

WATCHEM & DISTRICT

LOCAL COMMUNITY PLAN

A surviving community





BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY PLANNING

OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY PLAN

The Watchem community led by the Watchem Progress Association updated their community plan in 2016. Funding in 2018 from the Federal Government's Building Better Regions Fund supported the re-engagement of community to explore longer term issues and aspirations looking towards 2030.

The 2016 Watchem Community Plan has strongly informed this renewed plan which has also captured recent consultation to shape the Buloke 2030 'whole of shire' integrated plan focusing on livability and economic development in the current rural environment.

Residents in and around Watchem were invited to share their thoughts through:

- an online survey
- community postcards
- a drop in session
- a focus group
- a community workshop; and
- draft plan feedback processes.

The Watchem & District Local Community Plan is a community owned plan that captures community aspirations across a broad range of areas (not just local government). The plan gives voice to local aims and aspirations and provides an opportunity for involvement by people who are interested in shaping the future of Watchem and District.

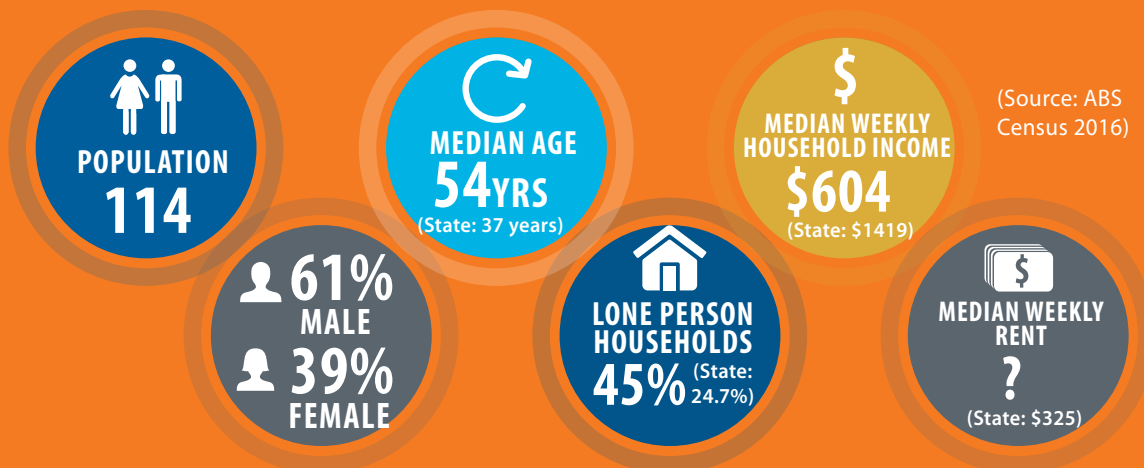
A Community Plan describes the community's long term vision and aspirations and is a way of directly involving residents in future planning.

The Watchem and District community has already made a number of achievements as a result of their previous community plans, such as:

- Walking track to Watchem Lake
- Toilet block development at Watchem Lake
- New kitchen and heating in the community hall
- Watchem website; and
- Monument Precinct projects.

OUR COMMUNITY

Watchem is a picturesque little town located on the Sunraysia Highway 317 kilometers North West of Melbourne. It was settled by Europeans in the 1870's and was originally part of the Djadjawrybg and Djabwyrung lands.



OUR STRENGTHS

- Friendly people
- Quiet and peaceful community
- Wide open spaces
- People know one another
- New people are welcomed

"The people here are top notch".

"The town is going forward".

OUR ASSETS

- Watchem Lake
- Recreation Reserve
- Community Owned Church
- Town Hall
- Pool
- Pub
- Community Hub
- General Store
- Playground

"The oval was derelict until three years ago, now cricket is using the pitch".

"The lake is a terrific asset".

