

REGENERATIVE COMMUNITIES ROAD TRIP

3rd – 6th of October 2019

innovative ideas, inspiring stories and practical tools to regenerate your community



PROJECT SUMMARY

From the 3–6 October 2019 Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) went on a Road Trip! We covered **680** kilometres visiting **5** communities, took **22** special guests with us and ran activities for over **500** people, we engaged **125** children in activities, and worked with over **30** local and national organisations to deliver the **Regenerative Communities** events from the Millewa to Murrayville.

MRCC received a \$75,000 Drought Preparedness and Support Package (Health & Wellbeing) from the Department of Health & Human Services in early 2019.

We formed a working group made up of representatives from local service providers and community members. The working group had conversations with a variety of community groups and individuals across the LGA to find out what the key challenges our rural and remote communities are facing.

From here we developed four key themes of interest (see page 3), and designed a program which aimed to bring inspiring stories, innovative ideas and practical tools to our communities.

The program was centred around a Forum in Mildura which brought leaders from across regional and rural Australia who are taking control of their local economies, finding creative approaches to meeting challenges by working together, harnessing the power of their people and finding innovative solutions that can be delivered from the ground up.

We partnered with a key community group in each town to deliver an outreach program across the Millewa, Nangiloc, Ouyen & Murrayville.

Each event was tailored to the needs and interests of the individual communities, whilst tying in with the key themes developed for the overall program.

"I was impressed by the quality of the programming but more so by the evident achievement of the aims to provide new ideas, inspiring stories and practical tools we need in challenging times to re-imagine and regenerate our rural communities. There were many highlights for me including the compelling speakers at the Forum but the personal standout was the Unbreakable Millewa event at Lake Cullulleraine, where farming families, in the midst of a heartbreaking drought, came together to not only enjoy an uplifting night out but to show solidarity in the face of adversity. The Mildura Rural City Council staff who developed and delivered this event deserve accolades for their practical yet highly creative and inclusive approach to creating this unique and important project."

Councillor Helen Healy
Mildura Rural City Council



"It was great to hear so many innovative stories of people and communities coming together for great causes."

"Support each other to keep the positivity and energy going in our entrepreneurs and local community champions."

"If you have an idea or a passion stick to your guns and surround yourself with others that share those dreams."

"Nothing is done in isolation, connection is everything."

"Move beyond transactional relationships to transformational relationships."

"Lots of small things add up to big changes."

"Sharing our story strengthens our community."

"Rural communities are inspiring!"

Forum attendees

FORUM

FRIDAY 4 OCTOBER, MAGENTA WOOLSHED

The incubator style forum was centred around four topics that gave examples of how everyday people are re-generating their local communities.

Gilbert Rouchecouse, founder & managing director of the Village Well, introduced the day with a presentation on *Creating a Thriving and Resilient Mildura- The Art of Placemaking*, as well as facilitated dynamic conversations throughout the day.

Mildura Rural City Council CEO Sarah Philpott provided an introduction covering the value of persistence, the impact of diversity on community life, and taking strength based approaches to community development.

Each panel was made up of three presentations followed by an interactive Q&A run via the Slido app, allowing questions to be submitted and voted on by the audience.

60 people from a variety of community organisations and local businesses attended. Feedback indicated that representation from more community groups and businesses would have been beneficial.

Collection of attendees postcodes showed that attendance from our remote communities was low. Feedback indicated this was due to barriers experienced by people living in remote communities to attend events in Mildura, particularly during tough times.

In anticipation of this, the sessions were filmed and uploaded to YouTube to allow for further sharing of the content. The views on these videos are currently averaging 40 views each (Dec 2019)

KEY THEMES AND GUESTS

PEOPLE POWER

Knowledge and skills as a shared community asset

- Marieke Dam, Volunteer Resources at the Centre for Participation- *Volunteer Trends and How Communities can Adapt*
- Deane Munro, Co-Chair of the Ouyen Lake Working Group- *Mobilising Volunteers in Rural Communities*
- Dean Cracknell, CEO & Co-founder of Town Teams Movement- *Building Your Community*

Q&A conversations:

How can we replicate and scale successful economic migration projects?

What are the success factors in the early transition process for Migrants?

What are the attributes of a 'ready' community?

