Sunshine Coast Social Strategy 2019-2041
Stakeholder Event Summary

Overview

On 28 November 2018, the Sunshine Coast Council, in partnership with Engagement Plus, ran a stakeholder engagement event to provide a collective impact approach to support the development and delivery of the new Sunshine Coast Social Strategy 2019-2041. Participants included more than 70 representatives from organisations with interest or influence across a range of issues relevant to enhancing a strong Sunshine Coast Community. A world café method was used where participants had the opportunity to contribute to three rounds of discussions on a number of pre-defined themes as well as one 'wild card' table for any other themes not captured. These themes included; transport infrastructure, social infrastructure, social equity and inclusion, safe communities, housing affordability and homelessness, health and wellbeing, employment and education, community recovery from disaster and community engagement. Discussions centred around two key questions:

1. How can your organisation contribute to addressing this issue?
2. What key opportunities are there for partnerships to make shared outcomes happen?

Participants generally viewed the role of council across all themes as being an enabler, facilitator, coordinator and, in some regards, a leader. Regarding leadership, participants generally saw effective council leadership around promoting positive social change and embracing innovative solutions, rather than being the chief driver of initiatives.

Figure 1: World cafe discussions in progress

Participants displayed a strong appetite for change in many regards, including but not limited to:

- Cultural attitudes
- Funding mechanisms
- Processes for problem solving
- Means of sharing information and resources
- Ways of connecting and accessing different sectors of society.

There was significant repetition across themes of the concept that there is a need to be more proactive in building a stronger community and to pursue positive, preventative strategies rather than focusing only on emerged problems in a reactive way.

Feedback analysis and report development was undertaken by Engagement Plus.

Photography courtesy of Balance Photography.

The following provides a summary of the key areas of discussion under each of the themes.

Transport infrastructure - mobility

Participants identified 'mobility' as a preferred description of the theme to 'transport infrastructure'. Mobility was identified as being about connectivity, accessibility, education and information as well as incorporating transport infrastructure. In the discussions, some key sub-themes were identified, such as accessibility, mobility, inclusion, isolation and managing the conversation around these. It was agreed that people who are disadvantaged in some way must be considered and included in planning outcomes.

Under this theme, participants discussed a range of topics, including:

- the role of Sunshine Coast Council in being a leader in forwarding the focus on mobility as well as educating and informing stakeholders
- the importance of providing pathways for timely, frequent and diverse modes of movement
- the creation of 'hubs' through walkability and place-based planning, with accessibility for all being a key consideration
- an important objective under the mobility theme is shifting sectors of the community from isolation to connection. The concept of the "transport poor" was
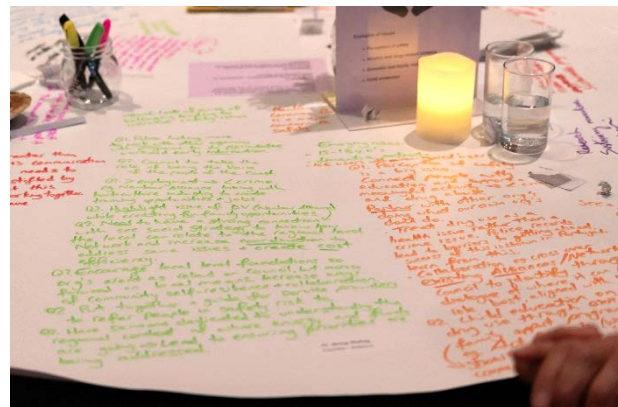

Figure 2: Participants contributed notes on tabletops throughout the discussions

raised and participants encouraged further analysis of who are missing out or lack capacity to access transport and options for collective responses.

Social infrastructure

Participants discussed ways that stakeholder organisations can contribute to building and improving social infrastructure for the Sunshine Coast region. Participants thought that social infrastructure for the region could be improved by such things as redefining the boundaries of services, linking assets and providing opportunities for collaboration, providing social infrastructure through new models such as an Asset Based Community Development model and designing self-sustaining services and programs. It was also suggested that social hubs could be used as a centrepiece in planning and design.

