

Cunnamulla

Community Development Plan



December 2020

Foreword

Cunnamulla was built along the banks of the Warrego River, a place of diverse growth, people and opportunities. With a rich history of battling through adversity, be it drought or flooding rains, Cunnamulla is a place few who visit forget and few who live here want to leave. As a community, it is a place which embraces the new and celebrates the old, which is the cornerstone for the drive to keep our community involved and thriving.

Consisting of five not-for-profit clubs, the new Cunnamulla Recreational Precinct will aim to revive and maintain the Cunnamulla & District Show Society, Cunnamulla Diggers Race Club, Paroo Pony Club, Cunnamulla Gun Club and Cunnamulla Polocrosse Club. Relying on volunteers, memberships, donations and grants these clubs have struggled to remain viable and current in today's modern climate, however led by a motivated and enthusiastic team they are rallying to combine their collective expertise to inject new life and vitality into their future.

It is our great hope that this project is embraced by our community as an opportunity for change and growth, to help build places that are welcoming and make people feel like they belong. We are building strong community spaces for our children and future generations.

With the support of Rural Aid and these club leaders we can achieve these goals and we are excited to see them come to fruition.

Amy Palmer

PRESIDENT | CUNNAMULLA & DISTRICT SHOW SOCIETY INC



Acknowledgements



The formulation of this Community Development Action Plan was initiated and funded by Rural Aid as part of their 'Ten Towns' Makeover Initiative, of which the town of Cunnamulla was a winner. Facilitation of the community engagement process and preparation of the Plan was undertaken by Peter Kenyon from the Bank of I.D.E.A.S. and assisted by Jen Curnow-Trotter from Rural Aid and coordinated by Amy Palmer, President of the Cunnamulla & District Show Society Inc.

Special thanks to so many Cunnamulla community members and councillors and staff of the Paroo Shire Council, who gave so generously of their time, insights and experiences.

Cover Photo supplied by: Cunnamulla Fella Information Centre

Our Story



Cunnamulla is a thriving community of 1100 residents in Far South West Queensland. It is located on the Warrego River at the crossroads of the Mitchell Highway (Matilda Highway) and Balonne Highway (the Adventure Way). It is the administrative centre for the Paroo Shire which encompasses 47,688 Km².

The word 'Cunnamulla' means 'long stretch of water' or 'big waterhole' in the language of the Kunja people. Historical research indicates that the Kunja people originally occupied this region prior to first contact with Europeans. However, besides the Kunja people, there are four other traditional language groups, namely Kooma, Kullilli, Budjiti and Mardigan

William Landsborough travelled down the Warrego river past the site where Cunnamulla is now located in 1862. The purpose of his journey was to search for the ill-fated explorers Burke and Wills. Landsborough's favourable report of the district triggered an inflow of settlers and entrepreneurial graziers utilising lands for sheep and cattle. These industries have continued to play a pivotal role in our history and growth through time and have ensured Cunnamulla remained a vibrant rural centre.

Town settlement was due to a reliable waterhole where two major stock routes intersected. A town survey was conducted in 1868, and civic

improvements followed over the next two decades: businesses, a courthouse, post office, hospital, school and Paroo Shire offices were built. Recreational life has always been a strong feature in Cunnamulla with a host of sporting and cultural groups established. The first Warrego Pastoral Society Show occurred in 1882. The extension of the railway line from Charleville in 1898 cemented its role as a regional centre in south-west Queensland.

The current annual Show traces its origins to 1954, and operated for 65 continuous years till its forced cancellation due to COVID-19 in 2020.

Despite being impacted badly by drought since 2013, Cunnamulla residents continue to work together to make our town a place where we all want to be. We have many young families who have made Cunnamulla their home and who are passionate about making it a better place for their children to grow up. Thus, the focus on developing our recreational facilities and opportunities. We want to bring our Recreational Precinct, including the Showgrounds, to life to reflect the traditions and history that has made our town what it is today. We want it to be a place where we can gather as a community and create a sense of ownership and belonging; namely a 21st century meeting place of agriculture, entertainment, education and wellbeing.

Our Vision

Developing a community recreational hub and multiple purpose precinct that will contribute to ensuring Cunnamulla remains a vibrant, family friendly and progressive community for all generations to live, play, work and age well.

Our Goals

Goals are broad statements of intent that direct our efforts towards accomplishing our vision in line with our guiding principles.

- To maintain and grow our strong sporting traditions and clubs.
- To aesthetically enhance, preserve, modernise, and improve our existing Recreational Precinct facilities in order to promote public attendance appeal and reduce facility denigration and erosion.
- To strengthen collaboration, networking and collective action between Cunnamulla sporting and cultural organisations.
- To implement physical changes to improve the appeal of Cunnamulla's town entrance.
- To actively promote our community as a lifestyle, work, business, investment and tourist destination.
- To create the environment and opportunities where our young people feel involved, supported and empowered.
- To enhance our collective community capacity by continually building and diversifying its local leadership base and encouraging volunteerism.



