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OUYEN INC. VISION

Provide vision, direction, leadership and unity to create a dynamic future for Ouyen.

Glossary

MRCC	Mildura Rural City Council
IAP2's	International Association of Public Participation
DHS	Department of Human Services
SUNITAFE	Sunraysia Institute of TAFE
RDV	Regional Development Victoria
LGA	Local Government Area
MTHCS	Mallee Track Health and Community Service
UPG	Underbool Progress Group
WDC	Walpeup Development Committee
MRD	Mildura Regional Development
ACT	Advancing Country Towns
DPCD	Department of Planning and Community Development

Purpose of this document

The Ouyen Community Planning Strategy sets out the framework, history and research utilised to provide direction in the development of the Ouyen Community Plan 2020 - 2025 (5 years).

What is Community Planning

Community planning is a forum for community, Government, local groups, and organisations to collectively participate, identify priorities, form partnerships, expand perspectives and implement strategies that impact the long term sustainability of the community.

Community Planning aims to improve the effectiveness of public services, programs and projects, whilst taking into account the emerging needs and support the development of local communities.

Benefits Of Developing A Community Plan

Local, State and Federal Government have identified that local people are experts when it comes to understanding the economic and social dynamics of the community.

Community Planning creates a platform for communities to:

- Achieve set goals
- Be connected
- Be resilient to emerging changes
- Plan for the future
- Be long term and self sustaining.

“We need to form partnerships with outlying towns as we suffer the same issues as they do”

Ouyen History

The Ouyen community is situated in the Municipality of Mildura at the intersection of the Calder Highway and Mallee Highway, 105 kilometres south of Mildura, 441 km north-west of Melbourne and 400km east of Adelaide. The area was first occupied by the Wergaia people which some believe signifies ‘pink-eared duck’ and others claim it refers to ‘ghost waterhole’. Ouyen was first settled in 1906 around the Ouyen Railway Station and historically the major economic input has been agriculture with a particular focus on dryland cropping and prime lamb production. However in recent years, health services, local government, mining, tourism, retail and education have provided increased levels of local employment.

Ouyen continues to be an important service centre because of its geographic location, at the intersection of two major highways and a significant distance from major cities. There is abundant evidence of best practice in the community, advisory groups, health services, streetscapes, festivals, local retail sector, dedicated volunteer base and success in attracting key infrastructure.

Overview Of Ouyen Inc.

Ouyen Inc was established on the 3 December 1997 to represent the community and liaise with Local, State and Federal Government to investigate emerging economic and social development opportunities. The elected members manage the association’s affairs and also have legal duties under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (the Act). The purpose is to provide vision, direction, leadership and unity to create a dynamic future for Ouyen.

Ouyen Inc provides an unprecedented and unique service to the community that is a role model for community development, leadership, empowerment and self-determination. The Ouyen and surrounding community has taken responsibility for their own long term sustainability and have been successful in implementing numerous projects and initiatives in the region.

Ouyen Inc is a volunteer managed committee with set objectives, using an innovative, strategic and flexible approach to provide long term and sustainable outcomes for the future of Ouyen.

Strategic Objectives

Ouyen's Strategic Objectives have been developed based on emerging community needs, research studies, [Business and Strategic Plan](#), Advancing Country Towns Program and the current views and opinions of Ouyen Inc and the wider community.

The objectives are:

- To provide opportunities for all residents, volunteers and visitors to Ouyen
- To promote economic and social growth
- To advocate to Local, State and Federal Government on a range of topics/issues
- To provide opportunity for community leadership and to foster participation
- Encourage special events and drive identified projects
- To research and pursue potential industry and create employment opportunities
- To provide an enviable lifestyle for Ouyen
- To provide opportunity for community leadership and inspire participation
- To encourage visitors through the integrated development of tourism possibilities and special events
- To implement resilient services strategies to reduce volunteer burnout
- To preserve, promote and sustain local heritage and environmental assets
- Develop, maintain and review an effective operational structure to achieve our objectives and priorities.

The committee is governed by not less than five and a maximum of twelve elected members including a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Press Officer/Assistant Secretary. The committee meets monthly and auspices various subcommittees and project teams. Meetings are held on the first Monday of each month, excluding January. November's meeting is held on the second Monday due to Melbourne Cup and Farmers Festival activities.

