

Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation Strategic Plan: Workshop Report

November 2019



Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work, the Gunai Kurnai people and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Preparation of the Report

This report has been developed by Professor Kerry Arabena, Managing Director of Karabena Consulting Trust (www.karabenaconsulting.com). Professor Arabena also acted as the facilitator for the four workshops, held in Gippsland, Victoria in August 2019, on which this report is based.

Acknowledgments

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We would like to acknowledge the active participation of all individuals, groups, organisations and agencies who undertook to give detailed contributions in the form of discussions, workshops, surveys and other written material in the development of this report.

We would also like to thank those residents in each of the areas who assisted in the preparation and provision of the community workshops, and those who gave up their valuable time to attend.

Finally, we would especially like to thank those community members who gave generously of their time and knowledge. Our work benefits greatly from comment and input by a diverse range of people who recognise both the value of the aspirations of community people and the value of Ramahyuck, and who are working together to achieve self-determination.

Acronyms

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services (Victorian Government)
EBA	Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
MoU	Memoranda of Understanding
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee
RDAC	Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation
RDO	Rostered Day Off
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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About the Workshops

...Ramahyuck's vision for 'a healthy, strong and vibrant community' speaks of our role to tackle the barriers that effect many social determinants of good health and wellbeing for Aboriginal people...

Over the course of a week in August 2019, Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation (RDAC) facilitated community workshops in Morwell, Drouin and Sale, as well as a whole-of-organisation staff meeting in Morwell. The information contained in this Workshop Report is based on the group ideas, strategies and decisions recorded during these workshops, which have then been used to develop the Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation Strategic Plan 2020–2025.

The facilitator used a mixed methods approach to the strategic planning process, which involved presentations, group work, case study analysis, reflective practices and 'blue sky' thinking as well as developing a shared vision about priorities, opportunities and impact. The program was designed to be flexible so as to facilitate inclusive planning and forecasting activities. This approach also supported staff, community members and the RDAC Board to identify strategies that will assist people to work 'smarter', to streamline collaboration and to make insight-based decisions as to where to put their energy and effort when implementing new projects. In addition, the program facilitated people's understanding about their own personal capacity for contributing to the success of Ramahyuck. The combination of these activities provided a clear view of where Ramahyuck stands and where it is likely to be headed.

The agenda

Workshop participants were asked to consider the journey of Ramahyuck up to this point, along with the role and purpose of the organisation over the coming decades. Staff and community members were asked questions about RDAC's contribution to their communities, what had been the 'golden times' for RDAC, to think about those issues likely to impact the region and the health and wellbeing of the community in the short, medium and longer term, and the role of RDAC in addressing these issues.

Future scenario planning was used to 'imagine' the world in 20 years' time. RDAC staff and community members were presented with information about [global megatrends](#) and the [Anthropocene](#) and their impact on natural environments, populations, animals and livestock, and agriculture and industry in the region.

Staff and community were able to focus on community and organisational resilience now and in the future. They were then asked to consider some 'Big Ideas' as programs for action that could be started during the next phase of the Strategic Plan.

Contributing to the framework of the Strategic Plan

One of these programs for action centred on taking a life-course approach to the current and future health needs of Elders, adults, youth, children and infants within and across generations of families. This was suggested as a way that the organisation could truly respond to the multiple and dynamic expressions of 'family' in their five-year strategic planning. Staff and community members were also given a chance to consider the cultural determinants of health and wellbeing and the role of Ramahyuck in supporting communities to invest in culture as a protective factor across their lifetime.

Staff at their forum were asked to consider the future of the region, their 2050 Vision, particularly how it might be impacted by more frequent weather disruptions and the inevitable transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

Focusing on workforce and platforms of action

Increasingly, members of the community are wanting to become part of the workforce, but there are significant barriers to achieving this outcome in the region. Representatives from the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector attended some of the workshops and indicated the range of partners, programs and capacity development opportunities that are available to grow a sustainable, local workforce.

Additionally, RDAC is embarking on entrepreneurial opportunities to secure financial sustainability so that it can underpin future activities. These key investment areas for regional growth and independence will be included in the Strategic Plan. Future programming opportunities were also discussed to understand what programs are working well, which ones can be left behind and those that need to be acted on now to meet future needs.

The Imagination Declaration

At the commencement of each of the four workshops, the recent ‘Imagination Declaration’ developed by young people at the Garma Festival¹ was read out. This was done to set the scene for considering future opportunities for the next generation, and to hear how young people themselves were wanting to address the deficit discourse that frames their lives.

