

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FEEDBACK REPORT

Draft Community Capacity and
Connection Strategy 2026–31

and

Draft Empowered Community
Implementation Plan 2026–31

21 May to 14 June 2026

Introduction

This report summarises the outcomes of community consultation on the draft Community Capacity and Connection Strategy 2026–31 (strategy) and the accompanying Empowered Community Implementation Plan 2026–31 (implementation plan), conducted between 21 May- 14 June 2026.

The new strategy responds to the expiry of the previous Community Capacity Strategic Plan 2021–24 (CCSP) and has been informed by research, demographic and forecasting data, prior community engagement, staff input, strategic context, contemporary literature, and learnings from delivering on the CCSP.

It recognises shared priorities across council and will be delivered through 4 implementation plans: Informed Community, Active Community, Creative Community, and Empowered Community; currently, only the Empowered Community Implementation Plan 2026–31 has been developed for consultation alongside the draft strategy.

No formal upfront engagement was undertaken to inform the draft strategy and implementation plan, with recent insights from the Community Vision process and annual community surveys used to capture current community sentiment and priorities to guide their development.

Community engagement purpose

The purpose of the engagement was to consult relevant stakeholders and the broader community on the draft strategy and implementation plan, to:

- inform residents and stakeholders about the draft strategy and implementation plan, what they are and the opportunity to provide feedback
- enable different methods for accessing and providing feedback on the draft strategy and implementation plan
- communicate what the community can and cannot influence with their feedback
- understand community sentiment towards the strategy and implementation plan
- ensure the draft approach reflects community needs, priorities and aspirations, and to strengthen its relevance and effectiveness
- identify any gaps or omissions that need to be in the strategy or implementation plan
- inform residents and stakeholders of next steps.

What community could influence

Community feedback could influence focus areas, strategic objectives and actions. Input will help inform the final strategy and implementation plan to be presented to Council for endorsement.

What community could not influence

The community could not influence the broad direction, resourcing or budget associated with the draft strategy and draft implementation plan.

Engagement techniques and reach

Technique	Delivery	Reach
Your Say Page (online)	Background Info, 5 x document links, FAQ's and survey tool.	470 page visits 335 unique visitors Draft strategy downloaded 135 times Draft implementation plan downloaded 83 times 15 survey contributions
Emails to Your Say members	Notification of engagement sent to members citywide via the Your Say platform	1,452 recipients 665 opens 94 click-throughs
Emails to stakeholders	Email sent to key City of Onkaparinga stakeholders including business associations, friends of groups and residents' groups	55 recipients 6 opens 3 click-throughs
Social Media Posts	Facebook	2,358 views 1,364 viewers 91 interactions 69 clicks 9 comments, 8 positive reactions and 0 negative reactions 6 shares 1 net follow 6 link clicks
ONow Article	Background info and document links.	41 page views
Compass Panel (internal intranet) and Director news	Compass news and banner with graphic attached and Director News article.	All staff
Emails	Staff in Strategy, Engagement & Community directorate for awareness and sharing with networks (included reminder email) Elected Members for awareness and sharing with networks and community	329 staff recipients All Elected Members
Roadside Banners	3 x banners - north, central and south	Unknown

Posters	Noarlunga foyer (1), community centres (8), youth centres (3), positive ageing centres (2), libraries (6), sport and recreation centres (3) and art facilities (3)	Unknown
<u>Hardcopy of draft documents</u> Strategy Implementation Plan Plain English versions of both Two Page Summary	Noarlunga Foyer Aberfoyle Community Centre Aldinga Community Centre Noarlunga Library Arts Centre, Port Noarlunga Elizabeth House Wardli Centre and Neporendi Aboriginal Community Centre	Unknown
Screens	Library Multi Screens	Unknown
Drop-in Sessions (Promoted)	Aberfoyle Community Centre 25/05, 10:30-12:30hrs Noarlunga Library 28/05, 16:30-18:30hrs Aldinga Community Centre 03/06, 10:00-12:00hrs Arts Centre, Port Noarlunga 04/06, 10:00-12:00hrs	0 attendances 1 incidental visitor 5 attendances 0 attendances
Drop-in Sessions (Ad-hoc – not advertised)	Neporendi Aboriginal Community Centre 10/06, 10:30-11:30hrs Elizabeth House 10/06, 09:45-11:00hrs	7 attendances in centre program 8 centre users and 2 volunteers
Network Meetings/Forums	Multi-Use Sporting Facility Forum held on 03/06/2026	Nil feedback
Third party newsletters	Included in the June information to 6 community news publications	Unknown
Mayor on Radio	Tribe FM Interview 05/06/2026	Unknown

