

TARA AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY PLAN

2023—2033

MAY 2023



QGC

MAK
PLANNING & DESIGN

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Tara, and the surrounding district, are part of the Western Downs Regional Council and is located approximately 90 kilometres west of Dalby and 300 kilometres west of Brisbane.

Tara is the service centre for the district and provides basic medical and shopping facilities. Children travel to Tara for school.

Tara is a community where more people live outside the town than within it—many on small (10-30 hectare) rural blocks. The population of Tara has declined over the years though there is anecdotal evidence that the population may be stabilising. The population is older than average and has a lower level of income. The socio-demographics provide particular challenges, particularly in regard to health and other services.

The Tara Neighbourhood Centre commissioned the development of this 10-year Community Plan with the support of Shell QGC. MAK Planning and Design has undertaken the development process from mid-2022 to early 2023.

This Community Plan focusses on projects that the community can achieve that will make a positive difference to the lives of residents and the liveability of the area. It aims to be realistic and achievable. There are many challenges in Tara and district that are beyond the community's ability to ameliorate and while these are noted, they are for government agencies and others to address.



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BACKGROUND RESEARCH

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS

Tara and district's socio-demographics show a community that varies significantly from the Queensland average. The socio-demographics, whether age, health, income, or any other measure, indicate that Tara and district has particular needs that are different from mainstream Queensland communities.

Population	The population was 2,555 people at the 2021 Census. The population continues to decline as recorded in recent censuses. [†]
Age Profile	The age profile is skewed to younger and older persons with an under average population in the 15 years to 49 years age group (see Figure 1).
Median Age	49 years compared to 38 years for Queensland.
Birth Country	Nearly 80% of the population were born in Australia. 84.2% were born in Australia, England or New Zealand. Filipinos make up 1% of the population and are the next largest group.
Health	Tara has very challenging health outcomes. Examples are shown in Table 1 and in all cases the results are significantly worse than for the Queensland average.
Income	Median income is significantly less in Tara and district than for Queensland. The median household income in Tara and district (\$867/week) is approximately 48% lower than the Queensland average (\$1,675).
Education	In Tara and district the percentage of the population with a tertiary vocational qualification (3.5%) is half of the Queensland average (7.0%). For 'university and higher education' the discrepancy is greater—Tara and district (2.2%) versus Queensland (14.2%). This is a six-fold difference.

[†] There is wide-spread doubt in the community concerning the accuracy of the 2021 census population data. Anecdotal evidence, it is reported, indicates a steady if not a slight increase in the population. It is believed that the nature and demographics of the subdivisions leads to under-reporting in the census.

