

RUFFY COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN 2012



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INTRODUCTION

In 2005 the Strathbogie Shire Council, with funding from the Department of Planning and Community Development, introduced a community planning model that in 2012 consists of eight community action groups across the Shire. These action groups are comprised of members of the community, whose role is to develop and implement a community action plan for their particular community.

The Ruffy community enjoys living in a beautiful and quiet environment; its strength is a strong community spirit, and it has used this to develop a range of great community assets and social events enjoyed by its residents and visitors to the area.

The guiding vision of the Ruffy Community Action Group is to build on these community values and strengths to achieve:

- a sustainable future for the Ruffy area, balancing compatible economic development with maintaining important environmental and social values
- harmonious interaction and cooperation between old and new residents, different interest groups within the community and with the responsible authorities
- a well-informed community that participates actively in matters that affect it.

To achieve this vision, the objectives of the Ruffy Community Action Group (RCAG) are to:

- develop and implement a community action plan that reflects the aspirations of the Ruffy community
- support individual community groups to achieve their objectives by working cooperatively with them and coordinating as necessary
- provide an effective link between the Ruffy community, the Strathbogie Shire Council, and other relevant agencies
- provide a forum for free and open discussion about matters of concern
- keep the community well informed.

RCAG ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

Since its formation in 2009, RCAG has played an important role within the Ruffy community. As a facilitator and through cooperative arrangements with the existing community groups, it has helped to bring about:

- the purchase of the Ruffy School site to allow the creation of the Tablelands Community Centre (TCC) – planned for and managed by the TCC Committee
- a substantial upgrade of the Ruffy Recreation Reserve to provide better facilities for equestrian events – planned and supervised by the Ruffy Recreation Reserve Committee in conjunction with the Ruffy Adult Riding Club
- a range of improvements to the Ruffy Hall and its surrounds – planned and supervised by the Ruffy Hall Committee.

RCAG has also initiated and implemented some projects of its own:

- the establishment and operation of the www.ruffycommunity.com.au website which helps to inform both the Ruffy community and visitors to the area
- the preparation of the Ruffy Streetscape Plan which sets out guidelines to ensure that future development in the Ruffy township is in tune with the community's vision for its streetscape.

In line with its objectives, RCAG has provided at its meetings an opportunity for exchange of information on what is going on in the community, and has promoted various social functions and events. It has acted as a forum for discussion of issues of concern, to allow projects initiated by individuals such as the creation of the Ruffy 'Avenue of Honour' Memorial, to receive broader community support. Following up on expressions of concern, RCAG has approached the Strathbogie Shire Council with various requests, including improvements in road conditions and road safety, reduction of fire hazard and changes to signage. Council representatives and Shire officers have generally responded positively to such requests.



DEVELOPING A NEW ACTION PLAN

This plan was developed from the responses to a series of questions posed at a community engagement dinner held on June 22, 2012. An invitation to this evening was delivered to all community members in the Ruffy area, including those in Upper Creighton's Creek and Terip Terip, with 50 people attending. The evening included presentations from some of the areas' community groups, dinner and drinks, and a facilitated community conversation asking the following questions:

1. What do you love about living in the Ruffy area?
2. What are the strengths of this community?
3. In ten years, what do you want the Ruffy area to be like?
4. What do you want to do to get there (i.e. what projects and ideas)?

Main points from the discussions were recorded and someone from each table read out some of the things that had been listed. The unedited responses from these questions can be found in Appendix 1. A brief summary of the main themes in the responses is given on the next two pages.



COMMUNITY VALUES

Responses that could be grouped around the theme of 'natural environment' were the most common. People love the rock formations, the elevation, the rolling hills, fresh air, and remoteness.

The community spirit, range of events, and the sense of belonging were also frequently reported as what people love about the area.

In terms of the built environment, the lack of development, signage and traffic were common themes.

The values expressed at the community engagement dinner can be used to test future proposed ideas and projects. To test if a proposed change, project, development etc, is in-line with the community's values, ask the following:

- Does it preserve/improve the natural environment?
- Does it keep development to an acceptable level?
- Does it foster community spirit and the sense of belonging?

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

Communities are most successful when they know what their strengths are, and then work to build on them. When asked what the strengths of this community were, the overwhelming response was about the social characteristics of the community; the way the community cooperates and supports each other; the commitment, dedication and pride.

