

The Story of Connecting the Heart of Point Cook

The Pop Up Park was a community led initiative to Connect the Heart of Point Cook, a community of over 50000 people and one of the fastest growing suburbs in Australia. It's location in the restaurant precinct was intended to create a focal point where people could meet, enjoy time together and get to know one another. The pilot ran from 25th Feb – 15 Apr 2018.

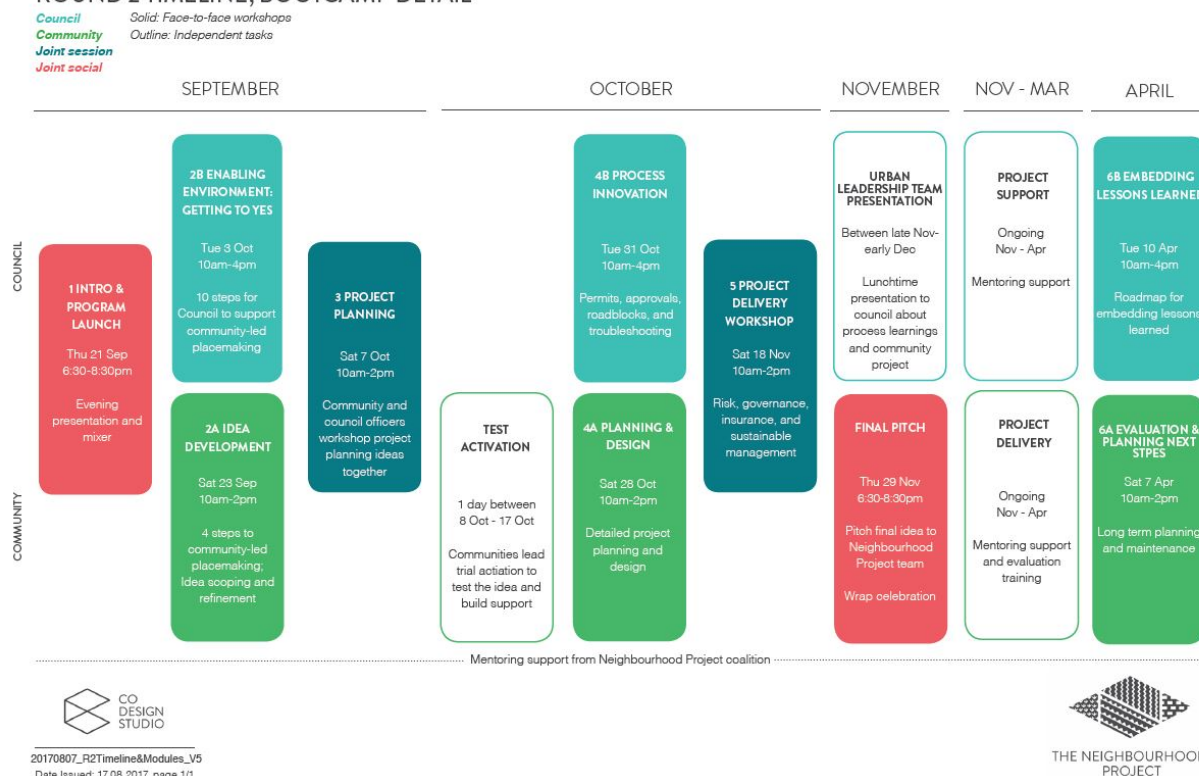
Mid 2017 **Susan McIntyre** stood up at a council budget session and proposed an idea for a pop up park in the restaurant precinct of our town centre – she pointed out that we are one of the fastest growing areas in Australia and yet loneliness and local businesses often struggling were some of our major challenges. Our suburb for numerous years has been the Nation's online shopping capital! While her budget submission was not successful - it was a catalyst for putting in an application to The Neighbourhood Project, an initiative of CoDesign Studio. The Neighbourhood Project is a practical program that supports community groups to deliver placemaking projects in their neighbourhoods. The program also works with their respective councils to reduce red tape and embed long term change towards community-led placemaking. The Neighbourhood Project included a series of bootcamps the Point Cook Pop-Up Park group attended alongside a project team from Wyndham City Council (see diagram for bootcamp content). Wyndham council provided the funding to participate in the program and up to \$10K was available through The Neighbourhood Project thanks to the support of The Myer Foundation. This application was completed with fellow local advocate **Sara Mitchell** with assistance from **Clifford Eberly**.

Local concept artist **David Mullins Relativity3D** created a 3D Vision of what the park would look like and really helped to capture the imagination of the public and the stakeholders.



