

MERIMBULA

Town Summit

Merimbula Chamber of Commerce
February 2021



 PEOPLE PLACE & PARTNERSHIP





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Project: Merimbula Town Summit Report

Client: Merimbula Chamber of Commerce

Revision	Status	Date	By	Checked
A	Draft	24 February 2021	SH, JL, MS	JK
B	Final	26 February 2021	SH, JL, MS	JK

report are based on estimates, assumptions and information sourced and referenced by People, Place and Partnership and participants at the Merimbula Summit. We present these estimates and assumptions as a basis for the reader's interpretation and analysis. With respect to actions we do not present them as results that will actually be achieved. We rely upon the interpretation of the reader to judge for themselves the likelihood of whether these actions can be achieved or not. In undertaking this project we have relied upon information concerning the study area provided by the client and Summit participants we have not independently verified this information except where noted in any documentation.



PLACE
PLANNING



STRATEGIC
FACILITATION



COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT



PLACE
ACTIVATION

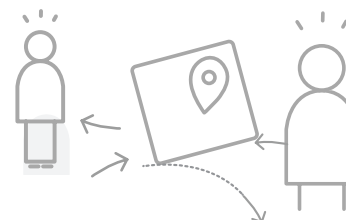


PLACE
TRAINING

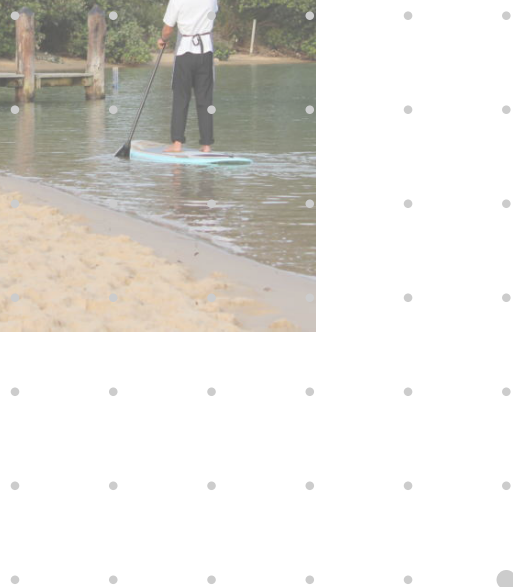


PLACE
MANAGEMENT

We are passionate about connecting people to place and place to people to create long lasting change.



Cover: mural artwork from public toilet by Sueellen Yates



PPandP have undertaken this work in collaboration with Merimbula Chamber of Commerce and part funded by Mumbulla Foundation. Further PPandP have undertaken this work as a philanthropic project to assist in the recovery and community connectedness in the town of Merimbula within the Sapphire Coast that has been affected by bushfires, COVID-19 and VIC border closures.

It has been our joy to connect with the diverse stakeholders that are all working so positively to seek a resilient outcome from these challenging times. We wish the community of Merimbula all the very best in the road to resilience, connectedness and long term revitalisation.

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WORKSHOP

PURPOSE

On Friday and Saturday the 19th to 20th February 2021, Merimbula Chamber of Commerce held a community and business Summit hosted at Merimbula RSL club over one and a half days, facilitated by People, Place, and Partnership (PPandP). More than one hundred individuals participated over the course of the two days comprised of a cross-section of government agencies, property owners, business owners, tourism groups, community groups, developers, media, and the local community.

A number of key speakers were in attendance including Nigel Ayling President of Merimbula's Chamber of Commerce, Michael Pryke Chair of Mumbulla Foundation, Jo Kelly Director of People, Place, and Partnership, Dr Alice Howe of Bega Valley Shire Council, Darren Batty National Manager of Regional Sales and Development Qantas (via video), Kristy McBain MP. Member of Parliament for Eden-Monaro, Andrew Constance, Member

for Bega, Minister for Transport and Roads, Russell Fitzpatrick Mayor Cr. Bega Valley Shire Council, Shane Fltzsimmons Commissioner of Resilience NSW (via video).

The Summit included a series of interactive group sessions that were centred around reflecting on the past and thinking about the future of the town, understanding the context of the region, recognising the current issues, analysing the potential gaps for opportunities, brainstorming ideas for the future of Merimbula, and finally developing an implementable strategic 10 Point Action Plan for the years ahead.

Local artist Sueellen Yates has highlighted the key attractors for people coming to Merimbula and the team at PPandP have continued to embellish this artwork based on the final outcomes from the 2 day event. (image included on the next page).

DISCLAIMER

The following Action Plan represents the documentation of thoughts, ideas and aspirations of the Merimbula community as discussed at the Merimbula Town Summit. In preparing this report no background research, place assessments or evaluation has been undertaken. Therefore, conclusions and statements included in this document are purely based on engagement outcomes.



MERIMBULA

Tourism GROW

- Boardwalk
- Lake
- Fishing
- Foreshore

Where Focus goes, energy flows...

CBD MAKEOVER

DISCOVER
BUSINESS

Marketing jobs
CONNECTIONS

Housing Community

- Affordable
- Workability
- Employment

WORKSHOP

OVERVIEW

Friday

SESSION 1

SWOT Analysis

Identifying the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Merimbula focused on the key issues identified.

Big Ideas

Understanding the big ideas individuals have for the future of Merimbula.



SESSION 2

See & Do

Participants wrote out the various things they wanted to see and do in Merimbula in the future, highlighting their values and priorities.

Visitor Profile

Participants mapped the visitation profile of Merimbula in relation to age, groups, travel distance as well as visitation peak hours.

Identity Cards

Understanding how participants perceive Merimbula's local identity, and what it represents to them.

Mapping

Participants identified locations with specific issues and potential solutions the issues recognised.

SESSION 3

Initiating Actions

Participants identified the opportunities for key actions understanding what they would like to see in the future.

SESSION 4

Panel Discussion

The Panel Discussion aimed to forge the future of Merimbula within the Bega Valley communicated by the speakers across three layers of Government.

Participating in the panel discussion included; Kristy McBain MP. Member of Parliament for Eden-Monaro, Andrew Constance, Member for Bega, Minister for Transport and Roads, Russell Fitzpatrick Mayor Cr. Bega Valley Shire Council.



Saturday

SESSION 5

Ideas Think Tank

Participants refined their most favourable actions that were both feasible and implementable.

SESSION 6

10 Point Action Plan

Participants voted on the most desirable action plan initiatives that reflected what they wanted to achieve in the short, medium and long term.

WHAT IS THIS REPORT?

This report is an accurate documentation of the ideas, insights and group discussions held over the two-day Summit. This information has therefore not been further interrogated to discuss what may or may not be deliverable.



SURVEY

RESULTS

A survey was undertaken through the RSVP system prior to the Summit session to understand the values, issues, and sentiments of the local community. The survey results identified what the community valued most whereby the natural environment of Merimbula was a favourite amongst many. The responses additionally shaped the focus area of the Summit translated into ten unique categories as the initial focus of the SWOT analysis.

What does the community value



ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS

ISSUES



1. Employment

- Employment heavily influenced by seasonal tourism
- Limited employment opportunities for youth



2. Housing supply

- Increasing competitive housing market
- High demand, limited supply
- Low availability of affordable housing options



3. Business & Town Centre

- Large vacancy rate
- Commercial rental prices
- Limited business mix
- Catering for more than tourists but local and regional consumers
- Limited trading hours
- Closure during off-peak tourism seasons
- Relationship between community



4. Community

- Lack of community connectedness
- Lack of community spirit



5. Nightlife & Entertainment

- Lack of activation including:
 - Events
 - Youth entertainment
 - Local markets



7. Public Domain & Town Centre Amenity

- Lack of parking for retail and at peak times
- Outdated infrastructure and amenities
- Need for beautification
- Does not align with community needs
- Positioning of bins within the town centre



9. COVID-19 Impacts

- Ongoing impacts to community and businesses
- Closure of borders particularly NSW and Victoria
- Lack of tourism spending
- Impacts on local economy



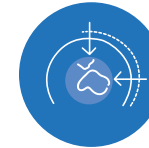
6. Accommodation & Tourism

- Industry focus on tourism
- Narrow seasonal tourism periods
- Under-funding on tourism
- Uncertainty with timeframes for the recovery of tourism



8. Transport & Accessibility

- Limited options available
- Connectivity within the town centre
- Connectivity with urban centres



10. Bushfire Impacts

- Neighbouring areas and surrounding natural environment heavily impacted by fires
- Many businesses required to close due to the safety of the community
- Impacts on local economic revenue
- No roadmap for recovery targeted for business



SESSION 1

SWOT

Participants undertook a SWOT analysis activity using the key issues identified from the survey results. This activity allowed collaborative thinking and discussion of the current identity of Merimbula. The analysis highlighted the various aspects that make the town a strong area, whilst also outlining the key areas to build and improve upon.

