



St Matthew's Long Gully

Strategic Review - Dave Fagg, 2013

This document summarises the current state of affairs at St Matthew's Long Gully, as well as collating research of different kinds that shed light on the strengths and needs of Long Gully.

It outlines the contemporary challenges to Christian community development in Long Gully, and proposes ways for St Matthew's to meet those challenges.

It is not an operational document, and requires input from key stakeholders to prioritise, resource and carry out.

It was funded by Bencourt Care, and carried out with support from Urban Seed.

St Matthew's: God | Food | People
PO Box 7
Long Gully VIC 3550

W: godfoodpeople.org
FB: [godfoodpeople](https://www.facebook.com/godfoodpeople)

Contents

A. Introduction	3
1. Background	3
2. Aims of this paper	3
B. Background	4
1. St Matthew's Anglican Church.....	4
2. Seeds Bendigo	4
3. Urban Seed.....	5
C. Current state of affairs	6
1. Churches	6
2. Christian organisations	6
3. Community Organisations	6
4. Local Business	7
5. St Matthew's Building	7
6. St Matthew's Programs	8
D. Research	9
1. Demography.....	9
2. Previous welfare interventions	12
3. Conversations.....	14
4. Reports	15
E. Strengths, Needs & Challenges	16
1. Community Strengths	16
2. Community Needs	16
3. Challenges and Risks	17
F. Proposals	19
1. Christian Community Development	19
2. Core People.....	19
3. Neighbourhood Action	20
4. Public Engagement.....	20
5. Governance, Funding and Property	21
G. Summary List of Proposals	22
H. Budget	23
Proposal for remaining monies	23
I. Readings/Resources	24



A. Introduction

1. Background

Bencourt Care funded this project, which involved research and initial work to guide a long-term strategy for St Matthew's, Long Gully.

David Fagg has conducted this research. He is a member of Seeds Bendigo, the small missional group which currently co-ordinates St Matthew's under a license from the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo.

Urban Seed, a medium-sized NFP with whom Seeds Bendigo has long-standing contact, is also conducting a simultaneous strategic planning process, with the intent of becoming more involved in the Long Gully and Northern Bendigo communities.

2. Aims of this paper

- Lay out the history and current state of St Matthew's in the context of Long Gully
- Summarise research into past community development in Long Gully, and current stakeholders' views
- Name some of the existing needs in Long Gully
- Propose ways forward for St Matthew's as a base for Christian community development



B. Background

1. St Matthew's Anglican Church

St Matthew's has never been a parish in its own right, having been overseen by various other parishes such as Golden Square, View Hill and Eaglehawk. It has struggled to retain clergy: most ministers stayed for an average of 2 years. In the 100 year period from 1883 – 1983, there were 53 ministers. The longest serving was the apparently heroic and long lived Rev CJ Chambers, who managed to stay put from 1904 – 1910.¹



It started out in a weatherboard church but then moved into the Methodist Church, its current location, when the Methodists built their Wilson St church.

At one stage it had a connection with View Hill Anglican, who planted a new form of church ('Café Church') in the mid-2000s. This relationship ended around the time that Seeds Bendigo took over co-ordination of St Matthew's.

2. Seeds Bendigo

Seeds Bendigo took on the co-ordination of St Matthew's at the beginning of 2009. Seeds Bendigo is a "small missional community" that is part of the Seeds Network, a small collection of Christian groups that undertake incarnational mission in marginalized neighbourhoods. Seeds has been present in Long Gully since 2005 when a small group moved into the neighbourhood.

Bishop Andrew Curnow asked Seeds to take on St Matthew's, and to use it for Christian community work purposes. At the time, Seeds Bendigo members had been using the site in an *ad hoc* way for events and programs, as well as attending Café Church and the morning congregation at times.

¹ St Matthew's Long Gully: 1883-1983, Bendigo : St. Matthew's Anglican Church, 1983

Seeds invited the 2 congregations (Café Church and the Anglican morning congregation) there at the time to continue using St Matthew's. The morning congregation were unwilling to meet without an ordained minister, and dispersed. The Café Church congregation continued to meet, but as their leadership had stepped down, they found it difficult to continue and finished in mid-2009.

Seeds is exploring a more intentional connection with the Diocese at the time of writing.

