

UNDERBOOL PROGRESS GROUP INC PRESIDENT'S REPORT AGM 26th OCTOBER 2015

At this time last year the Underbool and District Community Plan for 2014-2019 had been completed, but still had to be endorsed by the Council. The Progress Group, using information gained through community consultation and documented in that Plan, has continued to work towards the goals that have been identified. While some of those achievements seem minor compared to the large-scale projects being undertaken, the committee has been able to address some 'Actions' under all seven themes since the last AGM.

Community Safety There has been an ongoing partnership with the fire services to support community bush fire emergency plans and also to encourage and support local individuals to update their own fire plans, including the use of the USBs distributed by MRCC to store personal information- most important being medical details. Support to record and save that data, has also been offered for those who do not have access to a computer. Support for the MRCC Emergency Services Expo was through the organisation of catering for the event, assisting with venue details and supplying information about schools, other events and ways of advertising the event along the Mallee Track.

Efforts are being made to investigate the need for flashing lights and reduced speed signs in school/kinder zones (MRCC/ Police/ UPS/UELC). CEO Gerard suggested we apply to have the speed monitor trailer in town for two weeks; Police be asked to monitor traffic on highway.

Removal of some derelict buildings has occurred, and repair/removal of other dangerous structures and trees will continue as necessary.

Continuation of the path from the school crossing in Mossop street to connect with the concreted path at the Hotel has been listed with Council to be done when funds are available, (currently the path goes from the corner of Mossop Street/Monash Ave, past the school bus stop and finishes at the school crossing). The Telstra Pit on the corner of Monash Avenue and Mossop Street has been reported to Telstra and was to be repaired a fortnight ago.

Installation of adequate fencing in Outen Park is one of UPG's major projects. Quotes have been obtained for Elmslite fencing and gates, including stone pillars to match those at the front of the park to be installed at each of the other entrances. The proposal includes plaques with the names from the Underbool and Linga Honour Rolls from WW1, plus other historical information relating to that time. Hopefully a large portion of funding will be obtained through the State Government Anzac Centenary 2014-2018 scheme.

Community Services The committee continued to lobby for doctor's visits to Underbool (particularly in the first part of the year), promoted and utilised services already available at the Mallee Track Underbool Centre.

A fund (to be managed by UPG Inc) for the replacement of pads and service/repair of the defibrillator was set up to ensure that the machine is always in working order, with one spare set of pads. This vital piece of equipment could save the life of a member of our community or of a visitor to our town. A target of \$500 was set as replacement pads cost \$180, once-only use, and 'shelf' life of 2 years. \$290 has been donated to date.

Community Development Due to the space and state of the old noticeboard, and the opening of the new shop, the committee sourced different types of noticeboards and engaged in community consultation, contacting Trish and Murray, as well as Tamsin re the preferred location of a new noticeboard. (Thanks to Kristen for her time and efforts.) Discussion with the CEO and Geoff Burr followed. With type and site determined, the committee was to purchase the new noticeboard when funds became available from Term Deposits at the end of September. At that time a new noticeboard was erected at the shop, courtesy of GWM Water, and I believe, Greg Brown. Thanks must go to them for their contribution to the community. However, it is perhaps timely here to remind everyone that communication and consultation with UPG Inc about intended projects and activities may lead to bigger and better outcomes if more people can be involved. In the above case, it was fortunate 'Progress' noticeboard had not been delivered to Underbool!

The over 60's in Underbool and district will have the opportunity to develop their use of digital technology (mobile phones/laptops/ipads/tablets) through a State Government funded program which will be run in Underbool in the next 6 months.

The Progress Group provided support to the Swimming Pool Committee to apply for a grant to purchase new solar blankets for the pool. This was successful and the blankets will be installed in time for season opening.

Culture and Heritage The Australia Day Celebration took place again in Outen Park, thanks to Joan and her helpers. A “salad” tea was enjoyed by all who attended. The Roy Outen Plaque was unveiled, and Alan Lynch told of Roy’s family and war service. Guest speakers included Alan and Helen Lam, Cr Brown and Cr Thorburn.

The Anzac Centenary Commemoration Service was a fitting tribute to those who served in the First World War and the conflicts since. What began as a small affair in the early planning stages, grew into an event which saw many families coming together to pay respects to their ancestors. From the March in the rain, the raising of the flag at Outen Park Gates, the solemn service in the Hall where floral tributes were laid, the displays of memorabilia to the cooked breakfast and camaraderie – all played a significant part on this historic occasion. It is from this event that the idea of adding more historical and educational information and documentation to Outen Park has stemmed.

