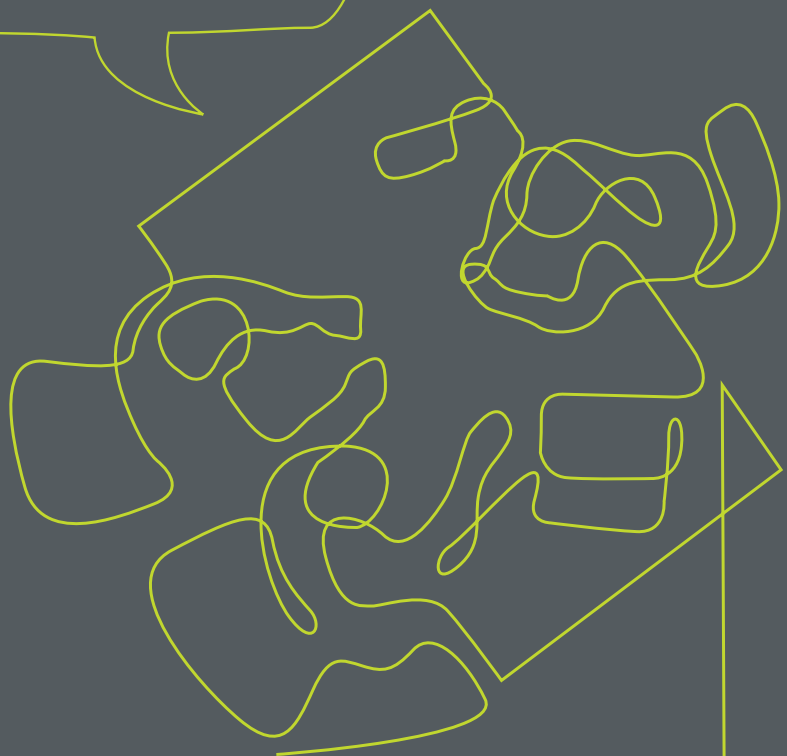


**Strong and
Adaptable -
a Community
Conversation
Guide for the
Murraylands,
Mallee and
Riverland**





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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Aboriginal First Nations people are the first people of the Murraylands, Mallee and Riverland. We recognise all Aboriginal people, Elders past, present and emerging, and respect their connection to country. We value First Nation knowledge, wisdom and leadership.

Our work towards Reconciliation continues.

Purpose of this Guide

Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland (RDAMR), the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board (MRLB) and the Murraylands and Riverland Local Government Association (MRLGA) require your input to help develop a plan for ensuring our community is as prepared as we can be for any challenges we might face into the future.

Whether it is pandemics, drought, bushfires, or changes to our workforce, we want to learn more from you about what needs to be done to be better prepared – socially, economically, environmentally and emotionally - to manage these events.

We want to be better prepared to ensure that as a community we are not just surviving but flourishing and that we continue to be strong and adaptable.

It is intended that this community driven activity will develop an enduring process, much more than yet another plan.

Our organisations exist to bring benefit to the broader community.

The plan and its enduring process will build on these existing networks and improve how we work together - across the entire region.

This will aid our ability to both plan for and respond to adversity, with strength and agility into the future.

It may improve the region's likelihood of being prioritised for federal drought funding (and other financial support through current and future federal and state funding initiatives).

Developing the Plan requires your help!

Developing the Plan requires that we understand the strengths of your community and what your community needs to ensure it is prepared for the challenges that will come.

In designing this Guide, we interviewed 28 residents of different ages, experiences, areas of work and locations.

We now need you to help us take the next step. We want you to be part of a network that works on this into the future.





Who can participate in this conversation?

Get together with your sporting club, your industry group, your church or your organising committee or even just a group of your friends or workmates ... and share your views about what your community needs to help it be as resilient as it can be.

If you are organising a conversation, use the “**Host Guide and Feedback Form**” to help you step through the questions and record your group’s thoughts. You can then return your Feedback Form via mail, drop it into a RDAMR office in Berri or Murray Bridge or record your group’s thoughts on the **ONLINEFEEDBACKFORM** as you go.

Participants in your group may find it useful to read this guide in advance of the conversation, to stimulate their own individual reflections. Alternatively, you might like to draw peoples’ attention to certain sections in the conversation.

We will collate the feedback from your group with others from around the region and use that information to help inform what the priorities are for the region.

