



HealthWest  
Partnership

# *Place-based Initiatives in the West*

HIGHLIGHTING  
PROMISING PRACTICE

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## Executive Summary

This review of *Place-based Initiatives in the West: Highlighting Promising Practice*, looks at some incredible projects that have worked towards improving the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities in Melbourne's western suburbs.

The following consideration of four different projects demonstrates that place-based approaches are not limited to a single model, lead organisation or target population. Place-based approaches need to be flexible and specific initiatives need to be carefully tailored.

Place-based projects are valuable when engaging a community with diverse health and wellbeing needs. They provide an opportunity to engage with individuals on complex and dynamic health and wellbeing needs present in communities. Not limiting 'place' to a strict geographical location, but using a defined location as a starting point to reach people with a diverse range of needs.

The place-based projects considered include the Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening project, Linking Melton South, Our3021 and Revitalising Braybrook. Each project took a unique approach to strength-based community development in terms of partnership models, community engagement or governance. Each of these projects offers promising outcomes and learnings that can inform future practice.

This review examines common themes and considerations drawn by comparing project documents and interviews with project staff. Themes include applying a structure, engaging with the community, management and administration, and sustainability. These considerations offer learnings for the continuous improvement of place-based project development as a method for improving health and social outcomes of individuals and neighbourhoods, so that subsequent projects can make the most of opportunities and avoid common pitfalls.

The following recommendations should be considered if a place-based project is being planned or reviewed:

<b>Policy</b>	Planning Context	1. Plan your place-based approach strategically. Consider alignment with current policy frameworks and strategic partners. Take the time needed to plan the project in terms of exploring the issue, political context and local needs.
<b>Structure</b>	Partnership	2. Explore opportunities to work in partnership with the relevant established networks and region-wide activities.
	Governance	3. Establish a governance structure to guide project direction that best suits the planned engagement and project partners.
	Human Resources	4. Ensure your organisation has internal structures and human resources that can support a collaborative effort.
<b>Community</b>	Strength-based	5. Consider how to welcome and encourage ongoing participation from community members and potential partners
	Community Engagement	6. Develop a well-researched range of community engagement strategies that can be adapted depending on the project and/or the characteristics of the community.
<b>Management and Administration</b>	Resources	7. Consider how the partnership models, external policy alignment and alternative funding sources impact available resources.
	Data Collection	8. Data collection and storage protocols need to be set and agreed on by all partners.
	Evaluation	9. Consider the most appropriate approach for evaluation. Ensure to both evaluate the project itself and any impact on the wider community.
	Reporting	10. Research and make use of previously developed project documents and resources.
<b>Sustainability</b>	Sustainability of Project	11. Make the establishment of a sustainability plan a priority during the project planning and partnership engagement stage, not an afterthought towards the end of a project.

*Table 1- Place-based project learnings*

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Brimbank City Council

cohealth

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HealthWest Partnership

Hobson's Bay City Council

IPC Health

Maribyrnong City Council

## Introduction

Place-based initiatives provide opportunities to bring a community together and are considered a strong platform for addressing social disadvantage that can lead to poor health outcomes, as well as being responsive to emerging and specific needs of the community<sup>1</sup>. This report captures the experiences and key learnings from four place-based projects carried out in Melbourne's West.

*Place-based Initiatives in the West: Highlighting Promising Practice* showcases some of the possible variations when applying a place-based design. The purpose of the report is to highlight the different approaches to place-based work, demonstrate promising practice, and help inform and improve future work.

The four projects: the Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening project, Linking Melton South, Our3021 and Revitalising Braybrook, each approached place-based work differently. Each developing partnerships and governance models to suit their circumstances, community and objectives. The projects were all unique in terms of how they engaged and partnered with their community. It is important to note, however, that all the place-based initiatives considered in this report didn't limit community participation by strict geographical boundaries. An emphasis was instead given to the role any interested community member wanted to play in identifying issues and needs; decision-making; and implementation.

Place-based work is defined as stakeholders engaging in a collaborative process that aims to address issues experienced by a specified neighbourhood or community<sup>2</sup>. A place-based approach targets an entire community and aims to address issues that exist at the neighbourhood level, such as inadequate housing, social isolation, poor health and wellbeing, and fragmented service provision. The projects also drew on various co-design practices, principally, delivering services with people rather than to them<sup>3</sup>. By using community engagement and co-design approaches, the place-based projects sought to make the communities engaged more connected, healthy and resilient.

### What is Place-based?

"Place-based approaches (or area-based initiatives) seek to improve the social, cultural, economic and/or physical environment within a defined boundary, in order to improve overall health and reduce the differences in health amongst the people living within that area "

- VicHealth, 2008

"Importantly the framework acknowledges that no single intervention will arrest the current cycle of disadvantage in Braybrook. To bring about genuine improvements to the lives of those in Braybrook, and to provide hope for the future generations, targeted and sustained investment is required across multiple disciplines."

- Revitalising Braybrook Action Plan 2013-2015

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<sup>1</sup> [People, Place, Processes: Reducing health inequities through balanced health approaches](#), VicHealth, 2008

<sup>2</sup> [The Evaluation of Place-Based Approaches](#), Policy Horizons Canada, 2011

<sup>3</sup> [People Powered Health Co-Production Catalogue](#), Nesta, 2012

## In the West

The diversity of the western suburbs underpin the need for the unique and tailored approach to health and social improvement offered by a place-based project. The western region encompasses the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Brimbank, Hobson's Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton and Wyndham. These LGAs also correspond to the HealthWest Primary Care Partnership catchment (Figure 1).

The western region is characterised by a rapidly growing population and a richness in culture, food and innovation. Melbourne's western suburbs is a growth corridor and attracts a large number of new families and businesses. However, with this growth come challenges in promoting healthy communities and lifestyles for large and diverse communities.

These challenges are evident in the low indicators in these LGAs around healthy food intake, physical activity, community participation levels, social inclusion and perceptions of health and safety. According to the 2011 Socio-economic Indexes for Area (SEIFA), a scale of relative disadvantage derived from Census variables, Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton and Wyndham ranked amongst the lowest 7 disadvantaged metropolitan areas of the 31 metropolitan Melbourne LGAs<sup>3</sup>. Indicators of community strength across these catchments ranked low, compared to the Victorian average in volunteering, participation in organised groups, participation in decision-making on committees, attendance of community events, feeling safe on the street after dark and feeling there are opportunities to have a say on issues.

Please see each place-based project summary for specifics of municipalities.



Figure 1- Melbourne's Western Suburbs

## Methodology

In preparing this report, four place-based projects were reviewed: the Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening project, Linking Melton South, Our3021 and Revitalising Braybrook. These are not an exhaustive list of projects aiming to strengthen individuals and neighbourhoods in the area. The four place-based projects selected represent projects delivered by organisations who are members of the HealthWest Partnership. These members shared an interest in understanding how a variety of place-based approaches could be implemented to strengthen communities.

Organisations were initially invited to a meeting to discuss their interest and willingness to be involved in a review process. Each agreed to offer transparency of their reports and achievements, so information could be consolidated effectively.

A consultant was engaged to independently review all available information. This involved conducting separate interviews with project staff from each of the different project's governance and implementation teams, to assess the over-arching themes and future considerations for place-based project work (Appendix 1).

Current policy and planning documents that are relevant to place-based work were also reviewed to consider the relevance of this type of work in the health promotion and community development fields, and future support for work in the space (Appendix 2).

Projects offered documentation for appraisal, these were variable depending on what was available, the different stages in project life-cycles and different existing formal evaluation. However, an effort was made to provide as many relevant documents as possible. These documents included evaluation reports, planning and reporting for Integrated Health Promotion funds, case studies, film and other summary pieces of work that helped to capture and demonstrate the projects considered (Appendix 3).



## Projects

### Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening Project

The Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening project was a shared initiative advanced by Hobson's Bay City Council and IPC Health (previously ISIS Primary Care). The project commenced in 2015 with a mapping and scoping exercise undertaken with stakeholders to establish what strengths and identified needs were currently present in the two areas. The gap analysis established that the communities experienced a degree of isolation, a service gap for early education and a range of complex social issues.

"Due to the range and complexity of identified issues impacting on the Brooklyn and Altona North communities...the aim of this project is to further engage and consult with the residents to identify their needs, strengths and issues they perceive as impacting on their sense of health and wellbeing."

- *Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening Project IHP Plan 2014-15*

Although conceived as a combined project, the differences in the two communities (Brooklyn and Altona North) resulted in the project being split. The outcome was two separate and distinct projects after its initial year. This allowed for each project to evolve and include slightly different approaches and focuses on the needs identified by local community members.

Altona North incorporating a strong desire to improve its community via its schools, early childcare and other existing community services and Brooklyn successfully joining the Neighbourhood Project – an initiative to create a community development model that can be replicated across the country.

For more information on the Neighbourhood Project please contact Hobson's Bay City Council.

For more information on the Altona North Community Strengthening project please contact IPC Health.