Governance

	STRENGTH	Recognised the community interest
	WEAKNESS	Application process with council is both hard and slow Red tape restricting businesses and organisations to grow
	OPPORTUNITY	Establishing better communication between government departments Recognising the various organisation within government and how they work and collaborate with the community of Merimbula
	THREAT	Competition for grant funds within the region

Foreshore

	STRENGTH	Unique location with diverse biodiversity and natural features Natural Beauty Pristine air quality Maintenance and management of the biodiversity Ability to thrive and continue to remain unspoilt
	WEAKNESS	Lack of visual access along the foreshore Bridge height restricts the launching of large boats
	OPPORTUNITY	Develop facilities that better access the foreshore for community benefit and encourage visitors to utilise the water system Ongoing management of the lake and systems including the mangroves and bar
	THREAT	Closure of the lake due to pollution and sewage treatment outfall Impacts to the oyster farming

Housing & Accommodation



	STRENGTH	Diverse variety of housing types available Close proximity to the Town Centre
	WEAKNESS	Increase in investors acquiring the properties Shortage of builders and labourers Real estate agents are not empathetic to local community seeking housing
	OPPORTUNITY	Shared accommodation incentives particularly for the elderly population wanting to downsize Backpacker or low-cost accommodation alternative for travellers and future employees Tiny houses on existing properties
	THREAT	Loss of jobs and job opportunities available if there are limited housing options available Increase of housing cost and displacement rates for residents unable to afford the increasing housing market prices Decrease in land availability for future growth to the area

Businesses & Town Centre



	STRENGTH	Many businesses are locally owned and operated Variety of business choices Many local artists and makers provide stock to local businesses
	WEAKNESS	Availability of skilled staff is limited Short trading hours throughout the week High rental pricing for shopfronts along major roads
	OPPORTUNITY	Capitalising on the various transport networks including airport, highways to enhance the accessibility to businesses
	THREAT	COVID-19 restrictions facilitating a forced closure on many businesses Border restrictions reduced local economic turnover



Employment



	STRENGTH	Environment and locality of Merimbula as a backdrop allows work to be enjoyable Low commute time to work Access point of airport provides convenience for those working from home or quick departure to cities Hospitality venues take in high levels of youth employees
	WEAKNESS	Lack of employment accommodation Limited career paths for young people Seasonality of work opportunities available Limited full time work roles
	OPPORTUNITY	More employment opportunities Employment programs for both customer service training and youth opportunities
	THREAT	Job opportunities are impacted by the externalities such as COVID-19 Red tape restricting the opportunity to open new businesses Complexity of awards and wages Rigidity of employment requirements does not allow for flexibility

Primacy of Bega



STRENGTH

Unique location and what Merimbula has to offer
Oyster farming and industry
Diverse variety of things to do including walking tracks, fishing, whale watching, water activities, national parks, fine dining
Locality to neighbouring Town centres within Bega Valley

WEAKNESS

Proximity to major cities such as Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne can be far
Limited signage of Merimbula on Highways

OPPORTUNITY

Capitalise on the oyster industry to help create an identity for Merimbula
Putting Merimbula on the map taking advantage of all the things the area is known for
Enhance the awareness of the area throughout NSW

THREAT

Competitive tourist market within Australia
Limited signage before entering Merimbula

Community



STRENGTH

Diverse range of community groups, ages, and stakeholders
Diverse talent and expertise
Various stakeholders from across the region
High levels of volunteer efforts
All round passionate
Recognised as a vibrant community

WEAKNESS

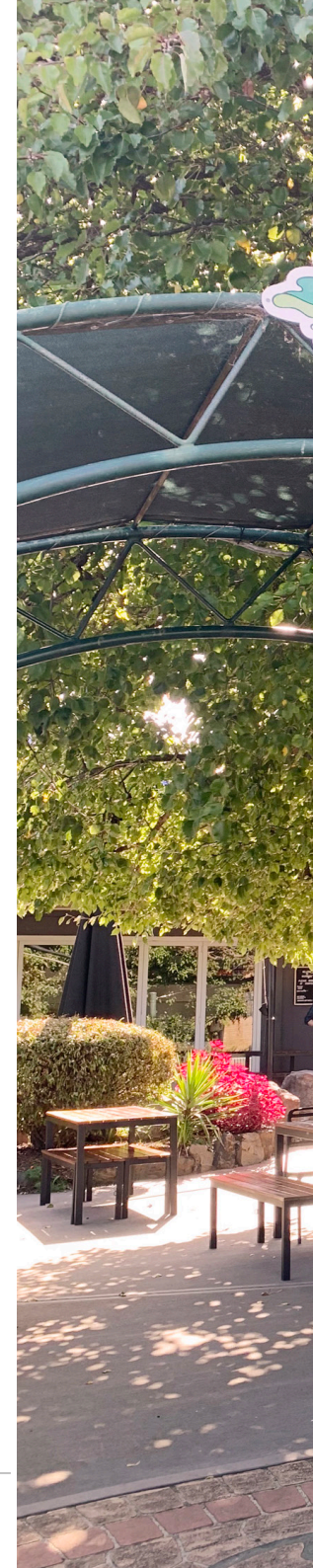
Community collaboration is not always effective
Volunteer community are of the older demographic
Lack of community identity
Untapped skills and experience not being properly utilised
Business approach is recognised as lifestyle driven
High turnover rate of people passing through the area

OPPORTUNITY

Bringing the community together for events
Establishing a unifying vision for businesses and community
Celebrate the success and identity of the community collaboration

THREAT

Apathy regarding what is happening both in and around the Town
Limited housing and accommodation for future community members





Tourism & Nightlife



STRENGTH

Natural beauty of Merimbula
Unique nature and biodiversity within the region
Airport creating better connectivity for visitors travelling
Merimbula Golf Club
Oyster farming

WEAKNESS

No nightlife within the Town Centre
Short business trading hours restricts the options available for visitors
Character of pubs is restricted for young people to enjoy
Limited events for families year-round
High levels of closure of businesses and activities within the Town during winter periods

OPPORTUNITY

Activate the winter season
Improve accommodation
Leverage the proximity of the airport and carriers
Enhance domestic tourism
Facilitate unique tourism experience
Promote what we are proud of
Provide night time events along the main street

THREAT

Regional location
Competition with the rest of the sapphire coast
Expensive to travel and stay within Merimbula
Funding sources for tourism are restricted
Low levels of transport options both during the day and evening
Ongoing border closures of States

SESSION 2

See & Do

Participants were asked what they would like to be able to see and do in the future within Merimbula. Most participants highlighted they wanted to see a unified and enhanced local identity of both the town and foreshore. Participants would also like to have better experiences within the town particularly focusing on a better interaction with the lake and cultural tours

See

- Focus on the foreshore and lake identity
- Recreational boats and activity in and around the lake
- A finger wharf at old tourist centre
- Pop up food trucks
- Creative retail and revitalised town centre that connects to the waterfront beauty
- Real focus on the lake
- Leadership
- Retail showing unique shopping experience
- More roadside signage-awareness
- More of the natural world and pristine places
- Improved entry signage relating to the History of Merimbula
- Opportunities for young people who don't want to leave the region
- Better connectivity between town centre and foreshore
- Trail of all the vantage points open at sunrise and sunsets
- More future work opportunities
- Merimbula to think beyond its postcode (e-commerce digital economy)
- More available flights to other locations rather than Sydney and Melbourne
- Much more character in town



Do

- Experience the lake and the various opportunities
- Have pleasant and extended dining experiences
- Relax in a 100 room 4.5 star hotel
- Nature based tourism, local food, and wine experience
- Locals tour for visitors to the area showing all the local favourite spots
- Growth to impress our returning tourists
- Flexible shopping times and diverse experiences
- Food trail experience
- Enhanced engagement with the community
- More eating experiences
- Walkable town centre that thrives on its surrounding natural features
- Best fish chips and seafood (Merimbula seafood) catch of the day fish
- Family friendly activities all year round
- More daytime functions available within the Town
- Extension of mountain bike trails to and from the area capitalising on regional tourism

SESSION 1 & 3

Big Ideas

Participants were asked to write down what their big idea for the future of Merimbula would be. Most participants reflected a strong need for better accessibility and connectivity, enhanced place identity, more attractions and events, improved parking options available as well as providing

more diverse tourism experiences. Whilst the question were asked to participants at the Summit to provide aspirational big ideas, once these ideas were analysed they reflect more of people's individual wants and aspirations rather than big transformational ideas.