Notice of a successful application came in early August and a team was assembled to attend the boot camp sessions that included **Wanda Hernadi** and **Eva Maddox** both local mums in the area with strong community commitment and skills.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PROJECT ROUND 2 TIMELINE, BOOTCAMP DETAIL



A small grant of \$10k was the maximum that would be available from the project. It was clear at the outset that this would not be sufficient to deliver the project in an area that had the footprint 80m long and 7.75m wide. Our team worked closely with **Steve Bentley** and **Georgina Pikoulos** of Council City Activations using their experience and knowledge. To make the best use of available resources it was planned for the proposed park to dovetail with the Summer Park Event planned in Werribee City and the Lunar festival in Point Cook. This way items like the seating blocks, Astroturf, deck chairs, beanbags and container could be borrowed after the City event packed up and savings from road closures following on from the Lunar festival could be utilised. Our neighbourhood hubs team contacts were **Pat Rayner** and **Stewart Grieg** who gave us support and council perspective on the project.

Of course, nothing could have been possible without agreement and collaboration of the Stockland Management Team and traders. There were many discussions with local traders as to the possible impact of a pop up park and a detailed proposal was put together to show how the Pop Up Park Pilot could come together for the centre. Stockland was delighted to be part of this community led initiative and agreed to support it with security and cleaning as well as some major events like outdoor cinema and a foodie weekend. **Frank** at **Stockland** and his team, **Heidi, David and Kat** also sourced additional funds for festoon lighting which really brought the park to life. [Stockland's videos](#) of some of the key events helped to capture the mood of those occasions. **Julie, Andrea, Sam and Jacqui** at **Customer Care** were very helpful too as were the **Security** and **Cleaning** teams.

A mini test activation was done in the town centre in October to gauge interest, collect community feedback and generate some excitement about the project ahead. This led to 322 suggestions for the park being collected. Photos were taken by Local Photographers **David Mullins** and **Senthill Sundaram**. The **Point Cook Action Group** team members, Council Community Hub Team and local councillors all attended and actively supported the day. Printing of flyers and postcards was done By **Duncan** from **MBE Printing** and The T shirts were made and donated by **Emma** from **AtWholesale2u**. The patch of AstroTurf was donated by **Bunnings** in Hoppers Crossing.



A planning group was established on Facebook and the team grew to 38 with weekly meetings being held outside Gypsy Road every Tuesday night at 7pm next to the proposed pop up park site. Our team included **Bob Fairclough** who quietly supported and encouraged, wrote letters for support and delivered postcards and even took surveys in the park. **Wanda, Eva, & husbands Brett and Mark** who helped with a lot of cleaning and maintenance, **Roma, Shanti, Chris, Senthill, Karthick, Paul, Christine, Daniel, Melissa, Regina, Liz** and our husbands **Chris and Demos** who supported behind the scenes and on site.

The community led team knew that the essence of the park would be in showcasing the character and involvement of our community in its infrastructure. A team was founded around key elements of the project like the Community Planter Boxes. **Harley Collins** had recently launched his **Third Life Gardens** via the **Enterprise Wyndham** project and was approached to lead the gardens project. He

worked tirelessly to fashion 12 wicking beds out of recycled pallets and grew the seeds from scratch. A working bee was developed to support him that included **Daniel** and **Melissa** from **Dan's outdoors**, **Chris Boddington**, **Eva Maddox** and others. **Bunnings** and **All Green Nurseries** supported with additional mulch, soil and seedlings and transportation other support was provided by **Alex Tzounis** from **Landforming to Perfection**.



At a later stage Traders meetings were established every Thursday morning at Grill'd Led by **Brett** from **Grill'd** and **Kerrie** from **Gracie's Boutique**, attendees included **Abhi** and **Pinto** from **Crust**, **Cynthia** from **Boost**, **Anthony** from **Xpress Images**, **Duncan** from **MBE**, **Jiemin** from **Rainbow Bridge Education**, **An** from **Gypsy Road**, **Vasu** from **Sri Murugan**, **Janice** from **Floral Point**, **Shagun** from **Just Cuts**, **Jag** from **Burrito Bar**, **Rose** from **Phone Essentials**, **Parul** from **Dosa Hut**, **Luciana** and **Ryan** from **Telstra** and **Silvana** from **LJ Hooker**. They helped to get the rest of the traders motivated. We created a trader's information pack with lots of handy hints, links and information to enable them to best utilise the opportunity for their business.

