

Population Growth Study – Community Discussion

Date - 13 February 2018

Heather Butler

Heather lives with her husband in Mirboo North. They describe themselves as empty nesters who moved here for lifestyle and to support older parents who live in Foster. They have a granny flat out the back 'just in case'. Heather and Steve and their son moved to Mirboo North in 2010, found it difficult to find work and almost moved to Melbourne. They became involved in



Heather was born in Dandenong Victoria where she spent the first 15 years of her life. Her Father came from Orbost and mother from Fitzroy.

Heather and her husband had owned a property in Mirboo North for six years before moving to the area to live following the 2010 bushfires. Heather and Steve and their son moved from Sydney where Heather and Steve had lived for 25 years. Heather worked in aged care managing a Home and Community Care team and Steve ran his own building business.

Heather and Steve moved to Mirboo North primarily for lifestyle but also to be closer to Heather's ageing parents who had moved to a farm in Foster in their 50s. Heather and Steve found they were travelling to South Gippsland every school holidays as Heather's parents were reluctant to travel to Sydney.

Originally Heather and Steve had considered moving to Foster but the block where they now live in Mirboo North met all their needs. They were looking for a town with primary and secondary school for their son that could cater for a child with additional learning needs. Mirboo North is close to Leongatha, Morwell and Traralgon and Trafalgar with options to catch the train to Melbourne, providing increased opportunities for Heather and Steve to find work.

Steve built the house on the block following the 2010 bushfires that came to the property across the road. Both Heather and Steve gave up their jobs to move to Mirboo North.

Employment

Finding work was not easy for Heather or Steve for the first five years when they were not known locally. Moving a builder's licence between states is difficult and Steve had difficulty finding work initially. He and his work was unknown in the area. Initially Steve found work through community connections with the Scouts.

During those first five years, without work the family came close to moving to Melbourne to live and considered keeping the Mirboo North house for a weekender or to sell up. After moving from Sydney, Heather and Steve invested in a house in Leongatha that they let out. The rent income from the Leongatha house allowed them to stay at Mirboo North when they didn't have work. Eventually once Steve gained work with a local builder, he has had

ongoing employment. Heather has gained work in Home and Community Care in the local government.

Connection with the community started with schools through their son. They had been involved with Scouts in Sydney but transfer was not that easy. Entering into an established local club can be difficult if individuals block involvement of new members.

Scouts did provide a way into other community events in town. "If you can organise a jamboree, you can organise a community event". Heather joined the community organising committee for the Great Victorian Bike Ride. Her experience with Scouts allowed her to coordinate the community activities offered when the Great Victorian Bike Ride stopped in Mirboo North in 2012.

Heather is now heavily involved in the local community in a variety of ways. Mirboo Country Development (MNCD) takes up 95% of her voluntary time. She received an invitation to join MNCD through the school and being known in the community. She is still involved with the secondary college, particularly with the Year 9 Breakout program where students link with the local community.

Education

Heather has completed a range of courses and training initially beginning with a Bachelor of Social Science / Library and then a post graduate degree in marketing. She began her work in aged care through her experience in marketing and then completed certificates in aged care to help develop an understanding for staff she was managing in home and community care.

Benefits and barriers to living in South Gippsland

Mirboo North offers great lifestyle, a good place for raising a family, opportunities for education and good access to TAFE and university in Churchill. Heather and Steve's son has now moved back to Sydney. Heather's ageing parents keep them here now and they are fully part of the community with all the previous hurdles to inclusion gone. They are not intending to move.

Where were you born?

Dandenong. Father in Orbost and mother Fitzroy

a. If South Gippsland – were your parents born in South Gippsland?

2. Do you currently live in South Gippsland?

Mirboo North – 9 years this year. But owned the property for 15 years.

- a. What is your connection to South Gippsland? (Holiday home owner, grew up in SG now live elsewhere)

3. Where did you live most of your time before you were 15 years old?

Dandenong

4. When did you move to South Gippsland (year)?

Moved to SG in 2010 after bushfires. Owned the house then moved. Came to the property over the road

5. Why did you move to South Gippsland?

Lifestyle and ageing parents living in Foster. Parents had a farm in Foster and only one set of grandparents for son. Parents reluctant to travel. Heather and husband living in Sydney and travelling here. School holiday visits every school holidays – able to do so due to self employed husband and time in lieu arrangements for Heather. Lifestyle first reason and ageing parents another reason.