Accessibility & Connectivity

- Pedestrian accessibility
- Fluid and easily accessible Town
- Transport access & options
- Greater Connectivity



Tourism & Experience

- Upgrade quality of accommodation
- Tourist destination & attraction
- Support travel within the Bega Valley



Place Identity

- Build a story to tell
- Clear Identity
- Aspire and belong
- Communication Strategy



Attractions & Events

- Night Economy
- Markets
- Foreshore Activation
- Large Scale Events



Traffic & Parking

- Better Parking options
- Less congestion
- Resolve traffic movement

Panel Discussion

The Panel Discussion comprised of three levels of Government including Andrew Constance NSW Member for Bega and Minister for Transport and Roads, Kristy McBain MP Member of Parliament for Eden-Monaro and Russell Fitzpatrick, Mayor of Bega Valley Shire Council. The discussion emphasised the importance of community connectedness to produce a unified vision for Merimbula.

Key Messages from Speakers:

- Ms McBain stated the first step should be community consultation, identifying the wide cross section of participants attending the Summit is a great start
- Mr Constance highlighted the importance of clarifying priorities to develop the 10 Point Action Plan and inform Government
- Mr Fitzpatrick identified the need to start and collaborate with Local Government
- Community connectedness is fundamental to the vision of Merimbula and formulating a universal action plan
- Enhance the local features and amenities unique to Merimbula
- Recognise the power of communities understanding the priorities for the area
- Understand the importance of establishing short-, and long-term goals and objectives
- Rebadge the branding image of Merimbula as the South Coast not Far South Coast
- Take advantage of Service NSW grants and tourism initiatives
- Support change and commit to a cohesive direction

SESSION 2

Local Identity

The different themes identified for Merimbula's local identity character were connected to the layering of history, as well as the unique local character and diverse community found within the town.



Box of Chocolates

The box of chocolates represents Merimbula with its similarity to be a surprising unique journey for everyone. It highlights how the Town is filled with unique experiences businesses, and people. Not everyone enjoys every flavour of chocolates within a box but the mystery of experiencing each one shows a personalised sentiment about how Merimbula is defined uniquely by each individual within the community.



Layered Chocolate Cake

The layered chocolate cake represents the many historic layers that Merimbula is built upon. It is a celebration of key milestones and achievements found within the Town, working together to tell a story that is reflective of its proud identity.



Trifle

The trifle demonstrates how Merimbula is built in various stages, with each layer being a unique ingredient to the local character and identity. The combination of the various people and places within the Town, complement each other when all added together harmoniously.



Celebration Cake

The celebration cake also reminds people of when they would visit Merimbula as a tourist, and eventually migrate to the area. Merimbula is recognised as a home surrounded by their family, friends and local community which should continue to be celebrated every day.



SESSION 2

Mapping

The mapping activity allowed participants to visually identify areas where there were key issues within Merimbula. The participants were asked to pinpoint their favourite places within the area, many identifying the foreshore. Further investigation highlighted that users found these areas

along the foreshore hard and unsafe to access. Participants formulated key ideas to improve these issues with majority wanting to enhance and improve the current pedestrian connectivity throughout Merimbula.

Key Issues

- Many community members love walking particularly along the foreshore areas of Merimbula but accessibility within certain points is limited or not safely reachable. This is inclusive of the areas behind Merimbula Airport.
- The night-time economy of Merimbula has been identified by the community as limited to restaurants closing at 9pm most weekdays. There are limited opportunities available for the youth of the Town who are younger than eighteen to socialise safely within the public environment.
- The entry points into Merimbula Town have been identified as an issue due to its limited signage present for traveling visitors
- Pedestrian accessibility throughout the Town Centre has been recognised as an ongoing issue for many community members due to the dominance of private vehicles
- The views along the foreshore walk are hidden by infrastructure, mangroves, and community amenities



Key Ideas

- Expanding business opportunities around Merimbula Airport taking advantage of the peripheral locality and optimising the visitor influence
- Enhancing the signage located along Merimbula's entry points to improve the identity and awareness of the Town, telling a story to traveling visitors
- Improve the pedestrian connectivity throughout the Town centre to enhance accessibility for all individuals whilst further encouraging a reduced dependence on private vehicles
- Activate the foreshore and surrounding greens space for more individuals can utilise and enjoy

Key Takeaways

- Many issues highlighted were consistent amongst most community members relating to accessibility, mobility, wayfinding, signage, activation of public spaces, and the local identity

SESSION 2

Visitor Profile

Participants were asked to map out the visitation profile of Merimbula identifying the various ages, groups and locations visitors came from.

The assessment indicated the town was the busiest during the morning and evenings with all demographics occupying the urban environment, highlighting the inherent relationship between community and trading hours of businesses.

What time do people come?



Mornings between 7-10am are the peak time in Merimbula



Low activity between afternoon and evening



Increased footfall between 6-9pm

How long do they spend there?



Merimbula's visitors and locals normally spend around 30 minutes in cafes and outdoor seating.



People linger for about 1 to 2 hours in the town's retail, restaurants and the waterfront.

Where do people usually spend their time?

In the mornings, people often spend their time relaxing in cafes, visiting retail and walking in the foreshore. From midday onwards, clubs and restaurants as well as the cinema and retail get busier. The RSL, the cinema and restaurants continue to keep busy during the evening.

How old are they?

- Variety of demographic groups depending on the location within the Town Centre
- Families enjoy the various playgroup and leisurely spaces within the town centre
- Professionals utilise the local cafes before work and during their lunch break
- Young people enjoyed using the walking trail in the morning before school, and work

Where do they come from?

- Increase of business workers traveling to the coast due to the COVID-19 restrictions allowing to work from home
- Regional visitors from Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne depending on border restrictions
- Large group of visitors from areas within the Bega Valley Shire
- Increase of visitors from regional areas due to staycation drivers
- Decrease in international backpackers also impacting the employment within the hospitality sector of Merimbula

