



Pirie Voices empowers local community

By Neralie Bailey

PORT PIRIE - The official launch of Pirie Voices was held on September 17 at the Parham Centre with a large group in attendance, including retired council chief executive Peter Ackland who has been a vocal champion for the initiative.

The new project aims to put local people at the centre of shaping their own future.

Too often, programs are designed elsewhere and delivered to communities.

Pirie Voices takes a different approach – it starts with the people of Port Pirie who live, work, play and use the town as a service hub.

The focus is on listening, building on local strengths, and creating solutions together.

Over the next 12 months, Pirie Voices aims to engage in 1,000 conversations to hear what matters most to local people; their hopes, challenges, and ideas for the future.

Pirie Voices coordinator, Paula Backstrom said residents, parents, teachers, Elders, neighbours, and young people, will lead the conversations in their own networks, ensuring every voice has the chance to be heard.

"We've taken the time to look at what's

worked in other regions across Australia and what we've learnt is that when communities lead the way they can create long term, positive outcomes and change for their community," Ms Backstrom said.

"Pirie Voices is our opportunity to do the same – to listen to our community and to come together to work on the things that matter most to the people who live here, work here or rely on Port Pirie."

The initiative is supported by a growing group of partners including local industry, community organisations, council, service providers, and state government agencies.

"Pirie Voices doesn't belong to any one group – it belongs to the community," Ms Backstrom said.

"Our partners have been generous with their time, knowledge, and resources to help get things started, and we welcome others who want to walk alongside and support this journey."

Listening to 1,000 voices is just the start according to Ms Backstrom.

Throughout the year, Pirie Voices will regularly check in with the community, share what people are saying, and take immediate action

wherever possible.

Once the listening phase is complete, the community will get together to reflect on the conversations, identify shared priorities, and decide on practical steps forward.

Importantly, the direction will be set by the people of Port Pirie.

The roadmap that emerges will be community-owned and community-driven, ensuring that actions are meaningful, achievable, and truly reflect local aspirations.

There are many ways for people to take part in the project;

- Chat - answer the five community questions at bit.ly/PV_ShapingourFuture or reach out to connect with a Community Conversation Leader for a one on one chat;
- Become a Community Conversation Leader – host chats with friends, family or groups;
- Partner – the team is still open to opportunities to work with new partnerships where there are shared values
- Follow along - register for updates at www.pirievoices.com to stay informed about news, progress, and opportunities to get involved.