

CGDN Initiatives and Outcomes:

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Emergency Communication and Information

www.mirboonorth.vic.au

During the fire disaster affecting the Gippsland region of Victoria in January 2009, coordinators of the Mirboo North website ensured community members were kept well informed. The homepage of the site included emergency numbers for the CFA and for other fire and ambulance authorities as well as details for local radio stations and information on the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund.

Outcome:

During the week of the fires, hits to the local website **increased seven fold**, this explosion of web visits shows how important the Mirboo North website is as a local source of news and information.

The South Gippsland Shire Council contacted the Mirboo North community website to acknowledge their efforts and provide additional information to be included on the site, realising its importance as a communication portal for the area.

www.koonwarra.vic.au

Under the threat of bushfires in 2007, the Koonwarra community used their website to invite the local community to a public meeting held by the CFA. Half of the town attended the meeting, where the CFA appointed a committee to develop a community fire plan. The fire plan has since been added to the Koonwarra community website and has helped residents develop their own plan during fire-danger periods

Outcome:

Mr Considine, Brigade Captain of the CFA reported that 70% of properties could be saved if Koonwarra was beseeched by fire.

The Koonwarra website created a template for other CGDN communities to follow in developing their own fire plan.

The community attendance at the meeting and response to the initiative proved that the website is a trusted voice for the community

www.mangrovemountain.nsw.au

A group of volunteers in the Mangrove Mountain area in the hinterland of the Central Coast of New South Wales pioneered an online system early in 2010 to alert the community to potential threats, such as bushfires and severe weather: www.macs.mangrovemountain.nsw.au

The Mangrove Alerts Community System (MACS) is based on a combination of information drawn from official sources and the invitation to subscribers from the community to contribute first-hand information. Alert messages will be quickly distributed to subscribers by email, text-to-mobile phones and text-to-voice-to-landline phones, or any combination of these methods depending on the urgency.

Outcome:

Nick Mason of MACS states, "The objective of MACS is to supplement and support other alert systems locally, including the Government funded 'Emergency Alert' system to be used for major life-threatening emergencies.

"The sooner you are aware of a threat, the better placed you are to monitor the situation and take appropriate action before it becomes a more serious threatening emergency."

Mr Mason adds, "We are disadvantaged in our area at present by problems with Broadband and mobile phone coverage, especially in the remoter areas more vulnerable to bushfires. In addition, and perhaps partly because of this, many in the community do not yet realise that mobile phones can be used for a lot more than just making phone calls. Looking to the future, we believe this will change."

The MACS web address is associated with the Mangrove Mountain Community Geographic Domain Name: www.mangrovemountain.nsw.au

Providing safety plans from the local police

www.emeraldbeach.nsw.au

The Emerald Beach community have utilised their community website to provide information on the common problem of beach parties in the area and suggestions on how to deal with this issue. Detective Chief Inspector, Cameron Lindsay of the local police force has included an address to the community on the website in addition to an information brochure that can be downloaded from the site explaining how to keep beach parties safe and prevent them spiralling out of control.

Reuniting long lost friends

www.bathurst.nsw.au

A Swedish woman looking to find a long lost friend contacted the Bathurst community website. The two have now been reunited and have expressed a warm thanks to the community in Bathurst for their help.

Community Bank Involvement

The Bendigo Community Bank Branch is a franchise where the community owns operation rights. The Community Bank branches provide communities with an opportunity to enhance control over their community's capital ensuring more money stays in the district for local investment. Many CGDN holders have used their community website as a place to drive for a community bank in their community.

The development of the Newstead community website was funded by the Maldon and District Community Bank Branch of the Bendigo Bank. and the Mount Alexander Shire Council's Community Grants Program.

www.buderim.qld.au, www.montrose.vic.au and <http://mirboonorth.vic.au/homepage/communitybank> are some of the communities who have used their websites to drive the process and seek pledges of support for establishing their own Bendigo Community Bank Branch.

Outcomes:

The Buderim community website group say the response has been nothing short of awesome with a huge pledge rate being strongly endorsed by local community leaders.

The Bendigo Bank has supported many community websites with funding including: www.upperfertnreegully.vic.au and www.newstead.vic.au

Council involvement

Many councils around Australia have been assisting community groups to apply for and build their home on the internet. These councils have recognised that a community website provides an avenue for communities to promote themselves and to develop sustainability plans.

As at 31/12/08 32% of CGDN groups have a council representative as a member of their website group.

As at 31/12/08 around 20% of the CGDN websites are provided with funding from their local council.

www.narromine.nsw.au is one of the communities that boasts funding from the local council who provide the services of their web-manager.

Many community websites are assisting their local councils in providing community opinions. The Narromine community website has a link to the survey the Narromine Shire Council are running about the services and facilities provided by Council. The input will be used to help Council better understand and meet the diverse needs of its residents.

Helping people relocate

www.buderim.qld.au - A family who were relocating to Australia, saw the website and decided to visit Buderim. They went to the Australia Day celebrations in the QLD town and fell in love. Consequently the family decided to relocate to Buderim with the father of the family taking over the position of leader of the local scout club.