Summary of community engagement outcomes

A total of 38 contributions were received:

- 15 Your Say Onkaparinga online survey responses
- 23 people participated in community drop-in sessions
- No feedback was received via phone, email or post.

Your Say

Throughout the engagement period there were 335 unique visitors to the Your Say project page, 470 page visits and 527 page views.

Over 28 per cent of visitors to the page stayed for at least one active minute indicating engagement with the material. A total of 409 documents were downloaded:

- Draft Community Capacity and Connection Strategy - 135 downloads
- Draft Empowered Community Implementation Plan - 83 downloads
- Community Capacity and Connection Strategy Summary- 76 downloads
- Plain English version of Community Capacity and Connection Strategy- 58 downloads
- Plain English version of the Empowered Community Implementation Plan- 57 downloads

Survey Questions

The survey featured 6 open-ended questions, with participants asked to respond to 3 identical questions for both the strategy and the implementation plan.

A summary of the key themes is reported overall and for each question below.

NOTE-verbatim comments are available in Appendix B.

Key insights across the six survey responses were:

1. The vision is well supported, but delivery/actions could be clearer and stronger.
2. Community leadership should be the foundation of the entire strategy, not one component.
3. Council should act as an enabler/partner, shifting from designing and delivering programs to enabling genuinely community-led action.
4. There is a need for clearer outcomes, measurement, and accountability.
5. Council to better recognise, connect with, and invest in existing community capacity networks as well as other relevant strategies and systems, and avoid replication.

Q1. Is there anything in the draft Community Capacity and Connection Strategy 2026–31 that you strongly support?

There was strong alignment and support for the strategy's direction, particularly around:

- Overall vision of community capacity building.
- Social connection, wellbeing and community activities.
- Volunteering.
- Social inclusion and equity focus.
- Asset-Based Community Development/strengths-based approach.
- Community participation, empowerment and self-determination.

Q2. Is there anything missing from the draft Community Capacity and Connection Strategy 2026–31 that you think should be included?

Key gaps centred around:

- Genuine community empowerment and leadership as the fundamental principle as opposed to access and participation.
- Delivery, with emphasis on immediate program needs.
- A need for improved integration with economic, social, place and infrastructure systems as contributors to community capacity.
- Alignment with the Community Vision and integration of the four streams.

Q3. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the draft Community Capacity and Connection Strategy 2026–31?

Across responses, the strongest themes were:

- The strategy has genuinely good thinking, intent and clear direction.
- There is a gap between vision and implementation.
- The strategy needs to be more ambitious and action-oriented regarding genuine community capacity building to move away from a service delivery model.
- There is a need to better define the measures, outcomes, progress reporting and how community input will shape implementation.
- Strengthen communication to improve community understanding of the strategy through clear language and visuals.

Q4. Is there anything in the draft Empowered Community Implementation Plan 2026–31 that you strongly support?

The most supported elements were:

- More activities and programs.
- Community-led, co-designed approaches.
- Community facilities and place-based community development.
- Social equity, access and inclusion.
- Social connection and wellbeing.

Q5. Is there anything missing from the draft Empowered Community Implementation Plan 2026–31 that you think should be included?

Key gaps centred around:

- More activities and programs.
- Stronger actions over planning.
- Community leadership/ownership as the foundation, not just participation.
- Reduce barriers to and increase support for, the long-term sustainability of community-led initiatives.
- Better knowledge and use of existing networks, infrastructure and local assets.

