

NEIGHBOURLY

Natter MARCH 2020

IT TAKES A VILLAGE...



Clunes
Neighbourhood House

Message from the Manager

Ensuring the effective operations of a community organisation can be surprisingly complex. You need to follow good practice, keep abreast and comply with legislation, compliance and funding requirements, stay on top of your deliverables, communicate as effectively as possible and respond to new ideas. In a nod to this complexity, Clunes Neighbourhood House invited the Australian grassroots community leadership expert, Mark Creyton to Clunes to work with our committee and other groups in 2017. He spoke with us about what motivates people who step up to take a leadership role in community, and the risk of burn out or damaged relationships (particularly in small towns) as expectations increase or become more complex. He talked about the shared assets a town has, and the benefits of going easy on ourselves and each other as we all aim high. He talked about the importance of community leadership retaining an element of 'fun' for all, while balancing all the responsibilities that come with it.

At the same time as Mr Creyton came to speak, our committee commenced a thorough review and revision of their policies and procedures, leading to Child Safe Practices training for ourselves and other groups with ChildWise in 2018. It was a long process. Recently many of the forms needed to support our operations – such as volunteer registration forms and induction videos – have all been converted to online forms (see our website). It's another nod to complexity because these online forms help reduce double handling and mean electronic record keeping reduces paper and the need for storage.

As we did this we remembered the discussions that Mr Creyton had raised in that community leadership seminar years back. The value of sharing assets in order to make it easier on others and ourselves. For that reason we've placed several of these forms on our website and an explanation of how we developed (and why) these forms to help us operate. The examples we've put up are documents that might be useful to other community groups and could be readily replicated/copied. Running community groups (typically led by people volunteering their time) is undoubtedly complex. It's hard to get all of it right or even to just get around to all the work that doing things correctly requires. Hopefully sharing these will help other groups save some time, leaving more room for the fun and benefits of being involved in community to remain at the fore.

Open House Dinners - Every Tuesday @ 6pm, Town Hall

Did you know that the Open House dinners have been running for more than five years? During that time it's consistently provided a healthy, affordable dinner experience in the supper room at the Town Hall every Tuesday night (excluding January and December). The dinners have always been operated by a volunteer team, first as a community project and later as a Clunes Neighbourhood House activity.



Last year we had several of our long-standing volunteers step down to do other things with their Tuesdays; thanks Fiona, Sue and David; so this year there are many new faces on the team. We now have two volunteer teams who operate on the roster each month. The teams have started collating recipes for an Open House recipe book and have even started to blog about their experiences – check it out at www.clunesnh.org or on facebook. Why not pop into a dinner and say hi?



Ritual of Taking (and Making) Tea

There is something surprisingly restorative about making and drinking tea. Tea is a beverage that is centuries old. It is steeped (sorry – having fun with this!) in history, showing that once we were a world that took the time to enjoy the ritual of setting the scene to drink tea, brewing the beverage and then savouring it with friends.

Talking Tuesday

At Clunes Neighbourhood House, each Tuesday from 11am til midday we all stop to take tea. It wasn't something we automatically thought to do. We have a communications meeting earlier that morning, bringing together volunteers and staff, so we are often all focused with getting on the job. The idea of stopping all that productivity to take tea seemed contradictory and even a bit indulgent. But then something occurred to us.

A Social Moment

Taking time to slow down, connect and revive oneself and others isn't indulgent, it's essential. It's also proved to be a fun adventure. Once upon a time the teapot took pride of place in a household, and there are many still out there looking to be loved. We've have great fun on our Social Bus Trips each Wednesday (often to op shops – have you popped your name down to join one?) asking those shopping to keep an eye out for unique pieces to make up our tea service. Each cup is different, a bit like all the people who visit or are a part of a Neighbourhood House. It's proved a thrifty and sustainable choice too, which has added value and meaning to what we are trying to do.

A Sustainable Choice

We've discovered a tea maker. Tea pots. Infusers. A glass tea pot for cold teas. We've even explored teas. We've stuck to loose teas because in a Sustainability Audit that Clunes Neighbourhood House undertook in 2019 we realised that it's actually better for our health and the planet if we drink loose tea, rather than use tea bags. Loose tea is compostable, not containing any microplastics or contained in a bag that may or may not decompose depending on whether we bought the right brand or not. This has been a good incentive for us to explore different teas. A trip to T2 (did you know that T2 is an Australian company born and brewed up the road in Melbourne 20 years ago?) let us explore black and white tea varieties and fruit tisanes. We brought back a variety of flavours to stock our tea trolley, as well as a few of the brewing tools (I kid you not, that's what they are called) they had on hand to help us master the perfect brew. Closer to home we just nick down to the Clunes Greener Grocer for their range.

Every Tuesday at 11am til 12 noon

Once equipped, we set a timeframe around our tea taking because we didn't want to get so comfortable that none of us got out of our seats afterwards (lol) and we opened our doors (and started talking about it – like we are here) so others could feel welcome to join us.

Intrigued? Why not come along? It's not a restaurant experience. There is no catering. It's a cuppa around a table or on the couch with (new and old) friends. Sometimes we all try different teas, other times we share a pot talking about our weekends or the tea drinking we used to do with our grandparents when we were kids.

More often though, we just savour the calm of a good, simple brew and think, mmm, who knew?

Talking Tuesday is a Grounded 20:20 initiative.



