



Kilkivan & District Ageing-in-place Project

The Rise & Shine Project by K&DCCAI

Updated October 2023

A place-based solution devised by locals for locals...

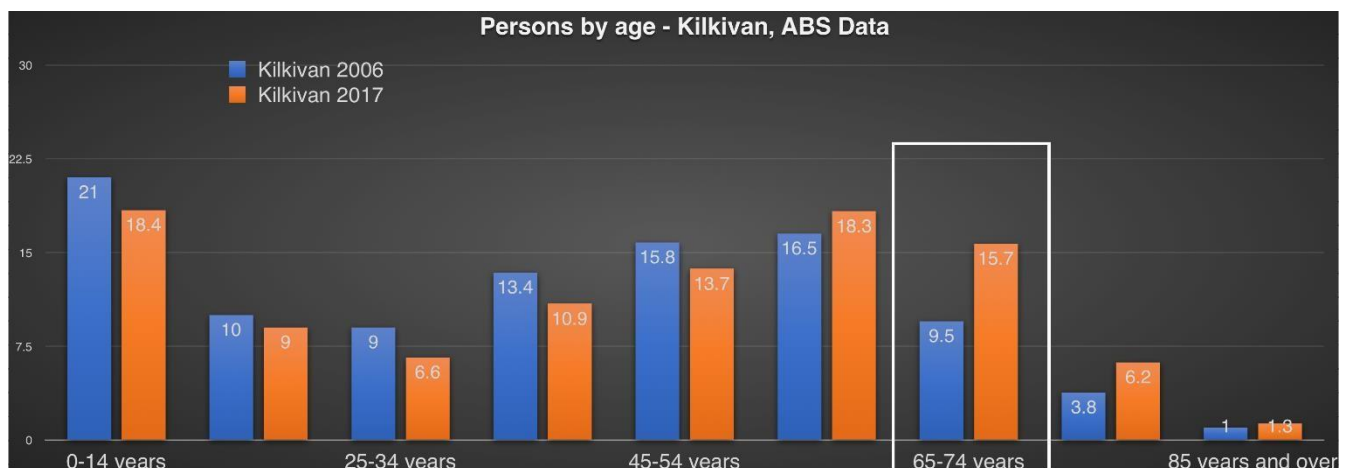
Summary statement:

Our proposal, because it is a **place-based solution** to a genuine, increasingly urgent and particular local context, seems relatively easy to achieve, cost-effective, and flexible enough to adapt to altered circumstances in the future.

Community consultation sessions over the last 25 years by Kilkivan Shire Council and then the post-amalgamation Gympie Regional Council have all provided evidence of this issue's pre-eminence in the minds of Kilkivan residents. The fact that a parcel of land was purchased for the purpose of residential care prior to 1997 by the former Kilkivan Shire Council proves the issue's long-term local prominence.

Our **investigations during the 2020 & 2021** highlighted how easily **small communities' needs and priorities slip through the cracks in the policy-making process**: very little data and research was available about our community because it is too small to "register". Therefore, we used our own experience as a basis for designing a preliminary proposal and set about identifying the specifics. However, we all knew we were living in a rapidly-ageing community...

This graph illustrates how **urgent** the situation had become by the 2016 Census:



At a glance: The *integrated* proposal (after refinement during 2020, 2021 & 2022):

- A **community transport** service
- **Better, more efficient in-home care** to enable improved senior lifestyle locally
- Accessible, affordable **rental accommodation** (a group house as well as separate 1 & 2-bedroom modular homes)
- A **community hub building** (commercial kitchen, spacious dining/multi-purpose area, allied health consulting rooms, day respite area, etc)

The documents/materials on the local situation available to support our proposal:

- “**A Future in Kilkivan**” – 20-minute documentary filmed February 2020
- **Survey** of Kilkivan residents Sept-Oct 2020 – independent analysis (Appleby)
- Kilkivan research paper/report (QUT students) – detailed report re community transport
- QUT report **Rural Ageing in Kilkivan** (Gottlieb & Beatson) based on 48 interviews in Nov-Dec 2020 (published 2021)
- **Petition** to Gympie Regional Council (early 2020)
- De-identified case studies of individual residents’ situations