To the Prime Minister and Education Ministers across Australia

In 1967, we asked to be counted. In 2017, we asked for a voice & treaty.

Today, we ask you to imagine what’s possible. The future of this country lies in all of our hands.

We do not want to inherit a world that is in pain. We do not want to stare down huge inequality feeling powerless to our fate.

We do not want to be unarmed as we face some of the biggest problems faced by the human race, from rising sea levels, which will lead to huge refugee challenges, to droughts and food shortages, and our own challenges around a cycle of perpetuated disadvantaged. It’s time to think differently.

With 60,000 years of genius and imagination in our hearts and minds, we can be one of the groups of people that transform the future of life on earth, for the good of us all. We can design the solutions that lift islands up in the face of rising seas, we can work on creative agricultural solutions that are in sync with our natural habitat, we can re-engineer schooling, we can invent new jobs and technologies, and we can unite around kindness.

We are not the problem, we are the solution.

We don’t want to be boxed. We don’t want ceilings. We want freedom to be whatever a human mind can dream. When you think of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander kid, or in fact any kid, imagine what’s possible. Don’t define us through the lens of disadvantage or label us as limited.

Test us. Expect the best of us. Expect the unexpected.

Expect us to continue carrying the custodianship of imagination, entrepreneurial spirit and genius.

Expect us to be complex. And then let us spread our wings and soar higher than ever before.

¹ Following the ‘Uluru Statement from the Heart’, a group of young Indigenous people gathered in East Arnhem Land for the Youth Forum at the 2019 Garma Festival. A forum facilitated by the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience or AIME resulted in a Declaration for the Prime Minister and Education Ministers across Australia – The Imagination Declaration. Accessed 5 August 2019 at: <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/nitv-news/article/2019/08/05/imagination-declaration-youth-forum-read-garma-2019>.

We call on you and the Education Ministers across the nation to establish an imagination agenda for our Indigenous kids and, in fact, for all Australian children. We urge you to give us the freedom to write a new story. We want to show the world Aboriginal genius.

We want to show Australia Aboriginal leadership and imagination for the whole nation.

Over the coming months we'll be sharing the declaration with thousands of Indigenous kids across our nation and together we'll stand to say, 'set an imagination agenda for our classrooms, remove the limited thinking around our disadvantage, stop looking at us as a problem to fix, set us free to be the solution and give us the stage to light up the world'.

We want the Imagination Agenda in every school in the nation, from early childhood learning through to our most prominent universities. To our Prime Minister and Education Ministers, we call on you to meet with us and to work on an imagination plan for our country's education system, for all of us.

Developing the strategic initiatives

Ramahyuck is a member-based organisation currently operating from multiple sites across inner and outer Gippsland. In meetings with Ramahyuck staff in the lead-up to the strategic planning consultations, there was a specific request to focus attention on the current contributions by RDAC to the community. Staff also wanted to focus on strategies that promoted recognition for effort and that celebrated the achievements of individuals both in the organisation and within the community. Staff advised this was part of a concerted effort to embed a strengths-based approach to service delivery and community engagement.

Finally, staff wanted to consult community members on the issues they would like RDAC to put their time and resources into with a view to long-term sustainability and growth. This strategic area of activity will necessarily involve current building projects, transitions in services and programs, and the facilitation of self-determination aligned to Treaty conversations in Victoria.

Current Contribution by RDAC to the Community

Staff and community recognise that RDAC is building a positive name in the outer Gippsland area. There are, however, tensions about the organisation's role in inner Gippsland. At Morwell and Drouin, the community workshops indicated that a key strategic initiative should be for RDAC to withdraw from this area, and for it to facilitate support for local communities to have their own cooperative models. Such an approach would allow RDAC to pursue a district-wide health service delivery focused solely in outer Gippsland.

Family focused

Strategic initiative: RDAC provides family-focused care, services and supports for parents and their children by adopting a life-course approach to their effort.

Staff indicated that:

- The day care service, open from 8.30am to 5.30pm, includes transportation to pick up and drop off parents and children. There are also resources available for parents who do not have their children in their care, including rehabilitation services and supports for housing and emergency housing (under strict conditions), as well as access to lawyers and Centrelink workers.
- There are great program options available for people both in outer and inner Gippsland including mums and bubs programs, family services, counselling and support, early intervention and prevention supports.
- There could, however, be a greater focus on prevention and early intervention, including support services for parents who are at risk of having their children under Orders with the Child Protection system so they can keep their children and meet these Orders.

