

Balingup Progress Association (BPA)
Strategic Plan May 2021

Background

The purpose of the Balingup Progress Association Strategic Plan is to identify community priorities for the next 5-10 years and to feed this information in to the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup’s (SDB) four-year review of its Strategic Community Plan (SCP) 2017-2027.

In achieving this, a series of Conversations, facilitated by the Shire Community Development Manager, were held over a three-day period from 27-29 April 21, then an Open Space workshop occurred on 4 May 21, as follows:

Topic	Key Question	Numbers
Environment	In 10 years’ time, what would Balingup look like to a visitor/new resident observing how the community worked with its natural, built, and heritage environment?	28
Economy & Tourism	In 10 years’ time, what is happening in Balingup that shows a vibrant, diverse and resilient economy using our existing advantages?	18
Lifespan & Living	Balingup is one of the oldest settlements in WA (average age 55 years), in 10 years’ time, what does living healthily look like?	16
Community & Governance	Over the next 10 years, how does Balingup further develop its sense of community and strong community leadership?	12
Open Space Workshop		19 (am) 15 (pm)

Making Our Move – The Big Picture

Responses to those questions (Annexes A and B) identified the strengths, opportunities and aspirations for the town and this information was refined into the following statements:

- Balingup is a centre of environmental sustainability (Environment)
- Balingup is a resilient, thriving community with a vibrant, village feel (Economy and Tourism)
- Balingup is a community that creates, learns and grows together (Lifespan and Living)
- Balingup Progress Association is an intergenerational, community-led, representative, change and innovation group. (Community and Governance).



Photo right – Open Space discussion held in car park.

A common theme, identified during both the Conversations and Open Space, was the need to have more intergenerational activities. There is a strong desire to bridge the gap between young and old.

All information from the conversations and workshop was captured by the facilitator for BPA, resulting in a 31 page “Book of Proceedings”. This document, which also includes details of the methodology used, is available on request. Information from the Book of Proceedings was then synthesised into this shorter document (Strategic Plan) for BPA to distribute to the community for feedback. Supporting documents for this Plan comprise:

Annex	Topic
A	Summary of strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results (SOAR)
B	Conversation Priorities
C	How does the BPA organize itself to support the aspirations of the community?'
D	Individual Action Plans – sample template

Making Our Move – Strategies & Measuring Results

Strategies	How success could be measured See Note*1
<p>Balingup is a centre of environmental sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town development and landscaping retains a ‘village’ feel. • Land is revegetated and well managed – the best quality land is reserved/reclaimed for agricultural use. • Waterways are clean – brook and tributaries are revegetated. • The Blackwood River offers educational and recreational activities for all abilities. • Use of natural pesticides is widespread. • The community is well educated in the principles of waste reduction. • The community showcases its respect for its environmental and cultural heritage. 	<p>Health and quality of soil Health and quality of water Reduction in waste No of rural properties retained. No of new educational/ recreational activities created.</p>
<p>Balingup is a resilient, thriving community with a vibrant, village feel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract and retain a diverse range of profitable businesses, providing local employment opportunities. • Collaborative and funded event management. • Increase in trails tourism (walk, bike, horse). • A new industry is built around education – providing education opportunities in sustainability, agriculture and artisan skills. • Town is self sufficient in utility infrastructure. • Golden Valley Tree Park is prized by the community as a world class Arboretum, centre of excellence in conservation and fire science. • New industries in arboriculture and silviculture. • 	<p>No of shops open in town. No of visitors to town No of children at Primary School No of events No of micro-grid power systems.</p>
<p>Balingup is a community that creates, learns and grows together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure and services support healthy independent living. • Regular community events and mentoring programs create a supportive, inter-generational community. • A wide range of volunteering opportunities are offered through membership of special interest community groups. 	<p>No of independent living services and facilities. No of metres of footpaths and bike tracks (new or repaired). No of mentoring programs and community events. No of community groups.</p>
<p>Balingup Progress Association (BPA) is an intergenerational, community-led, representative, change and innovation group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BPA meetings are informal, social and encourage an atmosphere of co-creation. • Mentoring programs are in place to support future leaders. • The community is resilient and able to respond to challenging situations. • There is strong focus on community building, family focused events and activities. 	<p>Average age of BPA member reduce. No of mentoring programs. No of community building activities held. No of Bushfire Brigade and other emergency resources available.</p>

*Note *1 A ‘snapshot’ of data will be collected in 2021 and every three years thereafter.*

Making our Move (Action Plan)

Infrastructure and Major Projects

In October 2020, BPA was asked to provide a list of infrastructure and major projects to the Shire and these were provided at the Open Spaces so that participants could add their own ideas.