Key Takeaways

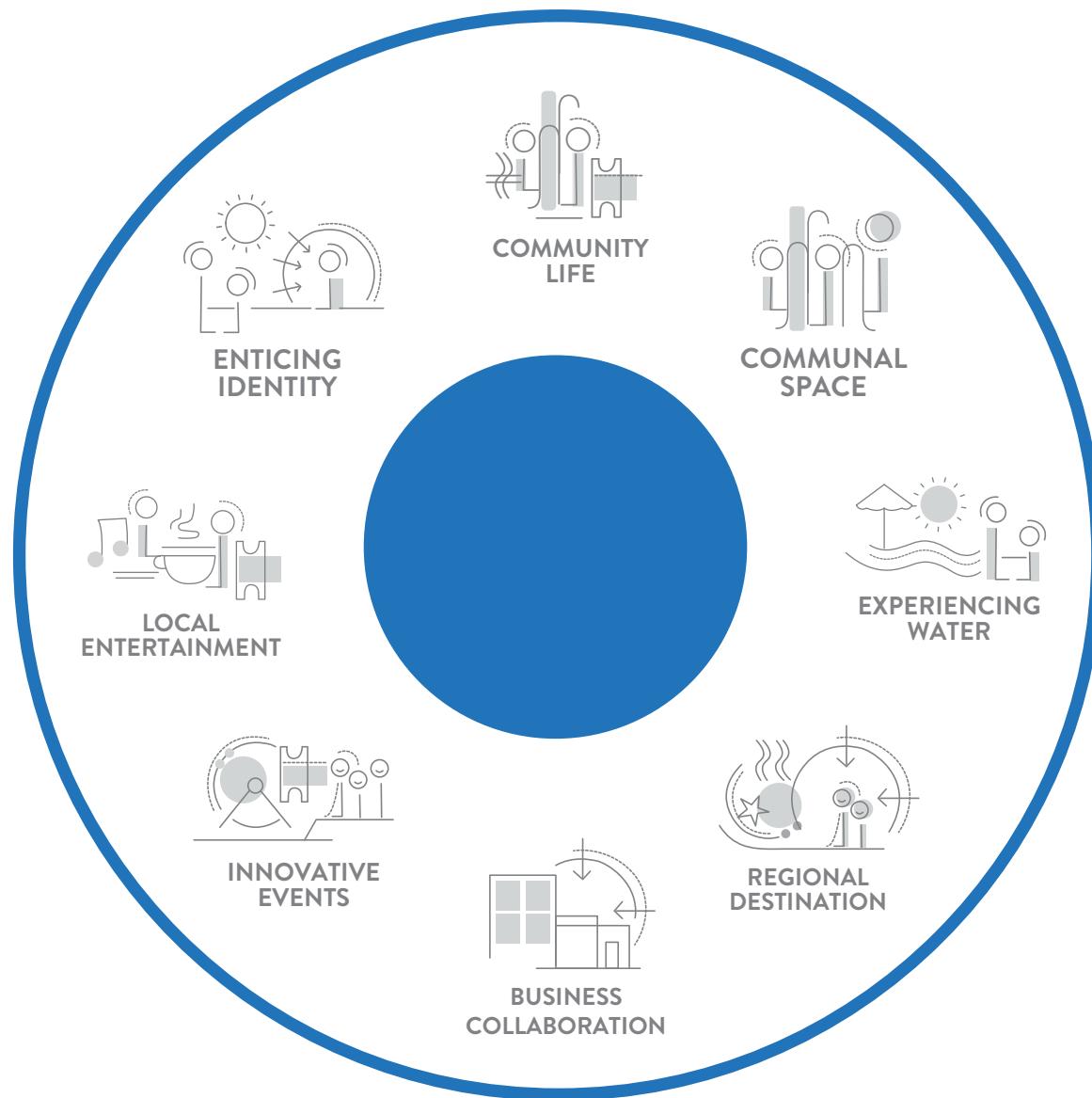
- A variety of people of all ages come to Merimbula depending on the time of year
- Many of the shops within the town determine and dictate the busy times within the town centre
- The more businesses that are open throughout the afternoon will help encourage more people to spend time within the centre
- Throughout the past year, Merimbula has experienced an overall decrease in visitors to the area due to externalities including the bushfires, and COVID-19 border restrictions

SESSION 3

Visitation Drivers

Locals to visitors, set foot in Merimbula. Either it is a local doing their daily needs, businesses collaborating with each other, a neighbouring locals accessing a service they can only find in Merimbula or a visitor that comes to enjoy shops, attractions and experiences. These visitation drivers are a summary of the key reasons people come to Merimbula.

The 10 Point Plan should always look against these Visitation Drivers to establish if an action seeks to encourage visitation, activation or business connection and to help facilitate the ongoing positive identity of Merimbula.



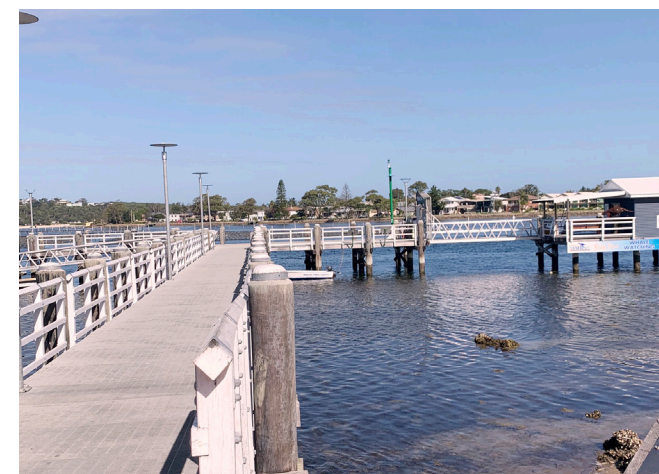
SESSION 4

Ideas Think Tank

Participants were placed into groups to collaborate, discuss, and identify the four major actions for Merimbula in formulating the 10 Point Action Plan based on the various issues, opportunities, and challenges investigated from previous activities. These ideas were categorised into key themes including transformational (major things), branding, programs, events, identity, accessibility and mobility, organisations, activation, businesses, wayfinding and signage, and housing and accommodation. Each individual idea highlighted what the focus area was how long it would take to deliver, an estimate of cost, and the various stakeholders needed to collaborate to deliver.

Transformational (Major things)

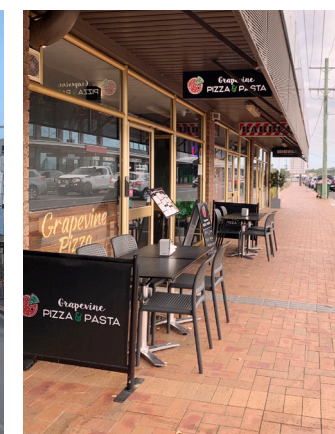
Idea	Time	Resources	Collaboration
Wharf to wharf trail for locals and visitors Establishing a connected tourist experience	Long Term 2-4 years	\$\$\$	Council Tathra Region
CBD Upgrade. Focus on foreshore and lake environment, whilst also securing funding. Additionally, implementing bike and walking trails	Long term 2 years	\$\$\$	Council Chamber of Commerce Cycling community groups Schools State Government
CBD Revitalisation and activation focusing on re-engineering of Beach St., activating the foreshore green spaces, enhance the connectivity and accessibility for pedestrian mobility	Long term	\$\$\$	Council Chamber of Commerce Businesses Community State Government
Refresh of Main Street (promenade), including more planter boxes and public art	Short-Medium	\$	Community Groups and organisations
Transform Beach Street Carpark into a marketplace. Temporary activation transformed into long term with supporting infrastructure	Short-Medium	\$\$	Community groups Council Business Owners
Large branded hotel with water access	Long term	\$\$\$	Property Developers Hotel Brand Government Planning
Beach Street Foreshore Upgrade. Primary public space and redevelopment site will enable local events	Long term	\$\$\$	Business Community Council Government Bodies Tourism



Foreshore Wharf



Market Street



Local business

Branding

Idea	Time	Resources	Collaboration
Better Branding of Merimbula through unique signage consistent throughout the Town and surrounding regional areas .	Medium Term 6 months	\$	Chamber of Commerce Council Merimbula Tourism Roads NSW
"The World is your Oyster" Merimbula Campaign. Ambassador program for local businesses and Town centre enhancing the branding	Medium Term, next 18 months	\$\$\$	Bega Valley Tourism SCDM Merimbula Tourism Chamber of Commerce
"Meet Merimbula" Campaign for businesses and community groups	Short Term	\$	Businesses Community Chamber of Commerce

Programs

Idea	Time	Resources	Collaboration
Youth Engagement Employment Program. Partnership with local businesses allowing opportunities to educate, and encourage employment	Now, Long term program	\$	Council, Training Services and organisations
Business Awards to encourage improved Customer Service	6-12 months	\$	Chamber of Commerce RTO Training Services NSW
Building Business collaborations and referrals. Boosting the 'elf on the shelf' initiatives to promote and collaborate with each other	Ongoing	-	Local Businesses Community Groups Think Tanks



