



AN INITIATIVE of the Centre for Participation, our new Participate magazine has been created to encourage participation within the broader Wimmera Mallee community and to help readers in staying connected with current events and opportunities across the

district.

Formed following the amalgamation of Volunteering Western Victoria and the Wimmera HUB in 2016, the Centre for Participation encourages people from all walks of life and all skill sets to fully participate in their lives and their communities, via the four pillars of Community, Learning, Volunteering and Partnerships.

As such, the theme of our second edition is "Strengthening communities".

We are exceptionally proud of PARTICIPATE and welcome any feedback you may have about it.

Please enjoy.

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05 → Welcome, migrants

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BALANCE:

Young volunteer Mark Gallagher (overleaf) says volunteering gives him work-life balance and is a great way to investigate potential career paths.

CEO WELCOME >

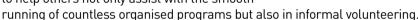
Strong communities = successful communities

National Volunteer Week 2018 featured the theme "Give a little. Change a lot" and highlighted how a seemingly "small" contribution can positively affect not just an individual or organisation, but an entire community.

That brings me to the theme of this edition of Participate, "strengthening communities".

It may come as no surprise that the percentage of community members who volunteer in rural and regional area is considerably higher than our city counterparts, at 41 and 34%, respectively, so why?... that is my question.

A volunteer is defined as "a person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task". Here in the Wimmera Southern Mallee we see and hear many examples of people offering kindness, exceptional skill sets and generosity of time to help others not only assist with the smooth



From manning the kiosk at the footy on Saturdays to driving seniors to their appointments or assisting with their weekly shopping, helping to find animals new homes and even teaching teens how to drive, to name just a few examples, our volunteers are truly invaluable.

Volunteers can be shy or underestimate their contributions, commenting "I'm just doing my bit", yet as we know, their "bit" is absolutely worthy of praise, not only for the volunteering act itself, but for their contribution to creating strong and resilient communities

So this brings me back to my question...Why is volunteering in rural and regional areas so high? Is it because we feel more connected to our communities, is it because we are in effect creating the communities we want to live in, or is it because we have recognised that volunteering is a pathway to achieving our own personal goals? Whatever the answer is, we do know that taking part in something bigger creates change.

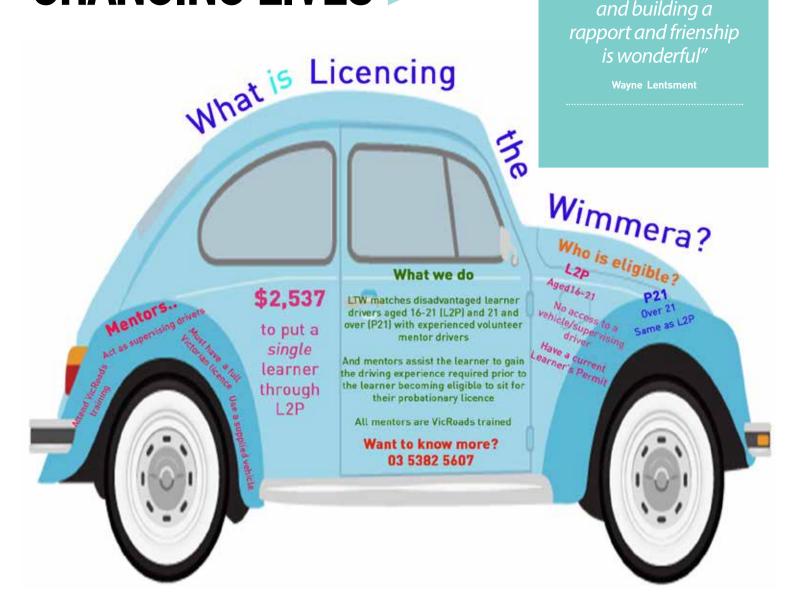
Volunteering is not only at the heart of any vibrant, thriving community... it makes the Wimmera Southern Mallee the place I am proud to call home.

Julie Pettett

CEO, Centre for Participation

"GIVE A LITTLE. CHANGE A LOT."

CHANGING LIVES >



The L2P program

The L2P program is vital for young Wimmera Mallee drivers who don't have access to a supervising driver."

"When the State Government introduced the requirement that learners get 120 hours of supervised driving, if under the age of 21, before they could go for their licence it potentially alienated some of the most vulnerable young people in the community."