Q6. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the draft Empowered Community Implementation Plan 2026–31?

Responses included:

- Reduce bureaucracy and adopt community-designed and led approaches.
- Clearer actions/deliverables required, also clarify resourcing, outcomes, measures and progress reporting.
- There were differing ideas about Council's role in building community capacity and connection
- Improve communication and visibility of council documents to improve community understanding and of council promoted activities/events to improve community connection.

Community drop-in sessions

Six drop-in sessions were held throughout the engagement period. Four of these sessions were advertised on the Your Say page and at the drop-in venue, and two incidental sessions were added during the engagement period with programs occurring at these centres.

A total of 23 people were engaged during the drop-in sessions; however, none attended specifically to provide feedback on contents of the strategy or implementation plan. Discussions focused on the high-level intent of the draft strategy and plan, and how to provide feedback.

Primary themes from discussions at the drop-in sessions included:

- Strong value of community centres: widely recognised as important for social connection, wellbeing, and regular participation with a desire for more frequent and varied offerings.
- Demand exceeding capacity: high interest in programs, with limited space, facilities, and availability leading to unmet demand. Need for larger spaces, additional storage, and improved facilities to support a broader range of activities and meet demand.
- Aboriginal inclusion and representation: need for more culturally relevant activities in different locations (i.e. further south), better representation and meaningful consultation with Aboriginal people (ideally paid).
- Volunteer support and resourcing: reliance on volunteers highlights the need for incentives and better support to sustain services. For example, when volunteer shortages prevent transport from operating, this limits access to centres for some community members.
- Awareness and promotion: low community awareness of positive ageing centres and their offerings and stronger promotion is needed.

Evaluation

The Engagement successfully achieved the identified objectives and was promoted widely using a range of direct and indirect methods.

Documents were accessible via both digital and hardcopy, as well as multiple ways (survey, email, verbal, phone or post) for people to provide feedback.

To support accessibility and encourage broader engagement, different versions of the strategy and implementation plan documents were made available to the community. These tailored formats aimed to better enable stakeholders with varying levels of time, interest and capacity to engage.

Following wide promotion utilising various methods, engagement with the feedback survey received fifteen responses.

Of the 8 respondents who completed the evaluation section, 3 indicated they heard about the engagement via the Your Say email, with 3 citing word of mouth. One respondent became aware through a roadside banner, and another through the City of Onkaparinga Facebook page. Other channels such as media, were not identified as sources by respondents.

Of the 8 evaluation respondents, 6 reported they found it easy to provide feedback while 2 found it hard. 100 per cent reported there was enough time to find out more and provide feedback.

All feedback was reviewed and analysed to identify key themes, alongside consideration of any gaps or omissions. This informed what needed to be included, strengthened, or omitted and are detailed in the August 2026 Council report.

All engagement participants that provided an email address will be informed of the outcome of the Council meeting to approve the final draft strategy and implementation plan.

Sign-off

Officer who prepared the document

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APPENDIX A - Engagement Collateral

Social Media Panel



Compass Panel



Library Multiscreen



Generic Poster (A4)



