Growing Long Gully

A plan for our community

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1. INTRODUCTION

A COMMUNITY PLAN FOR LONG GULLY

On 4th March 2021, an informal meeting was held at Long Gully Neighbourhood Centre to form a working group to develop a Long Gully Community Plan. The working group was open to anyone who expressed interest. Whilst navigating the Covid pandemic, the group continued to meet from time-to-time, including holding a number of community focus groups in April 2022, a community survey in mid-2023, and a process of feedback on the first draft of this plan, culminating in a community meeting at the Long Gully Neighbourhood Centre in August 2024. The working group has brought together all of this input and feedback to produce this document.

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You can contact any of the working group members if you have any questions about this plan.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY PLAN?

A community plan is a document drawn up by the local community that tries to capture some of our hopes and aspirations for the future, and to identify concerns and challenges that need to be addressed. First and foremost, it is a plan for the people who have a stake in Long Gully – a vision statement to spur community action, initiative and collaboration. It is also a tool for the community to use in lobbying Council or government departments around specific issues. We also hope that the City of Greater Bendigo will consult our community plan in their own planning processes and when they undertake projects affecting Long Gully.

It is our hope that the Long Gully Community Plan will be a living document, changing to meet the needs of the local community as they occur.

WHO IS A STAKEHOLDER IN LONG GULLY?

This plan concerns anyone who feels they have a stake in what happens in Long Gully, especially:

- Residents
- Business owners and operators
- Workers
- Students and their families
- community groups, such as sporting clubs, churches, and other organisations
- Service users (shops, doctors, chemist etc)

We do not restrict the definition of “Long Gully” to its strict suburb boundaries, but rather see Long Gully as a watershed that catches people from around its edges, but who naturally flow into it for school, work, shops, community activities etc.

WHO IS MISSING HERE?

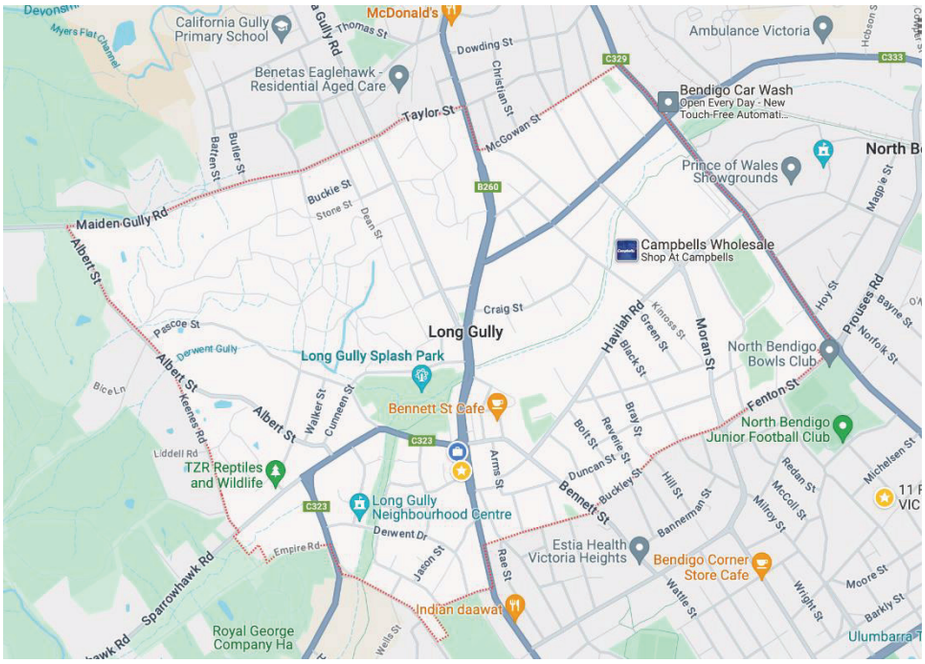
There are a few groups who were under-represented during the community planning process:

1. Business owners
2. First Nations peoples
3. Multicultural community members
4. Vulnerable and isolated people
5. Children and young people

As this vision for the Long Gully community is taken forward, think about how to reach out to, and involve these groups.