Ouyen Inc's Annual General Meeting is held in August where a minimum of 12 people are elected to the committee. The Committee then meet the following week to determine the executive committee and assign members to portfolios.



“ The younger generation need education and jobs to stay here ”

Overview Of Ouyen Service Centre

MANAGEMENT

Mildura Rural City Council operates the Ouyen Service Centre under local management and provides a diverse range of services to both internal Council branches and external community members. A local Team Leader and administration officers manage the day to day operations of the facility over a period of 45 hours per week.

COMMUNITIES

The Ouyen Service Centre is an essential satellite office to the southern area of the municipality servicing Walpeup, Underbool, Torrita, Linga, Boinka, Tutye, Cowangie, Murrayville, Carina, Panitya, Mittyack, Kulwin, Hattah, Patchewollock and neighbouring communities. The centre also functions as a liaison for ratepayers and advisory groups whilst providing a range of valuable services to these communities. The conference room is also regularly utilised by Ouyen Inc, advisory and project teams and is able to be hired by business or user groups.

SERVICES

The centre also provides a VicRoads agency for licence and registration requirements and the Magistrates Court Victoria holds sitting days in the Ouyen Conference rooms as part of the country location package.

Mildura based accountancy, financial planning, agronomy, hearing specialists, counselling and employment services regularly hire office space to meet with local businesses and community members. This allows the community to access services locally and reduces the strenuous travel burden that rural communities face on a daily basis.

Since the decommissioning of the Mildura Rural City Council mobile library service in 2018, an Ouyen based public library operates for 45 hours per week and includes books and resources, audiobooks, E-books, CDs, DVDs, Wi-Fi, computer and printer access, children's and school holiday programs and author visits. The service also provides a smaller mobile pop up library service to outlying Mallee Track communities.

The Ouyen Service Centre is a central point for a Project Officer to provide vital specialist support and information that volunteer committees may require. As Ouyen is a central point for Mallee Track communities, this location allows Advisory Groups to access these services in one convenient location.

MALLEE TRACK PROJECT OFFICER

Mildura Rural City Council employs an Ouyen based Project Officer who specialises in strategic research and project management. This has a primary focus on developing strategies and implementing projects to increase the economic, social, health, education and wellbeing of communities. The role sits within the Community Futures branch, has a specific target area of Mallee Track communities and has an interlinking function between community, Local, State and Federal Government as a continuation of the Advancing Country Towns Initiative (ACT).

Ouyen Inc. petitioned to Government for 20 years to provide funding for a local based project management specialist to work directly with the Mallee Track communities to assist with the objectives of advisory groups. In late 2018 the position was made permanent which gives projects a means of continuity, greater expertise and direction for the future.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Council supports emergency services in responding to an emergency event, this support can include the use of municipal resources, clearing blocked drains, closing roads and clearing roads and storm debris. Council is the lead agency for local relief and recovery activities. This can include providing emergency accommodation, counselling services, setting up recovery centres and coordination of clean-up activities.

The Ouyen Service Centre, Southern Construction and Parks and Gardens staff actively participate in emergency preparedness, prevention, response, relief and recovery activities in the event of an emergency. Local staff are often members of volunteer emergency service agencies and this allows for both parties to communicate effectively, build resilience and respond appropriately in an emergency event.

COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES

Council also employs a Community Support Team Leader as part of the Aged and Disability Services Branch to deliver services and programs in support of older people, people with disabilities, their families, and carers. The service aims to assist people to maintain their independence, quality of life, and general wellbeing. As the community an ageing community, this is an essential services to assist the elderly population in remaining independent in the community and comfortably in their homes for as long as possible.

MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH SERVICE

Maternal and Child Health provides to families with a child aged 0 to 6 and includes a series of regular health checks with a qualified Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Nurse.

Maternal Child Health also provides a post birth at home visit, regular scheduled appointments, and an optional enhanced specialist service in Ouyen, Underbool and Murrayville.

WORKS, INFRASTRUCTURE, PARKS, AND GARDENS

Mildura Rural City Council also provides an essential Ouyen based depot and team who maintain and irrigate parks, gardens and reserves, undertake an extensive road maintenance capital works program, maintain footpaths, maintain drainage and provide emergency prevention, response, relief and recovery services.