#### Hobson's Bay

The Hobson's Bay region is home to a large multicultural demographic, with residents from over 130 countries, almost 31% born overseas and over 90 languages spoken<sup>4</sup>. Within the suburbs of Brooklyn and Altona North, the proportion of residents that speak a language other than English is in excess of 80%, compared to 62% of Hobsons Bay residents as a whole<sup>5</sup>.

Hobson's Bay had low scores for 11 of the 18 indicators around Community Strength, in the 2008 Population Health Data report<sup>6</sup>. Both Altona North and Brooklyn, ranked low on the SEIFA index and had the highest proportion of people born overseas. With Altona North at 12% and Brooklyn the next highest at 9%.

There are a large number of people who need assistance with fundamental activities such as self-care, communication and mobility. More than 500 people aged between 26 – 65 years receive a disability payment<sup>7</sup>. In comparison to the wider Hobsons Bay LGA, these communities had a lower rate of employment, income and education. These indicators are all predictors of poorer health outcomes<sup>3</sup>.

Because of this and the disproportionate degree of isolation due to the lack of public transport, limited walking and bicycle tracks and high volume of traffic and fumes from truck activity; Altona North and Brooklyn was highlighted as an ideal setting for a place-based project to address the wide range and complex needs of the community.

<sup>4</sup> [Multicultural Policy Background Paper](#), Hobsons Bay City Council, 2016-2020

<sup>5</sup> [Altona North and Brooklyn - Neighbourhood Profile](#), Hobsons Bay City Council, 2015

<sup>6</sup> [Population Data](#), HealthWest Partnership, 2015

<sup>7</sup> [Census Data](#), Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017

## Linking Melton South

Linking Melton South (LMS) is a place based community project established by Djerriwarrh Health Service (DJHS) in 2013. The project's goal is to promote a socially inclusive and connected community in Melton South capable of responding to local aspirations and community needs. Its objectives are to:

"The DJHS Health Promotion team has worked across a variety of settings and engaged a broad range of community members and stakeholders in the planning, implementation and evaluation of these projects. There have been some great immediate and short-term outcomes across all project areas so far."

- *Djerriwarrh Health Services, Progress Report 2015-2016*

- build the capacity of engaged community members to effect change in the community
- increase opportunities to build community pride and strengthen community connections

Consultation and engagement with people who work, live, learn or play in Melton South led to the identification of priority areas for the project, namely to:

- improve the physical environment
- create opportunities to connect with others and celebrate Melton South
- strengthen service provision and infrastructure

Linking Melton South continues to promote health outcomes in Melton South. The projects continued life-cycle can be attributed to the support and contribution by community members and success in securing different funding sources.

For more information on the Linking Melton South project please contact Djerriwarrh Health Services.

### Melton

Melton's municipality is a significantly larger geographical area, compared to the other LGAs described above. Melton scored low in 16 of the 18 indicators of community strength, with significantly lower scores in the areas of representation on community boards and whether residents feel like they can comment/ contribute on issues<sup>8</sup>.

VicHealth LGAs profile indicators for Melton demonstrate significantly lower wellbeing measures. Indicators of general wellbeing, safety and neighbourhood connectedness all ranking significantly less favourably than a Victorian average. With 4 out of 10 residents agreeing they didn't feel safe walking alone in their local area after dark<sup>9</sup>.

Melton South is the most disadvantaged area in the City of Melton in Melbourne's outer west. Melton South has a SEIFA index of just 893.8 and experiences significantly more disadvantage than the City of Melton as a whole (1000.2) and is comparable with Victoria's most disadvantaged municipality of Greater Dandenong (894.9)<sup>10</sup>. Melton was highlighted as an ideal setting for a place-based project because of this high level of disadvantage.

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<sup>8</sup> [Understanding Community Resilience in the Context of National Health Security](#), RAND Health, 2010

<sup>9</sup> [Programs and Projects - LGA Profile Indicators](#), Vic Health, 2015

<sup>10</sup> [Population Forecast](#), City of Melton, 2017

## Revitalising Braybrook

In 2011 Maribyrnong City Council adopted the Revitalising Braybrook Strategy. Based on the *Revitalising Braybrook Report* which was developed from significant consultations, data collection and analysis. The report identified the challenges facing Braybrook and indicators of disadvantage across all aspects of life, including health, education, employment and social inclusion. The Strategy noted that no single intervention would arrest the cycle of disadvantage in Braybrook and that to bring about genuine improvements, targeted and sustained investment was required across multiple disciplines. The Strategy provided the groundwork for long-term investment into Braybrook which was captured in the *Revitalising Braybrook Action Plan 2013 – 2015*.

The Revitalising Braybrook project included a governance process (via a Project Control Board) with participation

“Revitalising Braybrook is an innovative and ambitious place-based revitalisation initiative designed to improve the wellbeing of Braybrook residents through a range of targeted and co-delivered actions.”

- *Revitalising Braybrook, Executive Summary 2016-2018*

and representation from both local government and community members. This working group structure and stakeholder process (which included 25 stakeholders representing levels of government, service providers and agencies working together) were established to ensure connections with the community and community organisations. This phase of the place-based project embedded the understanding that a partnership with all levels of community, service providers and government was required to shift disadvantage.

In 2016, the project continued to evolve and Council developed the 2016 – 2018 Framework for Action, in consultation with residents, other levels of government, community organisations and local businesses. It involved an analysis of demographic and wellbeing data; local knowledge and input gathered through group meetings, individual interviews and survey data, resulting in a comprehensive reflection and analysis of learnings collected during the initial phase of the project. The framework consolidates previous achievements and identified five priority areas to invest in and 13 strategies for achieving a shared vision for the community. These priorities include access to learning; local economy and housing options; social inclusion and community decision-making; accessible, affordable and safe transport; and community infrastructure to promote social connection.

Revitalising Braybrook is an ongoing project. A key feature is the understanding and an actualisation of empowering the community to work together with all stakeholders, to create change. The project has relied on multi-level collaborations through working with agencies, across the council and other levels of government to leverage opportunities and inspire collective solutions.

For more information on the Revitalising Braybrook please contact Maribyrnong City Council.

### Maribyrnong

The City of Maribyrnong is the smallest but most densely populated area in metropolitan Melbourne<sup>11</sup>. Maribyrnong City residents reported significantly lower levels of wellbeing (75.1), compared to a Victorian average (77.3), with no significant change in this score over the last 8 years<sup>12</sup>.

One of Maribyrnong’s most diverse suburbs is the residential area of Braybrook. Braybrook includes a large proportion of public housing, low-cost housing in relative proximity to Melbourne’s City centre, and a primary base of resettlement for newly arrived migrants. Braybrook is home to multiple language groups, including Vietnamese (27.6%), Cantonese (7.1%), Somali (2.7%) and Mandarin (2.6%). With 0.6% of Braybrook’s population of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent compared to 0.5% in Greater Melbourne<sup>13</sup>.

Braybrook had been the subject of a range of interventions from service providers and government (such as Neighbourhood Renewal) for over a decade. Revitalising Braybrook, which commenced in 2011 was the City of Maribyrnong’s response to extensive consultation and data collection. This process identified the challenges facing Braybrook and proposed an integrated place-based framework as a response.

<sup>11</sup> [Snap Shot](#), City of Maribyrnong, 2017

<sup>12</sup> [Programs and Projects - LGA Profile Indicators](#), Vic Health, 2015

<sup>13</sup> [Census Data](#), Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017

## Our3021

Our3021 was a four year project (2013-2017) driven by a workforce partnership between: HealthWest Partnership, IPC Health (previously ISIS Primary Care), cohealth and Brimbank City Council.

The project's objectives were to:

- identify and create innovative partnerships that support the engagement and development of strong communities by trialling a workforce model utilising Integrated Health Promotion resources
- empower and mobilise communities to act on their health and wellbeing
- strengthen connections and partnerships between decision makers and mobilised/empowered communities

“Our3021 supports those living in the Brimbank area in Melbourne’s western suburbs, who want to create a project to improve the health and wellbeing of their community. Our3021 takes a strengths-based approach by supporting community to turn their ideas into actions.”

- *Our3021 Case Studies 2016*

Our3021 was managed by a steering governance group and a project implementation group, each made up of representatives from the partnering agencies. Community members were recruited and supported to develop and run their own projects to improve the health and wellbeing of their community. Some of the activities developed included: food and nutrition; physical activity; mental wellbeing including social connection; healthy relationships; safe environments; employment; and arts.

The Our3021 project finished its four year project life-cycle and wrapped up, while many of the community groups (that had initial support from the project via seed funding and capacity building) continued their activities.

For more information on the Our3021 project please contact HealthWest Partnership.

### Brimbank

Indicators of community strength that reflect attitudes towards (and participation in) community life were captured during a 2015 Population Health Data report on the western suburbs. Overall, Brimbank scored low in 13 out of the 18 indicators around community strength<sup>14</sup>. The indicators included volunteering levels, access to services and safety, participation in community life and social inclusiveness. Indicators that have an important impact on the mental health, wellbeing and resilience of a community, as well as to the capacity of communities to improve and prosper<sup>15</sup>.