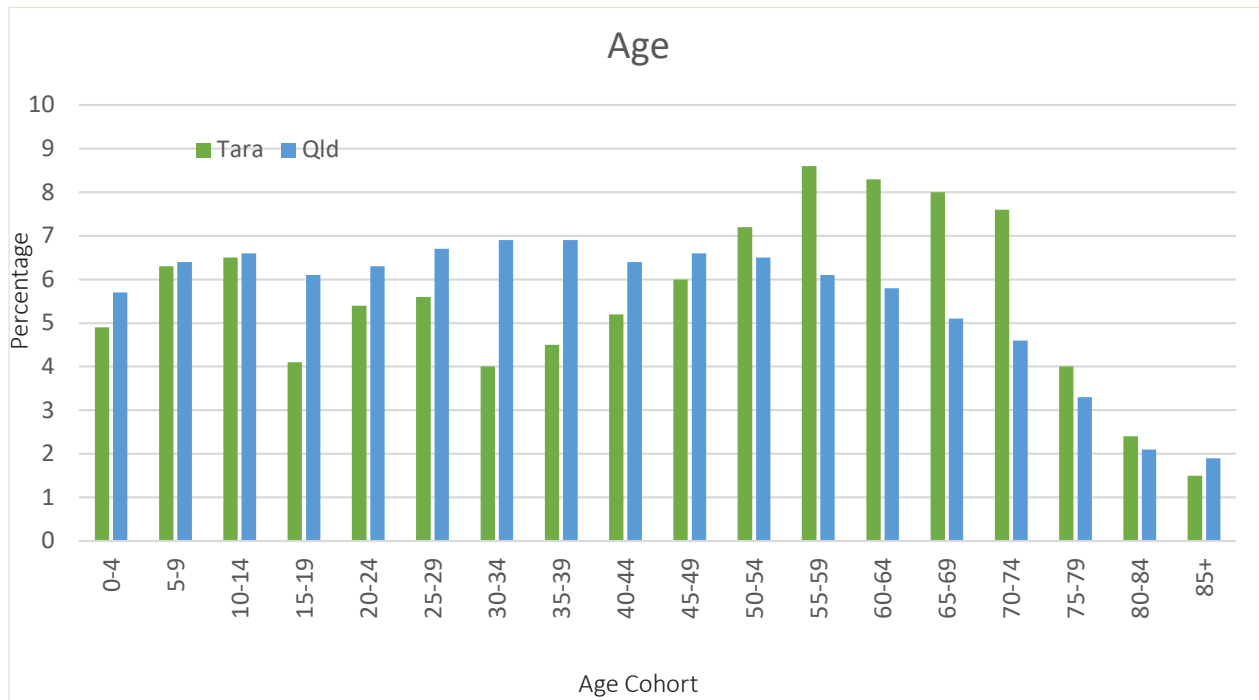
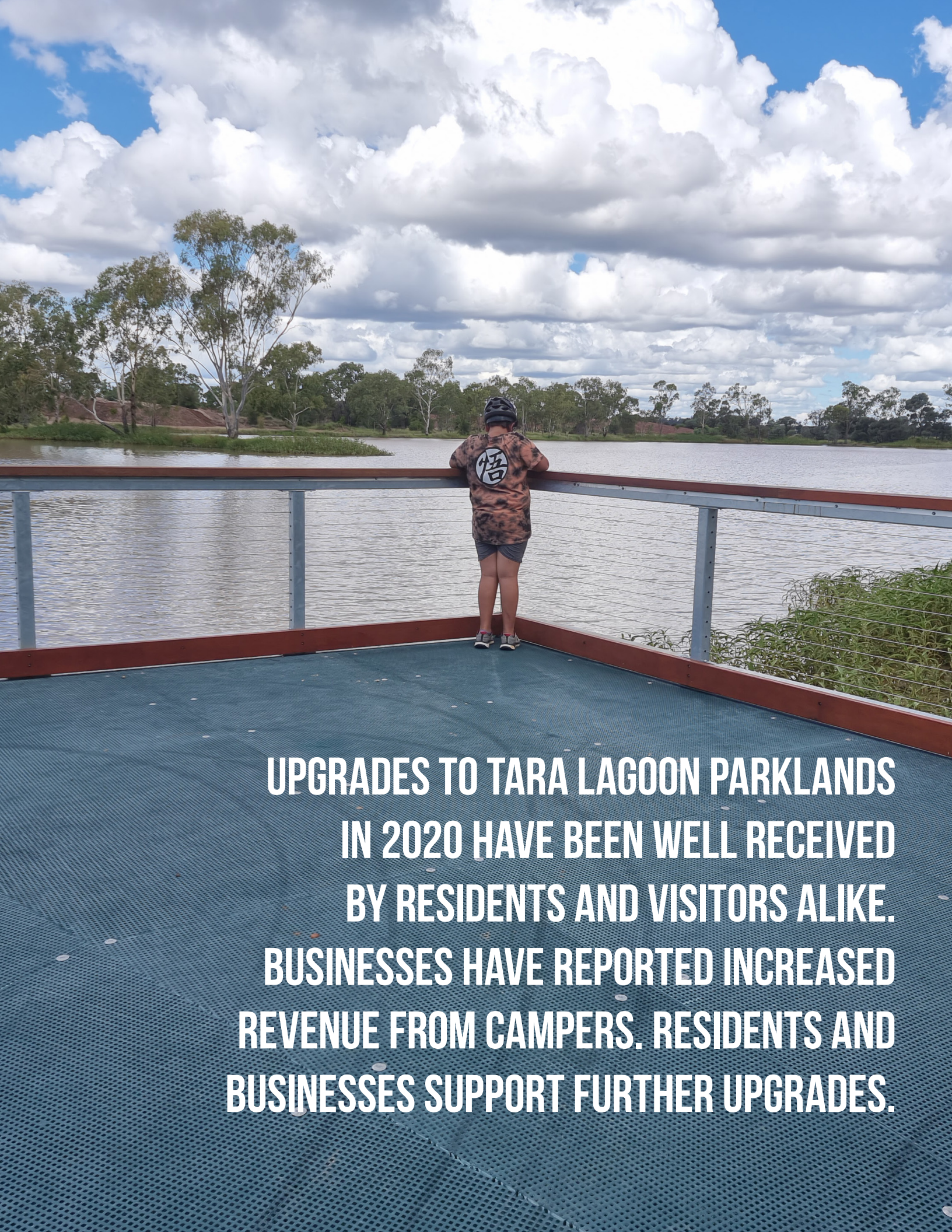


