

A vibrant photograph of a group of approximately ten children of various ethnicities and ages running across a lush green field dotted with yellow flowers. The children are dressed in casual summer clothing like t-shirts, shorts, and tank tops. The background features a bright blue sky with a few wispy clouds.

# It's Our Place Bellambi

First Report  
2016/2017





The Australian Social Investment Trust (ASIT) acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business.

We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present.

ASIT is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

# Partnerships

ASIT would like to acknowledge all its Illawarra Shoalhaven Social Investments (ISSIT) members who contributed to making these achievements possible.



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA





We are very pleased to publish our first Annual Report on the investment in the community of Bellambi by the collective impact partners, led by the backbone team. In 2015 we incubated this approach. In 2015 the #Ask Illawarra Shoalhaven event resulted in hundreds of conversations with people across the region, about their aspirations for their community; what kind of community they wanted to live in. We followed with deep engagement with the Bellambi community hearing their **expressions of concern about safety, loneliness and the opportunities they wanted for their children and young people**. We engaged with and co-designed the first community Action Plan with over 800 residents and service providers. This was an ambitious plan with **123 actions** across four themes which the community identified. The actions were implemented through 2016 and 2017 with the result that 110 actions have been completed and a further 13 actions require ongoing activity within the community in 2018.

Putting the **community at the centre of this work** has meant that unlike other place-based initiatives, collective impact work in Bellambi spanned all age groups and focussed on the issues that were of greatest concern to the community. If this work is to have integrity it must genuinely proceed at the pace of the community (although actions in the Community Action Plan are also focussed on helping the community come together, identify community leaders and build capacity to gradually take more responsibility).

**"It's just been a wonderful year...last year was pretty good too... [it gets] better and better"**

We have noted in the report, that collecting data across a number of domains has been challenging and in this early stage of collective impact, while we and the community believe we are seeing change, we are cautious about attributing causation after just two years of implementing the first community action plan.

Over this time we have been honoured to meet and work alongside so many members of the Bellambi community and to watch the emergence of community leaders who are increasingly taking responsibility for leading in key areas of the plan.

It is our intention to work alongside the Bellambi community in mid 2018 to co-develop the Community Action Plan for 2018-2021. We are confident that the community's progress will continue into the next three years with the benefits continuing to flow for the community of Bellambi as well as for the wider society.

**"This is family, a community ...it's like a village, everyone has to pitch in and help. Everything about being here makes it worthwhile"**

# Table of Contents

## About It's Our Place

Page 7

## The Theory of Change

Page 8

## Bellambi – An Overview

Page 9

## The Community's Action Plan

Page 10

## Data, Measurement and Evaluation

Page 12

## Safety and The Physical Environment

Page 14

## Connections, Support and Inclusive Communities

Page 16

## Learning, Education and Employment

Page 18

## Community Focused Services

Page 23

## Conclusion

Page 25

# About It's Our Place

*It's Our Place* is a model for social and collective impact initiatives developed by the Australian Social Investment Trust (ASIT) and delivered in partnership with the Illawarra Shoalhaven Social Investments (ISSIT) member organisations.

Over time, we aim to break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage and promote long-term sustainable change for communities in the Illawarra Shoalhaven (particularly those in Social Housing).

We believe that no single agency, organisation or sector can solve the complex and intertwined issues and challenges faced by communities suffering intergenerational disadvantage.

Placing the community at the centre of all that we do, ISSIT members work collectively, pooling resources, funding, time and effort to ensure our work is aligned, coordinated and meeting the actual needs of the community. We aim to shift the siloed perception of needs that is typical of a single organisational or sectoral viewpoint, towards a more holistic view that is continuously informed by public knowledge gained from working alongside the community.

Our work is authorised and guided by the ISSIT Advisory Board comprising senior leaders from the member organisations. We use a collective impact approach as the guiding framework for long-term change and investment:



*The Collective Impact framework as described by John Kania & Mark Kramer.  
Source: Collaboration for Impact*

ASIT is the neutral organisation that facilitates, coordinates, manages and hosts the initiative and the backbone team.