"However, the L2P program now fills this void and also teaches young drivers safe driving habits, personal responsibility, punctuality, team work, how to handle stress and problem solving, along with many other valuable life skills".

- Michael Schilling, Horsham Driving School instructor
- ** NOTE: Centre for Participation also contacted Wimmera Driving School instructor Adam Hall and Horsham Police Superintendent Paul Margetts for comment, however, at the time of publication both were yet to respond.

Volunteer mentor driver training

"Seeing the learners

confidence grow,

Saturday, August 18 9am—4pm

To book your spotphone 03 5382 5607



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VOLUNTEERING >

'I get a lot out of it too'

A CHANCE sighting of a "lend a hand" board was the catalyst for Mark Gallagher getting into volunteering when moving to Horsham 18 months ago.

Are you a volunteer?

Previously volunteering in activities at an aged care home in Mount Gambier, Mark. 25. said he "probably gets more out of volunteering than my clients", and that volunteering gives him work-life balance.

Leading a busy life, Mark, who was formerly studying and is now currently trying to establish a Rotaract club in Horsham, also works part time and volunteers at the Centre for Participation regularly.

"Volunteering breaks my life up and I usually tells which day of the week it is depending what activity I'm undertaking that day," he said.

"I got into volunteering when I was looking into studying Community Services back in Mount Gambier, and when I came to Horsham I saw the 'lend a hand' board and started volunteering over here.'

Currently volunteering with the men's outings every second Tuesday, providing shopping assistance each Thursday, and providing social support to a disabled young man each Wednesday afternoon, Mark is also looking into joining the MATES Mentoring program.

"The men's outings give men, who may not have the opportunity to socialise otherwise due to limited mobility or no licence, a chance to get out and spend time with others," he said.

"And the social support visits allow the young man the chance to get out of the house."

"Whether that means we take a drive somewhere or go for lunch, we decide when I arrive to pick him up."

"I enjoy the social aspect of volunteering, but the biggest enjoyment for me is seeing the benefit my volunteering

"Volunteering adds balance to my life"

Mark Gallagher

of someone giving up their time to because they have to.'

as both an advantage and disadvantage, with younger volunteers potentially having more energy or less mobility issues but older volunteers able to relate better to clients, most of whom are also senior, Mark said he would "absolutely" recommend more young people get into volunteering.

"If they are looking into a potential career path, volunteering is a great way to get a behind the scenes look at the field and see whether that's the path they want to

"It also looks really good on your resume and shows an employer that you can commit to something"

Migrant Torres Strait Islander Retired **Unemployed Semi-retired Aboriginal**

has on others, and their appreciation help them because they choose to, not

Describing being a younger volunteer

WELCOMING MIGRANTS >

From scratch to sunshine

CAN you imagine migrating to a new country where you don't speak the language and know no one outside of your immediate family?

For the Wimmera Mallee's growing migrant community, that's just the reality they face.

A proud and inclusive community, the Wimmera Mallee has welcomed a number of nationalities, including people from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, India, China, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Thailand, Italy, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Japan and Sri Lanka.

Predominately young families, many face issues surrounding the language barrier, but also starting from scratch in a strange new country and trying to adjust to new systems, a new work environment, or finding work, and making new connections and friendships in their adopted community.

And, although an often time consuming and tedious process, particularly for new

Australians from a non-English speaking background. Centre for Participation Migrant Liaison Office Padma Giri believes the success of the new arrivals stems from their strong optimism and sense of belonging, even in the face of hideous discrimination.

"In terms of assisting migrants to find employment, or increase their skills, the Centre for Participation offers English Language classes, Hospitality Workforce Pathways training, and can even assist them to gain their drivers licence via our Licencing the Wimmera program," Mrs Giri said.

Spread out in pockets across the Wimmera, including the thriving Karen community in Nhill, there are a range of other formal and informal groups in place to welcome our new arrivals,

including the volunteer support group "Oasis Wimmera" in Horsham which supports migrants with social activities. the Filipino Club, Islamic Association, Italian Club and various others.

Migrants welcomed

to the Wimmera since 1960

And, of course, let us not forget the local migrant-focused events like Cultural Diversity Week, the Oasis Wimmerahosted Taste of World which is hosted bimonthly and encourages attendees to learn about other culture's cuisines, plus various other social events including Mother's Day cake making workshops, badminton, soccer, Christmas parties and more.