Figure 1: Age cohort comparison of Tara and district to Queensland

Type of Long Term Health Condition	Compared to Qld (red is a worse (higher) outcome)
Arthritis	84%
Asthma	56%
Cancer (including remission)	32%
Dementia (including Alzheimer)	71%
Diabetes (excluding gestational)	71%
Heart disease (including heart attack or angina)	69%
Kidney disease	89%
Lung condition (including COPD or emphysema)	105%
Mental health condition (including depression or anxiety)	58%
Stroke	140%
Any other long-term health condition(s)	40%

Table 1: Health outcomes compared to Queensland average (red is the percentage higher in Tara compared to the Queensland average)



**UPGRADES TO TARA LAGOON PARKLANDS
IN 2020 HAVE BEEN WELL RECEIVED
BY RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ALIKE.
BUSINESSES HAVE REPORTED INCREASED
REVENUE FROM CAMPERS. RESIDENTS AND
BUSINESSES SUPPORT FURTHER UPGRADES.**

CONSULTATION FINDINGS

What is great about living in Tara and the district now that must be kept?	What don't you like about living in Tara or the district that should be improved?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ County lifestyle/small town ▪ Natural environment ▪ Nice people ▪ Affordable ▪ Medical services and hospital ▪ Council facilities and services ▪ Tara Lagoon ▪ Community events/facilities ▪ Variety and quality of shops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Telephone/internet ▪ Crime ▪ Roads (and roads!) ▪ Town entrances and streetscape ▪ Youth activities ▪ Improved medical (range) ▪ Empty shops ▪ Limited art/craft activities 	
What is your idea/s that would make Tara a better place to live?	Key words and phrases describing the ideal Tara 10 years from now	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve roads and address crime ▪ Beautify town entrances and streetscape and a dog off-leash park ▪ Bank services ▪ More medical/ allied health ▪ Better living arrangements for People with Disability (PWD) ▪ More cafes and shops ▪ More events ▪ More activities/interaction/ entertainment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thriving ▪ Beautiful ▪ Improved roads ▪ Happy ▪ Rural living ▪ More retail choice ▪ Friendly ▪ Helping ▪ Close knit ▪ Internet/mobile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pride ▪ Better services, flourishing ▪ Bigger and Brighter ▪ Parks/ Lagoon ▪ Less crime ▪ Tourists/ Attractions ▪ Well kept ▪ Prosperous ▪ Convenient

Statements from the Community on their 10-year Vision for Tara

- A thriving small town, in business and the people that live here.
- Inclusive. Access to health services. Better roads. Key agencies working together, police, education, health and local council.
- Better for teenagers. More for kids in town. Professional workshops. Better roads.
- Youth returning to or staying within the community to live and work.
- I just hope Tara can keep attracting new people who want to contribute to the community and not just expect their community to do everything for them.
- A good viable safe town where you want to raise your family.
- Connected. Prosperous. Busy.
- More big business. Jobs and a working future.
- Frequent events. Vibrant, Healthy, Safe.
- Community strength. Resilient. Connected. Self-sustaining i.e. not relying on government entities to survive but rolling up our sleeves and helping each other where needed. Strong identity.
- Friendly, convenient, cheaper than now, dedicated to helping the population.
- A growing yet close knit, welcoming community, with access to great programs through the school, library, council, sports grounds, and community centre.
- My home. A place filled with community pride. A town with no empty shop windows.
- Bigger brighter and better.
- Prospering local businesses. Higher volunteer participation in local events. Well maintained local gardens and streets. Key tourist attractions established.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Approximately 20 years ago there were two community plan studies undertaken within a few years of each other and they identified similar issues and problems affecting the community. This Plan has identified that those same issues are still largely present today (along with some new ones). Business as usual has not produced marked change.

