

Heathcote All Hazards Workshop 1 Report

Collated data from activities

Tuesday 21 October 2025

On 21 October 2025, around 30 Heathcote community members participated in a workshop facilitated by Maree Grenfell and Martina Holland (Once upon tomorrow and Martina Holland Consulting).

The workshop commenced with broad group discussions noting frustrations from community members about their number one issue, cleaning up Mclvor Creek. The community feel forgotten and unheard since the flooding events of 2022 and 2024, noting the absence of communication from council and other agencies regarding their priority to remove debris from the creek to minimise the impact of future flood events. Following this discussion, the workshop moved into a series of activities to explore an "all-hazards" approach to future events that may threaten what the community love about living in Heathcote.

The following notes capture and make sense of what participants expressed as most important, looking to their future preparedness.

What do you love about living in Heathcote?

Natural environment	Built environment	Social environment	Economic environment
▪ The beautiful, bush environment (3) ▪ The wildlife (3) ▪ Chatty bird life (3) ▪ Peace and quiet (2) ▪ Valley in the range (2) ▪ Space (2) ▪ Location / locality (2) ▪ Surroundings ▪ Diversity ▪ Bush ▪ Kangaroos ▪ Lack of humidity ▪ Having a creek in town	▪ Walking tracks (4) ▪ Lack of traffic congestion (3) ▪ Small town (2) ▪ Quietness of the main street ▪ Country town ▪ The gorgeous main street ▪ Walking distance to friends ▪ Our house and garden ▪ RFDS Community Transport	▪ Strong sense of community spirit (9) ▪ Community connected activities: what's offered (2) ▪ Friendly people – always ready to chat (6) ▪ The Community House (2) ▪ The passionate volunteers (2) ▪ Quiet and not rushing ▪ Slow life ▪ Country life	▪ Medical services (hospital, doctors' clinic, ambulance) (6) ▪ Vineyards and wineries (5) ▪ Affordable ▪ Local organisations ▪ Less shopping hours ▪ Information Centre ▪ Great coffee ▪ Bowls Club ▪ Work ▪ Lack of gambling

▪ Nature on your doorstep ▪ Trees ▪ Brilliant sunsets ▪ Nearness to state parks ▪ Archean rock outcrop ▪ National Park ▪ Nature ▪ The brilliant stars ▪ Sunshine ▪ Natural environment	▪ Transport to Melbourne via Vline	▪ Easy going ▪ Friends I've made ▪ Golf and bowling, netball, footy ▪ Walking in footsteps of our ancestors ▪ Men's shed ▪ I feel safe in Heathcote ▪ Arts and crafts ▪ Performing arts ▪ Caring people ▪ Generous to charity ▪ Clubs and community groups ▪ Smiling faces when walking around town ▪ Wonderful charities ▪ Safe space	
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What events might threaten what you love?

Sudden shocks	Gradual stresses
▪ Bushfire (5) ▪ Flood (4) (and associated events:) ○ Cut off from town in flooding for 24 hours (3) ○ RV dump overflow (2) ○ Access to medical services during flooding ▪ Loss of power / telecommunication (2) ▪ More health-related pandemics (2) ▪ Heat health impacts (2) ▪ Storms ▪ Thunder storm asthma ▪ Road transport accidents ▪ Disasters	▪ Cuts to and loss of emergency/health/community services (9) ▪ Older population (dying) impacting on: volunteering, mental health, stress on health services, lack of community help (e.g. blankets, food etc) (6) ▪ Overpopulation / overdevelopment (4) ▪ Closure of business / empty shops (4) ▪ Crime (e.g. gangs) (3) ▪ Big business coming to town (Maccas, Coles, KFC, fast food, etc.) (3) ▪ Gambling / pokies (3) ▪ Loss of pool (2) ▪ Plant and pest diseases (e.g. overrun with vermin and locusts) (2) ▪ Loss of habitat and biodiversity for environment (e.g. cutting trees down) (2) ▪ Dirty creek ▪ Parking meters ▪ Lack of footpaths and pedestrian islands ▪ Maintenance of walking tracks, signage etc ▪ Place of last resort (holy rosary) has no facilities ▪ Wright Street: Council to clean up behind the house ▪ State government ▪ Heavy equipment ▪ Negative ideas ▪ Consistent transport

What actions can the community take?