If you would like to know more about any of the Centre for Participation courses listed in this article please phone 03 5382 5607 or visit centreforparticipation.org.au.

Made with love!



offering employment training.

FOR the Karen women of Nhill, the newly opened Paw Po Products provides a chance to come together with other Karen people and utilise their incredible craft skills to create breathtaking traditional clothing, accessories and furniture.

In partnership with the Nhill Learning Centre. Paw Po which translates to "little flower" and wonderfully encapsulates the growth and beauty of the women and their products, brings together contemporary and traditional design with creativity, stunning loom-woven fabrics and beautiful artistry to create vibrant and truly unique pieces, which have been made with love.

"Paw Po is all about connection, competence and creativity," Program Coordinator Alison Creek said.

she said.

"A not-for-profit organisation, Paw Po aims to offer both employment opportunities and pre-employment training in the areas of customer service and sewing skills".

Some of the products the women make include cushions, heat packs, document pouches, couch caddies, key chains, sunglass cases, oven mitts, hand-woven table runners and clothing.

And, if that wasn't enough to tempt you to check the products out, Paw Po has also partnered with the Australian Native Flower Company at Laharum which, incidentally, employs a number of the ladies' husbands, to sell luscious bouquets and bunches of gorgeous native blooms.

OPPORTUNITY: The business provides "It is a training and retail centre which an opportunity for Karen women provides an opportunity for women **Employed** to connect with each other and to connect with each other as well as the wider Nhill community while members of the wider Nhill community,"

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TRANSPORT >

Call for improved rail

WESTERN Rail Project is calling for improvements to the connectivity of current passenger rail services in Western Victoria to increase access to capital cities for the current 110,000-plus residents experiencing limited access to services.

Proposing a two stage plan, the project is seeking an increase in passenger rail services between Ararat and Melbourne; a return of passenger rail services to other parts of Western Victoria, including Horsham and Hamilton; extra coach services to improve connections between road and rail services, and upgrades to all operating rail stations in Western Victoria to ensure they are accessible to disabled and elderly people.

Western Victorian passenger services have been described as "the worst in the state", with the project being driven by the Horsham Rural City Council, Southern Grampians Shire Council and Ararat Rural City Council, with support and input from Shire across the Yarriambiack, Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, Northern Grampians and Glenelg

It is aimed to not only ensure greater access to the services, but to also generate important economic and social benefits including increased access to employment, health, education and training opportunities, improved social connectedness, greatly improved access to the

region's tourism destinations, faster and more reliable links to Ballarat, Melbourne and Geelong, and improved public transport between regional centres of Horsham, Ararat, Ballarat, Hamilton and Geelong.

Plus, a further 60,000 people living in south east South Australia could also benefit from improved connectivity through Victoria to provincial and capital cities.

Regional Councils have recognised the need for improved public passenger services for many years, with a recent detailed study commissioned by eight Western Victorian Councils proved there is significant demand for improved public transport and linkages to Ballarat and Melbourne.

Stage one has a capital cost of \$200,000 and an estimated operating cost of \$1.4 million per annum.

For stage two, the estimated capital cost has been broken down as below, with an operating cost of \$6.1 million.

Ballarat to Ararat: \$110 million

- Ararat to Horsham: \$107 million
- Ararat to Hamilton: \$92 million
- Additional rolling stock: \$60 million

STAGE 1 (2017–2019)

Increase Ararat to Melbourne passenger train services from three to four daily services.

- Ballarat line upgrades to allow five weekday return trains between Melbourne and Ararat.
- New weekend coach services to Casterton and Mount Gambier.
- Coach services improvements for Balmoral, Cavendish, Coleraine, Dunkeld and Lake Bolac.
- Tourist-friendly coach schedules to boost tourism business opportunities.

- Reinstate passenger rail services to Horsham and Hamilton from 2023.
- Convert the railway between Ararat and Ballarat from broad to standard gauge.
- Provide six daily return train services to Ararat, four to Horsham and three to Hamilton.
- to extend to Geelong or Melbourne.
- Ensure Horsham trains service the communities of Stawell and Murtoa.
- Ensure Hamilton trains service Willaura, Glenthompson and Dunkeld.

STAGE 2 (2021–2026)

- Provide the option for some trains

THREE YEAR PILOT >

Helping community organisations be their best

Centre for Participation is piloting a Good Governance initiative in four Victorian communities over the next three years.