Outcome:

The website has given people reason to relocate to the area which in turn helps the local economy.

www.woodvale.vic.au

The Woodvale community website includes a Welcome Pack section containing necessary information for people relocating to the rural Victorian community. Website developer Gary Davis came up with the Welcome Pack after he and his wife relocated from the city to the country town. "When my wife and I decided on a 'tree change' for our retirement, we were floundering in terms of local information, being used to living and working in the city. You have no idea some of the information you need - like how do you get a septic tank cleaned/checked, water tank servicing, pumps, what to do when there is no electricity (therefore no water) , what types of trees can you cut down for firewood & bushfire clearance etc. Rather than new residents having to struggle on their arrival like we did, and potentially make costly mistakes, I thought it would be a good idea to have a compendium of useful and emergency information for new residents." said Mr. Davis.

The Woodvale Welcome Pack includes much information to help newcomers transition to living in the region such as bus times, where to find a local doctor or pharmacy, information on getting kids to and from school, rubbish collection, where to register your animal and many other useful tips.

Rosters for community groups

www.casino.nsw.au displays rosters for community groups on their website such as for Meals on Wheels and the local Library.

Outcome:

The website provides the opportunity for community members to access their rosters from wherever they like. When users log onto their community website to view roster information they will also visit other pages boosting their web usage.

Sports Results

www.casino.nsw.au displays sporting results for the community through their website, so anyone that misses a game can check it up on their community website.

Outcome:

Not only is the sporting results a good resource for community members but also people looking online at the sport results are also having a look at other pages on the website.

Funding website managers

Some of the CGDN communities have found that through funding and revenue raising efforts that they can afford to employ a website manager.

www.goondiwindi.qld.au

After only a couple of months of going live were able to financially afford a web manager

www.mansfield.vic.au

After being live for just over a year, Mansfield now have a dedicated person in their organisation who updates their CGDN website.

Conservation and Environmental sustainability

www.kyogle.nsw.au

The Kyogle community created a car pooling initiative to overcome the costs and resources involved with separate people driving to Sydney.

Outcome:

In addition to helping the local community, the \$5.00 joining fee for the car pooling initiative has helped with sustaining the cost of running the Kyogle community website.

www.wollombi.nsw.au

Following the lead of Kyogle, Wollombi has added a Car Pooling initiative to their website.

Outcome:

The Wollombi community see the Car pooling initiative as a means of saving fuel (and emissions), sharing the cost of travel all the while helping other community members.

www.emeraldbeach.nsw.au

In addition to Kyogle and Wollombi, Emerald Beach has added a car-pooling section on their website which provides links to leading Car Pooling website so residents can share the cost of travel and reduce fuel emissions by co-travelling to Sydney. This is a great example of how communities that have become part of the Community Geographic

Domain Name Initiative can learn and share ideas with one another to enrich their community website and subsequently their community.

www.lordhoweisland.nsw.au

Residing on a World Heritage listed island has meant that members of the Lord Howe Island community are passionate about preserving and caring for their beautiful island home. The Lord Howe Island CGDN has become an important part of promoting their conservation work to the online world.

Lord Howe Island members go to considerable lengths to preserve their Paradise, with comprehensive recycling programs, tourist bed limit and environmental management plans. The conservation work detailed on the Lord Howe Island CGDN not only shows the communities great commitment to their environment but also the pride they have for their home.

www.bundanoon.nsw.au

The small Bundanoon community in NSW made headlines around the world in July 09 announcing plans to become Australia's first bottled water free town, an initiative featured on www.bundanoon.nsw.au.

According to website manager Geoff Stewart of the Bundanoon Community Association (BCA), hits to their community website doubled on the day of the announcement with the majority visiting the news item about the bottled water issue. The total hits to the website for the week were over 4500.

When originally applying for the Bundanoon CGDN, the BCA stated one of their intentions in creating a community website as keeping the community informed about local news and any relevant information. Little did they know their community site would in fact keep the world informed with environmental websites from the USA providing links to www.bundanoon.nsw.au for information about 'Bundy on Tap'.

Providing employment information

One of the major issues in Mansfield is attracting doctors and other health professionals and after a request from the local community, an employment section was added to www.mansfield.vic.au as often partners of health professionals need employment as well and they don't have a permanent Job Network provider in their town.

Outcomes:

The employment section on the Mansfield site has proved to be the most visited area on their community website.

This has also inspired other communities to provide employment sections, including www.avoca.vic.au and www.wollombi.nsw.au

By providing an employment section this not only helps the local community but also people planning on relocating to the area. When web visitors are looking up employment information they will also access other areas of the site.

Communities celebrating communities

www.avoca.vic.au website coordinator Marg Pilgrim, said that at the end of 2008 a local business owner celebrated 50 years of continuous business in the town. The website displayed an article celebrating the milestone on the front page of their website. The man was overcome by this gesture and it also led to the local business group holding a town BBQ for him which was a huge success and totally blew him away. Marg comments that it is this community spirit that "makes it all worth it".

On both www.koonwarra.vic.au and www.upperferntreegully.vic.au sites, both towns incorporate a "people" section which celebrates exceptional members of their community. These CGDN websites allow a channel to celebrate and recognise the efforts of people that give to their community.

