

Final Report

Sustaining Land, Sustaining People in Nillumbik



Authors: Prudence Rothwell and Sophia Christoe (Open Food Network Australia)

Contributors: Jen Rae (Fair Share Fare), Jen Sheridan and Megan Roberts (Open Food Network Australia)

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Sustaining Land, Sustaining People in Nillumbik

Executive Summary

Nillumbik has an enthusiastic and motivated population of older landholders, many of whom have been living in the Shire for several decades, holding deep knowledge and experiences of the area. Throughout the Nillumbik Shire many rural landholders find it challenging to keep up with the ongoing land management requirements of their properties as they age, due to lack of time, physical ability, skills, knowledge and/or finances. As the population gets older, this challenge is likely to grow and have implications on the management and threat of pests, weeds and fire.

The Sustaining Land, Sustaining People project ran between December 2021 - December 2022 and was funded through the National Landcare Program: Smart Farms Small Grants. The project aim was to increase the capacity of agricultural land owned by ageing landholders in Nillumbik to be managed sustainably, while simultaneously supporting farmers to age well in place, and enhancing the Nillumbik food system with social and ecological health at its core.

Open Food Network Australia and Fair Share Fare worked in partnership with Nillumbik Shire Council to engage ageing landholders through a co-design process over 4 workshops to devise community-owned solutions to this complex problem. The initial stage of the project involved desktop research investigating the local community organisations, groups and key people in Nillumbik Shire that related to the project themes, plus a community consultation process led to the identification of key barriers, opportunities and the fostering of collaborative ideas and approaches for problem-solving.

A series of co-design workshops then enabled a dedicated group of community members to further explore and test community-led solutions to improve land management and support ageing in place. The participants formed working groups that focused on the following four areas:

- Land management
- Land-sharing
- Community connections
- Dynamic life and succession planning

The increased trust, connection and direct relationships built between Nillumbik community member participants and Council staff is one of the most significant outcomes from this project that will help to address the interrelated challenges of land management and ageing well in place.

Project outcomes:

- Community-designed solutions identified and tested - these included:
 1. Trialling a "Know your neighbour" style event that had land management and social connection goals and outcomes.
 2. Identifying the types of land management education that community think would help people to better manage their land, stay on land for longer and or/ help others in the community.
- Strengthened connection and trust between Council and community
- Trusted network and connections established within the community
- Community adoption and trust in the co-design process

Recommendations for community:

1. Persist with the solutions that have emerged, and are continuing from this project;
2. The Sustaining Land, Sustaining People participant community to continue to build collaboration opportunities and cross pollination of ideas;
3. Maintain and strengthen the relationships and communication channels developed between Council and community.

Recommendations for Council:

1. Celebrate the demonstration of community leadership and solutions from this project;
2. Nurture the communication channels developed between Council and community;
3. Leverage the trust and networks that have been built out of this project to engage with ageing farmers in Nillumbik;
4. Continue to build internal opportunities for collaboration between Council Departments and the cross pollination of ideas on interconnected challenges.

Context

The Shire of Nillumbik is located on the peri-urban fringe in Melbourne's north-east. Within a Green Wedge landscape that comprises 91% of the Shire,¹ agricultural production continues across the great diversity of land types and uses in the municipality. These include cleared grazing land for beef cattle and sheep, permanent plantings such as orchards, vineyards and olive groves, remnant and regenerated bushland, hobby properties and horse farms.

Nillumbik has an enthusiastic and motivated population of older landholders, many of whom have been living in the Shire for several decades, holding deep knowledge and experiences of the area. As the median age of Nillumbik landholders increases, growing numbers will be unable to keep up with the ongoing land management requirements of their properties.

Throughout the Nillumbik Shire many rural landholders find it challenging to keep up with the ongoing land management requirements of their properties as they age, due to lack of time, physical ability, skills, knowledge and/or finances. Unmanaged and disused rural land represents a challenge for older people and the wider community due to persistent weeds and pest animals. These threats cause ongoing degradation of agricultural land and adjacent high biodiversity remnant vegetation. Climate change impacts are expected to exacerbate the challenges faced. Inability to manage land often prevents ageing in place for older residents. Inability to undertake necessary works in preparation for the fire season poses a serious threat to community safety. Inability to manage the land can trigger neighbour disputes, it can impact on mental health, and it leads to a decline in business prospects.

If older residents are to be supported to responsibly live and age *well* on farms and large rural properties, new (or renewed) mechanisms to enable sound land management and/or agricultural productivity are necessary.

Project summary

The project objective was to increase the capacity of agricultural land owned by ageing landholders in Nillumbik to be managed sustainably while simultaneously supporting farmers to age well in place, and enhancing the Nillumbik food system with social and ecological health at its core. Through community-derived and -led approaches, the project aims to help ageing landowners remain on their land, and explore ways they can manage the threat of pests, weeds, and fire.

Open Food Network Australia and Fair Share Fare worked in partnership with Nillumbik Shire Council to engage with the ageing landholder demographic through a co-design methodology. This process involved the identification of key barriers and opportunities, and fostering collaborative ideas and problem-solving to test possible community-led solutions to improve

¹ For more, see: <https://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Explore/About-the-Shire/Snapshot-of-Nillumbik>

land management and support ageing in place. The rationale for using a co-design approach was that involving those most impacted - now or in the near-future - in the design process will help build outcomes that have a higher chance of community buy-in and creation of on the ground change.

Project activities

These activities were carried out from March 2022 to November 2022.

Community engagement

The first stage of the project involved Open Food Network engaging with interested and affected community members in a series of individual conversations and interviews. We contacted 72 community members and organisations, inviting their participation in a research interview. This outreach led to 25 phone interviews with community members and Council staff. The sample consisted of community members that had registered their interest via the Council's Smart Farms project webpage, and referrals that came from either Council staff or community members i.e. participants suggesting other people to speak to. This snowball sampling methodology² enabled us to examine and surface the spectrum of barriers to this wicked problem to then reach a saturation point of overlapping / repeating themes (refer to Appendix 1. for the engagement process and communications).

Open Food Network also conducted a desktop review of community organisations and networks related to the project themes of ageing in place and improving land management.

Through the community consultation period, the following opportunities and barriers were identified in relation to land management and ageing in place:

Opportunities

- Many interviewees, particularly older residents, indicated a high degree of enthusiasm for the project topic and the need to bring these issues together.
- Of those interviewed who were ageing or approaching ageing, there was a desire and interest to have agistment / people work their land, or diversify their land use in order to continue living in place.
- A strong theme across all interviews was a sense of distance, fragmentation or lack of community (e.g. difficulties retaining volunteers, sense of missing in-person gatherings, new people / demographics moving into Nillumbik and not wanting to engage in

² We adopted a snowball sampling methodology for our community consultation stage. This methodology involves one study participant nominating or referring another potential participant. This process is continued until a saturation point of overlapping or repeating themes is reached.

community) since the beginning of Covid-19 and that there is a need and desire for improved community connectedness.

- Perception that learning about & supporting improved land management is a need not just for ageing people, but also new landowners in Nillumbik.
- Many interviewed indicated a sense that there were opportunities to improve community knowledge of land management practices. For example: ecological literacy (e.g. Weed ID); different types & models of land use arrangements (e.g. land sharing via lease or agistment arrangements); and opportunities for diversifying production or land use.

Barriers

- Zoning, planning scheme and what is possible with regards to multiple dwellings was regarded as a barrier for land-sharing by those already engaged in production or who have explored the possibility of diversifying.
- Perception of Council as a blocker to enabling diversified land use, increasing food production capacity and opportunity to market, and enabling alternate dwelling situations.
- Residual trauma from natural disasters makes land management a 'hot' issue - there are real & perceived tensions in the community about approaches to land management.
- The cost of installing infrastructure for diversifying production was identified as a key barrier for those wishing to encourage or begin farming enterprises on their land.
- Perceived and actual limitations of agricultural activities and production due to soil quality and landscape.
- Some interviewees indicated a high degree of resistance to unknown people getting involved with land management on private land.
- Contrasting needs between productive landholders vs lifestyle blocks.
- Individuals interested in land sharing lack the networks / know-how on instigating this.

Community workshops

The second stage of the project involved holding a series of co-design workshops with engaged community members to help them build community-led approaches to address issues experienced by those wanting to age in place/stay on the land and the requirements of managing the land. The outcomes of each workshop are described in detail below.