3. Urban Seed

Seeds Bendigo has always had a connection with Urban Seed, a Christian not-for-profit organisation based in Melbourne's CBD. Members of Seeds have been employees and/or interns with Urban Seed over the past 20 years, and they share many common goals.

Seeds invited Urban Seed to think about a firmer connection with St Matthew's. At the time of writing this report, Urban Seed has engaged a local consultant (Clare Fountain) to help clarify what its role could be.



C. Current state of affairs

This section seeks to lay out the context in which St Matthew's finds itself:

- other churches and Christian organisations
- community organisations
- local businesses
- the building itself
- current and past projects

1. Churches

There are a number of churches and Christian organisations that people from Long Gully access. They have varying levels of activity in the neighbourhood. St Matthew's has not connected with these in any systematic way. Members of St Matthew's know people who attend some of these organisations, but we have not partnered with them in any projects.

- **Momentum:** formerly Bendigo Christian Fellowship this is a CRC church which is auspiced by Waurin Ponds Community Church (Geelong). They have struggled to retain a pastor, but a few years ago Nathan Poloso moved from the Solomon Islands to take up with role. The church holds a Sunday morning service and a weekly small group.
- **Oasis of Love:** this is a small Pentecostal church that uses the Long Gully Community Centre (distinct from the Long Gully Neighbourhood Centre).
- **Revival Centres International:** very much the same as Oasis of Love, and meets at the Long Gully Community Centre
- **Catholic Church:** this church closed before Seeds Bendigo moved to Long Gully.
- **Wilson Street Uniting Church:** this church has a morning service and is part of the ELM Cluster (Eaglehawk, Long Gully, Marong). In recent times they have also started a Sunday School.
- **Life Centre:** originally a church plant from Connect Church (AOG), Life Centre started in Eaglehawk before moving to Ironbark. It's focus on supernatural healing and deliverance, as well as the personal story of the senior pastor, attracts a number of people from Long Gully. Life Centre runs a number of groups and ministries for young people, young adults, Mainly Music, small groups etc.

2. Christian organisations

- **Our Place Ministries:** this started soon after the 2009 Black Saturday Fires, and (although not located in Long Gully) engaged a large number of people from Long Gully. Our Place will close at the end of 2009. Our Place is/was a similar initiative to St Matthew's, and we are keen to learn from their experience.
- **Bendigo Uniting Care Outreach (BUCO):** many people from Long Gully go to BUCO (Forest St, Bendigo) for food parcels and other assistance.

3. Community Organisations

There are a number of community groups which St Matthew's has partnered with over the last 9 years. Long Gully Neighbourhood Centre is the organisation with whom we have co-operated on most, followed by Havilah Road Preschool, and a growing connection with the 2 primary schools in the area.

- **Foodshare:** project of Foodbank Victoria, located in Long Gully. Supplies food to community organisations; does not supply to individuals in need directly
- **Long Gully Neighbourhood Centre (LGNC):** the most active of community groups in the area, it houses programs such as youth activities, after school care, Street Soccer, and child and maternal health care. Members of the LGNC were instrumental in larger projects like the Multipurpose Centre at the Long Gully oval, and the Mensheds Inc project.
- **Long Gully Community Centre (LGCC):** this is located in Havilah Rd, and is a place for community groups to hold larger events and regular gatherings eg. Bendigo Symphony Orchestra rehearsals, craft groups etc
- **Havilah Rd Preschool:** the preschool is very open to St Matthew's contributing to their program. We have run gardening workshops at the preschool.
- **Mensheds:** this is a venue for (usually older) men to connect around the task of making something. They have a large venue on the fringe of the Long Gully oval.
- **Energetic St Community Garden:** co-ordinated by the LGNC, this is a plot-hire community garden about 10 times the size of the Hope...It Grows! garden
- **Lightning Reef PS:** this school has been completely redeveloped, and now also houses a preschool and early childhood centre. This school would be very open to involvement from the community. It has a large number of disadvantaged children enrolled. Community Chaplains from St Matthew's have been running a playgroup during school hours.
- **Violet St PS:** less disadvantaged than Lightning Reef PS due to a more diverse mix of social and economic classes, but still has its fair share of children from the Sparrowhawk Estate in Long Gully.
- **Scope:** Scope is located in Long Gully and provides services for people with disabilities.

