



RE3 RESET REBOOT REVITALISE

Community Recovery Plan

August / September 2020

Acknowledgement of Country

Strathbogie Shire Council acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this nation.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands and we pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present.

Council is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

Message from the Mayor

At Strathbogie Shire we are acutely aware of how our region has been affected by drought, bushfire and now the unprecedented impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Coronavirus restrictions have hit us hard. Our region has experienced job losses, staff being stood down and businesses being forced to close.

Our community has not been shy on its need for support during this challenging time and Council is committed to doing all it can to provide this help.

Our 2020/21 Budget was prepared with coronavirus at the forefront. It included rate relief for business and our community.



We also know providing support to our community during the coronavirus pandemic is not limited to financial assistance.

Helping to **Reset, Reboot and Revitalise** our communities will take much more.

This is why we launched the RE3 project – to support our community through the pandemic and to flourish on the other side.

Executive Summary

RESET



Established communications channels



Regular video updates



Rate relief for business and community



Health promotion



Signage to keep people safe



Launch RE3 project



Financial hardship support

REBOOT



Working for Victoria



The Strathbogie Story



Taking services and community engagement online



Access to health services



Capital works power on



Streamlined community grants

REVITALISE



Engage with community to learn, heal and flourish



Improve access to services



Ensure our community is heard



Economic Development Strategy



Taking customer service online

Why we need to act

IMPACT ON OUR ECONOMY

Local businesses are reporting a substantial decrease in economic output. Some have reported a downturn in income so significant they are unable to meet rental and credit commitments. We know:

- 25 per cent of businesses have applied for job keeper payments with a greater number applying for other government assistance measures
- There has been a seven per cent increase in unemployment across the Shire.

IMPACT ON OUR COMMUNITIES

Our community has worked hard to follow restrictions and help keep us all safe. Major events across the Shire have been cancelled. Community groups and sporting activities have stopped.

However, in doing our bit to stop the spread of the virus, comes feelings of isolation and loneliness.

We are constantly reminded of the significant number of older people in our community without access to technology.

We know that now, more than ever, we must talk about mental health and look out for our friends, family and loved ones.

IMPACT ON OUR WORKERS

Strathbogie Shire has established a strict two-team routine to keep our staff and our organisation as safe as we can.

This means we are operating two teams across our entire business – working from the office, and from home, on alternating weeks. For those who could work from home, they did, and are continuing to do so.

What we're doing – Phase 1: Reset

Phase 1: Reset

This phase is about ensuring our community has access to the information it needs to stay safe during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It's about establishing communication channels with our community to make sure they know where, and how, to get credible information about restrictions.

WHAT WE HEARD

Through a series of online feedback sessions on the 2020/21 Draft Budget we heard our community was hurting. The impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19) have hit many areas hard and they asked us to do all we could to support them.



KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Communication:

We established a COVID-19 page on our website to ensure our community has a one-stop-shop for information about impacts to local services. We used social media to drive safety messages and continue to generate video updates to reinforce our messages.

We built an email network of more than 600 businesses and used it to provide advice and seek feedback. We have also worked closely with the business representative groups such as and the Euroa Chamber of Commerce.

Health promotion:

We are working closely with our immunisation provider to ensure immunisations continue, while following COVID-19 restrictions. Our maternal health services are also providing online appointments, with priority provided to young infants. Essential face-to-face appointments continue but are limited to 15 minutes.

What we're doing – Phase 1: Reset



Signage:

We have erected signs at the entry to all our townships reminding our community to stay safe and reinforcing messages on how to do this. Above and beyond this we are taking our messages to our main thoroughfares through innovative footpath stickers.

Our COVID response plan:

We established the RE3 Project – Reset, Reboot, Revitalise to ensure our community knows exactly how we're responding.

Relief to business and community:

Council's 2020/21 Budget included rate relief for our businesses and community. Our goal was to support businesses to continue to operate and provide support to our community in the best way for them.