Workshop 1. Ageing in rural Nillumbik - Let's talk land management!

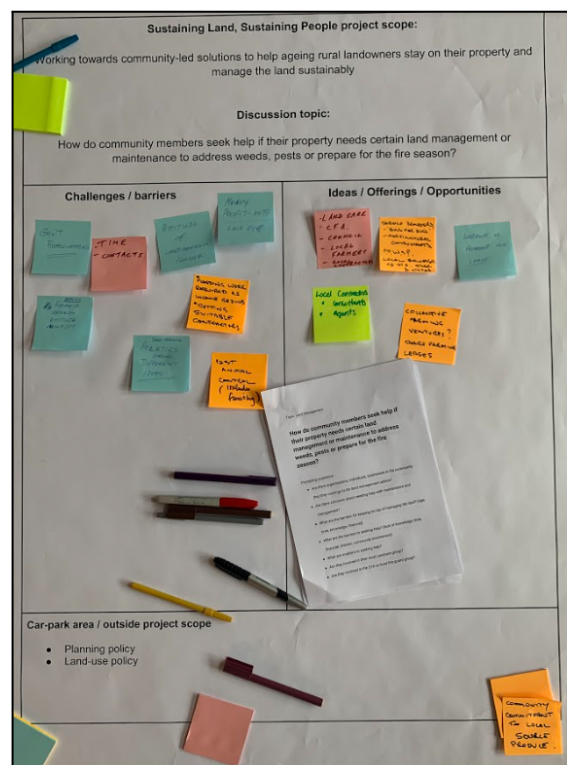
In late July, 52 community members attended the "Ageing in Nillumbik - Let's talk land management!" workshop at the Wadambuk St Andrews Community Centre. The purpose of

this event was to engage broadly with the Nillumbik community on the three topics of community building, land-sharing and land management.

The at-capacity event had three guest speakers who each discussed their experiences in relation to these topics. This included:

- Smiths Gully General Store's Lydia Heap sharing how she is using a small business to build a network of community care.
- Thanisa Adams of Wattle Gully Produce talking about her experience in developing a market garden business through a land-sharing arrangement on an established mixed livestock farm in Mitchell Shire.
- Dunmoochin Landcare's Mel Nelson sharing how the Dunmoochin community works together through neighbourhood working bees and group initiatives to address land management issues such as weed control.

The event included a breakout activity with smaller groups to further surface and generate opportunities and barriers across the topics of community building, land-sharing and land management.



From the 21 respondents of the workshop evaluation feedback, 95% felt that the event was worth attending.

"A hopeful outcome is innovative solutions that enhance the land stewardship already undertaken for many years by elders in the Nillumbik community. That the collective wisdom of both the Nillumbik and broader community will champion thinking outside the square and genuinely explore all the possibilities." - **Attendee feedback from Workshop 1**

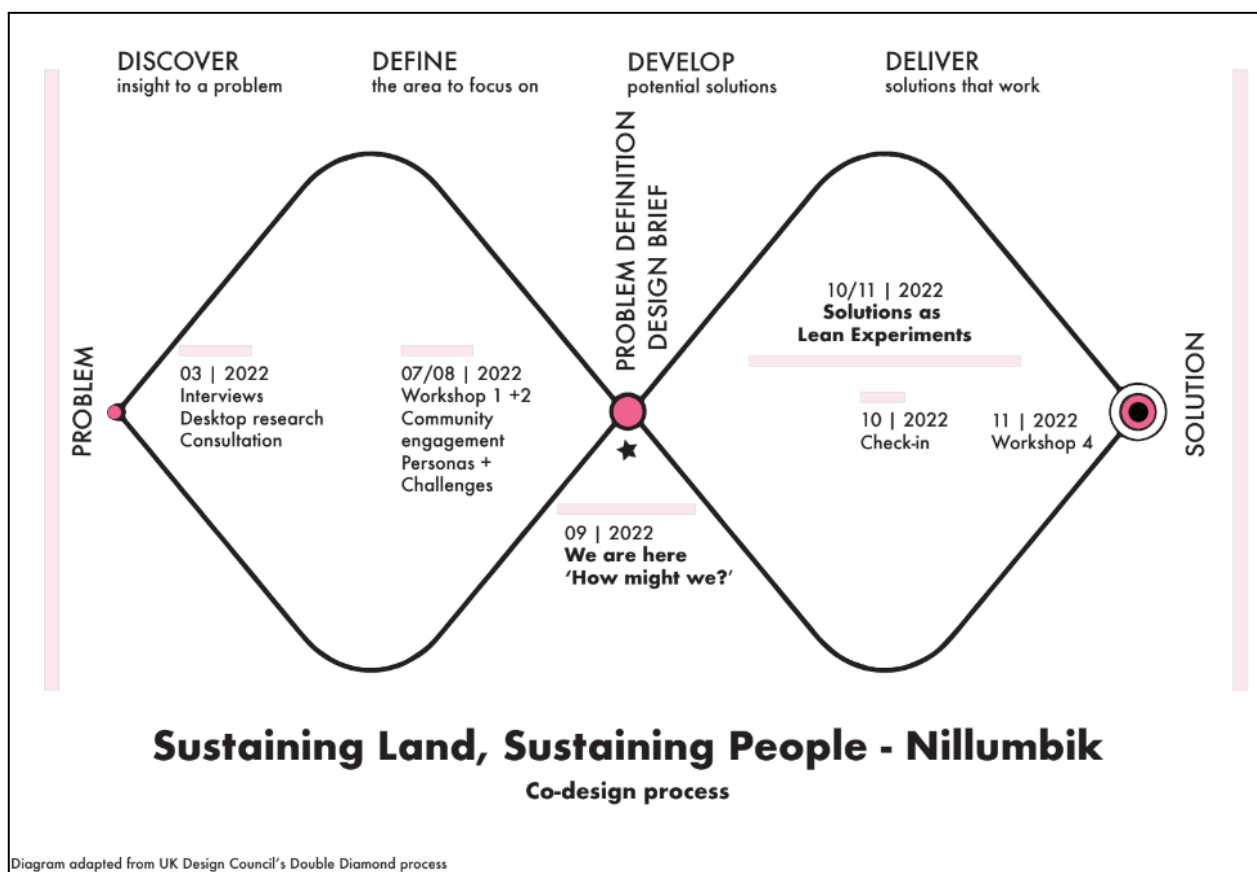
On the day, 15 community members submitted their expression of interest (EOI) to participate in the project's further 3 co-design workshops. Open Food Network also emailed the 55 registered contacts from workshop 1 with an invitation to submit an EOI to attend the co-design workshops. Community members were encouraged to share the co-design EOI with interested networks.

A total of 25 EOIs were received for the co-design workshops with a strong representation of females and ageing rural landholders. Active farming landholders attended the first event but did not nominate to join the co-design workshops. This may be due to differing perceptions of what ageing farmers vs 'lifestylers' or bush block landholders need to stay on the land, or the communications and framing of the event not 'speaking to' farmers. Open Food Network noted this and asked participants for any rural farming landholder contacts who may be interested in participating in order to have representation within the group; however this did

not lead to additional participants. Due to workshop time scheduling and other factors, several community members were unable to attend subsequent workshops but were kept in communications of the workshop summaries, outcomes and progress.

Workshop 2: Exploring the challenges and what we need

The first of three co-design workshops was held in early August at the Christmas Hills Hall. 17 community members attended and began developing trust within the group and an empathy for others' perspectives on the complex issue of ageing in place and land management. The diagram below depicts the co-design 'double-diamond' approach adopted across the workshops to define the problem(s), explore focus areas, develop potential solutions and test these.



