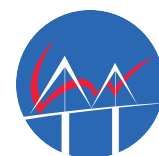




# Place-based initiatives in the West

**HIGHLIGHTING  
PROMISING  
PRACTICE**



**HealthWest**  
Partnership

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“Place-based approaches enable health promotion to be embedded in everyday settings that support the kind of coordinated responses that are necessary for tackling the complex and interrelated issues that generate health inequalities.”

VicHealth, 2008

## Executive Summary

This review of *Place-based Initiatives in the West: Highlighting Promising Practice*, looks at some incredible projects that have worked towards improving the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities in Melbourne’s western suburbs.

The following consideration of four different projects demonstrate that place-based approaches are not limited to a single model, lead organisation or target population. Place-based approaches need to be flexible and specific initiatives should be carefully tailored.

Place-based projects are valuable when engaging a community with diverse health and wellbeing needs. They provide an opportunity to engage with individuals on complex and dynamic health and wellbeing needs present in communities. Not limiting ‘place’ to a strict geographical location, but using a defined location as a starting point to reach people with a diverse range of needs.

The place-based projects considered include the Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening project, Linking Melton South, Our3021, and Revitalising Braybrook.

Each project took a unique approach to strength-based community development in terms of partnership models, community engagement, or governance. Each of these projects offers promising outcomes and learnings that can inform future practice.

This review examines common themes and considerations drawn by comparing project documents and interviews with project staff. Themes include applying a structure, engaging with the community, data and evaluation, and sustainability.

**This report offers learnings for the continuous improvement of place-based project development as a method for improving health and social outcomes of individuals and communities.**



The following recommendations should be considered if a place-based project is being planned or reviewed:

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Planning Context</b>	<b>1</b> Plan your place-based approach strategically. Consider alignment with current policy frameworks and strategic partners. Take the time needed to plan the project in terms of exploring the issue, political context and local needs.
<b>Structure</b>	<b>Partnership</b>	<b>2</b> Explore opportunities to work in partnership with the relevant established networks and region-wide activities.
	<b>Governance</b>	<b>3</b> Establish a governance structure to guide project direction that best suits the planned engagement and project partners.
	<b>Human Resources</b>	<b>4</b> Ensure your organisation has internal structures and human resources that can support a collaborative effort.
<b>Community</b>	<b>Needs Mapping</b>	<b>5</b> Any mapping activity should be highly inclusive of a wide and diverse range of community members.
	<b>Community Engagement</b>	<b>6</b> Develop a well-researched range of community engagement strategies that can be adapted depending on the project and/or the characteristics of the community.
<b>Data and Evaluation</b>	<b>Data Collection</b>	<b>7</b> Data collection and storage protocols need to be set and agreed on by all partners to avoid duplication.
	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>8</b> Consider the most appropriate approach for evaluation. Ensure to both evaluate the project itself and any impact on the wider community.
	<b>Reporting</b>	<b>9</b> Research and make use of previously developed project documents and resources to avoid duplication where possible.
<b>Sustainability</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>10</b> Consider how the partnership models, external policy alignment and alternative funding sources impact available resources.
	<b>Sustainability of the Project</b>	<b>11</b> Make the establishment of a sustainability plan a priority during the project planning and partnership engagement stage, not an afterthought towards the end of a project.

**Table 1** Place-based project learnings

# Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the following organisations that have been involved and contributed to the content of this report:



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## What is place-based?

“Place-based approaches (or area-based initiatives) seek to improve the social, cultural, economic and/or physical environment within a defined boundary, in order to improve overall health and reduce the differences in health amongst the people living within that area.”

VicHealth, 2008

## Introduction

This report captures the experiences and key learnings from four place-based projects carried out in Melbourne's West.

*Place-based Initiatives in the West: Highlighting Promising Practice* showcases some of the possible variations when applying a place-based design. The purpose of the report is to highlight the different approaches to place-based work, demonstrate promising practice, and help inform and improve future work.

The four projects: the Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening project, Linking Melton South, Our3021 and Revitalising Braybrook, each approached place-based work differently. The projects developed different partnership and governance models to best suit their circumstances, community and objectives. The projects were also unique in terms of how they engaged and partnered with their community. It is important to note, that all the place-based initiatives considered in this report didn't limit participation by strict geographical boundaries. An emphasis was instead given to the role any interested community member wanted to play in identifying issues and needs, decision-making, and implementation.

Place-based work is defined as stakeholders engaging in a collaborative process that aims to address issues experienced by a specified neighbourhood or community<sup>1</sup>.

A place-based approach targets an entire community and aims to address issues that exist at the neighbourhood level, such as inadequate housing, social isolation, poor health and wellbeing, and fragmented service provision<sup>2</sup>. The projects also drew on various co-design practices, principally delivering services with people rather than to them<sup>3</sup>. By using community engagement and co-design approaches, the place-based projects sought to make the communities engaged more connected, healthy and resilient.

“Importantly the framework acknowledges that no single intervention will arrest the current cycle of disadvantage in Braybrook. To bring about genuine improvements to the lives of those in Braybrook, and to provide hope for the future generations, targeted and sustained investment is required across multiple disciplines.”

**Revitalising Braybrook Action Plan 2013-2015**

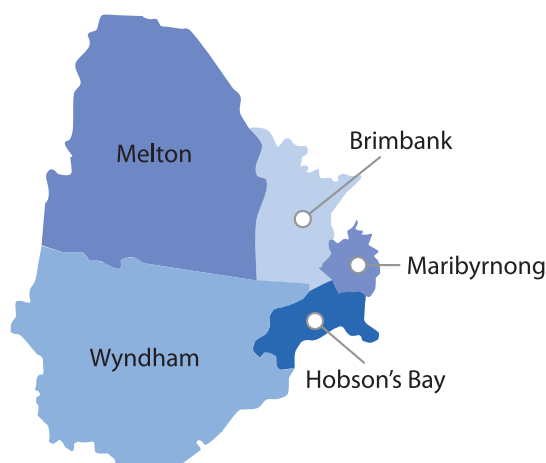
## The West

The diversity of Melbourne's western suburbs underpin the need for the unique and tailored approach to health and social improvement offered by a place-based project. The western region encompasses the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton and Wyndham. These LGAs also correspond to the HealthWest Primary Care Partnership catchment (Map 1).

The western region is characterised by a rapidly growing population and a richness in culture, food and innovation. Melbourne's western suburbs are a growth corridor that attract a large number of new families and businesses. However, with this growth come challenges in promoting healthy communities and lifestyles for large and diverse populations.

These challenges are evident in the low indicators in these LGAs for healthy food intake, physical activity, community participation levels, social inclusion, and perceptions of health and safety. According to the 2011 Socio-economic Indexes for Area (SEIFA), a scale of relative disadvantage derived from Census variables, Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton and Wyndham ranked amongst the 7 most disadvantaged metropolitan areas of the 31 metropolitan Melbourne LGAs<sup>6</sup>. Indicators of community strength across these catchments ranked low, compared to the Victorian average in volunteering, participation in organised groups, participation in decision-making on committees, attendance of community events, feeling safe on the street after dark, and feeling there are opportunities to have a say on issues.

**Please see each place-based project summary for specifics of municipalities.**



Map 1 - Melbourne's Western Suburbs

## Method

In preparing this report, four place-based projects were reviewed: the **Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening project, Linking Melton South, Our3021 and Revitalising Braybrook.**

These are not an exhaustive list of projects that aim to strengthen individuals and neighbourhoods in the area.

