Organisational commitment for a bright community future

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Brookton is a small rural farming community of approximately 1500 people in the western wheatbelt region of WA. When the local hospital closed many years ago the local shire, with a volunteer board of management, decided that they would become the sole provider of the health and aged care services in the community. This model served the community very well, but as needs increased or changed, with increased governance and limited resources, it became an unsustainable model for the community. After much deliberation by the community it was decided, in March 2012, that all health and community services would be transferred to a well-established not-for-profit organisation.

After three months of working together the services were successfully transferred and no changes made, at this time. It was always the understanding, post-transfer, that there would be a program of community engagement and consultation to identify the service needs and gaps for now and into the future, specifically for the small community, before we would enter into any changes or growth in services. We wanted the services delivered to be what the community saw as being the need and the priority.

This presentation will discuss:

- the process that was used for community engagement
- how we identified needs and gaps in services and the changes required
- how we formulated a community advisory group and how they worked with us
- how we developed a local service plan
- how we developed measures around the plan and continually measured success
- how we ensured the plan was a living document, owned by the community and continued to be very visible to finally become part of ongoing community feedback.

In conclusion, I will discuss the outcomes for both the organisation and the community from the process that we went through, as well as the benefits and any learning that was obtained. Then, finally, how the commitment from both the community and the organisation resulted in a bright future for the health services in Brookton.