A voting process was used to prioritise the list.

Possible Balingup Infrastructure Projects	Black Dot Votes
Walk and cycle trails – new and repair existing	12
Centre of Excellence in conservation, arboriculture, and silviculture (GVTP)	11
Permanent covered space in front of stage @ Carnivale grounds	5
Two tennis hard courts	4
Improve village green playground	4
Upgrade skatepark so surface is not so hot in summer	4
Develop new recreation precinct on Balingup-Nannup Road	4
Develop and implement Balingup-Nannup Road Improvement Proposal	3
Develop and Implement Blackwood Ride Park	3
Review land use/pine plantations and scale back to improve amenity and reduce fire risk.	3
Renovate showers and toilet block @ Balingup oval	1
Improve acoustics at Town Hall	1
Promote sustainable burning in the shire including State Forests	0

Making our Move Activities List

At each Conversation, priority areas were voted on to identify projects people would be happy to make a move on (be involved in). The Conversation Priorities (Annex B) were then provided to participants at the Open Space Workshop. A further round of conversation and voting resulted in the priority projects listed below. These will be followed up with individual team leaders.

Make Your Move – 12 Priority Action Items 2021/22	Votes
Self-sufficiency/Sustainable town	10
Footpaths and Trails	7
Arts and Creative learning Centre	6
Clean waterways	5
Intergenerational project	3
Creating jobs (cars to E. V's)	3
Kids and youth engagement	2
Cluster development	2
Waste management	1
Supporting Aboriginal awareness	1
Community Safety	1
Health and wellbeing centre	0

Expectations

The value of having community plans is clear – both the Small Farm Field Day and Community Centre/Workspace resulted from groups of residents who identified a need and then went out and made it happen. With a population of 544 (ABS 2016), Balingup has traditionally ‘punched above its weight’ in terms of events and activities in the town however there are limited funds, and most of the work is done by volunteers, so people need to keep their expectations realistic.

This Strategic Plan faces the eternal challenge of involving all stakeholders in decision making – with only around 10% of the population participating in the Conversations/Open Space, and local businesses and absentee landowners not able to be fully engaged. It would be true to say however, that this document is representative of the opinions of those who took part.

The Future

This Strategic Plan and Book of Proceedings will be made available on www.balingup.asn.au with hard copies at Balingup Library. A copy will also be distributed via the community email list. The Strategic Plan will be treated as a work in progress. Each year:

- The Making our Move Action Plan will be progressed and reported back to the community. Not all projects will be completed because we are totally reliant on volunteers and good will.
- People who did not participate in the Conversations/Open Space will be given the opportunity to put forward their ideas using the template at Annex D and request that new projects be included in the Plan.

Acknowledgements

Balingup Progress Association wishes to thank the community members who gave up their valuable time to participate. And a big thankyou to James Jarvis, the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup Community Development Manager, for facilitating the Conversations/Open Space and for faithfully recording the outcomes.

Addendum

At the Balingup Progress Association meeting held in May 2021, BPA readily agreed to organise a follow-up Community Conversation to ensure that the BPA is an ‘intergenerational, community-led, representative, change and innovation group’. This Conversation, held on 25th May 21 was attended by 26 people and the results are at Annex C. Key outcomes include:

- Structure of BPA & SFFD. BPA Executive should be retained for governance (incorporation, insurance etc).
- Need to create additional opportunities for interconnectivity between formal groups/individuals.
- Alternate formal BPA Executive meetings with social/community meetings held at Village Green, BADSA, GVTP, school etc (6 of each per year). Could also use Open Space format combined with meals night.
- Meetings need to be welcoming, fun and informative, include children.

As a result of this discussion, the BPA Executive agreed to trial a change of meeting date and to facilitate a series of follow up Open Spaces.