



Community Engagement Framework



The establishment of the Community Engagement Framework draws on Council's skills, leadership and capacity to establish strategic partnerships within its own service system and service providers in the community to assist in the creating higher levels of health and well-being within the Mildura Rural City.

“Local government plays a key role in creating the environment for communities to prosper and enjoy improved health and wellbeing” (Vic Health 2002, Creating a Healthier Community)

The Community Engagement Framework aims to achieve an integrated and holistic approach to the community's health rather than the traditional compartmentalised approach. It is attempting to apply a systems thinking approach to the community. This approach recognises local government's role in driving a social model of health through restoring local input into these processes.

The major outcome of this project is the development of integrated community planning where there is a whole of government approach to improving and measuring social, environmental and economic standards. This is all set in the context of a geographically isolated region.

This has involved researching and developing indicators that reflect the demographics of the people of the Mildura region, which already has a 2.3% (2001 Census) indigenous population, a 9.3% ethnic population (defined as people not born in Australia), an ageing population and issues with youth retention.

There is mounting evidence to suggest that creating a healthy community is more than just good health care.

“All countries show a relationship between socio-economic status and health and other outcomes.” (Fiona Stanley AC 2003 Australian of the Year CEO Australian Research Alliance For Children and Youth, National Press Club Address 2003)

For local government to acknowledge its social responsibility and fully grasp the role they play in leading the community there must be a framework to work within and a strategy process that leads communities to a healthier life style.

The Community Engagement Framework consists of three core elements:

- (1) Social indicators provide the community with a “snapshot” of the level of well-being within the community. These indicators provide the basis for identification of issues and factors which are driving the levels of health and well-being. This then provides the context for development of strategies to address the root underlying causes.

The Mildura Rural City social indicators are a product of the work of Professor Tony Vinson, who first stated this work when he, together with the Jesuit Social Services, published “Unequal in Life: The distribution of social disadvantage in Victoria and NSW”. This work was repeated numerous times and first adapted specifically for Mildura in 2006. This was repeated in 2008. This profiles the levels of disadvantage by postcode.

- (2) The Community Engagement Framework provides the structure that brings the service system together into cross-service working groups to develop operational action plans in response to identified issues. These plans, when collated, form the overarching Health & Well-Being Plan that provides a detailed picture of how the service system is addressing community needs in an integrated way.
- (3) Healthy Community On-Line provides an on-line version of both the Social Indicators and the Health & Well-Being Plan. This enables a comprehensive overview of where we are at and where we are heading along with where we want to go with regard to the levels of health and well-being within the community.

The on-line model will also form the data collection process to ensure the indicators and strategies are continually maintained and relevant.

Why do we need to do this?

Local government has traditionally developed a Municipal Health Plan and service plans that complement this. However, this process has been limited to a council focus and not enlisted all the driving factors of a healthy community's well-being. The fragmentation of the service system makes it very difficult to bring all these elements together. There is no real over-arching process that aligns all the facets that drive a community's level of well-being.

The service system is more or less driven by a funding model or an issue of the day rather than a robust model informed by clear concise data. Consequently, the service system is often left to choose an isolated strategic path rather than a collective one.

“Often we are faced with significant problems within the community that affect the level of well-being. Finding solutions to these problems can often be an onerous task. Further detailed research into what actually drives the well-being within the community would greatly assist this process and enable us to target resources, education and development within our sector to address these issues within the community.” (Bob Mutton, Executive Officer, Mallee Division of General Practice, 2004.

The involvement of “Regional Partnerships” has enabled the necessary research and development work required to establish a framework and develop appropriate regional well being indicators.

The diverse nature of the Sunraysia area makes the delivery of services quite a significant challenge and any models which we can utilise that bring all sectors together in an over-arching framework will, in turn, produce better health outcomes and far better targeting of resources to address the issues facing our community (Dane Huxley CEO Mildura Base Hospital 2004)

Summary:

The Community Engagement Framework aims to:

- Empower members of the community to play an active role in addressing issues that affect the health and well-being of the community.
- Provide a clearly defined pathway for better health outcomes.