Hazard	Before	During	After
Pandemic	▪ Phone trees and neighbourly connections ▪ 'Get to know your community' activities ▪ Learn practical skills ▪ Have a glass of wine! ▪ Awareness	▪ Vaccination information events ▪ Support the vulnerable ▪ Listen to medical advice ▪ Post latest information	▪ Future-plan ▪ Get together to celebrate community
Storm	▪ Call Council to request drains cleaned prior ▪ Neighbours to also act ▪ Apply for grants to install battery and generator ▪ Prepare, build capacity property ▪ Stock torches ▪ Buy powerbanks ▪ Prepare kits	▪ Community clean-up ▪ Check on neighbours ▪ Inform people of who to contact	▪ Calling insurance ▪ Clean-up ▪ Access to supports and services, including Services Australia
Bushfire	▪ Access for disabled (mobility) ▪ Footpaths and pedestrian safety islands	▪ Clear hazards	▪ Slow burn bush DELP ▪ Clear the creek of fire hazards ▪ Clear the creek – no fire – no flooding – problem solved
Extreme flood	▪ Clear debris from creek within the town ▪ Pro-action, not reaction ▪ A clear tenure map: roles and responsibilities of agencies and where ▪ Raise and rebuild Shakespeare Street Ford	▪ <i>[no post-it notes added]</i>	▪ <i>[no post-it notes added]</i>

	▪ Clear creek debris in town boundary (swing bridge, Jenning street to northern highway) ▪ Warning systems ▪ Clean gutters (action people can take around house) ▪ Awareness about what to do and where to go ▪ Sandbags available when needed and where ▪ Clean drains around the house		
Heat event	▪ Get to know your neighbours ▪ Plant trees in public spaces for shade ▪ Trees on footpath to hospital as a shaded route ▪ Identifying those community members at risk ▪ Install public drinking fountains ▪ Cool space for the elderly and non-cooled homes ▪ Advertise heat event coming (BOM)	▪ Check on neighbours ▪ Reminder to look after pets ▪ Supply cool drinks ▪ Extended pool hours ▪ Open public airconditioned spaces e.g. Barrack Reserve RSL ▪ Provide cool spaces (e.g. library)	▪ Identify most impacted residents ▪ Check again on neighbours and friends ▪ Check on neighbours and vulnerable

Unresolved issues

Information/comments requested from community members

- Banging heads against brick walls
- Debris in the creek: flood and fire risk
- "The hazard becomes the emergency"

- No feedback or closing the loop from agencies – “we need communication”
- The creek is in the middle of town: it needs to be thought of as an urban waterway
- The creek; the community is not allowed to help with cleaning out the creek of debris and rubbish
- “Useless council”
- “We need a proactive conversation on flood protection and positive action from Bendigo Council, Coliban water and any other relevant bodies”

Maps with identified hazards marked: page 7

Key

	Bushfire
	Storm / Flood
	Road incident
	Pandemic
	Heat health
	Things you love





What is the data telling us?

What the community values

Heathcote residents love their town's natural beauty and peaceful atmosphere. The bush setting, wildlife, walking tracks, and open spaces were highly valued, along with the quiet main street, lack of traffic, and small-town charm. People described a friendly, caring community with strong volunteer networks and a slower pace of life. Access to medical services, affordability, and local wineries added to the town's appeal, contributing to a sense of safety, connection, and belonging.

Perceived threats

Residents identified bushfire, flood, and power loss as the main hazards, alongside concerns about heat events, storms, and future pandemics. Gradual stresses included cuts to health and emergency services, ageing population pressures, and economic change. Overdevelopment, arrival of big business, gambling, and environmental decline were seen as threats to Heathcote's character and identity.

Community readiness

Practical ideas for strengthening preparedness included neighbour check-ins, phone trees, and community gatherings. Residents suggested clearing drains and creek debris, planting trees for shade, maintaining footpaths, and ensuring access to sandbags, cool spaces, and emergency information. There was a strong emphasis on self-reliance, connection with neighbours, and mutual care before, during, and after emergencies.

