



Our connected community roadmap

Batlow & Surrounds

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and pay respects to Elders past and present.

We recognise Aboriginal people as the original custodians of the lands that comprise the Snowy Valleys Council area and pay our respects to the leaders of the traditional custodians of this land.

Together we acknowledge the contributions of Aboriginal Australians to this country we all live in and share together.

Snowy Valleys Council is committed to enhancing the knowledge and understanding of our communities about the history, heritage and cultures of Aboriginal Australians.



**Snowy
Valleys
Council**

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CONSULTING

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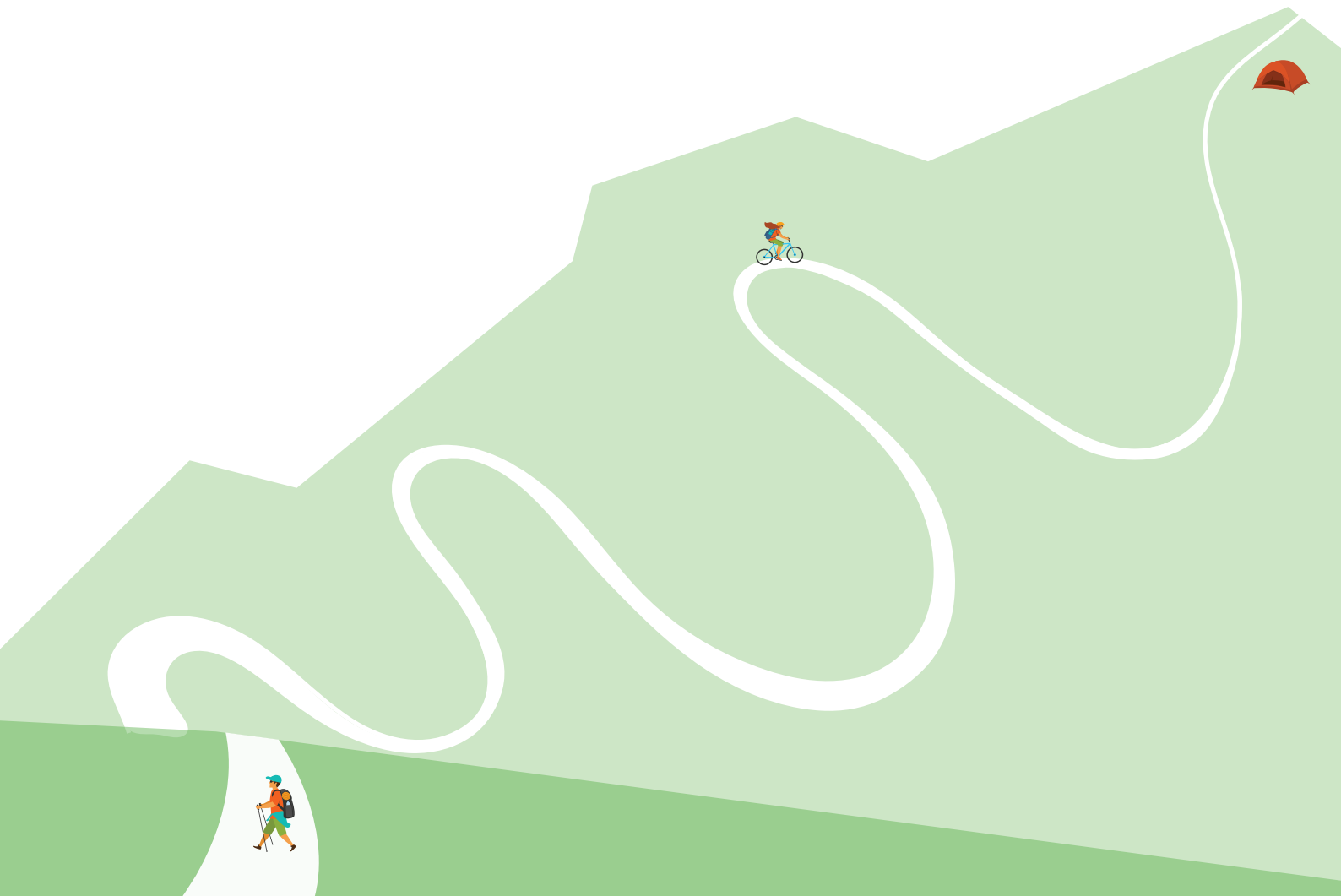
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Table of contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Our Community	7
3. Our Vision and Values	10
4. Mapping our Community Assets	12
5. Our Roadmap	16



1. Introduction

Background

The past few years have been difficult for our community, with the impacts of the 2019-2020 Black Summer Bushfires and COVID-19 lockdowns.