PROFILE OF LONG GULLY

Long Gully is a suburb in the City of Greater Bendigo, 3 kms north west of the Bendigo CBD.



SOCIAL PROFILE

The 2021 census showed 3,420 residents living in 1,632 private dwellings. The median age was 38.

Data from the census indicated 4.2% (144) were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (with a median age of 25). 80.6% (2,755) were born in Australia with the other top responses being Thailand, England, Myanmar, India and Philippines. 3.3% (112) people indicated language used at home as Karen.

Long Gully is well known as a suburb with significant socio-economic disadvantage. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (Socio-Economic Indexes for Australia), it ranks amongst the bottom 1% of most disadvantaged suburbs in Victoria. The average household income in Long Gully was just over half the Victorian average, and almost a third of households had no member in paid employment. Educational attainment is much lower in Long Gully: the number of people who have not advanced beyond Year 9 is double the Victorian average. Long Gully has the highest density of social housing in Bendigo (17%). Disadvantage in Long Gully is evident in high rates of mental ill-health, substance abuse, family violence, welfare dependence and housing instability.

HISTORY

City of Greater Bendigo undertook the Ironbark Heritage Study 2010 which confirms that Long Gully was an internationally renowned gold mining site in the 19th century:

> *The area is distinguished from other gullies by its particular micro environment. The particular flora and fauna, physical geography and geology led to a different type of mining development, settlement pattern, mining immigrants and historic labour relations. The history of the area has left an abundance of local toponyms that is place names of local features, which record the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the area.*

The Postcode 3556 Eaglehawk & District Community Plan launched in 2010 describes Long Gully:

> *Long Gully with its dominant church buildings, its small miners' cottages and its mixture of larger buildings and remnant commercial land uses reflect the identity of the scattered mining hamlets of the nineteenth century.*
>
> *In 1862 Long Gully was included in the Borough of Sandhurst. In the mid nineteenth century businesses (blacksmith, butcher, drapers and engineers) and hotels were established in the area and as roads became an issue in 1877 this was a mark of urbanisation for the area. In 1865 the Long Gully Methodist Church was constructed and further signalled urban growth along with gas main connection to the area in 1866. The Mechanic's Institute was built in 1878.*

The Long Gully neighbourhood came into existence through the Bendigo Gold Rush, and contained some of the richest mines in Australia. Many of the older houses in Long Gully were either cottages inhabited by miners, or larger houses owned by mine managers. Though mining in Long Gully came to an end in the early 20th century, it has left its mark across the landscape. Much of the land in Long Gully is highly contaminated with chemicals from the mining process, and there are remains of mining machinery dotted around the bushland that survives in Long Gully.

On one of the moonscapes left by the gold mines, the Sparrowhawk housing estate was built in the late 1970s. From the beginning, the Sparrowhawk estate struggled with high unemployment. However, various community initiatives have tried to address social issues in the neighbourhood, including the formation of the neighbourhood centre in 1984, Shared Action with St Luke's Anglicare (1997-2000) and Neighbourhood Renewal, a state government community development program.

From 2002-2010, Long Gully Neighbourhood Renewal was undertaken with a number of projects successfully completed. Neighbourhood Renewal brought together the resources and ideas of residents, governments, local businesses and community groups to tackle disadvantage in areas with concentrations of public housing, and then build vibrant communities where people want to live. Six key objectives were:

- increased community pride and participation
- enhanced housing and environment
- improved employment, learning and local economic activity
- decreased levels of crime and improved personal safety
- better health and wellbeing
- increased access to services and improved government responsiveness

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Long Gully has a number of active community groups, although not all of these groups have strong engagement from Long Gully stakeholders. Groups based in Long Gully include:

- The Long Gully Neighbourhood Centre and Community Garden
- A Men's Shed and Women's Shed
- Bendigo Woodturners
- Three churches
- Three community choirs
- Groups that use the Long Gully Community Centre (as distinct from the neighbourhood centre).

