

The Recent History of Community Action in Federal Village

Since 1882 when John Bate and William Risley trekked through the bush from Lismore in search of land, the village of Federal has had a well-deserved reputation for community spirit. In the beginning the settlers helped each other clear the land for farms. As they became more established, families like the Bates played an important role in founding schools and churches for the community. They set a legacy.



Ever since, the residents have worked tirelessly to raise funds for community hubs like the Federal School of Arts (known locally as 'The Hall') which opened its doors in 1895, the Anglican Church which opened in 1909, and more recently Federal Park and the tennis court.



The Recent History of Community Action in Federal Village

Case Study in Community 1; Federal Park.

After years of patience, the Federal Community Centre (FCC) persuaded Council to buy the land for the Park in 1995. A DA was approved for the planning of the Park after a 'community mapping' process conducted by the FCC and planting commenced in 1999. Since then, grants and contributions totalling more than \$100,000 have been awarded for playground equipment, park furniture, shelters, pathways and additional planting. Fundraising at the annual **Park Party** has delivered installations of sculptures and mosaics. A public toilet and skatepark upgrades are new additions in the last few months. Tucked in one corner of Federal Park, another community group, Federal Tennis Club, quietly ensures the community has a great court for day and night tennis at community rates.

Case Study in Community 2; Jasper Corner.

More recently, the community fought to keep their local store open and, in 2012, they put their fundraising hats on again and raised over \$220,000 to buy the deconsecrated Anglican Church. The Church, which sits next door to the Hall, was to be sold to help pay off a considerable debt incurred by the Anglican Archdiocese. The community felt very strongly that it was important to maintain the building and the grounds for public use particularly as it was situated so close to the Hall. The result of their phenomenal effort is a wonderful 'double amenity' for the Federal community - the Hall and the Church buildings known collectively as Jasper Corner. During the last seven years this committee (**FSAAI – Federal School of Arts Assoc Inc**) has pushed on and has been awarded grants for the restoration of the Church, including a beautiful replacement for the stained glass window, new flooring in the Hall, landscaping and pathways on the grounds, a new effluent system, and a new paint job on the roof of the Hall before the installation of a grid interactive solar power system. Today (outside Covid) Jasper Corner is a hub of activity from cooking classes to Pilates to birthday celebrations to music gigs to weddings and importantly Federal Films which has been creating community through food and film at the Hall for 18 years. No one has grown up in Federal in recent years without winning a raffle at a film night. From the monthly Repair Coop to a fundraising night for the NGO Federal Loves Refugees there is always something called community happening. This is all community funded. Jasper Corner receives no regular financial assistance from Byron Shire Council or State Government.

Case Study in Community 3; The Many Successes of Federal Community Centre (FCC)

- Federal Community Centre Inc. (FCC). This organisation was created in 1987 by people who were inspired to make a commitment to the future development of community planning and facilities in the village.
- The management committee comprises a mix of some originals and newer members.
- It has worked with Council very successfully on many projects.
- We have often proactively engaged with developers to attempt to achieve sustainable and welcome developments for the village.
- The creation of Federal Park and its ongoing maintenance and improvements (with Council help).
- FCC facilitated the planting out and maintenance of Keyes Bridge Travelling Stock Reserve as a community greenspace and swimming hole.

The Recent History of Community Action in Federal Village

- The Federal Park Party- convened by the FCC - the annual gathering of the community - looking ahead to its 19th year in October/November 2020- Covid permitting
- The fostering of Federal Landcare Group into existence, with a specific focus on the natural environment.

Case Study in Community 4; The History of Crown Land Lots in Federal

1890 – 1980; The Department of Education purchased two acres of land in 1890, and a primary school was established in 1896. The original "one room 18' X15' with a six-foot verandah. All of the timber was pit sawn from local trees. The walls were white beech 14"X1" and twelve feet high, the floor was teak, the doors, window frames etc were red cedar." (From the Centenary of Federal booklet, 1982). By 1906 the schoolmaster's house and schoolroom had been built. Sixty children were in attendance that year. The original building was demolished in 1943.

This is Lot 89 DP755697 Public Reserve 105960.

Later, in 1945, a second two-acre portion was 'granted' to the Department for the purpose of grazing land for the ponies that the children rode to school. When school busses came into use, the P and C cultivated this paddock growing potatoes to raise funds.

This is Lot 90A DP 374765 Public Reserve 228590.