Mail your hard copy
Feedback Forms to:
PO BOX 134
Murray Bridge
5253

OR

Deliver your hard copy
Feedback Forms to RDAMR:
6 Kay Ave, Berri
or
137 Adelaide Rd, Murray
Bridge

OR

Complete your
online Feedback
Form **HERE**



ABOUT RESILIENCE

Resilience is a critical part of communities being able to anticipate, respond and recover to changes in the world around it. The changes may be fast, such as a natural disaster in which the patterns of daily lives are destroyed or disrupted by changes in the availability of, or access to, infrastructure, livelihoods, and environments in which we live, work and recreate. This type of disruption is usually unexpected, with little notice given to prepare. In contrast, slow grinding trends, such as aging, loss of services, lack of employment and ill health, reduce capacity and options over time. In most cases it is the combination of fast disruptions and slower adversity that create the biggest challenges for communities in terms of their ability to prepare and recover. Disruptions usually accelerate the pre-existing slow trends, making it difficult for communities to recover and ‘bounce forward’. Resilience is more than just bouncing back. In many cases, we want to use disruption as a ‘window of opportunity’ to move in a new direction, not just recover back to exactly where we were.

Resilience science continues to evolve as our understanding of how people and communities cope with change evolves and as the nature of change itself changes. Large events like Hurricane Katrina in the US or 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires here in Australia while tragic, provide important opportunities to learn more about how we cope with such events. There is now huge effort being invested in understanding and building resilience around the globe to cope with a changing climate. As the world becomes increasingly turbulent, researchers are interested in what helps people and communities not just cope with change but to create positive opportunities. Some useful links for learning more about resilience are:

<https://www.resalliance.org> <https://www.resilience.org/fundamentals/>

Overview of Project and Process

This Guide has been developed by consultants democracyCo from 28 interviews of residents from across the region.

democracyCo talked to people – of different ages, experiences, areas of work and locations. Together these interviews gave democracyCo a picture of the challenges people of the region face, how they have faced similar challenges in the past and what they need to help them manage them into the future.

This Guide has been written in the voice of the interviewed people, the ‘interviewees’.

Wherever possible, the words of interviewees have been used.

Now it is your turn.

This Guide seeks to paint the picture of the region and to ask questions across a wide range of groups in the Murraylands, Mallee and Riverland, to explore vital questions that will assist communities and government’s alike to prepare for our future.

Tell us what your group thinks.

Download the “Host Guide and Feedback Form” to help you host a conversation and record your groups views.

You can then post or deliver your hard copy to RDAMR or complete the online Feedback Form as you go by clicking [HERE](#).

The outcomes and information we receive from you will be used at a summit of community members and regional stakeholders, where they will be shaped into key ideas and concepts for inclusion in the Plan.

Completed in
October 2021

Individual Interviews

Individual views about what is needed to be resilient



November 2021
- March 2022

Community (Conversation Guide)

*What can you do yourselves?
Where do you need help?*



Summit: February 2022
Interest Panels: March-May 2022

Regional Stakeholders (Summit / Interest Panels)

*From what communities need,
seek region-scale needs that
support resilience.*



Who are the people of the Murraylands, Mallee and Riverland region?

The description below comes from the voices of 28 interviewees. Have a read. Have a think. Do you think this is us? You'll get your chance to let us know in your conversation survey responses.

We are the many and diverse communities of the Murraylands, Mallee and Riverland region, from Jervois to Renmark, and Pinnaroo to Truro.

Our landscape is defined by the iconic Murray River and our vast open space, featuring undulating hills and expansive mallee. We love the openness, the freedom, the fresh air. We love the way the sunset turns our pastures golden, the Mallee, the smell of the dirt during seeding and, most of all, our lifeblood - the Murray River - its beauty, its wetlands and cliffs and the vital water source it provides.

Our landscape is one which has existed for millennia.

We have a shared history together and a shared future. Our First Nations people who have lived here for thousands of years, particularly along the lifeblood of Moorundi (the Murray River), retain our connection and identity to this Country, the river flows deep in our veins.

We aren't one community - we are many communities, and we connect in similar ways. Our sporting clubs, service clubs, artistic groups, churches, industry groups, and the many committees we have established provide the backbone of our communities, giving us reasons to come together, creating gathering places. Our families and friendships sustain us in times of boom and bust.

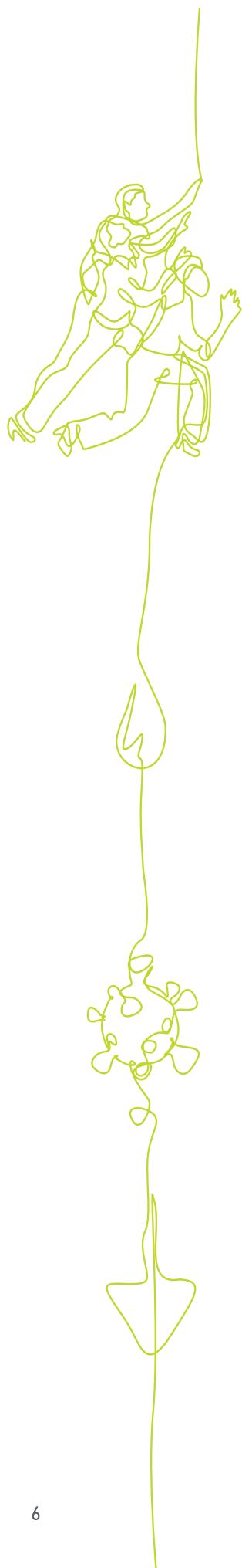
While largely agriculturally based, our economies are underpinned by many supporting businesses of all shapes and sizes, a renowned tourism industry, schools, healthcare, government, and non-government services.

