



## Hartley District Progress Association (HDPa)

We welcome the opportunity to share with you the outcomes of the discussions and debates the HDPa Committee, members and the broader Hartley community have been having around the purpose and focus areas of the HDPa for 2017 and beyond.

Our underlying objective is simple – remaining relevant to the needs of the Hartley District community is what drives us. The proud and positive contributions made by so many over the years in the HDPa provide a benchmark for us all to build upon and grow.

This year marks 60 years of HDPa's existence. Founded in 1956, the HDPa then was serving a considerably much smaller population - a largely rural population. Today, the demographics are different with changing land-use, increased mobility and more and more families moving into the area. The sense of community belonging and having an organisation which can provide a meaningful and effective interface in various ways is as much required today as it was back in 1956 - perhaps even more so.

### Our journey

Our reflections on the ongoing role of the HDPa started in earnest in June. A proven method called *Design Thinking* was adopted by the HDPa Committee to get us to the right solution with community involvement and engagement. The key things we did were:

- In July, the HDPa Executive and Committee members scoped the task and the process that was to be followed, along with sharing their views on the future role of the HDPa
- In August / September, we posted a Community Survey on our website seeking views on the HDPa role and key focus areas now and in the immediate future. We also sought community input via an abridged Community Survey during the day of the Local Government elections on 10th September
- In October, we held a public meeting at which the HDPa presented the findings of the Community Surveys and provided the opportunity for comment and contribution from attendees as to HDPa's future direction.

What all of this has done is reinforce the HDPa's purpose for being and as we progress along the *Design Thinking* route, the focus of the HDPa will evolve as it tackles the various issues before it.

### What the community said

The community response was both encouraging and reassuring. Some 85 responses were received through our printed and on-line Community Survey. Overall, there was consistency of theme around both the issues and role of the HDPa.

- Respondents cherish the rural lifestyle and heritage value of the Hartley district but saw the need for some improved amenities and facilities;
- Fixing communications, TV and radio reception, having a general store / bakery (with a Post Office facility), having walking tracks/cycle tracks to various parts of the district and a recreational parkland and facilities were some of the key priorities identified;
- Respondents want the HDPa to be a community hub for social activity and a platform for addressing key issues and needs – overwhelmingly 88% saw the HDPa as playing a critical role in addressing the community's priorities; and,

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- Over 90% of respondents highly regarded the HDPAs website, Facebook and Newsletter and saw these as the primary mediums to keep the community informed and connected.

Go to our website - [www.hartleyvalley.org.au](http://www.hartleyvalley.org.au) - for the Community Survey Insights presentation.

The public meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> October reinforced many of the survey responses. But it went further. There was widespread support for a collaborative approach with other similar locally based community groups to both 'support one another' and to work 'as one' for the benefit of the area. Also, there was acknowledgement that more needed to be done to the Historic Hartley School site along Mid Hartley Road in making it appealing and comfortable for use as 'a hub' by the HDPAs and the wider community for social events and meetings.

We have had a number of compliments on the two surveys and public meeting process that has allowed everybody the opportunity to have 'their say' knowing their contributions would be considered seriously. Our thanks to everybody for their enthusiastic participation.

### Role of the HDPAs

The wide-ranging discussions and community feedback has led the HDPAs to see its role as *'promoting the advancement of the Hartley Valley through social engagement, championing local issues, being proactive with Government and keeping the community informed'*.

There are five key areas the HDPAs will focus on:

1. **SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT** - organising and holding social events & functions;
2. **ADVOCACY** – taking a proactive role on critical issues impacting local residents effectively acting as the 'voice of the Hartley Valley';
3. **PHYSICAL PRESENCE** – progressively upgrading facilities and amenities at the Historic Hartley School and Hall site;
4. **COLLABORATION** - work alongside other like-minded local community groups in bringing about a coordinated approach for the benefit of the local community; and,
5. **INFORMATION SHARING** - providing timely and relevant information to residents through our website, Facebook page and newsletter.

### What's happening in 2017

During 2017, the HDPAs will tackle each of the areas noted above. A key priority will be on telecommunications and TV reception and getting to the bottom of these protracted issues. We will become more active with locally based Federal and State Ministers, as well as the Lithgow City Council Mayor and Councillors. Site planning for upgrading the Historic Hartley School and Hall will be progressed. And the highly successful social events will continue. There are various other matters the HDPAs will also attend to and these will be foreshadowed in our ongoing communications.

### Moving forward

Having determined where the HDPAs should focus in the future, it is important we get your continued buy-in as we move forward. There are two aspects to this. One is around executing on what we say we'll do and always being cognisant of the issues or initiatives relevant to the community. Your input is always valuable and we welcome this. The other is around gaining your help in assisting us with organising key events and functions – these are time-consuming and any support we can get from the wider community would be most useful.

The HDPAs exist for the benefit of the community. We will do everything we can to fulfil our charter and ensure we all have fun through social interaction, ensure we get to the bottom of issues that have been annoying us all and, play a collaborative role with other like-minded organisations in being a 'voice' of community sentiment.