There is currently no sporting team based in Long Gully and no community advocacy or progress association.

2. WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT LONG GULLY

While there are many things we wish to change and improve in Long Gully, there is also much to preserve. In the process of change, we want to be careful not to destroy the things that we cherish about Long Gully. It's clear that the Long Gully neighbourhood wants to care for what already exists, as well as act for change.

What things do we want to conserve?

NATURAL HERITAGE

- The bushland which surrounds Long Gully, particularly on the northern and western sides.
- Off-road tracks and trails, including the Long Gully Creek Trail, and numerous trails through bushland.
- Mining reserves such as Victoria Hill and Dai Gum San.
- Open sky and horizons.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- Access to a variety of nearby preschools and primary schools.
- Hubs of community (e.g. the LGNC, St Matthew's Church, Energetic Street Community Garden, the Mens' Shed, Manchester Arms Hotel, etc).
- The growing multicultural diversity of Long Gully.
- Strong sense of mutual support between neighbours, local businesses, schools and other organisations.
- Access to Bendigo's CBD and Eaglehawk, particularly via public transport.
- Existing businesses, and the strong local loyalty to these.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- The mix of housing stock and styles, particularly affordable housing (social, community, and public).
- Older buildings (for e.g. miners' cottages, the former Long Gully Primary School etc).
- Public open spaces, (e.g. the Long Gully Creek Trail, Recreation Reserve, the former Long Gully Swimming Pool).

3. PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES TO BE ADDRESSED

Although there is a strong sense of attachment to Long Gully, the focus groups and survey also showed that there is wide acknowledgement that Long Gully has many challenges, and there are many things people would like to see change.

In the survey, the two strongest responses to the question, "What do you like least about living in Long Gully?", were "Anti-social behaviour" (62% of respondents) and "The stigma attached to Long Gully" (61%). The next two strongest responses were "Untidy and unsightly spaces" (35%) and "Dumping in the bush and litter" (32%). The survey strongly confirmed sentiments expressed in the focus groups. All of these things represent an unhappiness with "the sense of place" felt by people connected with Long Gully.

At the level of day-to-day problems and challenges, the most widely reported was the difficulty for some people of moving through the suburb. These took the form of accessibility and safety problems and the lack of connection between walking and cycling routes.

Behind all of these challenges was a strong perception that Long Gully had suffered from long-term underinvestment and lacked the quality of facilities and upkeep found in other places in Bendigo.

STIGMA AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The focus groups reported a strong sense of the of stigmatisation of Long Gully by outsiders, and a sense of stigma felt by people who live here. Even within Long Gully, people are aware of a stigma attached to coming from "the wrong side of Eaglehawk Road" (the west side). It was generally agreed that the stigma had a lot to do with the high level of social problems and anti-social behaviour in Long Gully, and the reporting of these in local news. However, the sense of stigma was also related to "the look and feel of the place" (see below).

There was wide agreement that Long Gully had high levels of anti-social behaviour that made people feel unsafe and reinforced stigma, although people understood the reasons for this behaviour in different ways. Things that were commonly mentioned were:

- Burnouts and hoons
- Motorcyclists on the Long Gully Trail
- Vandalism
- Domestic violence
- Petty crime, drug use and police call-outs

CARE AND UPKEEP

Both the survey and the focus groups reported widespread dissatisfaction with the physical appearance of the suburb. There was strong agreement across the groups that lack of care and respect for Long Gully, in the form of litter and dumping, and lack of upkeep of some spaces, both public and private, detracted from people's enjoyment of the area while reinforcing the negative stigma. There was a perception that this represented both a lack of care of some residents and a lack of care from the Council (compared to other parts of Bendigo). Common things that were mentioned were:

- Litter along the Long Gully Trail and in the bush.
- Dumping in the bush.
- Long grass and unkempt areas in public spaces and along main thoroughfares
- Upkeep of playgrounds.
- Lack of upgrades to the housing estate to improve liveability.
- Vacant and damaged public housing.
- Private properties and public housing that are 'eyesores'

MOVEMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY

While people love the sense of Long Gully as a place close to town and that is relatively easy to move around, this is not everyone's experience. The focus groups revealed that there are areas where the connectivity of the area breaks down, especially for children and people with mobility issues. Specific things that were mentioned recurrently:

- Lack of footpaths, curbed roads and bike paths in key areas, especially St Just Point, connecting to California Gully PS, and around Havilah Road Kindergarten. Walking and cycling these areas is difficult, especially for children.
- Unsafe street crossings along the Long Gully trail for children or people with mobility issues, especially Creeth Street, Derwent Drive, Happy Valley Road and Wood Street. For example, there are no zebra crossings near the Havilah Road kindergarten.
- Accessibility into and out of the Chemist Warehouse and doctor's clinic on Eaglehawk Road.
- The extent to which Eaglehawk Road is a dividing barrier due to size and speed of traffic, and the difficulty even of crossing at the lights for people with mobility issues.
- Lack of bus routes connecting to other parts of Bendigo, especially Kangaroo Flat/Lansell Plaza. Too few buses generally.
- Not enough footbridges across the Long Gully Trail and lack of lighting along the trail.

HOUSING

The state of housing and yards, especially in the areas of public housing, was a commonly cited dissatisfaction. There was a perception that the state government left burnt-out and abandoned public housing as a very visible eyesore for a long period of time. Associated with this was the state of the yards of some houses, in particular in relation to hoarding, rubbish dumping and motor vehicle worksites. The working group considers that there is a possible feedback loop between these visible signs of decay and abuse, and the ongoing lack of care shown by some Long Gully residents.

On the other hand, there was also a worry that Long Gully might also be prone to gentrification in some places due to the comparatively low house prices. As stated above, the affordability of housing in Long Gully is one of its primary benefits, and there was a worry that this was under threat.

4. OUR ASPIRATIONS FOR LONG GULLY

Expressing the hopes and aspirations of a community for the future is complex, as how people think about such questions can be very different. There were different themes that surfaced between the focus group sessions, and survey questions 8 and 9, both of which asked about the future.

In the focus groups, improving the movement and accessibility of the area and increasing social connection, emerged along as the strongest themes, followed by revitalisation of the Long Gully Trail and preserving the history and heritage of the area.

In question 8 of the survey people were asked to rank four areas in order of priority for “making Long Gully a better place”. The results suggested the following four priorities:

1. More community events and activities
2. Preserving the heritage and bushland
3. Make it easier to get around (e.g. better crossings, footpaths, bike paths)
4. Renew and develop public spaces (e.g. parks, ovals, Long Gully Trail)

When people were asked to nominate two things they would most love to see happen in Long Gully, three strong themes emerged. These were (ranked in order):

1. Hopes for improvement in the movement, accessibility and connectivity of Long Gully.
2. Hopes for more community events and participation in community groups and activities.
3. Hopes for development and improvement of Long Gully’s public spaces.

Between them, these three accounted for well over half of the hopes people stated.

Overall, these all emphasised a very positive vision of the development of Long Gully as a place and a community. “Negative” hopes – such as for more policing or less public housing – were a surprisingly small component of what was expressed.

The Working Group has distilled all this feedback into four key areas in which the Long Gully Community Plan will make proposals:

1. ***Developing and deepening community and connection.***
2. ***Improving movement, connectivity and access.***
3. ***Developing public spaces and community assets.***
4. ***Preserving nature, heritage and character.***

5. MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

This plan captures the hopes and priorities of the Long Gully community. But it requires people like you to make it happen. We have split it into two parts:

1. **Priorities for immediate action**
2. **Great ideas waiting for someone to take them on**

The first part represents clear and concrete ideas which someone has expressed an intention to push forward. Each idea has a contact person if you would like to know more or get involved.