Work / spouse or partner work / return to region of birth / family reasons / employment other than current employer / amenity and lifestyle / housing choice and affordability / education or training / other

6. Where did you live prior to moving to South Gippsland?

Sydney – husband a building and H working in aged care for around 25 years and husband born and bred in Sydney – where met husband.

Melbourne / Other Australian Capital City / Other regional Victoria / Other regional Australia outside Victoria / Overseas

7. Have you moved within the Shire since living in South Gippsland?

No – just built a house. Started building a house to move into. Originally were going to move to Foster but found a block in Mirboo North as it added distance. Looking for a town with primary and secondary school. Could get what wanted in MN and close to Leongatha, Morwell and Traralgon Trafalgar and train to Melbourne. Had a child in primary school needed to find a decent sized primary school and high school that could cater for a child with additional needs.

- a. YES – where and why

8. Are you employed?

Yes for 5 years and initial period when couldn't get a job because wasn't known locally. And Steve has found the same thing. Move interstate the things you think are going to be difficult – transferring builders licence difficult between States all sorts of problems. Managed a HACC team in Sydney.

During first 5 years came close to going to Melbourne to live and keeping MN as a holiday house and possibly selling up due to work issues. Previous work in aged care. Not long out of moving had \$ left over so could invest in rental property income from additional house in Leongatha. Could buy a reasonable house to rent out to get an income from and income kept here when didn't have other work.

- a. Your job: what/ when/ where/ how long/ previous job/ future employment
- b. Are you involved in the local community? If yes, what do you do? Hours/ why?

Initially involved with schools because had the connection and Scouts. Were with Scouts before came – but transfer wasn't that easy – individuals can be barriers and make life difficult to new members. One individual high up in a voluntary organisation that was influencing others and blocking your involvement.

Scouts – not involved any more- involved in low capacity for a few years because blocked. Had to fight and stand up for selves and background experience and training.

Great Vic Bike ride – coordinate all the activities – experience with scout camp

Mirboo Country Development –95% voluntary time. Invitation to join through school and live in small community. Still involved with school council at secondary college and year 9 break out program. Review regularly.

9. Education

- a. Where did you attend the majority of your secondary school education?
Dandenong
- b. What is your highest educational qualification?

School education / 2. **Certificate I, II, III, IV direct marketing then aged care/ Advance Diploma and Diploma / Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate / 1. Bachelor Degree – bachelor social science – library / Postgraduate Degree – in marketing. Aged care by chance and after doing marketing**

- c. Where did you attain that qualification?
- d. RMIT - Marketing, Marketing Uni NSW Cert IV in TAFE – do the course to develop understanding for staff.

10. What do you see as the main benefits of living in South Gippsland?

Lifestyle, raising family, opportunities for education, child could access good TAFE and Uni in Churchill. Son now moved back to Sydney. Ageing parents keep here now and part of the community and over previous hurdles from when first arrived have gone.

Easy to fit in because had child at school and having dogs as a first discussion point ice breaker.

Accessibility/ Ease of travel / Good place to raise a family / Quality services / facilities / Employment / Access to Melbourne / Close to family / friends / Access to services / activities / Location / Lifestyle / Friendly community/ Less congestion / Good size/ Affordability / Natural amenity – climate, bush, beach/ Built form – parks, trails, /Other

11. What are the disadvantages of living in South Gippsland?

Jobs – finding them and being recognised for them. Closed circuit – need to know someone to get a job. Even Steve as a builder – no one would take on because didn't know his work. Ended up getting a job through voluntary connection (Scouts and through rental property real estate agents) Not intending to move.

Jobs / income / Services/ Environment/ Location / Distance/ Infrastructure/ Lack of activity/ Culture/ Council/ Cost of living/ Social issues/ None/ Other

12. Do you intend to move out of South Gippsland in the next 2 years?

No just settled

Yes / No / Unsure

a. YES – where / why/ unsure

b. NO - Do you intend to move within South Gippsland? Where and why?

13. What is your household status?

Empty nester and older parent support phase – have a granny flat just in case.

Living alone / With spouse – partner (no dependents) / With spouse – partner and dependents / Other

14. What is your age category?

15 – 19 / 20 – 29/ 30 – 39/ 40 – 49/ 50 – 59 / 60 – 69/ 70 – 79/ 80 +

15. Gender

16. Female

17. Privacy

Identity to be kept anonymous Yes / No

Picture can be shown Yes / No Skype photo is good to use.