Snowy Valleys Council (Council), through partial funding from the NSW Community Recovery and Resilience Fund, has been working with our local community to prepare community-led plans aimed at understanding our places, spaces and networks that connect us to build stronger more socially cohesive and resilient communities.

Research from Resilient NSW and NCOSS tells us that for communities to be resilient in the face of emergencies, they need to be connected with each other, their places, and local services and institutions. Knowing our neighbours, having good relationships with friends and family, and being part of a connected community means someone will notice if we're missing, help if we are in trouble and get us back on our feet after the crisis has passed.

Building stronger communities

Resilience NSW has identified a number of ways that we can build stronger communities and be prepared for emergencies, respond as a community, and recover together. This includes:

- Understanding our local community including the people and place context - including our history, values and aspirations
- Recognising the complexity of different and unique places, because successful recovery is responsive to the complex and dynamic nature of both emergencies and a community
- Using community-led approaches - being community centred, responsive and flexible, and engaging with communities to move forward
- Coordinating activities - successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach between community and partner agencies and requires a range of social connectors, and community assets, for this to occur effectively
- Recognising and building capacity - successful recovery is built on effective communication, networking and partnership between communities, services, and government agencies/ institutions.

The importance of planning for social cohesion

The Scanlon Foundation (2021) defines social cohesion as being concerned with: "the extent of shared values, mutual respect and acceptance of difference, as well as trust between people and trust in institutions".

Social cohesion is about having strong bonds between individuals and institutions within a society, resulting in positive quality of relationships that are rooted in equal and just treatment, respect and care for one another. Social cohesion is an important foundation for cooperation towards shared outcomes.

Research shows that connected communities, with strong networks, trust, social spaces to connect, and bonds recover more quickly from adversity like the ones we've recently experienced in Batlow and Surrounds.

The Resilient Cities Network's "Measuring Social Cohesion Guide" notes that:

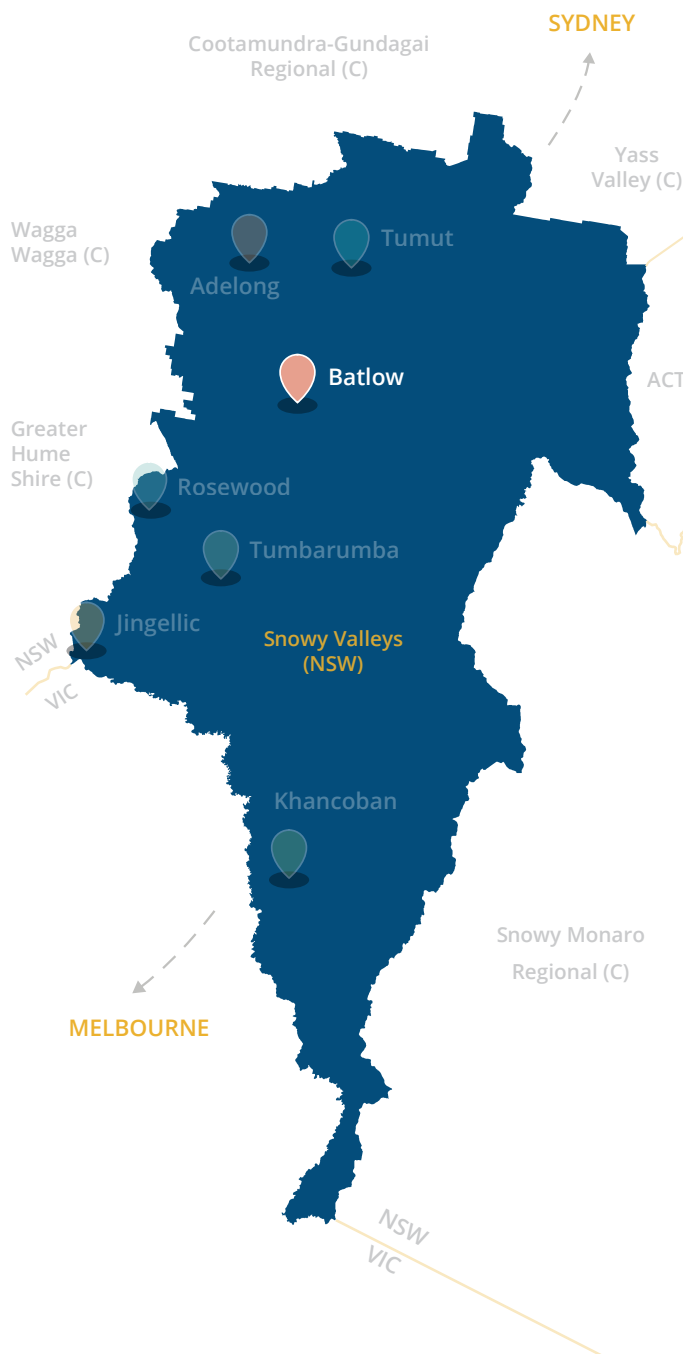
"Higher levels of social cohesion and positive social interactions serve to strengthen the overall fabric of the city, allowing communities to bounce back faster and rebuilt more efficiently after experiencing major shocks and stresses."