VicHealth local government profile indicators for the Brimbank area as of 2015 reported significantly lower mental wellbeing (including resilience, neighbourhood perceptions, safety and gender equality) than the overall Victorian average. There was no significant difference in this low life satisfaction measure between the 2015, 2011 or 2007 surveys<sup>16</sup>. Because of these low ranking indicators of community strength Brimbank was highlighted as an ideal setting for an innovative place-based project to improve community empowerment and mental wellbeing, with a specific focus on culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups.

<sup>14</sup> [Population Data](#), HealthWest Partnership, 2015

<sup>15</sup> [Understanding Community Resilience in the Context of National Health Security](#), RAND Health, 2010

<sup>16</sup> [Programs and Projects - LGA Profile Indicators](#), Vic Health, 2015

The following is a summary of the place-based projects reviewed:

Project	Location	Lead Organisation	Governance Model	Community Outcomes	Status
<b>Linking Melton South</b>	City of Melton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Djerriwarrh Health Services</li> </ul>	Led by a health service with a steering committee that included staff from the Department of Health and Human Services, the local council and community representatives.	Increases to community member engagement in activities, leadership and capacity to contribute. Multiple improvements to the physical environment via art projects, service provision and community events.	Ongoing – attributed to the continued support and contribution by community members and success in different funding sources.
<b>Revitalising Braybrook</b>	City of Maribyrnong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maribyrnong City Council</li> </ul>	Designed and led by local government with a Project Control Board - comprising Council Directors and an external Senior Executive with experience in community health sector. As well as, a working group representing all areas of Council and a stakeholder body meeting.	Development of community hub, community leadership program and engagement of various stakeholders committed for future project work.	Successful completion of the initial 4 year project – with plans for a second phase roll-out.
<b>Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening Project</b>	City of Hobson's Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hobson's Bay City Council</li> <li>IPC Health</li> </ul>	Led by local government and health service with a range of school staff, artists and community members on the steering committee and working group for different projects.	Community mobilised and supported for multiple projects including; community gardens, food security and early school engagement and art activation.	Initial project split in half due to the successful identification of needs by the two communities. Now exists in the form of the Neighbourhood Project and the Altona North Community Strengthening project.
<b>Our3021</b>	City of Brimbank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HealthWest Partnership</li> <li>Brimbank City Council</li> <li>IPC Health</li> <li>cohealth</li> </ul>	Shared partnership model with joint responsibility for delivery and reporting by all partners.	Community participants empowered to act in their community on physical health and mental wellbeing issues, with multiple completed and ongoing projects. Such as multicultural fitness classes, arts and cooking.	Successful completion of the project 4 year life-cycle trialling the innovative co-management model.

Table 2: Project Summary

## Policy and Planning Context

Place-based project planning and delivery in Victoria is guided by the state government, local government and community health policy and planning. Consideration should be given to review and align with the current political and policy environments. These state, region and local plans offer guidelines for the most appropriate course of action and priority areas in the delivery of health and wellbeing projects. The guidelines can support the establishment of a framework for project that include customised local approaches

While the four projects evaluated met the highlighted elements, it is suggested that it is a very valuable question to ask:

*“How can organisations best utilise and respond to the challenges and opportunities as presented in these documents and by definition by the Victorian Government’s policy and planning imperatives?”*

A strong learning from reviewing the strengths and sustainability of the projects in this report is the importance of incorporating these guiding policies and plans into any planning, implementation or reporting. Projects that achieved this, increased their opportunities for partnership, funding, sustainability and have a stronger impact for both the community and individual health outcomes. It is critical therefore, when a place-based approach is being considered to take into account the relevant policy and planning for greatest impact.

### For example

The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*<sup>17</sup> provides the legislative framework for public health and wellbeing in Victoria. The Victorian Government and all local governments are required to produce (on a four yearly cycle) a state and municipal public health and wellbeing plan respectively. Integrated Health Promotion plans of community health services follow the same cycle. Research the priorities of your local municipality health and wellbeing plan and any local health services, when a place-based approach is being planned.

This extend to researching what other guiding documents are being followed by your local government and other agencies, such as the *Public Participation in Government Decision-making*<sup>18</sup>. This document provides a high-level framework for how an organisation can best involve the public in decision-making, directly relating and supporting the empowerment and activation of place-based projects.

Other Victorian policies directly related to place-based initiatives to consider:

- *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015–2019*
- *Department of Health and Human Services Strategic Plan 2016 – 2017*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Health 2040: Advancing health, access and care*
- *Victorian Government’s response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence*
- *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*
- *Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children*
- *National Disability Insurance Scheme*
- *Victorian State Disability Plan 2017–2020*
- *Victoria’s 10-Year Mental Health Plan*

Links to these can be found on the HealthWest Partnership website:

[healthwest.org.au/projects/policy-and-advocacy/policy-and-research/](http://healthwest.org.au/projects/policy-and-advocacy/policy-and-research/)

### **Alignment with Local Government Direction – Linking Melton South**

Close alignment with the Melton City Council plans and departments have led to strong support for projects such as local events, Pop-Up Services Hub and Community Train Stations projects.

Melton City Council, state government departments and local organisations are represented on the Linking Melton South steering committee and a number of working groups, which has led to greater collaboration and alignment.

<sup>17</sup> [Public Health and Wellbeing Act](#), Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria, 2008

<sup>18</sup> [Public Participation in Government Decision-Making](#): A Better Practice Guide, VAGO, 2015

## Themes

The projects in this review varied in relation to the length of the project, the roles of the partner organisations, stakeholders and the community (Table 2: Project Summary). Some of the learnings gained from the four projects were shared, while others were unique to a specific project. However, all have value for understanding what to consider when contemplating a place-based approach.

## 1 Structure

### 1.1 Partnership

The attempt to reduce health and social inequities is most effective when done in partnership and in a collaborative manner. The projects in this review worked to develop and implement their activities with the contribution of various partners. In many ways place-based initiatives that strongly utilise partnerships are localised examples of a larger collective impact approach, where many partners join to affect collective action on social, economic or environmental challenges<sup>19</sup>.

Partnerships here refer to formal ongoing agency agreements, rather than more informal or one-off stakeholder interactions. Partnerships often evolve from existing working relationships, where organisations are operating in the same catchment or have previously worked together (Figure 3).

#### Working with Partners

Understanding how each partner operates makes it easier to establish project structures; roles and responsibilities; communication systems; flexible practices; and the sharing of skills. Partners bring their own expertise and a diverse skill set to the table, but each partner will also bring their own unique constraints.

- For instance, it was recognised that when councils are involved they can bring a wide range of disciplines and resources to the table e.g. economic development, health and social planning, community development and long-term commitment. However, allowance for organisation structure and decision-making procedures need to be factored into timelines.
- There is a need to be clear from each partnering organisation. What they can and are able to bring to a project. This includes factors such as, committing over the entire life of the project.
- It is important to be transparent about what level of collaboration the project has. Consider using a previously developed resources such as the Collective Impact Self-Assessment and Planning Tool<sup>20</sup>.

#### *Advantages of Working with Partners – Linking Melton South*

The partnership between Linking Melton South and Festival for Healthy Living (an arts-based mental health promotion program primarily based in schools), helped to strengthen the actions for two of the three community identified priority areas of the place-based approach.

The partnership has led to a strong focus on promoting arts and wellbeing, fostering a culture of creativity and connection, and building the capacity of local artists and residents in Melton South to promote health and wellbeing in the community. Key outcomes from this partnership are the delivery of community events such as Party in the Park 2014 and 2015, Dream Big Festival 2015, 2016 and 2017 and the formation of a local street band the 'Fabulous Meltones'.

Because of its many partners the festival has grown exponentially from its small beginning as a one day school focused art and health event to a two day large scale community celebration of art, culture and health. A number of local artists and performers have also been employed through this partnership to facilitate participatory arts activities for the community.

Figure 2

<sup>19</sup> [Collective Impact 3.0](#) – An Evolving Framework for Community Change, M. Cabaj and L. Weaver, 2016

<sup>20</sup> [Collective Impact Self-Assessment and Planning Tool](#), Tamarack Institute, 2016



### General Observation – Partnerships

- ✓ Consider who are the 'known' partners - those that your organisation has previously worked with or those that are lead agency in the area you are/will be working.
- ✓ Consider alternative partners that bring a different/new perspective and broader skill set.

### Formal Partners

Where a formal partnership between agencies has been agreed on for project delivery, structures should be put in place to facilitate smooth working relationships. Use traditional guiding documents to clarify roles and responsibilities. The importance of documents that are mutually agreed on i.e. a memorandum of understanding or terms of reference should not be discounted.

- Formal guiding documents can help provide clarity and reduce conflict. These documents clearly articulate the expectations, commitments and requirements of all partners. Has a key terms document been developed? (Figure 4)
- It is important not to assume universal knowledge of the issue; understanding of terminology; or who will deliver certain aspects of a project. Has a Theory of Change<sup>21</sup> been jointly discussed? A Theory of Change aligns partners and helps define what indicator of change is being addressed.
- Where this step was not strictly followed discord occurred in some projects. These potential confusions should be pre-empted by documents such as: project logic, project plan, communication plans and community engagement strategies.

