

## Senior Citizens Clubs and Centres – Community Consultation Outcomes and Recommendations

In March of 2021 a consultant was engaged to complete a review of the usage and functioning of the five Indigo Shire Senior Citizen Centres. Undertaking the review is an action item on the Indigo Ageing Well Strategy, arising from the global decline in membership and usage of Senior Citizen Centres, as well as the cessation of funding from state and commonwealth governments for the centres.

The consultant reviewed the relevant literature and met with club members, Committees of Management and also the Indigo U3A, based in Beechworth and Yackandandah. The resultant report offered eight recommendations for Council to consider adopting.

The report was finalised in June 2021 and was taken to Council briefing in October 2021 with the recommendation that wider community feedback on the eight recommendations be sought, as there was not financial scope to complete community consultation in the initial stage.

The eight recommendations were grouped into five themes to make them more digestible by the public:

1. Welcome all - In collaboration with the seniors citizens clubs, rename the centres as general community buildings to both embrace older people and the general community
2. A new look and feel - Update the appearance of the centres such as the signage, landscaping, entrance and internal and external appearance.
3. Programming and activities:
  - Support the clubs in promoting their activities and encourage broader community use.
  - Encourage clubs to use their existing funds to increase the number and range of activities on offer.
  - Establish an activities program that is jointly funded with Council to provide activities not normally offered by the clubs
  - Encourage and support the Indigo U3A to offer activities at the senior's centres in Chiltern, Rutherglen, Yackandandah and Wahgunyah.
4. Future opportunities:
  - Prepare a facilities plan (including appearance, accessibility and more significant infrastructure needs) for all senior citizen centres, including the U3A.
  - Consider the needs of the Indigo U3A and the opportunities provided by the Platelayers Cottage when developing the plan for Beechworth (NB - A formal EOI process will be undertaken to determine future usage / management arrangement of the Platelayers Cottage.)
  - Investigate the U3A's future program development plans and facility needs.
5. Management modelling
  - Appoint the senior citizens clubs as managers of the renamed community centres and provide assistance to the clubs in undertaking this role.
  - Review the arrangement after 2-3 years and introduce a new management approach if required.
  - Enter into formal occupancy arrangements with the senior citizens clubs

The following steps were taken:

**Step 1:** Report taken to the clubs for feedback

**Step 2:** Have Your Say survey on website and in libraries

**Step 3:** Community consultation drop-in sessions

This report summarises the findings from the three steps on each of the five themes for each of the five towns where Senior Citizen Clubs are located, as well as the Indigo U3A in Beechworth and Yackandandah and the exercise group in Tangambalanga.

**The proposed recommendations from the community consultation are as follows:**

1. Welcome all - In collaboration with the Senior Citizens Clubs, rename the centres as general community buildings to both embrace older people and the general community.
2. A new look and feel - Update the appearance of the centres such as the signage, landscaping, entrance and internal and external appearance.
3. Programming and activities:
  - Support the clubs in promoting their activities and encourage broader community use.
  - Encourage clubs to use their existing funds to increase the number and range of activities on offer.
  - Research and finance a centralised on-line booking system and support its introduction into the clubs.
  - Encourage and support the Indigo U3A to engage with interested parties in Chiltern, Rutherglen, Tangambalanga and Wahgunyah to form their own branch of a U3A.
4. Future opportunities:
  - Prepare a facilities plan (including appearance, accessibility and more significant infrastructure needs) for all senior citizen centres, including the U3A.
  - When developing the plan for Beechworth, the precinct encompassing the Beechworth Senior Citizen Club. And Croquet Club, Gang Platelayers Cottage and the Old Railway Building should be considered for broader planning for community use as a consolidated hub.
5. Management modelling
  - Appoint the senior citizens clubs as managers of the renamed community centres and provide assistance to the clubs in undertaking this role.
  - Review the arrangement after 2-3 years and introduce a new management approach if required.
  - Enter into formal agreements with all Senior Citizens Clubs as a core requirement of Council.

**Snapshot:**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Supported</b>	<b>Not Supported</b>
Welcome all	Beechworth, Rutherglen, Chiltern, Wahgunyah	Yackandandah
A new look and feel	Beechworth, Rutherglen, Chiltern, Wahgunyah, Yackandandah	
Programming and activities	Beechworth, Rutherglen, Chiltern, Wahgunyah	Yackandandah

Future opportunities	Beechworth, Rutherglen, Chiltern, Wahgunyah, Yackandandah	
Management modelling	Beechworth, Rutherglen, Chiltern, Wahgunyah	Yackandandah

## Beechworth

75% of the 44 Have Your Say submissions were from Beechworth residents and attendance at the drop-ins was highest in Beechworth (36 people). The focus here was heavily weighted on the location of a premises for the Indigo U3A and the question of use of the Gang Platelayers Cottage by Beechworth Senior Citizens Club (BSCC) and Indigo U3A. The BSCC had extensive input at consultation meetings prior to the drop in and as such no members attended the drop-in. There is a strong desire for the Community Meal to return.