Our plan for a connected place

This *Our Connected Communities Roadmap for Batlow and Surrounds* is a community-led plan to build a socially connected, resilient place supported by the community assets needed to plan for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. Batlow and Surrounds includes the localities of Batlow, Wilgrow and Laurel Hill.

The Roadmap sets a vision and values as identified by our local community to strengthen community connections and our resilience, and identifies ideas and actions to improve access to the community assets we need to better withstand future challenges and emergency events. It provides our resident and business community, Council and other institutions with the information needed to work in partnership with us.

It acknowledges that our social connectors - the community groups and events; services and institutions; places and spaces; and information sources - play a central role in how socially cohesive we are and focuses on identifying community-led initiatives and priorities for the improvement of our place and community.



Our Community Road Map Locations
(Source: Cred Consulting 2022)

What's in this Roadmap?

This Roadmap includes:

- Our community demographic and place profile
- Our community's vision and values
- What we love and what we'd change about our place
- A map of our community assets, or "social connectors" which bring our community together
- Assessment of our social connectors, our social capital, and identification of strengths and challenges
- Our ideas for how to make our place stronger and more socially connected, and
- An Action Plan for how our community and other institutions can work together to build a strong, socially connected and resilient place.

"The weather, the scenery, the natural beauty, the opportunities (especially in relation to tourism) and the people."

- Community member

How was this Roadmap developed?

This Roadmap was developed in partnership with the Batlow and Surrounds community and Snowy Valleys Council, acknowledging that the creation of strong socially cohesive communities must be community-led. Our local people and community groups and services have a critical role to play in community building, emergency preparedness and recovery. Engagement with the community included:

- Love Letters to Local Places postcards
- Places We Connect Boards, built by the Batlow Men's Shed
- Pop-up stalls in main streets
- Community meet ups in local community spaces
- Interviews with service providers, businesses, Council, and community groups
- Submissions via Council's Have My Say Page.

How can we use this Roadmap?

How can Council use this Roadmap?

Council can use this Roadmap for forward planning and resource allocation for infrastructure, strategic city planning and social development activities within the annual Operational Plan process.

How can Councillors use this Roadmap?

Councillors can use this Roadmap for advocacy, lobbying and promotion of community successes and challenges to government agencies, industry and all levels of government for funding support or program delivery.

How can community members and groups use this Roadmap?

Community members and groups can use this Roadmap for galvanising community group and volunteer action around identified activities for improvement of social cohesion and sourcing grant funding.



2. Our community

Our place

Batlow and Surrounds includes the localities of Batlow, Wilgrow and Laurel Hill. Batlow is a charming residential area and the centre of our place, located mid-way between our two Council administration centres in Tumut and Tumbarumba. Our town is located on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri People.