The Greenethorpe community in New South Wales has created a birthday calendar including every resident from their locality. This is a wonderful way to give a personal touch to the Greenethorpe community website and to encourage a more cohesive community.

See the Greenethorpe birthday calendar by visiting www.greenethorpe.nsw.au

Youth engagement

www.wycheproof.vic.au utilised their local students for website accessibility guidelines through the website process.

Most community groups struggle with website accessibility guidelines - the students not only learnt about website accessibility, but the website group succeeded in overcoming accessibility challenges.

www.glenmaggie.vic.au - The Lake Glenmaggie Community Representative Group have organised a youth survey on their website to better gauge the needs of the youth in the community. The survey also asks if youth volunteers would like to put their hands up to coordinate a youth page on the Glenmaggie website.

www.avoca.vic.au have a whole section dedicated to Youth on their community website.

Assisting ancestral search

www.gheerulla.qld.au

The Gheerulla community website helped a Darwin man find the missing link in his family tree.

By viewing the comprehensive cemetery section of the website, the Darwin man was able to trace his family back to early settlement in the Kenilworth, Queensland district. Lenore Meldrum of the Gheerulla Hall Committee said this person discovered that when his family settled in the region, they had mysteriously changed their name.

“There are a number of local myths as to the reason for this name change, one being that the settler himself knew and rode with the Kelly Gang. The Gheerulla Hall Committee is delighted that our community website could provide the link for this family history search.”

Giving communities a voice to influence

www.wollombi.nsw.au have used their CGDN as a platform to protest against Gas mining in the Wollombi area. Web master Peter Firminger has commented that many residents stop him to speak about the issue and use the website to find out the latest information concerning the issue.

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Promoting local economy

By providing a business directory and web presence for local businesses, many CGDN web sites have helped to promote the local economy to community members and abroad.

Outcomes:

www.hall.act.au has had a positive impact on the community by showing for the first time what an extraordinary set of local businesses they have.

While previously the Lowood community had little directory information, since the addition of the directory at www.lowood.qld.au, every association, club, business, trade and service in Lowood has their details on the web.

www.wollombi.nsw.au has been used often by visitors to the region to find out what to do and see whilst in the area.

www.condobolin.nsw.au - as a result of their community website a film producer contacted the Condobolin CGDN to talk about potentially filming a commercial in the central NSW town.

Outcome:

According to Peter Firminger, the web manager of www.wollombi.nsw.au, local businesses have mentioned that visitors have contacted them through the website directory during their stay in the town.

A community of communities

Communities that register for a CGDN join a network of other communities online around Australia. This network allows the opportunity to share experiences and follow the examples of other communities.

At the launch of the Frankston community website, coordinator Richard Laverack spoke about the inspiration given to him by other community websites around Australia that ultimately pushed him to establish www.frankston.vic.au.

www.welshpool.vic.au has made a “links to other sites” section on their website which acknowledges help they have received from other CGDN websites around Australia including www.mirboonorth.vic.au, www.narromine.nsw.au, www.wollombi.nsw.au, www.koonwarra.vic.au and www.buninyong.vic.au.

Many CGDN websites have included links on their home page of their website to the .au Community Domains website so that visitors can have a look at other community websites. www.avoca.vic.au also include a link to the latest CGDN website to go live.

In the “Have Your Say:” section on www.upperferntreegully.vic.au Koonwarra and Avoca both list congratulatory posts to the Upper Fern Tree Gully community and express kind thoughts about their experiences as being part of the CGDN family.

Tourism

As many communities in Australia thrive on tourism as the major source of their town economy, Community Geographic Domain Name websites are proving to be a valuable tool in promoting all aspects of the town and district to visitors to the area.

www.lowood.qld.au

After four months of being live, Lowood’s website has reached its 3000th visitor. The highest users of the website are people planning weekend visits and re-locaters to the Lowood district.

www.lordhoweisland.nsw.au

World Heritage listed Lord Howe Island, is a small vibrant yet secluded island that can only be visited by plane, off the coast of NSW. With tourism being a vital part of the island’s economy, the Lord Howe Island

CGDN is an extremely important part of promoting the great tourist destination to the world.

Pixie Rourke, Chair of the Lord Howe Island Tourism Association said, "The community website is extremely important for Lord Howe Island. It helps present our beautiful island to the world and is important for our tourism based economy."

Bushfire affected communities given a voice online

.au Community Domains responded to the Black Saturday bushfires by providing community websites for twenty seven of the affected communities.

Throughout the rebuilding process the aim of these websites has been to:

- Keep community members informed of local news and events
- To keep people connected.
- For the wider community to offer donations and the services of their businesses.
- To provide an opportunity for community members to share stories and experiences
- To provide links to important information (emergency information links, council websites etc)

Outcome:

Since the fires, the websites have been used as an ongoing source of community information about local news and events with community members regularly contacting auDA to post information to the websites.

Content on many of the websites are now being managed by community members including www.marysville.vic.au, www.mudgegonga.vic.au and www.strathewen.vic.au