Submission to Parliamentary Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee.
19/8/2012

Over the last eighteen months, SpringDale Neighbourhood Centre has worked with Drysdale Clifton Springs Community Association to start a wide conversation in our community, around economic development opportunities.

Drysdale Clifton Springs is a designated growth area for housing in our wonderful part of the world but the City of Greater Geelong - Drysdale Clifton Springs Structure Plan 2009 updated in 2010 has only allowed for minor economic planning.

Our community has been content and happy but this has been interpreted as apathetic and uninterested by our non participation in local government decision making and feedback. But many of us feel that we must act now and we must encourage everyone to participate and be part of the conversation.

We continue to bring people to the table to get the conversation going. It has become evident that the prime goal to assisting us down this path, to improve our economic capacity, is to build infrastructure that was planned and designed more than 30 years ago, which is a bypass to increase the wellness of the heart of our town. This piece of infrastructure would enable businesses to develop along Murradoc Road and to extend along the sides of the ring road. This would allow through traffic to progress to their destinations without cutting our town in half and preserving the village atmosphere within our beautiful town.

The other high priority that is raised is urgent access to the NBN as we have many “black spots” in current communications reception which greatly affects our ability to compete economically in the world wide arena or even locally.

Next week we are holding sessions with our Business Network as part of the Small Business Festival to look at Marketing our Town and on Wednesday evening we are holding the same session with our community members, a public meeting of the Drysdale Clifton Springs Community Association, and we will complete the week on Sunday with a community consultation to define the types of stories that we would like told via art installations and the sites where we might like to place art installations. We believe that art plays a significant role in our lifestyle. Drysdale is home to a theatre complex shared with 2 local secondary colleges called the Potato Shed. We have created a successful Festival of Glass and we would like to build on these strengths in a tangible daily way through art installations which may tie our part of the world together.

We have fully participated in the G21 Land Use Growth Plan and have enunciated the goal of economic development in our part of G21 strongly and we seem to be being heard.

We have participated in the launch of the Expansive Learning Network in Geelong and have offered our town as a pilot project to map our current situation and as our town transforms from being a town with 55% of income escaping from our town to a town which strives to meet needs and keeps 80% of income circulating within our community.
We have participated fully in the development process for an Urban Design Framework for Drysdale. We continue to work with City of Greater Geelong and the community to ensure that the best outcome is implemented to support long term sustainability.

We are currently going through the process of consultation concerning proposed boundary changes for Drysdale as other towns on the Bellarine are growing, it is being proposed that Drysdale – a significant town with great heritage, is being reduced in footprint, much to the dismay of residents.

This issue has brought many people to the conversation and has probably been the tipping point to call our town to action.

We continue to ask for 12 months to allow us time to bring opportunities for discussion to our community so that we form a community point of view to assist in any consultations in a fully informed and resourced manner to enable our community to act proactively.

We have received some funding to help us along this path from ACFE, Adult Community Further Education – Learn Local. The grant has allowed us to research the education courses required to support our community long term and thus develop training courses in line with community requirements while bringing to the attention of our community, opportunities for discussion and action.

The project will provide a community led Economic Development Plan for Drysdale Clifton Springs to feed into City of Greater Geelong and G21 plans. We will also have a training development plan for SpringDale Neighbourhood Centre. These plans will help to build the template for other plans that we are working on for our town including an Art installation Plan, Open Spaces, Cycling Walking Plan and many other plans as they are determined.

It is through engagement with City of Greater Geelong, G21 and other levels of Government that we wish to progress our own Economic Development to ensure that our town becomes sustainable again and greatly reduces the high income escape and retain it to wander around the town supporting many businesses as it is spent over and over again. We do not wish to be a dormitory town in which people only really live here after hours and on weekends we want people to live, work and participate here.

I am excited to be working with our community in this way. SpringDale Neighbourhood Centre is excited to be supporting and empowering our community to determine its own future.

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