At 775 metres, the high elevation of our area provides ideal growing conditions for apples and means that we experience four seasons in a year. We are dusted with snow in the winter and enjoy panoramic views across to the mountains.

Batlow was once a thriving centre when the local packing house - a place where the fruit from the local orchards was processed, canned and distributed under the Mountain Maid label - was central to the town's prosperity. Today, Batlow is a small service centre set in the beautiful low-lying mountains of the NSW South West Slopes and is surrounded by cold climate orchards which produce apples, pears, cherries, berries and stone fruits.

The smaller locality of Laurel Hill is located within the Bago State Forest, which produced hardwood timber for many years and is now home to excellent mountain bike trails, 4WD tracks and picnic areas for our residents and visitors.

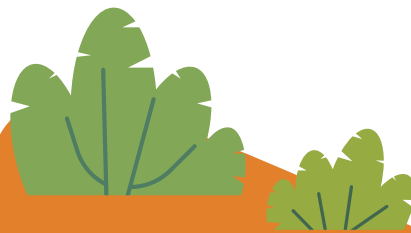
We live near the Tumut River and Blowering Reservoir, which provides our residents with recreation opportunities, including fishing, boating and hiking. We are also home to CiderFest, one of the largest festivals in our region, which celebrates the end of the apple harvest and brings visitors from across NSW, ACT and Victoria to our town.

The community assets and those social connectors that make our place special are detailed in Section 4, Mapping our Community Assets.



The soil can grow anything and we produce so much food in Batlow."

- Community member



Gardening conditions & horticulture

We appreciate the fertile soil and climate in and around Batlow, meaning that we can grow a variety of produce.



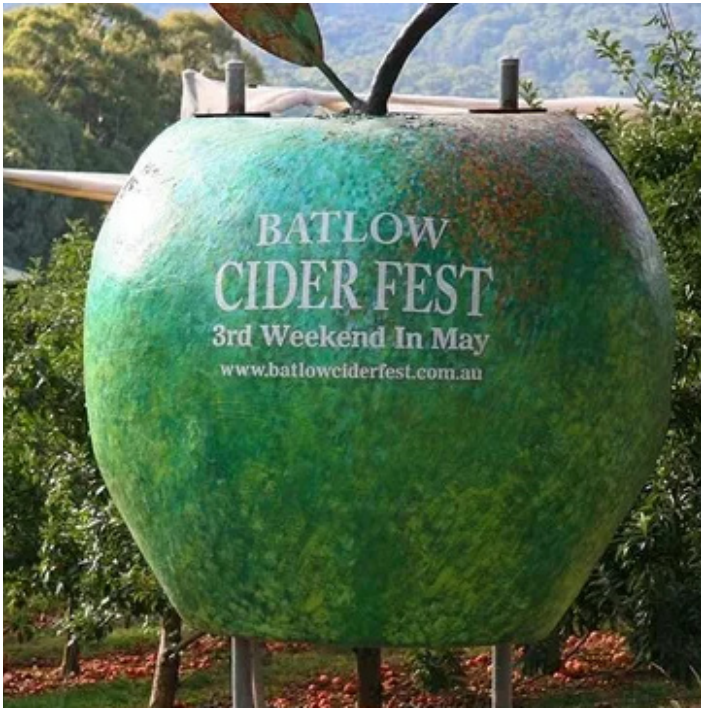
Four seasons

We experience four seasons in a year and enjoy the weather and cooler climate, including snow twice a year.



Great facilities

We have access to cheap rent and a range of good facilities, including the school, library, hospital, golf course, pool and sports facilities in the area.



Our people

Batlow, Wilgrow and Laurel Hill is home to approximately 1,334 people.

We have an ageing population.

Our median age is 50 years compared to 43 years in Regional NSW. We have less people aged 18 and under (17% compared to 22% in our LGA) and a higher proportion of people aged 65 years and over (27%), indicating that our population is ageing.

One in five people speak a language other than English.

More than 19% of our residents speak a language other than English at home, which is significantly higher compared to our LGA (3.5%). This is most likely due to itinerant workers in local industries.

Our town is located on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri People. We have a smaller population of First Nations people living (2.2%) in Batlow, Wilgrow and Laurel Hill.

We earn up to \$200 less per week.

Our residents experience more disadvantage compared to the average across our LGA, with a lower average household income (\$928) and a higher SEIFA score (901).