RECENT AND CURRENT PROJECTS

In recent years the most significant local community project has been the \$4.5 million upgrade to the [Tara Lagoon Parklands](#). This upgrade has produced wonderful parklands that are strongly supported by the community. The upgrades have significantly improved and extended the camping spaces, and these are now generally full over the winter months. Local traders report an increase in income directly related to the campers.

The [Tara Community Pool](#) is being replaced by Western Downs Regional Council with a modern, heated swimming pool that caters to the needs of older people and people with a disability, people learning to swim, swimming club as well as regular swimmers. The pool should be open in early 2023 and has a budget of \$7.9 million.

The [Sunset Way Tourist Drive](#) is an initiative of the Western Downs Tourism Investment Program to promote the towns of Tara, The Gums, Hannaford, Meandarra, Glenmorgan and Surat and other smaller towns along the Surat Development Road. There are road signs, downloadable maps, a website, and a social media presence promoting the route and the accommodation, attractions, events, fishing and sunset viewing spots along the route.

TARA LAGOON PARKLANDS



03

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (swot) for Tara and district have been derived from the research and the consultation.

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Tara's residents love their town. They love the "country" feel and that people are friendly

Housing is relatively cheap and the lifestyle is affordable

Tara Lagoon, the parklands and the natural environment

A program of major and minor events

Quality of existing retail outlets

Camping at Tara Lagoon

A P-12 school

W

Tara is not large enough to support specialised medical and dental services and many retail outlets

Rural blocks lack services

The roads throughout the district need upgrading

Internet and telephone services are generally poor

There are no post-school training opportunities

Low incomes and an older population

Elevated levels of crime

A lack of activities for youth

Empty shops look tired

Tara is not on a highway

Limited volunteers

O

Land is cheap and there is a steady supply of unskilled labour

Grow the program of events with an alternate year event to the Tara Festival

There is ample land for development

There are retail spaces available to rent

There are opportunities to increase the tourism market

T

If the town's population continues to decline there is the possibility that more services will be lost

Increases in crime will discourage professionals moving into the community

Continued ageing of the population will place increased demand on medical and care facilities

MAJOR CHALLENGES

THERE ARE SOME CHALLENGES THAT ARE TOO BIG FOR A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PLAN BUT ARE REAL, AND NEED TO BE ADDRESSED BY LOCAL, STATE OR FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS.

1. The viability and liveability of the subdivisions
2. Road upgrades across the district
3. Internet, telephone and TV connectivity is poor across much of the district
4. Structured activities for youth
5. More medical specialists, doctors, dentists, psychologists etc
6. The need for accommodation and care for older people and those living with a disability
7. Public transport within the town and the district as well as to Dalby and Chinchilla
8. Increasing the supply of housing for purchase or rent
9. Training and education (post school) in Tara so that youth do not need to leave to further their education
10. Attract and retain key skilled workers and business owners.



04 THE PLAN

VISION

The Vision, based on extensive community consultation, for the Tara and District Community Plan is:

A thriving country town and district, with country values, where residents and visitors enjoy a fulfilling lifestyle.

To achieve this Vision we need to create a town and district that can meet the medical, education, employment and lifestyle needs of our residents, over their lives, so that they can always reside in our district if they wish.

ACTIONS

A range of actions have been developed that work towards achieving the Vision. The community, on its own, cannot entirely meet the Vision and other levels of government and agencies will have roles as well.

The following actions have been chosen because they are realistic and achievable given:

- The resources such as time, money or personnel that are available.
- The ability, or the jurisdiction, the community has to influence or deliver the outcome.
- The “Bang for the Buck”.

Actions have been given a priority of High (achieve within the next three years); Medium (4-6 years) or Low (7+ years). The priority does not mean that any action is more important than another. It is no more than a plan to spread the load of achieving the actions across the time frame of the Plan, recognising that people already have busy lives. If any action can be achieved in a faster time frame then that is supported.