We are already a resilient community ... we have always been so. Remaining strong and adaptable is something we will always do, but we can't do it alone.

We know there are challenges coming, and every day we navigate change.

Like all communities - we need some support. We don't expect or want governments to do 'it all' for us, as this doesn't help us to be resilient. But we need governments to 'back us'. We need our leaders and governments to collaborate with us, to develop a vision for our future with us and work with us, in our way, to achieve it.





What challenges do we face?

We know that we won't be free from events and challenges that create adversity or disruption for our communities. We can foresee that the following events will create problems for us into the future.

- **Drought, climate change and associated natural disasters** - Changes to climate is the most significant threat we face. We have suffered from droughts, floods, and extreme weather events (like hail and storm cells). We know that we are going to experience more droughts, more often, and other harsh conditions or unexpected events associated with a changing climate. The CSIRO reports that the Murraylands, Mallee and Riverland region will experience¹:
 - Increasing average temperatures in all seasons - there will be more hot days and fewer frosts.
 - Less and more variable rainfall - when it comes, it is likely to be heavy and intense.
 - Less rainfall in the Murray Darling Basin will reduce water flow in the river, change the river ecology and impact on water prices. ABARES analysis suggests a 3% change in average rainfall results in a 17% increase in temporary water market prices in the southern Basin.² This will also bring about ecological changes & challenges.
 - Harsher conditions for fire - longer and more intense fire seasons.

We know that the challenges and the opportunities presented by climate change require planning and adaptation efforts to maximise the potential advantages and minimise the disadvantages.³

- **COVID19 and other pandemics** - COVID unexpectedly hit our communities hard; affecting our ability to connect. We know that the effects of COVID are not over, and we expect that COVID won't be the last pandemic we experience.
- **Sudden loss of export opportunities** - in the last 1-2 years we have borne the impact of sudden loss of many of our export markets in China. This has created uncertainty for our wine industries and our citrus industries (amongst others), developing concern for our businesses and jobs in the region. We know that this could happen again, and across other sectors.

“Droughts - not getting enough rain - this will have a huge impact on the farmers and the town. This will be the biggest issue they will face in the next 10-15 years.”

Interviewee, Karoonda

“We have one good year in ten. Farmers plan for the future - they plan financially for disaster. They don't expect good years.”

Interviewee, Loxton

- **Disease** - biosecurity threats to our agricultural and allied industries can isolate us from the world's markets and starve the region of income; our region has been strong in this area but the threats are closing in.
- **Technology and innovation** - technology has, and will continue to change our lives, in both positive and negative ways. Technologies that enhance agricultural productivity are transforming our potential, helping our community to continue production during times of drought. Technology is helping us to communicate better and stay connected to our families, friends, and work colleagues all over the world. Likewise, technology helps us create and explore business opportunities we might never have been able to access. On the flip side, mechanisation presents a significant dilemma - simultaneously making us more competitive whilst impacting on the size and strength of our communities.
- **Population** - population changes are affecting the region in different ways. Changes that are being driven in significant part by other disruptions listed here. In some places, population decline (in significant part due to the decline of small farms), is affecting the ability of the community to operate - making sporting teams inoperable and fuelling further decline as services are removed. This can create challenges for industries that are expanding and wanting workers. How do you attract people to a place with diminishing services?
In other areas, communities are experiencing an influx of new community members - who are not connected to the area. This influx is creating challenges for local communities - changing social cohesion. However, these new community members also create an opportunity to improve the strength and resilience of the community.
- **Workforce constraints** - exacerbated by COVID (but an issue for some time), employers struggle to find a trained workforce or to attract workers to the region, creating challenges for production and industry expansion.
- **Unexpected deaths of people from the region** - can hit us hard, creating significant sadness for the family, and grieving in the broader community.

“ Covid has impacted our culture, we can't touch each other. It is human, we need to hug each other. We need to touch and connect with each other - we need human touch.”

Interviewee, Loxton

¹ CSIRO, "Climate Change in Australia" - <https://climatechangeinaustralia.gov.au/en/projections-tools/regional-climate-change-explorer/clusters/?current=MBC&tooltip=true&popup=true>

² Independent Assessment of Social and Economic Conditions in the Murray Darling Basin, "Final Report: Independent assessment of social and economic conditions in the Murray-Darling Basin", pg 79, https://www.mdba.gov.au/sites/default/files/pubs/seftons-report-september-2020_0.pdf

³ 2013 NCCARF, Australia's Country Towns 2050: What Will A Climate Adapted Settlement Pattern Look Like? FINAL REPORT pg 25



What makes us strong and adaptable?