4. Local Business

There is a medium-sized industrial estate that occupies a fair chunk of Long Gully, the national headquarters of a large employment and training group, as well as a number of smaller businesses that cater for the needs of local people:

St Matthew's has connections with the smaller businesses through our own use of them, but has not connected with the businesses in the industrial estate.

5. St Matthew's Building

St Matthew's as a building is in surprising good shape, assisted by assiduous maintenance performed by Anglican member Bruce Pollock in the years leading up to 2009.

Since Seeds Bendigo took on St Matthew's, we have undertaken a number of building works and improvements, funded by grants obtained through government and philanthropic organisations.

Works completed (2009-2013)

- Replacement of tin on hall roof
- Electrical works in church and hall: new wiring and points
- Safety lighting on external doorways
- Amphitheatre
- New external gates
- Shed
- Garden shed
- Floors polished in hall and toy library
- Landscaping
- Community garden
- Pizza oven (at time of writing)

Existing building issues:

- Tin needs replacing on the church roof + drainage issues
- Some church plaster needs replacing
- Painting: church, kitchen, bathroom
- Disability ramp access externally & between church and hall internally
- Kitchen and office area needs revamping

6. St Matthew's Programs

Over the period 2009-2013, St Matthew's has hosted a number of small projects, some initiated by St Matthew's, and others not:

Project	Time	Description	Initiated by
Outdoor Edge	2007-2010	Outdoor program for local young males	Urban Seed/Seeds Bendigo
Gully Gallery	2008	Community pride art show and competition	Seeds Bendigo
Hiphopportunities for Youth Inc	2009-present	Youth work organisation who use the space for regular youth events	Hiphopportunities for Youth Inc
Gully Gathering	2009-present	informal church service and meal	Seeds Bendigo
Colour the Gully	2010	post-bushfire art project	Neighbourhood Renewal
Bike Butcher	2010-2011	Bike recycling enterprise	Seeds Bendigo
Breakin Tha Mould	2010-present	Hiphop skills + youth development	Hiphopportunities for Youth Inc + Urban Seed
Hope...It Grows! Community Garden	2010-present	Demonstration and teaching garden	Seeds Bendigo
Out of the Box	2012-present	Toy library for preschool aged children	Seeds Bendigo
Community Chaplains	2013	Outreach into local primary and preschool with associated ad hoc programs	Seeds Bendigo
Burning Stories	2013	Short bushfire resiliency project	Seeds Bendigo

