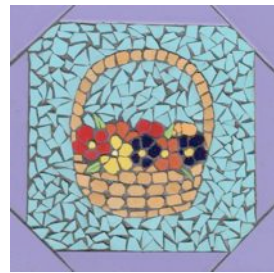
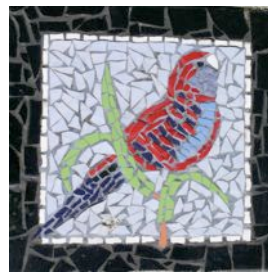


Broadmeadows Disability Service



Site Report

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Ambience Garden Designs

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Broadmeadows Disability Service Overview

Broadmeadows Disability Services (BDS) is located at 241 Camp Road in Broadmeadows on a 5-acre site and is a Not-for-Profit organization established in 1977 that is funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services in order to provide diverse member focused services to a specific number of members. These services cater for over 350 members a week, with the program delivery tailored to address each individuals needs as identified through their Person Centred Plan (PCP). The service accesses a wide range of community facilities and venues in the delivery of the program and activities. In addition the facilities at BDS have been developed to meet the needs of people of all abilities. BDS services adults and children who reside primarily in the cities of Moreland and Hume. Support is provided across 4 service areas – Day Services, Escapade (Respite), RASP (Acquired Brain Injury) and HomeFirst.

BDS in partnership with the Broadmeadows Community Neighbourhood Renewal Project (BCNR) is creating a community wide facility through the Broadmeadows Environment, Enterprise and Education Project (BEEEP). The project will make use of existing infrastructure and resources at BDS, as well as building new infrastructure to support its activities. Activities will include facilitation of a community tool library, a men's shed, a propagation nursery, community gardening and water harvesting. Additional activities may be built as the project develops over time. BEEEP will include community development activities, volunteering opportunities and enterprise aspects to assist develop its sustainability.

Initial Observations

It is evident when walking through the buildings and talking with staff that BDS has dedicated staff that value their members and are interested in providing them with a quality service. There are many positive aspects about the BDS site, the main ones being the large open spaces, the established on-site infrastructure and the visibility to the wider community.

It is also very positive that the organization is taking a proactive approach to their service and site and to sustainable practices. The current direction of incorporating initiatives such as installing solar panels, a grey water system and rainwater tanks is evident that the organization is keen to address new initiatives that benefit the members and the organization.

It is evident that some excellent programs and ideas have been implemented and achieved in the past, however it appears that they have been somewhat disparate and in isolation from each other, which has lead in part to them being under-utilised or deemed too hard to maintain. In particular, the inner courtyard, the vegetable patch, the sensory walk and the nursery are evident of this.

I believe that by incorporating some key principles into an overall picture of what can be achieved, the smaller components of the plan can then be better implemented, maintained and sustained.

Key Principles

I believe any changes to the external environment of the BDS site need to encompass the following key principles.

1. Integrated approach

Basing any changes or adding programs on this principle will assist to achieve ownership by all. Once there is ownership, there is ongoing interest, interconnection, pride and also an ensuing sense of achievement. An integrated approach will assist with providing an overall maintainable and sustainable service. Each program area and activity will in some form be able to be a part of each other's program, thereby giving strength and support to each other and unifying the BDS service.

2. Member focused and directed

The success of new projects, programs or changes will be greater if they are focused on member's needs, interests and improved satisfaction as this will enable ongoing engagement and involvement. Staff still need to oversee and drive these, however where possible member involvement in the process and with ongoing maintenance is imperative.

3. Projects and garden areas need to be achievable, maintainable and sustainable.

No garden is without some level of maintenance, however from my experience highly beneficial and enjoyable gardens can be achieved without requiring a high degree of maintenance. Combining good horticultural practices with appropriate plant selection will provide achievable, maintainable and sustainable gardens. Any garden plantings need to be focused on low water use, lower maintenance, but still of high interest and benefit to all users. While vegetable gardens require a higher level of input and maintenance, I believe that with good practices and crop selection they can be achieved with lower amounts of time input and maintenance.

4. Dream big, start small

It is often important to see the bigger picture in order to know the direction to head, however for some this can be daunting and can hinder any progress. It appears too hard to achieve. I believe however that with the bigger picture or plan in mind, the "dream big", that it is easier than to "start small". Starting small has many benefits. It provides achievable increments, it provides initial momentum and it provides inspiration for ongoing interest. With the overall plan in mind, it enables the opportunity to begin to work on specific areas of that plan based on member interest, service goals and also what might have the greatest and/or best impact and benefit for both the members and service.