A tight budget required careful resourcing and our group worked closely with the Point Cook Cultural community (Lunar Festival). **Bob Fairclough** has a leading role in this major event as well as the Point Cook Action Group. We ensured no money was wasted on double handling on things like road closure costs. Thanks to **Casey Lyons** for being the collaborator that helped ensure the logistics and savings worked for both projects.



A suggestion from **Silvana** from **LJ Hooker** to donate a cubby house was discussed and led to the creation of 5 gorgeous mini cubbies that created a little cookie town with a milk bar, library, café, LJH house and a fire station all lovingly decorated By **Laura Dalta Viota**, **Anindita** from **Meet Dita** and her little artists, **Liz** from **Caliba Design** and the **LJ Hooker team**. Silvana could have gone into the cubby business considering we probably had 10-15 thousand children through the cubbies. She certainly got very handy with a drill and a screwdriver before the project completed. Many a night she helped pack up and put things away as did **Senthill**, **Chris**, **Shanti**, **Susan** and **Sara** (apologies if we have missed a few). Who knew that giant Jenga and Dominoes would be so popular among children and parents alike, and, how many ways they could be used! (Not to mention and **NOT** so much fun for us “**Stones**”) We were constantly surprised at the amount of stones children brought into the cubbies!



Discussions at our team meetings from **Christine McPherson** about comfortable seating for elders who take their grandkids to the park evolved into asking **Envision Employment Services** who run Work for the Dole activities across Melbourne to making us 5 charming bench seats from recycled timber pallets. This was organised by our fellow PCAG member **Roma Pedersen** from **Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services**.



The community planters were adopted and decorated by local community groups: **The Girl Guides, The Point Cook Scouts group, Neighbourhood Watch Point Cook Central, PCAG, Western Gymkhana Group, CWA In Sanctuary Lakes, The Point Cook Walking Group, WA In Point Cook, Point Cook Football Club, Point Cook Central Football Club** and the **Pop Up Park** team including **Wanda, Swati, Shanti**, her daughter **Arsha** and **Milly** took the lead in decorating our planter and had the green hands to show for it :)



Artwork for posters, flyers, banners etc. was done by **Sara** hastily learning some newfound skills on Canva and **MBE, BizBuddyHub** and **Council** all contributed to get the print jobs done. The Container wrap was sponsored by **Stockland**. A call out on Facebook for help with postcard delivery resulted in **many locals** collecting and distributing around the neighbourhood.

Nicole Tehan from **Elysian Creative** supported us by building out the program and getting it up on council what's on website and copy for the Around Point Cook newsletter.

The connecting the Heart T shirts were designed by **Liz, Caliba design and Branding** a fellow PCAG member with some feedback from the team. T Shirt supplier Emma from **Atwholesale2u** daughter **Arliyah** was the gorgeous young model in the pics again taken by our talented local **David Mullins**.



Additional Turf was sourced from **Barry Vincent** at **Oz Turf** below cost and **Tim Woollam** kindly supervised and supported delivery, installation and collection. Installation was done by a team of local volunteers including **Brett** from **Grill'd**, volunteers from **Dosa Hut** and **Telstra**, **Michael Fairclough** from **Xsell Landscaping**, **Daniel Thorne** from **Dans Outdoors**, **Chris McIntyre**, **Chris Boddington** and **Stew** from Community Hubs.



Items for the park were donated by awesome locals - like the **#PCPOPUP** hashtag sign by **Anthony** at **Image Xpress**, **Gracie's Boutique** donated decor and toys for the park, **Little Red Wagon** and **Matt Carr** donated toys. **Rose** from **Phone Essentials** donated a small seating set for the village and kept the iPads charged and ready for collection for the survey takers and **LJ Hooker** donated the other seating set. **Janice** from **Floral Point** delighted us with little bouquets and garlands placed around the park for people to enjoy and 'adopt'.

Lunches on the installation day were supplied by **Grill'd** to the volunteers and snacks were also supplied from **Crust**, **Dosa Hut**, **Nandos** and **Burrito Bar** which was very much appreciated by the hardworking crews. **Telstra Melbourne West** supported by paying for the volunteer Hi Vis Vests, T Shirts and Pop Up Park website as well as lending iPads for the survey taking.



Michelle Oakman from **Ones & Twos Plumbing/Gas Fitting** kindly donated the cute watering cans which were decorated by **Meet Dita's** art students. **Chris McP** lovingly decorated the water storage with colourful hearts. She also bought some cute decorations for the planter boxes and quietly snuck in and watered the planters on a regular basis. The stencil templates made and donated by **Maria** and **Eli** from **Ukit laser** (another local business started via Enterprise Wyndham) were collected by our lovely **Roma** who also purchased spray paint and gifted it to the project. **Melissa, Daniel** and **family** stencilled the benches overnight, so they would be ready for park to enjoy by the community the next day.