Discussions with the Beechworth Lions Club – who are managing the refurbishment of the Gang Platelayers Cottage for future use as a community space - BSCC and Indigo U3A resolved the question of use. The Lions Club are hoping to be successful in an EOI for the management of the cottage when it is completed. Any future discussions around use will take place once there is an appointed group managing the facility. As such, any mention of the Gang Platelayers Cottage has been removed from the recommendations.

The Indigo U3A were successful in their EOI to manage the Old Railway Building in December 2021, which has relieved the need to secure a premises for them until 2024. This decision provides the Indigo U3A with two years to grow their programs, membership numbers and to demonstrate their capacity to manage a Council owned community facility.

A large amount of feedback from community engagement was received about the reduction of affordable community spaces in Beechworth. However, the decision to make the U3A the lead tenants of the Old Railway Building at least temporarily meets community need for affordable, accessible spaces. This need will need to be considered in future assets planning.

The interest in the U3A model and the services they provide came through very strongly in the consultations. There was a clear emphasis on the fact that the services they provide to the community directly meet the aims of the Indigo Ageing Well Strategy, particularly around respect and inclusion, social participation and information and communication. Strong social connections – particularly after 50 years of age – are a good determinate of healthy ageing. Council have recognised the positive service U3A provide by supporting them with the use of a subsidised space.

This report will not deal with the U3A any further, other than to recommend that master-planning is also completed for them, despite them only having a two-year lease at the Old Railway Building. It is recommended that the Beechworth Senior Centre, Gang Platelayers Cottage and Old Railway Building be considered in master-planning as a centralised community hub all three facilities provide community services with a focus on older people.

- 1. Welcome all - In collaboration with the seniors citizens clubs, rename the centres as general community buildings to both embrace older people and the general community**

**BSCC response:** This has been the subject of prior discussion within the Club. There appears to be general agreement that renaming the facility, something along the lines “Beechworth Community

Centre”, would more broadly reflect the types of programs and activities proposed to be conducted at the facility.

**Community Feedback:** Positive response in regards to a name change generally, however there is concern from Quercus Neighbourhood House and to a lesser degree from Indigo U3A that the use of the word ‘community’ could cause confusion about purpose. An initial meeting between stakeholders occurred in December 2021 with future meetings scheduled to workshop the renaming. Council will support the stakeholders to come to a satisfactory outcome.

**2 A new look and feel - Update the appearance of the centres such as the signage, landscaping, entrance and internal and external appearance.**

**BSCC response:** The present appearance of the Beechworth Senior Citizens Hall is not conducive to attracting the interest of potential users. Updating the external appearance of the facility is fully supported.

**Community Feedback:** This is also widely supported by the community in general. The BSCC have many ideas which they have been working on with the assets and infrastructure team. BSCC have a long history of financially contributing to the improvement of the facility.

**3 Programming and activities:**

**BSCC response:** These collaborative measures to increase and expand community usage of the facility are fully supported. The extension of U3A activities to other population centres in the Shire is fully supported.

**Community Feedback:** There was some pushback on the idea of the BSCC being opened up more fully to the community based on the need for “Elders” to have their own spaces. However, the general consensus for Beechworth is that the centre is very well used at present and that utilising it more for the benefit of community is a positive.

**4 Future opportunities:**

- Prepare a facilities plan (including appearance, accessibility and more significant infrastructure needs) for all senior citizen centres, including the U3A

**BSCC response:** It is clear that the present layout of the BSCC facility does not allow for concurrent activity. Additionally, there is ineffective use of the facility when small groups meet. There is little scope for increased usage of the facility if its present layout remains unchanged.

In planning for the future use of the Centre, major works to the building are warranted. This would include enclosing the back veranda, use of concertina partitioning of large spaces, redesign of the office, storage and croquet clubroom areas, and possible extension of the building towards the Platelayers Cottage.

The Platelayers Cottage would logically fit, as an annex, in any facilities planning for a Beechworth Community Centre. This logic is confirmed in the Beechworth Railway Precinct Land Management Plan July 2019 which states “*The historic Plate Layers Cottage may be refurbished and any future use needs to consider the operations of the Beechworth Senior Citizens Club which is adjacent to the Cottage*”.