5. Community involvement and awareness

I believe that an ongoing relationship with the community in some form is vital. The benefits of this are two-fold. Firstly, volunteer support is a valuable asset for any organization. Volunteers will come alongside and assist organizations that they feel positively impacts the lives of others. They bring a variety of skills and abilities and many hands do indeed make light work. Seemingly large tasks can be successfully achieved in shorter periods of time with good help. It is important to note that this will by its nature require time and resources to manage which needs to be acknowledged. Secondly, by incorporating the community within the organization in some form, it will increase the wider communities awareness of the service and those within it, which in turn can then bring more volunteers, support and community engagement.

Site Review and Recommendations

Front Entrance

The front entrance to a site or a building reflects a lot about those who occupy it. It is the first opportunity to welcome people and it will set the scene for many people - those who work in the site, those who attend the site and those who visit the site. It often gives an indication of what can be encountered inside.

I believe that the front entrance could be improved to increase the site appeal for members, staff and visitors, but also importantly for the wider community as they drive past, and moving forward, as they begin to engage more with the service. This would involve the removal of plants along the front fence line to open up the view into the site, and improved planting throughout the front area, in particular the gate entrance, car park, front fence line and the front building entrance. This area could also include artistic elements created by the members. Once the new buildings have been completed I would suggest continuing the current planting style that is in front of the existing building to provide a unified and consistent feel. Additional signage would also assist with welcoming and directing people. While the bins need to be in a practical position I would suggest that if they need to remain where they are to install a low screening wall to hide them from view as people access the front entrance.

Inner Courtyard

This is a great gathering place and provides a space for a variety of activities for various times of the year and is an area that fosters and encourages community amongst members and staff. The large undercover sitting area with the seats, wood fire oven and barbeque area are valuable assets. It has great scope to link in with the vegetable garden area enabling members to pick and take fresh vegetables straight from the garden to the table. A positive of this area is that it can also be viewed from indoors for passive involvement and enjoyment, however the garden area is in need of rejuvenation. The walls of the building area a great opportunity to be utilised as feature walls for art pieces or sculptures and I believe the garden area lends itself to being a smaller sanctuary within the site for members and staff to enjoy. This may incorporate a smaller sensory garden experience or may be sculpting the lawn and garden to undulate and draw people along a pathway to spots to sit and contemplate. I understand the importance of including some memorial spaces and I would suggest terming this a "Reflection Corner" in order to keep it a positive and respectful experience.

Orchard and Vegetable Plot

This is an area that has once been used well but is now under-utilised, but has great potential. I believe that this area has the greatest potential to provide lots of integrated program aspects and provide visual and practical benefits. It provides an activity and an area that can achieve healthy choices and activities for members. I would suggest extending the current vegetable garden and orchard area to wrap around the toilet block building and also incorporate the shed in the middle of the yard. The recent inclusion of rainwater tanks and the proposed grey water system will be ideal for this area.

In the vegetable garden area I would suggest improving the access and linkage from both the toilet block building and the outdoor covered barbeque / food preparation area. This

may mean removing part of the fence from the barbeque area and replacing it with an easy-use gate, however, having easy access to this area will improve its use and appreciation. The mural on the end of the building is fantastic, however no one sees or experiences it, so incorporating the mural wall as a main entrance to the garden will add to the area. It would be imperative for safety to have this area fenced off from the driveway and I would suggest that a mesh fence be used so visually it does not appear blocked in. These could also be used effectively for fruiting vines. The inclusion of something visually appealing, such as art or bright colours, at the fence line would help to draw people from the buildings out into the garden area. I believe that incorporating art into the vegetable garden can also be fun. Pieces like the existing picket fence may be revamped or relocated within this area. I would also add seats and seating areas in this area.

I would suggest removing the existing raised beds and change them to cypress pine beds, having a variety of garden bed heights – some at ground level, some at “sitting at” height, and some of mixed heights (as per picture below), which will allow for members with differing capabilities to work either individually or as a group. The arrangement and quantity of beds depends on both cost and desired use, however these may be built over a period of time depending on funding. Surfacing of this area needs to be addressed in respect to who will be accessing it, how they will be accessing it and whether they need to access all areas, as this can be a large cost. It may be more suitable to have the main concrete pathway leading out from the building and bbq area past an “all access/use” bed through to the orchard and improved shed, with crushed rock pathways in and around the remaining garden beds. It would be ideal for this area to be largely irrigated from the new tanks, however some supplementary water use may be required.

