

Pirie Voices: A new community-led initiative attracting national attention

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For immediate release

Port Pirie has been selected as one of over 50 communities across Australia to take part in the Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment (PLACE) Community Roadshow and Listening Tour, an initiative focused on strengthening local leadership and collaboration for community-driven change.

PLACE is a newly established national organisation, funded by Government and philanthropy, that supports the adoption and impact of place-based approaches in local communities across Australia.

“PLACE’s vision is about communities taking the lead in shaping policies and initiatives that affect them. This tour is about listening, learning, and strengthening connections to support meaningful, long-term place-based impact,” said Luke Craven, CEO, PLACE Australia.

“Our goal is to elevate community leadership and ensure decision-making is shared with governments—firmly grounded in real-world experiences and local priorities,” added Luke.

Port Pirie was selected following a submission from local organisations who helped create Pirie Voices – an initiative that will ensure the voices of the Port Pirie community are at the centre of long-term solutions for the region.

Pirie Voices originated from the Mid North Jobs and Skills Taskforce, a key component of the Australian Government’s Workforce Australia – Local Jobs Program. The Taskforce comprises a dedicated group of community leaders committed to exploring big-picture solutions that will make a positive and lasting impact for individuals and families who experience disadvantage. Taking inspiration from successful community-led efforts across Australia and further engagement with other regional organisations, government and industry, a collective of local organisations was formed in 2024 with the vision of empowering the Port Pirie community to address intergenerational disadvantage by creating locally driven, long-term solutions. These efforts have not arisen from a crisis, a specific event, or government intervention, but from passionate people and organisations within the community who are driven by an aspiration for a more socially and economically inclusive future.

Pirie Voices has been created through the shared commitment and collaboration of a range of organisations. This includes the project partners Port Pirie Regional Council, The Country Counsellor, Workforce Australia – Local Jobs, Uniting Country SA, Centacare Catholic Country SA, Nyrstar, Preventive Health SA, Workskil, Country Arts SA, Pirie West Children’s Centre and the Department of Human Service, together with many other local organisations who have been supporting and informing the foundational work for Pirie Voices over the past few years.

The visit will take place on 31 March and will provide an opportunity for PLACE representatives to engage directly with Pirie Voices and the local community, listen to their experiences, and gather insights that will help shape PLACE’s future strategies. It’s an opportunity for Port Pirie to have a voice in policies, partnerships, and initiatives that affect the local community and to forge long-term connections and collaboration between PLACE and Pirie Voices.

The Port Pirie Regional Council is a key partner in Pirie Voices and is working together with the consortium of aligned organisations to jointly fund and deliver the first stage of Pirie Voices. This first stage will focus on listening to the community and elevating their voice by engaging with a wide cross-section of residents, leveraging the leadership of multiple trained community facilitators to reach over 1,000 people. These conversations will inform a community-generated roadmap, outlining aspirations, challenges, and actionable steps for the future. This approach puts the local community in the driving seat – ensuring effort is focussed on what matters most to the people who live in Port Pirie, enabling community ownership of solutions.

Port Pirie Regional Council CEO Peter Ackland welcomed the opportunity for Pirie Voices to be part of the national initiative.

“Port Pirie has a strong history of innovation and collaboration and Pirie Voices reflects our community’s proactive approach to shaping its own future. The visit from PLACE is an opportunity to share our journey and connect with national networks that support locally led action.”

Port Pirie has never undertaken a fully community-owned and community-led change initiative of this scale before. Drawing on evidence-based projects from other Australian communities. Pirie Voices lays the foundation for sustainable, community-driven change. Pirie Voices is set to commence in the coming months, with a Pirie Voices Coordinator role soon to be advertised.

Following its visit to Port Pirie, the PLACE Community Roadshow will continue to metropolitan, regional and remote communities across the country, building a collective vision for a more inclusive and responsive Australia.

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