D. Research

1. Demography²

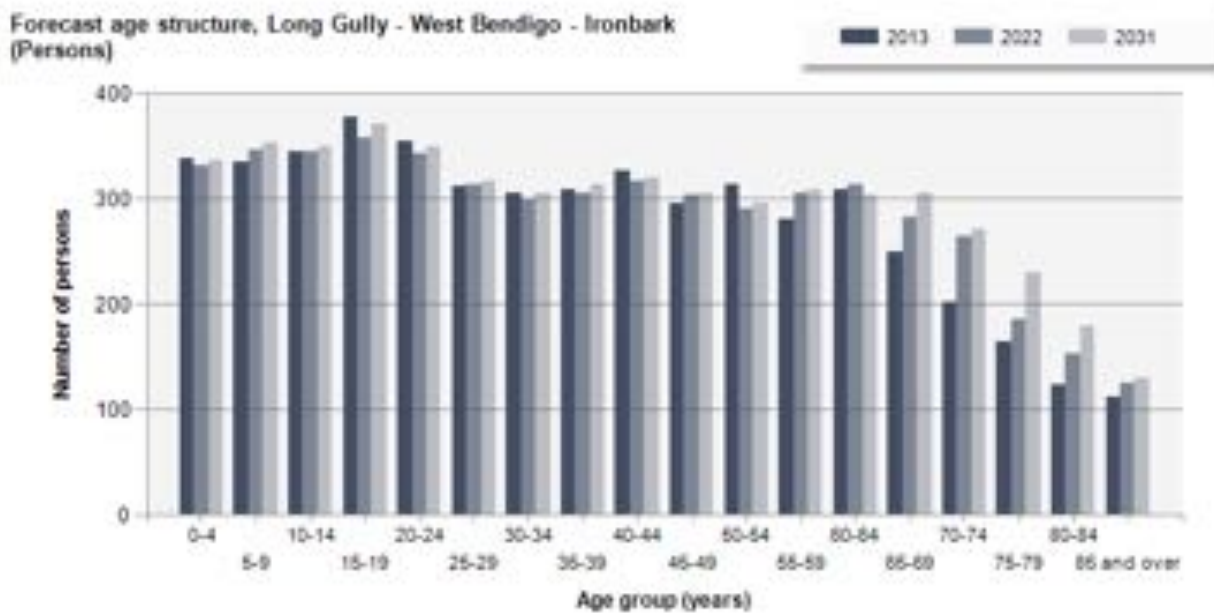
Long Gully

Long Gully has a SEIFA index number of 863.3³, making it the most disadvantaged in the City of Greater Bendigo. In 2011 it had a total population of 4,776.

The largest type of household is “one-person”, with 1 and 2-person homes making up 68% of all households in Long Gully. There is a large number of units for older people in the area.

The population is not forecast to grow much over the next 20 years, as there is not much land available for residential development; a legacy of the mining era which has left much vacant land unsuitable for construction.

There is a significant portion of the population who need assistance because of a disability: in 2011, 8.8% of the population of Long Gully needed such assistance compared to 5.5% in the wider city.⁴



Age forecasts

Over the next 20 years, Long Gully’s age structure is likely to stay generally the same, with the most significant change to happen in the 65-84 age ranges, as the current population ages, and as retirees move into the area.

² <http://profile.id.com.au/bendigo/>

³ <http://profile.id.com.au/bendigo/seifa-disadvantage?es=2>

⁴ <http://profile.id.com.au/bendigo/assistance?EndYear=2006&WebID=210>

Qualifications and Occupations

In the period 2006-2011, Long Gully has experienced a significant growth in people with 'vocational qualifications' and occupations in the trades, as well as a decrease in those with "no qualifications". However, it is impossible to tell whether this is due to existing residents gaining qualifications, or people with those qualifications moving to the neighbourhood. In either case, it indicates an important change in Long Gully's demographics.

Religion

Long Gully's population has 59.4% of people who claim a Christian faith.⁵ There is some evidence of a strong pull towards Pentecostal forms of church. This may be because of the themes of 'rescue' and 'power' that charismatic/Pentecostal churches emphasise. Both of these themes resonate with people who feel trapped and powerless by poverty. Numbers of Long Gully residents who claimed a Pentecostal faith grew between 2001 and 2006, one of the few Christian denominations to achieve numerical growth – but then declined slightly between 2006-2011.

Anglicans in Long Gully declined by 67 people (to 872) in the period 2006-2011. This may have been caused by the sharp increase in Christians who did not name a particular denomination, up by 53 people since 2006.

The census category of "No Religion" was up by 96 people since the 2006 Census. From 2001-2011, this category gained 421 people, so this trend has flattened somewhat.

The category of "Not Stated" declined by 121 between 2001-2011, perhaps indicating that the population take spirituality seriously, even if they do not associate with a particular religion.

Ethnicity

There is a very small percentage of people from non-Anglo backgrounds in Long Gully, though in the past 2 years there has been a small influx of Karen refugees:

Out of a total population of 4,776, only 90 spoke a non-English language at home, and only 121 were born in a country that did not have English as the main language. The only statistically significant ancestries stated that were non-Anglo and non-European were Chinese (23 people) and Maori (23 people).

⁵ <http://profile.id.com.au/Default.aspx?id=134&pg=106&gid=210&type=enum>, accessed 18th October 2010.