Participants felt that Sunshine Coast Council could be well positioned to host, collaborate and engage in conversations with external organisations, to take a targeted and selective approach to determining soft infrastructure needs in the planning stage for hard infrastructure and stimulate discussion and advocate on behalf of the community. Participants also discussed specific partnerships and areas of focus that would assist in building social infrastructure. For example, it was suggested that selected partnerships with sports clubs, non-government organisations and social enterprises is needed. In addition, a need was identified to strengthen universal service's capacity to engage with vulnerable families.

Social equity and inclusion

Overall, under this theme participants agreed that enabling connections within the community is key to achieving social equity and inclusion. It was suggested that achieving this will require looking at what is happening in the community, creating hubs in commercial and community

centres, considering the 'village lifestyle' as a model for community building and reaching out to all sectors of society. Creating community hubs, enabling connections and inclusive 'human centred design' were all identified as key factors in considering building and improving social equity and inclusion.

Participants also discussed the needs and issues associated with this theme for the Sunshine Coast region. Some of the key points from this discussion included the need for:
- access to safe transport and building design for people of all abilities
- ongoing engagement to hear the voices of the community and a broader vision to work across sectors, rather than in silos
- identifying barriers to accessing 'hard to reach' groups and addressing their fears, frustrations and desires.

Safe communities

Participants discussed ways for building safe communities in the Sunshine Coast region. They agreed that local government is ideally positioned to listen to people and express their will. It was identified that collaboration and a multi-disciplinary approach is required to enhance community safety. Participants stressed the importance of increasing emphasis on preventative work as well as enhancing collaboration and coordination in building a safe community. Drug issues were discussed, with the suggestion of exploring positive examples of responding to drug use and bringing together an advisory group to tackle issues such as ice use.

In discussions around the needs and issues associated with building safe communities, participants noted that there is a need to change to a more sustainable funding model for programs so that people receive a 'hand up' not a 'hand out', particularly through social enterprise seed funding. Further, it was suggested that collaboration is needed between different service providers to share resources and expertise and support sustainable programs.

Participants felt that there is a need for additional support in the following areas:
- increased employment opportunities
- improving a sense of belonging in communities
- more treatment centres for people affected by drug addiction
- support for people living with dementia and their carers.

Housing affordability and homelessness

In discussions around this theme, participants felt that there is a need for accountability and ownership around housing and homelessness. Participants believed that there is also a need for leadership and creative problem solving to find new ways of housing people and generating community support in this space. There was discussion about the significant proportion of income that goes towards housing and how people within lower income thresholds are disproportionately affected. In terms of social and cultural change, participants discussed the need to build communities of compassion to break down stereotypes. It was suggested that society needs to stop viewing housing as privilege and start treating it as a right. There was also discussion about the need to move away from the "Australian dream" of home ownership and move towards other solutions like long-term rentals, small houses, shared rentals, and in-home care in exchange for rent.

Participants expressed a positive outlook on the role of local government and the opportunity for Sunshine Coast Council to be the voice of the people. For example, participants discussed how the Sunshine Coast Council and key partners could assist in reducing red tape, supporting temporary mobile housing, creating safe spaces for people to sleep in cars, seeking to seed fund social enterprises that would provide low cost crisis accommodation and facilitating collaborative ventures by bringing diverse groups together.

Health and wellbeing

Under the theme of health and wellbeing, discussions focused around a need for proactive and preventative responses with regards to health and wellbeing using a 'human centred design' approach. The need for alternative funding sources for services and programs and opportunities for businesses to contribute through philanthropy was also raised as a key opportunity. Further, enhancing a sense of community and connection was discussed as being central to improving health and wellbeing.

Several areas were identified by participants as being important in enhancing health and wellbeing for the community. Some of these included:
- engaging with people who are socially isolated
- being proactive rather than reactive, for example, developing programs for older people that are positive and prevent problems
- improving the sense of safety, especially for older people to build their confidence in leaving home and participating in activities
- building a sense of meaningful connection, purpose and belonging within the community
- working to understand where the challenges lie, for example, mental health and family violence
- focusing on children and families as the backbone of healthy communities
- enabling access and contact with nature as a means of improving health and wellbeing.

Employment and education

Participants discussed the current state of employment and education on the Sunshine Coast, issues and possible improvements. Participants generally saw the role of Sunshine Coast Council as being a central conduit, collaborator and coordinator that links service providers and puts the pieces together to find solutions. It was also identified that there is a need for leadership at a grassroots and local level that is individualised and not centralised. Participants noted several trends regarding employment and education. Some examples of these included the rise in the

Figure 3: Table discussions and facilitation in progress

need for digital skills and tech savvy workers, moving to more self-employment and social enterprise models, and the growth of the social services sector on the Sunshine Coast with a growing population of elderly people.