Strong and adaptable communities are made up of strong and adaptable individuals, economies, and environment that are working together effectively.

We believe that a strong and adaptable region is made up of:

Strong and adaptable individuals

*Fulfilment / Meaning
Hope / Faith
Confidence / Self-belief
Positive relationships
Connection to nature*

Flourishing local communities

*Connection to place
Connection to others
and places to connect
Physiological needs
- housing - food
- water - safety
Strong, trusted governance*

Productive industry and landscapes

*A resilient Ag Sector
Investment
A vision / Plan
Diversified economy
Healthy landscape
Accessible information*



Discussion Point 1

Does the previous diagram capture the key elements that regions need to be strong and adaptable? Is something missing?

Note: At the end of the guide, we will ask you to talk about what needs to be done to support individual resilience.

During the interviews, participants talked about all the components that help to make both themselves and their communities resilient - strong and adaptable.

This section explores the components identified during the interviews and poses questions which seek your community's feedback on:

- the components of resilience
- the strengths of your community
- the areas of focus - where work is needed

Read this section closely and use it to inform your discussions.

Strong and adaptable individuals

A lot of things are needed to make us resilient as individuals. Many of those needs are basic while others are described as psychological and self fulfilment needs.

In this Conversation Guide, we recognise these basic human needs of food, water, safety, accommodation, and sleep. Most of us have these basic human needs met - but not all of us. Some of us don't have accommodation and some of us aren't as safe as we should be. Sometimes some of us also have trouble affording food.

This is creating significant issues for some of our community members. In some areas we have government services, and, in some areas, we have non-government organisations or voluntary organisations to support us in meeting these basic human needs.

Over and above these basic physiological needs, we know we have a range of psychological needs - that help make us as individuals strong and adaptable.



