

Communicating into the Heart of our Community

A return to basics

A first principle of our community engagement was a commitment to make every effort to contact as many members in our older demographic as possible. We were aware that some in our community do become isolated as they become older. We wanted to do everything we could to try to entice them out. This was important; the project funding was directly related to the Australian Government's response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and initiatives to better support older people to live longer in their communities.

Under the terms of the project our primary demographic was defined as all community members who were aged 50 and over, and 45 years or older for First Nations people. All Attitude events came with a rider though: that while the activity should be aimed at older residents, all ages would be welcome.

Living in what Marshall McLuhan first identified as a global village, but with communication now dominated by digital and social media rather than traditional print and broadcast channels, we recognised that in our town we could still draw on a traditional 'village well' to engage with our community. We saw that social media, with its cheap and immediate but oftentimes unreliable and crowded messaging, was failing to reach many people within our demographic who had either tuned out to the ceaseless 'noise' or had never switched on.

By adding 'old fashioned' print to create a seasonal *What's on in Clunes* guide to promote our program, we could create a valuable resource for our community and health networks to hand out to people not on social media. We saw this as a key investment for the project, and the Living and Ageing Well in Hepburn funding allowed us to pay for our print costs and for a volunteer to be trained up by a local designer to use a modern desktop graphics package to create professional print ready documents. The guide would be backed by posters for noticeboards and shopfronts, and articles would be placed in the local monthly newsletter. A website and social media were still a part of the mix but would not be relied on as the only way to get our message out.

Our network and the power of conversation

Our 'village well' was a mix of the town's known community gathering spots backed by an active network of referrals, personal interactions and conversations through our partnership with the health service and neighbourhood house and our growing Clubs of Clunes alliances.

Through Central Highland Rural Health, home-help volunteers and local allied health professionals, such as physiotherapists and diabetes educators, were given the *What's On in Clunes* guide to pass on in their visits or personal interactions with clients. We also introduced it to our local doctors. And at the start of each quarter, the guides were distributed with meals on wheels packs. This outreach approach, taking our program offerings right into the homes of some of our more isolated community members, was further supplemented through the Clunes Neighbourhood House, going out with their meals service and through their carers' network.

We also tapped into Clunes' active café culture and distributed guides through local restaurants, along with key contact points for our community such as the IGA supermarket, chemist, newsagent, hairdressers, library and museum complex and the local pub. Each of the three partners had copies in their reception/entry areas. We printed around 1500 each season for a town of 1700 people. Posters were created for shop fronts and notice boards to promote events as they grew closer, with new posters issued around every three weeks to highlight four different events at a time.





Designing for success

Another key principle defining our community engagement was a commitment to professionalism in the design and production of our promotional materials. We wanted materials that had meaning, were good to look at, readable and relatable. Images needed to be 'real', not the stock photo images that give so many government-funded projects that 'institutional' look. We ran a photo competition as part of the local Show to help build our collection of relatable images (as well as helping promote our broader program, calling for entries that explored the theme 'Ageing and Living Well in Clunes'. An A6, fold-out design was chosen for our *What's on in Clunes* guide so it could be easily picked up and taken home in a back pocket, a wallet or purse. The branding and colour palette was adopted across all elements of the Living and Ageing Well in Hepburn project to create an identifiable 'look and feel' linking all elements of the project.

The first section of the guide promoted our key upcoming events, such as day trips or special conversation and specialist workshops. The middle fold was given to our recurring activities such as film nights, local groups such as watercolour and writing and our 'fun and fitness' classes, covering everything from our weekly trekkers to strength and mobility sessions. Importantly, an invitation to submit events for promotion in the guide was also extended to other active groups in Clunes through a newly formed Clubs of Clunes alliance that the Attitude working party had initiated as part of the broader project. This was called 'Elsewhere about town'. Not only did it prove to be a great way to cross promote events in town, sharing the space was pivotal in helping re-establish the trust and communication between groups that had been fractured by the COVID-19 shutdowns.

What's On in Clunes guide specifications:

Quantity – 1500

Stock - Eco Star Silk recycled

Full colour

A4 Folded to A6

Quarterly, one full week prior to the start of each season

Prepared by the Attitude. Ageing Well in Clunes working party