

# Mount Alexander community meals



## Project overview

The Mount Alexander Shire Age Friendly Communities Project found that older people in the shire needed local options for social meals.

A community lunch was established at Taradale, a small, isolated town with a cohort of older residents who found it hard to access established community lunches at Castlemaine and Maldon.

The social aspect of meal sharing is a vital component to the project aims.

## Project description

This project involved a feasibility study to deliver sustainable community lunches in Mount Alexander Shire.

It investigated and evaluated various meal-share options in towns that were not currently supported with established and sustainable community lunches.

## Project model

- Draft terms of reference were developed.
- Key stakeholders were identified and invited to an information session to explore various meal-sharing options across the shire.
- Research was undertaken to review current community meal programs and examine alternative community meal models.
- Previous work was considered, and discussions were held with other local councils, organisations and stakeholders on existing community meal models.

## Budget

Total project cost	\$10,000
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## Project challenges

The key challenge for this project was the inability to deliver a sustainable community meal program unless a set of specific requirements are in place. For example:

- ongoing funding needs to be secured to establish a new meals program and make it sustainable
- providing community meals is heavily reliant on a volunteer workforce and in-kind support.

## Project outcomes

The project identified the need to create a more collaborative community meal-share solution based on existing sustainable service models, rather than developing a new approach.

Community meals research enabled the council to identify models that will be most sustainable in the Mount Alexander Shire, as well as to target and support the most isolated people.

The new Taradale community lunch is a replica of existing community lunches at Castlemaine and Maldon, but with a new element involving a primary school and their established Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program.

The model is directly transferable to other locations.

## Project sustainability

Castlemaine Community House will continue to explore options for providing low-cost meals in the shire, including the possibility of hiring a project worker to establish the service.

To be truly sustainable, a community meals program in the shire needs to secure:

- appropriate facilities at no cost
- skilled and reliable volunteers
- funding to balance low attendance/income situations.

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