Supported by a Federal Government grant, the test aims to gather more evidence of the contribution that better governance of small and medium community organisations can make to strong and resilient communities.

Hosted by the Ballarat Multicultural Resource Council, Northern Grampians Shire and Whittlesea Community Connections, the pilot is backed by an extensive evaluation exercise.

Mentors experienced in governance recruited as volunteers and trained to work with community organisations, with each host coordinating their own volunteer mentors to ensure they are the right fit for their community and groups.

There are more than 560,000 notfor-profit community groups across Australia; each fulfilling a social purpose and, even though these groups and organisations are small, they encourage

inclusion and help to create strong, cohesive and resilient communities.

Unfortunately, Local Governments across Australia are struggling to support these small not-for-profit groups in their region with Good Governance at the core of Councils' concerns.

And, although Councils provide governance training, they have hundreds of groups, each with individual issues and a "one size fits all" approach is not working for many.

Evidence gathered from a previous Centre for Participation research project and the Australian Institute of Company Directors demonstrates that governance of small community groups impacts upon their effectiveness and sustainability.

Centre for Participation's Good Governance initiative is a solution aimed at building effective governance for small organisations across Australia.

Before the pilot ends the centre expects to have sufficient evidence to encourage dozens of Councils and Local Government to support Good Governance in their communities, backed by support from volunteers experienced in governance who will offer their experience to improve financial and social outcomes.

For more information about Good Governance contact alistair@ centreforparticipation.org.au.

GOVERNANCE: The pilot is being hosted by the Ballarat Multicultural Resource Council, Northern Grampians Shire (operating out of St Arnaud) and Whittlesea Community Connections.



Well travelled >

Bookings 1800 952 211

Since its inaugural run in November 2017 the Wimmera Southern Mallee Community Transport Service (route one) has ...

Travelled 7.650km Made 33 trips **Transported 114 passengers Provided 63 volunteer activities**



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NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK >

Enthusiasm high

NATIONAL Volunteer Week was a huge success across the Wimmera Mallee, with communities lauding volunteers and the fantastic work they do via drop in, information and morning tea celebrations throughout the week of May 21-27.

Kicking proceedings off on the Monday, Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly and the Centre for Participation hosted "drop in" sessions, welcoming the community through the doors to showcase what the organisations do, and how volunteers can help.

On Tuesday, crowds gathered at Horsham Town Hall for a mini expo and community celebration morning tea, during which various volunteering organisations including Horsham Agricultural Society, Town Hall, Community House, PAWS and YMCA, the Christian Emergency Food Centre, Centre for Participation and Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network displayed the work their organisations do and how volunteers could contribute.

And, at Harrow, visitors enjoyed a community morning tea at the Bay Riders Community Centre.

Warracknabeal Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre welcomed a hungry crowd to their community barbecue on Wednesday, with the day also seeing St Arnaud hosting a morning tea and a drop in session taking place at Horsham Agricultural Society.

At Stawell, a "Celebrating volunteers in the Northern Grampians Shire" evening, hosted at Power House on Thursday, proved exciting, with several speakers, including the Centre's own Learning Manager Robbie Millar, sharing their expertise.

With enthusiasm as high as ever on Friday, Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly hosted a second drop in session, while morning tea was on the cards at Edenhope, with an excitable crowd of 80 welcoming speakers including West Wimmera Shire Councillor Bruce Meyer and Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital CEO and Centre for Participation board chair Kevin Mills.

And, winding up the week, Lowana Women's Centre at Nhill hosted a community afternoon tea.

"Thank you to everyone who attended these events, and to the groups who hosted," Centre for Participation Volunteering Resources Program Officer Michelle Pitman said.

"I'm certain the wonderful feedback received from, and enthusiasm shown by, visitors throughout the week will result in even more dedicated volunteers lending a hand in the region".



GENEROUS: Horsham Christian Emergency Food Centre volunteers (from left) Jill Cramer, Ann Mahoney and Pauline Keyte manned the Centre's stall at the mini expo.



AVAILABLE: Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN's Vanessa O'Loughlin showcased the range of initiatives, like MATES Mentoring, the network offers.

National Volunteer Week workshops

SPIRITED discussion about customer service and myths energised Volunteer Coordinators attending workshops hosted by international volunteering expert Rob Jackson at the Centre for Participation on June 25.

"During his third visit to the region, which led into him speaking at the 2018 National Volunteering Conference in Sydney, Mr Jackson led a morning session titled "Customer service and volunteering", before an afternoon session explored "Myths of volunteer management".



INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING EXPERT:

LEARNING >

Forging bonds

English Language Program students were given an insight into the work of Victoria Police during two sessions hosted at the Centre for Participation in June.

Hosted at the Centre for Participation, Horsham Police Youth Resource Officer Linda McLennan spoke with the class, made up of students from varying cultural backgrounds including Thai, South Korean, Serbian and Vietnamese, about the duties of police officers, their uniform, some of the various forms of crime and calling 000.

After the students introduced themselves, they discussed how the police work in their respective countries and how they compared to the Australian Police Force, with observations including that Australian police work for the good of their communities and to keep people safe whereas, in some of the countries people must give money to police to get things done or can bribe officers to avoid a fine.

Visiting Horsham Police Station, the students met a detective and Custody Officer, tried on a bullet proof vest, which proved heavy, and explored a police car where they learned that although both the red and blue lights are used, the red is easier to see at night and the blue in daylight.

"Describing the sessions as "a good experience", the students said they learned more about licences and driving on Australian roads, to not feel scared when they see officers in the street and to call 000 if they need assistance in an emergency".



PROCESS: Horsham Police Youth Resource Officer Linda McLennan discusses the Police recruitment process during two visits to the English Language Program class.

Engagement = social cohesion?

Anyone who works in volunteer engagement knows in their heart that volunteering leads to stronger

But how does it work, and what forms of engagement results in the most

Social cohesion is in decline in Australia

In fact, the most recent survey by the Monash Scanlon Foundation found emerging signs of increased pessimism and an increase in the proportion of people experiencing discrimination

We know formal and informal volunteering plays a critical role in the wellbeing and fabric of our society and yet volunteering is in decline.

Despite this significant contribution, there has been no study conducted in Australia to date that has examined the current role and potential for effective volunteer engagement to build social cohesion and contribute to resilient communities.

That is all about to change.

Centre for Participation has commissioned Think Impact, who have been studying volunteerism since 2012, to conduct this research over a two year period through the Strong and Resilient Communities Research Grant from the Department of Social

The research will shine a light on the value created by the volunteer sector, how this value is created, and best practice to engage and align volunteering with social cohesion to strengthen and grow positive outcomes; especially for those who are facing some form of social exclusion

If you have any questions, or if you or your organisation would like to make a submission to this research, please email your Expression of Interest to research@thinkimpact.com.au

This is your chance to shape the future of social cohesion in Australia and how great volunteer engagement creates great communities.

Ross Wyatt, Managing Director & Suzi Young, Director

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SPOTLIGHT > MEET THE TEAM



ALISTAIR SHAW



Joining the Centre one month ago, Alistair recently arrived in Australia from Wellington. A former student union manager and teacher, he has a PhD as well as degrees in economics, international relations, and law.

A father to three, Alistair has board experience at pre- and primary school level and was a trustee on a trust that managed the companies and assets that students collectively owned at Victoria University in Wellington.

He is looking forward to being involved with justice for refugees, understanding more about the Wimmera Mallee's human cultural development, living in a rural community for the first time, and catching as many football games as possible.



Learning and Community Development Program Coordinator, Skilled Mentors in Education Project Worker and Department of Justice "Connecting the Service Puzzle" Project Worker

Joining the Centre for Participation one year ago, Kylie has a busy and varied role within the organisation, including her position as Skilled Mentors in Education Project Coordinator, a project which is unfolded across five municipalities across the Wimmera Southern Mallee and works in partnership with the Wimmera Southern Mallee Community Learning Alliance to build the capacity of Neighbourhood Houses and Learn Local organisations to deliver training.

As part of her work with the project, Kylie engages with, and offers training to, a pool of skilled volunteers who can then utilise their skills, knowledge and expertise to teach others.

MICHELLE PITMAN

Volunteers in Health and Volunteering Resources Program

Having been with the organisation, in its various forms, for nine years, Michelle is a familiar face around the region, whose responsibilities include coordinating the Volunteer Programs at Wimmera Health Care Group (on behalf of Centre for Participation), and working in the Volunteer Resources Program at the intersection between individuals wanting to volunteer and organisations needing volunteers.

This includes recruiting, inducting, referring volunteers to various roles and assisting organisations with developing volunteer roles, and with information about how to manage their volunteers, sourcing and delivering information to people who are interested in volunteering and promoting volunteering.