Community projects will be most successful when they build on, or utilise these existing strengths and assets.

THE RUFFY AREA IN TEN YEARS TIME

Attracting young people and families to the area was the major theme emerging from the conversations about the Ruffy area into the future.

Improvements to infrastructure, facilities and a range of services, including the National Broadband Network and mobile phone coverage, were also mentioned several times, and even linked to the goal of attracting younger people to the area.

Preserving the natural environment was also a priority, as was supporting diversified farming practices to stay self-sufficient (as opposed to intensive farming operations).

Maintaining the cultural identity of the community was also important, with emphasis on valuing the history of the area, and the rich community life.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

People were invited to write their project ideas (emerging from Question 4) on individual pieces of paper and read them out to the whole group. These ideas were taped to a display board at the front of the room and people had fun participating in a 'dot democracy', where they could paste five sticky dots onto projects of their choice (a maximum of two dots for any one project). This provided an immediate and clear idea of the level of support for the various projects. People were also asked to write their name on projects they wanted to be involved in, as only projects with project teams to work on them can be achieved.

Projects identified by the community during the planning evening have been grouped and listed in order of the number of votes received (see Appendix 2).

The list also identifies whether they are projects that the community can make happen themselves (this may include fund raising/applying for grants); projects that the community cannot do but can advocate for; and projects that are a combination of both.

Community members wrote their names on some of the projects and from these, projects teams may develop. The role of RCAG is to support the development of these project teams and to aid them in securing funding for their projects if required.

The last column indicates which other community groups could or should be involved in developing this idea further into a project proposal.

Broad Project Areas.

Appendix 3 lists broad project areas that the Community has identified as worthy of support by the Action Group and possible implementation over the next few years.

Each year the Action Group will decide on a new Action Schedule for the next 12 months, and how to use the current funding allocation.

Some projects may not need any further support from RCAG; other existing community groups in Ruffy or community members can start their projects straight away.

Some of the ways RCAG can support community members to undertake projects are;

- Promotion of projects on the community website and in the Granite News
- Support for how to plan a project or advocacy campaign
- Funding small projects or providing seed funding for larger projects (RCAG receives some funds from the Strathbogie Shire Council to use on projects identified in the Community Action Plan)
- Connecting members of the community to each other
- Partnering on grant applications or letters of support for applications
- Ideas for fundraising.



APPENDIX 1: Record of community conversations

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT LIVING IN THE RUFFY AREA?

Natural Environment

Land
Peace and quiet
Koalas
Wildlife
Rocks
Landscape
Love being up among the rocks
Watching the stars with no smog to see through
The area is peaceful and with nature beauty, such as the bush, trees, birds, animals etc
Fresh air, no pollution
Reliable rainfall
"On the plateau looking down"
Bushlands
Serenity
Wildlife
Environment – quite, peaceful, pretty, wildlife
Remoteness
The land, the rocks
The rolling hills, elevation, scenery
Altitude
Bush, landscape, views
Hills
Fresh air, clean air
Isolation
Autumn
Climate
Quietness, peacefulness
Ruralness
Being isolated
Space, privacy
Wildlife, koalas, reptiles, phascogales
Remoteness
Rocks, water, winter
Trees and remnant vegetation on roadsides
Peace and quiet
Area not industrially farmed
Aesthetics
Fresh air
High rainfall
Cool climate
Climate
Wild life
Scenery
Warambangles
Ability to have seclusion
Rocks

Community/People/Culture

Show
Henry Noye cooking the 'barbie'
The welcoming committee and the get together once a month
Quirkiness
Family
Because of my spouse
People and good neighbours
Local gossip
Friendships
Family connections

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT LIVING IN THE RUFFY AREA? Continued...

Diversity of people
Our home, history
Feels safe
Friends
We know each other
Friendship of locals; happy to help when needed but not in your pocket all the time
Community spirit
The people
Community spirit
People, helpful, friendly
Sense of community/belonging
The people
Chatting to other farmers
Coming together occasionally at Ruffy Hall for functions
Activities, horse riding etc
Efficient CFA
Local wines

Built Environment/Facilities

Equestrian facilities
Breakfast at the Ruffy store
Great facilities at the oval
Freedom and privacy
Not too populated
A strong community hub
The lack of development (e.g. no pubs, no Coles, no McDonalds)
The Produce Store
Lack of signage, billboards, advertising
Uncluttered
Dirt roads
No through traffic
The Ruffy General Store/Friday's Local's night
Local produce
RuffArtZ

Other

History
Physically travelling up onto the tableland up winding roads leaving the rest of the world behind
Remote however not too far from Melbourne
Close to snowfields and Lake Eildon
History
150km from Melbourne

WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS OF THIS COMMUNITY?