The four place-based projects selected represent projects delivered by organisations who are members of the HealthWest Partnership. These members shared an interest in understanding how a variety of place-based approaches could be implemented to strengthen communities.

The organisations were initially invited to a meeting to discuss their interest and willingness to be involved in a review process. Each agreed to offer transparency of their reports and achievements, so information could be consolidated effectively.

A consultant was engaged to independently review all available information. This involved conducting separate interviews with project staff from each of the different project's governance and implementation teams, to assess the over-arching themes, and future considerations for place-based project work.

Current policy and planning documents relevant to place-based work were also reviewed to consider the relevance of this type of work in the health promotion and community development fields, and future support for work in the space (Appendix 1).

The projects offered documentation for appraisal, these varied depending on what was available, the different stages in the project life-cycle and different existing formal evaluation. However, an effort was made to provide as many relevant documents as possible. These documents included evaluation reports, planning and reporting for Integrated Health Promotion (IHP) funds, case studies, film and other summary pieces of work that helped to capture and demonstrate the projects considered (Appendix 2).





## Projects

“Due to the range and complexity of identified issues impacting on the Brooklyn and Altona North communities... the aim of this project is to further engage and consult with the residents to identify their needs, strengths and issues they perceive as impacting on their sense of health and wellbeing.”

Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening Project IHP Plan 2014-15

### Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening Project

The Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening project was a shared initiative advanced by Hobsons Bay City Council and IPC Health (previously ISIS Primary Care). The project commenced in 2015 with a mapping and scoping exercise undertaken with stakeholders to establish what strengths and identified needs were currently present in the two areas. The analysis established that the communities experienced a degree of isolation, a service gap for early education and a range of complex social issues.

Although conceived as a combined project, the differences in the two communities (Brooklyn and Altona North) resulted in the project being split. The outcome was two separate and distinct projects after its initial year. This allowed for each project to evolve and include slightly different approaches and focuses on the needs identified by local community members.

Altona North incorporated a strong desire to improve its community via schools, early childcare and other existing community services and Brooklyn successfully joined the Neighbourhood Project – an initiative to create a community development model that can be replicated across the country.

**For more information** on the Neighbourhood Project please contact Hobsons Bay City Council.

**For more information** on the Altona North Community Strengthening project please contact IPC Health.

### Hobsons Bay

The Hobsons Bay region is home to a large multicultural demographic. Almost 31% of residents were born overseas, coming from over 130 countries and speaking over 90 languages<sup>4</sup>. Within the suburbs of Brooklyn and Altona North, the proportion of residents that speak a language other than English is in excess of 80%<sup>5</sup>.

Hobsons Bay had low scores for 11 of the 18 indicators around Community Strength<sup>6</sup>. Both Altona North and Brooklyn, ranked low on the SEIFA index and had the highest proportion of people born overseas, with Altona North at 12% and Brooklyn the next highest at 9%.

There are a large number of people who need assistance with fundamental activities such as self-care, communication and mobility. More than 500 people aged between 26 – 65 years receive a disability payment<sup>7</sup>. In comparison to the wider Hobsons Bay LGA, these communities had a lower rate of employment, income and education. These indicators are all predictors of poorer health outcomes<sup>6</sup>.

Because of this and the disproportionate degree of isolation due to the lack of public transport, limited walking and bicycle tracks and high volume of traffic and fumes from truck activity, Altona North and Brooklyn was highlighted as an ideal setting for a place-based project to address the wide range and complex community needs.

4. Multicultural Policy Background Paper, Hobsons Bay City Council, 2016-2020  
5. Altona North and Brooklyn - Neighbourhood Profile, Hobsons Bay City Council, 2015  
6. Population Data, HealthWest Partnership, 2015  
7. Census Data, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017



## Linking Melton South

Linking Melton South (LMS) is a place-based community project established by Djerriwarrh Health Service (DJHS) in 2013. The project's goal is to promote a socially inclusive and connected community in Melton South capable of responding to local aspirations and community needs. Its objectives are to:

- build the capacity of engaged community members to affect change in the community
- increase opportunities to build community pride and strengthen community connections

Consultation and engagement with people who work, live, learn or play in Melton South led to the identification of priority areas for the project, namely to:

- improve the physical environment
- create opportunities to connect with others and celebrate Melton South
- strengthen service provision and infrastructure

Linking Melton South continues to promote health outcomes in Melton South. The projects continued life-cycle can be attributed to the support and contribution by community members and success in securing different funding sources.

**For more information** on the Linking Melton South project please contact Djerriwarrh Health Services.

“The DJHS Health Promotion team has worked across a variety of settings and engaged a broad range of community members and stakeholders in the planning, implementation and evaluation of these projects. There have been some great immediate and short-term outcomes across all project areas so far.”

**Djerriwarrh Health Services,  
Progress Report 2015-2016**

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## Melton

The LGA of Melton covers a significantly large geographical area. Melton scored low in 16 of the 18 indicators of community strength, with significantly lower scores in the areas of representation on community boards, and whether residents feel like they can comment or contribute on issues<sup>8</sup>.

VicHealth LGAs profile indicators for Melton demonstrate significantly lower wellbeing measures. Indicators of general wellbeing, safety, and neighbourhood connectedness all rank significantly less favourably than the Victorian average, with 4 out of 10 residents agreeing they didn't feel safe walking alone in their local area after dark<sup>9</sup>.

Melton South has a SEIFA index of just 893.8 and experiences significantly more disadvantage than the City of Melton as a whole (1000.2) and is comparable with Victoria's most disadvantaged municipality of Greater Dandenong (894.9)<sup>10</sup>. Melton South was highlighted as an ideal setting for a place-based project because of this high level of disadvantage.

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8. Understanding Community Resilience in the Context of National

9. Programs and Projects - LGA Profile Indicators, Vic Health, 2015

10. Population Forecast, City of Melton, 2017

## Revitalising Braybrook

In 2011 Maribyrnong City Council adopted the Revitalising Braybrook Strategy. Based on the Revitalising Braybrook Report which was developed from significant consultations, data collection and analysis. The report identified the challenges facing Braybrook and indicators of disadvantage across all aspects of life, including health, education, employment, and social inclusion. The Strategy noted that no single intervention would arrest the cycle of disadvantage in Braybrook and that to bring about genuine improvements, targeted and sustained investment was required across multiple disciplines. The Strategy provided the groundwork for long-term investment into Braybrook which was captured in the *Revitalising Braybrook Action Plan 2013 – 2015*.

Revitalising Braybrook was governed with participation and representation from local government, service providers, and community members. This working group structure was established to ensure connections with the community and community organisations. Embedding the understanding that a partnership with all levels of community, service providers and government is required to shift disadvantage.

In 2016, the project continued to develop the 2016 – 2018 Framework for Action, in consultation with residents, other levels of government, community organisations and local businesses. It involved an analysis of demographic and wellbeing data, local knowledge and input gathered through group meetings, individual interviews and survey data, resulting in a comprehensive reflection and analysis of learnings collected during the initial phase of the project. The framework consolidated previous achievements and identified five priority areas and 13 strategies for achieving a shared vision for the community. These priorities include access to learning, local economy and housing options, social inclusion and community decision-making, accessible, affordable and safe transport, and community infrastructure to promote social connection.

Revitalising Braybrook is an ongoing strategy. A key feature is the understanding and actualisation of empowering the community to work together with all stakeholders, to create change. The project has relied on multi-level collaborations through working with agencies, and other levels of government to leverage opportunities and inspire collective solutions.