Primary health care programs

- A wide range of primary health care services, many of which are available across the life cycle, are delivered on site and in the region. These programs are funded to promote chronic disease prevention and management, hearing screening, oral health and maternity services, community safety and wellbeing. RDAC is also able to attract visiting specialists on a regular basis.
- RDAC is able to demonstrate its work and impact across all life stages – from infancy to Elders – and to provide services for carers and partners of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the region.
- A lot of effort has been placed on integrated family services, with RDAC supporting Aboriginal family-led decision making and parenting support programs, family restoration and preservation, and assisting parents in meeting their children's developmental milestones.
- RDAC is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) so is able to provide cultural training and support to staff members who interact with Aboriginal clients; it also operates a Local Justice Worker program from Drouin.
- Over the past few years, RDAC has developed a strong entrepreneurial and infrastructure development program, with funds being sought for a solar farm and for new premises in Sale, while also refurbishing the current buildings and infrastructure across the district, most recently the children's day care centre. All buildings are now compliant and fit for purpose.
- Due consideration is needed to guide the dental program, which is not operating as effectively as it could be.

Strategic initiative: Facilitate strategies, organisational changes and programs to reflect and celebrate men's roles and responsibilities in RDAC, their families and communities.

The workshop for RDAC staff and members of the community in Sale agreed that there could be more programs focused on the role and contribution of men to family wellbeing, indicating a need to facilitate father-inclusive practices. This could include strategies that incorporate a move to strengths-based language and understanding, from a community perspective, of the roles and contributions of men to family health and 'a good life'. There was also a move to explore inner and external empowerment, with a focus on relatedness and building up men's strength and identity both internally, by strengthening identity and connectedness through empowerment, and externally through relationships with other members of the community, connection to culture and providing organisational support.

For men to have cultural pride and be recognised for the contribution they make to the community, they specifically indicated a desire for the following initiatives.

- Facilitate programs for fathering and carers, culture-based healing and behaviour transformation, and for supporting men at risk of homelessness or who are coming out of prison to find stability.
- Work on changing perceptions of men in the community from one of deficit to one of strength. This 'change of thinking' process would positively impact behaviour, create conditions for better relationships and self-identify, and instil pride in men's roles in community.
- Re-activate the men's shed concept in a location closer to town, create pathways to work, and facilitate mentoring and other opportunities to bring professionals in to provide a forum for men to discuss sports, politics and business.
- Consider employing 'work for the dole' styled models to engage men in the men's shed and create work experience opportunities.
- Facilitate pursuing scholarships and traineeships to create pathways to work in allied health, particularly through RDAC's current and future program areas such as aged care, residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation services, and expanded early years services.
- Consider changing employment conditions for male staff members at RDAC to have more time to participate in antenatal visits with their partners and to recognise the cultural relationships and roles within the family.
- Have male staff member days in which to discuss men's issues on a regular basis and support the capacity for this to happen.
- Support men into employment with RDAC, and/or RDAC to support men experiencing vulnerability to find pathways to healthy living and a meaningful life through work, cultural obligations, life after prison, self-respect and community leadership.
- Include a sand circle in the design of the new building, where people can learn to dance, draw concepts in the sand and facilitate an exchange of cultural knowledge and beliefs.

Women's programs and approaches

Strategic initiative: RDAC staff and community recognised the contribution of the service to achieving women's health through a number of already established programs and working with community to ensure they are culturally safe and grounded in cultural knowledge.

The Koorie Maternity Services already has good programs, e.g. mums and bubs, but it could be more culturally safe or grounded in cultural knowledge program opportunities. In a session about what women wanted, the staff and community people present came up with the following suggestions for RDAC.

- Establish a Women’s Network through which to share information, provide support, learn self-defence strategies, be mentored, go on camps and access cultural healing. In addition, RDAC could support women by implementing early prevention strategies that:
 - Improve access to childcare, preventative health care, social health, and mental health and wellbeing services.
 - Facilitate playgroups, music and drama services, artistic groups, retreats and financial management services.
 - Facilitate courses for women in home economics, home and car maintenance, and assist them to set goals to achieve their aspirations in these areas.
 - Support women experiencing vulnerability to maintain a home so as not to be vulnerable to homelessness.
 - Provide information about bodily functions, such as understanding sexual and reproductive health, menopause, after pregnancy body care and self-care.
- Consider having an Aboriginal day care and early education centre in Sale for the families of staff.
- Facilitate cultural learning for women – language, ceremonial obligations, Welcome Baby to Country ceremonies, weaving, women’s community leadership and empowerment.
- Run classes on healthy living skills for women and support them in passing on this knowledge to their families.
- Consider rehabilitation, refuge and housing supports for women experiencing vulnerability.
- Introduce more education programs in schools that encourage young people to complete their education and provide support for their aspirations.
- Expand youth-engaging programs (like Drumbeat) and sexual health education programs, and make available a range of activities across the day.
- Establish a ‘one-stop shop’ clinic, where multiple service providers are accessible at each site on a given day.