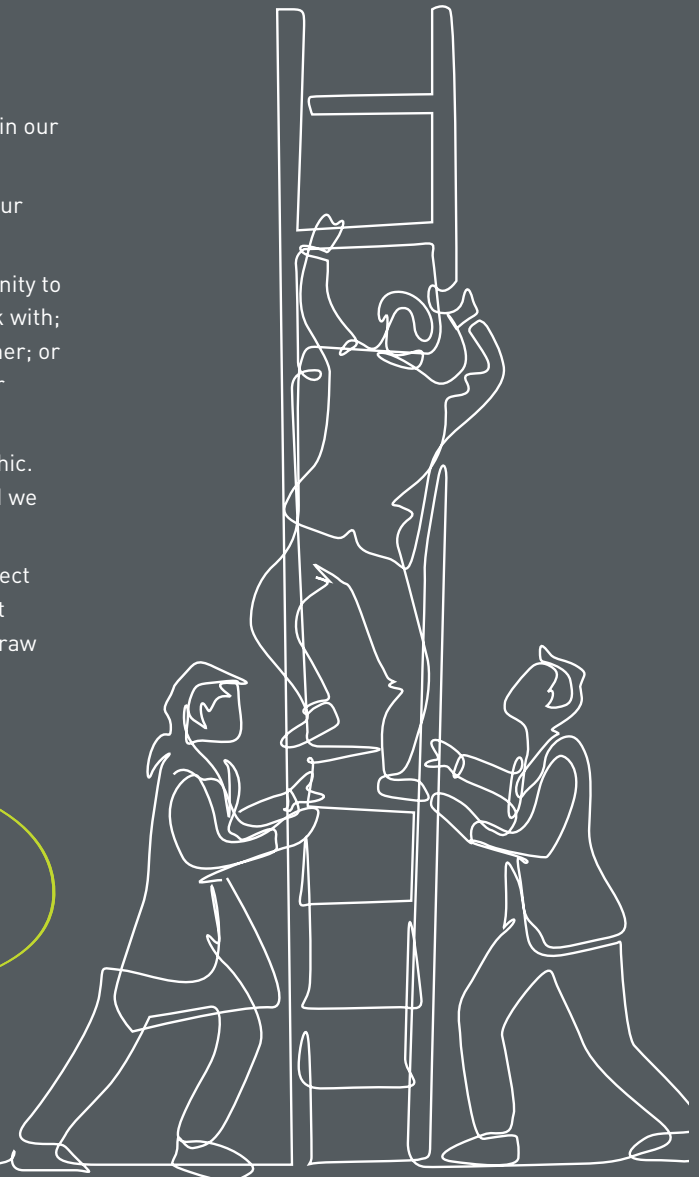


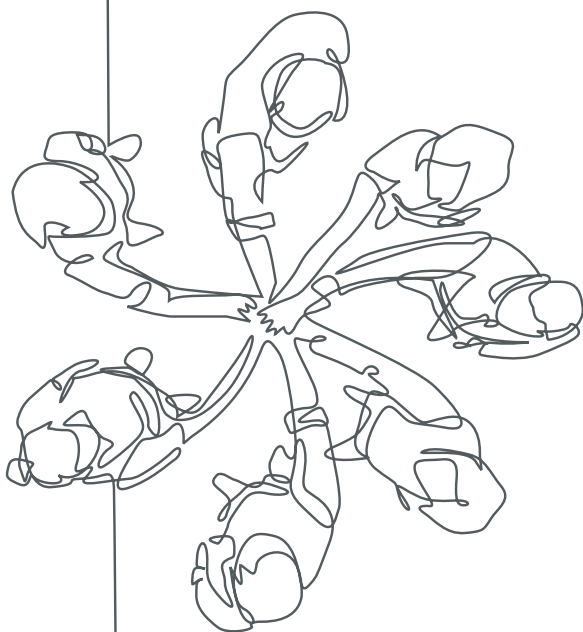
Strong and adaptable individuals have:

- **Hope, faith, and optimism** - a positivity, a glass half full philosophy that helps people to ride out the hard times and look forward to the future. Part of this is also gratefulness - being thankful for what we have.
- **Fulfilment and meaning** - we are active doing things that give us a sense of achievement. We can see we are making a difference. That we are helping others or helping our environment.
- **Confidence and self-belief** - we believe in ourselves and in our own capacity.
- **Positive relationships** - our families provide the core of our support structures.
- **Connections with others / support** - we have our community to support us. We have people to lean on; people we can talk with; people who are in the same boat as us. We are in it together; or we are supported by people who have experienced similar things in the past.
- **Self-drive and determination** - we have a strong work ethic. We don't shy away from hard work. We are persistent and we don't give up.
- **Connection to nature** - we take our opportunities to connect with nature. Whether it is the river, the mallee, or the vast pastures ... we are connected to the land around us and draw strength from it.

"Talking - people underestimate the power of talking... you know you're not alone when you talk / share with someone. And this happens casually in sporting clubs / church. You can get stuff off your chest."

Interviewee, Mannum





Flourishing local communities

We need to create the conditions in which individual resilience can be strengthened. We know that there are a range of 'conditions or components' that must be in place for our community to be resilient and flourish.

Flourishing local communities need:

- Places and opportunities for community connection
- Connection to place
- A shared vision / plan
- Investment in infrastructure and services that build communities
- Strong trusted leadership and governance

Places and opportunities for community connection

We need to have places and opportunities to connect with each other.

Whether it is at the weekly footy match, in the local hairdresser, at the local café, through our local school, at work or at a community event or social function - we need to see each other regularly.

We gain strength by talking to each other.

It is through having the opportunity to share our journeys and experiences that we can learn from each other and enable others in our community to realise where we might need more support. This is what creates a 'community'.

As they say "a problem shared is a problem halved" - and it is more than just a saying - it's true! More than anything else, it is community connections that make our communities resilient.

Connection to place

Our connections to 'our place' help us to ride out the hard times.

We belong to this place. We have pride in it. We have a passion for it. We live its history.

This is so much more than just living here.

This place means something to us. For some of us this is because our mob have called this place home for thousands of years, for some of us it is because our families have managed the land for generations and for some of us, we just love this place - the landscape connects with us, and its existing communities have welcomed us.

This makes a big difference to our resilience. When others, with less of a commitment might just 'pack it in', we stand strong and we work at rebuilding.

A vision / plan

Planning helps communities in transitioning to new futures. We need to have a plan that is realistic and based on the best possible information. A plan that has a shared vision for where we are going.

Clear plans help to attract business, providing certainty and clarity about the future.

Having a clear vision and plan can also help our region tackle some of the complex social challenges we face – unemployment, lack of housing, lack of education options, poverty, and polarisation.

Investment in infrastructure and services that build communities

A school, a doctor, grocery stores and post office make our towns and communities viable.

We want our children to attend school locally, we want to play sport for our local team, and we want to be able to buy our bread and milk close by. We also need these services to support our basic human needs.

When these basic services are in place our towns thrive; providing job opportunities, supporting other businesses to thrive (providing services their workforce needs) and providing us with places for our communities to come together to connect and mobilise.

“ We are in good hands - the leaders are doers - they are positive. ... they have a long-term vision. The conversations are about the next 10-30 years ... ”

Interviewee, Tintinara

Strong trusted leadership and governance

We need strong and trusted leadership - we need to feel confident that our leaders have our region's best interest at heart, and act to serve us all. Most importantly we need our leaders to be working together collaboratively and working with us.

There is a place for both informal and formal leadership in our communities.

We are not afraid to put our hands up to help our community, whether it's to volunteer at the school, coach the netball team, support the local service club, or run one of the many community committees. Our most successful communities have strong and collaborative groups of informal leaders who are focused on making our 'communities work.' Succession is vital. We need the next generation to be learning how to lead.