The Southern team is managed by a local Team Leader who facilitates a team of operators and parks and garden staff. This service requires a crew to manage day to day duties across the Mallee Track.



“The Mallee Track Health and Community Service is one of the most valuable services in town”

Community Engagement Principles

Since the inception of Ouyen Inc. the International Association of Public Participation principles have been implemented to enhance community engagement and ownership over priorities. The principles are designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public’s role in effective community engagement and informed decision making.

Effective public participation is based on three foundations which guide the level of participation to be applied to a project or initiative. The key foundations are inclusive of **values-based, decision-oriented and goal-driven objectives** and utilised to enhance the community planning process.

The following IAP2 Public Participation Framework includes:

- **Inform**
To keep the community informed and provide open and transparent information.

- **Consult**
We will listen to and acknowledge concerns, aspirations and ideas and provide feedback on how the community influenced the decision.
- **Involve**
To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
- **Collaborate**
We will actively partner with the community in each aspect of the decision making and the development of solutions.
- **Empower**
We will enable the community in decision making and accept these decisions.

History, Research and Development

PREVIOUS RESEARCH 1944 - 2018

The Ouyen community has been subject to several research studies dating back to A. J. and J. J. McIntyre (1944) from Melbourne University¹ due to its unique social dynamic and ability to be self-sustaining with limited resources, support or professional expertise.

Ouyen had previously been selected for inclusion in the 1988 small town's case study by Henshall Hansen and Associates as a small town model with a dryland rural base, which identified and analysed key community issues. Henshall Hansen and Associates were engaged by the (then) Victorian Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs to undertake the research study. The 'origins of the study lie in the concerns within the State Government and community to more closely understand the causes and consequences of change in country Victoria and the impact of these changes on small towns.'

The aims of the study were:

- To examine the nature of the economic linkages between the government, commercial and farming sectors and to identify the key sectors influencing the viability of country towns.
- To analyse the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour patterns of people in small towns as they respond to changing economic circumstances.
- To identify items of a strategic nature to be taken into account in examining prospects and problems for small towns.
- To prepare an agenda of items for continuing Government and community involvement in small town development.

Henshall Hansen and Associates determined that many of the same issues encountered in the early 1980's are still current in the most recent years. Lessons learnt from the study concluded that small rural communities do not necessarily have issues with facing change, but rather knowing or having the appropriate tools and strategies in managing these changes. 'However, during the course of this study some towns revealed a remarkable capacity to adapt to and make the best of the changes they confronted. In general, these were towns which see their role not merely as one of reacting to change, but of shaping its outcome.'²

The Ouyen community was also integral to the Victorian Governments Rural Futures Initiative 2008

supporting a strong focus on proactively responding to pressures and change. The Rural Futures Initiative (RFI) was designed to support Victorian rural communities to proactively prepare and respond to pressure and change that included:

- Rapid restructure of food and fibre chains resulting in changes to agriculture industry
- Climate change
- Land use
- Change in demographic characteristics
- Change in allocation of natural resources

Interestingly, the same issues are encountered today and include:

- Little power to influence key policy decisions that have significant impact on the community
- Gap between rural community and urban policy
- Regulatory burdens on volunteers and organisations
- Residents demonstrate high volunteer rates and volunteer burnout
- Amalgamation of community organisations and services, provides a level of survival; however this requires a commitment for further travel outside of the community which accelerates the social isolation issue
- Limited social opportunity for people (youth), especially for those who aren't involved in sport
- The farming industry is a less attractive option for the next generation with farm sizes increasing and less employment, including family members. The Northern Mallee Pipeline has provided some reprieve for intensive or mixed livestock enterprise; however the agronomic, environmental and social dimensions of mixed sheep/wheat farming systems require further research and development (Latta, Weston 2007)³
- Declining and aging population with limited access to purpose built smaller and independent living accommodation
- Secondary college students often leave to seek further education and employment opportunities due to the lack of local opportunities
- Limited access to prenatal, postnatal, maternal child health, mental health support, allied health and specialist services
- Fewer employment opportunities due to the regionalisation of services
- Housing availability and access to land for house construction.