OWN YOUR STORY

Successful and authentic engagement in our Mallee Country life

- Teagan Jane Oliver, Founder of Teagan Jane Photography- *Everyone has a story*
- Linda Tillman, CEO of Tilma Group- *How communities can create a shared story to attract visitors*
- Jade Miles, Business Builder at Black Barn Farm & Consult- *Savour the Apple- the Journey of Black Barn Farm*

Q&A conversations:

How do we start a local food revolution?

How do you sustain your energy as innovators and entrepreneurs, what keeps you inspired?

What do you see as the biggest sticking point in our current food system that needs to change most urgently?

Q&A conversations:

How can we inspire community energy and investment from volunteers?

What's the most effective way to shift silo thinking to whole system thinking?

What creative incentives can we inspire and mobilise volunteers...especially youth?

INVITING DIVERSITY

Injecting new life into community by embracing new migrants

- Cheryl McKinnon, Mayor of Loddon Shire Council- *Filipino Migration into Pyramid Hill*
- Carly Jordan, Project Manager of Great South Coast Economic Migration Project- *An Intercultural Approach to Regional Migration*
- Julie Pettett, Steering Group for HeartLand Horsham Project- *Locally Led Regional Migration*

Q&A conversations:

What are some of the best examples you have seen of features in rural towns that get tourists to stop and spend?

How can we capture and articulate an Essence of Place for our communities, that people are inspired and believe in?

How has social media changed rural marketing and how can we better harness the power of this platform?

REWRITE THE SYSTEM

A fresh perspective on innovative farming models & food systems

- Deborah Bogenhuber, Founder & EO with John Niyera, Assistant EO of Food Next Door Coop- *Nurturing Land, Nourishing People*
- Samuel Marwood, Co-founder & Managing Director of Cultivate Farms- *Realise your Farm Vision*
- Tammi Jonas, President of the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance- *Community Supported Agriculture*



"The Regenerative Communities Road Trip was a great insight into how we can look into and follow through with ideas and projects that can maintain and improve our community into the future. As a local young farmer that is passionate about my local community the day inspired me to continue striving for new ways to invigorate our Town. All the speakers were relevant and thought provoking. Many of the locals (including myself) came away with fresh ideas and passion for how we can improve our town even during these trying dry times in the MRCC. Looking forward to exciting things happening in the Murrayville community's future."

Tim Eichler, local farmer

OUTREACH- THE ROAD TRIP

Regenerative Communities guest speakers also took part in a 'Road Trip' which travelled through the Millewa, Nangiloc, Ouyen & Murrayville. The events presented a variety of activities customised to the needs and interest of each community, determined through consultation with a key community partner in each township.

The following projects were delivered across all Road Trip locations- the Millewa, Nangiloc, Ouyen & Murrayville.

Graziher Portrait Project

MRCC formed a partnership with local photographer Teagan Jane and Graziher magazine- a publication which aims to empower women living on the land. Teagan captured portraits and stories of 12 local women which will be shared via Graziher magazine and MRCC social media channels. The project aimed to celebrate local people and encourage rural communities to share their stories.

Digital Storytelling

The National Centre for Farmer Health shared a Digital Storytelling showcase, using i-pads to share powerful and engaging stories from young rural adults and rural women who have navigated tough times. Resources were made available for audiences regarding stress management, and mental health services available to them.

Mallee Sky

Beautifully told, exquisitely illustrated and essentially Australian, the Children's book Mallee Sky is a poetic text describing the Mallee landscape during drought. Author Jodi Toering facilitated craft workshops inspired by the book, presented readings, and encouraged families to purchase the book as a tool for facilitating conversations with their children. 125 children were engaged in the project across the four events.



THE MILLEWA

THURSDAY 3 OCTOBER, LAKE CULLULLERAINE

COMMUNITY PARTNER: MILLEWA LANDCARE

The Millewa community gathered on the banks of Lake Cullulleraine to share in a free community dinner, live music, kids activities and guest speakers. Over 150 locals enjoyed a beautiful sunset over the lake.

Mental Health is a major concern within the Millewa community, as they are the hardest hit drought area in the state. Feedback gathered indicated that the event provided a much needed opportunity for the community to come together and support each other.

The Unbreakable Farmer

Warren Davies, the Unbreakable Farmer spoke to the community about the importance of protecting our most precious resource- people. Warren shared his story- his eventful life has tested him, having a massive impact on his young family, relationships and finances. But it has made Warren the Farmer he is today.