When it comes to formal leadership, we need stability and confidence. We need long term strategic decision making, focused on making sure we are well placed to deal with the challenges we face. The complexity of the future we face requires thoughtful, strategic, long term, collaborative, and consultative leadership.

“ We need strong leadership. People with knowledge and expertise. We need to trust in our leaders. ”
Interviewee, Murray Bridge



Where they meet - the heart of the issue

Our communities are made up of a collection of individuals.

A big part of being a resilient individual is connection to community. Equally, communities will not be resilient if the individuals within are not resilient.

We know that there are people in our community that aren't connected socially, emotionally, or physically to our community. We know this isn't good for them ... and it isn't good for our communities either. We often do not have enough people in our communities, so we need everyone to participate and contribute. We wonder if there is more that we can do to help build those bridges and bring all the residents of our area into our community?

Strong and adaptable individuals

*Fulfilment / Meaning
Hope / Faith
Confidence / Self-belief
Positive relationships
Connection to nature*

Flourishing local communities

*Connection to place
Connection to others and
places to connect
Physiological needs
- housing - food
- water - safety
Strong, trusted governance*

Productive industries

Industry, particularly primary industry and tourism, rely on healthy and sustainable landscapes. They go hand in hand.

Productive industries need:

- A resilient agricultural sector
- Healthy landscapes
- Diversified economies
- Accessible information

Resilient agricultural sector

As agriculture provides the foundation for our local economy, it is vital that this sector is as strong as it can be.

In the face of a changing climate, we know that having an agricultural sector which is strong and resilient will equip us well to face the challenges ahead.

Primary industry underpins our region, and in the last few decades, efforts to improve and enhance productivity in agriculture have undoubtedly assisted us to become more resilient. Helping farmers and land managers to adopt new and emerging productivity approaches, embrace change, plan and sensitively manage their properties, are ways in which we can secure the future of our communities.

Healthy landscapes

Healthy landscapes are central to a thriving ecology and productivity, enabling strong and resilient agricultural and tourism sectors.

We need to have healthy soils and waterways and minimise the impacts of pest plants and animals on our landscapes to ensure long term benefits to farmers, primary producers and the region as a whole.

Diversified economies

We know that regions with diversified economies are stronger and more adaptable than regions with simple economies.

When we rely on one main economic source and a catastrophic collapse occurs to that source we are vulnerable and can be severely impacted.

Having a diversity of industries and market sectors allows our community to spread the risk. We are more likely to bounce back from a disruption or shock to one sector if we have people and services in different sectors who are not impacted.

Diversity in industries also provides opportunities for attracting people to the area, ensuring that there are a range of job opportunities.

Accessible information

We can't plan for future disruptions if we don't have information about them. We already know the power of being able to access information around bushfires and how fundamental that is to supporting people during an emergency.

Having equitable access to detailed and relevant information helps us to plan for ourselves and for our businesses, improving our ability to adapt and evolve and keeping our industries and landscapes productive and viable. Having the support to make sense of that information is also vital.

It helps us to ensure that our community can continue to adapt and be resilient to the challenges that are going to hit us - particularly to climate change - and the associated impacts of increased droughts, flooding and other natural disasters.



What isn't helping our resilience

We are finding that some things are also working to undermine our strength and resilience. We believe the following are creating problems for our community.

- o **Polarisation and division** - sometimes driven by social media, sometimes by media, and sometimes just due to communities feeling pressure - ultimately it is destabilising and can be devastating for 'getting stuff 'done. "'Labels' that pigeon-hole" our community. Racism and prejudices that stop us seeing each other as 'assets' to the community - as people - who all need the same things
- o **Cutting of services (education / public transport / health services)** and infrastructure that isn't responsive to need (housing supply)
- o **Communications infrastructure** - insufficient connectivity (including digital) to run our businesses or respond where members of our community are in imminent threat
- o **Programs that sap our sense of agency**, our strength, and encourage us to rely on external support when we need to adapt / change to the conditions we are facing
- o **Red tape** - that makes getting stuff done hard ... particularly unnecessary red tape that stops our community from being able to work together
- o **Lack of responsiveness** - when disaster strikes we need to be nimble. We need resources to follow what we need, when we need it
- o **Lack of information** - in emergencies, a lack of information limits our ability to prepare
- o **Negativity** ... media / social media /community members ... gossiping



"Government is constantly taking services away. This has bad impacts on the community. It makes you feel unimportant and it makes it harder to get families into the district because they will go elsewhere... we are in a weird negative cycle. They rip services out and then give different services because we are depressed..."

Interviewee, Geranium

"Social media has fueled a lot of the hate and resentment"

Interviewee, Taillem Bend

Discussion Point 2

What are the most important things we need to put in place to ensure that our industries and landscapes are as resilient as they can be to manage disruptions and challenges (such as drought)?

