



# AMIENS HISTORY ASSOCIATION

## Amiens Legacy Centre

### Community Hub Plans

#### Background

The Amiens History Association Incorporated (AHA) has been active since 2013 and is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

It has created the Amiens Legacy Centre (ALC) at 17 Goldfields Road, Amiens as an interpretation centre for the Pikedale Soldiers ' Settlement that was created after WWI and headquartered in Amiens.

The AHA has an active research program that is discovering and documenting the history of the soldiers' settlement and the history of Amiens more generally. This information is made available to the public and is the foundation of the business plan which aims at **self sufficiency and financial viability in the long term.**

Complimentary to monetization of the presentation of Amiens history to visitors, we wish to diversify our income sources by establishing a community hub at the ALC that is attractive to local residents as well as visitors. This involves establishing quality retail and food service functions and this is the current focus of our development initiatives.

The economic and social benefits of the ALC to Amiens and the region that helps to increase community resilience is detailed below. This is evidenced by the community and visitor engagement and feedback received. Like other Australian communities we have experienced hardship due to natural disasters and Covid and these challenges are also detailed below.

#### Rationale

It is planned to operate a community hub at the Amiens Legacy Centre for the convenience of visitors and local residents. It will enhance the experience of visitors and lead to the generation of more income because more visitors will come and they will spend more when they visit. Moreover, visitors who are not necessarily interested in history will have a good reason to visit. A stronger financial position will mitigate the burden on volunteers by permitting the engagement of local contractors to undertake cleaning, serving, property maintenance, gardening, and other routine tasks. Volunteer fatigue is real, particularly post-Covid and needs to be addressed by relieving the work load on volunteers who tend to be older. Volunteers will then be able to spend more of their time doing what they do best; engaging visitors and story telling,

The hub will provide protected seating at tables for the comfort of guests. Portion of the seating will be indoors and climate controlled and the balance outdoors on a paved area under cover. Currently, bus groups of between 20 to 45 people have nowhere to sit at tables while they are enjoying light refreshments as part of their experience. Since provision of this service is an important source of income for AHA it is important to make the venue attractive to guests. We have been told that this facility will increase the interest of bus companies in the venue. Also, feedback indicates that such a facility would be popular for picnics for both locals and tourists alike.

Another component of the hub will be an enclosed area that in future will be upgraded to comply with the environment health requirement of a cafe. Initially, though it will provide a counter for the service of food prepared in a commercial kitchen off site or the service of low risk foods such as tea, coffee, and biscuits.

This latter service is an integral part of our current operation. Importantly it will also provide for the compliant washing up of food utensils, cups, and plates with is currently performed off site. A feature of our service is the use of heritage tableware that must be washed by hand. To comply with health regulations ,a scullery area with three sinks, stainless steel furniture, compliant wall, floors, and ceilings, and a floor drain for cleaning is needed as well as hot potable water. A scullery area will relieve the burden on volunteers .

When it can be afforded, the final fit out of a cafe will meet the needs of local residents and visitors by providing a meeting place and eatery in an interesting environment where none existed before.. Naturally, it will generate additional income. This staged plan to create a cafe has been discussed with the Southern Downs Regional Councils environmental health and building permit officers to seek their input.

## **Economic benefit to Amiens Currently**

### **Bus groups**

Our current goal is to secure an average of one bus visit to the Amiens Legacy Centre (ALC) per week for the year. Summer is not the tourist season, so perhaps two visits per week are needed at busy times. Assuming 30 visitors per bus, then we are aiming for 1,500 visitors per year. Each spends at least \$10 per visit producing an income of \$15,000 per year. Sales of merchandise have the potential to increase this by \$3 per person adding \$4,500 to income.

### **'Drop in' visitors**

During our limited opening hours , when a visit is free, we perhaps average 5 visitors per week during the year. Other than donations, we derive no income from these visits. If we had an attractive shop with POS facilities open at these times, selling memorabilia , snack, and food items, our income would increase to \$6per head or an annual income of \$1,500.