**For more information** on the Revitalising Braybrook Strategy please contact Maribyrnong City Council.

“Revitalising Braybrook is an innovative and ambitious place-based revitalisation initiative designed to improve the wellbeing of Braybrook residents through a range of targeted and co-delivered actions.”

**Revitalising Braybrook, Executive Summary 2016-2018**

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## Maribyrnong

The City of Maribyrnong is the smallest but most densely populated area in metropolitan Melbourne<sup>11</sup>. Maribyrnong City residents reported significantly lower levels of wellbeing (75.1), compared to a Victorian average (77.3), with no significant change in this score over the last 8 years<sup>12</sup>.

One of Maribyrnong's most diverse suburbs is the residential area of Braybrook. Braybrook includes a large proportion of public housing, low-cost housing in relative proximity to Melbourne's city centre, and a primary base of resettlement for newly arrived migrants. Braybrook is home to multiple language groups, including Vietnamese (27.6%), Cantonese (7.1%), Somali (2.7%) and Mandarin (2.6%). Moreover, 0.6% of Braybrook's population is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent compared to 0.5% in Greater Melbourne<sup>13</sup>.

Braybrook had been the subject of a range of interventions from service providers and government (such as Neighbourhood Renewal) for over a decade. Revitalising Braybrook, which commenced in 2011 was the City of Maribyrnong's response to extensive consultation and data collection. This process identified the challenges facing Braybrook and proposed an integrated place-based framework as a response.

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11. Snap Shot, City of Maribyrnong, 2017

12. Programs and Projects - LGA Profile Indicators, Vic Health, 2015

13. Census Data, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017

## Our3021

Our3021 was a four year project (2013-2017) driven by a workforce partnership between HealthWest Partnership, IPC Health (previously ISIS Primary Care), cohealth and Brimbank City Council.

The project's objectives were to:

- identify and create innovative partnerships that support the engagement and development of strong communities by trialling a workforce model utilising IHP resources
- empower and mobilise communities to act on their health and wellbeing
- strengthen connections and partnerships between decision makers and mobilised/empowered communities

Our3021 was managed by a steering group and a project implementation group, each made up of representatives from the partnering agencies. Community members were recruited and supported to develop and run their own projects to improve the health and wellbeing of their community.

Some of the community run activities developed focused on: food and nutrition, physical activity, mental wellbeing, including social connection, healthy relationships, safe environments, employment, and arts.

The Our3021 project finished its four year project life-cycle in 2017, while many of the community groups that had initial support from the project via seed funding and capacity building continued their activities.

**For more information** on the Our3021 project please contact HealthWest Partnership.

“Our3021 supported those living in the Brimbank area in Melbourne’s western suburbs, who wanted to create a project to improve the health and wellbeing of their community. Our3021 took a strengths-based approach by supporting community to turn their ideas into actions.”

**Our3021 Case Studies 2016**

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## Brimbank

Indicators of community strength that reflect attitudes towards (and participation in) community life were captured during a 2015 Population Health Data report on the western suburbs. Overall, Brimbank scored low in 13 out of the 18 indicators around community strength<sup>14</sup>. The indicators included volunteering levels, access to services and safety, participation in community life and social inclusiveness. These indicators that have an important impact on the mental health, wellbeing and resilience of a community, as well as to the capacity of communities to improve and prosper<sup>15</sup>.

VicHealth local government profile indicators for the Brimbank area as of 2015 reported significantly lower mental wellbeing (including resilience, neighbourhood perceptions of safety, and gender equality) than the overall Victorian average. There was no significant difference in this low life satisfaction measure between the 2015, 2011 or 2007 surveys<sup>16</sup>. Because of these low ranking indicators of community strength, Brimbank was highlighted as an ideal setting for an innovative place-based project to improve community empowerment and mental wellbeing, with a specific focus on culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

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14. Population Data, HealthWest Partnership, 2015

15. Understanding Community Resilience in the Context of National Health Security, RAND Health, 2010

16. Programs and Projects - LGA Profile Indicators, Vic Health, 2015

The following is a summary of the place-based projects reviewed:

Project	Location	Lead Organisation	Governance Model	Community Outcomes	Status
Linking Melton South	City of Melton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Djerriwarrh Health Services</li> </ul>	Led by a health service with a steering committee that included staff from the Department of Health and Human Services, the local government and community representatives.	Increases to community member engagement in activities, leadership and capacity to contribute. Multiple improvements to the physical environment via art projects, service provision and community events.	Ongoing – attributed to the continued support and contribution by community members and success in securing different funding sources.
Revitalising Braybrook	City of Maribyrnong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maribyrnong City Council</li> </ul>	Designed and led by local government with a Project Control Board - comprising Council Directors and an external Senior Executive with experience in community health sector. As well as, a working group representing all areas of local government and a stakeholder body meeting.	Development of community hub, community leadership program and engagement of various stakeholders committed for future project work.	Successful completion of the initial 4 year project – with plans for a second phase roll-out.
Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening Project	City of Hobsons Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hobsons Bay City Council</li> <li>IPC Health</li> </ul>	Led by local government and health service with a range of school staff, artists and community members on the steering committee and working group for different projects.	Community mobilised and supported for multiple projects including; community gardens, food security and early school engagement and art activation.	Initial project split in half due to the successful identification of needs by the two communities. Now exists in the form of the Neighbourhood Project and the Altona North Community Strengthening project.
Our3021	City of Brimbank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HealthWest Partnership</li> <li>Brimbank City Council</li> <li>IPC Health</li> <li>cohealth</li> </ul>	Shared partnership model with joint responsibility for delivery and reporting by all partners.	Community participants empowered to act in their community on physical health and mental wellbeing issues, with multiple completed and ongoing projects, such as multicultural fitness classes, arts and cooking.	Successful completion of the project 4 year life-cycle trialling the innovative co-management model.

Table 2 Project Summary



# Policy and Planning Context

Place-based project planning and delivery in Victoria is guided by the state government, local government and community health policy and planning. Consideration should be given to review and align with the current political and policy environments. These state, region and local plans offer guidelines for the most appropriate course of action and priority areas in the delivery of health and wellbeing projects. The guidelines can support the establishment of a framework for projects that include customised local approaches.

Projects that achieve alignment with the broader policy and planning context increase their opportunities for partnership, funding, sustainability and have a stronger impact for both the community and individual health outcomes.

## For example

The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*<sup>17</sup> provides the legislative framework for public health and wellbeing in Victoria. The Victorian government and all local governments are required to produce state and municipal public health and wellbeing plans respectively on a four yearly cycle. IHP plans of community health services follow the same cycle. It is a good idea to research and seek alignment with the priorities of your local government and local health services, when a place-based approach is being planned (Figure 1).

It is also beneficial to be aware of what other guiding documents are being followed by your local government and other agencies, such as the *Public Participation in Government Decision-making*<sup>18</sup>. This document provides a high-level framework for how an organisation can best involve the public in decision-making, directly relating and supporting the empowerment and activation of place-based projects.

The four projects reviewed demonstrated strong alignment with current political and policy context.

