



Innovating, learning and working together

The concept

An iterative project to establish a multipurpose innovation, coworking and learning space that bridges Mallacoota and the world. Connecting universities, vocational training organisations, industry, research bodies, government and community to realise a vision to be a global exemplar for innovative remote town living.

The project provides the physical space, digital tools and innovative thinking framework for the community to co-create solutions to problems unique to the Mallacoota District.

The space provides the link for government, industry and education to work in partnership with community, following the principles of smart specialisation and place-based development.

Progress

Much progress has been made with Wilderness Workspace Mallacoota project since its beginnings as a proposal under the MADRA economic sub-committee.

- Extensive community consultation has been undertaken and continues to be undertaken to evolve the project.
- A feasibility study has been conducted with the help of East Gippsland Shire Council.

- The study concluded that the original proposition, while valid, would be strengthening by broadening its remit to include education and lifelong learning.
- The team is waiting on the outcome of a Regional Digital Fund grant to run workshops on aspects of digital business and innovation and to continue work on the business case. (The project has been recommended at departmental level and is waiting on Ministerial sign off).
- Discussions are in train with TAFE and Gippsland East Learning and Employment Network (GELLEN) to include a study hub in the Wilderness Workspace.
- GELLEN had always planned to open a study hub in Mallacoota as a spoke of the Bairnsdale Study Hub supported by Federation University, TAFE and commercial partners.
- GELLEN remains committed to that and is happy to bring forward that plan to align with the wishes of Mallacoota.
- Discussions have been held with GELLEN management as to what they can commit to the Wilderness Workspace.
- Discussions have been held with TAFE as to what courses could be run in Mallacoota through the Workspace to support the vision outlined in the Recovery Plan.
- A survey is underway to seek input from the community on the learning needs. This will be fed back to TAFE.
- GELLEN would need Mallacoota to secure space and some staffing for the study hub.
- Discussions have also been held with the Sanctuary to see how the Workspace vision of supporting traditional, online and micro business and innovative thinking fits in with their long-term vision.
- Discussions are underway with MADBATA regarding governance of the Workspace, auspicing arrangements and contributing to a lease.
- The Workspace team are hoping to secure the lease on 61a Maurice Avenue (check address), next to Bendigo Bank.
- Discussions are also being held with local businesses to be anchor tenants.
- The rent and operating costs of the Maurice Ave lease would form a key component of the sponsorship pitch to NewsCorp.
- We would also seek project management funding from NewsCorp for securing long-term funding, forming partnerships, running workshops and managing the space.
- We are taking an iterative approach to the project. Securing the premises for stage one is vital. GELLEN and TAFE need premises that provide 24-hour access and must be able to timetable classes a term ahead with certainty.
- A Facebook page has been established to start sharing useful resources, especially on basic digital literacy, with the community. It's also a space to crowdsource ideas and engage the community.
- The Wilderness Workplace project team are working with GELLEN as part of its Be Connected program to offer digital mentorship to community members.

There is clear and pressing demand for helping older members of the community to navigate the digital world – from accessing QR codes to navigating My Gov.

Key Components

- Provide opportunities for economic and socio-cultural resilience through an innovative and collaborative culture
 - Facilitate learning and education of all levels, from basic provisional courses to high level post-graduate and doctoral research
 - A training space for all things digital, from basic computer literacy to digital entrepreneurship
 - An affordable co-working space for locals and visitors
 - Meeting spot for small business and Zoom calls
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- Desk and office space for visiting professionals and government, education and organisations.
 - A business services hub with packages not available elsewhere (e.g., promotional packages for local businesses, web design, laminating and printing, business planning)
 - An innovator-start up space for locals wanting to engage in online businesses
 - A showcase corner for microbusinesses in Mallacoota
 - Support existing businesses to expand their online offerings
 - A creator space for those wanting to engage in video, animation and related creative industries
 - Venue for online/physical workshops on topics aligned with MADRA's key recovery pillars. Eg Environmental Stewardship