### Stakeholders

Stakeholders, or more informal partners, are players engaged to help deliver a place-based project. Stakeholders can have a once-off or an ongoing relationship with a project. They typically include funders, government departments, councils, other community organisations, interest groups, schools, tertiary institutions, and of course members of the community. Often they remain involved with the community after a project's completion.

All of the projects in this review used strategic stakeholder engagement at various stages. They engaged with people and organisations outside formal partnerships during specific project activities or events where it was relevant and where community would most benefit (Figure 5).

- Key players need decision-making capacity. If a stakeholder is collaborating on the project they are invested in its activities. There should be a structure for continuous communication and feedback available, acknowledging their expertise (Figure 13).

#### Working with Partners

A signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is important in providing clarity of roles and responsibilities. These were used in the Our3021 and Linking Melton South projects. Plus, numerous project activities and event across the place-base initiatives.

A Terms of Reference (TOR) is useful for structures such as steering committees and working groups. TORs were used in the Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening, Our3021 and Linking Melton.

All projects are guided by project plans, developed at the working group level and guided by community identified priorities.

Figure 3

#### Stakeholders – Brooklyn and Alton North Community Strengthening

Altona North had multiple projects and activities within the place based approach. For the overall approach it was a partnership between IPC Health and Council Community Development Team. For the Kids Thrive project within the placed based approach, a steering committee was set up that consisted of IPC Health, Council community development workers, Council library staff, Kids Thrive artists, the school principals and teachers involved.

The garden bed and food security project had a working group consisting of IPC Health, Council CD workers and Council sustainability team workers. It worked closely with the parent group of the school and the school canteen operators along with school staff.

Figure 4

<sup>21</sup> [Theory of Change](#), unicef, 2014



## Finding Stakeholders

At the beginning of a project it is not always clear who the key stakeholders are but a mapping or scoping process can be an effective tool to identify potential stakeholders and their possible involvement. Similarly, during and towards the end of a project different stakeholder may present themselves (Please see section 2. Community for additional information).

- Where stakeholders have committed to supporting the community in an ongoing capacity consideration needs to be given to formalising this commitment into a partnership.
- Where stakeholders commit to supporting the community after the completion of the project, a handover or formal acknowledgement of future commitment towards the project could be given.

### **General Observation - Stakeholders**

- *Flexibility is a crucial consideration for the type of stakeholder and their motivation for collaboration. Provide avenues for communication and interaction with the project that is appropriate and considerate of their time and capabilities.*

## 1.2 Governance

The four projects utilised different governance models:

<b>Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening Project</b>	<b>Linking Melton South</b>	<b>Revitalising Braybrook</b>	<b>Our3021</b>
Governance and implementation were combined and overall project management was shared by two partner organisations: a community health service and a council.	The overall governance of the project was the responsibility of a health service, with input from a community based steering committee that included staff from the Department of Health and Human Services, the local government and community representatives.	Designed and lead by local government with a dedicated coordinator reporting to a project control board. The project control board included council directors and an external executive from the community health sector. A cross-council working group, and stakeholder body also met regularly.	A Primary Care Partnership, two health service organisations and a council all jointly responsible for the governance of the project. Each had a representative on the steering committee that oversaw the project and the project team that led community action.

*Table 3. Project Governance Models*

The development of each of the project's governance model was unique to the organisations leading the work and the type of strategies planned. Although all the projects used a place-based approach, no two governance structures were alike (Table 3. Project Governance Models). When it comes to place-based activities there is not a "one size fits all".

### Developing a Governance Model

When considering what governance structure to use these are some considerations:

- Clarity around which governance structure is most appropriate for the place-based approach planned i.e. a steering committee has a very different role and emphasis to that of an advisory committee. Consider the level of control the governance structure wants over project activities. If it is being closely led a steering committee is more appropriate. If, the project aspires to be more driven by community participants an advisory group can provide guidance rather than dictate.
- Consider who is best placed to be the lead agency i.e. for project coordination, delegation, and accountability.
- Ensure the governance structure has community representation at its core, where roles and responsibilities, decision-making, communication and accountability are clearly articulated and implemented. This recognises the value of a bottom up approach i.e. a community advisory committee influencing how the project is implemented to make it more relevant and ultimately effective (Please see section 2. Community for additional information).
- Irrespective of the model used, the governance of a place-based project needs some degree of flexibility. The ability to be flexible and open to change if the project is not achieving its outcomes or struggling (Figure 6).

**General Observation - Governance**

- *Governance structures should be able to make timely decisions when needed. Diplomacy and collaborative input is highly important in a project, but a general observation from this review is that timely decision making is critical to the health of a project. A monthly or bimonthly meeting is not sufficient, if it is the only forum for decision making.*
- *Attendance of governance members at community activities was found to be critical for the ongoing investment of project members. Management or members of project governance structures that do not have any direct engagement with the community activities can often struggle to see the value or effectiveness of activities.*

**Project Workers in the Governance Model**

Project workers are significant drivers within a place-based approach. It is important these individuals have a voice and decision-making power. An effective two way communication system between the governance group and the project workers is essential. Project workers provide feedback to the governance group on how the project is being received and they are the agent influencing change on behalf of the project and governance group. Opinions from these project workers should be highly valued in decision-making.

- The value of a coordinator or general facilitator role was identified in several of the projects reviewed. Where there was a number of project partners and associated project workers it was seen as highly important to have a coordinator, who had day-to-day decision-making power, project management, reporting responsibility and a voice on the governance structure.

**Governance Model – Our3021**

Our3021’s governance model change mid-way through the project. Incorporating evaluation feedback that having a steering group and a project implementation group was too confusing, promoted conflict and reduced decision making capabilities. The project demonstrated a high degree of flexibility by merging the two groups into one, effectively resolving the issues that arose because of the added complexities of a multi-agency partnership with too many layers in its governance model.

Figure 5

**Project Culture**

**Managing Conflict – Revitalising Braybrook**

Managing conflict is not unique to place-based projects and in the case of Revitalising Braybrook the organisation adopted the approach of conducting regular reporting and identifying any issues or problems arising and responding to these in transparent and timely way.

This was essential in Revitalising Braybrook. Not all problems can be solved immediately but an important aspect of a collaborative and complex system is people being heard.

Figure 6

A project has the ability to create its own culture, habits of working or “modus operandi”. This project specific culture can strengthen the project’s activities and promote a highly productive team environment. However, this culture can also be negative as a result of conflict or miscommunication. It can also be challenging if a project worker or a project team behaves contrary to the expectations of their parent organisation/s.

To promote a positive project culture it is important to:

- Establish a project’s definition of place-based, community engagement and other key terms. Different disciplines and organisations within the same industry can use a different language or mean different things (Figure 7).
- Communication plans, decision-making and conflict resolution mechanisms need to be established early in the life of a place-based project.

## 1.3 Human Resources

Human Resource (HR) management needs to be a key consideration by partnering agencies. Areas that require HR input include roles and responsibilities, such as inductions; line managers; performance indicators; reporting responsibilities; conflict resolution; and hand-over procedures. Proper HR management is especially important where there are a number of project workers coordinating work together from different partner organisations.

### Workforce Considerations

Place-based projects require a broad skill set and a capacity to work flexibly, both in terms of the individual and the project's working arrangements.

- The capacity to work out-of-hours is often fundamental for community engagement.
- It is often difficult for staff to assume responsibility for place-based initiatives on top of their existing workloads. Place-based initiatives and building rapport with community members takes time and should be acknowledged in the context of workload.
- Staff turnover is a natural feature of work, but the retention of project knowledge and the continuity of projects requires solid hand-over and induction routines. Time and importance should be given to a proper hand-over and introduction to new project workers. Alternatively, there is a risk of knowledge loss and a gradual disengagement with the project.

#### **General Observation – Human Resources**

- ✓ *Health promotion, community development and project officers bring different skill sets and background knowledge. They're often thought of as interchangeable but it is important to recruit individuals with appropriate skills to implement the type of place-based approach desired.*
- ✓ *Community engagement, mediation, advocacy, working collaboratively, problem solving, communication, mentoring, facilitation and self-care skills are important considerations when recruiting.*
- ✓ *Synchronising working days for project workers is important for community engagement, planning, information sharing, peer support and building a positive team culture.*

## 2 Community

### 2.1 Strength-based

All the projects identified and built on strengths currently present within the community, operating from an asset-base, rather than focusing on negatives or the prism of disadvantage. This is a defining factor of a place-based approach “places are crucial settings for building self-confidence, self-efficacy and a sense of wellbeing that may lay the foundations for bridging networks”<sup>22</sup>. It is important to highlight the strengths and resources currently available within the community at every stage to help build the behavioural change such as self-efficacy, social identity and social capital, and ultimately improve health outcomes<sup>23</sup>.

#### Needs Mapping

It is useful to undertake a mapping or scoping process at the project development stage to ensure factors such as the project’s location, approach and activities are appropriate.