- Become a measurement tool that will monitor and feedback elements of a wide cross-section of community initiatives, including service planning
- Be a resource monitoring tool that plots the levels of well being in the community
- Ensure the on-going development of our community in a systematic, targeted manner.
- Enable a multitude of strategies to be linked at the local level, targeting the themes of Safety, Health and Well being.

This approach benefits the wider community by bringing together many existing projects in a focused manner enabling the community to capture and see real improvement in their well being.

The Community Engagement Framework provides a focus for creating a positive community environment that promotes a sense of community well-being and a safe and healthy lifestyle for people within the Mildura Rural City. It adds rigour to the way we as a community objectively make decisions, allocate resources and determine the levels how to reduce levels of disadvantage that exist in all communities.

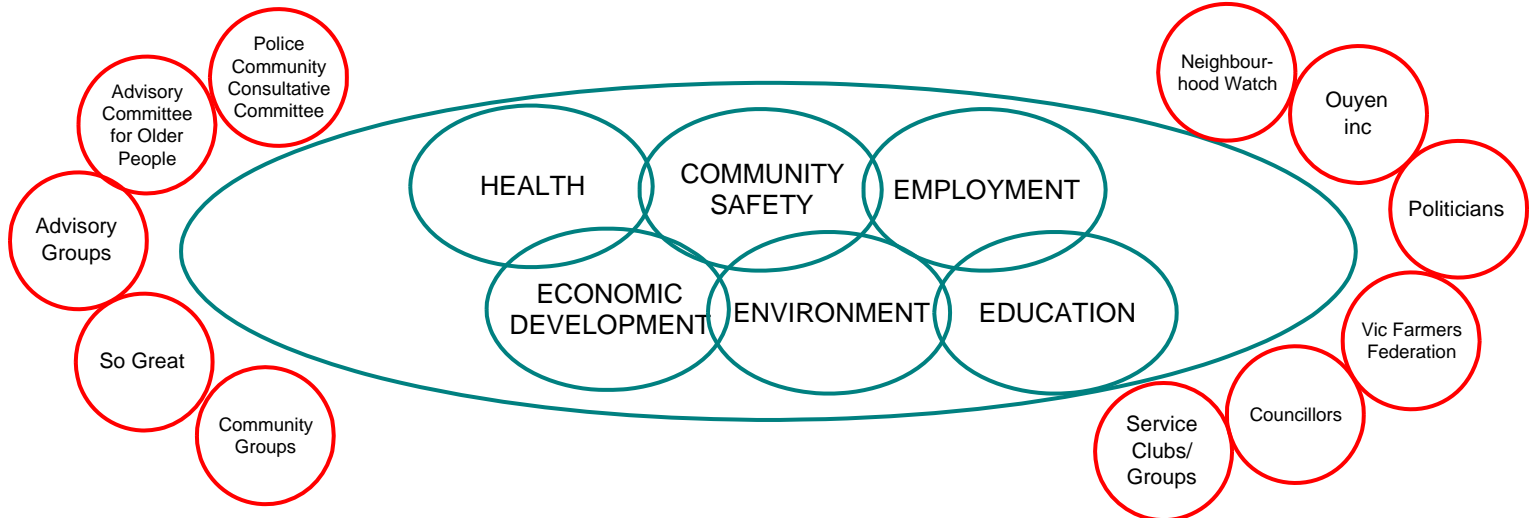
“The concept of developing integrated community planning with a holistic approach is an excellent notion and will measure and improve social, environmental and economic standards within this region.” (Graeme Martin, Sunraysia Mallee Economic Development Board 2004)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

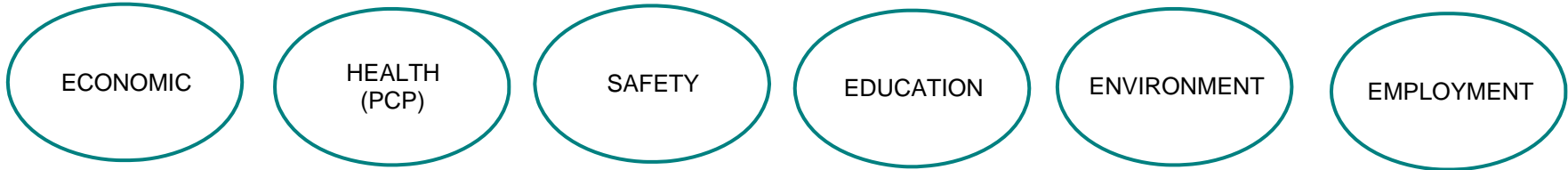
Culturally Diverse Community

Very Young Youth Middle Years Families Older People

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GOVERNANCE TEAM ...making it happen together



OPERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT FORUM

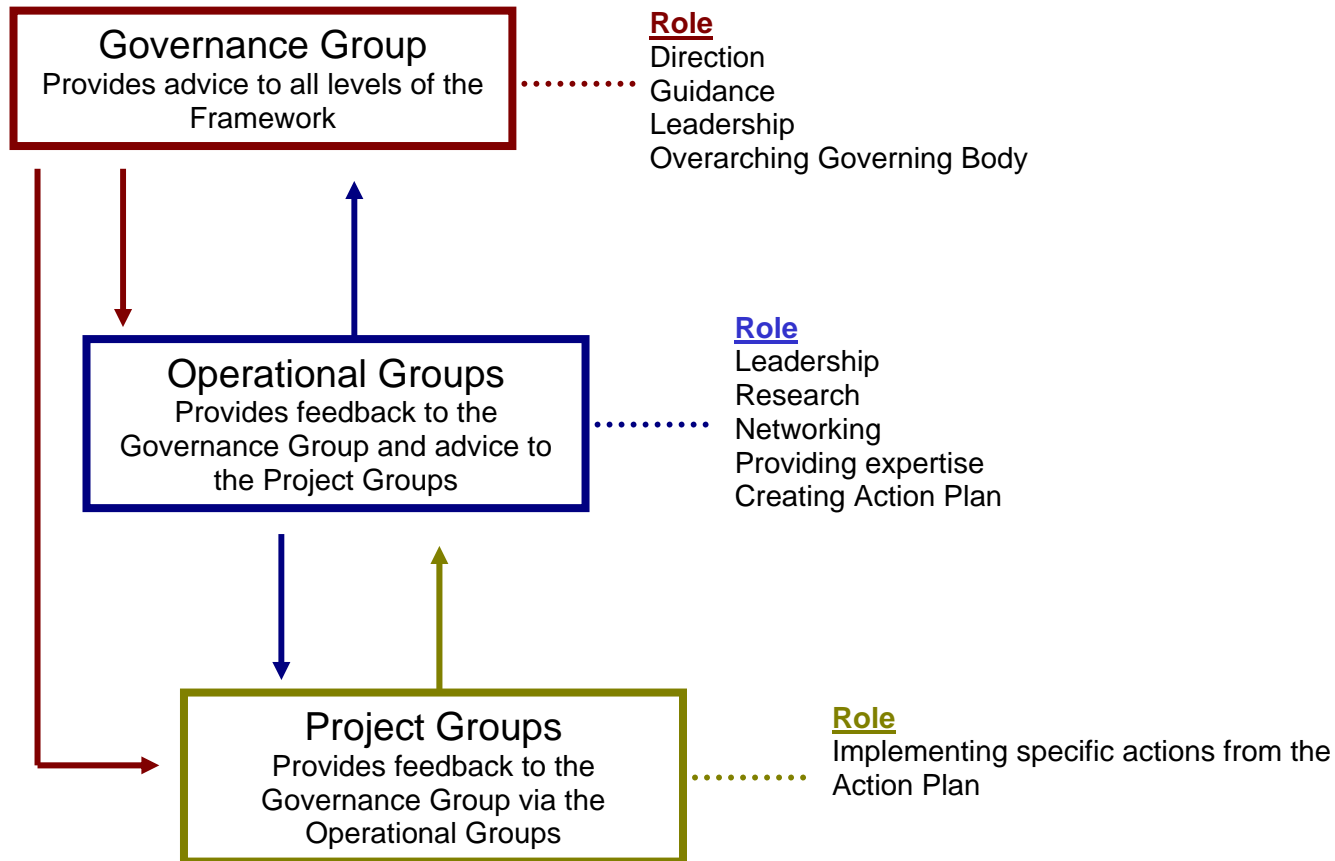


PROJECT ENGAGEMENT TEAMS



Government (Commonwealth State Local)

Community Engagement Framework Process



Note: Coloured arrows indicate information flow