Celebrating our Community and Organisation

Key strategic initiative: Invest in trust-building activities with the communities in which RDAC operates.

The staff and community workshops indicated there is a need to celebrate our community rather than viewing community people as clients. Each individual has their own experience of being part of the community, and RDAC staff thought that more efforts could be directed in the next Strategic Plan to celebrating the community, rather than focusing on this only during recognised events on the Indigenous calendar (NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Day). Desirable engagement strategies were detailed in the following ways.

Community meetings, community engagement and family fun days

At the workshops, the issues of engagement were discussed in depth with more than 80 people contributing their thoughts as to the best way for RDAC to engage the community in decisions, workforce and through programs.

Community meetings

Strategic initiative: To engage community people in decision-making processes aligned to RDAC's community self-determination aspirations and invest in strategies that support communities to have a say in the services and strategies on offer through RDAC.

This can be achieved by:

- Holding community meetings at which RDAC staff and service partners can get together with members of the community to discuss consultation processes, submissions and working relationships.
- Organising transport, catering and culturally safe places for people to discuss community data, evaluations, feedback, information about attendance, and influencing change through a community voice.
- Facilitating community healing programs by talking about cultural healing and how these programs can be accessed.
- Identifying the range of programs, services and pathways available, and identifying those needed, for accessing employment.
- Inviting funding bodies to community meetings so they can hear first-hand how a program of work can benefit communities.
- Facilitating better working relationships with RDAC and community by:
 - nurturing staff and investing in professional development and cross-site cohesion
 - discussing applications to ensure that funding is consistent with the community voice and vision
 - exploring the different facilities (aged care) and opportunities for enterprise development (e.g. solar farm) and new services, and improve the quality and range of current services on offer.
 - getting Elders to perform smoking and other ceremonies to reinforce their roles as wisdom holders in community.

Family fun days

Strategic initiative: To engage community people in programs and activities to support health and wellbeing.

Possible events identified in the workshops include the following:

- Hosting camps and education programs to create positive body image awareness, confidence and cultural healing.
- Holding traditional ceremonies and cultural safety practices particularly in family environments.
- Sharing real-life stories to give people encouragement and hope, along themes agreed to by the community and endorsed by the RDAC Board.
- Using these forums to recognise community achievement and provide awards to people and organisations for their work and contribution to family empowerment and community wellbeing.
- Facilitating Welcome Baby to Country ceremonies and holding Children’s Days.
- Establishing a women’s gym program with childcare included to give mums the chance to get fit and healthy.

Community engagement

Strategic initiative: Develop and resource a communications strategy to engage effectively across communities, sites and with local and State media outlets.

The consultations with community and staff identified a series of strategies for RDAC to engage with community, including the following:

- Writing positive news stories and sharing them in local media and on social media.
- Sending out information about upcoming community and family events.
- Taking family portraits to celebrate cultural connections and family pride.
- Using a communications and media strategy to make communication efforts cognisant of community aspirations and successes, and to share information about RDAC’s services and other activities.
- Instigating community awards and celebrations at Ramahyuck events.
- Creating a Ramahyuck sporting carnival for all ages, with participation dependent on having had a regular health check.
- Using radio and TV advertisements to disseminate health and community messages particularly for Elders and other at-risk population groups, on quitting smoking, chronic disease management, health literacy and other forms of community information that encourages health-seeking behaviour.
- Engaging with large employment agencies, local councils and other funders to facilitate community engagement and empowerment throughout the year, with a focus on school holidays and Christmas.
- Developing and implementing age-appropriate engagement activities and recognising achievements across all age groups in the community, not just those who use RDAC services, for example:
 - holding lunches for Elders who turn 60
 - celebrating youth success – completing year 12, gaining an apprenticeship or traineeships or other qualifications, sporting achievements
 - acknowledging #715 health checks with vouchers, raffles, lunch etc.
 - recognising and celebrating achievements, such as best garden or home cooked meal, and good mentoring.
- Facilitating youth engagement programs across the whole year for those who are in and out of school.
- Developing an annual calendar of events and sending a printed copy out to households so they can display it in their homes.