PHOTO CREDIT - TRACEY LAWSON

ADVANCING COUNTRY TOWNS

The Advancing Country Towns Program (ACT) initiative was a four year Victorian State Government program which aimed to improve outcomes in targeted regional communities. The initiative was part of a \$9.4 million investment focusing on creating opportunities and building on the strength of communities to tackle complex socioeconomic disadvantage in local areas.

The project aimed to develop local innovative solutions to increase the economic, social, health, education and wellbeing of the Mallee Track from 2012 to 2016.

The Ouyen Community Plan was initially developed in 2008 and subsequently reviewed in 2018 and has a strong strategic focus on long term sustainability, collaboration, integrated services and has had many distinguished achievements since initial implementation.

The Steering Group members included:

- Cassey Gloster - Mallee Track Project Officer, MRCC
- Steven Vallance - Former Project Manager, MRCC
- Mike Mooney - Former DPCD Strategic Project Manager, RDV
- Martin Hawson - MRCC General Manager, Community
- Mark Jenkins - MRCC Manager, Community Futures
- John Senior - Former CEO MTHCS
- Lois O'Callaghan - Former Community Manager MTHCS

- Win Scott - Former CEO SuniTAFE
- Anne Mansell - Former MDC, CEO
- Leanne Dawes - Former Principal, Ouyen P-12
- Matt Holland - DEEWR Regional Education Skills Jobs Coordinator
- Michael Oerlemans - DHHS Deputy Regional Director
- Christine Ferguson - DHHS
- Mark Wilson - Former Chair Ouyen Inc
- DPCD representative, Melbourne

The Community Reference Group (sub group) provided strong links to the relevant communities.

The Community Reference Group members included:

- Jagjit Dhaliwal - Mallee Track Health and Community Service (MTHCS)
- Sonia Mock - Mallee Track Health and Community Service (MTHCS)
- Kylie Armstrong - Murrayville Inc
- Trevor Wyatt - Murrayville Liaison
- Jenny Heaslip - Ouyen Inc.
- Ian Stacey - Ouyen Inc.
- Melinda Lynch - Underbool Progress Group (UPG)
- Nicole Magnisalis - Underbool Progress Group (UPG)
- Michael (Mick) Pole - Walpeup Development Committee (WDC)
- Jean Cooke - Walpeup Development Committee (WDC).

Development of the Ouyen community plan

The following process was utilised to develop the Ouyen Community Plan:

1. Establish the need for a community plan review, determine if the existing projects require reassessment, have been completed and if any new projects have been identified
2. Establish a key reference group of representatives within the community
3. Council officer to analyse previous projects, research and collate information for discussion
4. Reference Group and Council officer to establish an engagement process
5. Implement engagement process
6. Develop draft plan and send to reference group for review and comment
7. Present draft plan to community and engage with reference group to seek feedback
8. Evaluate vision statement
9. Present final plan to Council for approval
10. Final plan promoted and presented to community through online channels, newspapers and newsletters
11. Identify Priority Projects
12. Form sub groups to coordinate projects in plan
13. Sub group present priority projects to government bodies for acknowledgement.



Development of the Strategy

The Ouyen Community Planning Strategy 2018 – 2023 has been developed through consultation with Ouyen Inc, Mildura Rural City Council, local stakeholders such as Mallee Track Health and Community Services, community members and advisory groups such as Walpeup and District Development Committee, Underbool Progress Group and Murrayville and District Community Liaison Committee.

The residents of the Ouyen and district community participated in numerous focus groups, open meetings, one on one interviews, online/hard copy surveys, and group sessions. Data was collected during the Advancing Country Towns program from 2011 – 2017 and included several consultations.

Statistics and information were collated from the following sources:


The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016 Census QuickStats POA3490 (POA)
Mildura Rural City Council Community and Council Plan 2017 – 2021
Mallee Track Health and Community Services Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023
Advancing Country Towns Investment Logic Map, DPCD Dr David Platt 2013
Dr Robyn Eversole, RMIT University, Towns In Time Spatial Analysis and Research DPCD 2006
Ouyen Community Plan 2008
Ouyen Inc Business and Strategic Plan 2011 -2015, pg 7
Ouyen Incorporated Rules, Constitution 1997
Ouyen Lake Business Case 2014
Mallee Research Station Business Case 2014
Ouyen Independent Living Business Case 2014
Mallee Track Volunteer Services Review 2014
Brigade Sustainability Pilot North West Region 2014
McIntyre, A. J. and J. J. McIntyre Country Towns of Victoria: A Social Survey Melbourne University 1944
Revisiting the 1986-7 'Study of Small Towns In Victoria' 2005
Henshall Hansen Associates, Study of Small Towns in Victoria Department of ARA, Melbourne 1988
The agronomic, environmental and social dimensions of mixed sheep/wheat farming systems in North-West Victoria, Roy Latta and Cassey Weston DPI Walpeup 2007
Ouyen Rail Sidings Rapid Appraisal 2018.

