salmon Fishing in the Yemen' movie  
Camperdown Courthouse  
DAG Exhibition
- 15 October** 'History of Darlington' Book Launch  
CFA Medal Presentation
- 11 November** 'Pesheepio and the magic fleece' puppet show  
Community Christmas 5

### 2018

- 24 February** Film night 'The Golden Years'
- 7 March** Platypus count evening
- 23 March** Film night 'The Waking of Ned Devine'
- 31 March** Inner Varnika Festival fundraising 4
- 5 May** Bush Dance 4  
Mortlake Art Show DAG exhibition
- 10 November** Open Studio/ Afternoon tea
- 21 December** Community Christmas 6

### THE FUTURE

The Darlington Community Association has been very active in drawing out local interest in entertaining, enjoyable, social and creative community activities. It has been effective in raising funds for current and future projects. It has moved well beyond charity and survival and now has money in the bank. More than all that, the Association has the ambition to continue on its path to maintain and form new partnerships and to take advantage of presenting opportunities for the long-term benefit of the Darlington community.

**What next for Darlington?**





# Darlington Community Plan Priorities 2014 to 2024

A scorecard on implementation of the township priorities set in 2014 looks something like this. It doesn't include many other remarkable things the Darlington community has achieved over the period to 2018, not only in Darlington but across Corangamite Shire.

The work of the Darlington Art Group (DAG) is a good example, with members featuring their work at exhibitions in Mortlake and Camperdown. Darlington has also contributed strongly to the development of the Volcanic Lakes and Plains tourism development initiative with Corangamite Shire and GORT.



Priority	Project idea	Summary	Progress
1	Clean up the town	Improve the poor and unkempt appearance of the town and clean up rubbish	Good progress
2	Picnic Area	Create a picnic area at Nugget's Flat	Completed, Extended
3	New toilets at Recreation Reserve	Upgrade Speedway toilets and make suitable for camping at Reserve	No progress
4	Information board	Install information board marking historic sites and walking routes around town	Made a start
5	Entry to Speedway and Cemetery	Alter the entry road to the Speedway to make it safer	No progress
6	Water supply	Improve the water supply – pressure and quality	No progress
7	Reopen Hotel	Reopen the Elephant Bridge Hotel	Completed
8	Hall funding	Allocate some funding to the Hall	Continuing
9	CFA presence	Maintain the town's CFA presence	Continuing
10	Community get-togethers	Arrange more community get-togethers	Continuing
11	Creek track	Construct walking track along Creek	Made a start
12	Camping facilities	Provide for camping at Speedway	No progress
13	Reduce speed	Reduce maximum speed limit through the town to 60 km	No progress
14	Garbage collection	Arrange a garbage collection service, more bins, highway truck parking bay with bins	Completed
15	Enforce regulations	Police and enforce regulation on building permits, rubbish and grass removal	Some progress
16	Trees and Watering	Plant nature strip trees and water them	Good progress

**DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER PROJECT IDEAS TO ADD TO THIS LIST?**

**ARE THERE ISSUES YOU WOULD LIKE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY OR COUNCIL TO ADVOCATE FOR ON YOUR BEHALF?**

**NOW'S THE TIME TO HAVE YOU SAY ABOUT WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT FOR YOUR COMMUNITY.**