The vegetable garden would lead into the existing orchard area located alongside the toilet block building, and where the tanks are and the grey water system is to be established. Additional fruit trees should be added to the orchard, and I would suggest having the concrete path lead from the vegetable garden to meander through the orchard to the main undercover walkway that links the front and rear buildings and also split off to incorporate the refurbished shed and the Sheoak Walk. I believe that the existing shed in the lawn area is under-utilised and could be changed and opened up to be a good undercover gathering place in the gardens. This would provide the opportunity to keep the existing roses and hedges and make this a special area.

I would also suggest considering the possibility of keeping poultry, as this could provide great practical and therapeutic benefits. From managing green waste (food scraps and garden waste), to a source of eggs for the cooking program and also for the great opportunity for members to be involved in caring and nurturing for another living creature.



Raised bed with varying height

Sensory Walk - Current

This is a good example of a past project that has been enthusiastically established with a lot of work and finances put into it. Unfortunately, it has now become less utilised and while the few sensory elements are effective, they are minimal. The area is isolated from the main areas of the site with no real linkages to other aspects within the site and therefore is at risk of being under-utilised and forgotten. Given the identified need to provide increased on-site car parking with the additional main buildings I would suggest clearing this area for additional parking. Assessment needs to be done regarding quantity of required parking spaces and whether the boardwalk remains or is removed. If this is to become a car park with increased vehicle traffic, there is the concern of member safety when crossing this road to access this current area. Given that I would suggest removing the boardwalk and relocating the current sensory elements to a new area, thereby avoiding the need to access this area by members.

Sensory Walk - New

On reviewing the site and after staff consultation, I would suggest relocating the 'Sensory Walk' to be along the long covered walkway that links the front and rear buildings of the site. This is a higher trafficked area, is easily accessed and more visible and therefore would have a higher use and interest that I believe would increase member satisfaction.

A sensory garden incorporates elements that incorporate the five senses of sight, smell, sound, taste and touch, and are focused around benefiting those who use it. Therefore, the particular sensory experiences and elements to be included need to be discussed with the members. This process would involve spending time viewing sensory gardens, talking about different types of sensory experiences that they enjoy and then achieving a consensus about what sensory elements will be included in this sensory garden space.

Some sensory elements address multiple senses and provide multi-faceted experiences. Some suggestions that I believe may be of interest are:

- Native garden section with bird baths and feeders near the new tank to attract birds
- Plants with fragrant flowers or foliage
- Plants with different textures and foliage shapes
- Plants with a variety of flower and foliage colours
- Feature walls / panels – coloured perspex or textured elements such as panels of wood, corrugated iron, render, or mirrors
- Artistic elements, such as mosaics or statues made in the Art Program
- Passive spaces to stop and sit and view or be within the garden



Coloured Perspex panels



Textured rendered coloured wall



Water feature and art piece



Herbs and plants for smelling

Nursery

This is an extensive resource in good condition and has obviously been well used in the past with the hothouse and shade house being of a good size. Nurseries by nature can be a high input requirement activity with regular ongoing management needed. However, I believe these resources could still be utilised with a lower input requirement. Firstly, discussion is required to determine the extent of nursery related activities wanted.

1. Is the activity of enough interest to sustain year round use?
2. Would seasonal activities be of more interest, such as seed raising for the vegetable garden, or for propagating plants for plant sales?
3. Is propagating plants for the garden development of interest?
4. Is it still too much to maintain?
5. Just because it can hold a lot of plants doesn't mean it needs to be used to full capacity.

The benefits of propagating plants are many. Most significantly it reduces the costs of developing a garden. Planting costs can be expensive, however by propagating some of them costs can be reduced. The down side is that it will take longer to establish gardens this way, however I certainly believe there are many more benefits to gardens developing over time than by the "Backyard Blitz" style. Other benefits include providing seasonal activities and also plants for selling to raise funds for ongoing costs or developments.

In the shade house's current form I would suggest reviewing the surfacing, as the scoria rocks do little to inhibit weed growth. I would consider changing this to a permeable material or concrete to reduce maintenance issues of weeding and wasted time.

The outside hardening off nursery area is substantial. An outside hardening off area is required in a nursery but in reviewing the overall nursery use I would suggest reviewing the space required. Similarly, I would review the use of scoria rocks, but in this situation would suggest a permeable material to cover the ground to reduce weed invasion. If this area is to be reduced I would suggest returning it to a grassed area.

Given the current water conditions, I would strongly suggest utilising the new tanks for watering of the nursery where possible and this will require the addition of pumps.