Housing

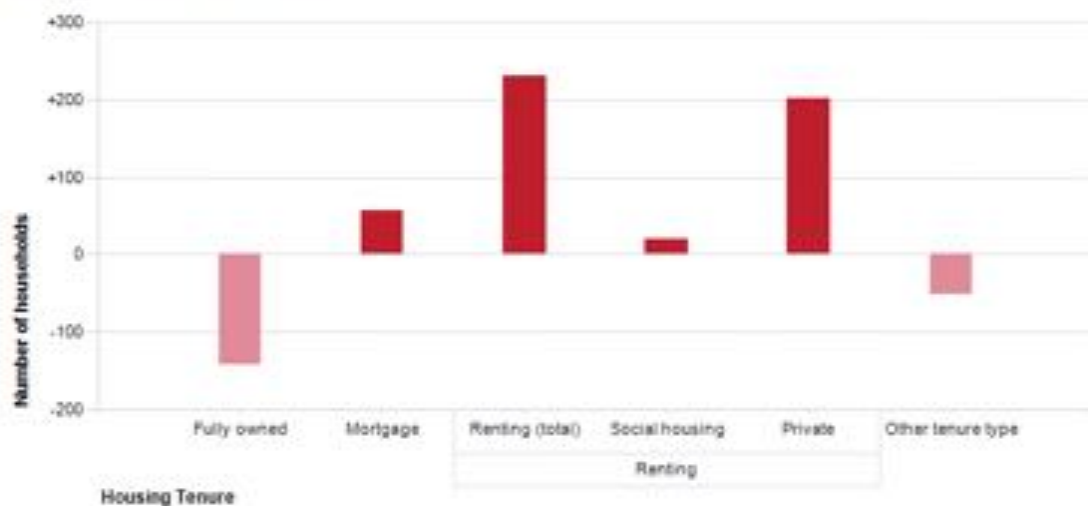
Out of a total of 1,982 households, 1,119 are either fully-owned or mortgaged, and another 752 are rented.

Public housing accounts for 259 households, however the reality is that about 1/3 of households in the Sparrowhawk Estate are privately owned by investors who lease to the same demographic as those who rent public housing dwellings.

Since 1991, there is an increase of investors buying houses for rent: in the period, the amount of Long Gully residents who fully owned their houses decreased while the amount of rented households sharply increased.

Change in housing tenure, 1991 to 2011

Long Gully - West Bendigo - Ironbark



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing: 1991 and 2011 (Enumerated data). Compiled and presented in profile *id* by *id*, the population experts.



Sparrowhawk Estate

Sparrowhawk Estate is a small housing commission estate of about 350 households in the suburb of Long Gully. Construction began in 1970 and concluded in 1973.⁶

It has a distinctive subculture based on public housing, relocation, generational unemployment, stigma from the Bendigo community and Anglo ethnicity. Economically it is poor, and literacy is low. Many residents are dependent on disability and unemployment payments. Social cohesion is high compared to wealthier areas in Victoria (Vinson, 2004), however isolation is a significant problem. Over the past 15 years there have been consistent government community development programs.

⁶ Den Otter, Community Profile

Sparrowhawk Estate lies in a lower-middle-class suburb within a regional city of 100,000 people, children go to schools with students from a variety of economic levels and classes, and residents need to travel for domestic, health and welfare system needs. Despite this interaction with other areas of Bendigo, residents still experience stigma from living in Long Gully, and the combination of place and poverty is a significant one.

2. Previous welfare interventions

Since the mid-1990s until about 2010, Long Gully has been the object of 2 successive large-scale community development projects: Shared Action and Neighbourhood Renewal, totaling 15 years between them

i. Shared Action

Shared Action was initiated by St Luke's Anglicare, the trigger being Long Gully's high incidence of child protection. It was initially funded by private philanthropic bodies, allowing the Shared Action team to build trust without rushing to predetermined outcomes.

Shared Action learnings:⁷

- Work from strengths – focussing on deficits reinforces the deficits
- Work from common concerns eg. safety of children
- Equip local people to organise ie. meeting
- Patience is needed – can't work to funding timelines
- Long Gully residents are constantly affected by poverty: illness, crime, child care, unemployment - workers needed to be available so people could connect when they needed to

ii. Neighbourhood Renewal

Neighbourhood Renewal was co-ordinated by the Department of Human Services (DHS): Long Gully was one of 13 such sites around the state. Neighbourhood Renewal was a very positive project for Long Gully, and resulted in many mini-projects decided on and carried out by local residents.⁸

At the end of 2010, Neighbourhood Renewal pulled out and a process called "Our Plan Our Future" was meant to continue the work, co-ordinated by the City of Greater Bendigo – this has largely petered out.

Neighbourhood Renewal carried on some of the ethos of Shared action, basing its work on the following 4 principles:⁹

- tackles a number of the multiple and interconnected causes of disadvantage
- builds whole-of-government and inter-sectoral partnerships
- organises responses around people and the places they live, work and play, rather than separate government program silos
- empowers communities to be part of the solution.