Drop-in Session Posters example



APPENDIX B - Verbatim comments from the Your Say Page Feedback Survey Tool

1. Is there anything in the draft Community Capacity and Connection Strategy 2026-31 that you strongly support?
I support more for more social activities and for cultural groups
Yes i support social activities
yes I support social activities
I support for more social activities.
I think that the intentions are really wonderful and strongly support building community capacity and better conexions.
The Mayor's foreword sets a genuinely ambitious tone — the framing of "unlock and unleash" an empowered community, and the explicit acknowledgment that community self-determination matters, is the right starting point. We support this aspiration and offer our feedback in the spirit of helping the strategy live up to it. The contextual analysis in Section 2.1 is thorough and honest. The data on declining community group participation (down to 42%), the sharp fall in people taking on leadership roles within groups (from 22% to just 7% since 2019), and the finding that only 27% of residents feel they can change something about where they live — these are confronting numbers that deserve a proportionally ambitious response. We strongly support the strategy's willingness to name these trends rather than paper over them. The Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) foundation described in Section 3.1 is exactly the right philosophical starting point. The language around building on community strengths, growing skills and networks, and supporting collective action reflects genuine community development thinking. The test will be whether the implementation reflects this philosophy or defaults to program delivery. We also strongly support the recognition in Section 2.1 that declining volunteerism and increasing compliance burdens are real structural challenges — and that cost-of-living pressures are actively reducing people's capacity to contribute unpaid time. This honest framing should lead to a more creative and flexible approach to how council enables community contribution. The inclusion of the Economic Growth and Tourism Strategic Plan 2025–30 in Appendix 4 as a related local plan is noted and appreciated — but the fact that it appears only in an appendix, with no integration into the strategy's focus areas, illustrates the gap we raise below.
Focus area 6 - Social economics... Support people and households on a low income and/or experiencing cost-of-living pressures with a focus on accessing support and equity of opportunity
I support the work council is doing in this space. The impact it can have is immense, but is difficult to measure.
Wellbeing
I strongly support the strategy's focus on building an informed, active, creative and empowered community.

The strengths-based approach is positive, particularly the focus on wellbeing, social connection, equity, inclusion, First Nations partnerships, community-led activity, volunteering, leadership and shared responsibility. I also support the recognition that people need knowledge, skills, resources, leadership and power to participate in and shape local community life. This is an important foundation for genuine community capacity building.
No, most of these are double ups of projects already run by State Government agencies. The Council needs to scrap most of this and go back to basics of just providing services like rubbish, roads and parks. If you can't make the area look nice you're not going to have people act nice and feel like they want to be part of the community.
Wellbeing, striving healthy life style with sport and active recreation
Supporting opportunities for people to connect with others in their community is so important - disconnection from community and loneliness is such as issue.
All the initiatives listed are very welcome. Personally, I think anything aimed at encouraging healthier lifestyles, improving facilities for sports, and creating more activities for children and young people is essential. Initiatives focused on strengthening community connections and promoting local events are also extremely important, as they help build a stronger sense of belonging within the community.

2. Is there anything missing from the draft Community Capacity and Connection Strategy 2026-31 that you think should be included?
Yes activities and programs for cultural sense of inclusion and belonging. Programs now, not planning for.
Activities and programs
yes actives and programs
At present I don't think that the actions fully challenge council to think critically about what we need to do to change our own culture and ways of working to genuinely build community capacity and leadership. There is still a sense that council staff create the programs, and we get "feedback" from participants, or they help to do small tasks. The plan doesn't challenge us to truly inspire, enable, train and sustain genuine leadership where council essentially does ourselves out of a job. Hands the reins back to community.
Community leadership should be the foundation, not the final chapter. The strategy's most significant structural weakness is that the Leadership theme — Focus Areas 8 through 10, covering active citizenship, community empowerment, volunteerism, and strategic approach — appears last. Yet the Mayor's own foreword frames the strategy's purpose as unleashing community leadership. A strategy genuinely committed to empowerment would open with this philosophy and let everything else flow from it. Placing leadership at the end suggests it remains an aspiration rather than the organising principle.