### **Local community**

Having come once, there is no reason for locals to visit again, unless they bring friends to learn about our history. As we are 17k from the Stanthorpe, having a shop selling food and utility items adjacent to undercover comfortable seating in an attractive environment, may appeal to locals as a convenience. This is the business we wish to grow by progressively increasing opening hours and the associated amenity.

These measures are already generating sufficient income to meet our overheads and have the potential to generate at least \$21,000 per year. However, modelling suggests that provision of a community hub with food service functions will increase income 10 fold to \$210,000 per year.

### **Special events**

A significant source of income are special event. Pre-Covid events have attracted up to 1000 people. A community hub would enhance such occasions.

## **Broader economic benefits for the region**

A comprehensive report on tourism in the Southern Downs identified 822,294 visitors in 2016-17 or 1.28 million domestic visitor nights. This translates to 1.56 nights per visitor. 99% of visitors were self-drive and 54% were day visitors. Overall expenditure was worth \$99m. In 2018/19 the .ID consultancy reported visitor nights to be 986,309, but visitor numbers were not provided. Visitor nights had dropped to 968,940. In 2019/2020 visitor nights were 968,940 a further decrease. The present project would add 2,000 visitors per year to the region or a 0.24% increase on the 2016/17 figure, representing a gain to the regional economy of \$0.25m. Another methodology is to assume that if over night visitors spend \$100 per head on food and lodging (a conservative number) then 2,000 new visitors per year or 3,120 additional visitor nights will amount to a spend of \$0.31m. Amiens has a variety of accommodation available from serviced cabins to camping.. Currently, the biggest group of 'drop in' visitors to the ALC is from the camp ground. While a community hub

will increase visits by local residents, its impact on visitor numbers to the region is hard to gauge. Nevertheless, feedback from tourist operators a more attractive venue will increase numbers substantially.

## **Social benefit to Amiens**

Like many country towns in Australia, Amiens has been in decline. From the boom era of the soldier settlement in the 1920s when the town and its service area had a population of over 2,000, its population is now 293. Changes in farming practices towards large scale enterprise has diminished the family farm and its associated population. Improved road transport resulted in the rail line to Amiens closing in 1974. The post office and shop closed a decade ago, but the small school is still functioning well. Amiens is now a dormitory suburb of Stanthorpe and people drive the 20 minutes into town to work, and shop. There is no reason to do anything in Amiens other than sleep.

The Amiens History Association (AHA) is trying to reverse this trend by creating the ALC as a community hub. The AHA interacts with many service clubs, schools, and the community generally. It provides historical information formally or informally to interested parties. The ALC site is an attractive meeting and performance venue for various musical groups, car clubs and others. Volunteers have helped with restoration tasks. Internationally, a delegation visited France in 2018 and signed a 'Proclamation of Friendship' with Amiens in France. A TV crew from France 3 television visited and a pen friend exchange has been initiated between Amiens students in France and Australia.

## **Community Engagement**

The AHA has engaged with a large number of community clubs and organizations. We have made formal presentations to them and have cooperated to stage community events and other projects.

Clubs and organizations who have engaged with the AHA are; Stanthorpe CWA, U3A, Stanthorpe Visitor Centre, Royal Historical Society of Queensland, Probus Club Warwick, Stanthorpe Lions Club, Southern Downs Regional Council, Granite Belt Wine and Tourism, St Joseph's School, Amiens School, Probus Club Stanthorpe, Stanthorpe Rotary Club, Stanthorpe Sub-Branch of RSL, Stanthorpe Chamber of Commerce

## **Community and Visitor Feedback**

Apart from signing a visitors book, visitors give feedback on Google Maps and directly by email. This is an example:

*'We must congratulate you and the Amiens team on your achievements in creating the Amiens Legacy Centre. As we drove away we reflected on all the many facets of what you have created- the detail in the memorabilia in the railway carriage and of course the acquisition and renovation of the carriage itself, the sculpture, the flags, the hut and mural, the sophisticated AV presentation, the landscaping, including the beautiful red poppies,..... so much thought and labour amalgamated into a poignant and relevant local history. And the old china tea cups and morning tea was welcome and delightful.'*

## **Exceptional circumstances and hardship**

The negative environmental factors that have prevailed in the Granite Belt region of the Southern Downs in the last few years are extraordinary. Not just the drought in an area that is normally spared, but the ensuing fires and now Covid. We are cognisant of the problems elsewhere in Australia but this is our story.