Sheoak Forest Walk

This is an excellent sensory experience. It provides great sound and movement elements with the trees and a place to sit and experience it. It also provides a private semi-secluded space where members can achieve a sense of privacy and being away from people yet still being visible. To improve access and use of the forest walk I would suggest linking it with a pathway from the new orchard and vegetable plot. Adding art pieces into the space would also possibly add to the experience, otherwise I believe it is functional and effective as it is.

Basketball Court

This is a great open space area that I believe is quite valuable. The grass areas surrounding it provide the opportunity for a variety of activities to be undertaken, either individually, in small groups or as a large group. I would be reluctant to reduce this area or take away any grassed areas and would be inclined to provide some designated sitting areas for members to use. As the eucalypt has occasionally been dropping branches, I would suggest getting a qualified arborist to assess the tree's health and possible safety risk.

Incorporation of Existing Programs

I see great potential in utilising a more integrated approach to program and service provision with respect to changes to the garden and external environments. There are excellent programs currently established and I believe that by ensuring there are tangible links with the garden it will add to them and assist with providing a unified service and importantly increased member satisfaction.

Involvement with the garden and external environment does not need to be primarily focused on having an interest in doing the gardening. For some they dislike gardening, however they still may enjoy aspects of gardens and it's activities, from enjoying the space to eating the produce.

Garden Maintenance Program

I see there being a greater benefit in the members utilising their time to maintain their own garden, rather than going out into the community to maintain other people's gardens. By doing this, they can see on a daily basis the benefits of the work they do and more importantly can see other people, peers, staff and visitors, using and enjoying the gardens that they have been involved in achieving and maintaining. The sense of pride and achievement in seeing others enjoy the work they have done and hearing the positive comments about it, is invaluable and will be the encouragement needed to inspire them to keep doing it.

Photography Program

I see the Photography Program linking in well with any garden activities. It provides another avenue for taking photos that can have a significant link to the service and the programs provided. In particular, the opportunity for creative expression and taking photos of garden aspects, then turning these images into gift cards, which in turn can be sold to raise money and also to increase the awareness of the service. There are many facets to this process that can empower members and add to their sense of achievement and pride in their work, skills and talents. From taking the photos, to printing them, to making the cards, to adding a BDS and photographer sticker to the back, to selling, managing and the documenting sales.

Art Program

There is a great opportunity to incorporate aspects of the Art Program with the garden either within the garden or inspired from the garden. This depends entirely on the focus of the art and crafts aspects of the program. However, the inclusion of elements such as mosaics, sculptures, and painted objects within the garden is endless. Similarly, the inclusion of a garden focus within any craft activities that occur inside is also of benefit.

Cooking Program

Utilising produce from the orchard and vegetable plot would provide a great link and provide those who work in the vegetable garden a sense of pride and improved self-esteem knowing that their produce was being used and enjoyed by their peers. Input can also be given from the Cooking Group and staff regarding what produce they would use. A reduction in purchasing food costs could also be achieved.

Community involvement & awareness

The benefits of incorporating the wider community within the gardening context are endless. The chance to share knowledge and skills and the opportunity for cross-community interaction are key aspects. The opportunity to engage with social, garden, volunteer and service groups as well as education groups such as schools, TAFE and universities, should be explored. Many people are keen to be involved once they know what the need, project or activity is. This involvement can foster and provide the opportunity for groups and local businesses to donate their time, plants, materials or resources. I would also suggest exploring the suitability of utilising the front car park as a community plant sales or carboot sale site to increase awareness and to fundraise.

Further Recommendations

It will be important for the BDS service to spend time discussing this report and to involve all the appropriate people within the consultation process. I would suggest that a 5 year plan timeline is implemented, with particular emphasis being placed on identifying what the priorities are, why they are a priority and then communicating this effectively to staff, members, families and, where appropriate, the wider community. Keeping people involved in the process and well informed of any proposed changes will significantly impact on their willingness to be involved, to be motivated and enthusiastic, and to be keen to bring their skills and passions into it. This will ultimately increase the service appeal and member satisfaction.

If any projects or changes to the grounds are to be implemented it will be important for these to be included into future budgets to enable them to occur. It is recommended to engage skilled and experienced people in any future consultations and design processes for these gardens and it would be valuable to engage them for each particular area.

Site Zone Plan



-  Sensory Walk – Current
-  Sensory Walk – New
-  Orchard & Vegetable Plot
-  Basketball court
-  Inner Courtyard
-  Sheoak Forest Walk

Contact Details

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