- Any needs mapping or scoping process should involve the community. Consider how best to tap into community members initially.
- Working in collaboration with direct service providers offers crucial insights into the needs of the community.
- During the initial needs mapping it is important to capture what has and has not been successful in the past. Past projects can be used to inform or help build a new place-based project or can be detrimental to how the community receives future engagement.
- If a partnering agency offers other clinical services this can be used to capture patterns and help inform the planned place-based approach. Individual community member and client feedback can be vital in informing what needs occur at the local or neighbourhood level (Figure 8).
- Consulting with the community and ongoing community input should direct how the project is rolled-out on an ongoing bases. Projects evolve over time, this necessitates a degree of flexibility for the project to maintain relevance (Figure 9).
- Mapping should be a periodic activity. Re-scoping, reconfiguration and regular review of the program/project logic become particularly crucial if community engagement occurs and the project is not achieving its outcomes.

#### *Asset Mapping – Linking Melton South*

Melton South residents were initially engaged through a series of asset-mapping workshops in 2013 that identified the strengths in the community which Linking Melton South would continue to build on between 2013 and 2017. Asset Based Community Development informed how Melton South residents and local organisations were engaged in identifying, implementing and evaluating community building projects.

Figure 7

#### *Projects Evolve Over Time – Linking Melton South*

Projects evolve over time and ongoing community input should inform these activities. In 2013 ‘Strengthening infrastructure and service provision’ was identified as one of three priority areas for the Melton South community. Through initial scoping with 22 local service providers and surveys with 189 community members a local integrated services model was developed, trialled and evaluated between 2015 and 2016. The Linking Melton South Pop-up Services Hub has grown since the first trial and has involved over 40 service providers in delivering accessible and community-friendly services to individuals and families in Melton South. The LMS Pop-up Services Hub has continued to grow and increase access to services through flexibility and working with partners and the community members to re-configure the model to adapt to the needs of service users.

Figure 8

<sup>22</sup> [People, Place, Processes: Reducing health inequities through balanced health approaches](#), VicHealth, 2008

<sup>23</sup> [Promotion health equity through promoting social determinates in health settings approaches](#), VicHealth, 2015

## Geographical Boundaries

Communities that are geographically next to each other are not necessarily similar in terms of their needs. While geographical boundaries are important there may be circumstances where boundaries need to be expanded. A degree of flexibility should be allowed when working with leaders from the community, such as opportunities when people from outside the area bring great ideas, enthusiasm and expertise to the issues of the community being engaged (Figure 10).

- A project may have restrictions due to funding or resourcing that limit activity to a certain demographic, need or location. Where there is flexibility allow organic connections outside the defined geographical area.
- People travel across project geographical boundaries for work, recreation, schooling and other hobbies. Although the project may be limited by scope to a certain location there should be an atmosphere of welcome for those that have a connection to 'place' and want to contribute.

### *Flexible Approach - Revitalising Braybrook*

Place-based projects dealing with complex issues and needs require visible and transparent plans and processes. These provide a framework for dialogue and discussion. Maribyrnong City Council maintained an agile and flexible approach which enabled discussion and input from stakeholders and partners and adapted to changes.

The process of engagement meant that stakeholders felt heard and valued.

Figure 9

## 2.2 Community engagement

Community engagement is a critical element of all place-based initiatives. It takes time and requires careful planning. It is important to keep asking: “What does it mean to work in this community? Who is engaged and who is not engaged and why?” This co-operative approach to project delivery can also be called co-creation, co-production or co-design depending on the level of community engagement<sup>24</sup>.

- It is important to have sufficient time and resources allocated to community engagement and associated needs mapping or scoping tasks. It is especially important when the geographical area is large or there is no real sense of community to build on (Figure 11).
- The community should be consulted as soon as possible and be involved in the design of the place-based project (Figure 12).
- Community members engaged also have the ability to further propagate the place-based initiative or recruit others in the community.

### Community voice and representation

Existing and emerging community leaders often seek ways to participate, so making pathways to engage with your place-based initiative easily accessible will increase reach and impact. Once communities and community leaders are engaged their expectations are highly valuable to the project. These new, emerging or existing community leaders can raise greater representation and awareness across the community. Their voice should be utilised in the shaping and directing of the place-based project. Community representation should therefore be main a priority and not a tokenistic gesture.

- It is critical for there to be established avenues for community members and project participants to provide continuous feedback. This provides project transparency, builds capacity and mobilises community members to play an active role in their community.
- Ensure that existing and emerging community leaders are supported and resourced so that they can be effective advocates for their community. Community members should be seen as equal partners who have a great deal to contribute.
- Community members are not ‘problems needing to be fixed’, but assets in a place-based approach.
- Accommodate changing levels of involvement by individual community members over the life of the project and be clear about what role they can play (Figure 13).

### *Community Representation – Linking Melton South*

As a result of the initial mapping conducted in 2013 a number of community leaders were identified and LMS has continued to engage these leaders to drive the projects. Some of these leaders have gone on to become members of the LMS Steering Committee and project working groups. There have been a number of community members that have expressed an interest in leadership, identified through consultation and project implementation. Such as, those involved in the participatory arts activities for beautification and local residents who have facilitated or led project activities.

Figure 10

### *Community Directed - Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening Project*

This joint initiative did a thorough job of engaging and consulting with local residents. To understand community needs, strengths and issues they perceive as impacting on their sense of health and wellbeing. Schools were highlighted and targeted in the area for consultation and engagement, resulting in many of the project’s future activities.

Bayside and Altona North Primary School agreed to partner with council and IPC Health to develop and implement a range of school focused engagement opportunities, including: cooking and gardening programs; kids thrive program; school garden; and celebrating local events and initiatives.

Figure 11

### *Community Representation – Revitalising Braybrook*

A major achievement of Revitalising Braybrook was the establishment of the Braybrook on Board, community leadership program, that offers accredited training courses that provides local residents with skills to develop and deliver their own community projects.

Launched in 2015 Braybrook on Board empowers community members by engaging them to become community leaders. The groundwork was laid by the Revitalising Braybrook project that identified the need and level of involvement individuals were willing to contribute to their community.

“When there’s commitment, people respond. People can see things are improving and there’s progress. The timing was right for this program and the community were ready.”

Figure 12

<sup>24</sup> [An Introduction to Co-design](#), Knode, 2016

## Community Collaboration

Collaboration is premised on goodwill, buy-in, common agendas, shared understanding, commitment to working together and a collective investment in achieving a project's goals.

Collaborators are often community members, informal leaders, clubs or local businesses, joining the project in a one-off or ongoing arrangement. Community members can also be engaged for a one-off consultation or mapping and consequently become ongoing collaborators. However frequently community collaborators engage, they can be champions and key decision-makers that are valuable assets throughout the life of the project.

### Working Collaboratively with the Community

Working collaboratively with the community is a vital component of a place-based initiative. Collaborators can be identified, resourced and engaged over the life of a project.

- Beware that, collaboration can be counterproductive when there is a lack of support. A project needs to be able to share appropriate information about the program design, structure and purpose with its community participants.
- Commitment should be made to support collaborators. Ensure that project management structures and tools are in place such as incorporation of health literacy principles or transparency processes (Figure 15).

Be conscious of the impact collaboration has on the community. Are you over utilising the same people? Be realistic about what can be achieved, what resources can be brought to the table by the collaborators. What demands are you placing on time and resources, and explore if the project has the capacity to reimburse volunteers.

- Stakeholder and community collaboration is very important to keeping a project on track and relevant. If a commitment is made to be inclusive of stakeholder and community collaboration this needs to be clearly represented in the governance model.

#### **Community Representation – Linking Melton South**

All Linking Melton South projects have been driven from community consultation, and delivered in partnership with community members and local organisations from planning through to delivery and evaluation. Local community members are well represented on the steering committee, all project working groups and are consulted regularly to ensure that LMS projects are informed by and, where possible, facilitated by the local community.

Figure 13

#### **Community Representation – Revitalising Braybrook**

Projects working with complex issues of change and development require attention to detail. A key aspect of Revitalising Braybrook was the role the project officer played in connecting with the people and the place. Managing relationships was key to the role and having the organisational infrastructure of Council enabled the officer to access support of Council areas such as human resources and other officers.

Maintaining regular and consistent contact and having open lines of communication was essential. This helped develop transparent processes, such as reporting regularly to stakeholders and community members.

Figure 14

#### **General Observation – Community Engagement**

- ✓ *Where there are a number of projects occurring at the same time it is important to provide opportunities for cross fertilisation and peer support between community members.*



## 3 Management and Administration

### 3.1 Resources

The project planning process needs to identify how the project can realistically be implemented with either existing resources or through obtaining additional funding.

- Consideration for the project's capacity to work in the area is vital. Is it feasible? Are the resources and funding sufficient to work across a large community or geographical area?
- Consider who is the best placed agency to lead the project. This could be the partner with access to a range of services, the one with rapport with the specific community being engaged or the one with established networks required to roll-out the initiative (Figure 16).

#### *Community Needs - Revitalising Braybrook*

Local government through its range of service and programs builds diverse partnerships and relationships and these can provide access points for establishing strong links into communities. Revitalising Braybrook accessed these diverse partnerships and was consistent in reporting back to staff and stakeholders.

Local governments can leverage their connection to community and stakeholders because they work across the spectrum of community life from city planning and design to community services for all ages and stages.