# The Theory of Change and Social Investment

Our Theory of Change is informed by the public knowledge gained from deep engagement with the community, our understanding the community's aspirations together with our developing understanding of the factors underlying the problems we are trying to solve through long term work with the Bellambi community. This work has been designed to occur in the four phases shown in the following graphic:



Our theory of change underpins the structure of the Community Action Plan. Unlike many other collective impact initiatives which direct action to one social problem or a single cohort, our work in Bellambi spans all cohorts and domains. It maps the conceptual links between the analysis of current issues, the strengths and opportunities that exist in the community, the implementation strategies and the desired long term outcomes and impacts in each of the four domains of the plan, namely: Safety and the Physical Environment; Learning, Education and Employment; Connections, Support and Inclusive community; and Community Focused Services. We expect the that the social and economic impacts - benefits for the community and return or yield on the investments made by collaborative partners - will be returned over a 10 to 20 year period. This requires the sustained implementation of a collective impact approach. The benefits include increased self reliance and economic and social independence and personal wellbeing of residents, reduced public costs including but not limited to costs associated with policing, juvenile justice and mental health.

# Bellambi – An Overview

Bellambi is located on Aboriginal land of the Dharawal people. It is situated 7km north of the Wollongong CBD, in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven region. Here is a **Bellambi snapshot** taken at the commencement of the collective impact work:



Nearly 40% of population living in social housing



**High rates for reported occurrences of domestic violence**



Bellambi's Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (SEIFA 2011) is 836, making it one of the most disadvantaged estates in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven.

**2<sup>nd</sup> highest level of Year 12 attainment compared to other Illawarra estates**



**of Bellambi social housing residents do not have a wage as the household's primary source of income**

**The median tenure length in social housing for Bellambi is higher than the average in NSW**



# The Community's Action Plan

Bellambi was the pilot location for the It's Our Place initiative.

In 2015, an action plan was co-created and guided by engagement with 800 Bellambi community members and representatives from business, schools, non-government organisations and government agencies.

The aim was to give everyone the opportunity to share their views and engage together to develop a Community Action Plan that would work towards achieving their aspirations for the Bellambi community.

A blended model of strengths based, community development approaches was used during this process, ensuring that the genuine community voice was at the core of this plan.

This is the first in a series of action plans that will be co-created with the community to fulfil a minimum 10-year commitment (to at least **2025**) to build a happy, healthy, safe and sustainable environment in Bellambi.

The actions within the plan were identified by the community and categorised under 4 themes:

Safety and The Physical Environment

Learning, Education and Employment

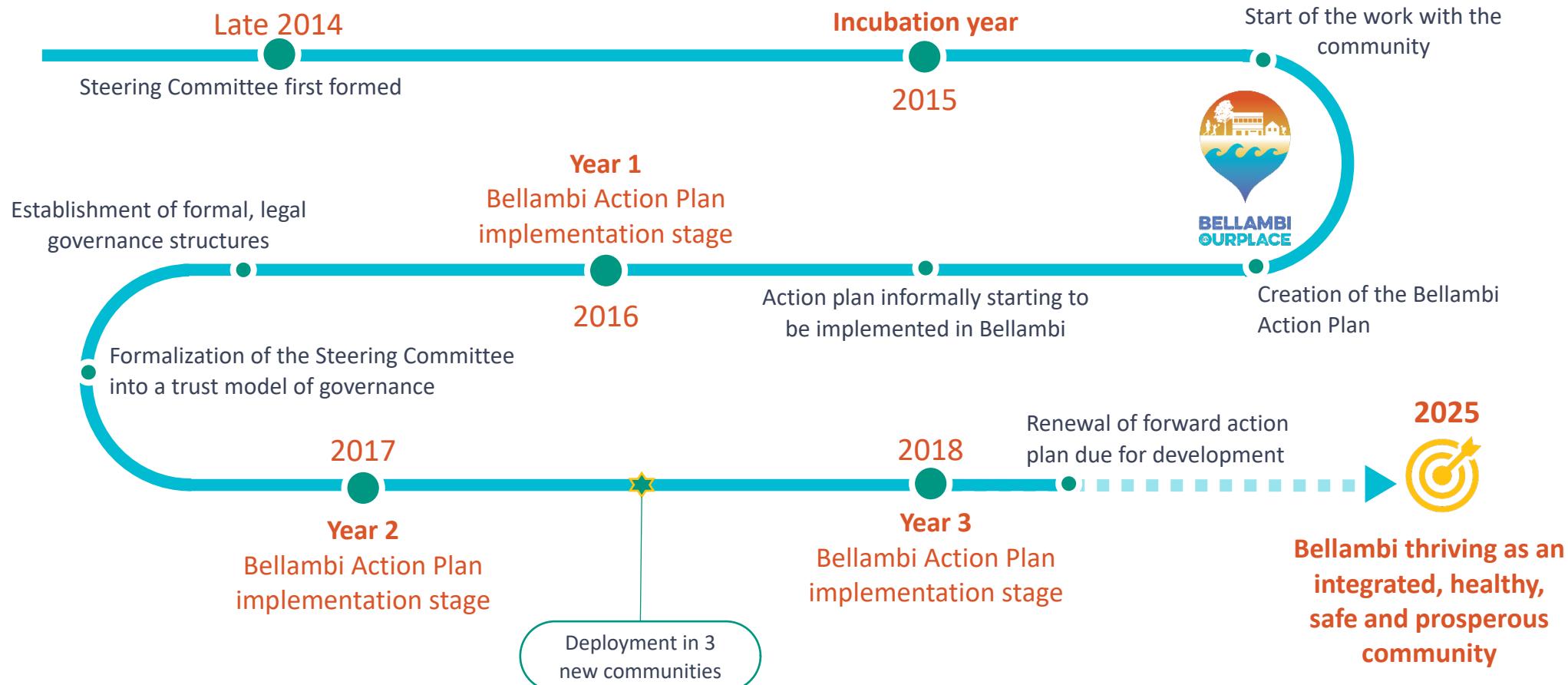
Connections, Support and Inclusive Communities

Community Focused Services



# The Community's Action Plan

It's Our Place Bellambi timeline



# Data, Measurement and Evaluation

We understand the importance of assessing progress not only based on the feedback provided by the community, but also by using factual data that allows us to impartially:

- measure our progress towards the goals set;
- promptly reassess our strategies in case of interim results that fall behind the milestones; and
- present strong evidence that the achievements of the Bellambi community impact beyond its four thousand residents, resulting in benefits across the wider Illawarra-Shoalhaven region.

This report presents the initial two years of work of It's Our Place (2016 and 2017) in Bellambi.

There are some challenges with data. For example, trustworthy and public available data sources such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics and some other government agencies do not use the same reporting periods. Notations have been made where this is the case. For transparency and objectivity, this report follows these premises:

## Base year: 2015

Collective impact work began in Bellambi in 2015. This has been adopted as the baseline year. Where there are no data for 2015, data for the period immediately preceding 2015 have been used.

## Current Year: 2016/2017

As a rule, the data on which we draw are the most current as at 31 July 2017. Goals have been set using comparisons with the local government area or nearest NSW state comparator. We will have further discussion with partners about realistic goals for some areas of the work.



