

## **AGM OCTOBER 16, 2017 PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

The past year has been a challenging one for our community – towards the end of 2016 we became aware of Mildura Rural City Council's intention to review the provision of library services in the Shire. What did this mean for Underbool and district, as the current mobile van service was deemed not viable long term due to the cost of replacing another truck. Also in the first week of December, our local shop suddenly closed its doors and this meant community members had to travel to Walpeup or further, for basic items such as milk, bread and newspapers. While this was a bonus for the Walpeup economy, our residents -especially the older generation- found travelling along the highway on a daily basis for essential items a bit of a chore! (and probably expensive due to higher fuel use!)

Initial action regarding possible changes to the provision of library services was through a letter sent by Scott Anderson Ouyen Inc on behalf of all on the Mallee Track to advise Council to investigate all options. Following Community Consultation meetings run by MRCC staff, the Progress Committee wrote a submission and encouraged individuals and groups to express their disappointment about the proposed changes (reduced services- hours and materials) and to offer ideas that would better cater for Underbool and District. To date, MRCC Librarians have inspected the Underbool Linga Memorial Hall as a possible venue for future library services. The proposed changes are expected to occur in the 2017-18 financial year.

The Shop Committee, having been in recess, sprang into action very early in 2017, sourcing possible options to provide and sell bread, milk and papers in Underbool. Due to a generous donation of a building from Tracey and Ashley Corbett, much hard work by members of the Shop Committee and \$5000 from UPG Inc, the Pink Lakes Pantry opened its doors for business on Monday 27 February, 2017. The business is operated under the auspice of the Progress Group, who will be the titleholders of the land and building. Thanks to Pennie Wisneske, the Manager, there is always a great selection of goods to purchase- far more than bread, milk and papers! The Shop Committee is appreciative of all donations – financial, loan of equipment, reduced freight costs, advice and support from suppliers. Pink Lakes Pantry would not be possible without the volunteers who work each day during opening hours. While the current business is 'not for profit', it is managing to pay its accounts on time and do some essential upgrades. An MRCC grant for \$10,000 per year for three years (Year 1- refrigerator and stock) will help the long term goal of creating a business which could either employ staff or be sold as a going concern.

While the Pink Lakes Pantry has been our main focus (Community Plan 2014-19: Community Services, Community Development and Economic Development), the UPG Inc Committee has continued to lobby for improved and ongoing health services in Underbool. Meetings with Lois O'Callaghan and Lyndel Munro (MTH&CS) have given opportunities for us to seek information about service provision along the Mallee Track and to give feedback about the needs and wants of our local community with regard to medical and allied health services that are currently operating at the Underbool Centre and the possibility of other services in the future. Credit must be given to Lois and the MTH&CS Board for obtaining the services of a full time doctor in Ouyen. While I hear it

is difficult to get an appointment to see the doctor, and he is not able to come to Underbool at this point in time, at least we have a better service for emergencies. The commencement of the nurse practitioner at the Underbool Centre two days per week will provide much needed opportunities for medical consultation locally.

Our application to the Veterans Affairs Centenary Fund for the Outen Park fence and plaque project was unfortunately not successful, but a new application- possibly with some modification- will be made in the next and final round which opens in November. An application to MRCC for funding for the same project has been on hold, pending further discussion about the project. We will continue to liaise with them for a satisfactory outcome for all concerned.

After years of frustration in obtaining Council permits etc, the shelters in the main street have been constructed and passed building inspection. Thank you to Ken Jones who managed this project from start to finish, and to the small band of people who assisted with the work. The shelter at the east end of town requires a base before it can be used, but hopefully this can be completed before harvest. New plants have already been put in the garden beds and a new watering system will be installed as soon as practicable.

During the year the Progress Group has organised three community events – Christmas Eve, Australia Day celebrations and Anzac Day Commemorations. Although numbers were down on Christmas Eve this time, all who attended enjoyed the visit from Santa at Outen Park. Christmas decorations were again put up at the Wayside Stop in the main street, and helped to spread some holiday cheer. The Australia Day Celebrations held in Outen Park in the evening of the 26<sup>th</sup> January continue to be a popular event. Guests Sue Gilchrist -Trip to Nepal, and Cr Simon Clemence's life as a member of the police force and his vision as a Councillor- were excellent speakers who had the audience intrigued. The Anzac Day Commemoration which was organised as a low-key event – a March to the Memorial Gates at Outen Park followed by a dawn service- saw an unexpectedly large crowd get out of bed before the sun was up to attend. It just goes to show that the sacrifices those early Anzacs made, and the Australian men and women who fought after them in all other conflicts, will not be forgotten in this community.

The current Progress Committee –Kristen who took on the role of Secretary , Raelene Treasurer, Sonia, Rosemary, Cassey and Joan- thank you to each and every one for the efforts you put in for this community. We have made a difference, and we will continue to do so, if all members of Underbool and District share a common goal – to make this place a great place to live and play!!!

Fran Lynch

President