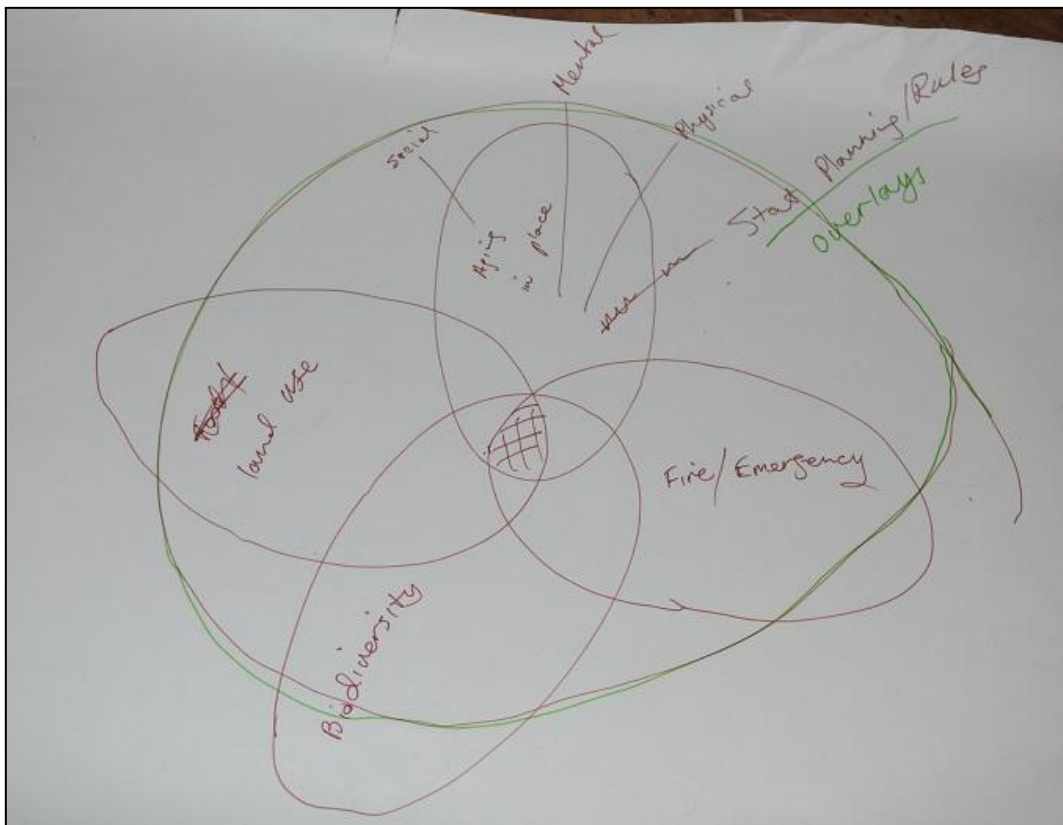
The 'double diamond' approach adopted for the co-design workshop delivery for the Sustaining Land, Sustaining People project. Image adapted by Fair Share Fare.

A series of case studies that outlined innovative approaches to ageing in place and land management were presented to the group along with opportunities, ideas and possible solutions that had been collated through initial stakeholder engagement and Workshop 1 (See Appendix 2). Four 'personas' (fictional people representing real-life scenarios; see Appendix 3) were also utilised to help participants relate to the different challenges experienced by Nillumbik community members. Participants began identifying which solution area they may want to continue focusing on in the further workshops.

The following themes emerged that were also consistent with the initial community consultation and Workshop 1:

- A significant enthusiasm for the need to bring ageing in place and land management issues together (see diagram below);
- An expressed need for improved community and social connectedness;
- A desire from some to explore land-sharing options;
- Learning & support for land management across the broader Nillumbik community is needed
- An opportunity to share, build and/or improve knowledge and skills in relation to ecology, land management, land-use & production.

It was noted that Council rates, and state planning and zoning policies all impact the challenges experienced, however these are out of scope of this project.



A visual diagram created by one of the groups in workshop 2 representing the complexity and intersections of differing areas related to this project topic.

Workshop 3: Identifying solutions and designing experiments

The second co-design workshop was held in early September at the Arthurs Creek Community Hall with 18 attendees. The purpose of this workshop was to devise potential solutions for the challenges of ageing in place and land management in participant's interest areas. Lean experiment methodology was presented as one way of creating small, achievable

experiments for community-led ideas to 'test the water' of a possible solution, learn, refine and continue working towards solutions in a way that doesn't break the bank or waste a lot of time on something that doesn't work.

Three working groups formed around the topics: community connections, land-sharing and land management. Goals were set by each working group with achievable action plans to work towards before the final workshop in November. There was also an important outcome that was borne from this project relating to life and succession planning - this outcome, along with outcomes from each working group are discussed in more detail in the Working Group Outcomes section.



Online check in on progress

A short online meeting was held in mid October for participants to attend and report back on progress made on the actions and activities planned in workshop 3. The purpose of this session was to continue encouraging engagement from community members and accountability for the actions set, to keep them on track to achieving their goals. It was also an opportunity for participants to receive feedback and further ideas from the broader group.

Workshop 4: Celebrating progress made & where to from here?

The third and final co-design workshop was held at the Wadambuk St Andrews Community Centre with 16 attendees in mid November. The purpose of this workshop was for each working group to re-convene and report back to the larger group on progress from the actions developed in the previous workshop, and define their next steps. Additionally, two community members volunteered to present on themes that emerged during the co-design process: an introduction to Dynamic Life & Succession Planning, and local horticultural enterprise Seeds of Plenty explaining the land-sharing model they have used for their business, and their interest in accessing more land within Nillumbik. The workshop also celebrated the wins that have happened along the way, and the opportunity for the Nillumbik community to continue building connections.

Working group outcomes

This section includes the process taken by each group to develop an achievable community-led initiative that they can test as a possible solution to the challenges associated with land management and ageing in place. The outcomes from activities undertaken along with next steps are also detailed, as defined by each working group throughout the co-design workshops.

Community connections working group

Background:

In response to the “Ian” persona that was included in Workshop 2 (see Appendix 3), the participants noted that ageing farmer landholders who may be experiencing social isolation were not represented or in attendance in the co-design process. This was identified as a barrier to improve land management and ageing in place within Nillumbik, but also an opportunity for community connectedness to improve and become a strong foundation to *then start to* address challenges associated with land management and ageing in place.

The group then considered:

How might we?... *build connections with ageing landholders in the Nillumbik community who are socially isolated? (but may not identify as socially isolated)*

By drawing on lean experimentation methodology, the group next defined:

Overall aim:

There is less social isolation and improved community connectedness among ageing rural Nillumbik landholders.

Hypothesis:

By improving community connectedness, rural Nillumbik landholders will be better supported and looked out for by their community.

Key Assumption:

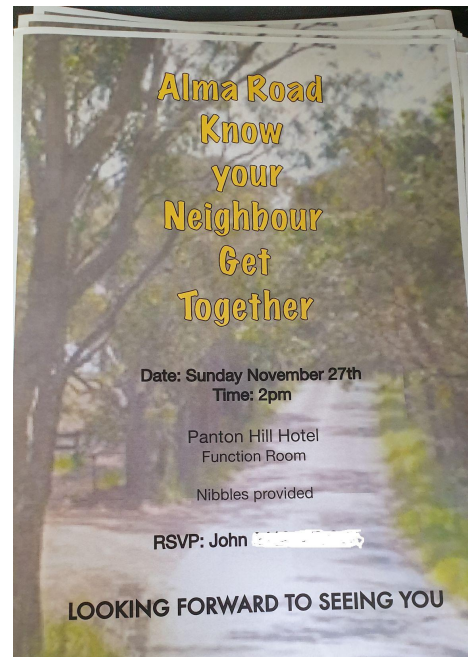
Nillumbik landholders that may be experiencing social isolation want to connect.

This working group then developed an achievable goal and activities to test the hypothesis:

Goal: To hold an inclusive community gathering: “Know Your Neighbour”, Alma Road (3km in length), Panton Hill. Location: Panton Hill Pub or Firefighters Park. To apply for and get funding from a Nillumbik Shire Grant (Social Connections program).

Activities:

- Two residents on Alma Road were the event organisers and worked closely with the Social Connections team at Council to make this event possible. They were successful in receiving a small community grant to cover the cost of (non-alcoholic) refreshments at the neighbourhood event.
- A flyer was developed by the resident-organisers who door knocked (no mailboxes on Alma Road) along Alma Road over several weeks. The resident-organisers prioritised 'having a chat' with the households when personally delivering a flyer instead of leaving it at the door when no one was home, to begin building personal familiarity.
- The organisers identified their ideal outcomes for the event (i.e. photographs for sharing the story of this event, establishing an opt-in Whatsapp group, ensuring it was inclusive by having no set 'agenda' for the event) and built these into the planning and preparation, and to also ensure that learnings would be captured and shared with the project participant group.