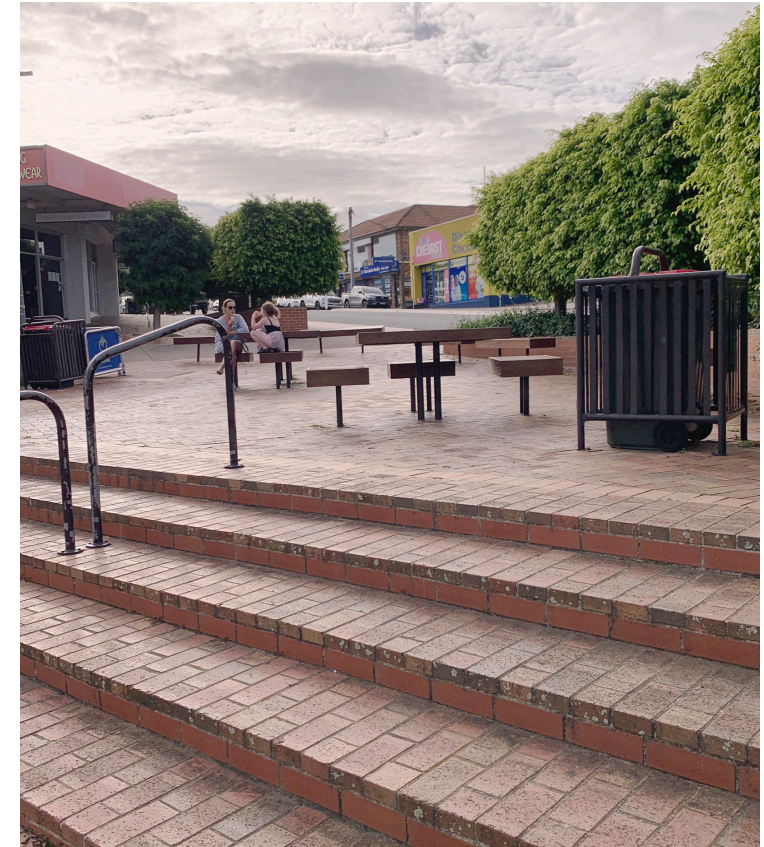
Examples of the current identity signage and local character of Merimbula and the businesses within the Town Centre

Events

Idea	Time	Resources	Collaboration
Christmas in July. Facilitate an event to enhance the entertainment opportunities particularly during the winter season for all ages	Short Term Planning and organisation Delivery in July	\$	Local businesses, community and visitors Chamber of Commerce Merimbula Tourism
September Oyster Festival expansion with supporting businesses and community organisations	Short Term Planning and organisation with delivery in September	\$	Local businesses, community and visitors Chamber of Commerce Merimbula Tourism
Pop up Beach Street Carpark Winter Festival. And trial in Summer periods	Short Term Planning and organisation with delivery in Winter	\$	Local businesses, community and visitors Chamber of Commerce Merimbula Tourism
Temporary Closures of Market Street exclusively for public events including markets, Jazz festivals, night markets. Delivered on a monthly or bi-yearly basis	Short Term Planning and organisation with ongoing delivery	\$	Local businesses Council Event planners

Organisations

Idea	Time	Resources	Collaboration
Establish a group to develop the Merimbula Brand. Facilitating the opportunity to put Merimbula on the map	Short Term	-	Community



Proposed existing spaces within Merimbula's public domain to host events for the community

Accessibility and Mobility

Idea	Time	Resources	Collaboration
Beach access points from behind Merimbula Airport	Medium Term	\$\$	Council
Footpaths from top of Merimbula Drive down as well as additional transport services for central points in Town	Medium Term	\$\$	Council Community Groups
Link major streets within the Merimbula Town providing better accessibility for both pedestrians and vehicles. Additionally, upgrade the boardwalk tracks. Will further assist in reduction of people using private vehicles and parking amenities	Medium Term	\$\$\$	Town Planners Landscape architects Engineers
Reclaim and upgrade the local mountain bush walking and mountain biking trails	Short Medium Term	\$\$	Community Bike Groups Government bodies
Local Shuttle Bus Service within the Town Centre and surrounding areas loop every half hour	Short Term	\$	SCBL Sponsors Chamber Merimbula Tourism

Activation

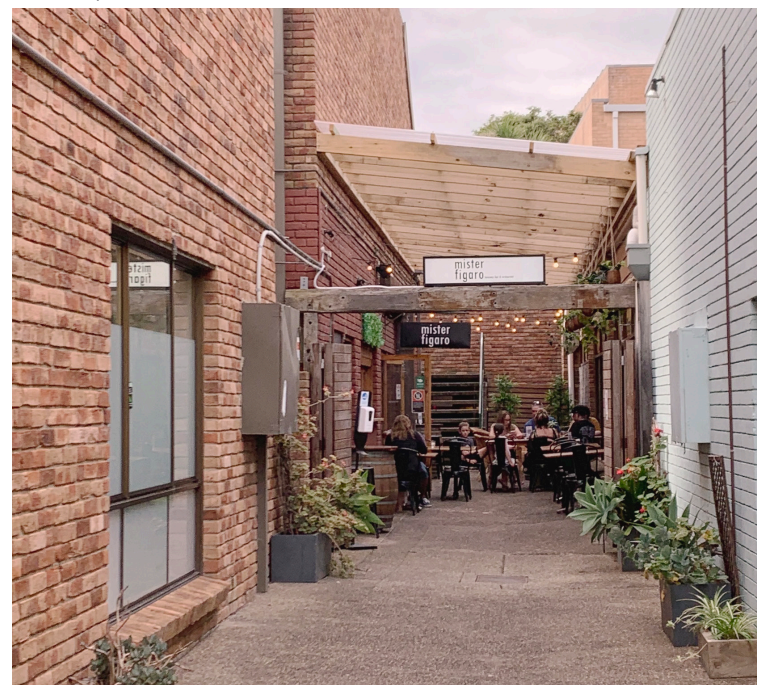
Idea	Time	Resources	Collaboration
Food and night time economy program. Inclusive of a food truck and pop up bar. Leverage Twyfold Hotel, Cinemas etc Foreshore Activation	Short - Ongoing Term	\$\$	Community Business SCDM



Signage and infrastructure showing current pedestrian accessibility



Boardwalk access along the foreshore



Activated laneway found within Merimbula's Town Centre

Businesses

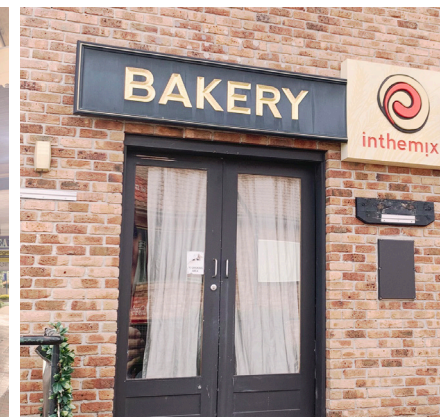
Idea	Time	Resources	Collaboration
Improved opening hours. Short term trial and provide monthly night-time activation events that emerge beyond the restaurant space	Short Term	-	Businesses Community Community Groups Chamber of Commerce
Longer Business trading hours. Providing more choice for locals and visitors	Short Term	-	Businesses Community Chamber of Commerce
Celebrity chef Food Activation Program – Program X – Business X – Your Seasonal Business. Fresh focus on food linking it to place with a new chef each time	Short - Ongoing Term	\$\$	Community Business SCDM

Wayfinding and Signage

Idea	Time	Resources	Collaboration
Integrate interactive signage throughout the centre using QR codes to allow visitors to understand more information. Creative local artists	Medium Term	\$\$	Chamber of Commerce Council Businesses Merimbula Tourism Roads NSW
Themed (e.g. Oysters) signage into Merimbula including the Highways and entry points	Short Term	\$\$	BVSG Road Department CC Leaders Merimbula Tourism

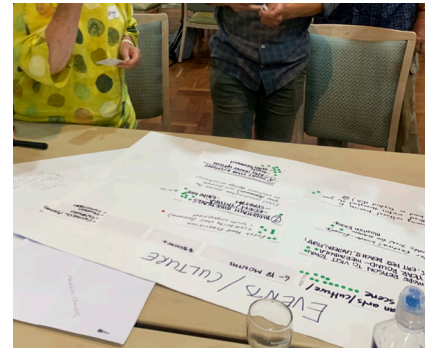
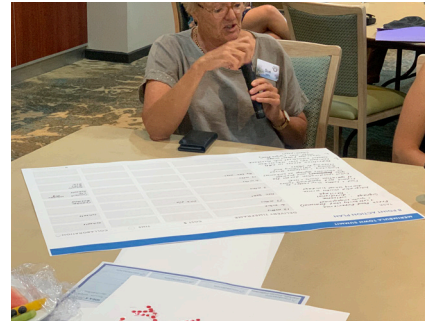
Housing and Accommodation

Idea	Time	Resources	Collaboration
Offer more long term new estates for a better affordable housing market	Medium Term	\$\$	Land Owners Council
Integrate medium density housing into the urban infrastructure of the town centre.	Medium-Long Term	\$\$\$	Land Owners Council



Images below represent examples of the businesses, signage and local character found within Merimbula.