In more detail: The 4-pronged, integrated framework we have designed to address the issues as we understand them would ideally be established on a large parcel of Council-owned land in Kilkivan (for the residents of Kilkivan, Goomeri, Woolooga & Tansey localities which we have surveyed and investigated in detail):

1. **A community vehicle/transport service** - without accessible, affordable transport, many frail/aged locals are condemned to a far more isolated, difficult life than should be acceptable given our south-east Qld location. *(Kilkivan: **ACHIEVED JULY 2021; operational September 2021; transporting mainly seniors but also school students on field trips.**)*
2. **Improved efficiency & efficacy of in-home care** in the district required by many locals – client centred to enable improved lifestyle. The traditional model of in-home care has not been a good fit with rural & regional residents – we believed it needed a complete re-vamp, because it appears to have been designed for city-based recipients in densely populated areas. Level 1 & 2 in-home care packages amounted to very little support in areas like ours previously, so life was largely unsupported for even these clients. *(We have two detailed case studies to illustrate this.)* **Achieved new model: Kilkivan Care + Trilogy Care + Mable platform from April 2022; currently 27 packages are coordinated by Kilkivan Care across the Kilkivan-Goomeri & Woolooga districts.** Anecdotal reports indicate the level of client satisfaction is high and we will soon formulate a client satisfaction survey to identify this more precisely.

3. **Affordable, accessible rental accommodation** – many frail and older rural & regional residents live in high set, old timber houses which are expensive to retrofit or modify. Additionally, many frail/senior residents sometimes need temporary support after periods in hospital, for example, or if their carers become ill – a judicious mix of temporary and long-term supported rental accommodation places would address most of their needs in a flexible, convenient way. *This rental accommodation is also desperately needed in the area within the context of the current widespread housing crisis: it is futile to assume that short-term accommodation, for seniors or others, will be available elsewhere in the region when, for example, there is a flooding or bushfire emergency – in 2023, other, larger towns such as Gympie, Murgon and Kingaroy are also in the grip of an accommodation shortage. Supply of more housing stock needs to be immediately created to satisfy a multitude of demands and make this area sustainable as a feasible ageing-in-place location. In early May 2023, an EOI for Qld government Housing Investment Fund (HIF) money was lodged by a consortium comprising The Affordable Housing Charity (TAHC) & KDCCAI. James Whitelaw, who founded Trilogi Care, is the driving director of TAHC. The consortium has progressed to the next phase, and a final outcome will be known by late 2023. The \$3.5 million proposal is for 4 x two bedroom homes, 8 x one bedroom homes & a group home for 4+ persons.*
4. **A community hub building** to include a commercial kitchen, a large dining/multipurpose area, an office, other rooms for health professional consultations, etc, the Kilkivan Care office, day respite room plus possibly carer/manager accommodation. The hub would also serve as a **drop-in centre** for social purposes – high levels of loneliness & social isolation, especially highlighted during the Covid-19 lockdowns which isolated residents from family support, (exacerbated when the relatively low level of internet access in the older cohort here is recognized) are evident, as is the absence of any practicable relief for full-time carers. (Because the Catholic Church on the block adjacent to the other aged-care land parcels may be available to purchase and integrate with this project, we hope that if we could acquire it, we could transform and extend it to become the Community Hub building. There is enormous synergy available! A final mass was held in St Kevin’s Catholic Church on 1.10.23 and the Church authorities are aware of our interest in the property.)