# Data, Measurement and Evaluation

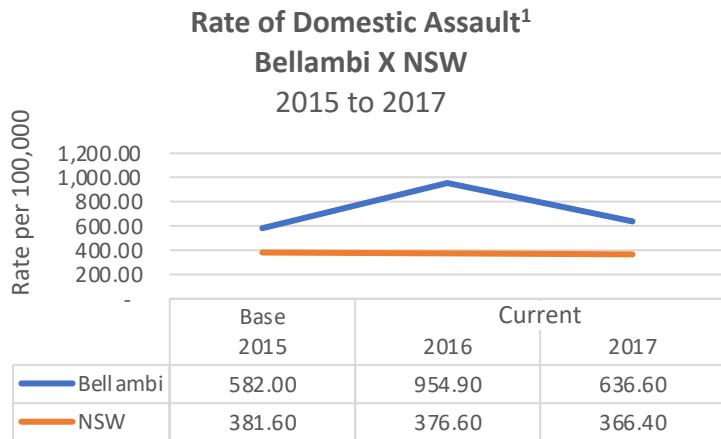
The data sources included in this report are:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (“ABS”)
  - 2011 Census data for base year
  - 2016 Census data for current information
- Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (“ACARA”)
  - Corrimbal High School “My School” data
    - 2015 data for base year
    - 2016 and 2017 data for current information
- Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (“BOCSAR”)
  - 2015 data for base year
  - 2016 and 2017 for current information
- Australian Early Development Census (“AEDC”) – Children vulnerable in one or more domains
  - 2012 and 2015 data for base year
  - Current year still non available, given that next report is expected to be released for 2018.

AEDC collects data on the vulnerability in kindergarten in a number of domains. Collection period for this data is every three years.



# Safety and The Physical Environment

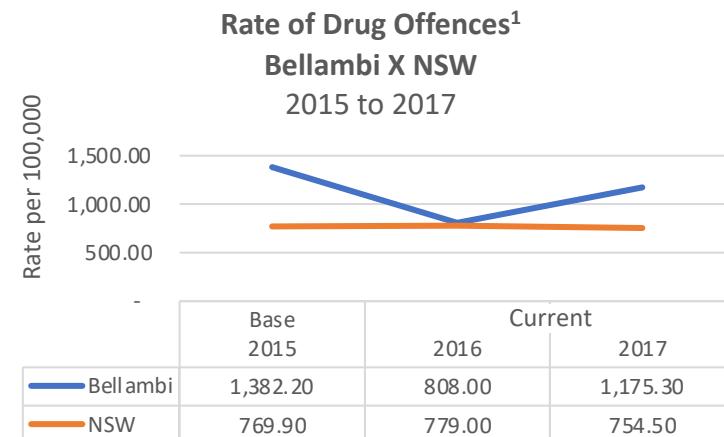


## How are we doing?

The community told us that rates of reported crime were low due to the fear of retribution and the community's disbelief that police would respond.

Actions such as safety audits, increasing police presence, mentoring programs and encouragement of crime reporting ("Crime Stoppers") have resulted in a considerable improvement of the relationship between the Bellambi community and the local Police Force.

The higher number of reported incidents shows that the Bellambi population feels more confident to report crimes.



## Why does it matter?

Fear of crime is not a motivator to report it to the police.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, crime in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities is often under-reported. The action plan aims to empower community members with knowledge and confidence to report crime in order to increase safety in their neighbourhoods.

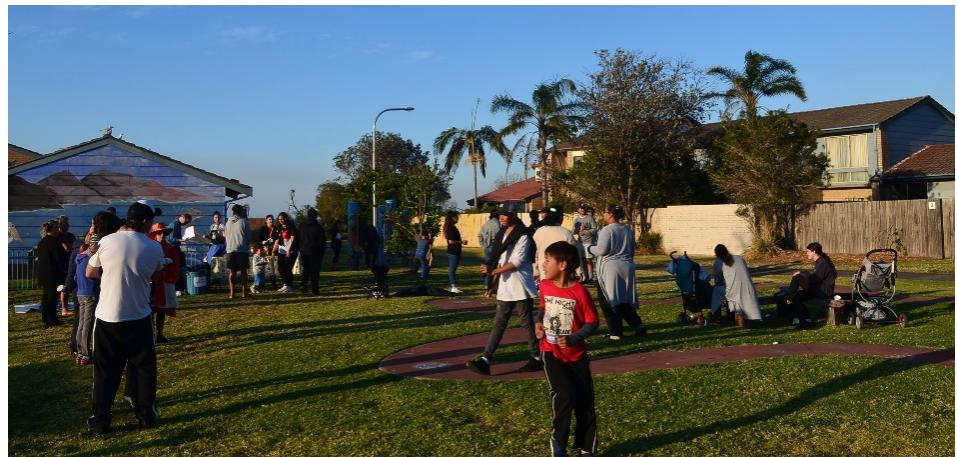
The growth in reports of criminal behaviour by community members is a positive step in addressing community safety as it shows a more accurate picture of crime rates in Bellambi than previously.