1978 - Present day; In 1978 the Federal Public School was closed. In 1980 the new settler community started using the schoolroom for a playgroup, but by May that year the building was moved to Clunes. The parents persuaded the Department of Education to allow the schoolmaster's house to remain for use as a preschool. The two-acre Crown Land lot where the schoolroom and house stood was handed over to the Byron Shire Council in trust for use by the community. Part of this land is leased to the Federal Preschool, now known as the Federal Community Children's Centre (FCCC – not to be confused with the FCC).

The two-acre pony paddock lot was not included in the original deal with the Crown for the use of the land as a preschool. It is described as a public reserve on Council's records.

The inaugural management committee of the preschool was the seed for the growth of community development in the village. A number of parents who were on the preschool committee during the first decades are still active members of the **Federal Community Centre Inc. (FCC)**. **This organisation was created in 1987 by people who were inspired to make a commitment to the future development of community facilities in the village.**

In the early 1980s the schoolmaster's house was renovated and expanded with funding from NSW community services, to bring it up to the standard for childcare centres.

After hours, the Federal Drama Society used the space to rehearse plays that were staged at the Hall, and FCC used it for regular meetings.

Other improvements including vehicular access, parking, playground structures and regeneration plantings were funded through various government employment schemes and grants in the 1980s

The Recent History of Community Action in Federal Village

and 1990s. A prototype tiny house was erected on the land with funding from the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

Various cohorts of preschool teachers and parents have continuously managed the land since the 1980's. The most successful project has been the relatively recent creation of the marvellous Bushfood Garden which is used as a learning space for sustainable gardening and weed control.

Importantly, the FCC committee's first request to Council in 1989 when the Federal DCP came into being, was to keep one lot in the subdivision along Roses' Road to provide an access handle to the western boundary of the Pony Paddock.

This is Lot 7 DP 263974, owned by Byron Shire Council.

Today

In 2018 the FCC continued in its long history of community engagement and took two actions;

1. It produced the "Federal Community – It Takes a Village" pamphlet to link and connect all the various community not for profit groups in and around the village. This gives the FCC the ability to connect to all of these groups and via this communications channel to everyone who calls Federal their village.
2. The FCC conducted a community survey of issues and ideas titled "Federal Futures" through a series of listening posts and suggestion boxes. The results were presented to a community meeting (and distributed via email) in May 2018. Both Council staff and Councillors were present. The results of that investigation are attached in an updated version to this document. Many of the "easy" priorities from that document have been achieved as indicated. The FCC and the community are rightfully proud to have achieved these items and we thank Byron Shire Council for the partnership.

Some of these achievements since the survey are; Defibrillator (achieved); Public toilets in the Park (achieved); Shading for playground (achieved); Landcare Group established (achieved); Some improvement in parking situation (achieved but not enough); Skate Park upgrade.

However, the result of building a strong vibrant community is that many more people want to visit and live here. The FCC and the community it represents aims to engage with all stakeholders to ensure our village remains liveable, sustainable and the paradise we have allowed to evolve.

So, in August 2020 the two groups of the FCC and FSAAI wrote to Byron Council to ask to partner with it in developing a road map for the future of the village. This letter is attached.

Council responded with a recommendation for the **Federal Village Project - Community Led Governance and Place Plan** which would eventually feed into all planning for the village and surrounds. Council adopted this recommendation at its meeting of 27th August 2020.

The Recent History of Community Action in Federal Village

Today's Priorities;

While acknowledging that there may be new items to be added to any list, we can see from the items not achieved after the 2018 survey what the main topics of concern are as we enter this process of planning a Governance and Place Plan for Federal Village, including clearly outlining location and type of development permitted (zoning).

- Maintain village feel; Limit the scale of commercial development. Development must be in keeping with size, character and visual amenity of the Village.
- Village road safety and parking issues are at crisis point.
- Any development must come with improvements to all four village access roads.
- Lot1/DP 1003205 (Troy/Palmer lot); this block would make obvious and sensible additional green space for the medium- and long-term future of the village, while linking Jasper Corner and Federal Park. In the letter to council, dated August 2020, we specifically request support in purchasing this property - LOT1/DP 1003205- to be incorporated into the Federal Village Common.
- Walking & Cycling paths should be prioritised.
- Any commercial development should bring something of value to the community of Federal, a net benefit, rather than being mostly a pull factor for vehicle traffic to the village.
- Social diversity is very important for a sustainable village. As a result of the 2018 survey the FCC attempted, with Council support, to establish a community housing project on the "pony paddock", After much time and expense the idea was rejected by State Government, however remains a critical need.