Figure 15

### 3.2 Data Collection

Specific data collection and management arrangements need to be established for each place-based project. Basic records are critical and at a minimum need to include the project rationale and objectives; budget; risks; milestones; and projected outcomes. Have you consider developing Shared Measurements<sup>25</sup>? This takes time and requires mutual agreement of what the indicators of the project will be.

#### **Capturing of Data**

It is important that data and information gathered is relevant, timely and of a high enough quality to inform planning, decision-making and evaluation. Data and statistics should be understandable and comparable to baseline information or broader indicators.

- Measures need to be established as part of projects initial planning and approval process.
- The collection, storage and sharing of information needs to comply with established privacy legislation, confidentiality policies and de-identification processes.
- The collection and storage of data and information needs to be time and cost efficient, and planned and coordinated within the life-cycle of a project.
- Where possible, data needs to be standardised, with consistent and common definitions to facilitate information sharing. Shared measures need this shared agreement of the project's goal, actions and indicators to allow for a collective analysis of data and measurements.
- Data needs to be collected and stored appropriately to allow for analysis. Consider using metadata techniques that help define and give meaning to what has been captured.
- Relevant data and information needs to be available and used to assist with planning, service delivery, monitoring and continuous improvement.

<sup>25</sup> [Challenges in Shared Measurement for Collective Impact initiatives](#), Collaboration for Impact, 2015

### 3.3 Evaluation

Identifying and measuring outcomes that can be directly attributable to place-based project activities is difficult but highly important. Valuable evaluation data in a place-based project includes participation rates; community capacity building; community assets; community pride; and perceptions of safety.

#### Evaluation Techniques

- Short- and long-term outcomes need to be established to verify the efficiency and effectiveness of each place-based initiative. Ideally in a framework agreed on by all partners (Figure 17). This also forms the basis upon which comparisons can be made and learnings established.
- Some outcomes are very long term in nature, and can sometimes be intergenerational. Appropriate indicators should be clearly defined, with a link to the theorised outcome explained in any reporting. It's very important these Theories of Change are mutually devised, understood and agreed on by project partners.
- Data should be both quantitative and qualitative in order to provide an overall picture of the project's outcomes.
- It is important to both record participation and case studies that highlight the power of community participation e.g. Mr Smith attended an event and it was the first time he left his home in 10 years (Figure 18).
- Exit interviews or end-of-project surveys can help capture project learnings missed by other evaluation methods. Asking community members openly to share 'what went well' and 'what could be improved on' has the potential to gather excellent data and inform future projects.

#### *Establishing Evaluation Frameworks – Revitalising Braybrook*

Revitalising Braybrook committed to consistent reporting based on clear framework actions. There has been a continuous process of reflection to examine our practice and direction. The history of Revitalising Braybrook and the development of distinct phases reflects that focus on change and development.

Figure 16

#### *Case Studies – Our3021*

Our3021 developed a Case Studies document in its third year to help showcase some of its community run project.

The projects in this report demonstrated various events, workshops, trainings and broader promotions. Together, they capture a snapshot of the range, varied depth and sustainability of community initiated and led projects. This documents helped provide stories and examples of impact from the Our3021 initiatives that can't be captured in data based quantitative evaluation. Providing an understanding of the impact Our3021 had on the health and wellbeing of individuals and neighbourhoods involved in the project.

Figure 17

#### **General Observation – Evaluation**

*A range of evaluation approaches were used in the place-based initiatives of this review, including:*

- ✓ *Participatory action-based research*
- ✓ *Informal evaluation*
- ✓ *Formal evaluation linked to funding*
- ✓ *Formal evaluation linked to Integrated Health Promotion reporting requirements*
- ✓ *External evaluation*
- ✓ *Quantitative research*
- ✓ *Documentation of case studies*

## Continuous Evaluation

Evaluation is important in any project to capture both the effectiveness of the model used for implementation and any impact the project has had in the community.

- Evaluation needs to be a core element of all projects, occur over the life of the project and beyond (Figure 19).
- Evaluation over the life of a project provides valuable insights and enables mid project refinement and redirection to occur. This can also be achieved through either internal or external evaluation, provided it is made a continuous priority throughout the project.
- It is important to ensure that evaluation addresses both the project itself and the outcomes for the community.
- There is a need for findings to be disseminated in order for knowledge to be shared and learnings added to the field of work. Some possible pathways include conferences; networking events; social media; e-bulletins; and links to more information on the project partner websites.

### *Continuous Evaluation – Linking Melton South*

The Linking Melton South evaluation framework was developed early on and has informed how all project activities are evaluated. Based on the California Healthy Cities and Communities evaluation framework it provides the means to measure changes in community capacity on a number of levels.

*Figure 18*

### 3.4 Reporting

Reporting needs to capture what has been achieved, which is often difficult when place-based approaches target long-term or individual empowerment outcomes. Ensure the evaluation represented in the reporting reflects any funding or other compliance requirements.

#### Planning Mechanisms

Planning and reporting can be time intensive and it is important to use a template or other mechanisms that are easy to use and capture useful information.

- Organisations in this review used different reporting templates. This is natural, however, when agencies are collaborating with each other it is important to make an effort to align reporting. Alternatively, there is a risk of duplication, confusion and ineffectiveness. A neutral or shared template can be very effective (Figure 20).

#### Duplication

Avoid duplication of effort, both within a project and between projects. This can often be avoided by a thorough mapping exercise before a project is started and proper planning of project activities (Please see section 3.1 Needs Mapping for more detail).

- Duplication of effort is often seen in similar organisations where mandated reporting is required. Partnerships could be explored here or at least an effort made to share reporting of documented successes and failures (Figure 21).
- Failure to learn from mistakes and lack of systems to capture learnings can hinder the application of an effective place-based approach in a community. An effort should be made by projects to distribute final reports, progress updates or (at the very least) make evaluations findings accessible.
- Establish ongoing cross-communication systems for place-based projects across your local region. In this instance, *Place-Based Initiatives in the West: Highlighting Promising Practice* was a region-wide cooperative effort to communicate successes, knowledge and learnings.
- Collective Impact is another example of coordinating action to impact an ingrained socioeconomic challenge in a community by multiple agencies from different sectors partnering. This approach also aims to reduce duplication and achieve a large scale change<sup>26</sup>.

#### Reporting – Our3021

Our3021 took advantage of shared reporting frameworks by using this opportunity to review project objectives and process indicators.

The governance group jointly developed project planning and reporting for Integrated Health Promotion funds, as three of the four organisation used this reporting. This reduced duplication between agencies and assisted shared goal setting and evaluation.

Figure 19

#### Avoid Duplication -Our3021

The awareness that the two health services partnering in the Our3021 project (cohealth and IPC Health) have an overlap of their catchment and both receive Integrated Health Promotion funds to use on a social inclusion project. By partnering in Our3021 the organisations avoided duplicating the planning and implementation of running simultaneous place-based projects in neighbouring communities.

Figure 20

<sup>26</sup> [The Collective Impact Framework](#), Collaboration for Impact, 2017

## 4 Sustainability

### 4.1 Sustainability of the project

All projects should contemplate their sustainability at the onset of planning. It may not be appropriate or feasible for the project to continue indefinitely. Consideration should be given to the sustainability of the project, its model, its partners and its funding sources. Clarification of these can be helped by sustainability instruments already developed like the HealthWest Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool Kit<sup>27</sup>.

#### Duration

Consider the ethical implications of the length of a project. It is not an effective use of resources to “just come in and then leave” when working on-the-ground with a community. Long-term investment, engagement and commitment are very important to maintain credibility as a ‘tap turned on and tap turned off’ approach is unacceptable to the community.

- Rapid entry and exit of a project can develop distrust, low-confidence and disengagement of community members. Activity and timelines should be transparent to participants.
- The objective of any place-based work should be to achieve a firm commitment from all those planning to be involved and ensure that they have a long term vision and ongoing commitment to the relevant community (Figure 22).

#### Linking Community into the Sustainability of the Project

Even if the project itself or the organisations currently leading the action cannot be sustained, the project should aim towards sustainability and capacity building within the members of the community.

Ideally mechanisms for sustainability are built into each step of the place-based project activity. Often the key to success and sustainability within the projects reviewed was the genuine integration of community participants in the various approaches (Figure 23).

- Succession planning or the equivalent needs to be considered and incorporated.
- The planning and implementation of place-based projects need to include “key players” that could potentially continue the work.

#### *Duration – Linking Melton South*

Linking Melton South commenced in 2013 with limited funding and project timelines. It is a result of long-term planning and relationship building that the project and its many highly valued activities are still ongoing. Some of the activities with the biggest impact have included the LMS Pop-Up Services Hub, Little Libraries (a free book exchange) and Mend It Melton (a community run repair café). These have grown to become a staple of the Melton South community, only through time and dedication given to community feedback, ongoing promotion and connections.

Figure 21

#### *Utilising Community Members – Linking Melton South*

Partnerships with local organisations have increased LMS’ capacity to support community members to implement actions to address their priority areas. Ongoing support by local faith based organisations, the Neighbourhood House, schools, V/Line and Melton City Council will help support the sustainability of community led action in Melton South.

