

# Voices you don't usually hear from

## Episode 2 – People with purpose

### Transcript

March 2017

<b>Lauren Andrews</b>	<p>The Victorian wheat farming towns of Rupanyup and Minyip are like many rural communities across Australia.</p> <p>The neighbouring towns have faced their fair share of challenges, but the locals have tackled these problems head-on with a little help from their Community Bank.</p> <p>I sat down with local farmer David Matthews to hear how the community has been transformed since it opened the first Community Bank company in 1998.</p>
<b>David Matthews</b>	<p>Like many communities throughout Australia we were caught in a wave of branch rationalisation and the major banks were trying to lower their costs. They did that by closing branches, by sacking people and by re-domiciling banking to the next major town. At the time in our community we felt we still needed contact banking and we were concerned around the impact on other businesses if people went to the larger centre to do their banking, they would naturally do their shopping there as well. So we were very strong as a community in our feeling that we needed a banking service back and we set about looking for an alternative.</p>
<b>Lauren Andrews</b>	<p><i>So in those early days the motivation was of course, return banking services but it didn't take you long to think a bit bigger picture than that.</i></p>
<b>David Matthews</b>	<p>You're right, I mean we were initially focused on just returning the service. We hoped that maybe in the end we would start generating a cash surplus that we could use somewhere else but really, the motivation early on was we want the service back and it was probably only a few years into it where the business was running well and we were building up the volume of customers, the volume of business, we were starting to generate cash surplus that we started to turn our mind to what we could do with that.</p>
<b>Lauren Andrews</b>	<p><i>And what did you do once you started to have that revenue stream coming into the community?</i></p>
<b>David Matthews</b>	<p>I think it's typical of Community Banks probably even to this day when they open and they start generating some surplus cash they start looking at providing some support to the various groups within their community and that's typically playground equipment for the kindergarten, it might be painting the school or supporting the sporting clubs. It is very much around that infrastructure support for the education and sporting facilities. That seems to be the early phase. What we are doing now, 18 years on in our communities we are actually starting to look at the things that will fundamentally change the</p>

	way the community operates and I don't think we yet have all of the answers to that but that's certainly where we're taking our thinking now.
<b>Lauren Andrews</b>	<i>And how is it that a Community Bank, essentially a bank, has this transformational effect on a community? What's your perception of that been?</i>
<b>David Matthews</b>	<p>The really extraordinary piece to witness is the way it's changed thinking and behaviours. So instead of having a victim type mentality – in those small communities we were used to things closing and we would have protest meetings you know 'we're going to save this and save that' and the reality is that we would kick and scream and yell and occasionally we would save something but, in the end, the die was cast.</p> <p>Whereas now, it's been flipped. We are now in control so when we have an issue we will identify the issue as a community, we'll put some money towards fleshing out a bit of a plan or a solution to that, we can then develop a fairly detailed business plan that we can take to local government, state government, federal government and we don't start the conversation with them by saying 'we have a problem, you fix it'. We start the conversation by saying 'here's an issue, this is the work we've done, we think this is the solution and we would like to partner with you and by the way, we'll deliver the outcome.' It changes the way we think within our community and I think it's a great way of engaging with other stakeholders, with government and others around us.</p>
<b>Lauren Andrews</b>	From one exciting community to another... our next stop is East Ivanhoe one of Melbourne's inner city suburbs. Here I spoke to Community Bank pioneer, Nan Caple.
<b>Nan Caple</b>	One of the wonderful stories to tell is to celebrate this model and to celebrate within the community and with the community that has supported you. That A, they have either bought shares or B, they are part of your customer base or C, they are a part of the community that has benefited from it so there's a lot of areas to celebrate and a lot of community to celebrate with.
<b>Lauren Andrews</b>	<i>And those millions of dollars, how have you been investing those back into the community?</i>
<b>Nan Caple</b>	Through our grants and sponsorship program which is now a pretty strong framework we have got two sponsorship round a year, we have one grant round a year. Our sponsorships are about a return on investments, it's about investing money in community groups which then will invest back in us, knowing that it's good for them and good for us. We also deliver strongly in the grants area in those groups in the community who just enriches the tapestry of your community, who commit to the least, the low and the lost. The people that don't otherwise have a voice or representative or are represented in our community.

<b>Lauren Andrews</b>	What do you see the opportunity for governments to partner with Community Banks such as your own and take part in these transformational projects?
<b>Nan Caple</b>	I think there's terrific opportunity. I think acknowledging that we have engaged and continue to engage at a real grassroots bottom up level. It's something that I think the larger, broader organisations would all strive to somehow achieve but have difficulty so I think finding those opportunities where you can do stuff together. Seek out connections that are already there and probably to collaborating to an outcome that the community wants to share and own. I think there are some terrific opportunities.
<b>Lauren Andrews</b>	In our next episode we look beyond Community Banking, to some of Bendigo and Adelaide Bank's other innovative solutions that are encouraging financial participation and inclusion.

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