

SOUTHERN
MIDLANDS
COUNCIL



Consultant Brief
for the
Levendale School Renewal Project

January 2014

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BACKGROUND

The Levensdale Primary School had a projected enrolment of approximately eight students for the 2014 school year. The school community therefore requested the Education Department initiate a transition process for the closure of the school at the conclusion of the school year in 2013. With the closure of the school an opportunity for the community to retain the school as an important focus of activity and enterprise has arisen.

At a public meeting held at Levensdale on Wednesday 6th November 2013 approximately thirty local residents were in attendance. In a wide-ranging discussion, there was a clear indication from the Levensdale residents that they believed that the school should be retained as a community resource. People suggested a number of options for the site, and a working group was quickly established with the purpose of exploring these options.

The Levensdale Working Group subsequently convened its first meeting on 12th November 2013. From a list of ideas collated at the 6th November meeting the concept of a social enterprise delivering sustainability education experiences and other complimentary activities quickly emerged. A number of potential partners for the project have already been approached and responded enthusiastically to the concept. The site lends itself to a number of co-located activities.

All of the proposed activities need to be examined with rigour to determine whether they are sustainable in the long term. In order to assess the viability and sustainability of the project it is necessary to engage an expert to develop a robust business case. Without such an assessment it will be extremely difficult to progress any plans for community ownership of the Levensdale Primary School site.

There may be the opportunity for the Department of Education to transfer the buildings/grounds to the Southern Midlands Council. The Department is not permitted to vest the property to a Community based organisation. Southern Midlands Council is extremely supportive of the efforts of the Community in exploring and developing activities at the Levensdale School site, and is mindful of the financial and physical implications of taking on additional significant property based assets. Any development of the site by the Community that requires a Council or other third party contribution needs to be based on sound business and asset management principles, underpinned by the identification of significant Community support as well as projected sustainability.

To this end the Community seeks, by way of a Consultant a well-structured, well-researched, rigorously analysed and tangible business plan that articulates the ability of any social enterprise that is core to the school site, to be a viable and sustainable venture.

A Community based Working Group Chaired by Carolyn Birch, which includes some Council elected members as well as the Deputy General Manager has been established to assist in driving the process.

THE PROJECT

Both Southern Midlands Council and the State Government, through the Department of Premier & Cabinet via Rebecca White MP and Michael Polley MP have provided funding of \$10,000 for the engagement of a suitably qualified consultant to undertake this important project.

It is envisaged that the consultancy will encompass the following output benchmarks;

1. Preparation
2. Generating ideas
3. Idea Screening - quick screening, then a second more in depth screening of ideas
4. Feasibility study
5. Business plan summary
6. Comprehensive Business Plan.
Project Report

1. **Preparation.** This includes building strong Community commitment and support for the development process. Reviewing the potential of the district, assessing the Community's strengths, understanding potential markets. Assessing potential customer's needs. Then develop a set of criteria for the ideas to be "ranked/scored" against.
2. **Generate ideas.** Creation of an extensive list of enterprise ideas through a facilitated brainstorming process that involves the Working Group, as well as the majority of Community members and also other stakeholders.
3. **Idea screening.** Edit the long list of enterprise ideas by comparing each idea to the established evaluation criteria, determining how closely they fit with the criteria.

One way to screen the number of ideas is by roughly assessing the market potential of the idea and its likelihood of success. For this purpose, it is useful to think of success in two dimensions:

- **The strength of the idea:** *Does this concept have market potential and a business model? Will it advance the Community's vision either by generating lots of revenue or by strengthening a service delivery?*
- **The fit with the Community:** *Can this idea be successfully implemented in the current market?*

4. **Feasibility study.** Research one or two of the most promising ideas, based on four major themes
 - a. Strategic Alignment – Will the enterprise further the vision of the Community?
 - b. Market Opportunity – Will Customers purchase the product?
 - c. Operational Capabilities – Can the Community make it happen?
 - d. Financial Potential – Can the profitability goals be met?

Ultimately, the feasibility study will inform decisions as to whether or not to invest further time and resources in that particular business idea.

5. **Business plan summary.** Summarise the key elements of the business idea(s) ie the site may be able to accommodate multiple but complimentary business income streams. This document will form the basis for the business plan and allow for preliminary promotion of the idea(s) to potential supporters and investors.
6. **Comprehensive Business plan.** A detailed Business Plan including a governance framework is developed for consideration and approval.
7. **Project Report.** A report covering the process, summary of meetings, attendees of the various meetings, the assumptions, as well as conclusions drawn from the facts as well as the assumptions. A summary of the output benchmarks, with those documents comprising appendices to the Project Report.

Timeline

The Department of Education has agreed to, and is supportive, of this overall process and as such it has agreed to continue to undertake the maintenance of the School and its grounds until May 31st 2014. As at this date if no social enterprise has been established with a solid business plan the Council will not be in a position to enter into discussions with the Department in respect of a property transfer and that the Department will have no other option than to place the site on the open real estate market.