Three projects which focus on our heritage have been ongoing for a number of years due to legal obligations, and finally we have a building permit for the shed over the Mallee scrub roller to hand, while the permit for the shed for the dray to be erected opposite Glosters’ Garage is on hold, awaiting the Vic track /Council lease of the land. Work can commence at any time on the first shed but there may be a delay as harvest is upon us, and we will be asking for volunteers to help. The third part of our display is the repair and installation of the old water trough and three sheep (ram, ewe and lamb) to be located near the pioneer wall, and behind the pioneer and his dog. Land manager’s approval has been sought for this, and Jason Morrish from Ouyen will go ahead as soon as that is received.

Environment Continued partnership with MRCC staff both at local level and the two service centres

Maintenance and upgrades to wayside stop rest area include: improved toilet facilities, installation of water bubbler for drinking water, roof guttering and rainwater tank cleaned.

Sourcing new out-of-town Blue highway signage for camping, toilets, BBQ; also food (Shop/Hotel)

Advocating for changed information re camping ground in Tourist Guides

Upgrade of recreation ground roads, parking area and tree planting

Following consultation with MRCC personal, a toilet facility is to be established in Outen Park next year. This will prove a great benefit for park users.

Shade trees planted in Outen Park

Attendance at Waste Management meeting for MRCC proposals for future and to voice local concerns

Economic Development With the impending closure of the local store in March, the Progress group organised a community meeting to share concerns and determine wants and needs. A sub-committee was elected to conduct further research and a second community meeting was held to inform the public of Murray and Trish’s proposal to open a shop in the hotel dining room, and for Tamsin to give details of post office hours of operation. The Progress Group and sub-committee have continued to support and promote both businesses, encouraging purchase of goods and services locally where possible.

Ongoing lobbying for improved telecommunication services is now coming to fruition with the upgrade occurring at the present time.

Partnerships If we are to achieve our goals as a community, we must continue to work together. This has been evident in the staging of another Football Final, the Primary School Garden Fundraiser, the Emergency Services Expo to name a few. Some had large crowds in attendance like the football and the Garden Day. While the Expo only enjoyed a small attendance due to other events on the same day, the volunteers from the various community groups worked together to provide the food and drink on offer. A job well done, especially as there was only a small number available to actually do the catering!

Our community has good ties with the MRCC- Geoff Burr our Community Liaison Officer who is always willing to assist with any issues, the staff at both the Ouyen and Mildura Service Centres and in particular, the local outdoor staff who maintain our parks and gardens; the CEO Gerard, who took time to come and visit again so he could see firsthand our plans for the town, and give us positive feedback and support on those projects; and also to the Councillors who have attended the functions this year.

We also had visits from Peter Crisp and Damian Drum (State Government) who gave advice and information about small rural communities and how they have managed a range of issues that come with declining populations.

SKYPE – This year the committee has had the opportunity to trial Skype as a means of communication when all meeting attendees are not able to be in the same location. We have been able to meet with a number of people based at the Mildura service centre of MRCC including Geoff Burr, Robert Tindall and Jarrod Delahunty from Emergency Management team and another staff member to discuss the proposed toilet in Outen Park. All participants were able to view plans and diagrams and come to satisfactory decisions without people having to travel long distances. This form of technology will be very useful in the future.

WEBSITE- Due to a new hosting service, the Underbool Community Website has undergone some changes. The update involved checking to see if all the relevant information was still available as in the past. Our grateful thanks to Ron Jackson for undertaking the management of the website.

FACEBOOK PAGE – the Underbool Community Facebook Page is proving a popular way of sharing information about events and other activities in our district. Thank you to Sonia and Kristen for setting up the page.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the Christmas Santa Lolly Run and the Christmas decorations for display in the main street. Several new initiatives were put in place to make things easier for future organisation – including storage of Christmas stuff, Santa escort, and Christmas music.

Thank you to the committee for all your work- Joan for stepping up during my absence in December-February, Rosemary and Sonia for the secretarial duties, Raelene for the financial records, Kristen for the research for quotes for our projects, and Cassey for advice on funding availability and Council contacts. Thank you to everyone who has contributed in any way to achieve the community goals. Hopefully 2016 will see the completion of old projects and the development of new ones to ensure our town continues to be a safe and happy place.

Fran Lynch President