The gap between participation and genuine agency. The strategy's own data shows that cultural diversity sentiment has declined sharply (from 82% to 66% since 2021), that Aboriginal cultural heritage importance has fallen (from 74% to 60%), and that community group participation is at its lowest point since 2018. Yet the strategic response to these trends is largely framed around improving access to existing programs and services. The more challenging question — what conditions would allow diverse communities to create and lead their own cultural expression, events, and activities — is largely absent. Equity of access is not the same as genuine agency. A stronger strategy would invest in the conditions for community-originated cultural life to emerge, not just in making council-designed programs more inclusive. Town centres and local economic vitality as community infrastructure. The strategy's liveability focus addresses food, shelter, safety, and social economics at an individual and household level, but says nothing about the vitality of existing town centres as community assets. In places like McLaren Vale, Willunga, Aldinga, and Old Noarlunga, the town centre is where community identity, economic resilience, and social connection converge. Their decline or stagnation is both a community capacity issue and a wellbeing issue, and it sits in the gap between this strategy and the Economic Growth and Tourism Strategic Plan. That gap needs to be explicitly bridged. The community ecosystem is underestimated. The strategy acknowledges community networks in Focus Area 10 but treats them as recipients of support rather than as a primary ecosystem to be understood, mapped, and activated. The Onkaparinga region contains an extraordinary range of grassroots groups, place-based initiatives, business associations, and informal networks — many of which council has limited visibility of. A commitment to genuinely mapping this ecosystem, and to convening it rather than just supporting individual parts of it, would be transformative. Heritage and place identity as community capacity assets. The strategy addresses cultural diversity and First Nations cultural heritage, both of which are important. But the distinctive local character and heritage identity of specific places within the region — the stories, history, and physical character that anchor community pride and belonging — receives no attention. For established communities facing change, this is often the most powerful raw material for revitalisation and cohesion.
While the link to the Community Vision 2034 is mentioned - unless I missed it - a stronger emphasis on this may be warranted, pointing out the key areas within the Vision that this strategy links to.
Making our communities more accessible by focusing on creating 'village' like communities - free shuttle buses between community hubs - facilitating our city to be walkable (there are Large gaps between shopping and services, steep inclines that make walking difficult) - shopping centres having variety so shopping can be done in one location
The strategy covers many important issues. The main opportunity is to more clearly explain how community voice will influence council priorities, planning and decisions. There could also be stronger focus on neighbourhood-level connection, informal community leadership, digital inclusion, disability inclusion, housing stress, community safety and practical support for people experiencing cost-of-living pressure. It would also be useful to show how the four streams will work together, rather than being delivered as separate areas of work.
No, most of its not needed

Where is the infrastructure provision, service levels, what we have and what don't need
I understand that the safety section was heavily focused on domestic violence and other forms of personal insecurity. I felt there was less emphasis on initiatives related to visible policing and broader actions to prevent criminal activity, drug trafficking, and similar issues. Not that this is currently a major concern in our area, but I do feel that crime trends in other regions are worsening, and it's important that we take a proactive approach to prevention before we find ourselves needing to react to more serious problems later on.

3. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the draft Community Capacity and Connection Strategy 2026-31?
The areas that could be ambitious and meaningful have light touch commitments like "Support strong community volunteerism" or " Investigate the development of a civic education and leadership framework" or " Explore opportunities to work collaboratively across the organisation to deliver small scale, community driven place making projects guided by the Local Government Association of South Australia Placemaking Toolkit" or "Investigate opportunities for increased community involvement in response to the impacts of climate change." Over 5 years this doesn't feel ambitious enough. I'd love to see us radically move away from our service delivery model.
The strategy contains genuinely good thinking but risks being undermined by its own structure and by the gap between its stated philosophy and its implementation architecture. A few observations worth making directly: The ABCD philosophy needs to be tested against the implementation plans. Asset-Based Community Development is described compellingly in Section 3.1, but the Empowered Community Implementation Plan — the only fully developed plan at this stage — reads primarily as a service delivery and program management document. If ABCD is the philosophy, the implementation plans need to reflect it through actions that build community capacity rather than deliver council programs. This is the critical translation challenge for the strategy going forward. The challenges data demands a bolder response. The 2025 Community Survey data showing only 7% of residents taking on community leadership roles, and only 27% believing they can change something about where they live, suggests a community that has become significantly more passive over time. Council's own cost-of-living data reinforces that many people are in survival mode rather than civic engagement mode. Against this backdrop, incremental improvements to existing programs are unlikely to shift the trajectory. The strategy would benefit from explicitly acknowledging this and committing to at least some approaches that are genuinely different — including by partnering with and resourcing community-led initiatives that are already demonstrating what's possible. The Southern District deserves more attention. The district breakdown in Appendix 2 confirms what community members already know: the Southern District has the third highest level of disadvantage, the second equal highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents, and the third highest proportion of residents in low-income households. Yet the district-specific actions in the Implementation Plan for the Southern District are limited to positive ageing and anticipated growth at Sellicks Beach. The established communities of this district —