Beyond the development and provision of suitable physical space designated for community use in the Railway Precinct area, Council will need to determine and appoint appropriate management.

**Community Feedback:** Positive response to systematic master-planning, rather than a piecemeal approach. There was strong support for reviewing the entire precinct for a community hub, including the Senior Centre, Gang Platelayers Cottage and the Old Railway Building. There was very strong sentiment from community that the Old railway Building be retained for community use.

## 5. Management modelling

**BSCC response:** Retention of BSCC as manager of the renamed facility is supported. The membership has frequently expressed a view that it would prefer to have its own members manage the facility. The establishment of a formal lease agreement is fully supported. The proposed “...*clause relating to the process for the review .... transitioning to a new arrangement*” would need to be specific in outlining the circumstances that would warrant a transition to a new arrangement.

**Community Feedback:** There is no concern about formal management agreements being between Council and seniors groups.

## Yackandandah

19% of the 44 Have Your Say responses were from Yackandandah and surrounds. Three people attended the drop-in session – two members of the Yackandandah branch of Indigo U3A and one Senior Citizen member. The YSCC met with council officers prior to provide their feedback on the report. The desire for the Community Meal to return was important for some of the members. Some members expressed the belief that the Council should be doing more for them and providing more events.

In short, the YSCC members are not supportive of any of the recommendations other than improving the appearance of the building and creating facilities plan. Secretary: “I disagree with the following recommendations, change of name, management requirements, need for a lease, and promotion requirements”; this sentiment was repeated by the treasurer and the one member at the drop-in.

The community would like to use the facility, however, due to some reported instances of difficulty interacting with the YSCC they are unwilling to hire the building. Beechworth Health Service had been running Club Connections there for over 15 years and have recently relocated to the Yackatooon Hall due to this issue.

### 1. Welcome all - In collaboration with the seniors citizens clubs, rename the centres as general community buildings to both embrace older people and the general community

**YSCC Feedback:** “The building is the base of the Yackandandah Senior Citizens Club and was built by funds raised by members and state/federal grant in 1983. The name should remain.”

The members believe that it would lose the identity of the building and the history to change the name. They also stated that there are many other general community buildings in Yackandandah, and another one would be duplication. There is a strong memory in the town of the fundraising to build the hall and there is a connection to the name and the history with the members. It should be noted that the Yackandandah Shire Council also contributed a significant amount of funds.

**Community Feedback:** There is a stronger sentiment for the name to remain than for it to be changed. Given that there is the Yackandandah Community Centre in town it was seen as a duplication to have two community centres.

**2. A new look and feel - Update the appearance of the centres such as the signage, landscaping, entrance and internal and external appearance.**

**YSCC Feedback:** Supportive of updating the building for seniors use and as a Neighbourhood Safer Place (AKA: Bushfire Place of Last Resort). They do not believe that the Seniors Club should have to contribute financially in any way to the upkeep of maintenance of the building. They believe that the Council gardening service should be doing more to upkeep the garden, including the removal of trees that are close to the building.

**Community Feedback:** The community supports improving the appearance and have called the hall “gloomy” and “depressing” inside. LED lighting, LED skylights and some new paint could improve the appearance of the interior. The Yackandandah community would also like to see a fence installed in front of the facility so that children from the park cannot access the carpark. There has also been concern about the children being yelled at by members of the Seniors Club for being near the building.

**3. Programming and activities:**

**YSCC Feedback:** The seniors club do not believe they require any programs or activities support from Council. They do not support the facility being used by external groups on the days they have indoor bowls as the mats are heavy to set up and they want to be able to leave them set up for their personal use. They would consider offering different programs if that’s what their members wanted.

The club do not want anything to do with booking the centre and have concerns that no-one is making sure the centre is clean after it is used. They have stressed that there is no internet at the centre and they don’t have the booking software that would be required. They have concerns about people from the park using the toilets in the facility.

**Community Feedback:**

- The resources used more often by community members makes sense.
- The building never seems to be available for use, however it is hardly occupied.
- There are only cards and bowls available – limited attraction.
- Under the control of one person.
- There needs to be various spaces in the community for seniors to gather.
- Accessible and affordable community spaces are needed

**4. Future opportunities:**

- Prepare a facilities plan (including appearance, accessibility and more significant infrastructure needs) for all senior citizen centres, including the U3A.

**YSCC Feedback:** The club believe that this is a good idea to ensure maintenance improvements are thought about and budgeted.

There was no community feedback on this point for Yackandandah. The U3A operate from the YCC building and are not looking to access the Senior Centre.