The goal is an overall reduction in reported and actual crime rates by 2025.

1. Source: BOCSAR

2. Source: Parliament of Australia Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. (2004). *Crime in Australia*.

# Safety and The Physical Environment



## ***Case Study: Working better together***

In March 2016 Police and FACS Housing Services undertook the first proactive joint door knock in the Mews area of Bellambi with the aim of promoting rubbish removal and crime reporting mechanisms with residents.

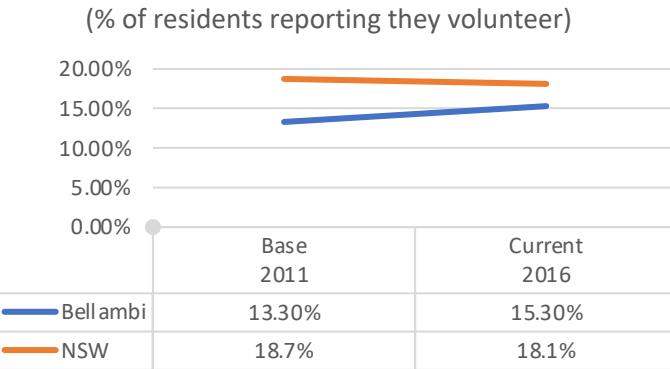
By conducting these door knocks together, each organisation has amplified the impact of their “business as usual”.

Reports to Crime Stoppers increased significantly in the period following and have been consistently higher than in previous periods.

This was the first time that Police and FACS Housing have undertaken proactive door knocking of this kind in the Wollongong Local Area Command. This approach has since expanded into other social housing estates in the Illawarra.

# Connections, Support and Inclusive Communities

## Voluntary work with a group or organisation<sup>1</sup>



### Our Goal 2025

Minimum of **18.1%** of residents reporting they volunteer with a group or Organisation in Bellambi.

## How are we doing?

The initial engagement activities in Bellambi were developed to build trust, social cohesion and community ownership for residents living in the area.

Support of the Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre, community volunteering, the encouragement of new community members to attend community events and the development of the community safety group are some examples of activities that brought the community together.

A total of nine community events were held since It's Our Place Bellambi started and there has been gradual rise in community participation in these activities.

## Why does it matter?

It is well documented that an upsurge in community cohesion and trust results in a reduction in social isolation and marginalisation and an improvement in mental wellbeing and perceptions of safety for individuals living in those communities.

The growth in the propensity to volunteer within their community shows a willingness of residents to engage with others and a developing sense of community ownership.<sup>2</sup>

This is further verified by the qualitative data collected through community events and the increasing independence of the community in organising their own initiatives such as the Bellambi Safety Group.



1. Source: ABS Census

2. Source: Australian Human Rights Commission. (2017). *Building Social Cohesion in Communities*

# Connections, Support and Inclusive Communities



## *Case Study: Domestic Violence Mentoring Program*

Domestic violence was identified as an issue of major concern within the Bellambi community. Community members felt that they either did not know who to turn to for assistance, or did not feel safe doing so.

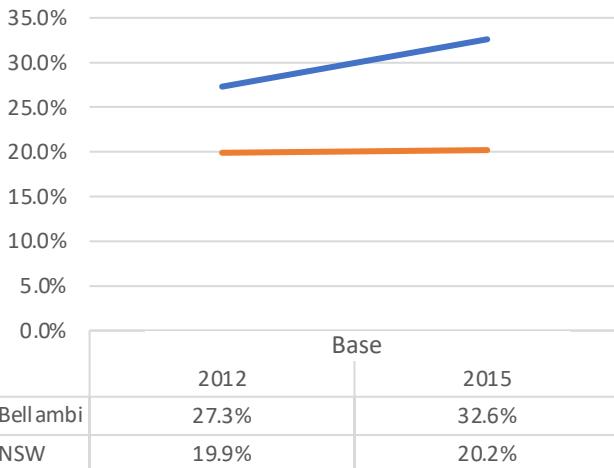
In response to these concerns, Wollongong Police and TAFE Illawarra designed and ran a mentoring program to give community leaders the skills and information necessary to assist with a range of social and community issues.