Enjoying finding and delivering information that helps others, Michelle gets a big kick out of finding that important piece of information or "thing to know" that gives an individual or organisation new insight into the volunteering experience or helps a group gain knowledge towards building a great volunteering program.

BREN GILMORE

Volunteer Engagement

Assisting with organising social support outings, ensuring volunteers are enjoying their role and hopefully achieving the right match up with volunteer and client so both enjoy the social support has been the focus of Bren's three years with the organisation, and she says hearing the positive feedback from volunteers is the favourite part of her role.

Governing for the future - diversity a key

> MEET THE BOARD

Current Centre for Participation board members possess a range of skills and life experience.

Allowing a maximum of nine members, the board is currently made up of chair Kevin Mills, deputy chair Ray Kingston, , members Lindy Muller, Geoff Witmitz, Dorothy Patton, Wendy Robins, Greg Little and Mala Govender, who are elected by members to serve a minimum term of two years. Secretary and Centre for Participation CEO Julie Pettett holds an ex-officio role. The Centre for Participation management team who work closely with Ms Pettett are also in attendance as and when required.

It is the board's role to set the tone for ethical and responsible decision-making throughout the organisation, thus it is important to ensure the 'right people with the right skills and experience are elected. Following a review of governance it was determined that while having a representative model has merit, the organisation would be better served by moving towards a skills-based board.

In 2016 a Nominations Committee was established to assist in achieving a diverse board by fairly and objectively seeking and recommending qualified candidates for vacant board positions to the members at the annual general meeting. The nominations committee has a Terms of Reference that guides them in making recommendations to members at the AGM each year. There are 5 members, including 2 current Board members who are not seeking re-election at this AGM.

The Board as a whole comprising of members with a broad range of skills, expertise and experience from diverse backgrounds, when seeking new members the nominations Committee is cognisant of the need for diversity, including a balance of age and gender. As such, Board as a whole should ideally have the following skills:

- Experience or knowledge specific to education
- Experience or knowledge in social services
- Experience or knowledge in government funding
- Accounting or auditing skills
- Marketing, communications or media experience
- Strategic planning experience
- Legal experience in relevant fields

Of course, being a board member carries with it quite a lot of responsibility, therefore potential board members must also: not be disqualified from acting as a director under the Corporations Act, not be disqualified from acting as a responsible entity under the ACNC Act and provide a satisfactory Police check

The Nominations Committee's role is to identify and review potential candidates and consider a range of factors, including; the skills, experience, expertise and personal qualities that will best complement board effectiveness, the candidate's capability to devote the necessary time and commitment to the role, and any potential conflicts of interest.

So how can you participate in the effective governance of the Centre for Participation?

You could

- Join as a member (organisation or individual), and/or
- Put forward an expression of Interest in being a board member (will be advertised on our website)

Our AGM will be held in November this year... and that is when the board membership is finalised.





Chair

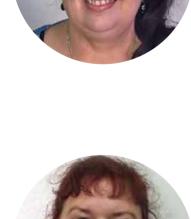
Having extensive experience across the not-for-profit and corporate sectors, as CEO of Edenhope and Memorial Hospital Kevin also serves the Wimmera PCP and the Wimmera Southern Mallee Health Alliance.

With wide ranging experience across operational and non-operational areas including finance, human resources, quality, payroll, IT and other corporate services and community services, he has qualifications in finance, HR, strategic planning, governance and management.

Passionate about strengthening partnerships across the region, Kevin, who grew up on a farm at Kalkee, worked locally before moving to study at the University of South Australia in Adelaide where he also gained experience working in large corporate organisations.

Married with two young sons, Kevin has a love of local sport, fishing, family activities and being involved in community events.









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HOW CAN I HELP? >

Your support = ongoing success

Centre for Participation pride ourselves on supporting and strengthening our communities.

We want them all to succeed, no matter their size, and welcome contributions from individuals and organisations to help us ensure this success.

Your contribution will assist us in running our various programs, including the newly introduced Wimmera Southern Mallee Community Transport Service, which offers communities the chance to get to Horsham to attend their non-emergency medical and human services appointments while maintaining social connections.

Or perhaps it will assist us to help a learner gain the mandatory 120 hours of driving experience needed to gain their probationary licence.

If you would like to contribute please go to our website www.centreforparticipation.org.au and click DONATE



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