**5. Management modelling**

**YSCC Feedback:** “We are a older group in the community and the stress of managing a building would have a negative affect [sic] on our members.” It was also stressed that Council should not “put the responsibility for managing the build [sic] on the aged community who do not have time and skill set to deal with trades people, be a debt collector and the hiring of the Centre. Let the council continue to manage the building and look after the senior members in the twilight of their years.”

**Community Feedback:** There is no concern about formal management agreements being between Council and seniors groups generally, however in Yackandandah there are community concerns with equity of access, welcoming and inclusive management of the facility under the current arrangement. This may be contributing to less than optimal use of the facility.

### **Tangambalanga**

Kiewa-Tangambalanga do not have a dedicated Senior Citizen Centre. There are many groups that meet in the area that have a focus on older people, such as the Kergunyah card group, the Planned Activity Group, fortnightly men’s group, Movers & Groovers, craft group and weight training and yoga twice per week. Many of the groups use Coulston Park – which is managed by a Community Asset Committee on behalf of Council, and at the Lion’s Den, a council owned community building.

There was one Have Your Say response – 2% of the 44 responses, and twelve people at the drop-in session including Cr Croucher. There was a strong sentiment that the community are an active group that can organise their own activities. The amount of red tape, rules and regulations and insurance requirements involved with formal groups and committees of management are a deterrent. The community would rather just attend events and activities without having to organise formal meetings and committees.

Areas where Council could support include the following:

- Grant funding support for events such as meals out, bus trips and fun activities
- Reinstating the Community Meal
- Interest in forming a U3A
- Public Transport – major concern

### **Rutherglen**

5% of the Have Your Say responses were from Rutherglen and eight people attended the drop-in session; a mix of current senior citizen members and community members and Cr Horne. The RSCC were consulted prior to the community drop-in. The RSCC are supportive of all recommendations and are open to the support of Council with bookings and activities.

- 1. Welcome all - In collaboration with the seniors citizens clubs, rename the centres as general community buildings to both embrace older people and the general community.**

**RSCC Feedback:** A name change would be supported if it would help more people join the club.

**Community Feedback:** Name suggestion: Rutherglen Community Hub. The community expressed that it would help people feel more welcome by changing the name. One resident strongly disagrees with a name change as they think it will detract from a designated 'Elder' sacred space.

**2. A new look and feel - Update the appearance of the centres such as the signage, landscaping, entrance and internal and external appearance.**

The feedback from the RSCC and the community was generally the same on this topic, with the overall sentiment that it is a neat and tidy facility that is broadly appealing to use.

The one main point of contention is the front door which is very heavy and has a trip hazard mat in front of it. A more accessible door is needed.

**3. Programming and activities:**

**RSCC Feedback:** The club are open to having the facility more broadly used and are open to support with promotion. They are happy for youth events to be held at the facility, just not parties with drinking. The hire fee has sat at \$25 flat for a very long time. Council will work with all the clubs to look at appropriate fees for hire by community groups and others, as well as making sure that there is insurance in place and that cleaning is part of the hire fee, rather than the senior's responsibility. Clear user agreements with other users is needed.

**Community Feedback:** There was interest in the following activities being held at RSCC:

- U3A sessions in Rutherglen would be great.
- Tai Chi, yoga, Pilates.
- Arthritis group from Corowa
- Craft Group – talk to Deb Stefanides about moving it to RSCC
- Tech Sessions at Seniors – Be Connected. Perhaps working with high school students? The recent installation of internet at the RSCC makes this option far more likely.

The question of cost came up and it is clear that there needs to be inexpensive options for activities, which needs to be considered in the cost of the hall hire.

It was requested that a hard copy way to book the hall continue to be made available – not just an online system. A sign on the building and at Golling Square of who to call or capacity to book it through the library was suggested. Hard copy ways to find out about activities at the hall is still wanted.

In terms of barriers, it was suggested that there is a reputation of the club of not being able to hire the club, or perhaps that people don't want to. This is something that Council can support the RSCC with in terms of promotion of availability and inclusivity.

- **Prepare a facilities plan (including appearance, accessibility and more significant infrastructure needs) for all senior citizen centres, including the U3A.**

The community and the RSCC are broadly supportive of this option. Should a U3A branch get started in Rutherglen, they will have the support of the RSCC to use the facility also.

**5. Management modelling**

There is no concern about formal management agreements being between Council and seniors groups from either community or the club at this stage.

## Chiltern

There was one Have Your Say response – 2% of the 44 responses and four people at the drop-in session – all current senior citizen members. Incidental community feedback indicates that the community are happy with the functioning of the CSCC and that there are sufficient affordable community spaces to use in Chiltern.