10 Point Action Plan



1. Events and Cultural Activity of Merimbula
2. CBD Revitalisation Short and Long Term initiatives
3. Pedestrian Access, Mobility and Transport Connections
4. Local Leadership Group to foster the delivery of 10-Point Action Plan
5. Interactive Wayfinding and Signage Installations
6. Renewed Identity and Branding of Merimbula Town
7. Youth Employment Skills Training and Opportunities
8. Housing and Accommodation Renewal
9. Business Collaboration and Unified Trading Hours
10. Foreshore Activation and Integration with Town Centre

SESSION 2

Ten Point Plan

The purpose of creating a 10 Point Plan provides implementable actions that are both feasible and locally-led to unify the growth and connectedness of Merimbula. The plan aims to capture the diversity of stakeholders from across a broad spectrum of the business and wider community of Merimbula. An effective plan provides the opportunity to test the principles, techniques, and opportunities whilst acknowledging that its okay to take risks being open to experimenting and learning through testing.

The plan builds on the key principles identified by the community through the engagement undertaken within the Summit whereby the actions are being delivered in the timeframes 'now' (quick wins and immediate actions) and 'next' (those actions that are able to be undertaken strategically in the future).

The development of the 10 Point Plan was achieved through discussion and collaboration amongst all participants involved within the Summit. Using the outcomes from the initial 8 Think Tank Sessions, participants debated and reviewed which actions were most relevant and practical to achieve, whilst also highlighting the key issues that the action would respond too. All actions formulated by the groups were then organised into the key themes that each action focused on. Each participant received ten green dots and five red dots to vote on the actions they believe were most important and feasible to Merimbula to oversee the future resilience and revitalisation.

The 10 Point Plan recognises the overarching priorities that the community would like to initiate when thinking about the future of Merimbula and the Town Centre. Each action has been developed to reflect the community priorities in the 'now' and 'next' phase of delivery.

The 10 Point Plan provides an overview for each of the 10 themes together with a series of summary actions, these work together and should be read as one.

The business and local community are encouraged to further review and assess specific actions that are highlighted on pages 20 to 24 as these ideas, actions and inspiration are also of merit and may provide more detail for future thinking.

The actions are intended to provide some oversight to the enthusiastic thinking of what happens next for Merimbula. Some ideas will work wonderfully, whilst others once tested may need to pivot or be implemented differently. This 10 Point Plan encourages that exact approach, to work together to realise the ambitions within this plan.

Events and Cultural Activities of Merimbula

Many community members understood that the variety of local events available within the Town Centre year-round was limited to a handful of events run by special interest organisations.

This Action focuses on activating the heart of the Town into a vibrant space, benefiting both the local community, and additionally attracting more visitors to the area throughout the year. Many individuals strongly supported and advocated for this action due to the common goal of enhancing the local identity and fostering community and business connectedness. The delivery of more events within Merimbula will be short to medium varying on the planning and organisation involved, with an ongoing event calendar, particularly throughout the winter seasons.

Explore further opportunities to seek land (whether Council or private land for a catalyst project to create a Cultural or Heritage Centre within the town centre.

Central Ideas of the action include:

Activate the Town Centre year round focusing on culture and food

Collaboration between community organisation, businesses and Twyford Hall

Collaborate with surrounding regional areas

Enhance the night-time economy

Attract visitors, enhancing the economic turnover and tourism spending

Celebrate the identity of Merimbula

Facilitate foodie experiences utilising local producers and farmers



Images above represent examples of inspirational imagery that could be used to encourage insights into further deliberations by the Leadership Group, whilst also providing an examples of existing local character found within Merimbula.

CBD Revitalisation Short and Long Term Initiatives

The CBD identity of Merimbula has been an ongoing topic for many community members. The issues commonly raised include the themes of the overall character and identity throughout the Town, and public domain amenities.

Revitalising and rejuvenating the CBD of Merimbula is a long-term planning process but short-term initiatives have been discussed to enhance and activate the existing urban fabric of the Town. Short term initiatives including collaboration with local businesses to further enhance the shopfronts will directly revitalise the visual identity of Merimbula. Additionally, upgrading the public bin amenities dispersed throughout the town will contribute to the visual appeal of the Town. Partnerships with government bodies, chambers, community groups and businesses will assist with the action of revitalising Merimbula's Town Centre.

Central Ideas of the action include:

Enhance the local identity and streetscape through Business shopfronts

Activate the passive spaces

Reinvigorate the public amenities

Completion of the CBD Masterplan upgrade and renovation



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Pedestrian Access, Mobility and Transport Connections

Walkability and transport within the Town Centre of Merimbula is an ongoing issue raised by the local community.

Merimbula is dominated by private vehicles with supporting infrastructures such as designated parking spaces and on-street parking zones contributing to the ongoing issues for pedestrian safety, accessibility, and mobility. Improving the connection points for pedestrians within the Action Plan will encourage more individuals to access the centre. Additionally, public transport services are recognised to be limited within the Town. Providing a community shuttle service loop will reduce both the dependency on cars and effectively connect the surrounding areas to the Town. Further consideration of mountain bike connections within bushland, along the foreshore as well as to and from the town centre. The short and long term actions will aid in improving the mobility and transport available within Merimbula.

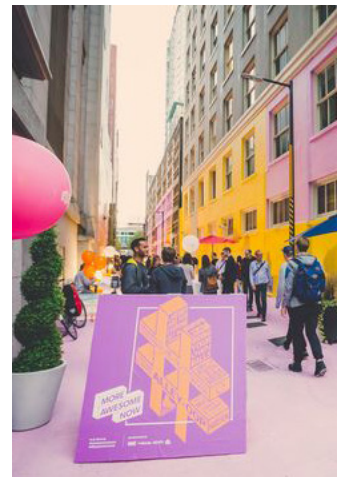
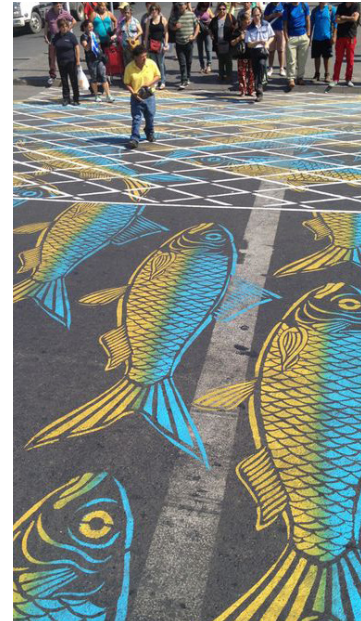
Central Ideas of the action include:

Enhance the pedestrian, cycle and mountain bike connectivity

Foster better community transport opportunities

Promote a safe walkable town

Reduce parking issues



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4

Local Leadership Group to foster the delivery of 10-Point Action Plan

The engagement findings from the Summit highlighted the opportunity to establish a Locally led Leadership Group identified as a key priority for the overall delivery of Merimbula's Action Plan.

This diverse cross section of the community, businesses, property owners, chamber, and tourism highlight the willingness to cohesively collaborate and work together towards a common vision. This action has been identified as short term with its implementation and planning process for an ongoing long-term lifecycle that will continue to evolve alongside the growth of the community. The Local leadership Group defines Merimbula as a proud and connected community.