The second part represents hopes and ideas expressed through the community planning process that are waiting for someone to turn them into a concrete proposal and take them forward. Maybe that is you!

Finally, this plan represents a snapshot in time. It is one attempt to capture a community's hopes and aspirations, in order to help people organise together to pursue their goals. It is just a tool, and it should not be seen as the final word in visioning for Long Gully. Perhaps you see something that really needs to happen in Long Gully, that doesn't appear in this plan. Don't get angry, get organised!

WHO ARE THE KEY PLAYERS IN THE COMMUNITY PLAN?

1. The most important actor in the Community Plan are the community stakeholders themselves (residents, business owners, workers, students and others). The Plan is only of value if these organise together to see pursue its goals.
2. Community stakeholders are most effective when organised into groups. The strength of Long Gully's various community groups and their ability to work together for common cause is critical to the usefulness of the Community Plan.
3. Greater Bendigo City Council (CoGB) is a key player for many of the goals expressed below.
4. Key state government departments, especially:
   a. Department of Housing
   b. VicRoads
   c. Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

Firstly, no one owns these ideas. If you would like to see something happen, do it! If you would like to find out who else is interested in an idea, or whether there is already something happening, feel free to contact any of the members of the working group (listed on page 3)

6. PRIORITIES FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

1. DEVELOPING AND DEEPENING COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION

1.1	The forming of a "Long Gully Action Group" to further the ongoing development of the area.
1.2	A variety community events through the year that bring different people together
1.3	The holding of a community safety forum to hear and address concerns
1.4	An annual Clean Up Australia Day & BBQ for Long Gully Creek and bushland

2. IMPROVING MOVEMENT, CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS

2.1	Improved road crossings on Long Gully Trail, especially Creeth St crossing.
2.2	Improve pedestrian crossing at Eaglehawk Rd/Creeth St intersection for people with mobility issues.
2.3	Footpath and bike path extension in black spot areas (Havilah Rd, St Just Point, around Cal Gully PS, Cunneen St)

3. DEVELOPING PUBLIC SPACES AND COMMUNITY ASSETS

3.1	Development of a Masterplan for the Long Gully Reserve and adjoining space, including the Long Gully Trail, that envisages how the whole space can be developed with a view to improving: a) the recreational, exercise and social gathering opportunities in Long Gully b) the connectivity of Long Gully for pedestrians and bike riders, particularly with a view to safety for children and people with mobility issues. c) Renewal of Splash Park
3.2	Revitalisation of the Long Gully Trail, including: • More revegetation • Better maintenance • Installation of lighting, seating and bins • Renewal of public artwork
3.3	Creation of a public space on the site of the former Long Gully Swimming Pool
3.4	Improvement, maintenance and usage of public buildings, including: • Long Gully Neighbourhood Centre • Long Gully Pavilion • Long Gully Community Centre

4. PRESERVING NATURE, HERITAGE AND CHARACTER

4.1	Creation of 'Friends of Long Gully Creek' group to advance the ecological restoration and social amenity of Long Gully creek.
4.2	An annual Clean Up Australia Day for Long Gully Creek and bushland

7. GREAT IDEAS WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO TAKE THEM ON

1. Increased visibility and awareness of community groups such as LGNC, community garden, Men's Shed, St Matts Church etc.
2. Advocate to City of Greater Bendigo on issues such as neighbourhood character, housing, public and open space, heritage, playgrounds.
3. Advocate to housing authorities and state government to conserve and improve social and public housing.
4. Improved bus regularity and return of a route to Lansell Plaza.
5. Development of the open space behind the Long Gully Community Centre on Havilah Rd.
6. Ongoing conservation and restoration of the Dai Gum San mining area.
7. Development of the Victoria Hill Mining Reserve.
8. Create an action and advocacy list of projects that help conserve natural heritage.
9. Invite groups such as Dja Dja Wurrung and local branch of National Trust to run events in Long Gully, that encourage historical storytelling and knowledge.
10. Run consultations with children and young people about their aspirations for the neighbourhood.