The Stanthorpe district supplies food to the Brisbane and Sydney markets. It is quite productive, growing for example 14% of the Australian apple crop. It is an attractive landscape and a wine region that supports a growing tourist industry.

### **Drought**

The recent drought was beyond a 1 in 100 year event. No one living remembers anything worse. The Southern Downs was drought declared in May 2018 and it is still drought declared in 2021. Stanthorpe's water officially ran out in December 2019. To meet the daily 1.3-million-litre requirement, 14 vehicles cart 42 truckloads of water from Connolly Dam near Warwick to Stanthorpe's Storm King Dam, in a 130-kilometre round trip. The emergency water solution costs \$800,000 a month, fully funded by the state. This is the largest water-carting project by a local government. The Granite Belt Growers Association estimates that the region lost \$100 million in the period 2019-2020 due to a loss of \$60 million in economic activity and \$40 million in lost employment.

### **Fire**

In September 2018, Stanthorpe and nearby communities were hit by bush fires while scrambling to deal with the prospect of running out of water. Many had to sacrifice precious stored water supplies to protect properties from fire. Smoke from the fires adversely affected the grapes used in wine production and this together with the drought crippled the 2019 and 2020 vintages.

### **Covid**

The adverse effect of Covid on tourism in the Southern Downs and AHA is difficult to quantify, as it occurred when the region was beset by fire and drought.

A paper by Flew and Kirkwood "The impact of COVID-19 on cultural tourism: art, culture and communication in four regional sites of Queensland, Australia" published in Media International Australia" is useful with some moderately recent data. To quote from this paper "In Australia, the arts, cultural and creative industries have been among those sectors of the economy most seriously impacted by COVID-19, with responses at various levels of government focused upon social distancing, travel restrictions, prohibitions on gatherings of large groups and the resulting economic recession. Deloitte Access Economics estimated the cumulative impact on wages and profits of COVID-19 on arts and recreation to be AU\$6 billion, making it the second hardest-hit sector after accommodation and food services. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) found that only 47% of businesses in the arts and recreation services sector were trading in the week commencing 30 March 2020, making it the sector hardest hit by COVID-19-related business shutdowns in Australia. The ABS also found that 94% of businesses classified as being in Arts and Recreational Services had been adversely affected by government restrictions arising from COVID-19, as compared to 53% of businesses as a whole". Since, we are an arts, cultural and creative enterprise in Queensland this evidence supports our own experience that the virus has adversely impacted our activities.

The Amiens History Association was 'open for business' from mid 2020 having gained all the necessary local government approvals for operation at that time. This was the height of the Covid crisis and many of our signature events were cancelled or curtailed. For example, the Queensland governor was to officiate at the Amiens Centenary celebration on 26 July 2020 and he had to cancel. This event was scaled down to 100 attendees. A previous similar event, held with local government permission, drew a crowd of 1000. Another