1. **Welcome all - In collaboration with the seniors citizens clubs, rename the centres as general community buildings to both embrace older people and the general community.**

**CSCC Feedback:** Name suggestion is Chiltern Citizen Centre. This will be worked on with the members after the March Council meeting decision. While some members indicated they would like to keep the name, newer members gave examples of community members refusing to join because of the stigma attached to the word 'senior.'

Discussions with the Chiltern Neighbourhood House clarified that they have no concerns about any community confusion should the name be changed to Chiltern Citizens Centre.

2. **A new look and feel - Update the appearance of the centres such as the signage, landscaping, entrance and internal and external appearance.**

**CSCC Feedback:** The concern is predominantly with accessibility, as the building is neat and tidy with a recent kitchen upgrade. The rear steps are of concern, as many of the members would not be able to use them safely as a fire escape. The front door is heavy and unwieldy and has a trip-hazard mat in front of it. The ramp at the front access does not meet current accessibility standards. They would also like to see binds installed instead of the old curtains and the men's urinal replaced. These items can be discussed further with facility planning.

3. **Programming and activities:**

**CSCC Feedback:** The club are very willing to hire out the venue more, provided there is no alcohol on the premises. Discussions have taken place about increasing the hire charge for certain events in order to cover the cost of cleaning. They would very much like to see the Community Meal return. The CoM have been planning interesting trips and opportunities for the members and have been inviting other seniors groups to join in.

**Community Feedback:** They would like to see U3A start up in Chiltern. They believe that the CSCC are doing a good job and that the facility is a welcoming space to hire.

4. **Future opportunities:**

- Prepare a facilities plan (including appearance, accessibility and more significant infrastructure needs) for all senior citizen centres, including the U3A.

This is broadly agreed to.

5. **Management modelling**

**CSCC Feedback:** The Seniors are willing to continue managing the facility. They have some concerns about the difficulty in getting people to step up to be on the CoM and believe that it will be even more difficult if there are more expectations put on the club.

**Community Feedback:** There is no concern about formal management agreements being between Council and seniors groups.

## **Wahgunyah**

There were no Have Your Say responses from Wahgunyah and four people attended the drop-in session – three Seniors Club members and one community member. Consultation with the WSCC took place prior to the drop-in session. The Senior Citizen Club Room is an annex to the Wahgunyah School of Arts, which is DWELP owned and managed by a Community Asset Committee (CAC). The WSCC rent the annex from the CAC and Council cover the cost of their rent. The WSCC are happy with their relationship with the CAC and their relationship with Council. Any considerations regarding formal occupancy agreements with WSCC will be significantly different to the other centres given the lack of ownership.

- 1. Welcome all - In collaboration with the seniors citizens clubs, rename the centres as general community buildings to both embrace older people and the general community.**

There is no pressing need to do this in Wahgunyah. The annex is generally referred to as the club rooms. The signage could be updated, and if so, the name could be considered at his time. There is the Wahgunyah Community Centre in town also.

- 2. A new look and feel - Update the appearance of the centres such as the signage, landscaping, entrance and internal and external appearance.**

The WSCC are quite happy with the facility. They have newer tables but are unsure about putting them out as the community use the facility also.

- 3. Programming and activities:**

The club and the community are more interested in outings and functions for their members but also to invite the broader community to be involved. They would like more advocacy for public transport and support with grants for bus trips, entertainment and events. They would like to see a walking group get started and gentle exercise, such as chair exercises.

They would like to have Councillors and Council officers attend their meetings every 2 or 3 months and to be more involved with the club.

There is a very strong desire to see the Community Meal return.

Feedback is that there is not enough to do in Wahgunyah, so trips to the movies, art galleries, silos, etc., is needed. The cost of a bus is prohibitive. Council to work with the club to find funding support, and to help network with other seniors groups, probus, etc., to see if they can share the cost.

- 4. Future opportunities:**

- Prepare a facilities plan (including appearance, accessibility and more significant infrastructure needs) for all senior citizen centres, including the U3A.

Ageing Well Officer feedback is that the facility requires some upgrading to make it more accessible and appealing. There is a courtyard at the rear which could be used for smaller meetings, particularly during COVID-19 times. The steps could be replaced with ramps, rather than the seniors having to bring their own ramp. The toilet facilities are very dated.

**5. Management modelling**

Given their status as tenants of a DWELP facility this is unlikely to be needed. However, some discussion about mutual obligations may be required, particularly if Council are to invest in facility master-planning and improvements.