Installation days Sunday and Monday were a hive of activity but behind the scenes we were also doing the hard work of booking in all the groups that wanted to do entertainment and ensuring all the

necessary risk and compliance documentation was in place. **Swati** lovingly and patiently chased this up while we were running around chasing our tails on the front line. We loved that **Shanti's** daughter **Arsha** took after Susan and made picking up litter a very desirable job among young people :) We spotted our local councillor **Tony** picking up litter and assisting with the set up too. It was lovely to see him and other councillors out many times with their families enjoying the park and supporting the local eateries.

Regina from **Namaste Yogis** coordinated all the exercise, fitness and dance classes which were offered free to the community to enjoy, **Lionheart Krav Maga**, **Polkadotsi**, **Feel Fyne**, **Iresonate Yoga**, **Bollywood Fit**, **Goodlife Gyms** and **Zumba with Afrina** were all much enjoyed by the community



Melissa from **Hey Dee ho Wyndham**, **Phebe** from **8 senses** and **Jiemin** from **Rainbow Bridge Education** and **Cindy** and the team from the **Little Buddies toy library** and **Reliance Real Estate** Family Fun day delighted little members of our community with a range of children's activities which even included a very popular Teddy Bears Picnic.



Western Gymkhana hosted a range of colourful performances and games evenings including, bingo, musical chairs, karaoke and board games. Many thanks to **Sudhir Juneja** and the team **Honey Juneja, Mahesh Soni, Sharad Sharma, Gaurav Malhotra, Reena Malhotra, Vandana Gupta, Sunish Miglani, Komal Manocha, Shailey Pahwa Khanna, Parth Verma, Bhavin Shah** and many who quietly worked behind the scenes to deliver outstanding performances and activities for the community to enjoy



Pat Rayner, Stewart Grieg and **Misty Palmer** from Neighbourhood hubs put the word out to the groups that run events in the community hubs and the International Women's Day and Cultural Week celebrations were a blaze of colour and energy. Pat also made sure that we were included in local newsletters and created flyers for the activities. **The Yangtze Choir, Point Cook Chinese Friendship Group, Goss Choir, Florence Shinanduku** with her **Mutuashi Dance**, **Tawanda Gadzikwa** on the drums, rapper **Krown** and **Gabriel** on his violin, all put on delightful performances in the park. Brand new resident **Kaussik** delighted us on the keyboard with his amazing talent from an impromptu performance.



The **Wyndham Youth team** held a comic making workshop, live music and games in the park. Local youth advocate **Mehak Sheik** contributed her Henna tattoo skills to the International Women's day celebrations. She was also seen contributing to The Welcome Dinner project, Youth activities and the Enterprise Wyndham Idea Fest.

The Libraries team supported with Rhyme time and the council teams brought a lot of the local arts and community activity that usually happens in the community centres out into our open air community park. This really helped us engage and appreciate our community.

Rahima and Daniel from Wyndham Arts and Culture brought together some awesome regular events like **Steph Payne's Tuesdaylele** with guest performers and **We HeART Point Cook** and **Point Cook Unknown** and our **Point Cook Fiesta Finale**.



Sumitra Puri and her talented group **Samarpan Theatrical Arts** treated us to colourful Hindi theatre.



Steve Jaz from **Universal School of Music** coordinated a lovely mix of young up and coming entertainers. **Emily Hatton**, **Helen Frazer**, **Luna Phoenix**, **Zaynab Naleem**, **NICO**, **Alana Joanne**, **'Z'- Zsuzsika Feher**, **DJ Skaterboy** and young star in the making 8 year old **Siyona Goel** charmed us with her jazzy moves and awesome performances and confidence.



Rod Pilois delighted us with his **Beat Factor Drummers** and the **AJP Jazz Funk Trio** as did **Lisa Worley** who wowed us with her voice that filled the park on Friday night.



Dancing under the stars was a much enjoyed event by all ages and all cultures with a broad mix of music from all corners of the world.



Cindy from **Brave Scribbler** updated our weekly Chalkboard and contributed so much enjoyment with her Chalk hearts for Unity. **Helen** from **Jill Hennessy's** office very kindly printed and stapled our weekly updated programme for distribution around the centre



Lisa Field and the **Transition Wyndham** team introduced us to more sustainable ways to live including a sewing bee to make our own veggie bags and a bring and share picnic. Activities were run by **Eva Maddox** and **Miwako Okumura** in the school holidays. **Luciana** and the **Werribee River Foundation** put on activities to encourage awareness around conservation and taking care of our planet. **Harley** held twice weekly workshops on urban farming and harvested the produce around the park and gave it to people who were visiting the park and **Erum Ali** introduced **the Welcome Dinner Project** to help newcomers feel welcome and connected.