Group Outcomes:

- In some instances, properties were security-gated and inaccessible. To address this barrier, the organisers tied the flyer with a personal note requesting that they call them if interested to find out more - this was a successful approach with the organisers contacted by most households. It challenged the organisers assumptions that neighbours with these types of gated properties did not want to interact, and demonstrated the need for multiple approaches of engagement.
- There was an 'overwhelmingly positive' response from neighbours wanting to attend the event, with the confirmation of 40 RSVPs. This may indicate that in this neighbourhood, the assumption that landholders who may be experiencing social isolation want to connect, is true.
- The Alma Road 'Know Your Neighbour' event took place on Sunday 27 November at the Panton Hill Pub with approximately 45 attendees. It was considered by the resident-organisers to be a hugely successful event with new relationships created and personal connections formed. It also extended beyond Alma Road residents with some neighbouring road residents attending.
- A WhatsApp group was created with an opt-in process for the residents to continue communicating with one another.

- Some resident attendees noted that they felt an improved sense of safety in knowing their neighbours.

Recommended next steps:

- Alma Road residents turn this inaugural meeting into an annual event (noting that the organisers have mentioned discussions of another event for October 2023).
- Where possible, the Alma Road resident-organisers share the process they undertook and lessons learnt to inspire and motivate other community members who may wish to hold a similar neighbourhood event.
- Community members with an interest in holding their own 'Know Your Neighbour' event in Nillumbik to find out more via:
 - Resources on the Neighbours Every Day website³
 - Contact with the Council's Social Connections team to see what support might be available.
- There is an opportunity for Nillumbik Shire Council to amplify the success of the Alma Road 'Know Your Neighbour' event across relevant council communication channels, networks and materials (i.e. community newsletters).
- Nillumbik Shire Council consider the possibility of building on the momentum of this community-led initiative by leveraging the existing resources of the Neighbours Every Day⁴ movement, and consider funding opportunities for residents specific to this initiative, as demonstrated by the neighbouring City of Whittlesea.⁵

Project outcomes:

- The Alma Road 'Know Your Neighbour' event is planning to continue beyond this project, as an annual gathering. It is anticipated that this will continue to strengthen the personal connections within the neighbourhood with an increased awareness of and support for their neighbours, particularly those staying on the land as they age.
- The 'Know Your Neighbour' event is part of a broader movement that occurs in varying forms across many Australian neighbourhoods.⁶ The replicability of this event throughout the Nillumbik Shire has significant potential: the local context and success of the Alma Road event has inspired fellow project participants with one member interested in organising an event for Rodger Road.
- The support provided by the Shire's Social Connections Officer to help the Alma Road resident-organisers plan for this event and receive funding through the Social Connections grant greatly contributed to enabling this community-led initiative to take place. The Officer's availability to meet and discuss the community members' idea, along with navigating things such as what can / can't be funded (i.e. cannot

³ For more, see: <https://neighbourseveryday.org/resources/downloads/#create-belonging>

⁴ For more, see: <https://neighbourseveryday.org/>

⁵ For more, see:

<https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/community-support/grants-awards-and-competitions/city-of-whittlesea-neighbour-day-grants-program-ndgp/>

⁶ For more, see: <https://neighbourseveryday.org/day-of-action/>

provide funds for alcoholic beverages but can provide funds for non-alcoholic beverages at the local pub) was noted by the participants as being extremely helpful.

- Engagement with neighbours with security-gated properties enabled the start of conversations around community fire safety, as there have been previous access issues for local fire brigades. This increasing understanding, coupled with the WhatsApp group communication channel, provides the opportunity for the Alma Road community to better manage the threat of fire in the future.
- The establishment of the WhatsApp group immediately resulted in one resident seeking advice on land management, asking the group for recommendations on people that cut hay in the area. This outcome is an early validation of a working group's assumption that: "By knowing and meeting our neighbours we can skill share and help others because we are connected and have personal relationships."
- It was a novel application of the "Know your Neighbour" movement to leverage land management outcomes, from what is traditionally an approach for social outcomes.

Land management working group

Background: As part of the community consultation process, it was noted by some landholders that they don't have and/or would like to build their skills and knowledge in order to better manage their properties (i.e. fencing, weed identification, managing pests such as rabbits). This finding was incorporated into the persona of "Penny" in workshop 2 (see Appendix 3), and a group of participants with an interest in land management wanted to further investigate how this challenge to improving land management may be addressed.

The group considered:

How might we? ... *identify what types of practical workshops Nillumbik landholders would be interested in?*

By drawing on lean experimentation methodology, the group next defined:

Overall Aim:

Practical workshops will help people to better manage their land, stay on the land longer and/or potentially help others in the community.

Hypothesis:

By helping people to gain practical skills, this will help them stay on their land longer and/or better manage their land.

Key Assumption:

Once people have the skills, they will be able to do the work on their property.

The working group then developed a goal and related activities that could be tested in the timeframe of this project, to act as a starting point that will help the community progress towards further testing of the hypothesis:

Goal:

Our goal is to find out what workshops would be most useful or high value for Nillumbik landholders. Our solution is to send out an online survey through our networks to identify the areas of interest and priority.

Activities:

- The working group developed a draft survey that then received feedback from the larger participant group during the online check-in on progress.
- During workshop 4, the working group further discussed key questions: how the online survey would be distributed, who was the target audience, who would/should 'own' the data and what the next steps would be.
- Given the project timeframe and sensitivities around data, the group decided that the best way forward was for the Council to 'own' the survey and analyse the data. This is now being held by the Land Management Officer in the Environment Services team. It was decided that the survey would be emailed to those that had already participated or engaged with this project.
- The online survey (see Appendix 4) to gather information from community members about priority areas for land management and skills development was finalised by the working group shortly after Workshop 4 .
- As the project lead throughout, Open Food Network holds the majority of the community relationships for this project. Therefore Open Food Network emailed an invitation to participate in the survey to 121 Nillumbik community members in late November 2022. These were people that had either: registered for updates on the Smart Farms - Sustaining Land, Sustaining People project webpage, registered for Workshop 1, were co-design participants or Council staff involved in this project.



Workshops in Nillumbik: Land Management

Sharing knowledge and practical skills for life on the land is important for Nillumbik landholders. As we get older, land management tasks can become more challenging and sometimes overwhelming.

As part of the [Smart Farms Sustaining Land, Sustaining People project](#), it was identified by one of the community-led working groups that Nillumbik landholders may not have certain skills or knowledge required to manage their land or properties.

By helping our community share and gain knowledge and practical skills, this may help and support our ageing Nillumbik community to stay on the land longer and/or better manage their land.

The purpose of this survey is for the Nillumbik Shire Council to understand what skills or

Group outcomes:

- Some of the working group community members have offered to act as a reference group to the Council moving forward.
- A total of 18 responses (nearly 15% of those emailed) to the land management survey were received with the findings including:

- 42% of respondents were on rural farmland, 26% rural bushland, 32% on peri-urban blocks either less or greater than 1 acre.
- The top 5 land management topics of interest included: pest animal management, weed control (grassy and woody), revegetation and applying for grants.
- The top 5 conservation/biodiversity related topics included: threatened local plants, threatened local animals, gardens for wildlife, nest boxes and ecological burning.
- More than half of the respondents (52%) are interested in attending educational workshops on a monthly basis.
- Pending the date and time, the majority of respondents (68%) would be happy to attend either workshops in-person or online.
- 100% of the respondents preferred contact method is via email.
- Seven respondents indicated their willingness to share their knowledge and skills with the community.

Recommendation of next steps:

- Working group members connect again with the Council's Environment team to discuss findings and any opportunities to further lead community action or next steps i.e. should a paper survey be distributed amongst rural landholders?
- Council provide a summary of the findings to survey participants, including information on any existing or known workshops in the Shire that cover the priority topics.
- Council use the information to review the current Council-run workshop schedules and/or inform other community organisations or service providers of the priority interest areas.

Project outcomes:

- The outcomes of this working group's online survey demonstrates the benefit of applying a lean experiment framework to new ideas or possible solutions rather than putting resources into developing a series of workshops for the community that may not be the priority topics or right solution for this community. Now that they have initial data, the working group can then make more informed decisions on whether to proceed or not, with further developing the idea and working towards the hypothesis, ie. make it a paper survey.
- The online survey included dynamic life and succession planning as one of the topic options for land management. This was an effective and collaborative way for another workshop participant to gather information on whether a workshop offering is of interest to those contacted.