OUR CURRENT CHALLENGES

- Lack of Employment
- Roads in disrepair/road safety
- Poor mobile/internet services
- High water costs
- Lack of town drinking water
- Run-down and vacant houses in town
- Lower house values
- Costs associated with small community projects
- Fundraising in a small town
- Volunteering
- Dealing with red-tape
- High costs of power
- Lack of hard rubbish/drum collection
- Access to health and wellbeing services
- Access to transportation

"You can only have so many chook raffles".

"If you don't have a car it can be difficult and isolating, this is compounded if you have medical needs".

OUR FUTURE CHALLENGES

Looking Towards 2030

Community members highlighted a range of challenges/trends that they felt were important to plan for.

- Ageing community
- Declining population
- Farms are getting larger
- Increased reliance on technology
- Access to health and wellbeing services
- Less residents = less volunteers
- Decreased capacity to raise funds locally

“Access to health services is vital for the future”.

“Internet (NBN) is a challenge out of town, consistency of service is poor and as more people get connected it is getting worse”.



OUR OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities for the future have been captured under four key themes which are supported by longer term strategic directions and key actions to achieve these.

Importantly, these key directions were formed through reviewing the 2016 Watchem Community Plan and combining new ideas from recent community discussions.

OUR BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND KEY ACTIONS: SAFE, ACCESSIBLE AND WELL-MAINTAINED COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE.

1. Create a plan for the improvement of footpaths, kerbing and drainage.
2. Enhance facilities at Watchem Lake and promote the lake broadly to attract visitors.
3. Advocate for affordable water to water public 'green' spaces and recreation facilities.
4. Clean up the old VicRoads/Shire gravel dump sites to allow for all weather access to water tanks.
5. Advocate/work in partnership with Council and VicRoads to ensure a safe road network.
6. Seek solar panel funding to reduce power costs for Watchem Lake and other key community infrastructure.

BEAUTIFICATION OF STREETScape AND TOWN ENTRANCES.

1. Enhance the Watchem Streetscape for both residents and visitors alike.
2. Install a town map and information board detailing key points of interest.
3. Add town signs for Watchem on Birchip – Corack and Warracknabeal roads.
4. Seek funding for the installation of historical markers that share Watchem's story.

PROTECT, MANAGE AND IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY.

1. Maintain trees and control weeds on council, crown and private land.
2. Apply for a town Fruit Fly Trap and educate community on the management of fruit fly.
3. Work to remove cactus around town.
4. Develop both sides of Warracknabeal road to Watchem Lake with natives.
5. Create a tree planting plan for key community areas.

OUR COMMUNITY WELLBEING

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND KEY ACTIONS

ENHANCED COMMUNITY AND SERVICE SUPPORT FOR RESIDENTS WHO ARE VULNERABLE AND OR ISOLATED.

1. Support residents in need of medical transport to link to Birchip's community car.
2. Advocate for improved promotion and use of tele-health options across the Buloke Shire.
3. Advocate for a review of the Victorian Patient Transport Rebate.
4. Advocate for improved public transport.
5. Continue the development of a Men's Shed led model to support residents to tidy up the town/their properties.
6. Continue to work with Food Bank Victoria to provide food relief services from the Community Hub.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES THAT ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY WELLBEING, LIFELONG LEARNING AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS.

1. Work in partnership with Council as it provides library services in Watchem.
2. Continue to explore funding opportunities for the development of a Men's Shed.
3. Develop and maintain the Watchem Community Hub and the services/supports they offer.
4. Offer community based activities/events to build and strengthen social connections amongst residents.
5. Capture and share the history of Watchem.
6. Investigate community solar schemes/micro-grids that could assist residents to lower their power costs.
7. Create a newcomers' welcome pack and processes for connecting new residents.
8. Create a What's On in Watchem community events page.
9. Seek funding for a community projector that could be used for movies/projecting images on silos.
10. Strengthen cohesiveness between residents and community groups in Watchem.
11. Explore ways to strengthen the Watchem Playgroup.