Cultivate Farms

Sam Marwood of Cultivate Farms ran a workshop for 20 aspiring and retiring farmers, giving them practical ideas and case studies on how they can step into or out of farm ownership with people outside their family. The workshop unpacked that sharing ownership is a mindset shift, but if you find the right partner, it could be a big win for both parties.



"The event was inspiring. Not only had the good news of the Government drought support been announced, but Warren Davies spoke about his journey of farming during tough times. Drought makes it tough to keep farming and in light of transitioning ownership, as discussed at our workshop, it is hard to see how it would be viable to share ownership of a farm when you are struggling to make ends meet. But we know the rains will come and we know there are hundreds of top gun next gen farmers who would love to farm in the Millewa. So we have to keep encouraging people to think about sharing ownership if we want to regenerate the farming community, as this will be key to attracting and keeping them.."

Sam Marwood, Cultivate Farms pictured with aspiring farmer Joel.



"Not only was it a great success for the information that was gathered by the council, our little community was bound together for a night for all we have been through especially the last few months mentally and physically.

It would be great to see this happen more often when available.

We had near 200 adults and kids combined, we gave away over \$1000 of door prizes and 10 raffles.

Not a bad effort knowing personally a lot of families were away for that weekend.

The funding was a valuable contribution to bring a community together.

Everyone is still talking about the night."

Mark and Aileen Mayes,
Nangilloc Store and Tavern

NANGILOC

FRIDAY 4 OCTOBER, NANGILOC TAVERN

COMMUNITY PARTNER: NANGILOC TAVERN

The Nangilloc Store & Tavern is a central meeting place for the community of Nangilloc. Our consultation with business owners Mark & Aileen, as well as our local advisory group, suggested that the community was in need of a fun night out, the chance to gather together and support each other through tough times.

Mark & Aileen approached local businesses to donate door & raffle prizes, and MRCC organised a performance by acclaimed comedy duo The Nelson Twins. The aim was to attract a wide variety of community members.

Over 200 people gathered at the Tavern for a free community dinner and to enjoy the entertainment, fun activities for the kids and a free dinner cooked by the Tavern.

Town Teams- Dotmocracy

To help build interest and momentum in the current Nangilloc Community Plan Review, MRCC partnered with the Town Teams movement to run a 'Dotmocracy' activity, which is an interactive, visual method of collecting information from community about priorities and hopes for growth. 77 locals participated including children and people from different industries and backgrounds.





OUYEN

SATURDAY 5 OCTOBER, OUYEN LAKE

COMMUNITY PARTNER: OUYEN INC

The Ouyen community gathered to celebrate the one year anniversary of the opening of the Ouyen Lake, an exceptional community driven project. We set up a Regenerative Communities tent and presented a series of free talking circles, in which 50 people gathered for intimate discussions on hot topics in rural communities and farming:

Fair Food Talking Circle

Fair Food Advocate Jade Miles asked us: how can eaters and growers work together to turn farming from a faceless commodity, into a celebration of the true story of food?

Cultivate Farms workshop

Sam Marwood, founder of Cultivate Farms shared the Cultivate model and led a discussion on how we can better support young people into farm ownership, and create succession plans for retiring farmers.

Food Next Door Talking Circle

Members of Food Next Door told their story of developing a cooperative model. Discussion was held around how community have more control of their food, the supply chain and their local economy.

Butchery Workshop

MeatSmith Tammi Jonas from Jonai farms demonstrated her butchery skills, alongside a hearty feed of food sovereignty and ethical meat dialogue.

Young Farmers Talking Circle

Young leaders in farming from the Mallee led a conversation about issues affecting young people in agriculture, and how young farmers are shaping the future of Victorian agriculture.

"I speak and participate in these sorts of events all over the country and can honestly say that the organisation of this event was second to none and the depth of event content was so very encouraging. In my experience it's rare that a CEO and a shire have the courage to deliver an initiative that stretches so far outside the 'comfortable' box ticking approaches to community connection and it is encouraging to see your genuine understanding and desire to bring your community (both Mildura and further reaching communities) on the journey of reconnecting and rebuilding rural vibrancy."