These community mentors are now the trusted people that residents can turn to for assistance; playing a major role in encouraging the community to stand up against domestic violence and supporting victims to seek help increase their safety.



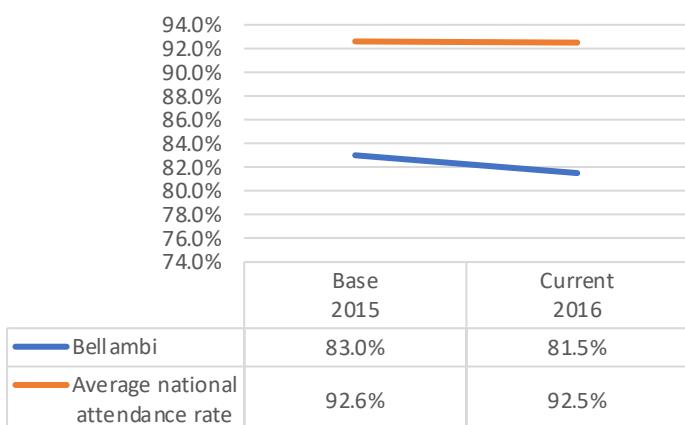
# Learning, Education and Employment

% of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains<sup>1</sup>



**Our Goal 2025**  
Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable in Bellambi not higher than **19.4%**

High school attendance rate<sup>2</sup>



**Our Goal 2025**  
Minimum high school attendance rate of **97.5%**

## How are we doing?

Historically, general learning, educational and employment performance rates have been challenging in Bellambi.

With that in mind, we adopted a holistic approach, with initiatives ranging from actions encouraging parents to enrol their children in pre-school to enriching teachers' professional development activities and supporting alternative education programs.

It is expected that we will see more significant results from this holistic approach in the coming years.



1. AEDC Census Data. No data is available for the current period. The next report is expected to include results for 2018.

2. Corrimal High School "My School" data (ACARA)

# Learning, Education and Employment

## ***Case Study: Early learning***

The community told us they wanted more opportunity for their children to go to pre-school and local teachers told us that many children coming to Bellambi Public School were not “school-ready”. In 2015-16 we found that very few or no pre-school aged children from Bellambi were enrolled in either of the local pre-schools. The Community Action Plan included action to investigate barriers to access for pre-school aged children in Bellambi in order to increase access for local children.

In June 2016 the ISSIT backbone team compiled information packs on pre-school and these were delivered to the homes of 25 families with pre-school aged children who were living in social housing. Direct follow up with families was not possible because of privacy considerations however the local Housing team agreed to include information on pre-school in the Welcome Pack for new tenants.

In early 2018, 18 children from Bellambi were enrolled at one of the pre-schools. We cannot currently access data to show the extent to which ISSIT has influenced this change and there are likely to be many factors at play. It will be important that we will stay focused on pre-school access because we know that it is beneficial for children’s physical, social and educational development and it prepares them for school.



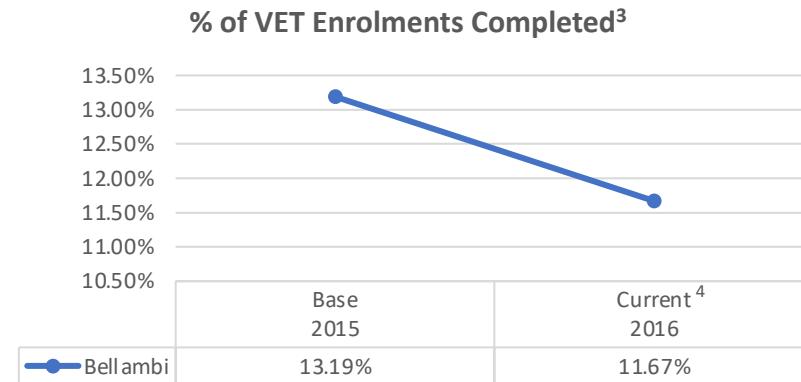
# Learning, Education and Employment

## Why does it matter?

Evidence tells us that a person's life successes, health and emotional wellbeing have their roots in early childhood.<sup>1</sup> Also, there is a direct correlation between work and improved health and wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>