Our Guiding Principles

The following seven guiding principles provide the context for our identified actions and initiatives below –

- **Community inclusiveness, connection and engagement** – valuing the involvement of all community residents, groups and ages; and appreciating and respecting the diversity of opinions and ideas.
- **Collaboration** – committing to a high level of community and stakeholder cooperation, partnership, and networking.
- **Positive mindset** - fostering community attitudes that embrace change, proactive ‘can-do’ behaviours, optimism, and hopefulness.
- **Respect for heritage and recreational traditions** – appreciating our unique rural heritage, stories, traditions and recreational pastimes and their importance in community and economic development.
- **Embracing new opportunities** – building upon local assets, capacities and creativity; and facilitating opportunities and experiences that enable all residents to see and experience their community as a place of opportunity and wonderful lifestyle options.
- **Celebration** – encouraging pride and times of celebration related to our heritage and culture.
- **Intergenerational solidarity** - creating opportunities for all ages to share, support and learn from each other.

Our Challenges

Like many inland small towns, Cunnamulla is experiencing population and service decline.

The community faces a set of challenges related to recreational facility and opportunities which this Community Action Development Plan and local resilience seek to reverse; namely –

- Impact of seven years of drought.
- Ageing and falling population – the District population has declined by 40% in the last 30 years.
- Volunteer burnout and declining numbers.
- Deteriorating and substandard recreational infrastructure. Most of the current facilities at the Showgrounds date to 1954.
- Loss of local services, tradespeople, and traditional industry jobs
- Seasonal tourism – tourism primarily operates in a 3-4 month period.
- Youth boredom – limited youth recreational options.
- Limited employment opportunities.
- High freight, transport, energy and communication costs.
- Poor town entrance statements.
- Lack of family and child facilities at main recreational sites.
- Limited cultural experiences.
- Insurance compliance and red tape for community groups.
- Poor signage.
- Unattractive town entrance.



Our Assets

People

Rural lifestyle

Many families with long connection to the District

Strong perception as a proud, friendly, welcoming, caring, and resilient community - strong 'giving' spirit

Strong community connectedness- most people are on multiple groups enabling great networking and collaboration

Commitment to place - 'people have chosen to be here'

Strong socialising behaviours - 'Everyone likes a party'

Low crime rate

Young people returning to District bring a variety of skills

Young and energetic volunteers

Many creative and actively involved 30 years olds

Social Networks

Cunnamulla & District Show Society

Strong sporting life - Cunnamulla Pony Club, Cunnamulla Diggers Race Club, Cunnamulla Gun Club, Rugby Club, Softball Club, Cunnamulla Polocrosse Club, Bowling Club, Golf Club, Tennis Club, Clay Target Club, Diggers Race Club, Motorbike Club

Paroo Progress Association

Cunnamulla Youth Club

Strong sense of collaboration and sharing between groups

Physical

Substantial Recreational Precinct - Showgrounds, Racecourse, Gun Club, Pony Club

Proposed Multi-Purpose Building

Location on Matilda Highway

Warrego River with its tourism, water supply and fishing opportunities

Stunning environment- sense of space, beautiful sunsets and stars

Conservation Bushlands

Western River Walk

Other key town infrastructure- swimming pool, halls, airport, skate park, sporting club facilities, Western River Walk, proposed Cunnamulla Hot Springs and River Walk Project

Our Assets

Institutions

Headquarters of Paroo Shire Council – staffing, facilities

State School through to Year 12

Catholic Primary School

Hospital

RESQ job provider

PCYC services

Economic

Strong pastoral industry – 29.7% of employment is in agriculture

Economic Development Officer

Economic Development Advisory Committee

Strong town commercial centre – most businesses are owner/family operated

Extensive range of local based services

Significant number of town businesses upgrading facilities

4G mobile coverage

Culture, Stories & Sources of Pride

Agricultural Show – showcasing of the community and its industries

History of the District's organisations

Strong horse community – Four 'Race Meetings' a year

Cunnamulla Fella Festival

Cunnamulla Heritage Trail

'Cunnamulla Fella' statue

28.2% of the population identify as Indigenous

Indigenous heritage – five traditional language groups – Kooma, Kunja, Kullilli, Budjiti and Mardigan