*NB: These 4 elements do not exist in a vacuum, so there must also be **apt levels of support from the health agencies especially**. We continue to encourage health service providers to consider an expansion of services to the Kilkivan Clinic to support the community’s identified and growing needs. However, recent staffing challenges and funding uncertainties are of concern.*

We have all learned a lot over the last 4 years, especially from COVID and the enforced isolation for older members of the community, namely the impact on

*their mental health and the realisation of the **need for comprehensive community support at the local level, including self-sufficiency.** Our **model focuses on provision of that support mechanism.** (We have recent case studies which illuminate just how precarious life is for many of our seniors now in a community with few, and uncertain, services available, even across a wide geographical area. * two extreme case studies from 2023.)*

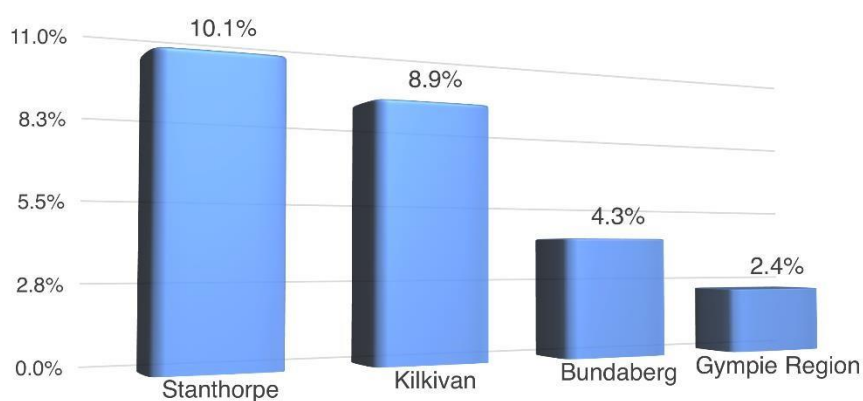
Background

Our proposal addresses the issues raised so sadly in the Federal Royal Commission on Aged Care but was being formulated long before that commission of inquiry. Because we have designed **the concept from the ground up, to better utilize and coordinate the resources we already have in our local community to put a safety net under the care concept,** we believe it can truly provide a nurturing, safe, practical and comprehensive solution to the complex demands of aged care, **so long as residents/users do not require very high care.** *(By ensuring that any accommodation built as part of our concept is rented, not owned, by potential occupants, the issue of having to provide high-care services is avoided – a lease would not be re-newed for an occupant if their level of care was more than our local model could reasonably provide. This would be made very clear to prospective residents prior to their signing lease agreements.)* Loneliness, anxiety, physical and mental limitations, financial inadequacy and mild dementia symptoms (forgetfulness re medication, for example) can eat away at people who feel isolated in their homes but wish dearly to remain in familiar territory, and their concerned family members. But if the only option our older residents have is to “go into care in Gympie” or beyond, they are more likely to tough it out for much longer than is safe or healthy for them to do. Then the public health system presumably incurs more cost than it otherwise might, and individuals/families are then stressed by having to make ad hoc choices on the run from very limited options. (Anecdotal evidence exists everywhere of seniors who perhaps died prematurely because their distress at being removed to institutionalised care impacted negatively their mental health. And the needless clogging of the hospital system which occurs when unsuitable or no local facilities are available for transitional care is negatively impacting the whole health system for all.)

It appears that we in Kilkivan still have a **binary set up:** *“stay more or less totally independent”, possibly on a farm or in a house and garden that is too large to adequately manage, waiting to access in-home care services or receiving in-home care services that are not a good fit or value-for-money, OR “go into full care” which means leaving the community and probably committing to a life where nearly all of the familiar social supports are removed.* (NB: Most blocks in our town are more than half an acre still.) Many of the local homes are high-set and challenging/expensive to modify for wheelchair access/use, etc.) And now it is increasingly difficult to obtain apt rental accommodation – there are currently very

few, if any, places. We believe that it is possible to **create a transition concept that is tailored to the needs of country people**, that **leverages value from existing resources**, and **provides a community hub** that all age groups can contribute to &/or benefit from. Our concept has the ability to efficiently satisfy a number of urgent requirements that are negatively impacting on the health, especially mental, and well-being of a large cohort of Kilkivan & district folk – and their often-distant families.

