

Bemm River Community Plan 2015 -2020



Sydenham Inlet



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Community vision

Bemm River is a safe, friendly community for residents and visitors in a pristine environment.

Background

With a community of approximately 70 people Bemm River is located on the Sydenham Inlet at the termination of the Bemm River, with the town being nestled between the river, the inlet and the sea.

Bemm River is situated approximately 450km east of Melbourne and around 45 minutes east of Orbost. The community is considered to be “out of the way” in the context of Victoria with minimal services and only one road in and out of the town. The town has a hotel, general store, caravan park, accommodation facilities and community centre.

Much of the area to the north of the town is state park while Cape Conran Coastal Park adjoins the western shores of the inlet and Croajingolong National Park adjoins the eastern shores. Bemm River winds its way down from the mountains to the north and is fed by the Errinundra River, McKenzie River and Combienbar River as well as many creeks and streams.

The town is surrounded by natural beauty and is renowned for its tranquillity, friendly community and as a great holiday destination. Fishing in Sydenham Inlet has been the focus of many fishing shows and feature articles over a long period of time. Other nature based activities such as bird watching, eco-tourism, canoeing and walking also attract holiday makers to the area.

What’s in the plan for our community

The Bemm River Action Group is a key community group that has taken the initiative to develop this community plan with the assistance of East Gippsland Shire Council. This plan has been developed through a community engagement process consisting of three community planning workshops, key stakeholder input and numerous individual discussions with many of the town’s residents. Community groups represented included Bemm River Action Group, Bemm River Angling Club, Bemm River Community Centre, Bemm River Country Fire Authority Brigade, Bemm River Progress Association, and Bemm River Recreation Reserve Committee. The Bemm River Action Group also undertook further community and visitor/tourist consultation during the 2015 Easter period.

The Bemm River community is committed to developing lasting partnerships with support agencies, and key businesses to further build our community as a safe, and friendly community and remain one of Eastern Victoria’s key holiday destinations

Recent achievements

Over the past 5 years there have been a number of significant improvements within the Bemm River community, these improvements have included:

- Town sewage connected, facilitating further land development and residential area expansion.
- New Country Fire Authority station and associated facilities constructed providing an upgraded building with more space for the brigade members, a new diesel tank and pump, new water storage tank with quick fill and improved car parking.
- Hotel has been designated as a safer place in the event of bushfires providing the community with a safe environment as the Hotel has a large backup generator, water misters around the outside of the building to fend off ember attacks, power points for charging electronic devices, cooking / tea and coffee facilities.
- Access to satellite television, Bemm River was previously serviced by a central analogue TV tower that required each house to pay a maintenance fee. With the arrival of digital TV every house has digital satellite that included a one off installation fee.
- Car park at the main jetty sealed, line marked and new entry signage installed. This has avoided the continual repairing of the old surface. Pergola's were built to make the area more inviting for visitors to sit and take in the views of the lake. Beacon lights were also placed on both of the boat ramps as a reference point for Anglers returning at night.
- The initial expansion of fire breaks around town to 40 metres enhancing the barrier to fire risk.
- Significant improvements to mobile phone reception via the installation of a Telstra 3G tower, this has improved phone and internet services.
- Development of Bemm River Foreshore Management Plan.
- Upgrade to Fingerling Jetty.
- Caravan Park upgrade.
- Street lighting has been partially upgraded and has improved community access and safety.
- Gravel Roads have been re sheeted with crushed rock.
- Upgrade to Morgan's Creek timber bridge with new cross deck and running deck.

Future progress underway

A number of plans and projects have been identified as having significant influence towards future progress for the Bemm River community including:

Foreshore Management Plan

The East Gippsland Shire Council in partnership with Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) prepared and adopted a Foreshore Management Plan for Bemm River in June 2014, including Luderick Point, Fingerling Jetty, Dolly's Garden, and the access walkway to the Bemm River from Sydenham Parade. The Foreshore Management Plan was developed with a high level of input from community groups as well as other government bodies, and aims to give all parties a clear expectation of management roles, responsibilities, and proposed activities over a 15 year period, with a structured review carried out every 5 years. The Plan prioritises infrastructure and maintenance needs and provides costing's for priority actions.

Local Destination Action Plan

A Local Destination Action Plan has been developed for Bemm River. The Plan prioritises actions for Bemm River that are supported by the local community and are

achievable in the short-medium term. The successful development of regional tourism can make a significant contribution to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of regional communities.

Capital Works

The following projects have been identified within East Gippsland Shire Council capital works program:

2015/16

- Prepare the design for the new Luderick Point Boat Ramp and Jetty to improve public safety and increased tourism opportunities.
- Bemm River Caravan Park - Camp kitchen refurbishment, construction of a cover over the BBQ area to enhance useability.
- Bemm River Caravan Park - Repair caravan park drainage to address issues.
- Replace the public toilet near Luderick Point Memorial Park, existing toilet is outdated, replacement is most cost effective option.