The role of the Community

The role of the community members in community planning is to empower, lead and engage the public to ensure that the community plan represents the broader community.

During the Mallee Track Advancing Country Towns Program from 2011 – 2017 the residents of the Ouyen and district communities were highly engaged in issues relating to the community and participated in focus groups, open meetings, one on one interviews, online/hard copy surveys and group sessions. Data was collected during the program and included several consultation sessions with various community members, project, advisory groups and stakeholders. The primary focus of the Advancing Country Towns program aimed at revitalising Victorian regional and rural communities through providing strategies for long term sustainability. The key functions included developing strategies, projects and initiatives that increase the economic, social, health, education and wellbeing of Mallee Track communities.

The Advancing Country Towns project was guided by a Steering Group across government, business and community sectors. The project was led by Project Managers Steven Vallance during inception and primarily by Cassey Gloster throughout the planning and implementation.



“Ouyen is safe, friendly and quiet”

PHOTO CREDIT - PHILIP DOWN

The Role of the Mildura Rural City Council

The Mildura Rural City Council facilitates the community planning process throughout the Mildura Local Government Area (LGA) to enable residents to develop clear goals for the community. The Ouyen Community Plan was endorsed by Council on 23 October 2019.

Council recognise that local people are experts when it comes to understanding the economic and social dynamics of the community. A grass-roots approach is used in shaping the future of regional communities and the plan is developed and owned by the community.

During the community planning process Mildura Rural City Council will:

- Provide an officer to lead and facilitate the process
- Conduct research and data analysis
- Assist with funding to support innovation
- Write the strategic and community plan
- Support communities to establish a community reference group.

Summary Of Community Plan Content

The content included in the Ouyen Community Plan includes:

- Ouyen community history
- Population and demographics
- Community map
- Vision
- Ouyen Inc
- Development of the Ouyen Community Plan
- Our key themes
- Achievements
- Events
- Values
- Concerns
- Project action plan
- Protecting our natural environment
- Building our strong local economy.

After the Community Plan is Complete

After completion of the community planning process Ouyen Inc. will prioritise the project action plan based on volunteer and resource availability to determine a clear pathway and focus for future planning. Active projects will be added to portfolio lists for accountability during Ouyen Inc. meetings. The project list / prospectus will be made available to Local, State and Federal Government to ensure funding bodies are well informed on the community's needs.

Ouyen Inc. will directly consult with Council to ensure projects are prioritised and there is access to various funding streams and support to progress and deliver projects.

Ouyen Inc. will distribute the community plan, market via Ouyen's website and email to Council for funding consideration.



PHOTO CREDIT - TRACEY LAWSON



Contact us

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The Ouyen Community Planning Strategy was developed by Mallee Track Project Officer, Cassey Gloster on behalf of partners Ouyen Inc. and Mildura Rural City Council in April 2019.

A special thanks to photographers Philip Down and Tracey Lawson for the amazing photographs we have exhibited throughout this document.

The final strategy was endorsed by Mildura Rural City Council on 23 October 2019.

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Endnotes

1. McIntyre, A. J. and J. J. McIntyre (1944) *Country Towns of Victoria: A Social Survey*. Melbourne University Press: Melbourne.
2. Henshall Hansen Associates (1988) *Study of Small Towns in Victoria (Revised Edition)*, Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Melbourne.
3. Latta, RA and Weston, C (2006). *The agronomic, environmental and social dimensions of mixed sheep/wheat farming systems in North-West Victoria. A report for submission to the key project manager, Department of Primary Industries, Victoria. Sheep/Wheat Zone Animal Productivity Development.*



This community plan was developed by the community of Ouyen in collaboration with:



Mildura Rural City Council



The final plan was endorsed by Mildura Rural City Council on 23 October 2019.