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Futures2040 - a creative look at possible futures

It seems that Clunes has always been a town where possibilities have been close to the surface. Innovative solutions to problems big and small have popped up in our town since the gold rush. Many of these possibilities were realised because people had the foresight to think beyond the patterns and pressures that shape our lives now – and instead thought about the future. *Future 2040 is a creative writing project with a twist.* In collaboration with the Ballarat Courier, Clunes Neighbourhood House is stepping forward in time to produce a newspaper in 2040. This newspaper will be a 12 page insert into the Hepburn Advocate and will be published in April 2020, just prior to Booktown. It's a chance to be a bit creative, as well as prescient. If you could fast-track yourself 20 years, how do you imagine Clunes might look? How will people live in our town? What industry will exist? What will the environment be like? What global issues will be directly effecting us?

The newspaper will be produced by an editorial team at the Ballarat Courier, and their advertising team have been encouraged to contact as many groups and businesses in town to advertise in the paper. The more people (of all ages), businesses and groups involved the merrier! Any businesses keen to advertise in this once-off publication can contact Lois Nichols on 0467 331 136, while budding writers or organisations can send story submissions to the editor at manager@clunesnh.org. Organisations interested in contributing a story, but keen to speak with a journalist who'll do the actual writing can contact Lois direct as well.

Did you know? Since 2019 Clunes Neighbourhood House has been involved in running a series of activities designed to explore how our community envisioned it's own future (see <https://clunesnh.org/futures-dreaming/>). While aligned with community planning discussions, these activities (as you can see on our website) were more about giving our community the opportunity to dream about Clunes for generations to come, rather than thinking about immediate planning needs. These activities have been supported by a relationship with internationally recognised futures architect Dr Mike McAllum. Currently consulting with the United Nations, Dr Mike McAllum been both an ambassador and mentor for Clunes Neighbourhood House staff and committee since 2018 enabling us to explore a range of different practices that can get a community thinking about the future.



Not sure what you might write if you or your group contributed a story? Here is an example of a possible story that was contributed at Booktown last year.

Opposite the water trough there was a pub. It's easy to picture how busy it would've been. Coaches and horses crossing the nearby bluestone bridge before pulling to a halt to eat, drink and refresh themselves. It's not hard to imagine the hum of conversation that would have existed as people tipped their hats, brushed the dust off their clothes and exchanged civilities before heading home on foot, or continuing on their journey. Commuter junctions like this were common place 100 years ago, but now we are used to the cold, impersonal nature of huge train stations, fast-paced freeways or airports where people who stop and chat are suspect, rather than friendly. So you might think it's strange that I can easily visualise how Clunes might have been long ago.

It's not strange, because while the pub is now someone's home, everything else I describe is much the same. Somewhere in time, Clunes became a town that decided to forget conformity and carve out its own reality. There's a museum in the main street. It dominates the streetscape with appealing outdoor spaces on either side of it and a bustling program of activities happening in the old hotel wrapped around it.

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Ancestry searches, old trades and high-speed wifi make it an appealing destination for visitors from near and far, while businesses toil in the offices above. Here it's easy to trace the origins of Clunes' self-determination. This town has been innovative from the very beginning. The mine it was first built around was recognised world-wide for its innovations, and while the town has consciously moved away from the practices that stripped the land of its resources, it's remained unashamedly innovative.

Take the carpark for example. It's underground. Built into the hills surrounding the town, the visitors' carpark is connected to the mainstreet by winding pathways that are peppered with GPS guides and storytelling touchpoints that kick in as you pass. I've a dodgy leg. So while I'd love to walk these paths and see the platypus they tell me are nearby, I've opted to ride the electric bikes provided at the carpark. I'm not the only one. Locals and visitors alike are all on bikes rather than in their cars. Visitors tend stick to the inner circle of the town (controlled in part by the battery life and coding of the bikes), while locals can be seen further afar. Like most of Victoria, the land around Clunes can be very dry, but careful planting and thinking about walkways had made this a particularly walkable town. An ageing population (an issue anywhere in this country) has probably given rise to the electric bikes with their nifty shade sails?

Easy spots to pull over and chat are evident everywhere in town, even wider afield where you can see that those living on the land or travelling also stop to chat. How do I know this? Each of these spots features trees, drinking taps and a solar charging station for bikes. Like the trough I first saw when I entered the town, these spots are commuter junctions and they are a big part of the appeal of living in or visiting Clunes. It is social, sustainable, and downright practical and at the same time, blends in with the land. If you look closely at the base of the drinking tap you'll see an etching carved into it that looks like the water trough that I first saw when I entered town. The etching is another nod to the past, and one that didn't happen by chance. But then I suspect, everything I see preserved and alive today in Clunes is here because it's a community that has chosen not to leave how it lives just chance.

~ An anonymous creative story about a possible future for 2040 that was written during an activity at Booktown in May 2019.

WHAT'S ON 2020

FOR THE KIDS

★ Clunes Tutoring Program

Every Wednesday, Session 1: 3-4pm, Session 2: 4-5pm sessions, excluding School Holidays, at CNH

FOR EVERYONE

★ Clunes Open House Dinners

Every Tuesday, 6pm - 7.30pm, at the Town Hall, Supper Room

★ Social Bus Trips

Wednesday op-shop tours and social trips target
- depart 9.30am - bookings essential, at CNH



Yoga

Various sessions, at the Clunes Senior Citizens Centre

★ Circus

Tuesdays & Fridays, Community Centre, CFNC grounds

★ Writers Group

Second Monday of the month, 1pm - 3pm, at CNH

★ Men's Shed

Every Monday and Wednesday, 10am - 12 noon,
at the Men's Shed, 18 Alliance Street

★ Community Garden

Tuesday and Friday, 10 am, at CNH
(previously located at the Men's Shed)

Other activities: check the Clunes Pool for water aerobics times



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