Our residents own their homes and are well connected to the internet.

Our residents are more likely to own their home compared to the average across our LGA, with 58% of our residents owning their homes. We however have a lower proportion of family households (51%) compared to our LGA (63%).

Although some people live outside of town with poor or no internet access, we have a higher proportion of internet access compared to our LGA, with almost four in five residents connected to the internet.



Table 1 - Our people and household characteristics
(Based on 2021 ABS Census for the areas of Batlow, Wilgrow and Laurel Hill)

	Batlow & Surrounds	Snowy Valley Council	Regional NSW
Total population	1,334	14,891	-
Median age	50	45	43
Median household income	\$928	\$1,122	\$1,166
Under 18	17%	22%	22%
18-64	54%	56%	57%
65+	27%	22%	21%
Language other than English	19.3%	3.5%	5.7%
First Nations	2.6%	4.4%	5.5%
Renting	16%	19%	22%
Homeowners	58%	39%	36%
Lone households	25%	27%	26%
Family households	51%	62%	63%
Volunteering	19%	25%	21%
No internet access	22%	34%	27%
SEIFA	901	951	971

Please note: The ABS provide estimates for localities with small populations for privacy purposes, and therefore not all percentages will add up to 100%.

3. Our Vision and Values

Our place vision

The Batlow and Surrounds community are proud of their history and heritage, which has led to Batlow being a well-known and respected place.

The community is passionate to work together to activate the town centre. They encourage diversified industries to establish in the town. The community also want to tell the story of Batlow, and see more amenity and support for tourists to bring the vibrancy of the town from days gone by, back to life.

Our values

The Batlow and Surrounds community shared what they value about their town and what makes it special:

Friendly community

- Welcoming
- Volunteering opportunities

Outdoor life

- Fishing
- Walking
- Gardening
- Cycling

Nature

- Peaceful
- Mountains and panorama views
- Fertile soil
- Fresh air
- Beautiful

Climate

- Cool climate
- Cosy atmosphere
- Four seasons

History and heritage

- Migrant story
- Industry, including apples and timber
- Women's Land Army

Country living

- Quiet
- Safe



Image source: Batlow CiderFest



What you told us Batlow and surrounds

LOVE

All the
volunteering &
our community
spirit

Best
gardening
climate in
NSW

The soil can
grow anything
& we grow so
much produce

Great services
like the school,
golf course,
pool, sports &
the hospital

The weather,
the cold, snow
twice a year
- Four real
seasons a year

Cider Fest and
the emerging
cider industries

The beautiful
mountains and
the view as you
drive down

Natural beauty,
close to nature

Centre of the
Snowy Valleys,
with much
traffic coming
through

Quiet
environment,
fresh air

Love the people
& hanging out
with friends

Our friendly
community
& welcoming,
country feel

So much
history here

We are half
way between
Melbourne and
Sydney

Snowy Valley's
hub will bring
the town
together

Love Batlow
Tech School,
it's a great
place to learn

Cheap rent

BCCA runs
community
projects eg.
the theatre
refurbishment

Love the library
- a quiet & safe
space

Wonderful
natural areas
like Lake
Blowering and
trout fishing

Activities like
fly fishing and
the skatepark

CHANGE

Bring the main
street back
to life, fill the
shops, more
cafés

More than
apples - so
much more!

Community
need to unite.
Too many
competing
groups

It's like a ghost
town. Each
shop should
be something
unique

Speed up
approvals &
delivery of the
rail trail

Working on
the rail trail
& bike trails
since 2003 and
gotten nowhere

Change
people's
attitudes
and get them
involved

We've all got to
band together
and bring it
back to life!

Stop the
bullying

A Fish & chip
shop

Forestry is
running out
of timber,
creating future
industries

Need stable
work

many
community
groups
that don't
coordinate

stop the
littering at
school or in the
community

Activate the
shop fronts

More
horticulture
enterprises.
Cold valued as
climate heats

Nothing is
open. We need
more cafés
& shops to
attract people

Cheaper
supermarket.

Bring back the
old bush trails.
Rail trail linking
Batlow to
Tumut

There's not enough
accommodation

Improve
garden
maintenance.
Research plant
types

The cannery
created jobs
and higher
value products,
bring it back!