Jade Miles, Black Barn Farm



MURRAYVILLE

SUNDAY 6 OCTOBER, MURRAYVILLE REC RESERVE

COMMUNITY PARTNER: NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

"These events bring things to Murrayville that we would never be able to achieve. We need more, more, more. Even though we live a long way from Mildura we still exist. We still have families wanting to thrive.

The speakers that the MRCC brought were fantastic. I especially enjoyed Linda Tillman's talk. Having her fresh perspective on what Murrayville could offer in the future was inspiring.

As I work for Landcare I am taking all her ideas and see if we can even make one of them work. Hopefully in the future we can have more events like this, as Murrayville is an amazing community."

Fiona Willersdorf, Murrayville
Landcare

Locals and friends from neighbouring communities gathered for Sunday Tucker at the Murrayville Rec Reserve, for an afternoon of music, food, entertainment, kids activities and guest speakers.

Food Next Door members cooked a paella for lunch utilising locally grown produce. The Rio Vista Social Club provided interactive entertainment in the form of a folk music jam.

Three speakers addressed the crowd informally to inject some fresh ideas into the crowd of over 50 people. Murrayville residents took the opportunity to chat to the guest speakers throughout the afternoon and be inspired.

Rural Marketing

Linda Tillman, rural marketing expert spent the weekend exploring the Mallee Track and meeting locals. Linda presented a unique and inspiring list of potential tourism projects to boost visitation to the Mallee Track.

Economic Migration

Carly Jordan spoke about her experiences with the Great South Coast Economic Migration Project, and how attracting migrant communities to rural towns can help boost local economies and strengthen communities.

Retiring & Aspiring Farmers

Sam Marwood of Cultivate Farms shared his model of seeking out young farmers who aspire to own a farm, and matching them with retiring farmers seeking a succession plan. Sam spoke of the importance of communities supporting these transitions.



KEY LEARNINGS

95% of survey respondents* agreed that community events are good for health & well being, the top reasons being:

- Gather with the local community (61%)
- Attend an event the whole community can enjoy (44%)
- Learn something new through workshops & talks (39%)
- Access information about services available (22%)

77% of respondents agreed they were more aware of the services available to them after attending the event.

*48 survey respondents who attended events in the Millewa, Nangiloc or Murrayville

- Feedback from consultation with remote residents indicated barriers to attending the Forum in Mildura. Therefore, the Road Trip was designed as a way to share costs across the five events, leveraging the small amount of funding allocated to remote communities. Guest speakers engaged for the Mildura forum were then also utilised for talks and activities in remote communities.
- Evidence through evaluation and also observation showed that attendees of the Road Trip events were mostly from the local community. The events with the lowest budget (Millewa, Nangiloc, Murrayville) had the highest attendance.
- This evidence, combined with low attendance at the Forum in Mildura from remote residents, demonstrated that directing funding and holding events in remote communities across our LGA has potential for high engagement and positive impact.
- Communities requested an informal attendance from local service providers at the event, mingling as part of the crowd. This meant that event attendees needed to have the confidence to approach service providers (and vice versa) to strike up a conversation. The informal format was a little difficult for some services to organise having staff attend as part of their role, especially as events were held outside of regular business hours.

BUDGET SUMMARY

FORUM \$26,800

Including speaker fees, travel & accommodation

MARKETING \$3,975

Print, social media and signage

ROAD TRIP EVENTS

Nangiloc \$5,000

Millewa \$6,000

Ouyen \$21,000

Murrayville \$5,000

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PROJECT PRESENTERS:



PROJECT PARTNERS:



PROJECT MANAGER:

Rachel Kendrigan, Community Planning Officer MRCC

REGENERATIVE COMMUNITIES WORKING GROUP:

Jennifer Zappia- Northern Mallee Leaders/Young Farmers Advisory Council

Robert O'Shannessy- Agriculture Victoria

David Talbolt- Sunraysia Rural Financial Counselling Services

Dianne Johnstone- Sunraysia Rural Financial Counselling Services

Michelle Kelly- Murray PHN

Norry Elder- Sunraysia Community Health Services

Glen Sutherland - Mallee CMA

Grant Doxley- Mallee Track Community Health Services

Chris Herman- Ramsey Health Mental Health

Jen Douglas- Food Next Door/ ABC

Cassey Gloster- Mallee Track Project Officer MRCC

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