The following **graph** was generated in 2020 from ABS data and shows the proportion of the 4 communities' population aged **65 years & over**:



NB: Stanthorpe was chosen randomly as a regional town about a similar distance from the capital city, Brisbane. It has many more services & facilities than Kilkivan; Kilkivan seniors struggle with very few, despite an equivalent proportion of over 65s.

The most critical aspects in designing a viable, ground-up concept for Kilkivan seem to be the following:

- i) we have a **large cohort of elderly residents but many are relatively independent and fit** – if they could maintain independence within a more structured and more supportive environment, they might remain out of the formal residential care system as it currently exists and thereby be less of a drain on the public purse – while leaving scarce places for those in greater need of specialized nursing care. (Some residents are fortunate to have family members still living in the district but the 21st century patterns of work mean that higher levels of support cannot be assumed to be available from family and friends, even in small rural towns. The **Covid-19 lockdowns** heightened the problems/discomfort felt by older residents due to isolation/removal from even intermittent physical family support.

- ii) **Many of Kilkivan's 80 years plus cohort, have lived their entire lives in this district.** Their social networks are mainly those established in their younger years and many are involved in local organizations or groups which are not readily transferable. For example, one 95-year-old man volunteered until relatively recently at the local museum and is lauded for being the local expert on farming equipment and a particular locality. This gave him self-esteem and a regular, positive public role, while simultaneously benefiting the Museum as a public resource for reliable, detailed information. This activity is not transferable to another community, such as Gympie – his expertise is only in demand and relevant in Kilkivan. Taking these senior citizens out of their local community means that they will necessarily lose touch with many/most of their regular, incidental social interactions. And the drive to Gympie is becoming less viable for this cohort with the increasing traffic, especially heavy vehicles. 52 kilometres may as well be a light year for many. (The absence of *any* sort of public transport has meant that, in effect, if you couldn't drive yourself, you were required to leave for a residential care facility in another town. Fortunately, our community bus purchase has already alleviated some of that disadvantage.)
- iii) **We believe that the mental health of all older local citizens,** and actually that of all residents associated with that cohort or those hoping to remain lifelong in the local area, will benefit if this *entire* project comes to fruition. Its presence would ameliorate some of the stresses of ageing by being a viable option to which many would aspire!
- iv) There are several **established activities here in Kilkivan which can be harnessed and coordinated to provide a vibrant social context** in which to place the residential component - this should ensure that a family-like, caring and inclusive environment is available to all. For example, our Seniors Social Hub held each fortnight has attracted consistently high numbers – this could be expanded to encourage wider community involvement if we had suitable premises in which to base ourselves. Additional activities (movie viewing, community gardening, craft, exercise sessions, etc) could also be added when the community hub building is added.
- v) **Many elderly people often need companionship, security and some help with daily tasks; however, many that we know do not want to relinquish their independence for full care in one step.** The proposal is envisaged as a *transition arrangement outside of the Aged Care Act* that may provide the most cost-effective and appropriate level of care for many locals.
- vi) The proposed design means that in the future **the hub and accommodation complex could be re-purposed if required – short-stay public housing, etc.**
- vii) **vii)** Making the facility a place for **multi-generational interaction** is considered vital – we would involve the Kindy and P-10 School as much

as possible. Both of those facilities are within walking distance of our proposed accommodation and hub location in Church Street, Kilkivan.

The **project name, Rise and Shine**, is not just a reference to an empowering idea; it has historical connotations because Kilkivan township was previously known as Rise & Shine, named after a lucrative alluvial gold find!

K&DCCAI now has an established record of developing a vision based on creditable research, then implementing the concept as far as possible within the framework of a volunteer-based organization. The Rise & Shine Project now offers both the local community and Gympie Regional Council (as well as other agencies) **an enticing opportunity to establish a wonderful, much-desired infrastructure development** which would positively transform the lives of many long-term residents as well as more recent residents, as well as boosting the local economy in diverse ways. *There is gold in that notion, don't you think?!*

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