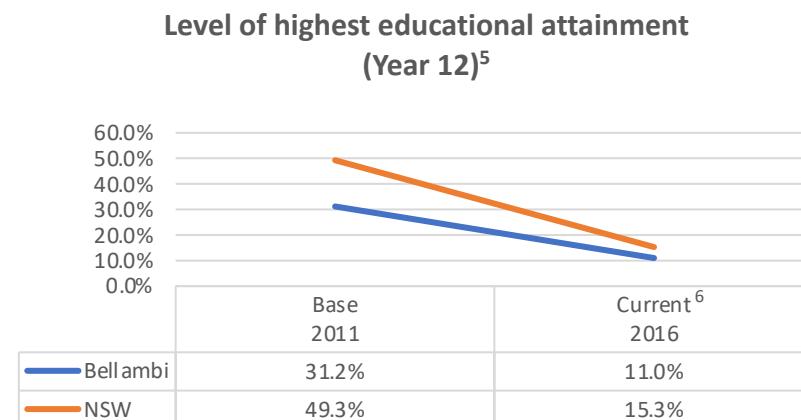
Hence, the importance of supporting children and young people's education along the spectrum from cradle to career, enabling them to envision and access new possibilities, providing pathways for individual success, economic independence and the maintenance of health and wellbeing.

The ongoing commitment to the Bellambi community is expected to further support vulnerable individuals and families and over the long term to increase the overall employment rate in Bellambi.



**Our Goal 2025**

To have **100%** of the VET enrolments completed.



**Our Goal 2025**

Level of highest educational attainment (Year 12) of at least **15.3%**

1. Source: Australian Early Development Census. (2014). *The Importance of Early Childhood Development*

2. Source: Royal College of Psychiatrists. (2014). *Work is a key clinical outcome*  
Corrimal High School "My School" data (ACARA)

4. Data from 2017 was not available by the time this report was published.

5. ABS Census data

6. ABS counting rule changed to exclude Cert III as ANHSC equivalent in the 2016 Census.

# Learning, Education and Employment



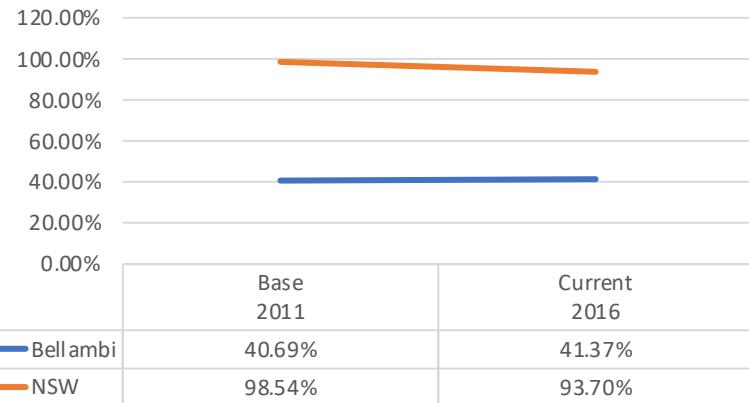
## *Case Study: Corrimal Community of Schools (CoS) leads in STEM education*

The CoS wanted to improve their STEM results and schools' reputations, and increase students' and teachers' pride in their schools. We facilitated a collaboration with the CoS and Google aimed at inspiring and supporting teachers' commitment to STEM education. Over 100 teachers received professional development from Google at no cost. These teachers also had access to a suite of Google teaching tools for use in the classroom. The CoS has continued its focus on STEM.