including McLaren Vale and Willunga — have significant community-led momentum underway that deserves to be recognised and resourced as part of this strategy's delivery. Council's own maturity journey needs honest milestones. The strategy's maturity diagram (page 8) describes a future state where council is a "community capacity building organisation" and community development is "broadly adapted as an empowerment tool." That's an ambitious destination. The strategy would be strengthened by being more explicit about what internal culture change, workforce development, and process reform will be required to get there — and by committing to specific steps in this plan period rather than deferring them to a future TBD strategy.
Liveability is also an important strategy theme - because safe, welcoming, and accessible facilities help people connect with others, access essential services, participate in community life, and build a stronger sense of belonging and wellbeing.
Presumably the four implementation plans will spell out the actions that will bring this work to life, so the strategy at this overarching level is good, and sets clear direction.
Seeking feedback is a great idea
The strategy has a strong intent and recognises many of the right community issues. It would be strengthened by clearer success measures so the community can understand what will change by 2031. The strategy could also better explain how progress will be reported back to the community, how community input will shape implementation, and how council will adapt its approach as community needs change. Plain language, clear priorities and visible links between strategy, action and community outcomes will be important.
No, most of these are double ups of projects already run by State Government agencies. There wouldn't have been many people participate in the community vision so any feedback won't represent most of the community. The Council needs to scrap most of this and go back to basics of just providing services like rubbish, roads and parks. If you can't make the area look nice you're not going to have people act nice and feel like they want to be part of the community.
Very clear strategy with clear implementation action plan.
Strategic objectives should describe the significant outcomes or future conditions the organisation is seeking to achieve in pursuit of its vision. The strategic objectives in this plan are predominantly expressed as strategic approaches, service responses, organisational contributions or activity-based statements. As currently drafted, they focus on what the organisation intends to do rather than the future outcomes or conditions it is seeking to achieve, making it difficult to identify measures of progress and success. Consider reframing the objectives to articulate the desired end state for the community. The interventions, programs and activities should be captured in strategic plans/implementation plans listed on page 39. There are a lot of focus groups - can you realistically focus on 10 different groups?
I think there is an opportunity for more effective communication to make the actions and initiatives within the implementation plan easier for the broader community to access and

engage with. At the moment, my impression is that people generally only find this information if they actively go looking for it.

The same applies to events and activities promoted by the Council. There are some excellent initiatives available, but many of us either never hear about them or only find out about them “by accident”. As a result, people can miss great opportunities to attend local events, connect with others, support local businesses, and develop a stronger sense of engagement with the community.

4. Is there anything in the draft Empowered Community Implementation Plan 2026-31 that you strongly support?

More cultural activities and programs for ESL

I support more activities

I support for more social activities

I support for more social activities.

The explicit commitment to place-based community development (Focus Area 7) and the recognition that community vitality requires both physical places and active social infrastructure. In particular, we strongly support Action 7.1.4 (collaborative place-making projects) and 7.1.5 (community involvement in planning of public spaces) — these reflect exactly the kind of council-community co-design that produces durable outcomes.

We also strongly support Action 3.4.3 (Community Connections Officers) and 8.2.6 (supporting community groups to take collective action on local matters). In our experience, the presence of a skilled, relationship-oriented council representative makes an enormous difference to whether community-led initiatives gain traction or stall.

The grants program actions (6.3.1 and 6.3.2) are important, and we particularly value the inclusion of in-kind support alongside financial grants — this reflects a mature understanding of what community-led activity actually needs. This would actually be how council can reduce the bureaucracy and process to enable better community outcomes.

Also the intention behind supporting under-represented community cohorts with a focus on social equity, including equity of inclusion, opportunity and dignity as well as building stronger connections across community.

3.4 - Work with community members, groups and leaders to deliver social projects and initiatives that address local matters and celebrate local values.

I strongly support the focus on community-led activity, First Nations partnerships, food security, homelessness responses, volunteering, youth services, positive ageing, community facilities and district-based planning.