It is a valuable question to ask:

*“How can a project best align and demonstrate support of the Victorian Government’s policy and planning imperatives?”*

## Other Victorian policies directly related to place-based initiatives to consider:

- Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015–2019
- Department of Health and Human Services Strategic Plan 2016 – 2017
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Health 2040: Advancing health, access and care
- Victorian Government's response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence
- Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy
- Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children
- National Disability Insurance Scheme
- Victorian State Disability Plan 2017–2020
- Victoria's 10-Year Mental Health Plan

Links to these can be found on the HealthWest Partnership website: [healthwest.org.au/projects/policy-and-advocacy/policy-and-research/](http://healthwest.org.au/projects/policy-and-advocacy/policy-and-research/)

Figure 1

## Alignment with Local Government Direction – Linking Melton South

Close alignment with the Melton City Council plans and departments have led to strong support for projects such as local events, Pop-Up Services Hub and Community Train Stations projects. Melton City Council, state government departments and local organisations are represented on the LMS steering committee and a number of working groups, which has led to greater collaboration and alignment.

17. Public Health and Wellbeing Act, Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria, 2008

18. Public Participation in Government Decision-Making: A Better Practice Guide, VAGO, 2015



# Themes

The projects in this review varied in relation to the length of the project, the roles of the partner organisations, stakeholders and the community (Table 2: Project Summary). Some of the learnings gained from the four projects were shared, while others were unique to a specific project. However, all have value for understanding what to consider when contemplating a place-based approach.

## 1 Structure

### 1.1 Partnership

The attempt to reduce health and social inequities is most effective when done in partnership and in a collaborative manner. The projects in this review worked to develop and implement their activities with the contribution of various partners.

In many ways place-based initiatives that strongly utilise partnerships are localised examples of a larger collective impact approach, where many partners join to affect collective action on social, economic or environmental challenges<sup>19</sup>.

Partnerships here refer to formal ongoing agency agreements, rather than more informal or one-off stakeholder interactions. Partnerships often evolve from existing working relationships, where organisations are operating in the same catchment or have previously worked together (Figure 2).

### Working with Partners

Understanding how each partner operates makes it easier to establish project structures, roles and responsibilities, communication systems, flexible practices, and the sharing of skills. Partners bring their own expertise and a diverse skill set to the table, but each partner will also bring their own unique constraints.

It was recognised that when local governments are involved they can bring a wide range of disciplines and resources to the table e.g. economic development, health and social planning, community development and long-term commitment. However, allowance for organisation structure and decision-making procedures need to be factored into timelines.

- Each partnering organisation needs to be clear about what they are able to bring to a project. This includes factors such as, committing over the entire life of the project.
- It is important to be transparent about what level of collaboration the project has. Consider using a previously developed resources such as the Collective Impact Self-Assessment and Planning Tool<sup>20</sup>.

Figure 2

## Advantages of Working with Partners

### Linking Melton South

The partnership between Linking Melton South and Festival for Healthy Living (an arts-based mental health promotion program primarily based in schools), helped to strengthen the actions for two of the three community identified priority areas of the place-based approach.

The partnership has led to a strong focus on promoting arts and wellbeing, fostering a culture of creativity and connection, and building the capacity of local artists and residents in Melton South to promote health and wellbeing in the community. Key outcomes from this partnership are the delivery of community events such as Party in the Park 2014 and 2015, the formation of a local street band the 'Fabulous Meltones', and the Dream Big Festival 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Because of its many partners the festival has grown exponentially from its small beginning as a one day school focused art and health event to a two day large scale community celebration of art, culture and health. A number of local artists and performers have also been employed through this partnership to facilitate participatory arts activities for the community.

## Consider Old and New Partnerships

- Consider who are the 'known' partners - those that your organisation has previously worked with or those that are lead agency in the area you are/will be working.
- Consider alternative partners that bring a different/new perspective and broader skill set.

## Formal Partners

Where a formal partnership between agencies has been agreed on for project delivery, structures should be put in place to facilitate smooth working relationships. Use traditional guiding documents to clarify roles and responsibilities. The importance of documents that are mutually agreed on (i.e. a memorandum of understanding or terms of reference) should not be discounted.

- Formal guiding documents can help provide clarity and reduce conflict. These documents clearly articulate the expectations, commitments and requirements of all partners. Has a key terms or definitions document been developed? (Figure 3)
- It is important not to assume universal knowledge of the issue; understanding of terminology; or who will deliver certain aspects of a project.
- Has a Theory of Change been jointly discussed? A Theory of Change aligns partners and helps define what change you hope to bring about and how you will go about creating that change.
- Where these steps were not strictly followed, discord occurred in some projects. These potential confusions could be reduced by documents such as: project logic, project plan, communication plans and community engagement strategies.

Figure 3

## Working with Partners

A signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is important in providing clarity of roles and responsibilities. MOUs were used in the Our3021 and Linking Melton South projects, as well as, numerous smaller project activities and events across the other place-base initiatives. A Terms of Reference (TOR) is useful for structures such as steering committees and working groups. TORs were used in the Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening, Our3021 and Linking Melton South. All projects are guided by project plans, developed at the working group level and guided by community identified priorities.

## Stakeholders

Stakeholders, or more informal partners, are players engaged to help deliver a place-based project. Stakeholders can have a one-off or an ongoing relationship with a project.

They typically include funders, government departments, local governments, other community organisations, interest groups, schools, tertiary institutions, and of course members of the community. Often they remain involved with the community after a project's completion.

All of the projects in this review used strategic stakeholder engagement at various stages. They engaged with people and organisations outside formal partnerships during specific project activities or events where it was relevant and where community would most benefit (Figure 4).

- If a stakeholder is collaborating on the project they are invested in its activities. There should be a structure for continuous communication and feedback available, acknowledging their expertise.

## Finding Stakeholders

At the beginning of a project it is not always clear who the key stakeholders are. A mapping or scoping process can be an effective tool to identify potential stakeholders and their possible involvement.

Similarly, during and towards the end of a project different stakeholders may present themselves (**Please see section 2. Community for additional information**).

- Where stakeholders have committed to supporting the community in an ongoing capacity, consideration needs to be given to formalising this commitment into a partnership.
- Where stakeholders commit to supporting the community after the completion of the project, a handover or formal acknowledgement of future commitment towards the project could be given.

Figure 4

## Stakeholders

### Brooklyn and Alton North Community Strengthening

Altona North had multiple projects and activities within the place-based approach. For the overall approach it was a partnership between IPC Health and local government's Community Development (CD) Team. For the Kids Thrive project within the place-based approach, a steering committee was set up that consisted of IPC Health, CD workers, library staff, Kids Thrive artists, the school principals and teachers involved.

The garden bed and food security project had a working group consisting of IPC Health, CD workers and local government's sustainability team workers. It worked closely with the parent group of the school and the school canteen operators along with school staff.

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## Flexibility with Stakeholders

- ▶ Flexibility is a crucial consideration for the type of stakeholder and their motivation for collaboration. Provide avenues for communication and interaction with the project that is appropriate and considerate of their time and capabilities.
-



## 1.2 Governance

The four projects utilised different governance models:

Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening Project	Linking Melton South	Revitalising Braybrook	Our3021
Governance and implementation were combined and overall project management was shared by two partner organisations: a community health service and a local government.	The overall governance of the project was the responsibility of a health service, with input from a community based steering committee that included staff from the Department of Health and Human Services, the local government and community representatives.	Designed and led by local government with a dedicated coordinator reporting to a project control board. The project control board included council directors and an external executive from the community health sector. A cross-local government working group, and stakeholder body also met regularly.	A Primary Care Partnership, two health service organisations and a local government all jointly responsible for the governance of the project. Each had a representative on the steering group that oversaw the project and the project team that led community action.

**Table 3** Project Governance Models

The development of each project's governance model was unique to the organisations leading the work and the type of strategies planned. Although all the projects used a place-based approach, no two governance structures were alike (Table 3. Project Governance Models). When it comes to place-based activities there is not a "one size fits all".

