

Strategic Focus Area: Engage. Create Unite.

There are two eligible projects in this area.

Violet Town Complex Hall upgrades

Cost: \$50,000

Problem and opportunity: The Violet Town Arts Music and Performance group (VAMP) organises live events for the wider community. These events include live music, open mic nights, poetry slams, storytelling nights, and exhibitions. On average, VAMP has been organising three to four of such events every month. These are hosted in community venues such as the local Bowls Club, BackArts, or the Shadforth Reserve Clubrooms. However, the limited size of these spaces has meant that we all too frequently sell out and have had to turn people away at the door.

An opportunity now exists to transform the large hall within the Violet Town Community Complex into a vibrant arts and performance hub. This would allow VAMP to increase our audience capacity and continue building the reputation and reach of our program within the wider Strathbogie community. Assistance in improving the hall would have a long-term positive impact on the community, by creating a comfortable and technically capable space that will be regularly attended by audiences and artists from the region. Currently, the hall's technical capacity and acoustics are the biggest barrier to creating a multi-purpose arts and performance venue.

How does it affect or impact the community? Currently, the large hall at the Community Complex is rarely used. The absence of a common community-oriented art and performance space has had the following impacts on our community:

- The lack of a consistent space has meant community members have missed our events.
- The lack of an appropriately accessible venue has prevented older audiences from attending our events.
- The minimal technical capacity of our current spaces has meant that we have had to turn down some artists who require more complex production elements (such as lighting).
- Larger scale events and offerings do not have a practical home.
- VAMP has had to turn audiences away due to events selling out and venues not having sufficient capacity.
- The hall, in its current state, cannot feasibly be presented to artists as a suitable venue. Therefore, events are scaled down or missed entirely.

The absence of a flexible art and performance space also has a negative impact on the significant number of artists within our community. VAMP programs such as our weekly writing, singing, and music groups have had to fit into spaces that are often too small to suit the growing number of people who wish to attend, and options for exhibiting their works to the community are similarly scaled.

We are not aware of a specific live performance venue within the shire. Having such a large space, infrequently used, poses a question for the types of usage that it could facilitate – and

as a development space, with increased capacity to be multi-purpose, could enliven the evanescent arts scene and reputation the town is attracting.

What is your idea and what difference would it make? We would like to improve the amenity of the large hall and increase its appeal as a performance and development space for community events and artists. Key modifications include improving the electrical capacity (and safety), venue lighting, acoustic buffering, the ability to create 'zones' in the hall (e.g. with push-up stands and drapes) to better cater for the requirements of artists and audiences.

A more flexible and well-equipped hall would increase its appeal as a performance and development space for community events and artists. It would also create a consistent space the wider community could attend and allow VAMP to offer new and varied live events (such as theatre or stand-up comedy).

Notwithstanding the benefits to the community, opportunity for self-sufficiency and a scalable model for future upgrades exist! A Hall of suitable specification would also become a space for theatre practitioners and dance ensembles to rehearse and perform in. The hall could also be leased to artists seeking intensive rehearsal periods to develop or create new work, meaning the town itself could become a hot-spot for artists from around Victoria.

From a boarder funding perspective, grand bodies such as Regional Arts Victoria is particularly interested in funding the development of works that reach or interact directly with the community, rather than commercial tours. There is limited fir for purposes space in the surrounding area, and the hall at Violet Town could fill that significant gap in venue availability.

We would like to see the hall become an Incubator venue, where groups come and stay in the town, develop works and present those works to the town as part of the process. This would increase the offerings available to the shire audiences, and boost local accommodation, hospitality, and tourism providers.

This type of resource, an artist in residence/development/incubator model is established in funding, and eagerly sought after by artists. Violet town has a reputation for attracting musicians and performing artists to present to the community, and we could have them stay a little longer and increase the economic and intangible artists exchanges that take place.

Further information: VTAG and local businesses have expressed interest and support in developing the hall as a performance and art venue. All users of the hall would benefit from modifications to improve its amenity and functionality. The modifications are simple, modular, low-entry and could form the start of major refurbishment of the hall as the performing arts venue in the Shire.