Central Ideas of the action include:

Deliver the 10 Point Action Plan

Foster the development of Merimbula's brand and identity

Continued collaboration with various stakeholders and Government bodies



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Interactive Wayfinding and Signage Installations

The various workshops undertaken during the Summit highlighted that many individuals wanted to improve Merimbula's wayfinding and signage both within the Town and at the various entry points into the Centre.

Creating unique wayfinding and navigation tools dispersed throughout the Centre will assist in providing both locals and visitors information and directions whilst also enhancing the visual identity and attractiveness of the Town. Integrating digital signage additionally within the centre that showcases information about 'what's happening' aids as an information tool for all individuals to experience. Additionally, placing signage strategically at the entrances to Merimbula will enhance the visibility to travelers whilst also communicating the identity and local character the area is defined by. This medium-term action will be achieved through the collaboration with the Local Leadership Team, community, and government bodies to create a positive outcome celebrating the identity of Merimbula.

Central Ideas of the action include:

Communicate the unique story of Merimbula

Strengthens the identity and local character

Provide information about what's on in Merimbula

Place Merimbula on the map

Identify where businesses and other activities are and how to get there



Images above represent examples of inspirational imagery that could be used to encourage insights into further deliberations by the Leadership Group, whilst also providing an examples of existing local character found within Merimbula.

Renewed Identity and Branding of Merimbula Town

Identity and Branding is the most favourable action in the development of Merimbula's Action Plan.

The central goal is to transform the town centres identity from its current unknown brand, into something that centralises the community and future vision. This action is outlined as short-term regarding the planning and delivery with a long-term trajectory that can continue to be refined ensuring the overarching brand stays true to the local identity of Merimbula. This action is low cost but will produce a highly effective outcome, enhancing the awareness of Merimbula to both locals and visitors to the region.

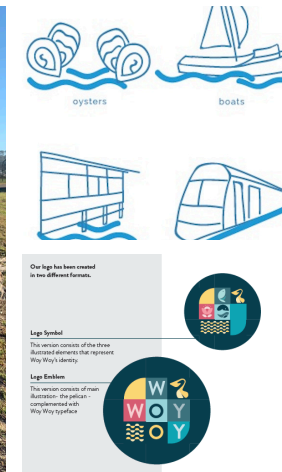
Various community members highlighted their interest in assisting in the planning and delivery of this action, illustrating the sentimental importance for both the identity and community in moving forward.

Central Ideas of the action include:

Create a clear identity unique to Merimbula

Define what the centre is to the community to share to travelling visitors

Establish a statement that reflects the local character



Images above represent examples of inspirational imagery that could be used to encourage insights into further deliberations by the Leadership Group, whilst also providing an examples of existing local character found within Merimbula.

Youth Employment Skills Training & Opportunities

The next generation of Merimbula's dynamic community is the youth of today.

The community recognised throughout the Summit that the current opportunities for the younger demographic are limited within the Town. By providing skills training programs for employment specifically tailored for the youth will help to sustain the opportunities available for long term employment within Merimbula. Many skilled individuals with knowledge in youth and employment volunteered to help carry through this Action Plan enabling more opportunities for the younger demographic.

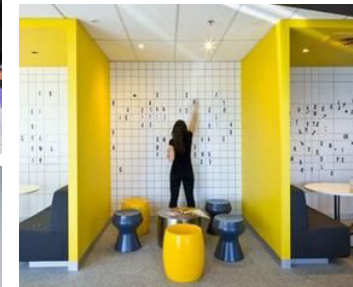
Central Ideas of the action include:

Provide mentors services for the next generation of employees

Support an education program to upskill and retain local employment opportunities

Facilitate training opportunities partnered with local businesses

Foster opportunities across all industry sectors



Images above represent examples of inspirational imagery that could be used to encourage insights into further deliberations by the Leadership Group, whilst also providing an examples of existing local character found within Merimbula.

Housing and Accommodation Renewal

The Merimbula Town Summit outcomes indicated various issues associated with accommodation and housing within Merimbula and surrounding areas.

Merimbula has experienced an increasing demand for housing stock and a growing competitive market over the years influencing affordable housing choices within the region to be extremely limited. Formulating a strategic plan for improving housing choices available to current and future community as well as enhancing the accommodation available has been identified as a strong action plan across the local community. Long term collaboration and partnerships with government bodies, the tourism sector, accommodation owners, and local community organisations will assist in the development and delivery of the strategic roadmap responding to accommodation and housing concerns.

Central Ideas of the action include:

Respond to the high housing demand and explore new housing typologies ie tiny houses

Provide opportunities for more people to relocate to the area

Formulate a long-term roadmap to prove diverse housing options

Investigate the opportunity for medium density housing within the Town Centre

Investigate the use of tiny houses on existing properties



Images above represent examples of inspirational imagery that could be used to encourage insights into further deliberations by the Leadership Group, whilst also providing an examples of existing local character found within Merimbula.

Business Collaboration and Unified Trading Hours

The business trading hours of Merimbula are recognised to define and dictate the vitality of the Town and how the community interact with the urban environment of Merimbula. Businesses need to extend their opening hours to capitalise on the various people roaming the Town in the morning and evening periods identified through the visitor profile assessment. Extending the opening hours specifically during the peak tourist seasons will inherently increase the revenue potential and economic turnover within Merimbula whilst also provide flexibility for visiting travelers.

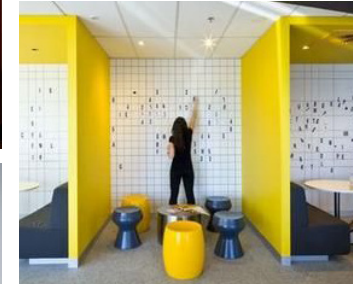
Central Ideas of the action include:

Collaborate with all business types within Merimbula

Create a campaign 'I'm proud to be open' communicating the positive attributes of longer trading hours

Unify trading hours amongst the business community

Create a 'Merimbula Ambassador' program that encourages and support business that are open to match the needs of visitors



Images above represent examples of inspirational imagery that could be used to encourage insights into further deliberations by the Leadership Group, whilst also providing an examples of existing local character found within Merimbula.

Foreshore Activation and Integration with Town Centre

The foreshore of Merimbula is a common favourite spot amongst the local community.

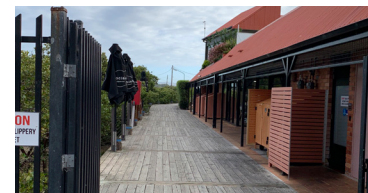
Reclaiming the grey spaces along the waterfront including the car parks and boardwalks will transform the urban environment into a more user-friendly activated space. The activation will focus on active transport routes such as bike and walking trails along the foreshore and pop-up community events within the car parks along Beach Street. The short and long term initiatives will harness the community interest providing better spaces for leisure whilst complimenting the surrounding natural environment. Furthermore, improving water management has been recognised as a priority for Merimbula. This includes improving the maritime tourism and fishing industry by ensuring safer access for boats and managing the sand bar to protect the natural environment for future generations, as well as recognising the vital role water tourism plays in the Merimbula local economy.

Central Ideas of the action include:

Activate the passive spaces for community benefit including temporary pop up markets

Harness the natural features and environment of Merimbula



Foster the conservation of the natural water system





Images above represent examples of inspirational imagery that could be used to encourage insights into further deliberations by the Leadership Group, whilst also providing an examples of existing local character found within Merimbula.