Land-sharing working group

Background:

Land-sharing can help ease the workload or burden on people to manage their land as they get older. Land-sharing models are less common in Australia⁷ and there are many different types of land-sharing arrangements that can be made between a landholder and a person seeking land or access to natural resources (e.g. firewood). These may include formal, transactionary agreements (i.e. setting up a farming enterprise with a written rent agreement), agistments (i.e. cattle on land in exchange for fixing or maintaining fences), or informal agreements that may include an exchange of labour for resources (i.e. helping to clear / cut firewood on the property, and taking home an agreed amount of wood). During the consultation and engagement process, community members (including people with land and people looking to access land) expressed an interest in land-sharing models that might suit their varying contexts and needs. However, they were unsure on how to best proceed or connect with people in their community or further, that may also be interesting in land-sharing. This was represented in the persona of "Cath and Shane" (see Appendix 3).

A working group consisting of landholders with an interest in land-sharing options for their property and needs, and interested community members with networks or knowledge in this area, formed to then consider:

How might we?... *help landholders work out what type of land-sharing arrangement could work for their situation?*

By drawing on lean experimentation methodology, the group next defined:

Overall Aim:

Land sharing arrangements help rural landholders stay on the land longer because someone else is helping to manage the land.

Hypothesis:

Once landholders know more about how land-sharing could work, they will be more inclined to seek out a land-sharing arrangement.

Key Assumption:

An information gap is the only thing holding landowners back from entering into land-sharing arrangements.

The working group then developed an achievable goal that could be tested in the timeframe of this project, to act as a starting point that will help the community progress towards further testing of the hypothesis:

Goal:

To experiment with land-sharing over three properties by having a get-together to discuss principles (with Open Food Network support) and explore the possibilities of land sharing. We would like to have a land assessment and have other community members share their

⁷ For more, see: <https://www.farmerincubator.org/regenerationreport>

stories of land-sharing with us (i.e. Beales Road Farm) and discover the gaps in what is needed in terms of growing for our local community (businesses and households).

Activities:

- Open Food Network developed a resource that was shared with the working group to guide discussions on land-sharing options and build an understanding of the needs of each landholder involved (see Appendix 5).
- Open Food Network shared links with group members to relevant local organisations and/or examples of land-sharing initiatives or models.⁸
- Three working group members met in mid October to discuss each of their needs / interests in land-sharing, with outcomes detailed below.
- Over the duration of Workshops 2 to 4, there was further engagement with more community members interested in this topic, particularly informal arrangements, who were then connected with the people in this working group.

Group outcomes:

- Following the smaller working group discussion, it became clear that the landholders within the group had different needs and held interests in both formal and informal land-sharing type arrangements:
 - a. One landholder is interested in a land-sharing arrangement where an existing commercial enterprise establishes a business on their land - and that the landholder may be actively involved. The landholder sees the opportunity for income generation in a land-sharing arrangement. They are now organising to have a land assessment of their property to understand what types of agricultural production might be possible.
 - b. One landholder determined that they did not need a land-sharing arrangement as they had sufficient support already in place; however they were interested in establishing Indigenous plants in an underutilised section of their property. It was suggested that the landholder connect with the Narrap Team⁹ of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to discuss consultancy possibilities.
 - c. One landholder is looking for flexible, informal type assistance or exchange as they don't know how much longer they will be on the property; i.e. a person to work the vegetable patch and share in the bounty, or someone to chop firewood and go halves in the stock. It was suggested that they start to build a task list or position description for what this type of assistance / exchange could be, and reach out to their immediate network via word of mouth, community noticeboards or Facebook community pages. For anyone that is interested, it was then suggested to have a "get-to-know-you over a cuppa" and a defined trial period to see if the arrangement will work.

⁸ For more, see: <https://www.growingfarmers.org.au/backyard-farmers-project> and <https://afsa.org.au/our-work/farming-on-other-peoples-land/>

⁹ For more, see: <https://www.wurundjeri.com.au/services/natural-resource-management/>

- With these diverse outcomes being arrived at for the individuals in the October discussion group, during Workshop 4 the larger working group recognised two, more generalised, 'spheres of influence' regarding land-sharing opportunities in Nillumbik:
 - a. The first sphere is where the group will focus:
 - To continue meeting and growing the network of residents and community members interested in offering up land for others to grow on, or access land for food production.
 - One of the group members offered to run a tour of the 'care-farm',¹⁰ Beales Road Farm.
 - The Working Group members will join the Young Farmers Connect Melbourne Chapter¹¹ to network with people seeking to access land, and what resources exist to support landowners to understand their options better.
 - b. The second sphere is beyond the power of this group to influence/control on its own: the restrictions and challenges of State laws around zoning. The group recognised it could support the Council in any advocacy work it does in this area.

Recommendation of next steps:

- The primary contact identified as leading the working group communications in Workshop 4 to continue driving the coordination of a get-together in early 2023.
- The working group establishes a schedule of meeting times and agreed topics to ensure that the varying interests and needs within the community and this group are being covered (i.e. commercial land-sharing for agricultural production, agistments, labour/skills exchanges etc).
- The working group members organise how to achieve their further goals of participating in a care-farm tour at Beales Road and joining the Young Farmers Connect Melbourne Chapter.
- Throughout the workshop process, several community members raised the possible solution of a community database of resources or contacts (i.e. local businesses, agricultural contractors, suppliers, service providers) as a useful tool particularly for those as they age and are looking to outsource some of the workload in managing their land. Also having land-sharing opportunities (those seeking and those with land) on a community database like this could be an effective way to connect the Nillumbik community and build community-led outcomes. It is recommended that the working group further explore this idea, if there are already databases/networks within the Shire that meet this purpose, and whether there is appetite from the group to set up a lean experiment around this idea.

¹⁰ A care farm will engage farming practices for nature-based therapeutic outcomes that may focus on mental health and wellbeing, social care and connection, education or rehabilitation. Care farms have a structured and supervised program of farm-related activities for their target audience. For more information, see here: <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/knowledge-base/article/what-care-farming>

¹¹ Join requests to the private group can be made via <https://www.facebook.com/groups/YFCMelbourne/>

- The working group meet with the Council team overseeing the delivery of the Future of Agriculture Action Plan¹² to discuss possible opportunities for community-led initiatives that may contribute to achieving the Action Plan objectives, and/or promote land sharing opportunities in relevant council communications.

Project outcomes:

- Community members with a driven interest in the topic of land-sharing and agriculture/food production within Nillumbik have connected through the project and defined next steps suitable for their personal contexts. This connection and relationship building is an initial but important first step to working towards further community-led initiatives or land-sharing outcomes that may help people stay on the land for longer, as it is building locally-held knowledge and understanding on the topic.
- As evident throughout this project, there is likely to be growing interest in this topic from more community members through word of mouth, along with more land-sharing examples surfacing within the local area (local land sharing enterprise Seeds of Plenty approaching Council mid-way through this project and then presenting at Workshop 4 is a good example of this). By expanding the community's topic literacy, awareness and building of opportunities and possibilities around land-sharing in Nillumbik, this has the potential to lead to many beneficial outcomes including increased social connectedness and cohesion, fresh food production, and fuel-load reduction.
- The many forms of land-sharing models that are possible provide an opportunity to meet different and varying needs of landholders within Nillumbik. As one example, it is recognised that many community members are asset rich but cash poor. Land-sharing may provide a form of income (whether active or passive) for ageing landholders that wish to stay on the land.

Dynamic Life and Succession Planning

Background:

Life and succession planning is not well understood or often practised within Australia. The importance of planning as a tool for staying on the land and/or how it will be managed was recognised by the participants in Workshop 2 as an area that had not been surfaced in the initial community consultation and engagement. As a result of this gap being identified, a workshop participant who works professionally in farm business succession planning was interested in further exploring how Nillumbik landholders, especially farmers, might engage

¹² For more, see:

<https://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/business/local-producers/the-future-of-agriculture-in-nillumbik-action-plan.pdf>

with the topic of dynamic life and succession planning, particularly earlier in life. Some of the key challenges include an avoidance of, or overwhelm with the subject, leaving planning until late in life when farming has already become very difficult, plus a low level of understanding or awareness amongst the broader community of how life and succession planning can help people to better manage how they age well in place.