Sustaining a strong workforce

... We need more from being members of the RDAC workforce, from feeling isolated and busy on [an] individual level to be a true team that supports each other, knows what each other does and works together to make Ramahyuck a trusted workforce...

Better working relationships within and across RDAC sites

Strategic initiative: Create more cohesion and professionalisation among RDAC staff across all sites by facilitating opportunities for collective impact, achieving parity, cultural responsiveness and shared services.

Staff indicated there needs to be a focus on the following in the next Strategic Plan:

- Supporting staff to come together across different sites and on key themes; for example, develop a professional development and engagement strategy around what the whole of service can do to support people attain sobriety.
- Ensuring that any Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) include Rostered Days Off (RDOs) and a chance for all staff to come together at the same time at different points throughout the year.
- More convenient childcare arrangements to support people retain work and return to work after having children or having them come into their care (this would include recognition of payment plans, transport and fees).
- Facilitating staff and team awards (Gippsland Health Deadly Awards) and celebrating staff achievement (i.e. completion of a course, individual and group/team acknowledgments).
- Recognising 'trailblazers' in the community and 'the first' within fields – e.g. nurse practitioners, care for Country fire stick burners, etc.
- Creating opportunities for all of staff to have an end-of-year activity to celebrate the year that was and establish a RDAC social club so people can socialise outside of work activities, particularly across sites.
- Promoting greater networks within RDAC to familiarise staff with the people and the programs on which they are employed, and to provide opportunities for meeting new staff through targeted messaging and shared lunch days that include lunchtime talks or presentations.
- Having more staff appreciation awards to build confidence and create a culture of celebrating successes in the organisation.
- Developing strategies to manage clients and client groups jointly across the organisation.
- Being accountable to the local community and other members of the workforce.
- Developing a cultural workforce and facilitating cross-cultural understanding within the organisation about the need for Aboriginal staff to fulfil local and community cultural obligations, e.g. attend Sorry business.
- Investing in professional development strategies so the local workforce can become more skilled and capable of managing its own affairs, particularly in the following areas:
 - trauma-informed care and specialty areas such as technological advances in health care
 - working with mental health issues in the community
 - facilitating study and work opportunities for local staff
 - encouraging new employees to work alongside others to learn for at least 12 months
 - succession planning for staff in managerial roles

- enterprise development and business strategy
 - ensuring support services are safe and accessible for people with disabilities.
- Increase cultural safety and supports in the organisation by growing the number of Aboriginal staff members and employing a cultural safety workforce across all sites.

Growing Aboriginal employment

Strategic initiative: Create an Aboriginal Employment Plan with specific attention to growing a local, culturally responsive workforce.

Creating an Aboriginal Employment Plan

- Working with regional and State-based partners and community people to co-design, implement and evaluate a Ramahyuck Aboriginal Employment Plan including pathways from schools, the VET sector, tertiary institutions and other agencies concerned with employment and/or supportive of Indigenous businesses.
- Being more specific on the types of leave available to Aboriginal staff at Ramahyuck.
- Including designated positions for community engagement, specialist women's clinic roles, etc.
- Assisting staff to get their drivers licences so they can drive themselves and others to work.

Developing a local, culturally responsive workforce

- Recognising the importance of an antenatal work for both men and women, and working with families at pre-conception.
- Training and employing Doulas to disseminate parenting, education, and social and cultural supports during pregnancies and birth.
- Having aunties and uncles, grandparents and Elders in early childhood services read and share stories, teach children about their culture and provide cultural advice and mentorship to people coming into the service.
- Holding sessions at RDAC for people to learn about culture and language and utilise cultural spaces at RDAC in respectful ways.
- Liaising with the local community to ensure that in all buildings and infrastructure developments the cultural elements of the building are aligned with the cultural aspirations of the community.
- Facilitating smoking ceremonies and engaging traditional healing by investing in cultural practices that have long existed in the region.
- Going into schools to support the eradication of racism, by giving young people hope for the future and actively encouraging them to complete school and undertake employment pathways with Ramahyuck.
- Supporting staff and community people to create Intergenerational connections and family, parenting and male role models. This strategy would see different generations from the same family groups participate in healthy activities such as sports, youth groups, cultural hubs and health care.

Achieving parity in the RDAC workplace

Strategic initiative: To ensure Aboriginal people have access to positions of employment, entrepreneurial and business opportunities including addressing the social determinants of health and wellbeing.