Natural Environment

Clean environment
Fresh air
Remote

Community/People/Culture

People always willing to help others out
Community events
Generosity of people to conduct events
Draws outside people to community
The diversity of the community
To share life and the responsibilities amongst each other
Unity and cooperation
Working together
Active members and officers sharing ideas and functions for the purpose of the community

RuffArtZ
Community focus
Local groups getting together
Have a go attitude
Strong Landcare group
People are there for you if you need them
Cultural life
Community spirit 'camaraderie'
Interconnectedness of groups/people
Well established groups; CFA, Hall, TCC, Landcare
Friendly
Community connectedness
Connection with other small communities e.g. Creighton's Creek, Terip
We know each other
Space for personal development
Foster independence and cooperation with each other
Resilient
Small and strong
Supportive of each other
Great ideas
Hard working
Tradition of long-term landholders and families
People are willing to put in
Responsible people
People are committed to the area
United in our love of Ruffy and the place we live
People respect each other and their privacy
Community commitment
Dedicated people
Passion to keep history alive
Community pride (purchasing the school)
Landcare focus
Community spirit
Sharing with no strings attached
Way of life
No children – all grown up
Variety of backgrounds in community
Diverse community
Feeling of safety
Endless possibilities
People
Creative solutions
A can-do attitude

Built Environment/Facilities

Recreation ground
The space
RG Sheds
Stone
TCC
No mines
Small
Local industries
No fast food chains
No parking meters
Free parking
No poker machines

THE RUFFY AREA IN TEN YEARS TIME...WHAT DO YOU WANT IT TO BE LIKE?

Natural Environment

Natural assets enhanced and protected
Warmer winters and cooler summers
Sustainable community/land care
Keep wildness of Ruffy
Tree focus
Retain native road side habitat
Landcare focus to continue
Maintain remoteness; discover it (no signage); natural environment,

Community/People/Culture

More young people
Young families
More community groups
Continue positive inaction with the community
Reverse the demographic, attract a younger generation
Vibrant cultural and social life
Keep and embrace the history
More people to know about it – visitors to bring diversity, open the community – don't lose Ruffy's identity or soul
Build on today's strengths
More younger people establish themselves in the area
More young people moving in

Industries, Economic Development

Change in farming diversity; more sustainability and environmentally diverse practices; food crops as opposed to stock
Farmers to be supported to stay self-sufficient and not intensive (commercial)
Build on the cottage industries – local wine/local produce

Built Environment/Facilities

Faster, reliable internet
Mobile coverage
Golf course
Public transport
Garbage collection
Power supply (solar, wind, water), green energy
Mobile phone coverage
More technology
Phone service
Supportive to older people staying in the community 'need facilities'
Ability to shop locally for basic provisions 7 days a week
Improved technology so we can stay/work, bring younger people