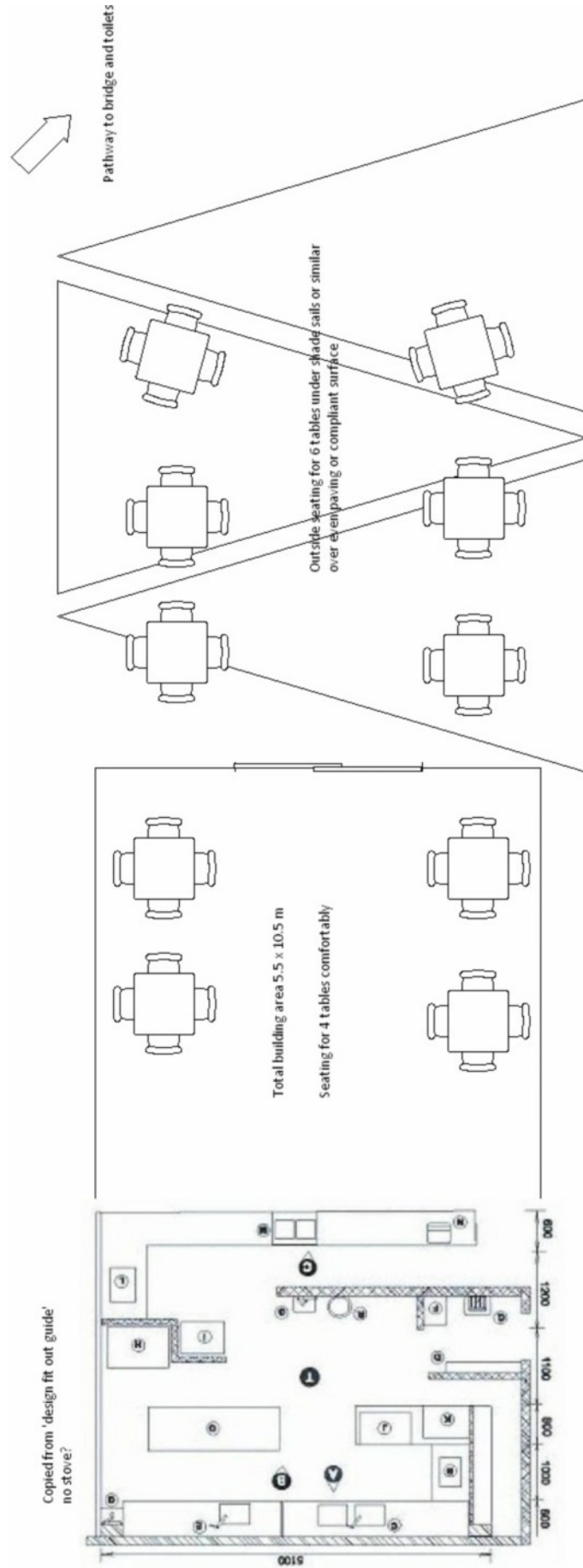
event that was cancelled was the opening of the Bailey bridge (a memorial to the Royal Australian Engineers) by the Governor General on 8 August, marking the centenary of the Battle of Amiens in WWI. It was coordinated with the opening of a similar bridge in Amiens France. Both events had to be postponed indefinitely because of the virus. The opportunity cost of not being able to stage a once in a 100 year events is a blow. A decline in visitor numbers at the Amiens Legacy Centre is impossible for us to estimate, as we were not open before the virus hit. Many of our clients are elderly, and they are clearly very nervous, so the virus has had an adverse impact on our business.

## **Increasing Community Resilience**

Our response to Covid and other hardships is to work toward increasing community resilience. AHA is not a farm affected by drought, and while bush fires threatened our location, the wind blew the other way that day. However, Covid was a real problem for our tourist business and has contributed to “volunteer fatigue”. Our volunteers have lost morale and are finding it difficult to resume pre-Covid behaviour and regain enthusiasm. Our response has been to be positive and do something that will increase resilience through economic activity associated with tourism. The facility we propose to develop will drive economic prosperity as a way to recover from Covid and the other negative environmental factors that have beset the district. It will enhance the physical environment in which volunteers work and mitigate volunteer fatigue.

## **Budget**

# Community Hub Floor Plan







COMMEMORATIVE BOOKLET SERIES



Amiens Amitié  
23 April 2018



**Amiens History Association**

The Friends of St. Marys and Friends of Seaside-Sorrento was organised to celebrate the centenary of the presentation of St. Marys to the Anglican Diocese of Queensland. This group was established as the Amiens History Association including its broader interest in all aspects of the history of the Amiens township and its surrounding district.

The group views as its close cooperation with the Queensland and District Historical Society and Museum, a success to the Amiens History Association's planning to celebrate the centenary of Amiens during a year-long "Amiens Centenary Festival" to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the presentation of the township. It is planning to establish an Amiens Centenary to celebrate the history of the district to date.

One of the important of the Florida State Settlement Scheme in Amiens is the role of the Amiens Centenary Committee in the display of the Amiens Centenary of the Amiens Centenary. It is also important to note that the Amiens Centenary Committee is also responsible for the Amiens Centenary of the Amiens Centenary. It is also responsible for the Amiens Centenary of the Amiens Centenary. It is also responsible for the Amiens Centenary of the Amiens Centenary.