With regards to improving employment and education outcomes for the Sunshine Coast, participants identified several options, including:
- local organisations taking on internships, students and placements
- more attention being directed to the Vocational Education and Training sector
- volunteer programs being pursued as solutions for life-long learning
- the potential for enterprise centres to be established in addition to community centres
- connecting the business sector to those trying to enter.

Community recovery from disaster

Participants discussed the current state of community disaster recovery on the Sunshine Coast, issues and possible improvements. The need for capacity building between agencies was raised, as well as the importance of identifying community recovery skills and strengths. Some participants felt that the Sunshine Coast Council needs to be more proactive in this space, to build trust and to address volunteering challenges. A number of people felt that Council would be well placed to be a central connector for community disaster recovery.

Participants agreed that recovery begins in the 'preparedness' phase, including developing household checklists and activating personal plans. It was identified that there is a need to change to a culture of preparedness and that everyone has a role to play under this theme. Participants noted that there is a need for integration between agencies for consistent information with centralised databases. Improved connections with local media are essential, as structured communications can be supported by media.

Community engagement

Participants discussed ways in which stakeholder organisations could contribute to improving community engagement for the Sunshine Coast. Some examples of the key points raised in these discussions include:

- bringing people together with shared interests, purpose and visions
- establishing a directory for community information and community liaison officers
- facilitating functions such as this engagement event for purposeful connections
- building opportunities for the common good to be fostered and moving away from separation
- creating an environment and opportunities for building community capacity and human-centred design
- facilitating community dialogue followed by action to demonstrate listening
- pursuing a public-private partnerships dialogue.

Figure 4: Table host facilitating conversation

Participants believed that Sunshine Coast Council could serve as a central coordinator for educating and connecting people. Participants also identified that if business prospers, the community prospers, and small businesses want to collaborate. There is a need for spaces for collaboration with business, and support for volunteering and mentorship. There are also opportunities for bridging young people to retired volunteers, connecting local artists and creating safe spaces like bigger art galleries.

Wildcard – Business

This additional business theme was created in response to participants believing that the business sector has an important role to play in the Social Strategy for the Sunshine Coast and that there needs to be a focus on this topic to be brought into the conversation. Business can create opportunities within the community. It was proposed that win-win solutions could be found for both the community and business, especially as business can drive social inclusion.

The role of Sunshine Coast Council was discussed in terms of being a facilitator of connections and collaborations and providing necessary instructions. Examples of what could be facilitated included mentoring programs, networks and business champions. Participants agreed that there is a need to break down silos within local government and the community and that skilled 'silo jumpers' are needed. The importance of reducing red tape was also raised.

Overall, participants demonstrated highly progressive attitudes and a genuine desire to contribute to sustainable solutions under all themes. Sunshine Coast Council appears to be well placed to leverage its connections with the stakeholder organisations to achieve valuable outcomes as part of the Sunshine Coast Social Strategy 2019-41.

Feedback

At the conclusion of the engagement event, participants were invited to complete a short survey based on their experience of the engagement process. Based on these results, it is apparent that the significant majority of participants agreed that:

- the methods used were innovative and made the engagement interesting and appealing
- participants had the necessary context to contribute meaningfully to the engagement process
- the engagement process that was offered suited the needs of participants
- participants felt that their contributions were valued.

Furthermore, a significant majority of respondents made key connections at the event that they would progress into the future. This indicates that the evening was successful in facilitating connections and relationship building for a stronger network of stakeholder organisations.

Figure 5: Graphic artist representation of the event

Next steps

- Feedback from this stakeholder event will inform key directions and draft outcomes to underpin a new Sunshine Coast Social Strategy to 2041.
- Ideas generation and potential partnerships will be followed up with key stakeholders, as required, through further targeted consultations.
- A draft Strategy is anticipated for release for community comment in May 2019. Participants who attended the stakeholder event will receive correspondence notifying them when the draft is released and inviting them to submit comment.
- The final Social Strategy is scheduled for presentation to council for adoption in October 2019.