4. Mapping our community assets

This section maps the community assets that connect us socially and that create networks in our community. It provides:

- A map of our social connectors and assessment of how they impact on the social capital in our local area, and
- An assessment of our social connectors, including our strengths and challenges.

Understanding our community assets that connect us socially, is a foundation of building social cohesion and emergency preparedness and recovery.

What are our social connectors?

Our social connectors in Batlow and Surrounds have been assessed and mapped overpage and include:

- **Community groups & events** - groups led by volunteers and our community events
- **Services & institutions** - funded services, Council, and other government agencies
- **Places & spaces** - including the parks, sport spaces, community buildings, cafes, pubs and other places where we meet, attend programs, and connect formally and informally
- **Information sources** - including the local papers, newsletters, and community noticeboards where we receive and share local information.

What is social capital?

Social cohesion is a broad concept that includes the concept of social capital. Social capital refers to the many benefits that arise from having strong social connections and networks within communities.

Social capital has three elements:

“Bonding” social capital characterises social groups where people share many experiences and values associated with their ethnicity, religion or locality and other interests.

“Bridging” social capital focuses on extending interaction between different social groups, which draw people into many different opportunities for pursuing and achieving their aspirations and meeting their needs.

“Linking” social capital connects groups to institutions and organisations that open up opportunities and resolve problems that might otherwise be missed.

Our social connectors

There is strong community desire to support each other and activate Batlow which is reflected in the many community groups, including the CWA, Batlow Community and Cultural Association Inc. and Do It for Batlow. However many community groups work in silos and there is opportunity to better collaborate and share skills and resources.

Social and cultural facilities are important for residents to connect and access services. Popular places include the Batlow Library, the Rotary Club, Batlow RSL and Batlow Hotel, as well as the recently constructed Batlow Men’s Shed. The Snowy Valleys Resilience Hub aims to support the community to plan for the regions future and also serves as a central point of contact for residents.

There are limited retail options, with many shopfronts now empty, requiring residents to shop and dine in Tumut. Council’s Spendmap data indicates that Batlow residents travel to other centres within the Snowy Valleys and to neighbouring LGAs to purchase goods and access services. This indicates there are limited places for the Batlow community to come together and access services needed.

We have some major events, including the Batlow CiderFest, Batlow Apple Blossom Festival and Winter Bites Festival, providing opportunities for residents to have fun and celebrate, as well as to promote local businesses to visitors.

A map of the community assets that connect us is provided overpage on pages 14 and 15. This includes how they support the creation and sharing of social capital in our communities.



Cider industry

We host the CiderFest and are working to build the emerging cider industry and other opportunities connected to our produce.

Assessment by social connector type

Type	Strengths	Challenges
Community groups & events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are many community groups and organisations, including Do It for Batlow, Batlow CWA, Baptist Care Social Club, Batlow Table Tennis Group and Batlow Historical Society. Batlow CiderFest is a large annual festival held in May to celebrate the end of the apple harvest. Batlow Apple Blossom Festival is very popular with locals and visitors for its atmosphere, food and live performances. It was established in 2003 and is an annual event held in October. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are many competing community groups that operate without coordination or the skills required for implementation and action. Support is needed to better coordinate community outcomes and upskill residents. There is concern that community volunteer groups have to compete with larger bodies for funding.
Services & institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are some essential services and institutions located in Batlow, including the Hospital, Batlow Police Station, Australia Post, Batlow Library, Batlow Technology School and St Mary's Catholic Primary School. Sureway Employment and Training provides employment assistance for job seekers with disability. Batlow Community Transport offers accessible transport services to seniors and people with disabilities in Batlow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are limited offerings for children and young people, such as public play areas.
Places & spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Batlow Library is valued by the community not only for its library function but also for other services it provides to the community. It is the resident community centre and Centrelink access point. Batlow Resilience Hub organise social activities and training opportunities in partnership with TAFE NSW to build local skills and connect community. Batlow Showground provides sport facilities and amenities and is used for community and cultural events. It also allows free camping for up to four days, which attracts visitors to the town. Batlow Community Swimming Pool is a seasonal family friendly facility that provides a place for community to beat the heat in summer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Batlow's main street is no longer an active and vibrant place. With many shop fronts empty, there are limited retail options. Batlow is known for apples however the town has much more to offer, including it's history, nature through all seasons and varied produce. Batlow lacks connectivity with other towns and major cities, such as walking and cycling trails as well as road infrastructure. There are limited accommodation options for itinerant workers and tourists.
Information sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Batlow and Beyond Bulletin is a community-managed online noticeboard (Facebook) for residents to connect and share events, news and local promotion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is limited communication and collaboration between local community groups and organisations. The two community noticeboards located at the Batlow Library and IGA can be consolidated.