Staff spoke about some of the difficulties in getting employment and participating in full-time work, and the need to address some of these issues in the next iteration of the Strategic Plan, including:

- Increasing job opportunities for the local workforce including participation and support for young people learning trades (plumber, electrician, etc.).
- Addressing the region's housing shortage with interested parties and supporting staff with safe and secure housing.
- Increasing transport options, which are limited, for people who work with or want to work with RDAC, as this is currently inhibiting people from participating in the workforce.
- Working with the VET sector and other agencies to find jobs for those with a criminal records by creating alternative pathways to employment.
- Ensuring that any EBA negotiations consider the following to achieve consistency across the organisation:
 - matching mainstream pay rates in RDAC
 - paying maternity leave – flexibility for mums and dads with small children
 - monthly RDOs for all staff
 - a four-day working week and/or flexible work times.

Community entrepreneurship and innovation

Strategic initiative: RDAC to pursue entrepreneurial activities that support the generation of independent, sustainable sources of income through which the organisation can grow services and assets and invest in people and programs.

Ramahyuck's innovation agenda, drawing on '60,000 years of genius', includes the following ideas for innovative initiatives:

- Training community members for construction through the Ramahyuck RTO as a way of supporting former prisoners and people at risk of homelessness to build tiny homes and set up a mobile home-styled complex where people can be housed.
- Setting up tourism and cultural tours as a joint venture with Traditional Owners and local groups.
- Purchasing a fitness gym and running for-profit training programs and fitness/sporting programs.
- Building community members' capacity to purchase properties in which to house state-of-the-art aged care and health facilities (e.g. at 104–108 Raymond Street and midtown motel).
- Creating a high-density living housing precinct that could create 'a community within community'.
- Developing the arts cultural hub, museum and café and engaging partners in developing the enterprise to facilitate business opportunities, employment and social outcomes.
- Creating emergency accommodation options for mums and bubs.
- Investing in mobile services so as to extend excellent outreach work into family homes if needed.
- Building 'granny' flats on or next to the houses in the current housing stock so that Elders and grandparents can live with their families and transmit culture.
- Providing culturally safe, locally accessible rehabilitation and sobriety support services.
- Developing strategies to address oral health needs in the region and create a system of care that is person centred, effective and supports people to overcome their fear of accessing dental services.

- Working together (across all sectors in RDAC) to build a hostel by involving end users in the design and delivery of construction and other services, and training others in home economics, maintenance and life skills sessions.
- Setting up a music program for children, adults and Elders using songs in language, and then have them perform these songs at public and private events.
- Investing in a 'technology hub' so young people get to engage with computer building and coding clubs ([Raspberry Pi](#)), and staff can learn about using telehealth and other services and engage with technology and innovations that will impact on their practice and work performance.
- Building capacity within the organisation to adopt family partnerships and person- and child-centred interventions and practices that support local community people and staff to learn about, apply and evaluate RDAC's work.
- Developing skillsets that enhance the ability of staff to assess a child's learning and development, to lead infant therapy and to work with families in addressing issues that negatively impact on health and wellbeing.

Where RDAC Needs to Transform

RDAC has improved in its engagement with community, staff, funders and other key stakeholders in the past 18 months, which has buoyed the use of its programs and services. It is now positioned to consider the value of partnerships to meet the Board's aspirations of contributing to regional development strategies, entrepreneurial activity and a strong regional health service in the outer Gippsland region. Information recorded during group work with staff and at the community workshops suggests that the following be included in the next Strategic Plan.

From isolated to collective impact

Strategic initiative: Ramahyuck to lead discussions with organisations that have similar values to coordinate and invest in a core operations platform that will support regional coordination and collective impact. This will be achieved by a Coordination and Operations Unit that is able to operate independently of the participating organisations by using the funds saved through its establishment.

The Coordination and Operations Unit would have three roles – project management, data coordination and facilitation – to support effective, place-based decision making. The Unit could, on behalf of a regional consortium of agencies, undertake planning and management of members' initiatives through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and the handling of a myriad of logistical and administrative details needed for the collective impact group to function smoothly.