Through the lean experiment framework, the participant then defined:

Overall aim:

More Nillumbik landholders have a life plan &/or succession plan in place.

Hypothesis:

Running an interactive workshop for life planning and/or succession planning for Nillumbik landholders and other (family) stakeholders will help them to better enjoy and cope with their later stages of life.

Key assumption:

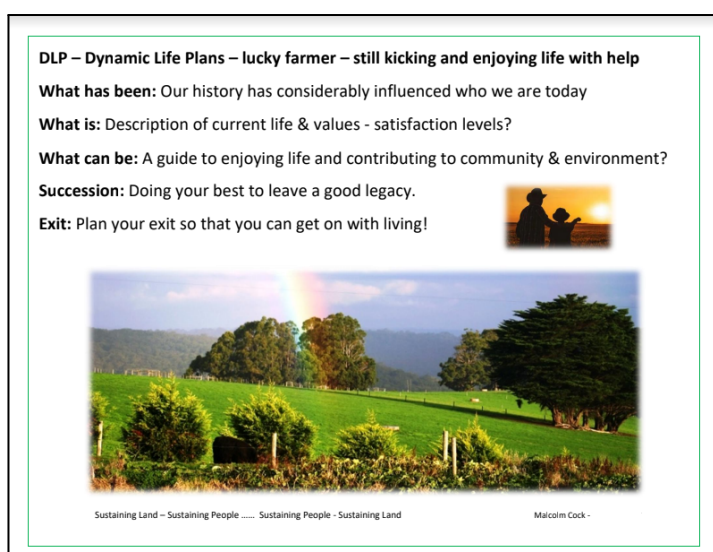
Nillumbik landholders would be interested in life planning and succession planning.

How might we: ... *See if there is interest from Nillumbik landholders in a life planning / succession planning workshop?*

The participant cohort was asked in Workshop 2 if they had interest in progressing this interactive workshop in the community as part of this project.

Outcomes:

- While the workshop participants were not looking to work directly on this idea and challenge, it was noted in Workshop 2 and the online meeting in October that participants would like further information on what dynamic life / succession planning is. As a result, the workshop participant working in the area presented at the final workshop in November with an introduction on the importance of dynamic life and succession planning.
- Dynamic life and / or succession planning was incorporated as an option in the Land management survey. This was an integrated approach to test community interest in the topic and only 1/18 respondents selected this option. It was anticipated by the workshop participant working in the area that it would not get much traction due to the nature of this challenging and often very complex topic.



- As this topic covers multiple areas and departments of Nillumbik Shire Council, Council is keen to support the offering of a workshop. As a result, the participant working in this area will be presenting to the Positive Ageing Advisory Committee in February 2023.

Recommendation of next steps:

- Council and the project participant working in this area to further explore stronger engagement with ageing farmers in rural Nillumbik. This may include events or gatherings that focus on a smaller, farmer-specific process or topic that has the same aims as this project, but with an exclusive targeted campaign, i.e. holding a farmer-specific dynamic life planning introduction session with locally-based professionals in a 'kitchen table conversations'¹³ or similar format to foster connections.
- There is potential to run these sessions segmented into different age brackets depending on the proximity to 'retirement'.

Project outcomes:

- Dynamic life and succession planning is relevant to rural landholders whether on farming or lifestyle properties; there is now a greater understanding within the community of the need to move the dial and normalise this topic, building an awareness of the importance of life and succession planning.
- Participants gained an increased understanding of the importance of life and succession planning and while it is never too late, it can be most beneficial to landholders to develop a plan when they are younger, or as early as possible, so that arrangements are in place, prepared for or managed more easily as they age.

¹³ For more, see: <https://kitchentableconversations.org/>

Project outcomes

1. Community-designed solutions

The project brought together different community stakeholder groups and demographics to design solutions that meet the diverse needs of the Nillumbik community (see Appendix 2. for the full list of collaborative solutions / ideas identified). As a result of this project, community members led the following initiatives that are working towards improving land management and ageing in place (see the Working group outcomes section for in-depth detail on each of these initiatives):

- A 'Know Your Neighbour' event to build social connections;
- An online survey to build an understanding into priority areas for land management workshops and skills building; and
- Establishment of a community group with an interest in implementing land-sharing models within Nillumbik.

An important outcome was that the facilitated space of this project gave community members the impetus and motivation to build their ideas into on-the-ground initiatives:

"There is a phenomenon in a class of materials called catalysts which can start and sustain a reaction but don't take part in that reaction. They remain in their own state after such a reaction. Which summarises the instigation and contribution of Open Food Network's co-design facilitation. This catalytic prompt gave us impetus for one of our 'gunna' ideas and it gave the Nillumbik team a better understanding and more insights into how they can best help ageing people on the land." -

workshop participant and Alma Road 'Know Your Neighbour' community event organiser

2. Trusted network and connections established within the community

It was clear from the community consultation and workshops that there was a strong need for the community to simply and firstly connect, and the facilitated space provided in this project (plus catered morning tea breaks and lunches!) enabled this to happen. This will be a critical building block to future resilient, community-led solutions and outcomes, particularly given the challenges of staying on or managing the land, often being complex, interconnected and with no instantaneous solution.

"Deep listening to the community. Having opportunity for lots of discussion. Coming with open mindedness, proper co-design" - **participant feedback on what worked well in the project**

3. Trusted connections strengthened between Council and community

The trust, connection and direct relationships strengthened (or built) between Nillumbik community member participants and Council staff involved in the project has been significant. Cross-engagement on this project between multiple Council

departments (i.e. Economic Development (Agri-business), Community Services (Positive Ageing, Social Connections) and the Environment team was effective. The community participants gained an improved understanding from Council on existing programs, information and supports available that can enable and empower them to lead change within their community or on their properties. Similarly, the opportunity for Council staff to engage in lengthy discussions with community members and build on existing or new trusted relationships is an important outcome for future engagement.

4. Community adoption and trust in the co-design process

Adopting a co-design approach to build community-led solutions was an unfamiliar methodology for most participants. This was evident amongst most participants having a strong desire to know the project outcomes or solutions from the outset, rather than being determined through the co-design process. This is reflected in some of the comments from participant feedback:

*“Not clear what we were getting into - felt a lot like being gradually asked to commit more and more time by stealth” -***participant feedback on what could have been improved in the project**

*“A better understanding of expectations and ideal outcomes at the outset.” -***participant feedback on what could have been improved in the project**

There was an expectation from community members that Council would, or should be more involved in the outcomes & solutions rather than it being led by, and actioned by community members. This was noted by community members in both the consultation phase and workshops:

*“Transparency about the outcomes. I thought the council would take some more ownership but I guess it's up to us to hold them / others to the report.” -***participant feedback on what could have been improved in the project.**

There was a question from participants whether Council staff participate or observe the co-design process and building of community-led outcomes. Open Food Network and Fair Share Fare highly encouraged active Council participation in the co-design process, and throughout each workshop it highlighted the importance of the role that Council plays in enabling and supporting community-led solutions and outcomes, without necessarily needing to hold complete responsibility:

*“Information sharing. Especially the role of the council and what can be offered. The rural area of Nillumbik tends to have a negative view of the Council. Much seems unwarranted.” -***participant feedback on what worked well in the project.**

At the conclusion of the Workshops and co-design process, community participants had a greater understanding of *why* co-design was used: there was a recognition of the role that they can play as community leaders working with Council staff to influence program and project design that impact their lives for the better.



Recommendations for community

1. Persist with the solutions that have emerged, and are continuing from this project:

- There is the opportunity for this participant cohort to (continue to) be leaders within their own Nillumbik communities and networks and champion community-led initiatives that continue to work towards solutions to this wicked problem, using the recommended next steps in each case study as a starting point.
- Participants can apply the lessons learnt, knowledge gained and networks strengthened to have a ripple effect within their community.

2. The Sustaining Land, Sustaining People participant community to continue to build collaboration opportunities and cross pollination of ideas:

- The community of participants have come to know each other, share their stories, contexts and interests related to ageing in place and land management. As a result, they have formed a community network that can be leveraged outside of this project.
- Participants can continue to access and utilise the online shared folder of resources, workshop materials and opt-in contact list to stay connected with others in the group.