Our social connectors in Batlow

1

BONDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

“Bonding” social capital characterises social groups where people share many experiences and values associated with their ethnicity, religion or locality and other interests.

There are a lot of community groups in Batlow to share experiences. While there are many shopfronts these are mostly closed, particularly on weekends, making it hard for locals to catch up, socialise and bond. There is a desire in the community to activate the main streets for this purpose.

2

BRIDGING SOCIAL CAPITAL

“Bridging” social capital focuses on extending interaction between different social groups, which draw people into many different opportunities for pursuing and achieving their aspirations and meeting their needs.

With some major services here such as the hospital and school, people come into Batlow to work or access the services and this provides bridges to other communities. The closure of shops particularly on weekends means visitors do not come to Batlow to activate the area.

3

LINKING SOCIAL CAPITAL

“Linking” social capital connects groups to institutions and organisations that open up opportunities and resolve problems that might otherwise be missed.

Batlow has a number of government services to link and resolve problems including the Resilience Hub, the hospital and the Council library which is a point of connection. However, residents need to travel to Tumut to access Council customer services and other Federal services such as Medicare and Centrelink. Community want the rail trail to link Batlow to Tumbarumba.



WALK SCORE

Batlow has a Walk Score of 47 which indicates that many residents have to travel by car to access services and run errands, this is despite having a mainstreet with many shopfronts.

COMMUNITY GROUPS & EVENTS

- Batlow Apple Blossom Festival
- Batlow Cider Fest
- Interact Club Batlow
- Enterprising Batlow Inc.
- Batlow Men's and Hen's Shed
- Batlow CWA
- Batlow Apple Growers
- Do it for Batlow
- Baptist Care Social Club
- Batlow Historical Society
- Batlow Table Tennis Group

SERVICES & INSTITUTIONS

- Sureway Employment and Training Batlow
- Batlow Rural Fire Service
- The Resilience Hub
- Batlow-Adelong Multipurpose Service
- Batlow Community Transport
- NSW Ambulance
- Batlow IGA

PLACES & SPACES

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Pioneer Street shops and cafes | • Batlow Technology School |
| • Batlow Library | • St Mary's Catholic Primary School |
| • Batlow Showground | • Batlow Police Station |
| • Batlow Hotel | • Batlow Caravan Park |
| • Batlow RSL Club | • Wilgro Orchard/Cider Thief |
| • Batlow Resilience Hub | • Batlow Bakery |
| • Literary Institute of Batlow | • Pippins of Batlow |
| • Memorial Park (RFS Safe Space) | • Coffee and More |
| • Batlow Community Swimming Pool | |
| • Yaven Creek NSW RFS Shed | |
| • Batlow Golf Course | |
| • Batlow Hospital | |
| • Batlow Bowling Club | |

INFORMATION SOURCES

- Batlow and Beyond Bulletin
- 2 Community Noticeboards (Library, IGA)

47
WALKSCORE



Community asset improvements and projects underway

Funded projects

Ongoing and planned major projects within a town influences the quality of places and its liveability. Recently completed and currently ongoing projects in Batlow include:

Council led projects:

- Batlow Cannery Demolition
- Batlow Cannery Site Business Case
- Batlow Caravan Park Upgrade
- Batlow CBD Master Plan and Amenity
- Batlow Library
- Batlow Playground Equipment Upgrade
- Batlow Tourism Project
- Batlow Wi-Fi Upgrade

Currently ongoing:

- Batlow Caravan Park Itinerant Worker Accommodation
- Batlow Reedy Park Repatriation Project
- Batlow Pool Upgrade

Project:	Grant:
Community Café	\$248,000 (Federal Government Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grant)
Community Resilience Hub and Men's Shed	\$465,000

"We are the first Men's Shed in Batlow. Has been started by Rotary as an overarching body. It gives me a sense of purpose. The Places we Connect boards for this Plan were our first project - we officially opened on 25th of February 2022"

- Community member

"We have a great and engaged community. Ten percent of Batlow's community volunteered to organise the last Cider Fest. This is a great asset in itself."