The actions around co-design, community leadership, grants, community networks, disaster resilience, social prescribing and local connection are also positive. These recognise that strong communities are built through local relationships, practical support, shared responsibility and opportunities for people to participate in community life.

No, probably only keep sports going

Volunteering within our sport and active recreation communities, we seem to have a strong connection within our community centres, hall - why is this so different

All the initiatives listed are very welcome. Personally, I think anything aimed at encouraging healthier lifestyles, improving facilities for sports, and creating more activities for children and young people is essential.

Initiatives focused on strengthening community connections and promoting local events are also extremely important, as they help build a stronger sense of belonging within the community.

5. Is there anything missing from the draft Empowered Community Implementation Plan 2026-31 that you think should be included?

Actually implementing cultural programs. No need keep planning for them.

Activities and programs

activities and programs

Activities and programs

The plan is community-focused and has good instincts. However, its most significant structural gap is that community leadership appears near the end of the document rather than as its foundation. If the strategy genuinely believes in empowered communities, that belief should be the lens through which every other focus area is designed and delivered — not a theme arrived at after wellbeing, inclusion, vibrancy, environment, and liveability have already been addressed. Leadership isn't one component among many; it's the philosophy that should animate everything else. With that reordering in mind, several related gaps become visible.

From access to genuine co-design. While actions like 2.1.3 (co-design principles) and 2.2.2 (promoting facilities for social connection) are welcome, the overall framing tends to position diverse community members as participants in council-designed programs rather than as originators and leaders of their own activity. True community capacity building asks a different question: not "how do we get more people through our doors" but "what would people create and celebrate if we gave them genuine agency, resources, and space?" A more ambitious approach would invest in fostering leadership and enabling them to develop community-led festivals, events, and cultural activities that reflect the actual diversity of the region — its multicultural communities, Indigenous heritage, arts scene, and distinct local character — rather than primarily adapting existing council programs for broader reach. This requires community connections officers to be more ambitious in their approach and skills around building community capacity, leadership identification, coalition building, community organising and sustainable leadership practices.

Town centres as community infrastructure. The plan addresses place-making in a broad sense but says little about the health and activation of existing town centres — the places where communities most naturally gather, connect, and express their identity. Town centres are not just economic assets; they are social and cultural ones. This plan would be strengthened by explicitly connecting community capacity goals to the vitality of these shared spaces, and by acknowledging the relationship between community wellbeing and local economic resilience. We would encourage council to consider how this strategy connects with its green space, economic

development and tourism frameworks — in many communities these are not separate agendas but deeply interdependent ones. Reducing barriers for community-led activity. Community Connections Officers (Action 3.4.3) are a valuable resource, and their role in supporting community ideas and action is appreciated. However, the plan would benefit from a more explicit commitment to reducing the bureaucratic barriers that community-led initiatives regularly encounter — in accessing council facilities, permits, road closures, navigating grant processes, and securing in-kind support. Enabling community leadership sometimes means getting out of the way or being willing to work in partnership. Supporting volunteer-led initiatives to become self-sustaining. Section 8.3 acknowledges the value of volunteering, but the plan doesn't address how council can help volunteer-driven community projects build the structures, governance, and momentum to operate independently over time. Investment in the sustainability of community-led initiatives — not just their initiation — is essential if the strategy's ambitions are to outlast council's direct involvement. It also appears that there is a genuine lack of understanding of the multitude of networks out there. Some are listed but I think there needs to be an action of genuinely mapping all the networks and then the work that council could meaningfully do is bring them together to help facilitate strong coalition building, shared projects and events where council is an active partner in what has been created from and by the community.
The strategy identifies important issues such as digital inclusion, housing stress, safety, climate readiness and community participation. These could be more clearly reflected as practical actions in the Empowered Community Implementation Plan. There is also an opportunity to strengthen actions around community-led decision-making, disability inclusion, neighbourhood-level connection, local champions, micro-volunteering and how community voices will influence priorities, programs and local projects.
No
Volunteering vs paid positions
I understand that the safety section was heavily focused on domestic violence and other forms of personal insecurity. I felt there was less emphasis on initiatives related to visible policing and broader actions to prevent criminal activity, drug trafficking, and similar issues. Not that this is currently a major concern in our area, but I do feel that crime trends in other regions are worsening, and it's important that we take a proactive approach to prevention before we find ourselves needing to react to more serious problems later on.

6. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the draft Empowered Community Implementation Plan 2026-31?
The strategy would benefit from more explicitly recognising community-led revitalisation as a distinct and valuable mode of activity — different from both council service delivery and individual volunteering, and requiring a different kind of council response. There are community groups across the Onkaparinga region already doing this work: place-based, self-organised, coalition-building initiatives that are revitalising towns and neighbourhoods from the ground up.

The strategy should name and resource this phenomenon, not just accommodate it at the margins.

Move beyond bureaucratic frameworks. The reference to the SA Placemaking Guide for Local Governments is noted, but guides developed within government tend to attract government-style responses — process-heavy, risk-averse, and slow. If council genuinely wants empowered communities, it needs to embed approaches that have been designed from the community up. The Town Team Movement, developed in Western Australia and recently trialled in the Adelaide Hills, offers exactly this kind of model — lightweight, community-led, locally owned activation that councils support without controlling. We would strongly encourage council to explore this model as a practical framework for delivering on the strategy's ambitions, rather than defaulting to tools designed for internal bureaucratic comfort. More information is available at www.townteammovement.com.

Commission a series of district-based community-led trials. Rather than waiting for a perfect framework, we encourage council to back a series of live trials — one per district — supporting existing community-led initiatives to go further and document what they learn. Groups like Imagine Uraidla, Southern SAGE, and Re-Imagine McLaren Vale are already doing this work with minimal council support. Resourcing them properly, reducing the barriers they face, and treating them as genuine partners would generate real evidence about what works in this region — evidence that could inform the strategy's implementation across all districts. These are not pilot programs designed by council; they are community-originated initiatives that deserve active partnership.

Map and connect the networks. As noted above, the plan lists some community networks but there is no action that commits to genuinely mapping the full ecosystem of groups, associations, and initiatives operating across the region. This is foundational work. Once mapped, one of the most valuable things council could do is bring these networks together — facilitating coalition building, shared projects, and collaborative events where council participates as an active partner in something the community has created, rather than as the primary convenor. The intelligence and energy already exists in the community; the missing ingredient is often simply connection.

Align the strategy's ambitions with its resourcing. The strategy sets out genuinely ambitious goals around community empowerment and leadership. For those ambitions to be realised, council will need to examine whether its internal culture, processes, and staff capabilities are aligned with them.

Community vibrancy and pride is important to the plan because local and community-led events bring people together, celebrate cultural diversity, strengthen community connections, and foster a sense of pride and belonging within the region while remaining accessible to everyone.

The plan includes many valuable actions, but it would be stronger if it clearly explained what success will look like and how progress will be measured.

Some actions use broad wording such as “explore”, “support”, “strengthen” or “advocate”. Where possible, these should be linked to clearer deliverables, timeframes or outcomes so the community can understand what will change.

It would also be useful to explain how council will report back to the community, not just Council, about what has been delivered and how community input has shaped outcomes.

No, most of these are double ups of projects already run by State Government agencies. The Council needs to scrap most of this and go back to basics of just providing services like rubbish,

roads and parks. If you can't make the area look nice you're not going to have people act nice and feel like they want to be part of the community.
Good work, well done
I don't have any comments about the implementation plan.
I think there is an opportunity for more effective communication to make the actions and initiatives within the implementation plan easier for the broader community to access and engage with. At the moment, my impression is that people generally only find this information if they actively go looking for it. The same applies to events and activities promoted by the Council. There are some excellent initiatives available, but many of us either never hear about them or only find out about them “by accident”. As a result, people can miss great opportunities to attend local events, connect with others, support local businesses, and develop a stronger sense of engagement with the community.