3. Maintain and strengthen the relationships and communication channels developed between Council and community:

- Where possible, it is recommended that individuals, community groups, networks and organisations spread the word about any initiatives, programs or supports that are available or shared by Council that will help gather more

community involvement in addressing this wicked challenge (i.e. living and learning workshops or courses relevant to land management or living on the land).

- If a community member has an idea that may be a possible solution to the challenges of ageing in place and managing the land, it is suggested that they speak with community groups and other community members as early as possible about the idea/s. Council staff also hold a lot of valuable information and knowledge that may assist community-led initiatives, whether that be connecting community members with existing resources, networks, programs, contacts. If community members are unsure who or how best to get in contact, it is suggested to reach out to their local ward Councillor who is there to represent them as their constituent.
- As detailed in the land-sharing working group case study, there was an expressed desire from project participants to have an accessible community database of resources or contacts (i.e. local businesses, contractors, suppliers, service providers). This is an opportunity for members of the Sustaining Land, Sustaining People cohort to continue to explore this idea, and how it may be tested or implemented in an achievable way. As demonstrated through this project, there may be ways that the Nillumbik Shire Council can support community members to test and implement this type of initiative (i.e. information or knowledge sharing, connecting with relevant people etc), and not reinvent the wheel (i.e. ensuring differentiation to the Shire's Community and Services Directory?¹⁴).

Recommendations for Council

1. Celebrate the demonstration of community leadership and solutions from this project:

- There is an opportunity for Nillumbik Shire Council to amplify the success of the Alma Road 'Know Your Neighbour' event across all Council communication channels and networks.
- Continued support from the Nillumbik Shire Council to help other community members wanting to run similar 'Know Your Neighbour' events will lead to stronger community connection and reduced isolation.
- Council to provide continued support to the dedicated working groups that have emerged from this project. This will be helpful to continue enabling community leadership and solutions that address different, interrelated elements of the challenges that ageing landholders experience in staying on the land and managing the land.
- An offer made by Council in workshop 4 - to convene a 6-monthly roundtable of community participants and relevant Council staff to continue information sharing and communication channels - was well received by participants. The

¹⁴ For more, see:

<https://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Community/Community-development/Community-and-Services-Directory>

offer was made as a genuine response to the conversations that have happened throughout the project and demonstrated to the community that Council can, and wants to, be responsive to the community's needs. It is recommended that the Council proceed with this offer.

2. Nurture the communication channels developed between Council and community:

- Nillumbik Shire Council would benefit from providing a regular dedicated forum for the community and Council staff from varying teams to connect around this interrelated topic of ageing in place and land management. This may be connected with the aforementioned offer of a 6-monthly roundtable meeting.
- Nillumbik Shire Council may benefit from reviewing the Council modes of information, resources and knowledge sharing related to this project topic to identify opportunities for strengthened communications that improve the community's understanding of what supports are available. This may involve strengthened collaborations with community groups and organisations that can help further spread the word within their networks of supports that are available (i.e. living and learning workshops or courses relevant to land management or living on the land).

3. Leverage the trust and networks that have been built out of this project to engage with ageing farmers in Nillumbik:

- It would be beneficial to the Nillumbik Shire Council to further explore opportunities to engage directly with ageing farmers in rural Nillumbik. This may include events or gatherings that focus on a smaller, farmer-specific process or topic that has the same aims as this project, but with an exclusive targeted campaign, e.g. holding a farmer-specific dynamic life planning introduction session with locally-based professionals in a 'kitchen table conversations'¹⁵ or similar format.
- There are opportunities for the Nillumbik Shire Council and specifically the Social Connections and Agri-business teams to work with project participants to either seek introductions, or work with them to engage their personal networks of ageing farming landholders.

4. Continue to build internal opportunities for collaboration between Council Departments and the cross pollination of ideas:

- Further building of collaborative project or program opportunities between Nillumbik Shire Council Departments and teams can enable greater impact for, and connection with the Nillumbik community. This project has demonstrated how this type of internal collaboration can work to begin addressing interconnected challenges such as ageing in place and land management.

¹⁵ For more, see: <https://kitchentableconversations.org/>

Appendices

Appendix 1: Engagement process, Information sheet, Interview guide & communications with participants

Engagement process

Direct email:

- Contacted to invite participation = [72 (out of 82 - 10 with no contact made)] total community members
 - SMART Farms EOI Contact List - email outreach (22 March 2022) inviting phone interview participation [5/34 interviewed, 34 emailed, 25 followed up]
 - Leaflet respondents [8/11 interviewed]
 - Snowballing contacts [9 - 'referred by']
 - Existing Networks [5]

Websites:

- Participate Nillumbik page
- Sustaining Land, Sustaining People project on Open Food Network site

Newsletters:

- Open Food Network March 31 2022 e-newsletter project mention
- From conversation with Local Food Connect, project mention in March 30 newsletter (sent to 3700 people)
- Nillumbik newsletter December 2021

Social Media:

- Facebook post 9 April, almost 4000 people engaged, 49 link clicks

Email to EOI participants

"Dear [Name] or Hello,

Thank you for expressing interest in the Nillumbik Council funded project "Sustaining Land and People".

My organisation, Open Food Network, are scoping a series of workshops to support landholders with land management options that both enable ageing in place and sustainable land management. To ensure those workshops meet community needs, we are conducting some scoping interviews with a wide range of community members to understand the current opportunities and barriers in managing land well and supporting ageing in place.

We would really like to ensure your perspective is included.

If you'd be willing to have a brief (30 minute) phone interview to discuss your perspective with me or my colleague Meg, please respond via email with your availability or you are welcome to give me a call on 9016 3003 during business hours.

Warm regards, [Prue, Open Food Network]

Information sheet (Background info to share with participants)

About the project:

Nillumbik Shire Council is working in partnership with Open Food Network Australia and Fair Share Fare to engage with community members to increase the capacity of agricultural land that is owned by ageing peri-urban landholders to be managed sustainably. Simultaneously supporting farmers & other landholders to be able to age well in place, while supporting the enhancement of a Nillumbik food system with social and ecological health at its core.

We are doing this through a relational co-design methodology to identify barriers and assumptions, foster collaborative ideas and problem-solving, and to test these solutions to improve land management and support ageing in place. The engagement process will centre around collaboratively considering this wicked problem of how to best support ageing farmers to adopt and/or maintain best practice sustainable agriculture on their properties. A workshop series will occur in mid-late 2022 to bring together stakeholders in these topics to co-design solutions.

About the interviews:

We are conducting interviews with community members, representatives of community organisations and enterprises who can shape the workshop series & potentially participate. We are seeking to understand the various barriers and opportunities to sustainable land management and ageing in place that you might see in your community, so that we can work on co-designing solutions. The interview should take about 30 minutes to complete and your interviewer (or a support person) will take notes. These notes would be used to generate information for workshop design. The information we gather will remain confidential and we will remove references to your name and role title. We will maintain a list of organisations consulted which would be shared with council. If at any point you feel uncomfortable or wish to stop the interview, you are free to do so. You are also free to withdraw your consent to have the data used in the project by contacting one of the project team.

Contact details:

Megan Roberts / Prudence Rothwell

Interview guide (community member)

Preamble: introduce project, remind participant about the information sheet (send in email ahead of time). Reminder that participants are free to end the interview at any time and if at any point they feel uncomfortable or would like to end the interview they are free to do so.