- Community member

"A lot of people don't realise what is required behind the scenes. A successful project doesn't happen overnight. People need to be educated on how projects run so that it's not always the same community members who have to put their hand up"

- Community member





Image source: Batlow CiderFest



Image source: VisitNSW

5. Our roadmap

We attended consultation and came up with the following small, medium and big ideas:

SMALL

Support volunteers to deliver events

Implement an information/notice board screen in the library foyer

Hang banners & colourful lights in the main street promoting Batlow

Get the rail trail happening to bring tourists

Wake up sleepy assets - find a baker for the wood fired pizza oven

Apple pie trail. Cider cycle trail. Batlow Fruit Coop tour

Maintenance of overgrown properties neglected by owners

Activate Reedy Creek - nature play for kids

Paint the pub/local shops (local sponsorship)

Signage & wayfinding. Visitors map with breweries & orchards.

Create owners register of empty shop-fronts to help establishing new business ideas

More shady seating to stop in parks & stay in town

Access notable places like the old power plant on Gillmore Creek

Pop-ups, social enterprise & artists in vacant shopfronts

Replace the metal in the skatepark - gets too hot in summer

More kindness

MEDIUM

More boutique events linked to local history & horticulture

Put in a new playground at the school

Create signage to walk & cycle from Batlow to the lake (Tumut River reservoir)

Town facelift - painting, planting, more people

Leverage more artists & events responding to future sculpture trail

More cheap camping areas to encourage overnight stays

Tours for weekend getaways to fish, ski, hike, boat, ciderys

Grants to fill empty shops & partnerships with local owners

Marketing campaign to promote what Batlow has to offer

Promote sports precinct & support volunteer run kids gym classes

Things open on Saturdays & Sundays

Make the Cider Fest 2 days to keep people in town longer

Untapped gardening potential. Botanic garden Opportunity

Community-run information/visitor centre (front room of literary institute)

Community governance training to put ideas in place

Need more eateries & supermarket open later

BIG

Work with agencies to regrow natural areas & support eco-tourism

More tourist accommodation

Provide itinerant worker accommodation

Health retreat/wellness focus. Spas, alpine feel

New economic drivers like trails, medicinals upgrade arboretum eco-tourism

Lobby for a better, more direct road to Canberra

Link every town in the Snowy Valley by bike to make it a destination

Establish a BioChar Facility

Bring more primary industry & employment into Batlow

Build a bigger playground next to skatepark

Big apple in town to attract visitors

We need better land to build on if we want to attract families

Need environmental conservation

Toc-it park needs an upgrade

Promote as a film location for 30s/40s

Our Roadmap

Action	Who
Community groups & events	
Align community groups around a common purpose and build capacity to activate Batlow town and promote local community-led events.	Community groups Council
Improve local skills to access and write successful grants.	Council Community
Institutions & services	
Work with Council to identify opportunities to increase short-term boutique accommodation options to support tourism and itinerant workers.	Community Business Council
Places & spaces	
Activate shopfronts and embellish the main street to increase attractiveness. Examples include lighting at night, street banners, landscaping and tree planting, restoration of building façades, public toilets, and shaded seating areas in parks.	Business Community Council
Work with local cafes and businesses to open on weekends to attract visitors to stay and encourage locals to connect.	Business Community
Advocate for the Rail Trail to connect to Batlow.	Council Community
Develop new tourism opportunities to attract visitors and boost local economy. Examples include Apple Pie Trail and Cider Cycle Trail.	Community Destination NSW
Information sources	
Complete an audit of local community noticeboards and nominate a community groups / person to maintain information.	Community Batlow Library
Advocate for improved signage and wayfinding in Batlow and Surrounds, including from Batlow to Tumut River Reservoir	Community Council
Work with the Batlow Library around opportunities to provide visitor information.	Community

