

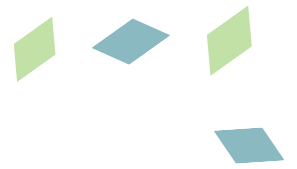


# Community Conversations

## SUMMARY



# OVERVIEW



## The Conversation

The Community Development Team facilitated three Community Conversations sessions. One in Stawell with 19 participants and two in St Arnaud with 62 and 37 participants. These sessions were designed with the following objectives:

### 1. Identify Current and Future Challenges:

To gain insights into the factors currently impacting community groups, as well as potential challenges they may face moving forward.

### 2. Gather Ideas for Sustainability and Growth:

To collect feedback from community group members on how they can remain sustainable, thrive, and expand, so that the Council can provide targeted and meaningful support.

### 3. The Community Development Team

**Understand Broader Systemic Changes:** To explore the broader systemic changes needed to inform and influence the Council's priorities, ensuring that future strategic directions align with the needs of local groups.

### 4. Provide Reflective Space for Community

**Groups:** To offer an opportunity for community groups to reflect on their own sustainability and growth, and to gain insights into the steps they can take to prosper in the future.

A DEEP DIVE  
INTO HOW COMMUNITY  
GROUPS CAN  
**PROSPER AND  
GROW**

## Trends that may be impacting community groups

The Northern Grampians Shire, with an estimated residential population of 11,879 (ABS 2023), is experiencing some key trends that are influencing how residents engage with and remain involved in local community groups.

- **Age Demographics:** A significant portion of the population (37.31%) is aged between 50-75 years, with the median age being 49. Between 2001 and 2021 there has been a significant decline in people under the age of 40. This age profile may affect the types of activities and the level of involvement in community groups.
- **Changing Workforce:** There has been an increase in temporary workers within the area, which could be impacting the continuity and stability of volunteer involvement in local groups. The continuing trend of families needing two wage earners to cover living costs is also impacting volunteering due to time constraints.
- **Volunteering Trends:** Like many communities, the Shire is also seeing a decline in traditional forms of volunteering, which can present challenges for maintaining group participation and leadership.



# CONVERSATION SNAPSHOT



## Current challenges and realities

Attendees at the Community Conversation session expressed their concerns around the number of challenges that are making it harder to operate effectively and plan for long-term growth. These include fewer volunteers, programs that aren't connecting with younger people, rising costs, and a need for stronger communication and promotional skills.

There's also a gap in governance knowledge and a need to improve computer skills and tackle technology-related issues. Addressing these challenges will help ensure that community groups can continue to thrive and serve their members for years to come.

## Important Factors

For a community group to thrive and sustain itself in the future, a number of key qualities were identified at the Community Conversations session. Strong leadership is crucial for guiding the group, while embracing technology can help improve efficiency and reach a wider audience. Involving young people in programs and activities ensures fresh ideas and continued growth.

Adequate funding and solid financial planning are necessary to support the group's initiatives, alongside effective promotion to spread the word and attract new members.



**St Arnaud**

### WHATS IMPORTANT

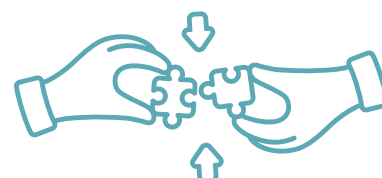


**Stawell**

Staying aware of what's happening in the broader community and collaborating with other groups can bring valuable resources and partnerships. Finally, ensuring access to transportation can make participation easier for everyone. Together, these factors create a strong foundation for lasting success and impact.

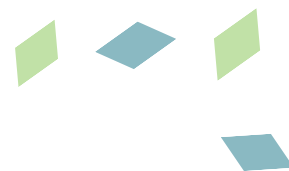
## The future

Community group members identified a range of challenges that could affect their long-term sustainability. However, by recognising the key factors essential for their groups to thrive, they can now leverage their collective skills, expertise, and knowledge to directly address these issues, positioning themselves for long-term success.





# OPPORTUNITIES

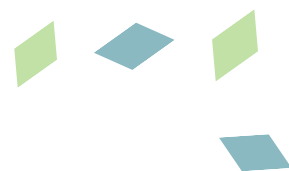


After identifying the key factors for community group sustainability and success, attendees explored the necessary steps to move forward, strategies for achieving these goals, and broadly who could be responsible for driving the process.

The following outcomes reflect the group's collective input on the key steps required to establish a strong foundation for future growth and sustainability. The strategies and actions will be further developed through a co-design process involving the groups, key organizations, and the council in the future.