In recognition of challenges faced by a number of our businesses, fees for registered premises were set at zero in our 2020/21 Budget and we will refund fees for the 2019/20 year. This also applies to footpath trading fees.

Our Budget also included a zero rate rise in the average rate per property.

Financial hardship support:

We're here to support our community and offer ratepayers special payment arrangements for those who may be experiencing hardship. We understand there is no one-size-fits-all approach so we work with individual ratepayers to best meet their needs.

What we're doing – Phase 2: Reboot

Phase 2: Reboot

The phase is rapidly responding - and rapidly changing - as we continue to adapt to meet our community's needs. In the reboot phase we are firmly focussed on tackling feelings of isolation and loneliness and looking out for the mental health of our community.

Our projects are focussed on driving community connection. Our staff are focussed on ensuring access to services and keeping our community safe.

WHAT WE KNOW

Research by the Black Dog Institute has found more than

50 per cent of people have reported feeling lonely during the coronavirus pandemic.

Rachel Cohen, a clinical psychologist at the Black Dog Institute, says that the loneliness we might be experiencing now can be reduced with the help of social media, but it's the quality of our online connections that count.

This is backed up by what we're hearing in our community. Staying at home, doing the right thing, has been hard for people. They're searching for the community connection that is usually prevalent in our Shire.



What we're doing - Working for Victoria

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Working for Victoria

Up to 43 new jobs were created in our Shire to help those impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The jobs were funded by the Victorian Government's Working for Victoria initiative and have provided us with the support needed to Reset, Reboot and Revitalise our community.

The six-month positions will provide community support in areas such as planning and assets, information technology, communications, project management, maintenance and repairs, food services and catering for the vulnerable, cleaning and much more.

In the outdoor crew we are ensuring facilities like playgrounds, toilets and public facilities are kept clean to meet the safest possible cleanliness measures during the coronavirus pandemic.

Members of this team are also out and about cleaning roadside drains to prepare for a wet winter and foreshadowed heavy spring rains and then the summer fire season.

In our communications, engagement, tourism and community development teams we have people working with schools, the art community, the elderly, our business community and so much more to drive connectiveness and wellbeing.

Our economic development team is working with businesses across our Shire to connect them to support opportunities and two additional project managers will help drive our important capital works program.

We'll also use the opportunity to work with the community to develop new streetscape plans for all our townships ready for planting and upgrades.

The \$500 million Working for Victoria program is part of the government's response to the coronavirus pandemic and includes matching people who have lost their job due to the economic impacts of coronavirus with employers.

Strathbogie Shire is one of an initial 28 councils across Victoria participating in the new initiative.

This is fantastic news for our community.



Before

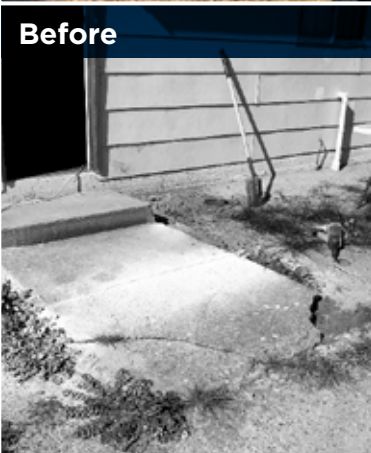


After

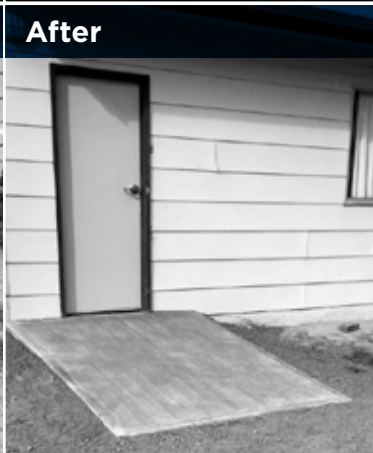


Before

**This is
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After



What we're doing - The Strathbogie Story

The Strathbogie Story

In doing our bit to stop the spread of the virus, comes feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Council knows these feelings are real because we too are feeling their effects.

