

## **Moving-on from Covid19... for the Improvement of Our Community and Society**

A kangaroo in transit through quiet streets in the middle of a CBD in a city of one million people! Clear water in the canals of Venezia! Countless You Tube clips from families singing and laughing together! Strangers saying “hello” each other on their morning walks! Although it has been a terrible crisis forcing many challenges and obstacles upon us, the Covid-19 Pandemic with isolation and lock-down has also seen many benefits to our way of life, our families, our local communities and the environment; benefits that we have not seen in countless years. And now many of us are asking “*what could we all do to keep these good things going when life gets back to normal?*”.

One town looking to answer this question and highlight the good things we have learnt or started to do again during the last few months is Tatura, part of Greater Shepparton in Victoria’s Northern Country. Several community members from diverse local groups including Tatura Community House, Tatura Community Plan Committee and Transition Tatura have realised that the deteriorating state of the world cannot and should not continue as is. Endless growth, exploitation of Mother Nature’s resources, greed and abuse of power are creating a world we are not happy to leave for our children and grandchildren. These people have come together via video conferencing and started to prepare plans to embrace the good undercurrents and move forward with hopes for a better future. And they hope not just to inspire residents of Tatura and surrounding communities but also Victoria, Australia and the world beyond.

The group has already discovered many wonderful local trends from our time in isolation such as;

- spending more quality time with family (dusting off the boardgames and jigsaw puzzles)
- backyard camping and evening firepits
- additional home-grown veggies, with the excess left on neighbour’s doorsteps
- swapping vegetables and fruit for eggs and cakes
- learning new skills, starting new hobbies, self-improvement, self-reflection
- more walking, exercise and improved health and well-being (Tatura is expanding its many walking tracks for residents and their dogs)
- buying from and supporting local business
- discovering a business in town you didn’t know existed (and it has just what you needed!)
- being more aware of “Australian Made” products and food miles
- reduced freight needed due to more use of local production
- greater awareness and support of local community
- looking out for others in your neighbourhood, especially your elderly neighbours
- saving petrol and car costs
- slowing-down of our life-style and the multitude of benefits that come from this

The Tatura Community House and Tatura Community Plan have established the Helping Hands Tatura initiative and sent every letterbox in Tatura an envelope inscribed with “Your Community Cares” on the front and containing a tea-bag, coffee sachet and note of support to all residents which includes a phone number for people to keep in touch. Another mail-out or personal delivery is planned very soon.

A few actions by the group are already in progress. Short videos to highlight the good things that residents and families have been doing and Vox Pops in the street will be ongoing and posted on YouTube and Facebook. Members of the public will also be encouraged to make their own videos and send them into the group. Transition Tatura are launching a competition, with a total prize pool of \$450, for local school children to create their own videos highlighting the positives they have experienced and noticed. Politicians and local councillors have been approached and newspapers contacted.

Along with getting the message out to as many people, communities, organisations and policy makers as possible, other measures planned are additional community engagement, both local and further afield and an eventual celebration / festival. The planning for this event has started to get it up and running as soon as possible after social distancing and group gathering restrictions have been abolished. This festival will bring to an end the hardships we have faced but it will focus on the positives we have encountered along the way and promote and encourage the continuation and growth of the great things that have happened. It is hoped the festival will not be the end of this initiative but the celebration of a brave new world to come.

If you would like to know more, send-in a video or join the conversation a few avenues exist:

<https://www.facebook.com/helpinghandtatura/>

<https://www.facebook.com/TaturaCommunityHouse/>

<https://www.facebook.com/transitiontatura/>