WHAT'S NEEDED	STRATEGY	ACTION
<b>Increased membership / Promotion</b>	Develop platforms to promote groups and projects in the shire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a community groups newsletter. (S)</li> <li>• Hold a community expo.</li> <li>• Create a directory.</li> </ul>
<b>Increased membership / Promotion</b>	Share and promote what groups are doing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use school newsletters. (STA)</li> <li>• Use the SCAN calendar. (STA)</li> </ul>
<b>Increased membership and promotion</b>	Shire wide promotions.	Make a campaign about the community.
<b>Youth involvement</b>	Connect with young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make groups more appealing. (STA)</li> <li>• Support leadership /mentoring programs for young people. (STA)</li> </ul>
<b>Youth involvement /Technology skills</b>	Young people sharing technological skills.	Look for opportunities to develop intergenerational programs. (STA)

Key: **S** - Stawell specific / **STA** - StArnaud specific.



WHAT'S NEEDED	STRATEGY	ACTIVITY
<b>Collaboration</b>	Share skills and knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce a local skills register. (STA)</li> <li>• Create a list of external groups to make connections with. (STA)</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration</b>	Share skills and knowledge.	Look for opportunities to share administration tasks.
<b>Collaboration</b>	Share facilities and resources.	Develop a comprehensive listing of the available community facilities / resources in the shire. (S)
<b>Collaboration</b>	Work with and learn from other groups	Hold events/gatherings showcasing what others groups are doing. (STA)
<b>Leadership</b>	Develop strategic plans (roadmaps).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skill building</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Share resources.</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	Re-think the structure of a committee or group.	Research and consider different group/committee models & options. (S)
<b>Transport</b>	Address limited transport options for people to get to group activities and events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a community bus.</li> <li>• Advocate for change of bus times.(S)</li> </ul>

Key: **S** - Stawell specific / **STA** - StArnaud specific.



# WHAT COUNCIL CAN DO

To help local community groups thrive and make a lasting impact, participants in the Community Conversation workshops emphasised the crucial role the council can play in providing essential support. This support includes helping groups achieve financial sustainability, facilitating effective promotion, offering skill and knowledge-building opportunities, fostering collaboration, and advocating for youth programs.

- 1 Provide grants that are responsive
- 2 Provide grant writing support
- 3 Provide a platform to promote groups
- 4 Promote the benefits of volunteering
- 5 Provide skill and knowledge building opportunities for groups
- 6 Support opportunities for community groups to connect
- 7 Support youth mentoring programs



# BUILDING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

During the community conversations workshops, participants were asked what would help their groups thrive and remain sustainable in the future. Both the Stawell and St Arnaud groups identified key areas where members would benefit from enhancing their knowledge and skills. This insight provides an exciting opportunity for growth and development, ensuring groups can continue to make a lasting impact in the community.

Participants from both St Arnaud and Stawell identified a wide range of learning opportunities that would be valuable for their groups. These topics span from high-level group management to more practical skills, including:

- strategic planning
- financial sustainability and viability
- leadership development
- governance and committee roles
- social media management
- understanding auspicing
- marketing and promotional strategies
- upskilling in using promotional tools.

The St Arnaud group identified several key skill-building activities that would support their growth and sustainability.

These areas focus on enhancing the group's ability to secure funding, effectively promote their activities, and strengthen internal communication.

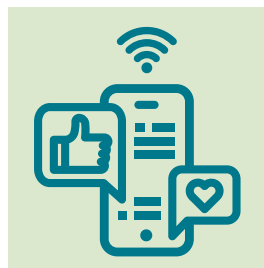
These include:

- grant writing
- flyer design
- event promotion
- communication skills.

On the other hand, the Stawell group highlighted different priorities, focusing on:

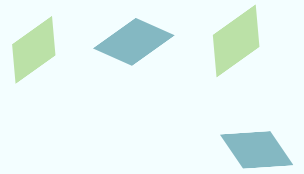
- managing volunteers
- strategies to increase membership.

These skills are crucial for ensuring that Stawell's groups remains engaged, and capable of attracting new members to sustain its activities in the long run.





## NEXT STEPS



The Community Development Team will:

- Focus on areas where the council has direct influence and was designated to take the lead.
- Collaborate with community groups to co-design activities and programs that address their needs and priorities.
- Develop a community knowledge-building program, incorporating input from local stakeholders.
- Organise and facilitate more workshop opportunities

**WE THANK YOU**  
FOR YOUR POSITIVE INPUT  
AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE  
**FUTURE OF YOUR**  
**GROUPS**