(5 ideas only)

Discussion Point 3 – the main discussion!

What does your community have as a strength or asset that helps you to be strong and adaptable?

What programs / initiatives, if any, have helped your community to become strong and adaptable?

Which of these components of resilience, as described in the previous section, are gaps in your community?

What is the root cause of the gap(s)?

What can your community do (yourselves) to address the gap(s)?

What can governments (local, state or federal) do to support your community to address the gap(s)?

What don't you want governments to do to address the gap(s)?

What is the most important thing that our community needs to better support it to be resilient?

Community Approaches to Resilience

MARDI'S STORY

Mardi and her family are deeply connected to the Murray River. For her family it is home – a place of peace, to relax and unwind. This is also true for the many tourists who visit their property – it's a magnet for people who want to experience the sunsets on the cliffs and the many things the river has to offer.

Mardi and her family have generational connections to the community. Mardi speaks of how her parents' active participation in the community provided a strong foundation for her, and she now follows in their footsteps as a committed and active community leader.

Drought and COVID have changed everything for Mardi and her family. It presented them with many challenges. Her community has changed, with people leaving, and new people moving in. She speaks of isolation being the greatest challenge – more people in the community are isolating in their homes, disengaging from what it means to be community.

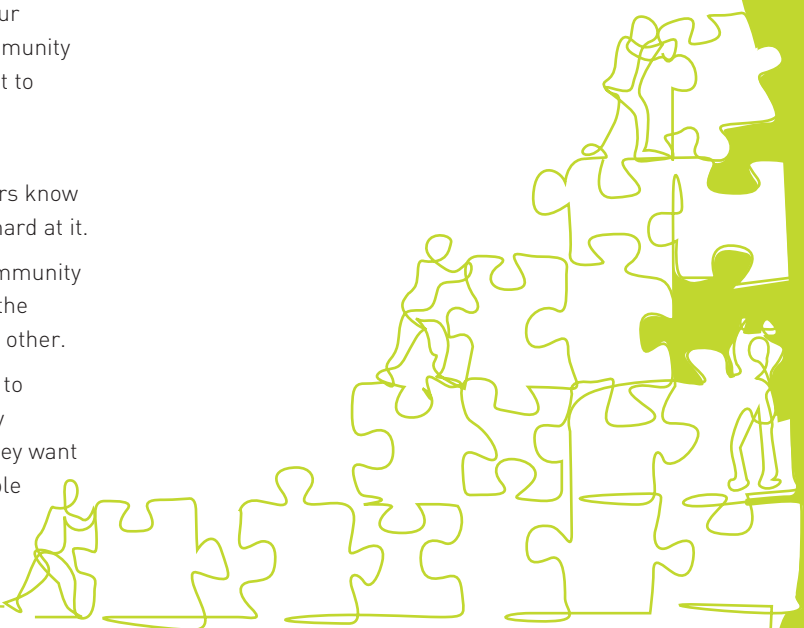
"Most new people who are coming into our community don't understand what a community is or have never been a part of one. I want to know, how do we bring this new type of community together?"

Mardi and her fellow community members know that a community is created by working hard at it.

Recognising the changing face of her community she is on a quest with others to build up the sense of community and connect to each other.

Together they are establishing new ways to connect and reach out to new community members, helping to understand what they want and need to settle in, and creating multiple pathways that encourage diversity of participation.

"Not everyone loves netball and footy. If we had to move somewhere new, we would want to be sure we could settle in, get involved in the community - want to know how to become part of the community. I want to know what it takes to bring people who are different to me into the community, so we are trying new things!"



GOULBURN REGION

I can still remember the excitement of the start of the irrigation season. In Spring the big irrigation supply channels would refill after sitting empty.

My father would pull up the door on the outlet, sending the water wheel spinning, and then he would walk along the outlet channel opening 'cuts' to flood irrigate pasture.

There were hundreds of thousands of hectares being irrigated across thousands of small properties like this that produced the fruit, vegetables, milk, meat and crops that fed the processing factories in towns and created employment.

The fortunes of the region and thousands of households flowed with that water. Water was cheap, plentiful and reliable. The region boomed for generations.

The millennium drought was a jolt to a reality the region had taken for granted for a century. The period since has been one of challenging adjustment as the water has sometimes flowed and sometimes not. Of course, as water has gotten scarcer it has become more political and more expensive, indeed it has become more valuable than the land it flows over.

Farmers sold water to pay down debt, that makes the irrigation system more expensive to maintain for the remaining farmers, a self-reinforcing cycle that will be hard to break. The thousands of small farms that once fed an extended family are not economically viable, they need to be aggregated together to make a living.

With less farms there are less farming families, less schools, churches and sporting clubs.

A region that had been relatively stable was suddenly in transition. Many of the region's ways of thinking and doing during the boom years were out of kilter with the rapid changes happening in every part of the system.