Summary



1. Events and Cultural Activity of Merimbula

Now	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with community organisations, council and businesses to create a diverse cross section of local and cultural events and consider options for a dedicated new resource (coordinator) to oversee • Document and promote the annual calendar of cultural and local events for Merimbula ensuring there is one place for all information delivered holistically • Further build on the many locally delivered events EAT Merimbula, Oyster Spring Festival etc • Test the Beach Street carpark for local markets and local events • Wharf to wharf trails and cultural focus on the foreshore and lake • Food and night time economy program, testing food trucks and pop up bars in the town centre 	Short Term	\$\$		Collaborator
Next	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake an audit of all existing events to understand how to grow, improve and build existing events to attract a wider audience • Review existing event calendar and look at months where least activity is occurring to promote a new event to attract attention to off-peak times • Create a local Merimbula Annual Festival and close off a street in the town centre • Collaboration with Twyfold Hall once opened • Establish a new authentic major regional event that becomes an iconic reason to stay, visit and enjoy Merimbula 	Long Term	\$\$		Collaborator

2. CBD Revitalisation Short and Long Term Initiatives

Now	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresh business frontages along Market Street by working with key property owners and businesses Integrate more greenery and colour within Merimbula town centre working with Council and businesses Actively define and then promote the key local communal spaces for pop up activations Create a pop-up activation toolkit to encourage business, cultural, creative and community groups to engage in the activation of key areas of the town centre Undertake a place experience audit to understand how a visitor experiences the town centre and the natural landscapes of Merimbula - what is working what is not and how can we improve? Undertake a spatial audit of the town centre and surrounding landscapes to further investigate areas that are in need of improvement The results of the experience and spatial audits should be used to provide a review of the Merimbula town centre upgrade to further prioritise future needs and aspirations 	Short Term	\$\$\$		Advocate
Next	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresh public infrastructure within Merimbula based on the experience and spatial audits working with Council Revitalise passive spaces and thoroughfares to create interesting opportunities to further enhance the local character and create moments of delight (for example look for streetscape upgrade opportunities similar to that of the carpark public toilets) Advocate for the renewal of the Master Plan for Merimbula's Town Centre and seek its implementation, particularly Main Street and the Beach Street foreshore 	Long Term	\$\$\$		Advocate

3. Pedestrian Access, Mobility and Transport Connections

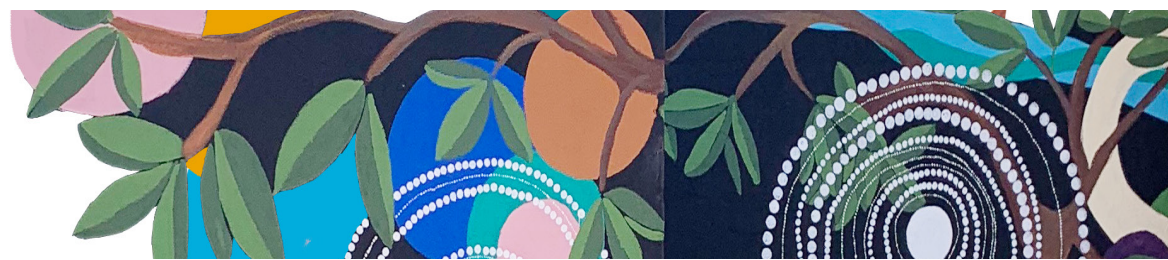
Now	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for better access the pedestrian networks across Merimbula, including the boardwalk tracks, buswalking and cycling / mountain bike trails and wharf to wharf trail for locals and visitors Collaboration with Council highlighting key issues regarding pedestrian mobility within the town centre 	Medium Term	\$\$		Advocate
Next	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate community shuttle service bus loop within the town and surrounding areas Collaboration with Tathra to create a wharf to wharf bike trail Work with council to enhance pedestrian walkways and footpaths throughout the town centre, such as beach access points from the Airport Work with council to provide better safe pedestrian crossings within the town centre 	Long Term	\$\$\$		Partnership

4. Local Leadership Group to foster the delivery of 10 Point Action Plan

Now	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form the local leadership group Establish a robust ongoing governance process Identify the key focus area for the delivery of the Action Plan 	Short Term	\$	🤝🤝🤝	Leader
Next				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage more local businesses and community groups to partner on local initiatives to deliver the Action Plan Provide ongoing leadership across multiple interest groups to ensure collaboration is holistically implemented 	Long Term	\$	🤝🤝🤝	Leader

5. Interactive Wayfinding and Signage Installations

Now	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the current signage across Merimbula at entry points Seek to better inform visitors about the diversity of opportunities for experiences, activities and business both within the centre and online from one consistent local brand identity Design marketing collateral for Merimbula that illustrates the key attractions in a holistic way 	Short Term	\$	🤝🤝🤝	Partner
Next				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement interactive signage within Merimbula Integrate Merimbula on highway signage, on all entry points to the area (from VIC, ACT and within NSW) Redesign Merimbula entry point sign to be more welcoming 	Medium Term	\$\$	🤝🤝🤝	Partner



6. Renewed Identity and Branding of Merimbula Town



Now	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a clear identity for Merimbula encompassing the holistic experiences of the town Define what Merimbula is to the community and visitors Undertake a key attractions audit by considering the day in the life of a visitor over a 48 hour timeline, what experiences are available, to stay, eat, recreate, enjoy, socialise - where do we need to improve? Establish a brand identity that reflects the local character based on the key attractions audit Distribute renewed identity through online, social media campaigns and wider marketing 	Short Term	\$	🤝🤝🤝	Advocate
Next	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a Campaign to promote Merimbula's identity across all local businesses within Merimbula, such as "Meet Merimbula" and "The World is Your Oyster" Implement the brand identity across all public facing collateral Communicate this change of direction in identity to all entities that widely promote the Sapphire Coast 	Medium Term	\$	🤝🤝🤝	Partnership

7. Youth Employment Skills Training and Opportunities

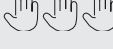
Now	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with government sectors, local businesses, and organisations to understand skills shortages Develop employment program and a training program targeted at youth partnering to align skills shortages in local business to local youth training opportunities 	Short Term	\$\$	🤝🤝🤝	Facilitator and Partnership
Next	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an ongoing partnership with local service providers in vocation skills training to deliver reoccurring programs to expand the diversity of local skills and opportunity for young people Collaborate to secure long term employment opportunities for youth by working with new and emerging industries to create a wider range of employment opportunities Collaborate with partners in new and emerging industries to create a wider range of employment opportunities 	Long Term	\$\$	🤝🤝🤝	Advocate



8. Housing and Accommodation Renewal

Now	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the current housing stock availability and seek to understand how to create future opportunities Collaborate with accommodation providers to seek opportunities for delivery of a diversity of housing types Formulate a plan for improving housing market choice Investigate how to provide short-term rentals to attract seasonal employees Explore opportunities from tiny houses on existing properties 	Medium Term	\$\$		Advocate
Next	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide more accommodation choices Provide more affordable housing Support Council in the long term landuse strategic direction in advocating for medium density housing within town centre Create incentives for landowners to adopt detached small housing on land parcels 	Long Term	\$\$\$		Collaborator

9. Business Collaboration and Unified Trading Hours

Now	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with local businesses to promote all businesses on digital and social media channels Encourage local businesses to work together to share local stories and what each other are doing within individual businesses Extend trading hours into the afternoons during peak season on weekends in a short-term trial Short term trial of monthly afternoon/night-time activation events that include a collaboration of businesses creating in store experiences, consistent trading hours and live music / cultural experiences 	Short Term	\$		Advocate
Next	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulate a strategic plan to recognise the future direction of retail trading hours Establish late night events calendar partnered with local businesses, particularly focused on Food Activation to leverage a night time economy and hospitality businesses 	Medium Term	\$		Advocate



10. Foreshore Activation and Integration with Town Centre

Now	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Formalise Beach St car park as a pop up activation space for up to 6 times a year. Seek expressions of interest for community, business or cultural entities to develop pop up activations to encourage more visitation to the centre, that includes food, entertainment and local experiencesActivate green spaces along the foreshore and integrate with dining and activation experiencesContinue management of the coastal sand bars to protect the water based tourism providers and access to Merimbula lake for motorised water craft	Medium Term	\$		Collaborator
Next	Time	Resources	Collaboration	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improve water access through wharf infrastructure and potentially a new jettyImplement a cycling and mountain bike trail along foreshore to encourage recreational opportunitiesManage the conservation environment along foreshore to cater for increased activity and conservationAdvocate for robust discussions regarding the future of the Merimbula (sand) Bar and ongoing management to further ensure that there is well understood role that boating and fishing tourism plays in towns economy	Long Term	\$\$\$		Collaborator



MERIMBULA

Town Summit