2016/17

- Bemm River Caravan Park - Toilet Block Replacement
- Bemm River Transfer Station Upgrade
- Replace the Luderick Point Boat Ramp and Jetty

What are the issues that are important to us now?

Three priority areas of focus to achieve the community's vision have been identified including:

1. Improving our community's safety for all
2. Improving safe access for all (including vehicle based tourists)
3. Enhancing our environment, both natural and built

What do we need to plan for in the future?

In addition to the priorities identified in the adopted Foreshore Management Plan and Local Destination Action Plan the community has identified ways to achieve the three priority areas including:

- 1. Improved Fire mitigation and preparedness:**
 - Work with DELWP to investigate increasing the fire break from current 40 metres to 100 metres
 - Ensure annual meeting between relevant government agencies, Country Fire Authority and East Gippsland Shire is undertaken to maintain open communications with the community prior to each fire season
- 2. Improving safe access by foot and vehicle around our community:**
 - Pedestrian access
 - During development of the Bemm River Urban Design Framework in 2007 and more recently the Bemm River Foreshore Management Plan 2014 the need for improved pedestrian access has been identified as a key issue. In response East Gippsland Shire have developed a Draft

Footpath Master Plan. This plan will direct the future footpath priorities for the Bemm River Township. Finalisation of the plan will consider the following:

- Construction of a suitable footpath from Boronia Street to Luderick Point Memorial Park
 - Construction of a suitable footpath from Sydenham Inlet Road to Morgans Road
 - Creation of a suitable walkway from Sydenham Inlet Road, along Sydenham Parade that adjoins the walkway to the fishing platform on the River near “the farm” (ideally with disabled access)
 - Creation of a walkway from Sydenham Inlet Road to the Community Centre
 - Improved maintenance of the access track into Dolly’s Garden
 - Improve and maintain access tracks to points of interest such as Elephant Rock
- Vehicle access
 - Work with Vic Roads on reducing speed limits to 50 km within town boundary
 - Reduce the safety threat of trees falling on people & vehicles

3. Improving our environment, both natural and built:

- Improving township maintenance;
- Reducing waste and increase recycling;
- In partnership with East Gippsland Shire develop solutions for Green waste;
- Improve the mowing of open areas around town;
- Improve town walkways / footpaths;
- Improve drainage around town; and
- Investigate ways to minimise bank erosion when the inlet is full (when the inlet to the sea is closed).



Luderick Park Facilities on the shores of Sydenham Inlet

Bemm River community priorities are:

The community has taken the combined work of the Foreshore Management Plan, Urban Design Framework, and Local Destination Action Plan and identified the following priorities. These will be reviewed on an annual basis.

High:

- Work with DELWP to investigate increasing the strategic fire break around town from 40 metres to 100 metres.
- Implement the priorities of the Bemm River Foreshore Management Plan.
- In partnership with East Gippsland Shire, assist in the finalisation of the Bemm River Footpath Master Plan and the development of a priority list of footpaths that require immediate improvement for safety of walkers including an audit of street lighting needs.
- In partnership with East Gippsland Shire, develop a priority list of drainage issues.
- In conjunction with East Gippsland Marketing and Destination Gippsland, promote Bemm River as destination for outdoor focused tourism (canoeing, walking, fishing, bird watching) including;
 - Large welcome sign upon entering the town
 - Undertake an audit of and improve tourist signs at Luderick Park to ensure visitors obtain the best information possible.
- Ensure an annual inspection of trees within the town is undertaken in partnership and onsite with East Gippsland Shire arborist and community members. This will include an inspection of roadways and footpaths that are affected by tree roots.
- Work with Parks Vic to undertake an audit of car parking and access to key sites with beach access.
- Develop a satisfactory transfer station operation strategy with East Gippsland Shire.

Medium:

- Further develop trails and footpaths:
 - As detailed in the final Bemm River Footpath Master Plan.
 - Improve the entrance to the caravan park to ensure safe entry and exit for visitors.
- Work with Vic Roads on reducing speed limits to 50 km within town boundary (as in other towns).
- Work with Vic Roads to reduce speed limits coming into town or relocate the existing speed limits further out.
- Construction of a footpath from Boronia Street to Luderick Park. Development of canoe access point into the river between the Inlet and rapids.



Bemm River rapids

What do we do next to develop this plan?

The next stage of the plan will be finalising and prioritisation of the key priorities and to allocate resources by considering:

- Level of importance – support expressed in numbers and urgency,
- Economic, social and environmental benefits to our district,
- Achievability – who will progress the priority and identify opportunities for agency support,
- Timing, and
- Costs involved.

Bemm River Action Group will work with local groups and individuals in conjunction with East Gippsland Shire Council and other agencies towards implementing priorities contained within the plan.

This plan is to be reviewed on an annual basis to measure the success of our partnership with Council and other partnership agencies.

Getting Involved:

The Bemm River Community Plan is a living document that will continue to grow. Projects will be further developed to fulfil the aspirations of our Community Plan. If you feel inspired by the idea of making things even better and want to participate, you can contact the Bemm River Action Group and/or Community Planning East Gippsland Shire Council.