Our local traders brought us much Joy with the Bolly Holi celebrations, which included a Bollywood Fashion show, Rangoli Competition, A Bollywood dance group, Face painting, Henna Tattooing, An awesome DJ, Dancing in the street and of course the awesome Colours of Holi – as well as other enjoyable events like the dancing under the stars and gold coin food trails etc.

This was coordinated through our awesome Teammate **Senthill** with much thanks to **Vasu** and **Raj** from **Sri Murugan**, **Parul** from **Dosa Hut**, **Bali** from **Priya** and **Shagun** from **Just Cuts** and lots of help in the background from **Sudhir** and the **Western Gymkhana group**. Sudhir had so much fomo he phoned from India to insist we lived streamed it. **Brett** from **Grill'd** not only showed us how it gets done installing and taking up the astro turf but also arranged the waiters race which was very entertaining. **Kerrie** from **Gracie's boutique** hosted Styling Days, Meet the Makers and Talks about Uganda



We were able to secure the **Victoria Police Pipe Band** on three occasions and their distinctive sound and dress certainly caught people's attention. This was often coupled with the local **Wyndham Police's mobile Police station** and police car which attracted lots of Community engagement and fun. Neighbourhood **Watch Point Cook Central's** displays were very informative. Our Local firies from the **CFA** did not disappoint either and many a delighted child engaged with captain koala and had a sit in the fire engine. Our team member **Karthick** was asked if wearing a costume, dressed up in his Fireman's outfit but he really is a volunteer fireman :)



Our local businesses came together and created a memorable Good Friday appeal collection with so much live entertainment, characters and fun for all an amazing amount was raised. Point Cook Real Estate / Sanctuary Lakes Real Estate / Wyndham Residential Real Estate team **Milly Ayala, Rosaria Barolli, Saba Zare, Fadi Saad and Rob Sinni** put together a great fun day supported by local businesses **Flossy Joe's, Namaste Yogis, Polkadotsi, Sash Entertainment, Paint my party and Hey Dee Ho** who gave generously of their time and services to entertain our community and raise funds. **Point Cook Real Estate** also supported the Park with Billboards around the community. Thanks Guys!

Julie Morris Conveyancing brought in the characters and the Arts team delighted us with live music, and **Stockland** arranged an Easter egg hunt and we think we caught the Easter bunny eating some of the lettuce from our garden beds.



Local photographers **David Mullins**, **Imran Abul Kashem** and **Senthill Sundaram** covered the events across the seven weeks, there are so many awesome memories captured it makes it difficult to pick a few highlights. They amused us with their camaraderie, sense of humour and teaching each other how to pose in front of the lens. The jury is out on who the true Guru ji is, but we suspect they all bounce off and support each other which is the way it should be :)



Surveys were done by **Roma** and others on our team and our **4 young Duke of Edinburgh Award** volunteers **Libby, Augusta, Mia** and **Claudia**. They also helped keep the park tidy and water the plants.

BizBuddyHub supported coworking events were run by **Holly Locastro, The Marketing Project**, **Enterprise Wyndham** ran an **Idea Fest** and **Telstra Point Cook** ran some **Business Essentials** workshops

Leigh Younger from the **Point Cook Girl Guides** little daughter **Aeryn** was our gorgeous poster girl and little **Emma** made a very cute little safety officer, while **Irina** delighted us with her pouty poses and cool dance moves



Overall, we had over 150 events and activities, over 100 groups and local business and countless individuals who contributed their time and services and talents - Our community has been delighted and we have collected over 715 very positive comments via our feedback jars and surveys, over 3500 people have already signed a petition to ask for a permanent version and over 30000 people visited the park while it was in place. Over 55% of those surveyed made new connections when visiting the park and all of us who were involved have certainly made new lifelong friends. We were very happy to hear that our local businesses enjoyed a nice upturn in trade and that they viewed the park as a major asset to the centre. Our very large suburb now feels so much more like a village and we look forward to working closely with the stakeholders to envisage what phase 2 might look like.

In the meantime, the community park lives on at the town centre in the form of pop up pockets. So, if you are having withdrawal symptoms, seek out a park bench near a planter and let your kids play in a cubby while you reminisce, and we are pretty sure you might bump into a friendly face or two.

Thank you for supporting our crazy dream to connect the Heart of Point Cook.