YOUTH

#	Action	Priority
1	Undertake improvements at Lions (Youth) Park (such as a basketball court, water fountain, paths, car park etc).	High
2	Assist a local person to start a driving school.	High
3	Consider building a regional level Pump Track ¹ utilising the western hillock of Lagoon dredging for local youth, but also to attract youth from surrounding towns.	Medium

¹ A pump track is a circuit of rollers, banked turns and features designed to be ridden completely by riders "pumping"—generating momentum by up and down body movements, instead of pedalling or pushing (Wikipedia).

FACILITIES

#	Action	Priority
4	Re-purpose the caravan park amenities for community use. Consider adding facilities for car parking, water refills and rubbish disposal.	High
5	Develop a dog off-leash park in Tara, possibly on the site of the former caravan park.	High
6	Facilitate engagement with sporting and social clubs to consolidate their clubhouse needs around a single venue which will result in increased viability.	Medium
7	Undertake a pre-feasibility study for a youth centre or drop-in centre with a feasibility study to follow if the proposal appears viable.	Medium



EVENTS AND TOURISM

#	Action	Priority
8	Stock the Betty Gill Luncheon Hall (Showground) with crockery, cutlery, and cooking utensils so that it will be hired more often and be used by the community more.	High
9	Install a Digital Signage Board in a key CBD location that can be easily updated with community information (events, emergencies and general information). The location may be in the centre street gardens.	High
10	Develop a strategy for positive promotion of Tara and district through digital and social media.	High
11	Provide new internal and external furniture to the Betty Gill Luncheon Hall (Showground).	High/ Medium
12	Support proponents of additional or new events to help them in the initial stages so that more events are held and the pool of skilled event organisers in the community is increased.	Ongoing



PARKS AND STREETS

#	Action	Priority
13	Prepare master plans for Lions (Youth) Park/Caravan Park, and Neville “Brumby” Wright Park.	High
14	Support WDRC in developing a Strategic Plan for the Tara Showground.	High
15	Decorate the tree in the park beside the library with fairy lights to add some light and colour to the street at night. Consider other locations as well.	High
16	Extend the CBD CCTV network.	High
17	To facilitate prompt and efficient responses from emergency vehicles undertake an audit of rural addresses to ensure an identifiable address for each property. In partnership with WDRC, address any gaps in the network.	High
18	Undertake further upgrades at Tara Lagoon including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lift the path where water flows over and makes it muddy ▪ placing step counters along the path ▪ extending camping to the east for walk-in camping. 	High/ Med
19	Prepare a disability audit of the streets (particularly kerb crossings), footpaths and shop entrances.	Medium
20	Paint disused shops (progressively) in vivid or heritage colours to reinvigorate the CBD.	Medium/ Low
21	Extend the streetscaping in Tara.	Medium/ Low
22	Increase the town’s public art: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In Tara Lagoon, near the boardwalk ▪ Paint power poles along main routes ▪ Establish locations for murals and cut-steel art ▪ Other ideas suggested by the community. 	Ongoing

LOCAL ECONOMY

#	Action	Priority
23	Request the Western Downs Regional Council's Economic Development Officer to consider options or a strategy for attracting new industry to Tara.	High

ADVOCACY

#	Action	Priority
24	Establish a body of key people, including representatives from WDRC, to advocate for the major local issues that can only be addressed by a government body and also to be a Voice for Tara that governments and agencies can consult on policy and program matters.	High



IMPLEMENTING THE COMMUNITY PLAN

This Community Plan is not the responsibility of any one organisation or person. To achieve its outcomes (Actions) it needs to be owned by the community and implemented by the community.

To achieve this, it is recommended that Action 24, the development of a formal group to advocate on behalf of the community, be the group that drives this Plan as a project and manages its delivery.

For many of the Actions it would be appropriate that a small group of people (or even an individual) be tasked with delivering the Action. These people need to be identified—they may have an interest in the outcomes, have the necessary skills or contacts, or they may volunteer for the role. These people may only ever deliver a single Action, however there are sufficient people in Tara and district to deliver on all these Actions over the course of the Plan.





Tara Neighbourhood Centre
49 Day St, Tara QLD 4421
Phone: (07) 4665 3508
Email: centre@taranc.com.au
Web: www.taranc.com.au



QGC