1. First off, could you tell me a bit about who you are, your role in the community and areas of interest?

2. What piqued your interest about the EOI? What were you hoping this project might lead to?
3. With regards to the project, can you tell me a bit about what you see as the opportunities for improving both land management and experiences of ageing in Nillumbik? (prompt for: existing collaborations, groups that are already active, areas where there could be more done)
4. And what about barriers - what, if anything, is blocking improvements to land management and ageing in place?
5. As mentioned in the preamble, part of this project will be a series of tailored workshops for co-designing solutions that might meet this combination of challenges. If you were to participate in those workshops, what would make them useful to you and the groups you work with?
6. We are snowballing our consultation, so could you tell me about anyone else - individuals or groups that we should be consulting? Would you be willing to offer an introduction so that we can get in contact?
7. Interested in being on the list to participate? Y/N

Appendix 2: Opportunities, ideas, solutions

Collected through Nillumbik community research & initial event for Sustaining Land, Sustaining People project

Community bus / transport alternatives	Network for older women living independently
Land-sharing (including agistment)	Community-owned facilities
Connect people that can't have livestock/do much food production on their own property due to zoning, with people that have land that can	Training scheme or 'bulk contracting' for getting work done at reduced cost
Multi-generation living	Community grants
Community agriculture farm	Community / neighbourhood email group + whatsapp group
Goats for weed management	Farm / property tours for those that are doing ageing in place well
Network of community groups for information and resource sharing	Building on 'incidental' interactions
More accessible food production (household) infrastructure (i.e. raised veg beds)	Work-away opportunities > can feed and provide accommodation in exchange for work
Farm gate stalls i.e. make it a farm gate Saturday across shire	Knowledge exchange / training for pest management
Informal networks to access opportunities (such as land-sharing)	Practical workshops on how to do things: i.e. fix fence, how to humanely catch/dispose of pest species (rabbits, foxes)
Succession planning, downsizing and exiting support for farmers and families	Community plan designed to support farmer succession planning
Resources for share-farming options (templates, resources, case studies, support programs)	Online manual specific for Nillumbik farmers / landholders (links to Lancare, agricultural groups, local service providers, technical information)

Appendix 3: Community Personas

'Personas' are fictional people representing real-life scenarios which were utilised to help participants relate to the different challenges experienced by Nillumbik community members which were surfaced during the community research and consultations.

Who	Age group	Context	Challenges experienced
"Cath and Shane" Retired landholder - couple	60 - 70s	<p>"We've been living in the Nillumbik shire for 35 years and we love it here.</p> <p>We live on 40 acres with a mix of bushland and cleared paddocks - we used to run cattle but de-stocked a couple of years ago. We just couldn't keep up with all the fencing repairs"</p>	<p>Interested in land-sharing (agistment or food production) but don't have networks or knowledge of how to progress this.</p> <p>Don't want to have day to day responsibilities such as livestock husbandry, fence maintenance.</p> <p>Cleared land not currently being used however blackberries & burgan require management.</p> <p>Fences need fixing and ongoing maintenance due to damage from wildlife and deer.</p>
"Ian" Retired landholder - single man	70 - 80s	<p>"I've been here for 40 years. My dearly departed wife and I raised our kids here.</p> <p>She's gone, and the kids have all moved closer into the city and have busy lives.</p> <p>I have 20 acres of primarily cleared land and it seems to get a little bigger each year!"</p>	<p>Doesn't identify as needing assistance or access to services that may be available.</p> <p>Doesn't move throughout the property as often & not aware of the extent of fire hazards on property.</p> <p>Financial barriers to contracting services required for land management.</p> <p>Doesn't know new neighbours that have recently moved next door.</p> <p>Increasingly isolated since Covid-19. Limited engagement with online community networks and groups.</p> <p>Only drives into town if essential.</p>
"Penny" Landholder - single woman	60 - 70s	<p>"I moved onto my property 15 years ago with my partner, who passed away a couple of years ago.</p> <p>I've got a 15 acre bush block; I want to care for it as best I can but don't have</p>	<p>Wants to gain knowledge and skills to manage certain parts of the property effectively and efficiently but has limited time and energy to do so.</p> <p>Deer, rabbits and capeweed are becoming increasingly rampant, impacting on the biodiversity on the property & require management.</p>

		as much energy as I used to, or the resources to do so"	Financial barriers to contracting services required for land management.
"Stuart" Farming landholder	60 - 70s	<p>"I'm the second generation in my family to farm this property, but none of my kids want to take it on.</p> <p>I've got 60 acres - a mix of tree crops and beef cattle; I'm not as quick as I used to be but I'm not going anywhere".</p>	<p>Doesn't want to stop farming and doesn't have a succession plan in place with the family / no one wants to farm.</p> <p>Physical health is slowing down their ability to work as hard as they used to.</p> <p>Doesn't identify as needing assistance.</p> <p>Hesitant to have unknown people on property (land-sharing).</p> <p>May not be familiar or interested in options for continuing to be involved w/o doing the actual hands on farming (i.e. mentoring)</p>

Appendix 4: Land Management Survey

Q1 Which of the following Land Management topics are you most interested in learning about further?

Tick your top 5.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fencing | <input type="checkbox"/> Soil management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pest animal management (deer, foxes, rabbits) | <input type="checkbox"/> Farm dams |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Integrated pest management (insects) | <input type="checkbox"/> Waterway management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weed management (grasses & pasture weeds) | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire season preparation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weed management (woody weeds like blackberry) | <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous land management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Erosion control | <input type="checkbox"/> Farm/property management planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Revegetation | <input type="checkbox"/> Rural property succession planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agroforestry (inc. for food, timber shelterbelts, windbreaks) | <input type="checkbox"/> Dynamic Life Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regenerative agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Grants, funding and governance for land management activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pasture management | |

Q2 Which of the following Biodiversity & Conservation topics are you most interested in learning about further?

Tick your top 5.

- ☐ Threatened local animals
- ☐ Threatened local plants
- ☐ Gardens for wildlife
- ☐ Fungi of Nillumbik
- ☐ Orchids of Nillumbik
- ☐ Insects and pollinators
- ☐ Nest boxes and other habitat structures
- ☐ Ecological burning

Q3 Are there any other topics not listed above that you are interested in?

Q4 Would you attend workshops on the above topics in-person or online?

- ☐ In person only
- ☐ Online only
- ☐ Either option - depends on the date & location

Q5 How often would you be interested in attending educational workshops such as those above?

- ☐ Fortnightly
- ☐ Monthly

- ☐ Quarterly
- ☐ Bi-Annually
- ☐ Just once a year, or less often

Q6 How do you want to stay informed about educational workshops being held in Nillumbik?

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Phone call
- ☐ Text message
- ☐ Flyer
- ☐ Other:

Q7 Your Suburb

Q8 Your property type:

Q9 Are you interested in finding out more on your local conservation and land management community groups?

Q10 Do you have skills or knowledge you are willing to share?

If so, please provide your name and email in the following questions so we can be in touch!

Appendix 5. Land-sharing guided discussion resource

Developed by Open Food Network Australia

Questions you might like to reflect on as individuals before you get together, or to reflect on individually when you meet to discuss land-sharing opportunities:

- 1) What do I want my life to look like in 5 years time?
- 2) How might the land be best used to contribute to my life goals?

Resources that may be helpful in reflecting on life goals:

Nb: these are optional!

U-Journaling:

This is an exercise developed by Otto Sharma at the Presencing Institute. It's a short guided reflection that takes about 50 minutes.

If you do it alone using the written guide, it works better if you don't look ahead at the prompt questions. If you do it as a group, I would suggest playing the audio guide (where the prompt qs are read out for you).

[Written instructions with questions](#)

[U-journaling exercise \(audio instructions\)](#)

Holistic Decision Making:

The articles, videos and examples in the "resources" tab on this website may be useful. Holistic management training is offered by a range of providers and may be useful if you want to do a deeper dive in life planning / land planning and how they fit together. (It is not necessary to do a holistic management plan for this exercise!)

Resources that may be helpful in reflecting on your land:

Nb: these are optional!

- 1) This ["Future of Agriculture in Nillumbik"](#) report (which you may have seen) provides good background on future thinking for the region, including consideration of climate change etc. See the land capability maps starting from pg 26 for selected products. These are generalised and it's recommended that they are not used for individual property planning, but may provide a useful starting point for your group

discussion.

2) A “SWOT” analysis for your land may be useful e.g.

- What are the **strengths/capabilities** of the land? (internal positive)
- What are the **weaknesses/constraints**? (internal negative)
- What are the **external challenges** I need to be mindful of in managing the land? (external, negative) (eg regulations; weeds on neighbouring land etc)
- What are some external **opportunities** in relation to the land? (external positive)

There are lots of free templates online to access to help you complete the SWOT. See [here](#) for several different template options that you can download.

Group discussion

- 1) Reflect on the process of clarifying life goals and land context and capability. Does this help in narrowing down some **principles or criteria** for what you are looking for in a land sharing arrangement?
- 2) Share insights (for example, from the SWOT exercise) - are there opportunities or ideas that might be relevant to each others’ land?
- 3) Formulate knowledge gaps or questions that you still have, in particular if there are any ways that Open Food Network can help you link up with resources / organisations relevant to your individual goals/needs.