### Developing a Governance Model

When deciding what governance structure to use consider:

- Clarity around which governance structure is most appropriate for the place-based approach planned (i.e. a steering committee has a very different role and emphasis to that of an advisory committee). Consider the level of control the governance structure wants over project activities. If it is being closely led, a steering committee is more appropriate. If the project aspires to be more driven by community participants, an advisory group can provide guidance rather than dictate.
- Consider who is the best placed to be the lead agency (i.e. for project coordination, delegation, and accountability). This could be the partner with access to a range of services, the one with rapport with the specific community being engaged, or one with established networks required to roll-out the initiative (Figure 5).
- Ensure the governance structure has community representation at its core. Roles and responsibilities, decision-making, communication, and accountability should be clearly articulated and implemented.

(cont. next page)

**Figure 5**

### Lead Agency Consideration Revitalising Braybrook

Local government was the most appropriate lead agency for Revitalising Braybrook. Local government through its range of service and programs builds diverse partnerships and relationships and these can provide access points for establishing strong links into communities. Revitalising Braybrook accessed these diverse partnerships and was consistent in reporting back to staff and stakeholders.

Local governments can leverage their connection to community and stakeholders because they work across the spectrum of community life, from city planning and design to community services for all ages and stages.

This recognises the value of a bottom up approach i.e. a community advisory committee influencing how the project is implemented to make it more relevant and ultimately effective (**Please see section 2. Community for additional information**).

- Irrespective of the model used, the governance of a place-based project needs some degree of flexibility. The ability to be flexible and open to change if the project is not achieving its outcomes (Figure 6).

Figure 6

### Governance Model

#### Our3021

Our3021's governance model changed mid-way through the project in response to feedback that having a steering group and a project implementation group was confusing, promoted conflict, and impeded decision-making. The project demonstrated a high degree of flexibility by merging the two groups into one, effectively resolving the issues that arose because of the added complexities of a multi-agency partnership with too many layers in its governance model.

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## Decisiveness and Engagement of Governance

- Governance structures should be able to make timely decisions when needed. Diplomacy and collaborative input is highly important in a project, but a general observation from this review is that timely decision-making is critical to the health of a project. A monthly or bimonthly meeting is not sufficient, if it is the only forum for decision-making.
- Attendance of governance members at community activities was found to be important for maintaining a high level of engagement in the project. Members of project governance structures that do not have any direct engagement with the community activities can often struggle to see the value or effectiveness of activities.

## Project Workers in the Governance Model

Project workers are significant drivers within a place-based approach. It is important that these individuals have a voice and decision-making power. An effective two way communication system between the governance group and the project workers is essential. Project workers provide feedback to the governance group on how the project is being received and they are the agent influencing change on behalf of the project and governance group. Opinions from these project workers should be highly valued in decision-making.

- The value of a coordinator or general facilitator role was identified in several of the projects reviewed. Where there was a number of project partners and associated project workers it was seen as highly important to have a coordinator, who had day-to-day decision-making power, project management, reporting responsibility and a voice on the governance structure (Figure 7).

Figure 7

### Project Coordination Revitalising Braybrook

Projects working with complex issues of change and development require attention to detail. A key aspect of Revitalising Braybrook was the role the project officer played in connecting with the people and the place. Managing relationships was key to the role and having the organisational infrastructure of a local government enabled the officer to access support of areas such as human resources and other officers.

Maintaining regular and consistent contact and having open lines of communication was essential. This helped develop transparent processes, such as reporting regularly to stakeholders and community members.

## Project Culture

A project has the ability to create its own culture, habits of working or “modus operandi”. This project specific culture can strengthen the project's activities and promote a highly productive team environment. However, this culture can also be negative as a result of conflict or miscommunication. It can be challenging if a project worker or a project team behaves contrary to the expectations of their parent organisation/s.

To promote a positive project culture it is important to:

- Establish a project's definition of place-based, community engagement and other key terms. Different disciplines and organisations within the same industry can use a different language or mean different things (Figure 8).
- Communication plans, decision-making and conflict resolution mechanisms need to be established early in the life of a place-based project.

Figure 8

### Managing Conflict Revitalising Braybrook

Managing conflict is not unique to place-based projects and in the case of Revitalising Braybrook the organisation adopted the approach of conducting regular reporting and identifying any issues or problems arising and responding to these in transparent and timely way.

This was essential in Revitalising Braybrook. Not all problems can be solved immediately but an important aspect of a collaborative and complex system is people being heard.

## 1.3 Human Resources

Human Resource (HR) management needs to be a key consideration of partnering agencies. Areas that require HR input include roles and responsibilities, inductions, line management, performance indicators, reporting responsibilities, conflict resolution, and hand-over procedures. Proper HR management is especially important where there are a number of project workers coordinating work together from different partner organisations.

### Workforce Recruitment

Health promotion, community development, and project officers bring different skill sets and background knowledge. It is important to recruit individuals with appropriate skills to implement the type of place-based approach desired.

- Community engagement, mediation, advocacy, working collaboratively, problem solving, communication, mentoring, facilitation and self-care skills are important considerations when recruiting.
- Synchronising working days for project workers is important for community engagement, planning, information sharing, peer support and building a positive team culture.

### Workforce Considerations

Place-based projects require a broad skillset and a capacity to work flexibly.

- The capacity to work out-of-hours is often fundamental for community engagement.
- It is often difficult for staff to assume responsibility for place-based initiatives on top of their existing workloads. Place-based initiatives and building rapport with community members takes time and should be acknowledged in the context of workload.
- Staff turnover is a natural feature of work, but the retention of project knowledge and the continuity of projects requires solid hand-over and induction routines. Time and importance should be given to a proper hand-over and introduction to new project workers. Alternatively, there is a risk of knowledge loss and a gradual disengagement with the project.



## 2 Community

### 2.1 Needs Mapping

It is useful to undertake a mapping or scoping process at the project development stage to ensure factors such as the project's location, approach and activities are appropriate.

- Any needs mapping or scoping process should involve the community (Figure 9).
- During the initial needs mapping, it is important to capture what has and has not been successful in the past. Past projects can be used to inform a new place-based project or can be detrimental to how the community receives future engagement.
- Working in collaboration with direct service providers offers crucial insights into the needs of the community. If a partnering agency offers other clinical services, this can be used to capture patterns and help inform the planned place-based approach. Individual community member and client feedback can be vital in identifying local needs (Figure 10).
- Mapping should be an ongoing activity. Regular review is essential to support the project and achieve its outcomes.

Figure 9

### Asset Mapping Linking Melton South

Melton South residents were initially engaged through a series of asset-mapping workshops in 2013 that identified the strengths in the community which LMS would continue to build on between 2013 and 2017. Asset Based Community Development informed how Melton South residents and local organisations were engaged in identifying, implementing and evaluating community building projects.

All LMS projects have been driven by community consultation, and delivered in partnership with community members and local organisations (from planning to delivery and evaluation).

Local community members are well represented on the steering committee, all project working groups are consulted regularly to ensure that LMS projects are informed by and, where possible, facilitated by the local community.



## Geographical Boundaries

Communities that are geographically next to each other are not necessarily similar in terms of their needs. While geographical boundaries are important, there may be circumstances where boundaries need to be expanded. A degree of flexibility should be allowed when working with leaders from the community.