Other

More communication for events
Status quo
Lower rates

APPENDIX 2: Draft Ruffy Community Action Plan 2012 – Grouped Project Ideas

ACTIVITY AREA, PROJECT/INITIATIVE	No. of DOTS	NAMES	TYPE OF ACTION	COORDINATE WITH
Community, People, Culture, Recreation				
Bring more cultural events to the area e.g. Writer's Festival, artists workshops to include all. Use the facility of the TCC to entice craftsmen who can teach and demonstrate and inspire their craft.	20	Verena, Jacque B RuffArtZ Sharron B Andrew B, Doug W Karyn Walton	Community action	TCC, RuffArtZ
More happy hour events, social events, community dinners etc, music nights	12	Justus Hagen, Doug Watson	Community action	Hall Com. Rec Res Com RuffArtZ
Sports/recreation activities (Cricket team, Pool, Table tennis)	11	Barb Trainor (table tennis)	Community action	Rec Res Com TCC, Hall
Natural Environment, Sustainability				
Valuing and active management of high quality remnant indigenous vegetation – education to support this, subtle signage (incl. walking tracks)	15	Barb T, Justus H (walking tracks) Cathy A, Sharron B	Community action	Landcare
More tree planting on farms and around water courses	10	Justus Hagen Cathy A, Sharron B	Community action	Landcare
Sustainability – power, fuel (wind, sun, water)	17	Cathy A, Sharron B	Community action	TCC
Keep up regular fox drives – support with an organised rifle range	4	None	Community Action	?
Farming, Industries, Tourism				
Identify tourism opportunities i.e. cellar door, accommodation, functions/weddings, fish farming	11	Karyn Walton	Community action Advocacy?	Rec Res Com Hall, CC
Sister town (overseas or metro)	11	Angie Randall	Community action	
Introduce a group for retired people from the land to continue their skills (similar to Men's Shed) – grey power community (Skill share)	10	Erwin W, Doug Boucher, Andrew B Cathy Artridge	Community action	TCC
Infrastructure, Facilities, Planning				
NBN, 4G, equal access	8	Brian Miller	Advocacy	
No building that dominates skyline	7	None	Advocacy	?
Rubbish collection	5	None	Advocacy	?
Community bus	3	Cathy Artridge	Advocacy	
Good roads 'in the bush' (Weibye Track), sound signals to avoid car accidents with kangaroos, to be provided by Department of Highways or Shire	3	None	Advocacy	?
Communication				
Monthly hardcopy Ruffy Community Newsletter to build community connection and communication	7	Sharron Batt Colleen F	Community action	TCC
Improve Communication via notice boards, websites, phone	3	None	Community action	

Health and Wellbeing				
Lobbying for services for elderly and those in need e.g. Meals on Wheels, home help, medical services, community lunch, U3A, entertainment/activities, Men's Shed	2	None	Community action Advocacy	TCC
Visiting doctor/health professionals i.e. one day per week	1	None	Advocacy	TCC
Other				
Fairer rate system – we have highest rates/ most costly shire of the 7 shires we border	22	None	Advocacy	?
Individuals accepting/taking responsibility for their choice of living in a 'more remote' community (unless not able to due to age/illness)	5	None	Community Action	?

APPENDIX 3: Draft Ruffy Community Action Plan 2012 – Projects

ACTIVITY AREAS, PROJECTS/INITIATIVES	COORDINATE WITH
Community, People, Culture, Recreation	
Promote, support or organise a broad range of events in the Ruffy area (using available community facilities in Ruffy), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural events with broad community participation – e.g. writer’s festival, artists workshops, crafts workshops • Social events – e.g. happy hours, community dinners, music or dance nights • Recreation activities, - e.g. Men’s Shed, cricket, billiards, table tennis 	TCC Ruffy Hall Com. RuffArtZ Rec. Res. Com.
Establish a ‘Men’s Shed’ to create opportunities for social interaction and sharing skills	TCC
Natural Environment, Sustainability	
Support activities aimed at preserving the natural environment of the Ruffy area, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational activities to develop greater understanding and valuing of our natural environment, including educational signage • Active management of high quality remnant indigenous vegetation • Tree planting on farms and around water courses • Weed and pest control (e.g. foxes) • Development of walking tracks 	Landcare
Promote/support environmental sustainability initiatives – e.g. alternative power systems, water conservation, public transport	TCC
Farming, Industries, Tourism	
Support initiatives to maintain the viability of existing enterprises and creating employment opportunities in the Ruffy area, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversified/alternative farming systems • Tourism opportunities, e.g. farm stay accommodation, cellar door, functions/weddings, ‘sister town’ (overseas or metro) 	TCC
Planning, Infrastructure, Facilities	
Promote appropriate planning for development in the Ruffy area by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the Ruffy Streetscape Plan • Advocating for planning regulations that are in tune with the values and aspirations of the Ruffy community 	
Advocate for improved infrastructure and facilities serving the Ruffy community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High standard access to internet and phone • Maintenance of roads and tracks in good and safe condition • Public transport option to shopping and services hub • Appropriate standard of rubbish collection 	
Communication	
Improve communication in the Ruffy area via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining/enhancing the Ruffy Community website • Notice board, appropriate signage with regularly updated information • Hardcopy Ruffy Community Newsletter to build community connection and communication 	TCC
Health and Wellbeing	
Advocate for improved access to services for people with special needs e.g. Meals on Wheels, home help, medical services (visiting doctor/health professionals one day per week), community lunch, entertainment/activities for senior citizens, U3A, Men’s Shed	TCC