Unresolved issues and requests

The management of Heathcote's Mclvor Creek emerged as a major concern, with frustration about debris, fire and flood risks, and lack of community involvement in decision making. During the workshop residents called for clearer communication, stronger collaboration between Council and agencies, and more visible follow-up from consultations. Requests also included better footpath maintenance, signage, and facilities at emergency refuge sites.

Overall observations

Heathcote's identity is anchored in its natural landscape, social bonds, and community pride. Residents are proactive, caring, and ready to act but want to be heard and included in local decision-making. Strengthening collaboration, communication, and agency roles will help preserve the qualities people cherish while building resilience to future challenges.

Feedback received from participants

During the workshop Menti was used as an online interactive feedback mechanism. Below are results provided by participants.



How are you feeling right now?



What's brought you here tonight?

Concerned about the quality of the creek and future flooding

Don't want to experience flooding again. Need to have my say and understand what actions if any are being taken.

Work, and wanting to help our community

Determine what we can do to mitigate future floods in Heathcote in future

My interest in Heathcote

My wife 😊

Need for actions/outcomes so that my community isn't as heavily impacted again

My wife





What's brought you here tonight?

The creek

The flooding of the creek and surrounding areas

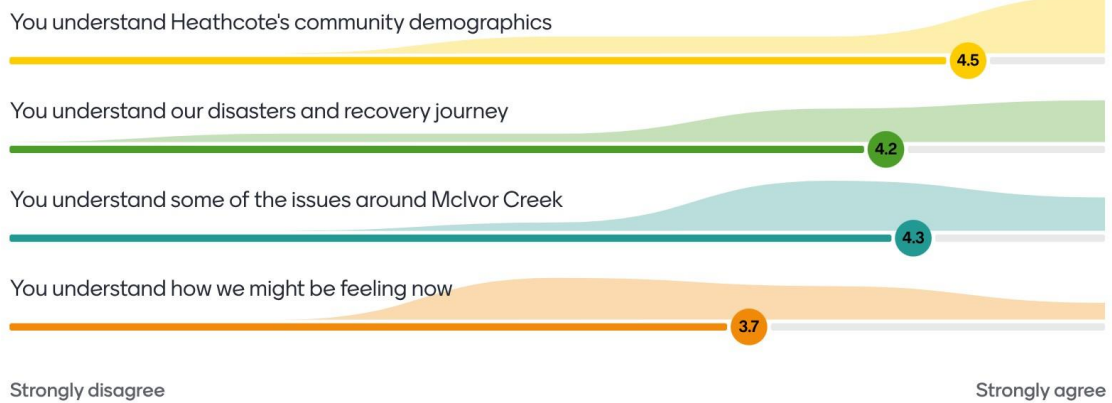
Creek needs repair and ongoing maintenance. After the 2021 floods it was repaired a maintenance the came the 2022/23 and nothing has been done in repatriation works after the aeoco d flood.

We are concerned about the RV dump opposite our house. We live next to the creek and our yard was flooded twice. The RV dump overflowed and filled our yard with effluent. We were ill afterwards.

Curiosity



How well do we understand your past?





Is there anything else you want CoGB to know?

Keeping the creek clear of debris will help mitigate flood water in the township with minimal environmental impacts, and diffuse this contentious issue for council.

A lot of talk and no action

Heathcote can't rely on endless volunteers, Heathcote needs help to attract younger families and better infrastructure for example a good swimming pool

Since 2015 significant residents of Heathcote have tried to be heard. In their effort to get the creek cleaned they have contacted many organisations including the Minister but never any action

Footpaths and pedestrian safety

Have a plan. Organise a creek expert to discuss what is required to prevent flooding. Have representatives from all regulators in the room so they can agree on responsibilities.

The health hazards associated with the RV dump being next to the creek in a residential area.

Assistance with navigating the councils system with regards to rebuilding, permits, what we are able to do into the future with regards to building.



Is there anything else you want CoGB to know?

We focused (quite rightly) on the creek tonight but as a connected and resilient community we should also remember the 20+ homes that were flooded around Dead Horse Gully, Craven Cres, Mia Mia & Redes



Next steps

The data collated from this workshop along with sentiments expressed by participants will guide the future workshop design in this series. Workshops 2 and 3 (Flood Deep Dive and Threats – Ideas and Opportunities), will

build on information collected to date to design community-based action plans for improved emergency preparedness in Heathcote.