

Wyndham as a Learning Community

March 2015

Joining its neighbouring local governments Melton and Brimbank, in Melbourne's Western Metropolitan Region, the City of Wyndham has embarked on its first Learning Community Strategy developed through a series of Community Forums. The Strategy covers the period from 2014-2017 and focuses on using learning to guide the development of the 'fast-changing face of Wyndham'¹ with its increasing diversity and expanding population base.

Wyndham, Victoria, is one of Australia's fastest growing regions, with more than 12,000 new residents in 2010, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Wyndham's population grew by almost 9% between 2009 and 2010 – more than five times the rate of Australia's population growth over the same period.²

The forecast is for steady and continued population growth over the next 17 years, leading towards an expected population of 332,239 by 2031 (the current size of Canberra). This is almost double today's estimated population of 187,788. During the life of this strategy the population is forecast to rise to 219,952 people.³

The strategy is being driven by Wyndham's vision to be a socially inclusive city with high levels of employment. These are fundamental in ensuring a prosperous future for the people of Wyndham. Learning is a key for realising this vision. Demonstrating effective learning community practice, the strategy is strongly linked to social inclusion and economic development goals in Wyndham City Council's key strategy documents, which set out the need to meet the learning challenges: the Quality Community Plan (the community's vision) and the Wyndham City Plan (2013 – 2017).

The City Plan states:

- To use learning to foster an inclusive City where diversity is valued and where groups at greater risk of exclusion are supported to participate fully in community life.
- To grow business investment, skills development and employment opportunities.
- To strengthen the capacity of citizens and community groups to participate in community life by providing opportunities for individuals to acquire knowledge, confidence, skills and experience.⁴

¹ City of Wyndham, Wyndham Learning Community Strategy 2014-2017, p 2:
http://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/aboutwyndham/planspolicieslocallaws/commdev/learning_community_strategy

² ABS (2011), Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2009-10, document 3218.0

³ 5 ABS (2013), Census of Population and Housing 2011, data analysis by ID Consulting; see
<http://profile.id.com.au/wyndham>

⁴ Wyndham, City Plan 2013 – "Inclusion is an important community value and focuses on how we ensure all residents can participate in their community and access services – regardless of age, gender, sexuality, income, education, skills, cultural background, language skills or disability".

The Learning Community Strategy sets out how Council will meet these learning goals over the next the next four years in partnership with the wide range of organisations in Wyndham which are responsible for learning.⁵

The aims and actions of the Wyndham Learning Community Strategy are addressed in five categories, a method which has been found to be a useful way of developing many learning community strategies:

1. Learning for everyone: the community-wide cultural change that supports and encourages learning for all
2. Early Years Life Stage: the learning needs of young children who have not yet started school
3. School Years Life Stage: the learning needs of children attending primary and secondary school
4. Young Adults Life Stage: the learning needs of people who have left school through to meaningful study or employment
5. Adults and Seniors Life Stage: the learning needs of adults from early adulthood through to seniors.⁶

Carriage of the strategy is within the Wyndham Employment, Education and Training Portfolio Committee. Day-to-day management of the strategy is the responsibility of the Manager of Libraries and Community Learning, Rhonda Rathjen, and the recently appointed Coordinator of Community Learning, Diane Tabbagh. Diane and Rhonda have engaged Learning Communities consultant Dr Shanti Wong to work with them and the Portfolio Committee in developing aspects of the strategy, including consideration of a governance model and professional development of the wider Libraries and Community Learning team.

⁵ City of Wyndham, Wyndham Learning Community Strategy 2014-2017, p 5

⁶ City of Wyndham, Wyndham Learning Community Strategy 2014-2017, p 6



Wyndham Libraries and Community Learning team workshop on using the *Learning Community Framework*, March 2015.

The team has found the resources available in *Learning as a Driver for Change: Learning Community Framework*⁷ and the accompanying *Measuring Impact Toolkit*⁸ to be invaluable as they establish an evaluation framework around the learning community strategy. Rhonda said ‘These templates are so clear and they help us make sense of what we have in our Plan - and we will be able to use these templates for our business planning as well!’ As a result, the team has now been helped to determine their baseline data and set targets in order to establish a sound foundation for measuring the impact of their work over time. Dr Wong has also introduced the City of Melton’s *Collective Impact Assessment Tool*⁹ which has been enthusiastically received and is now being trialled by the Wyndham Libraries and Community Learning team.

In an exemplary move to provide regular feedback, the City of Wyndham Learning Community is holding the first of what will be annual Community Forums in April 2015, to report back on progress of the Strategy and engage community members in further work. The next stages of rolling out the Learning Community Plan include a comprehensive review of the Learning Community website - so it reflects current good practice in online communication - and recruitment of community members to develop strategies to assist newly arrived refugees and people with limited educational experience to navigate learning opportunities across Wyndham.

⁷ Wheeler L., Wong, S. (2013). *Learning as a Driver for Change: Learning Community Framework*. Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government, University of Technology, Sydney.

Available at: acelg.org.au/news/community-learning-and-local-government

⁸ Wheeler, L and Wong, S, *Learning Community Framework: Measuring Impact Toolkit* (to be published by the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government, University of Technology, Sydney, mid-2015)

⁹ *Melton Collective Impact Assessment Tool* (under development, City of Melton, 2015. Contact Peter Blunden for details: peterrb@melton.vic.gov.au).

The City of Wyndham has made a considered and dynamic start to the development of its local and regional learning community and it looks forward to being an energetic partner in the international learning community. If you would like to find out more about Wyndham's Learning Community, Diane Tabbagh welcomes your contact on: Diane.Tabbagh@wyndham.vic.gov.au

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