- A project may have restrictions due to funding or resourcing that limit activity to a certain demographic, need or location. Where there is flexibility, allow organic connections outside the defined geographical area.
- People travel across geographical boundaries for work, recreation, schooling and other hobbies. Although the project may be limited by scope to a certain location there should be an atmosphere of welcome for those that have a connection to 'place' and want to contribute. Such as opportunities when people from outside the area bring great ideas, enthusiasm and expertise to the issues of the community being engaged.

Figure 10

### Community Directed Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening Project

This joint initiative did a thorough job of engaging and consulting with local residents. To understand community needs, strengths and issues they perceive as impacting on their sense of health and wellbeing. Schools were highlighted and targeted in the area for consultation and engagement, resulting in many of the project's future activities.

Bayside and Altona North Primary School agreed to partner with local government and IPC Health to develop and implement a range of school focused engagement opportunities, including: cooking and gardening programs, kids thrive program, school garden, and celebrating local events and initiatives.

## 2.2 Community Engagement

Community input is a critical element of all place-based initiatives. Community members can be people who have responded to a call-out or expression of interest, leaders of groups or clubs, or owners of local businesses.

Be conscious of the impact engagement has on community members. Are you over utilising the same people? Be realistic about what can be achieved and what resources can be brought to the table by community members. Are the demands you are placing on their time and resources reasonable? Explore if the project has the capacity to reimburse volunteers.

### Community Co-design

It is important to have an agreed understanding of the intended level of community engagement in your project. Community engagement can mean different things to different people. At what level on the Public Participation Spectrum will your participants be engaged<sup>22</sup>? It takes time and requires careful planning to have a mutual understanding of this between partners.

It is important to keep asking: "What does it mean to work in this community? Who is engaged and who is not engaged and why?" This co-operative approach to project delivery can also be called co-creation, co-production or co-design depending on the level of community engagement<sup>23</sup>.

- The community should be consulted as soon as possible and be involved in the planning or co-design of the place-based project.
- It is important to remember that community members are not 'problems needing to be fixed', but assets in a place-based approach. Using a co-design approach acknowledges the reciprocal exchange of information and power (Figure 11).

22. IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum, IAP2 International Federation, 2014

23. An Introduction to Co-design, Knode, 2016

Figure 11

## Community Representation Revitalising Braybrook

A major achievement of Revitalising Braybrook was the establishment of the Braybrook on Board, community leadership program. This program offers accredited training courses that provide local residents with skills to develop and deliver their own community projects.

Launched in 2015 Braybrook on Board empowers community members by engaging them to become community leaders. The groundwork was laid by the Revitalising Braybrook project that identified the need and level of involvement individuals were willing to contribute to their community.

“When there’s commitment, people respond. People can see things are improving and there’s progress. The timing was right for this program and the community were ready.”

### Participation and Pathways to Engagement

Existing and emerging community leaders often seek ways to participate, through the life of the project. Making pathways to engage with your place-based initiative easily accessible will increase reach and impact.

These community members can raise greater awareness across the community. Their voice should be utilised in the shaping and directing of the place-based project. Community representation should be a main priority and not a tokenistic gesture.

- It is critical for there to be established avenues for community members and project participants to provide continuous feedback.
- Consulting with the community and ongoing community input should direct how the project is rolled-out on an ongoing bases. Projects evolve over time, this necessitates a degree of flexibility for the project to maintain relevance (Figure 12).

- Accommodate changing levels of involvement by individual community members over the life of the project and be clear about what role they can play (Figure 13).

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### Networking between Community Members and Groups

- Where there are a number of projects occurring at the same time it is important to provide opportunities for cross fertilisation and peer support between community members.
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Figure 12

## Projects Evolve Over Time Linking Melton South

Projects evolve over time and ongoing community input should inform these activities. In 2013 ‘Strengthening infrastructure and service provision’ was identified as one of three priority areas for the Melton South community. Through initial scoping with 22 local service providers and surveys with 189 community members a local integrated services model was developed, trialled and evaluated between 2015 and 2016. The LMS Pop-up Services Hub has grown since the first trial and has involved over 40 service providers in delivering accessible and community-friendly services to individuals and families in Melton South. The LMS Pop-up Services Hub has continued to grow and increase access to services through flexibility and working with partners and the community members to re-configure the model to adapt to the needs of service users.

## Formalising and Enabling Community Collaboration

Community collaboration is premised on goodwill, buy-in and a common agenda. The project should share this commitment to work together by supporting community collaboration at every stage.

- Ensure that community members are supported and resourced so that they can be effective advocates for their community. For example, consider providing training and up-skilling if required.
- Community members should be seen as equal partners who have a great deal to contribute. Ensure that project management structures and tools are in place, such as a transparency of processes, budget and timelines (Figure 14).
- The commitment made to be inclusive of stakeholder and community engagement (via either collaboration, empowerment or co-design methods) needs to be clearly represented in the governance model of the project.
- Beware that, collaboration can be counterproductive when there is a lack of support for community members. A project needs to be able to share appropriate information about the program design, structure and purpose with its community participants in an understandable manner. For example by the incorporation of health literacy principles<sup>24</sup>.

Figure 13

## Participation Evolves Over Time Linking Melton South

As a result of the initial mapping, a number of community leaders were identified and LMS has continued to engage these leaders to drive the project. Some of these leaders have gone on to become members of the LMS Steering Committee and project working groups. There have been a number of community members that have expressed an interest in leadership, identified through consultation and project implementation. Such as, those involved in the participatory arts activities for beautification and local residents who have facilitated or led project activities.

Figure 14

## Flexible Approach Revitalising Braybrook

Place-based projects dealing with complex issues and needs require visible and transparent plans and processes. These provide a framework for dialogue and discussion. Maribyrnong City Council maintained an agile and flexible approach which enabled discussion and input from stakeholders and partners and adaption to changes.

The process of engagement meant that stakeholders felt heard and valued.

24. National Statement on Health Literacy, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, 2014



## 3 Data and Evaluation

### 3.1 Data Collection

Specific data collection and management arrangements need to be established for each place-based project. Basic records are critical and at a minimum need to include the project rationale and objectives, budget, risks, milestones, and projected outcomes. Have you considered developing shared measurements<sup>25</sup>? This takes time and requires mutual agreement of what the indicators of the project will be.

#### Capturing of Data

It is important that data and information gathered is relevant, timely and of a high enough quality to inform planning, decision-making and evaluation. Data and statistics should be understandable and comparable to baseline information or broader indicators.

- Measures need to be established as part of projects initial planning and approval process.
- It is important that collection, storage, and sharing of information complies with established privacy legislation, confidentiality policies, and de-identification processes.
- The collection and storage of data and information needs to be time and cost efficient, and planned and coordinated within the life-cycle of a project. Consider using metadata techniques that help define and give meaning to what has been captured.

- Where possible, data should be standardised, with consistent and common definitions to facilitate information sharing.
- Shared measures need a shared agreement of the project's goal, actions, and indicators to allow for a collective analysis of data and measurements.

### 3.2 Evaluation

Identifying and measuring outcomes that can be directly attributable to place-based project activities is difficult but highly important. Valuable evaluation data in a place-based project includes participation rates, community capacity building, community assets, community pride, and perceptions of safety.

#### Evaluation Techniques

- Short and longterm outcomes should be established to verify the efficiency and effectiveness of each place-based initiative, ideally in a framework agreed on by all partners (Figure 15). This also forms the basis upon which comparisons can be made and learnings established.
- Some outcomes are very long term in nature, and can be intergenerational. Appropriate indicators should be clearly defined, with a link to the theorised outcome explained in any reporting. It's very important these Theories of Change are mutually devised, understood and agreed on by project partners.
- Data should be both quantitative and qualitative in order to provide an overall picture of the project's outcomes.