⁷ O'Neil, "Curiosity and Hope"

⁸ Long Gully Final Evaluation report

⁹ Klein and Knowles, Empowering people, renewing places: an interim evaluation of Neighbourhood Renewal

For its time, Neighbourhood Renewal was a radical approach for a government: instead of government workers being responsible for a particular service (like housing), there were teams of workers based in the community (ie. with an office at the LGNC) who worked on outcomes for the community.

Learnings from Neighbourhood Renewal:

- poverty is not the problem, or the only problem – but the *combination of place and poverty*. Therefore, improvements to ‘universal services’ (eg. job agencies) will not work without targeting neighbourhoods experiencing entrenched disadvantage.
- Residents get involved if they have power in the decision-making process.

iii. Long Gully Neighbourhood Centre

The Neighbourhood Centre is an ongoing community development centre, which exists as a host to resident-led programs, educational courses, government programs (eg. housing worker and maternal and child health), and employs a part-time youth worker.

iv. Summary

The welfare interventions in Long Gully since the mid-1990s have, on balance, been positive for Long Gully’s wellbeing. They have equipped a significant minority of Sparrowhawk Estate residents to initiate and sustain projects in the neighbourhood.

However, both of these initiatives struggled to overcome the perception that they were aimed exclusively at the Sparrowhawk Estate, and therefore did not engage well with the industrial estate businesses nor the other residents in Long Gully. This has implications for training and employment.

In addition, community development in Long Gully has tended to mean “funded projects” with people paid to co-ordinate them. Although this is a great step forward from nothing happening, it has its limitations as a community development approach: it fails when funding is not available; it relies on paid/expert people, which disempowers local people; it tends to reduce community connections to ‘participating in a program’, and neglects more informal ways of connecting.

3. Conversations

A number of conversations took place with stakeholders concerned with Long Gully: school teachers, residents, philanthropic contacts, government department workers, community workers etc.

Conversations about the needs of Long Gully took place with, among others:

- Jackie Hunt (Key ex-Neighbourhood Renewal participant; community worker)
- Dzintra Martin (Principal, Lightning Reef PS)
- Kathryn Turner (Local youth worker, LGNC)
- Carol Rasmussen (co-ordinator, LGNC)
- John Jones (Extended School Partnerships)
- Martin Leach (local businessman)
- Faye Barrat (Foodshare)
- Eh Paung (Karen, Seventh Day Adventist minister)
- Ashin Moonianda (Karen, Buddhist monk)
- Kath Tointon (Co-ordinator, Our Place)
- Gill Sawyer (Department of Planning and Community Development)
- Michelle Rankin (Eaglehawk Anglican Parish)
- Paul Rankin (Youth Pastor, Eaglehawk Anglican Parish)
- Peter Cox (Councillor, CoGB)
- Jenny Dawson (Board member, various government and community organisations)
- Kate Bermedez (Lead teacher, Havilah Rd)
- Kim Boucher (Community liaison, Lightning Reef PS)
- Peter Noble (Seeds member, board member of St Luke's)
- Sue King-Smith (St Luke's community capacity building unit)
- Stephen Said (Church engagement, Urban Seed)
- Clare Fountain (Local businesswoman)
- Mike Flood (President, Hiphopportunities for Youth Inc)
- Shan Aziz (Youth leader, Hiphopportunities for Youth Inc)
- Rose Vincent (Community chaplain, St Matthew's)



These conversations were invaluable for including people in the process of re-imagining what St Matthew's could be. Some of the needs and challenges that surfaced will be detailed in "Emerging Needs and Challenges" (below).

4. Reports

There are a few miscellaneous reports related to Long Gully which are not government related:

- ***Bike Butcher Feasibility Study***: this was an economic feasibility report conducted to establish whether a bike recycling enterprise would work in Long Gully. It concluded that it would, but the enterprise has since finished.
- ***Urban Seed Strategic Direction***: this is currently being undertaken by Clare Fountain. It aims to establish what Urban Seed should aim to do in Long Gully
- ***Community Profile***: written in 2008 by Finn Den Otter, a youth work student. It gives a good summary of the history, current make-up and needs of young people in Long Gully.