Riding out this transition to a new future required a different way of thinking.

In 2018 community leaders came together to chart a way forward. They agreed that northern Victoria has a bright future, but the community needed to be deliberate about the future it wanted and to speak with one voice about that future. And the community were clear, they didn't want to wait to see how things played out or worse, to be dictated by others about what future it should have.

The community in partnership with government developed the Goulburn Murray Resilience Strategy to guide their efforts.

A Resilience Taskforce, made up of community members and agencies was established to coordinate efforts and provide one 'regional voice' to government about what the region needs to transition. They are being deliberate about building the future they want. Using resilience principles to guide their thinking and decision making, the Taskforce are working to ensure government agencies coordinate how they develop and implement policies and programs in the region. The Taskforce is working on developing a circular economy that maximises every opportunity from the resources they have and building opportunities for young people to stay in the region.

They want to improve prospects for empowerment and employment for Indigenous communities. They want to bring together the best thinking and research they can to help shape its future.

The Resilience Strategy and the work of the Taskforce are in the early stages, but the process of facing the realities of a changing climate have already created new conversations, partnerships and projects that are creating positive change in the region.

GOOBANG COMMUNITY RESILIENCE NETWORK

When Christian Munge, a farm manager from Toongi in Central West NSW first put the melted jar on the table, there were curious expressions around the room. The group of people gathered - what would later become the Goobang Community Resilience Network - had come together in response to rolling natural disasters and a rising tide of mental health and other problems in their communities.

The day had started with people sharing stories of resilience. The story Christian told about the jar was a very personal one and it contained a powerful expression of community resilience in practice.

Christian had recovered the jar from the ashes of his parents' home after it was destroyed by the Warrumbungle bushfire in 2013. The fire destroyed 56 homes and everything else in its path. Thankfully, given the speed and ferociousness of the fire no lives were lost, but Christian's parent's property was totally destroyed.

Soon after the fires, boxes of preserving jars were left at the farm, as was a boiler for preserving fruit, and other household goods started arriving too. Soon, they were overloaded with donated goods. Christian's parent's were overwhelmed by the generosity they received, but the seeds for a lot of the generosity they received had been sown previously.

Christian's mother had a passion for preserving fruit, and for years prior, no visitor to the farm ever left empty handed, everyone got a jar of fruit to take with them. And so, over the years she had built up a both network and a reputation for her generosity.

The fire and their losses were a chance for people to repay that small, act of generosity.

The jar, melted and deformed, spoke to the heat generated in the fire, but it also spoke to much more, how small acts of generosity and giving can connect and bind communities together, setting up a culture of reciprocal connection and care.

The Goobang Community Resilience Network drew inspiration and guidance from this story and the others.

They used their intimate knowledge of the landscape and the communities to map their place and their people. They mapped their networks, they mapped their vulnerabilities, they connected to some of the disconnected, they gave small gifts, they organised, they gathered and they shared.

They were all small acts, small connections, small gifts, but they are building towards a stronger more connected community that can take care of itself when needed.

Their next project is buying shipping containers that they will stock with the goods and supplies a community needs in the first days after a major disruption; when the wheels of government and agencies feel slow to turn.

The Goobang community will be ready to act and help where and how they can.



TIM'S STORY

Tim is a prominent member of the Jabuk Community Hall Group - playing a pivotal role in coordinating the voluntary efforts that keep the community's projects ticking. Tim supports the Community Hall in seeking out grant opportunities and providing upkeep for local facilities. He organises events with the help of group members, to make sure they go off without a hitch and keeps on top of the progress of community projects. Generally, Tim plays a less obvious role in supporting the morale of his community.

It hasn't always been this way.

Until recently, Tim was a Chef and then a pig farmer. Tim also isn't 'born and bred' from Jabuk - he's a relative newcomer, moving there just 11 years ago.

Now Tim is housebound due to severe injuries - he cannot work, so he has found a renewed passion and purpose in life supporting his community.

The inability to work took a big toll on him - emotionally and psychologically.

His injuries took away Tim's sense of meaning and where he drew a sense of achievement in life.

It took him time and a lot of self-reflection, but eventually Tim found that he could replace what he had lost (and more!) by supporting his local community.

"I want to give thanks to my wonderful wife Trudie for all her support and to the community for their spirit and for working together to make our events and projects happen.

I am so proud that my community stands up and volunteers - providing a service to others shows this community's spirit and I hope it is here to stay.

These things have been a great Inspiration to me, they gave me a focus, something to look forward to, and hopefully to the community as well. May this spirit carry on to a bigger and brighter future."

There is no doubt that both he and his community are better off, as a direct result of his commitment to his community and its spirit.



Strong and Adaptable - a Community Conversation Guide for the Murraylands, Mallee and Riverland



*For more information
visit the website links
throughout this document.*



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