Figure 15

## Establishing Evaluation Frameworks Revitalising Braybrook

Revitalising Braybrook committed to consistent reporting based on a clear actions framework. There has been a continuous process of reflection to examine our practice and direction. The history of Revitalising Braybrook and the development of distinct phases reflects that focus on change and development.

- It is important to both record participation and case studies that highlight the power of community participation e.g. Mr Smith attended an event and it was the first time he left his home in 10 years (Figure 16).
- Exit interviews or end-of-project surveys can help capture project learnings missed by other evaluation methods. Asking community members openly to share 'what went well' and 'what could be improved on' has the potential to gather excellent data and inform future projects.

Figure 16

## Case Studies Our3021

Our3021 developed a case studies document in its third year to help showcase its community run projects. The projects in this report demonstrated various events, workshops, training sessions and broader promotions. Together, they capture a snapshot of the range, varied depth, and sustainability of community initiated and led projects. This document helped provide stories and examples of impact from the Our3021 initiative that couldn't be captured in quantitative evaluation. The case studies provided an understanding of the impact Our3021 had on the health and wellbeing of individuals and neighbourhoods involved in the project.

Figure 17

## Continuous Evaluation Linking Melton South

The LMS evaluation framework was developed early on and has informed how all project activities are evaluated. Based on the California Healthy Cities and Communities evaluation framework, it provides the means to measure changes in community capacity on a number of levels.

### Continuous Evaluation

Evaluation needs to be a core element of all projects, occur over the life of the project and beyond (Figure 17).

- Evaluation over the life of a project provides valuable insights and enables mid project refinement and redirection to occur. This can also be achieved through either internal or external evaluation, provided it is made a continuous priority throughout the project.
- It is important to ensure that evaluation addresses both the project itself and the outcomes for the community.
- There is a need for findings to be disseminated in order for knowledge to be shared and learnings added to the field of work. Some possible pathways include conferences, networking events, social media, e-bulletins, and links to project partner websites.

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### Place-based Evaluation Techniques

A range of evaluation approaches were used in the place-based initiatives of this review, including:

- Participatory action-based research
  - Informal evaluation
  - Formal evaluation linked to funding
  - Formal evaluation linked to Integrated Health Promotion reporting requirements
  - External evaluation
  - Quantitative research
  - Documentation of case studies
-

Figure 18

### Reporting Our3021

Three of the four Our3021 partner organisations received IHP funding from the Victorian government and therefore were required to plan and report using an IHP framework. Buy-in from all partners could have been strengthened by developing one shared planning and reporting framework.

### 3.3 Reporting

Reporting needs to capture what has been achieved, which is often difficult when place-based approaches target long-term or individual empowerment outcomes. Ensure the evaluation represented in the reporting reflects any funding or other compliance requirements.

#### Reporting Mechanisms

Reporting can be time intensive and it is important to use a template or other mechanisms that are easy to use and capture useful information.

- Organisations in this review used different reporting templates. This is natural, however, when agencies are collaborating with each other it is important to make an effort to align reporting. Alternatively, there is a risk of duplication, confusion and ineffectiveness. A neutral or shared template can be very effective (Figure 18).

Figure 19

### Avoid Duplication Our3021

The awareness that the two health services partnering in the Our3021 project (cohealth and IPC Health) have an overlap of their catchment and both receive IHP funds to use on a social inclusion project. By partnering in Our3021 the organisations avoided duplicating the planning and implementation of running simultaneous place-based projects in neighbouring communities.

#### Avoid duplication

Avoid duplication of effort, both within a project and between projects. This can often be avoided by a thorough mapping exercise before a project is started and proper planning of project activities (**Please see section 3.1 Needs Mapping for more detail**).

#### Within the project

- Duplication of effort is often seen in similar organisations where mandated reporting is required. Partnerships could be explored here or at least an effort made to share reporting of documented successes and failures (Figure 19).
- Failure to learn from mistakes and lack of systems to capture learnings can hinder the application of an effective place-based approach in a community. An effort should be made by projects to distribute final reports, progress updates or (at the very least) make evaluations findings accessible.

#### Between projects

- Establish ongoing cross-communication systems for place-based projects across your local region. In this instance, *Place-Based Initiatives in the West: Highlighting Promising Practice* was a region-wide cooperative effort to communicate successes, knowledge and learnings.
- Collective Impact is another example of coordinating action to impact an ingrained socioeconomic challenges in a community, by multiple agencies from different sectors. This approach also aims to reduce duplication and achieve a large scale change<sup>26</sup>.



## 4 Sustainability

### 4.1 Resources

The project planning process needs to identify how the project can realistically be implemented with either existing resources or through obtaining additional funding.

- Consideration for the project's capacity to work in the area is vital. Is it feasible? Are the resources and funding sufficient to work across a large community or geographical area?
- It is important to have sufficient time and resources allocated to community engagement. It is especially important when the physical area is large or there is no real sense of community to build on.

### 4.2 Sustainability of the project

All projects should contemplate their sustainability at the onset of planning. It may not be appropriate or feasible for the project to continue indefinitely.

- Consideration should be given to the sustainability of the project, its model, its partners and its funding sources.
- Clarification of these can be helped by sustainability instruments already developed like the HealthWest Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool Kit<sup>27</sup>.

### Duration

Consider the ethical implications of the length of a project.

It is not an effective use of resources to “just come in and then leave” when working on-the-ground with a community.

Long-term investment, engagement and commitment are very important to maintain credibility as a ‘tap turned on and tap turned off’ approach is unacceptable to the community.

- Rapid entry and exit of a project can develop distrust, low-confidence and disengagement of community members. Activity and timelines should be transparent to participants.
- The objective of any place-based work should be to achieve a firm commitment from all those planning to be involved and ensure that they have a long term vision and ongoing commitment to the relevant community (Figure 20).

27. Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool Kit, HealthWest Partnership, 2014

Figure 20

## **Duration** **Linking Melton South**

LMS commenced in 2013 with limited funding and project timelines. It is a result of long-term planning and relationship building that the project and its many highly valued activities are still ongoing.

Some of the activities with the biggest impact have included the LMS Pop-Up Services Hub, Little Libraries (a free book exchange), and Mend It Melton (a community run repair café).

These have grown to become a staple of the Melton South community, only through time and dedication given to community feedback, ongoing promotion, and connections.

Figure 21

## **Link Community Members with Others** **Linking Melton South**

Partnerships with local organisations have increased LMS's capacity to support community members to implement actions.

Ongoing support by local faith-based organisations, the Neighbourhood House, schools, V/Line and Melton City Council help the sustainability of community led action in Melton South.

## **Sustainability within the Community**

Place-based initiatives should work towards the goal of community self-sufficiency. Project activities need an ongoing focus on building the capacity and the accountability of community participants.

Supporting and enabling independence requires transparency around the length of time and amount of resources available for support, as well as helping to link participants with appropriate training, stakeholders and alternative resources.

- Link with stakeholders, who can support the community members or groups throughout the life of the project (Figure 21).
- An important consideration for community groups is whether to become incorporated or form a partnership with an incorporated organisation (where appropriate). This allows the flexibility to seek and apply for funding.
- Appropriate resources such as action plans and pathway documents help guide community leaders and groups to be able to link with third party stakeholders and establish independence.

Ideally mechanisms for sustainability are built into each step of the place-based project activity.

Often the key to success and sustainability within the projects reviewed was the genuine integration of community participants in the various approaches (Figure 22).