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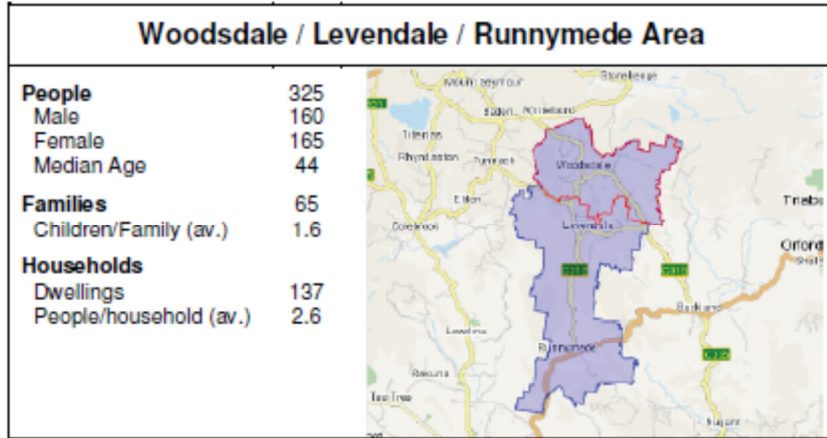
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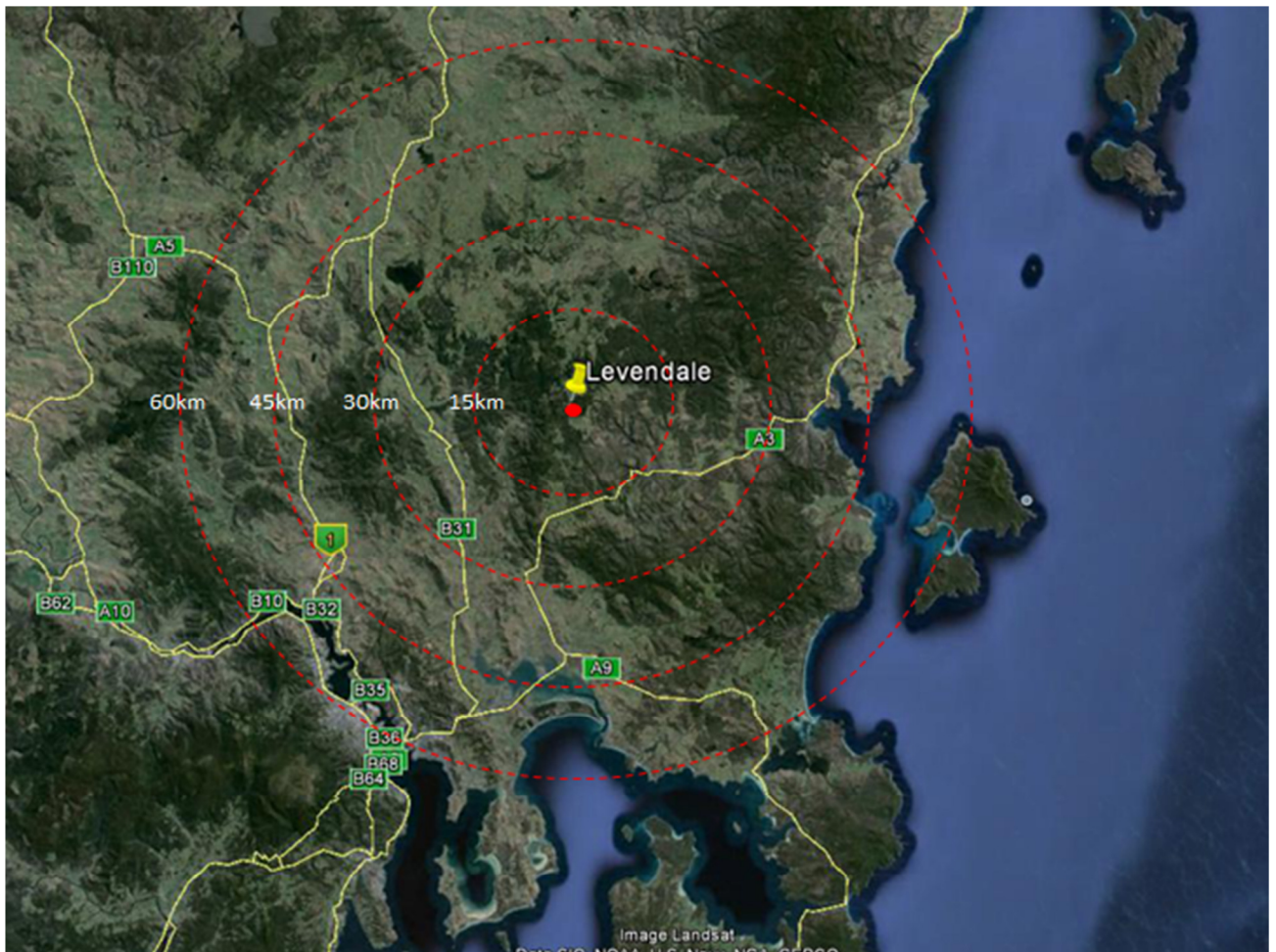
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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Extract of ABS Data for the District



Appendix B - Location Map



Appendix C – Site Plan



Appendix D – Title Area

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