To achieve this, RDAC needs:

- To continue to build partnerships with the local TAFE, VET sector and educational institutions to facilitate the development of culture-led, supportive pathways from school to employment.
- To develop a community of practice in the outer Gippsland region that supports the uptake of family-centred, child-led and culturally safe practices in multiple service delivery contexts.
- To develop professional support networks – including for kinship carers, child protection workers and family violence workers – and clinical/cultural supervision for those engaged with families experiencing disadvantage.
- To update the technology in use by RDAC for the benefit of staff, clients, students, partners and staff.
- To facilitate and develop on-line orientation, cultural safety and other courses that staff can complete as a mandatory component of their orientation across multiple sites and that can also be used by Ramahyuck's RTO and other training providers.
- To take on the guardianship of Aboriginal children in care who are either from or living in the region, a role that needs to be supported by a regional collective impact group.
- To explore additional entrepreneurial opportunities in the region, for example, the installation of electric car 'fuel up' stations and feeding the electricity generated through RDAC ventures to power vehicles etc.
- To engage local businesses to reciprocate in partnerships by offering work experience, traineeships and employment for community members of all ages. This could be an alternative option to 'work for the dole' for people recently released from prison to build their skills and support their integration back into the community. To succeed, staff would

need to support clients in work placements to ensure future potential employment, increased confidence, community empowerment, etc.

From inner Gippsland to outer district service delivery

Strategic initiative: RDAC to focus on developing services in the outer Gippsland region and to support those services in inner Gippsland that will facilitate the development of cooperatives where decisions and opportunities are localised.

Throughout the course of the community consultations in Morwell and Drouin, community members expressed a genuine concern for the way that Ramahyuck services were imposed on their community. They also stated that the ongoing role of Ramahyuck in the inner Gippsland region was no longer aligned to the aspirations of the communities it served.

At the community meeting in Drouin, a number of people suggested that the current services were not delivering any programs required by the community nor allowing any local decision making to occur. It was also pointed out that RDAC was not in a position to offer ongoing education or employment opportunities that aligned with the aspirations of the community due to funding constraints.

Community people were advised that Ramahyuck would be closing its services on the 30 June 2020, but that there could be an offer of support to the Drouin community to establish its own community cooperative after this date – an opportunity that community people wanted to have but couldn't as long as RDAC is operational in their area. A withdrawal by Ramahyuck from the inner Gippsland region could signal to governments and funding agencies the need for a locally co-designed community controlled organisation.

Morwell community priorities

Feedback from community members present at the consultation meeting to co-design the Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation 2020–2025 Strategic Plan came up with the following Strategic initiatives.

Priority 1: RDAC facilitates the transition, governance and programming responsibility of its current Morwell-based services to the control of a local Morwell community.

The aspiration

For many years, the Morwell community has held the aspiration of taking the original Co-op, as the local community knows it, back under their control. The reasons for this, which were shared at the meeting, include:

- The need to honour those Elders who had fought hard to deliver the local community with its own Co-op.
- Local community members who do not reside in the Wellington Shire cannot be members of RDAC, therefore cannot vote on the focus and direction of the organisation, nor have local people represented on the Board.
- The local community felt disempowered in their ability to make decisions that positively impact on the health and wellbeing of community members as:
 - the current RDAC Constitution does not allow for it to make decisions for Morwell
 - the Morwell RDAC Advisory Committee is not listened to, nor can it influence the decisions made
 - there is no longer a vibrant hub for local community activity
 - there is no work for young people in the community through RDAC.

The RDAC Board to consider:

That the RDAC 2020–2025 Strategic Plan includes a facilitated process to hand back governance and programs to local community control.

The gaps

Community members identified a number of gaps that could be addressed by localised decision making and action.

- For RDAC to provide young people with pathways to employment there needed to be better coordination between TAFEs, universities and local employers.
- Local community members believed that the provision of education to employment pathways within their own organisation would help to keep young people safe in their community.
- More Aboriginal people needed to be employed and to participate in local decision making to provide opportunities for the next generation.
- Since the Buckley Street Building, which used to be ‘the heart of the community’, has been with the liquidators, the community has not had a physical place to come together. This is causing social and other forms of isolation, and the community want a conversation about taking the building back.
- The original aim of the Co-op structure was as a one-stop shop for all services including justice, housing and health, and needs a wider brief than just the health services provided by Ramahyuck to provide a holistic service to the community.
- People want to see things ‘on the ground’, not just Treaty, which is a symbolic gesture. They want drug and alcohol services, and for RDAC to invest in training our people to take over positions in services once they come online.

The RDAC Board to consider:

That the RDAC 2020–2025 Strategic Plan includes supporting the Morwell community to identify gaps and strategies to meet the needs of local community members and young people in this transition phase, so that these can be incorporated into funding proposals, grants and future strategic partnerships.

Morwell RDAC Advisory Committee

Community members shared that they had been suffering for quite a while with the current situation. At a minimum, they wanted a change in the Terms of Reference for the Morwell RDAC Advisory Committee so that members could have input into the future direction of the RDAC Board and their voices could be heard. Community members asked if:

- At the AGM, the Advisory Committee or members of the local community could have a say, even if there is no opportunity to vote.