Figure 22

<sup>27</sup> [Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool Kit](#), HealthWest Partnership, 2014

### Sustainability through Impact

The completion of a place-based project does not equate to the end of an organisation’s commitment to the community. It is essential to plan either for long-term support, effective impact or to revisit the community on a regular basis. Long-term support or revisiting a community means informing them of project achievements or developments; identifying delayed outcomes; new and emerging issues; or re-engagement avenues.

- The community needs to be informed of what has been achieved. Regular check-ins with the community help reinforce what has been invested and achieved. This helps alleviate perceptions of the community being abandoned.
- Ongoing consultation with the community, partners and relevant stakeholders will help monitor progress, expectations and whether the project is producing effective outcomes (Figure 24).

#### *Sustainability – Brooklyn and Alton North Community Strengthening*

The Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening project was adjusted to allow for continued place-based work. The project changed to fit the needs and demand of the community.

Splitting into two projects: one side strategically aligning with the schools and childcare in the area and the other partnering with a wider-neighbourhood revitalising project, was in response to the unique needs and ability to deliver the project to the different communities.

Figure 23

### Sustainability within the Community

Place-based work should be working towards the goal of community self-sufficiency. Project activities need an ongoing focus on building the capacity and the accountability of community participants. Supporting and enabling independence requires transparency around the length of time and amount of resources available for support, as well as helping to link participants with appropriate training, stakeholders and alternative resources (Figure 25).

- Link with stakeholders, who can support the community members or groups throughout the life of the project.
- An important consideration for community groups (where appropriate) is whether to become incorporated or form a partnership with an incorporated organisation. This allows the flexibility to seek and apply for funding.

#### *Empower Community Leaders – Linking Melton South*

Community members have taken on additional responsibilities to support projects such as the Little Libraries, Mend It- Melton and Dream Big Festival - where entire elements of these events and activities are being driven by community members and working groups.

These projects have been established from the outset with sustainability in mind, to be handed-over to the community at the end of the Linking Melton South implementation period, or sooner.

Figure 24

#### **General Observation – Sustainability**

- ✓ *Appropriate resources such as action plans and pathway documents help guide community leaders and groups to be able to link with third party stakeholders and establish independence.*

## Summary of Considerations

The following points are presented as opportunities and directions that should be considered when participating in a place-based project.

### Policy

#### 1. Planning Context

Plan your place-based approach strategically. Consider alignment with current policy frameworks and strategic partners. Take the time needed to plan the project in terms of exploring the issue, political context and local needs.

- i. Align partner selection with the broader directions being enunciated by government via its health and wellbeing policy and planning documents.
- ii. Think creatively to engage partners that demonstrate alignment with state and federal government policy. For example, make use of environmental planners to help tackle overweight and obesity; consider the role police play in neighbourhood safety or; how a council's economic development department can help address intergenerational unemployment.

### Structure

#### 2. Partnership

Explore opportunities to work in partnership with the relevant organisations, established networks and region-wide activities.

- i. Such as, primary health networks, disability local area coordinators and the relevant metropolitan partnership.
- ii. Building in regional networking into place-based narrative helps provide the foundation for resource planning, project development, and funding applications.

#### 3. Governance

Establish a governance structure to guide project direction that best suits the planned engagement and project partners.

- i. Have a standing agenda item at governance meetings that reports on the project activities and achievements. This is important to promote group cohesion and enthusiasm with the roll-on of the project, as not all members of a project team are necessarily involved in the 'on-the-ground' community work.
- ii. A standing agenda item for the governance board meetings of partnering organisations should include a status report on place-based initiatives, concepts and achievements.

#### 4. Human Resources

Ensure your organisation has internal structures and human resources that can support a collaborative effort.

- i. These considerations will help activate the project and create a strong foundation for partnership work. If they are not present there is a risk of conflict and confusion impacting the effectiveness of the place-based initiative being implemented.

## Community

### 5. Strength-based

Consider how to welcome and encourage ongoing participation from community members and potential partners

- i. Build in mechanisms or pathways for the community to approach the project to act as sponsors or champions of the project.

### 6. Community Engagement and Collaboration

Develop a well-researched range of community engagement strategies that can be adapted depending on the project and/or the characteristics of the community.

- i. Review activities from other place-based projects to develop a large variety of activities for the life of a project and let project participants choose and adapt these strategies. Ensuring they are varied and proven but still relative and appropriate.

## Management and Administration

### 7. Resources

Consider how the partnership model, external policy alignment and alternative funding sources impact on available resources:

- i. Determine whether funding could be allocated to a key/lead organisation so that processes are managed easier and documentation of resources are consistent. This will also allow for simplified reporting and the ability to produce a funding submission at short notice.
- ii. Ensure project alignment with relevant policies and plans is clearly highlighted when applying for additional funding.
- iii. Explore alternative funding sources (e.g. the health and wellbeing industry or crowd funding) to reduce reliance on government funding).

### 8. Data Collection

Data collection and storage protocols need to be set and agreed on by all partners.

- i. Establish data collection and storage principles and protocols within and across the project and its partners. This could include the general construction and ongoing population of a library/database of place-based initiatives that can be accessed and used by all partners.
- ii. Establish an ongoing mechanism where information captured can be shared so that learnings from place-based projects across the region is available.

### 9. Evaluation

Consider the most appropriate approach for evaluation. Ensure to both evaluate the project itself and any impact on the wider community.

- i. Evaluation needs to be a core element of all project activities, either formal or informal.
- ii. Consider developing shared indicators and setting up structures for continuous evaluation.
- iii. It may be possible for this long term evaluation to be consolidated across projects, if a region-wide network or collective impact approach is established.

### 10. Reporting

Research and make use of previously developed project plans and templates.

- i. Rather than develop various project plans make use of available templates to cover the range of project types, so that the 'wheel is not reinvented'.

## Sustainability

### 11. Sustainability of Project

Make the establishment of a sustainability plan a priority during the project planning and partnership engagement stage, not an afterthought towards the end of a project.

- i. Sustainability is often forgotten and yet it is through sustainable outcomes that projects can achieve their full potential. Develop a sustainability plan that considers both the project itself and outcomes in the community.



## Conclusions

This report reviewed four place-based projects and identified learnings that can be applied to future initiatives. Identifying opportunities for improvement is not to suggest that the projects have been anything but successful. Rather they should be viewed as part of a continuous improvement process so that opportunities can be taken, and challenges and pitfalls avoided in subsequent projects.

Key observations include the need for projects to have strong collaborative partnerships, a high degree of community involvement at all stages of the project, a degree of flexibility so that projects can evolve, and to consider sustainable approached as an essential part of place-based approaches.

An important factor identified in this review was the need to align and take advantage of current policies and plans. Victorian Government's policy and planning directions, local government health and wellbeing plans, and community health's Integrated Health Promotion programs continue to inform and direct future place-based interventions in the West. The four projects all met elements of the Department of Health and Human Services strategic directions, the *Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019* and the associated *Victorian Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework*. The each project choosing a place-based approach to address the health and wellbeing goals in these policies. As a result, the place-based projects engaged and connected with their identified communities initiating and growing social change. The projects and associated organisations hope the learnings from these activities contribute to an ever growing evidence base for place-based work.

## Appendix

# 1. Consultation Themes and Learnings

The themes and learnings coming out of the consultation are summarised below:

Theme	Experience	Learnings derived from consultation*
<b>Applying a place-based approach</b>		
What is the trigger for a community or communities to be selected for a place-based project?	Organisation/s wanting to gain a greater understanding of the community it is currently working in.	Select partners who have an interest in and commitment to the community or communities in question.
What is the trigger for a project?	Identification of a community need that can be targeted via a place-based approach. Failure to secure project funding from other sources. Wanting to utilise / build on previous project outcomes.	Ensure that a place-based approach is the most appropriate model.
What were the triggers for changes to the project?	The availability of external funding during the life of the project. The size and complexity of a project may require re-scoping and reconfiguration.	Funding becoming available during the life of a project may mean that some of the fundamentals may need to be re-negotiated. Realisation that working across communities which were geographically next to each other did not mean that they would be similar in terms of their needs or the most appropriate mechanisms for engagement.
Approach	Community strengths based. Multiple community led projects are identified, funded and supported within the overall place-based project. Program / project logic guided the establishment, operations, reporting and evaluation processes.	Important to identify and build on strengths rather than to focus on negatives and or the prism of disadvantage. Community participants tended to only have an interest in or understanding of their own project rather than the overall, umbrella project. Transitioning from the implementation phase to the established phase needs to factor in self-sufficiency. Projects evolve over time thereby necessitating a flexible approach and regular review of program / project logic. Crucial to recognise that while geographical boundaries are important there may be circumstances where boundaries need to be expanded due to unforeseen opportunities such as people from outside the area coming with great ideas that were important to support, the project has the funding/resources to do so and or because particular community groups/cultural groups have connections outside the defined geographical area.
<b>Structure</b>		
Partnership	Utilising existing working relationships.	Understanding of how each partner operates makes it easier to establish project structures,

