

The Global Learning Village- What is it?

The redevelopment of Marysville has brought with it a lot of opportunities to make the town even better than before. In the early days following Black Saturday residents of both Marysville and Kinglake approached Frank McGuire about having a "Global Learning Village" incorporated during the rebuilding of the towns. Frank is a business strategist, community leader and dual winner of Australian journalism's most prestigious honour, the Walkley Award. He initiated the internationally acclaimed concept of building Global Learning Villages using public-private partnerships. Its initial expression was the Hume Global Learning Centre which built the first public library in Broadmeadows and a maternal and childcare centre in nearby Meadow Heights and used to connect the disconnected. The project has since won two Prime Minister's awards and Frank has outlined the strategy behind it to Government leaders from Asia and the Pacific at a "Connecting Communities" conference in Hanoi.

Those of us who visited the Global Learning Villages could see the potential for Marysville particularly as the concept is very scalable. The Broadmeadows building included a library, a cafe and many meeting rooms with IT infrastructure. The Meadow Heights building in particular was more the size of a building that could suit Marysville. It consisted of a central reception area, with rooms on each side that were delivering training, used by mothers groups, arts groups etc. The medical, child and maternal health centre was also incorporated in this building, as was office space

Global learning villages provide social and information technology infrastructure which can be used in a number of different ways. It can be established in conjunction with schools, libraries, childcare centres, sporting facilities or other community hubs. All hubs are tailored to local needs and aim to deliver smarter, healthier and better connected communities. They focus on the attributes that largely determine where people end up in life: attitude, education and opportunity. It links people to networks otherwise beyond their reach that has already blossomed into hundreds of organisations from neighbourhood houses and skills shops to TAFE colleges and universities.

The network currently delivers access to pre-school reading classes, mentoring for homework and literacy, training for lifelong learning, jobs training, small business development and recreation. International partners such as Microsoft (Bill Gates/Software), Intel (computers/hardware) and Cisco (Cabling/Connectivity) provide

reduced price infrastructure to buildings required for the communities.

So what does this mean for Marysville- a much smaller community than those already have the Global Learning Villages? Discussion is about to commence on the "Marysville Heart" project. This will place a community building, and perhaps a commercial building on the old police station site- the so called "Iconic building" project. A number of proposals are being put forward for this site, and how this comes together will largely be determined by the community in a number of workshops- including the 28th March MATDG meeting at the Golf Club.

Some funding for community building is available through the fund raising efforts of the Russell Crowe/Luke Longley Foundation, Australian Childrens Trust and other groups. The proposals so far include a performing arts centre, a bushfire education centre, and the global learning village. These proposals are not mutually exclusive. The inclusion of a theatrette and meeting rooms with strong IT infrastructure can only be of benefit to a town trying to attract conference centres and education facilities to stimulate the economy of the town. A bushfire education centre can delivery training that will result in preservation of life and increased safety. Linkages can be established with other fire prone areas, such as California, to make this education centre a major learning and tourism hub. So the "Global Learning Village" can be what Marysville wants to make of it. It can be an integral part of a building that will be a catalyst for economic activity, create jobs, increase business confidence and also act as a significant tourist drawcard to the area.

Frank has already presented the concept of the Global learning village at both MATDG and MOCA meetings. This concept (and that of a performing arts centre) has been strongly supported by the community. It is now the time to make these ideas tangible, to make them come together into a community building. Please come along and be part of the discussion of what the people of the Triangle want to see as part of the Marysville Heart project. Or risk having an "iconic building" you may regret.

Vicki Moritz

On behalf of Marysville and Triangle Development Group