A HEALTHY, SAFE AND ACTIVE COMMUNITY.

1. Seek funding for the development of a community gym.
2. Advocate for an annual hard rubbish collection and reintroduce the drum muster program.
3. Explore the extension of the walking track to promote further connectivity.
4. Seek funding to improve town lighting and to add lighting along the walking track.
5. Review the local availability of allied health and wellbeing services to ascertain current availability, gaps and future needs.
6. Create a mental health community resource so residents have access to telephone and online supports and are aware of locally provided services.
7. Advocate for continued comprehensive and quality place based GP services in the Buloke Shire.

OUR ECONOMY

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND KEY ACTIONS: INCREASED TOURIST ACTIVITY IN WATCHEM & DISTRICT.

1. Identify points of interest in Watchem for visitors and broadly promote.
2. Advocate for increased economic development/ tourism resourcing and improved collaboration and communication across the Buloke Shire.
3. Provide local representation for the Buloke Tourism Board.
4. Plan community events that could draw visitors to Watchem and district e.g. Tinnie Regatta, Lost Trade Fair etc.
5. Explore community art opportunities that could attract visitors to Watchem.
6. Plan a celebration for the 100-year anniversary of the fire brigade in 2020.
7. Continue to develop the Vietnam Vets Pilgrimage event in Watchem.
8. Explore funding opportunities to promote and celebrate Dr Sister Mary Glowrey e.g. silo art depiction, sculpture for church yard etc.
9. Explore the feasibility of a mini golf course.

DYNAMIC INDUSTRY, BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT.

1. Create a plan for the development, use and promotion of the Church.
2. Explore industry opportunities for Watchem.
3. Explore local recycling opportunities.

ACCESS TO RELIABLE AND EFFECTIVE TELECOMMUNICATION NETWORKS.

1. Advocate for improved internet services
2. Advocate for improved mobile phone coverage.



OUR COUNCIL & COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND KEY ACTIONS:

ENHANCED COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, INVOLVEMENT AND SPIRIT.

1. Continue to conduct regular Watchem & District Development and Progress Association meetings.
2. Recognise and support existing volunteers and create a campaign to encourage the involvement of new volunteers.

COUNCIL ADVOCACY, LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT ON COMMUNITY MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE.

1. Actively connect with the Council representative for Watchem to ensure leadership and support from Council with identified community projects.
2. Advocate for reduced red-tape and planning costs for smaller communities.
3. Advocate for improved public transport in Watchem.

APPROPRIATE AND TIMELY LOCAL LAWS ENFORCEMENT.

1. Timely enforcement of local laws in relation to unsafe or dilapidated buildings/houses.

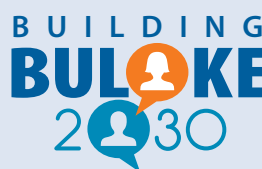
QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE AND IMPROVED RESPONSE TIMES FROM BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL.

1. Improve Buloke Shire customer service quality and response times e.g. works requests.



HOW DOES THIS PLAN FIT?

The ten Local Community Plans have informed the development of a 'whole of Buloke Shire' integrated Community Plan. The Buloke Shire Integrated Community Plan will inform Council's planning processes over the next three Council Planning phases up to 2030.



This Plan will also strongly inform the direction of a range of key stakeholder organisations that are connected to Buloke Shire communities.

GETTING INVOLVED

If you would like to get involved in implementing the Watchem & District Local Community Plan contact:

- P. 1300 520 520
E. buloke@buloke.vic.gov.au
A. PO Box 1, Wycheproof VIC 3527
367 Broadway, Wycheproof VIC 3527

Buloke Shire Council

PUTTING THIS PLAN INTO ACTION

Implementation of the Watchem and District Local Community Plan will be driven by the Watchem Progress Association.

A key Council representative will attend meetings to enable leadership and support from Council wherever appropriate. An action plan template has been developed to assist with local project planning and review.