The RDAC Board to consider:

That the AGM agenda include time for Morwell, Drouin and other RDAC-serviced community members to have a say.

Continue building localised social capital

After 15 years, the tolerance of local community members for being ‘managed from a distance and with no capacity for input’ is low, and they are looking for support to rebuild local governance, decision-making arrangements, programs and employment opportunities, and maintain a localised voice. To this end, they have formed a committee to commence negotiations with RDAC for the re-establishment of the local Morwell Co-op, and request the following from RDAC:

- Information and evidence to underpin the development of local initiatives including data, statistics, and programming and funding information relevant to their community and services.
- A joint decision-making process between local community committee representatives and the RDAC Board, with the support of the CEO, to develop an MOU to go forward and facilitate a transition.
- That community meetings about the aspirations of community members occur on a regular basis.

The RDAC Board to consider:

The development of a MOU with members of the local Morwell Community Committee to progress the transfer of governance and programs to a newly established Morwell Co-op.

Priority 2: RDAC to co-develop a MOU with the Morwell Community Committee to secure the Buckley Street building, identify the best company structure for the new Morwell Co-op and, when established, transfer the Co-op name to the new entity.

Buckley Street building

The local community expressed concerns that the Buckley Street building was under liquidation, with the matter referred to the Supreme Court for resolution in late 2019 at a cost of around \$80,000. Community members shared information about a large allocation of Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) money that was designated for building and infrastructure, and that these funds were being held while there was community consultation on the type of building required. Community members also discussed the possibility of using \$80,000 of these funds to secure the Buckley Street building through the Supreme Court process.

Registration of a business name

Community members also discussed that the name of the local Co-op had been registered as an Australian Business Name with RDAC, which had secured the name to protect it for the community. However, as it had not been discussed with community members the decision had caused confusion and upset.

Establishing the legal foundation of the Co-op

Community members discussed various legal structures under which the Co-op could be established including company structures, trust structures and Aboriginal corporations. Board members of these legal structures will need skills in finance, legal issues and risk management.

Taking on RDAC childcare services in the interim

The local community members also heard about the opportunity to take on the RDAC childcare agency in Morwell to demonstrate how local governance arrangements could work. Such a move would also enable the local community to implement education to employment pathways, demonstrate administrative capability and develop cohesive relationships with local partners.

Progressing a MOU

Through discussions, RDAC agreed with the local committee to have between 7–10 of its members meet with the RDAC CEO and Board members to progress a MOU. Such an agreement would enable the committee to approach the Supreme Court about the situation with the Buckley Street building, and to develop a possible transition plan from RDAC to a

locally established legal entity. In this way, local community members could regain localised decision making, programming, employment and control.

The RDAC Board to consider:

- *The establishment of a working group with representatives from RDAC (including the CEO) and local Morwell community members to develop a MOU for consideration by the Supreme Court. This MOU should resolve issues pertaining to establishing the legal foundations of the Morwell Co-op, securing funds from DHHS, and transferring the ownership of the Buckley Street building and of the registered business name.*
- *Transferring the Morwell childcare service to local community control in a transition plan.*

Where to from here

The local committee has agreed:

- To meet and decide on the 7–10 people who will form the negotiating group and will make arrangements to meet with the CEO and others to develop a MOU for consideration by the Supreme Court.
- To discuss the option of using some of the building and infrastructure funds held by DHHS to include in the agreement to the Supreme Court.
- To have regular meetings with RDAC to develop the MOU.

The RDAC CEO will provide advice to Board members on the outcomes of the meeting, and progress with the Board the opportunity of supporting the Morwell community to meet their aspirations in the RDAC 2020–2025 Strategic Plan.

Conclusion

Based on the information contained in this summary of the week-long consultations held in Sale, Morwell and Drouin, a high-level strategic plan has been developed and endorsed by the Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation Board at its meeting on 30 October 2019.

The Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation Board Strategic Plan 2020–2025 has the following strategic priorities:

Priority 1: Enhance where and how our services are delivered

Priority 2: Maintain quality services

Priority 3: Facilitate collective impact

Priority 4: Invest in the future of Ramahyuck and celebrate our families

Priority 5: Pursue a sustainability agenda

Priority 6: Grow our local workforce and the capabilities of our community

Priority 7: Advance self-determination in all our community relationships

A detailed Strategic Plan is available on the Ramahyuck website: <https://www.ramahyuck.org>