To help our community overcome these feelings we've developed a project that aims to drive community connections.

This is more than a simple video storytelling project and more than a children's story book competition.

This is **The Strathbogie Story**.

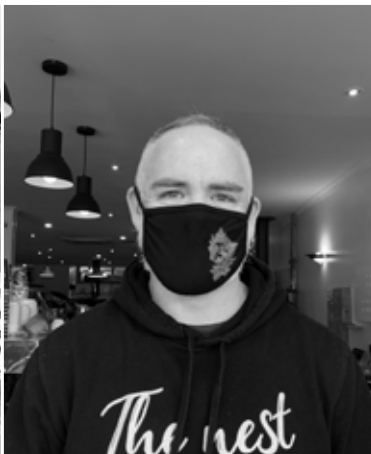
Through this project our community is sharing its stories through video, story books and even a hand-written note.

Locals are sharing their passions, why they love where we live and offering advice on getting through this together.

We are learning more about our people, their talents, resilience and ultimately what makes our community tick.

Most importantly we are tackling feelings of isolation and loneliness by bringing our community together.





I love living in Strathbogie Shire



What we're doing – community grants program

Streamlined community grants program

Another important way we're working to reboot our community is through a streamlined RE3 Community Grants Program.

We're simplifying the application process and asking our community to tell us how their project will help them address the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

Activities prioritised for a grant of up to \$5000 include:

- New one-off programs or activities that strengthen our community.
- The adaptation of existing services, programs or activities to sustain operations or support operational changes to meet public health directives.

- The implementation of activities outlined in COVID Safe Plans

We are encouraging projects that increase social connection and reduce isolation, promote healthy relationships or improve social, physical and mental health during COVID-19 restrictions. Most importantly we are looking to promote kindness and support for fellow community members.

Captions page 13:

- 1. Strathbogie Historical Group digitizing historical memorabilia.*
- 2. Kelvin View Hall project.*
- 3. Strathbogie Memorial Hall audio equipment.*
- 4. Bogarts opening night in Memorial Hall.*
- 5. Avenel Primary School – greenhouse for community garden.*
- 6. Euroa Croquet Club – concrete edging.*
- 7. Violet Town Historical Society – new projector.*





Support for fellow community members.



What we're doing – Phase 2: Reboot

Capital works power on

Our capital works program has not stopped. We want to ensure that when we move into the next phase we're ready to flourish. We know that, while the capital works program provides high quality infrastructure for our community, its progress creates economic benefits through the construction of new projects and maintenance of existing assets.

In Euroa we will spend more than \$800,000 on projects which include upgrading the saleyards, netball courts and the RSL Clubroom. Along with a scoping study for the Rockies Pedestrian Footbridge and the creation of a leash free dog park.

In Violet Town we'll invest almost \$400,000 to upgrade netball courts and market infrastructure and create an important dump point.

In Nagambie more than \$800,000 will be spent investigating a splash park and aquatic park and the upgrade of Wattlevale Rd. We'll also create opportunities for youth and water infrastructure to the Nagambie Recreation Reserve.

In Longwood \$42,000 will install solar at the community centre, in Strathbogie \$25,000 will be spent on the picnic shelter works and in Avenel \$50,000 will be spent on an exercise station.

For the full program see the 2020/21 Budget at www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au

Taking services and community engagement online

One of the most important aspects of working with our community is ensuring we continue to engage with them. While online isn't always the perfect way to engage with our community, we have embraced technology and are running regular community feedback sessions online.

While our Library buildings are closed, the service is still well and truly running behind the scenes. Librarians are working to keep the click and collect service running.

We've also continued story time with the younger in our community via StoryBox Library and are sharing child friendly videos through Kanopy Kids.