Significant town heritage buildings

Annual Bike Ride

Motorbike Gymkhana

Polocrosse Carnival

Dog trials

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme One

Immediate Recreational Precinct Upgrade

ACTIONS

1

1. With support of Rural Aid volunteers and funding, undertake immediate range of improvements to aesthetically enhance, preserve, modernise, and improve existing Recreational Precinct facilities, including -

- Showgrounds – painting of Showring boundary barrier
 - repair and repaint vehicular gates
 - install new animal proof picket and wire fence
 - repair irrigation
 - plant 30+ trees
- Racecourse – Repairing and repaint female ablution block
 - Repairing and securing gate ticket bo.
- Pony Club- repainting timber horse jumping rails

Timeframe: 2020

2. Undertake further improvements to aesthetically enhance, preserve, modernise, and improve existing Recreational Precinct facilities, including-

- Constructing front fencing along the Mitchell Highway including-
 - Completion of the arena fence for the Pony Club
 - New entry gates for the Pony Club/Race Club, dog trial arena (Showgrounds), back entry gate for the Showgrounds
 - New fence along the length of the Pony Club, Gun Club and showgrounds on the eastern side of Mitchell Highway
 - New fence along the Northern and eastern side of the Caltex block
- Upgrading of Recreational Precinct Signage including –
 - Erection of a “Cunnamulla Recreational Precinct” sign, including the names of each club involved
 - Installation of new signs for all clubs on their new entry ways
 - Pony Club, Race Club, Gun Club, Showground’s back gate, Showground’s main entrance and Showground’s dog trial arena
- Designing and implementing tree and watering systems for both Recreational Precinct and Mitchell Highway

Timeframe: 2021

LEAD GROUP

Cunnamulla & District Show Society Inc

OTHER PARTNERS

**Paroo Shire Council
Rural Aid
Paroo Pony Club
Cunnamulla Diggers Race Club
Cunnamulla Gun Club
Cunnamulla Polocrosse Club**

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Two

Recreational Precinct Sign & Fence Upgrade

ACTIONS



1. Undertake further improvements to aesthetically enhance, preserve, modernise, and improve existing Recreational Precinct facilities, including-

- Constructing front fencing along the Mitchell Highway including -
 - Completion of the arena fence for the Pony Club
 - New entry gates for the Pony Club/Race Club, dog trial arena (Showgrounds), back entry gate for the Showgrounds
 - New fence along the length of the Pony Club, Gun Club and showgrounds on the eastern side of Mitchell Highway
 - New fence along the Northern and eastern side of the Caltex block.
- Upgrading of Recreational Precinct Signage including-
 - Erection of a "Cunnamulla Recreational Precinct" sign, including the names of each club involve.
 - Installation of new signs for all clubs on their new entry ways
 - Pony Club, Race Club, Gun Club, Showground's back gate, Showground's main entrance and Showground's dog trial arena
- Designing and implementing tree and watering systems for both Recreational Precinct and Mitchell Highway

Timeframe: 2021

LEAD GROUP

Cunnamulla & District Show Society Inc

OTHER PARTNERS

**Paroo Shire Council
Rural Aid
Paroo Pony Club**

**Cunnamulla Race Club
Cunnamulla Gun Club
Cunnamulla Polocrosse Club**

Theme Three

Town Entrance & Signage Strategy

ACTIONS



1. Design and implement a signage/town entrance strategy on the Highway at the Recreational Precinct including -

- Undertake an audit of existing signage
- Develop and implement a road design and signage plan to attract visitors into the main street
- Enhance area with gardens, trees and shrubs
- Remove or update old-outdated signs on highway

Timeframe: 2022-2023

LEAD GROUP

**Paroo Shire Council
Cunnamulla & District Show Society Inc**

OTHER PARTNERS

**Paroo Pony Club
Cunnamulla Race Club
Cunnamulla Gun Club**

**Cunnamulla Polocrosse Club
Paroo Progress Association**

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Four

Development of Community Garden

ACTIONS

1. Review other successive community gardens in terms of construction, suitable plantings, watering, management
2. Recruit volunteer Task Team to oversee project
3. Develop appropriate garden at Showgrounds
4. Implement Project

Timeframe: 2022-2023

LEAD GROUP

Cunnamulla & District Show Society Inc

OTHER PARTNERS

Rural Aid
Paroo Shire Council
Paroo Progress Association

Theme Five

Develop a Caretaker's Space

ACTIONS

1. Develop a Caretaker's space for someone to live and care for the new developments and grounds of the Recreational Precinct

Timeframe: 2022-2023

2. Provide weekly tasks to complete to maintain the grounds of the Recreational Precinct

Timeframe: 2022-2023

LEAD GROUP

Cunnamulla & District Show Society Inc

OTHER PARTNERS

Cunnamulla Sporting & Cultural Groups

Cunnamulla

QUEENSLAND