Theme	Experience	Learnings derived from consultation*
	<p>Partners self-selected and already worked in the project's catchment.</p> <p>Partners brought a diverse skill set.</p> <p>Commitment over the life of the project can wane.</p>	<p>roles and responsibilities, communication systems, flexible practices and the sharing of skills.</p> <p>When councils are involved they can bring a wide range of disciplines and resources to the table e.g. economic development.</p> <p>Where a project is exploratory it is better to keep the number of partners down for ease of implementation.</p> <p>Partners reducing or removing their involvement during a project's life can impact planning, stability and community confidence.</p>
Enablers of collaboration	<p>A common approach, shared understanding, commitment to working together.</p> <p>Goodwill and buy in by the respective boards and directors / managers.</p> <p>Shared investment in achieving the project's goals.</p> <p>Key players had decision-making capacity.</p> <p>Project champions.</p>	<p>Flexibility is crucial.</p> <p>Decision-makers need to be involved and committed to the project.</p>
Barriers to collaboration	<p>Scope of the project was too large necessitating the project to be redefined.</p> <p>Lack of information about the community.</p> <p>External demands on time and resources.</p>	<p>Being realistic about what can be achieved and what resources can be brought to the table by the partners.</p> <p>Where a project is large / complex it is important to have a clear structure, model and approach.</p>
Governance	<p>Different governance models were used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall governance was the responsibility of a health service with a community steering committee including DHHS, Council, and the community.</li> <li>• Governance and implementation were combined and overall project management was shared by two partner organisations: a community health service and a council.</li> <li>• A partnership based steering committee that oversaw the project and the project team. Three health organisations and a council were involved.</li> <li>• A project control board, a cross-council working group, and an annual stakeholder roundtable.</li> </ul>	<p>Value of bottom up approach i.e. community steering committee influencing how the project was scoped and implemented.</p> <p>Crucial to have terms of reference that capture how project governance operates i.e. decision-making, accountability and conflict resolution strategies.</p> <p>Effective two way communication between the governance group and project workers is essential.</p> <p>Having a lead agency may be of value i.e. for project co-ordination, delegation, and accountability.</p> <p>Important for project workers to have a voice and decision-making rights on any governance group.</p> <p>Governance group needs to be flexible, open to change and understand community engagement.</p> <p>Important for decision-making to be timely.</p> <p>Attendance of governance group members at community activities is critical.</p> <p>Valuable, where there are a number of project partners and associated project workers, to have a coordinator who has day to day decision-making and project management responsibility.</p>

Theme	Experience	Learnings derived from consultation*
Stakeholders	<p>Stakeholders are key players in the delivery of place-based projects. They typically include funders, other community organisations, interest groups, schools, tertiary institutions, and the community.</p> <p>Staff changes within stakeholder groups meant the 'conversation had to regularly recommence.</p>	<p>At the beginning of a project it is not always clear who the key stakeholders are but a mapping / scoping process can be an effective tool to identify potential stakeholders, their possible involvement, and likely position/s.</p> <p>Stakeholders have to maintain their level of commitment and undertake to pass on background and knowledge to accommodate staff turnover, ie it is their responsibility to maintain corporate knowledge.</p>
Culture	<p>Often a project creates its own culture and modus operandi.</p> <p>Communication is critical but is not always straightforward.</p>	<p>It can be challenging when a project worker or project team's plans may be contrary to the expectations of their parent organisation/s.</p> <p>Different disciplines use a different language so it is important to establish a project's definition of place-based, community engagement, ect.</p>
Human resources / workforce	<p>Constant change of personnel at both the governance and implementation levels led to loss of peer support / interconnection and loss of knowledge.</p> <p>Health promotion project workers bring a different skill set to those with a community development background.</p> <p>Personality issues impacted on project delivery.</p> <p>The resourcing of the implementation / project team/s varied both across the projects and over the life of each project.</p>	<p>Important where there are a number of projects occurring to provide opportunities for cross fertilisation / peers support etc.</p> <p>Clarification re: reporting, roles and responsibilities, loyalties, dispute resolution etc. is important where there are a number of project workers provided by a number of partner organisations.</p> <p>Synchronising working days for project workers is important for community engagement, planning, information sharing, peer support etc.</p> <p>Hand over is critical.</p> <p>Induction is important.</p> <p>Capacity to work out of hours is fundamental for community engagement.</p> <p>Community engagement, mediation, advocacy, working collaboratively, problem solving, communication, mentoring, facilitation and self-care skills are invaluable.</p> <p>Managing conflict and addressing its impact is not just the responsibility of the relevant partner organisation but that of the whole project team including the governance group.</p>
<b>Community engagement</b>		
Community engagement	<p>Community engagement is a critical element of all place-based initiatives.</p> <p>Need to accommodate for changing levels of involvement by individual community members over the life of the project.</p> <p>Community engagement can be difficult where there is no real sense of community or the geographical area is large.</p>	<p>Community engagement takes time and requires careful planning. It shouldn't be rushed if you want buy in.</p> <p>It is critical to listen and for community members to feel confident and comfortable.</p> <p>Where there is no real sense of community it is important to have sufficient resources to allocate to the community engagement and associated mapping / scoping tasks.</p> <p>Consideration is vital about a project's capacity to work across a large community / geographical area and the associated wisdom of doing so.</p> <p>Community engagement can lead to empowerment which can in turn be challenging.</p>

Theme	Experience	Learnings derived from consultation*
		Important to keep asking “What does it mean to work in this community. Who is engaged and who is not engaged and why?”
Community voice and representation	<p>Communities and existing and emerging community leaders are often seeking ways to have their voice heard.</p> <p>Community representation at the governance and implementation levels was not always achieved.</p> <p>Community members either self-selected or were encouraged to become involved.</p>	<p>Once communities and community leaders are engaged their expectations are raised along with their desire for greater representation and acknowledgement.</p> <p>Community representation can be difficult to achieve unless made a priority.</p>
Awareness of community sensitivities	Community members do not like to be seen as ‘problems needing to be fixed’.	<p>Do not just come in and then leave. Long term investment, engagement and commitment is very important to maintain credibility.</p> <p>Tap turned on and tap turned off is unacceptable to the community.</p>
<b>Management and administration</b>		
Resourcing	<p>Projects were often added to project workers’ existing workload.</p> <p>Project funding impacted significantly on the capacity to deliver the project’s aims and objectives.</p>	<p>The project planning process needs to identify how the project can be realistically implemented with either existing resources or through obtaining additional resourcing / funding.</p> <p>Brokerage dollars are invaluable.</p>
Outcomes and outputs	<p>Difficult to measure but the proxies include participation rates, community capacity building, community assets, community pride, perception of safety and case studies, end of activity surveys.</p> <p>Attribution is difficult.</p>	<p>It takes a lot of ground work to get a project up and running.</p> <p>Important to both record participation and case studies that highlight the power of community participation e.g. Mr Smith attended an event and it was the first time he had left his home in 10 years.</p> <p>Asking community members to capture what was achieved is of value. If this was to be implemented in future projects then it would be important to support them to develop the necessary reporting skills.</p>
Data collection / Capturing of costs and funding utilisation	<p>Total value of investment not always captured or recorded.</p> <p>Disengagement of some groups led to a disproportionate allocation of funding.</p>	<p>Concentrating limited resources on one area is not necessarily cost effective.</p> <p>Basic records should always be kept covering as a minimum project rationale and objectives, budget, risks, milestones, and performance measures / outcomes.</p>
Reporting / planning mechanisms	<p>Use of DHHS IHP reporting template is a funding requirement.</p> <p>Mapping / scoping tool was used where there was little existing understanding of a community and its needs.</p>	<p>Reporting can be very time intensive and it is important to use a template / mechanism that is easy to use and captures useful information.</p> <p>Different partners using different reporting templates was confusing and time-consuming. A neutral/shared template would have been more effective.</p>

Theme	Experience	Learnings derived from consultation*
	Use of an action plan template to guide project activities and reporting requirements.	The mapping / scoping process was resource intensive but valuable because it guided the project and laid the foundations for future work.
Evaluation	Participatory action-based research. Informal evaluation. Formal evaluation linked to funding. Formal evaluation linked to IHP reporting requirements. External evaluation. Quantitative research. Documentation of case studies.	External evaluation over the life of a project provides valuable insights and enables mid project change / redirection to occur. Important to ensure that evaluation addresses both the project itself and the outcomes for the community.
<b>Sustainability</b>		
Sustainability for the project	Capturing and sustaining the experience, skills and capabilities. Building on the brand, which has acceptance and recognition.	Do not start a project until you are clear about how you will ensure its sustainability beyond the project timeframe. Produce an end of project plan.
Sustainability for the community	Working towards community self-sufficiency. Embedding achievements, skills e.g. leadership group. Emphasising relationships and connections between stakeholders (separate to the project partners). Providing resources such as action plans, pathway documents.	Importance of empowered and committed community leaders. Groups incorporated so that they can seek funding. Emphasise from the beginning that the project is time-limited and that the community would be supported to become independent by the end of the project.
Future proofing	Plan to revisit the community on a regular basis to identify progress and or issues.	Completion of the project does not equate to the end of your commitment to the community.

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