What we're doing – Phase 2: Reboot



Zero to One Roads improvement program

Of particular note in our 2020/21 Budget is the continuation of an allocation of \$400,000 for the Zero to One Roads improvement program, which will continue to upgrade the municipality's unsealed roads. This brings to \$1.6 million the amount allocated to this initiative in the term of the current Council.

Access to health services

Our Council has received funding to be the lead agency in our Local Government area to deliver the COVID-19 Community Activation and Social Isolation Initiative (CASI). This initiative involves the appointment of a person to undertake the Community Connector role.

The role will be a valuable contact point for all members of our community who need support during the coronavirus pandemic. Once connected with Strathbogie Shire, community members will be linked in with relevant support services. Additionally, the role will establish and build on existing networks of support agencies and volunteer programs – to better provide for our community.

What we're doing – Phase 3: Revitalise

Phase 3: Revitalise

This is the forward-looking phase. This is where we plan, advocate and work together to help our community flourish in the wake of coronavirus.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Engage with community to learn, heal and flourish

Community engagement is key in this phase. We must work with our community to ensure we're hitting the mark – delivering the services they need. This is why the actions and opportunities in phase three are yet to be outlined. We wouldn't want to pre-empt our community's wants or needs.

Improve access to services

It's highly likely our post-COVID community will look different. We must ensure access to services is easy, this includes (but is not limited to) health services, playgroups and maternal health services and mental health services

Ensure our community is heard

We will advocate for funding to help our community recover. Our Shire will be strong in its support, our community engagement will ensure a united voice.

Economic Development Strategy

We will work in collaboration with our community to develop an Economic Development Strategy that further supports, stimulates and strengthens the local economy.

Taking customer service online

As we adapt to a post COVID-19 community we know many things will have changed and we'll need to take our forms and payments online. This means we will provide our community with simple ways to access Council – from your home!



Helping our community to flourish.



What does success look like

While measuring our success will be challenging, and largely outside of Council's control we have developed a set of performance measures for our organisation. These are outlined below.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- The impact on economic output steadies after the second (August/September) lock down.
- The job rate in Strathbogie Shire remains steady, or improves, as we move into Phase three of our COVID-19 recovery plan.
- Tourism is reignited and visitation returns to the area after the second (August/September) lock down.
- The return of large-scale events to the Shire when safe to do so with support from Council to ensure compliance of all COVID safety measures.
- We see our community proactively taking up the help provided through the Community Connector role and the Community Activation and Social Isolation Initiative (CASI).
- The launch and delivery of a Healthy Aging newsletter to more vulnerable people in our community.
- We see the return of community events when safe to do so, with additional assistance offered by officers to support community to navigate new post COVID requirements.
- Successful community tree planting projects delivered across multiple sites in the Shire.
- RE3 COVID Response Community Grants implemented and funds distributed to a range of groups to deliver projects/activities.

COMMUNITY

- Council's COVID recovery initiatives are welcomed by our community and we see increased performed in our Community Satisfaction Survey results.

What does success look like

COMMUNICATION

- Our community is coming to us to learn. We achieve a social media reach of 30,000 on our RE3 initiatives.
 - Our community is easily informed about the work we do. This means a new website that is easy to use and navigate.
 - We get more information to our community through proactive media and the launch of an eNews.
 - Our My Strathbogie Bulletin is packed full of important information for our community.
 - A direct point of contact established for people impacted due to COVID-19 via the Community Connector role.
- Releasing more than 20 (90 second) videos featuring people from across our Shire which promote a diverse range of people and experiences
 - All eight primary schools participate in the Strathbogie Story.
 - Stronger connections established with community groups and relevant agencies
 - People who participate in Council engagement activities feel they are heard and their advice is taken on board.

OPERATIONS

- Successful delivery of Working for Victoria initiatives.

ENGAGEMENT

- The Strathbogie Story tackles isolation and loneliness in our community by:
 - Achieving more than 3000 page views.
 - Producing and released more than six Strathbogie Story postcards

