

QUAMBATOOK

Coffee under the Peppercorns

Background

The October-December 2022 floods impacted 44 per cent of the Gannawarra Shire with extensive flooding across rural areas and farming districts. Supporting social connections in small rural communities was a priority identified by the Gannawarra Community Recovery Committee and the roll-out of a large number of programs, events and activities have been held.

As recovery of the Quambatook community from the flood event continued, the community was further impacted by the traumatic passing of a much loved and respected community member in January 2025.

In response, the Quambatook Community Resource Centre/ Neighbourhood House worked closely with Council, Northern District Community Health and Lifeline Loddon Mallee to support the community at a time when relationships, sense of safety and community trust were compromised.

The Coffee under the Peppercorns program was supported by funding from the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments under the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) as part of the Gannawarra Community Flood Recovery Program.



Community-led Model

- Through a community-led recovery model, the need for further mental health support and support for the community to reconnect post floods and the traumatic event were identified as a priority.
- It was decided that a simple community centric opportunity to gather in the centre in town for a coffee and chat would be appropriate.
- The peppercorn trees along the Quambatook town precinct median strip are unique and a public space where community often gather.
- The Coffee under the Peppercorns program was an initiative that was felt would meet the needs of the Quambatook community and help to draw people back together to support ongoing recovery.
- Modelling the program around the 5 Ways to Wellbeing - Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning, Give - to support evidence-based community mental health and wellbeing outcomes, with the consistent theme of 'You are not alone' incorporated across promotional material.

What did the program deliver?

- A local coffee van attended fortnightly for four events from 7 March 2025
- Approximately 35 people attended each of the four events held
- A slightly different demographic attended each event
- Quambatook Men's Shed attended each event held
- Engagement with local cafe owners and support to enable them to attend
- A sociable and enjoyable catch-up under the shade of the peppercorn trees
- The opportunity for conversations on the weather, local business support, and occasionally the raw topic of the much-loved community member who had passed away
- Residents bringing along elderly or immobile neighbours and friends so that they had the opportunity to attend
- Attendance of support services providing the opportunity for a quiet word if desired
- A regular activity to bring the community back out into public and to demonstrate that they were not alone
- Consistent theme 'You are not alone' used in all promotional material



QUAMBATOOK

Coffee under the Peppercorns

Five Ways to Wellbeing

4 out of the 5 wellbeing frameworks have been fulfilled

✓ **CONNECT...** with the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

✓ **BE ACTIVE...** Go for a walk or run. **Step outside.** Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and one that suits your level of mobility and fitness

✓ **TAKE NOTICE...** Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

KEEP LEARNING... Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

✓ **GIVE...** Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