- Succession planning or the equivalent needs to be considered and incorporated.
- The planning and implementation of place-based projects need to include "key players" that could potentially continue the work.



## Sustainability through Impact - Closing the Loop

The completion of a place-based project does not equate to the end of an organisation's commitment to the community. It is essential to plan either for long-term support, effective impact or to revisit the community on a regular basis.

Long-term support or revisiting a community means informing them of project achievements or developments, identifying delayed outcomes, new and emerging issues, or re-engagement avenues.

- The community needs to be informed of what has been achieved. Regular check-ins with the community help reinforce what has been invested and achieved. This helps alleviate perceptions of the community being abandoned.
- Ongoing consultation with the community, partners and relevant stakeholders will help monitor progress, expectations and whether the project is producing effective outcomes (Figure 23).

Figure 22

## Empower Community Leaders Linking Melton South

Community members have taken on additional responsibilities to support projects such as the Little Libraries, Mend It- Melton, and Dream Big Festival - where entire elements of these events and activities are being driven by community members and working groups.

These projects have been established from the outset with sustainability in mind, to be handed-over to the community at the end of the LMS implementation period, or sooner.

Figure 23

## Sustainability Brooklyn and Alton North Community Strengthening

The Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening project was adjusted to allow for continued place-based work. The project changed to fit the needs and demand of the community.

Splitting into two projects: one side strategically aligning with the schools and childcare in the area and the other partnering with a wider- neighbourhood revitalising project, was in response to the unique needs and ability to deliver the project to the different communities.



The following points are presented as opportunities and directions that should be considered when participating in a place-based project.

## Summary of Considerations

### Policy

#### 1 Planning Context

Plan your place-based approach strategically. Consider aligning with current policy frameworks and strategic partners. Take the time needed to plan the project in terms of exploring the issue, political context, and local needs.

- Align partner selection with the broader directions being enunciated by the government via its health and wellbeing policy and planning documents.
- Think creatively to engage partners that demonstrate alignment with state and federal government policy.

For example, make use of environmental planners to help tackle overweight and obesity, consider the role police play in neighbourhood safety, or how a local government economic development department can help address intergenerational unemployment.

### Structure

#### 2 Partnership

Explore opportunities to work in partnership with the relevant organisations, established networks and region-wide activities.

- Consider, Primary Health Networks, local area coordinators, and the relevant metropolitan partnership.
- Building in regional networking into place-based narrative helps provide the foundation for resource planning, project development, and funding applications.

#### 3 Governance

Establish a governance structure to guide project direction that best suits the planned engagement and project partners.

- Have a standing agenda item at governance meetings that reports on the project activities and achievements.  
This is important to promote group cohesion and enthusiasm with the roll-out of the project, as not all members of a project team are necessarily involved in the 'on-the-ground' community work.
- A standing agenda item for the governance meetings of partnering organisations should include a status report on place-based initiatives, and achievements.

## 4 Human Resources

Ensure your organisation has internal structures and human resources that can support a collaborative effort.

- These considerations will help activate the project and create a strong foundation for partnership work. If they are not present there is a risk of conflict and confusion impacting the effectiveness of the place-based initiative being implemented.

## Community

### 5 Needs Mapping

Any mapping activity should be highly inclusive of a wide and diverse range of community members.

- Mapping is a highly valuable process that shouldn't be overlooked or rushed. It ensures the project goal, objectives, and implementation are appropriate for the community being engaged.

### 6 Community Engagement and Collaboration

Develop a well-researched range of community engagement strategies that can be adapted depending on the project and the characteristics of the community.

- Review activities from other place-based projects to develop a large variety of activities for the life of a project and let project participants choose and adapt these strategies. Ensuring they are varied and proven but still relevant and appropriate.
- Build in mechanisms or pathways for the community to approach the project to act as sponsors or champions of the project.

## Data and Evaluation

### 7 Data Collection

Data collection and storage protocols need to be set and agreed on by all partners.

- Establish data collection and storage principles and protocols within and across the project and its partners.

This could include the general construction and ongoing population of a library/ database of place-based initiatives that can be accessed and used by all partners.

- Establish an ongoing mechanism where information captured can be shared so that learnings from place-based projects across the region is available.

## 8 Evaluation

Consider the most appropriate approach for evaluation. Ensure to both evaluate the project itself and any impact on the wider community.

- Evaluation needs to be a core element of all project activities, either formal or informal.
- Consider developing shared indicators and setting up structures for continuous evaluation.
- It may be possible for this long term evaluation to be consolidated across projects, if a region-wide network or collective impact approach is established.

### 9 Reporting

Research and make use of previously developed project plans and templates. Avoid duplication where possible.

- Rather than develop various project plans and reporting documents make use of available templates to cover the range of project types, so that the 'wheel is not reinvented'.

## Sustainability

### 10 Resources

Consider how the partnership model, external policy alignment and alternative funding sources impact on available resources:

- Explore alternative funding sources (e.g. the health and wellbeing industry or crowd funding) to reduce reliance on government funding.

### 11 Sustainability of the Project

Make the establishment of a sustainability plan a priority during the project planning and partnership engagement stage, not an afterthought towards the end of a project.

- Sustainability is often forgotten and yet it is through sustainable outcomes that projects can achieve their full potential. Develop a sustainability plan that considers both the project itself and outcomes in the community.



The projects and associated organisations hope the learnings from these activities contribute to an ever growing evidence base for place-based work.

## Conclusion

This report reviewed four place-based projects and identified learnings that can be applied to future initiatives. Identifying opportunities for improvement is not to suggest that the projects have been anything but successful. Rather they should be viewed as part of a continuous improvement process so that opportunities can be taken, and challenges and pitfalls avoided in subsequent projects.

Key observations include the need for projects to have strong collaborative partnerships, a high degree of community involvement at all stages of the project, a degree of flexibility so that projects can evolve, and the need to incorporate sustainable practices throughout the initiative.

An important factor identified in this review was the need to align and take advantage of current policies and plans. Victorian Government's policy and planning directions, local government health and wellbeing plans, and community health's Integrated Health Promotion programs continue to inform and direct future place-based interventions in the West.

The four projects all met elements of the Department of Health and Human Services strategic directions, the *Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019* and the associated *Victorian Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework*. With each project choosing a place-based approach to address the health and wellbeing goals in these policies.

The projects and associated organisations hope the learnings from these activities contribute to an ever growing evidence base for place-based work.



# Appendix

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## 2 Project Documents

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Linking Melton, Feedback Summary

Linking Melton South Evaluation Framework

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Linking Melton South, Place Making Workshop 2014

Linking Melton South, Finding and Connecting our Assets (interview guide)

Mind Map

Project Evaluation Reports (various)

Reporting Documents (various)

Video

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### Revitalising Braybrook

Maribyrnong City Council Revitalising Braybrook Action Plan 2013 – 2015

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Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening Project Report 2015

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City of Hobsons Bay, Project Plan, the Neighbourhood Project

ISIS Primary Care IHP Planning 2013 – 2017, Brooklyn and Altona North Community Strengthening Project

### Our 3021

Integrated Health Promotion Plan 2013

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Integrated Health Promotion Plan 2016

Integrated Health Promotion Report 2015

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Logic Map

Our3021 Action Plan 2016

Our3021 Case Studies

Our3021 Governance Structure Terms of Reference

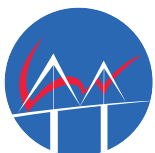
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Our3021 Summary Evaluation Report 2015

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