Corrimal HS is now a STEM-focussed High School, recognised as a "leader in 21st Century learning". Student groups across the CoS have also been recognised for their STEM learning and achievements. In mid 2016 Year 9 and 10 students from Corrimal HS displayed their STEM skills at the University of Wollongong Science and Engineering Challenge and in mid 2017 a team of five girls from Corrimal HS won the Social Change through STEM competition.

# Learning, Education and Employment

## % of population in the labour force<sup>1</sup>



### Our Goal 2025

To have at least **93.7%** of Bellambi population in the labour force



Illawarra Mercury  
21 July 2017 ·

...

The new Bunnings Warehouse Bellambi is expected to create over 150 new jobs once open.



### Big moves for Bunnings in the Illawarra

Bunnings' plans for the Illawarra have received a boost.  
[illawarramercury.com.au](http://illawarramercury.com.au)

### *Case Study: Bunnings*

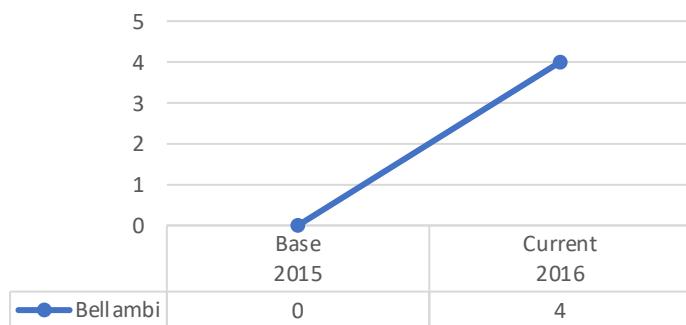
In the course of an environmental scan to identify the resources and assets in the Bellambi community, we discovered that Bunnings owned land in Bellambi. We approached the national office and engaged directly with the local manager of Bunnings as the company's plans for the site took shape.

Bunnings committed to participate in three community projects: the community garden at the Neighbourhood Centre and the improvements at Staithes and Pembroke Mews. We convened a meet involving Bunnings, the Chamber of Commerce, Bellambi Surf club and ACSO to workshop how we could assist residents gain opportunities for employment with Bunnings when the centre opened. As a result there were sessions at both the Neighbourhood Centre and the Surf Club for residents on how to apply for jobs. Bunnings opened in December 2017 providing 150 jobs, some of which we understand have been taken up by local residents (we are in the process of verifying the numbers of residents with ongoing employment).

Bunnings is an important and valued partner in our work in Bellambi.

# Community Focused Services

## Number of alignment activities (Interagency collaboration)<sup>1</sup>



### How are we doing?

The Community Action Plan in its current stage works to build trust and communication between services by facilitating positive interactions between government and NGO agencies on a range of levels.

Since the commencement of the Action Plan, activities such as networking events, assisting with funding reform and convening new mechanisms for case coordination around the most vulnerable families in Bellambi have been delivered.

This is an ongoing commitment and actions will evolve with the needs of the community and service system.

### Our Goal 2025

At least **10**  
alignment  
activities in  
place

### Why does it matter?

There is significant evidence of a correlation between improved client outcomes and interagency collaboration, particularly in regards to outcomes for children and families.<sup>2</sup>

However, achieving effective interagency collaboration is often easier said than done with low levels of trust, communication and systematic interactions being identified as barriers to collaboration.<sup>3</sup>

By facilitating collaboration between agencies, we are able to ensure that vulnerable families in the community are efficiently serviced to create increased positive outcomes.

Therefore, it is paramount to undertake activities that reduce the barriers to collaboration and work to build a more integrated service system.

1. Only activities that aligned at service system level are included. E.g. Bellambi Family Partnerships and Targeted Early Intervention (TEI)
2. Source: McDonald, M. Rosier, K. (2011). Australian Institute for Family Studies Briefing: Interagency Collaboration
3. Source: NSW Government (2011). Research to practice note - Interagency Collaboration: Making it work

# Community Focused Services



## *Case Study: Alignment of resources for the Community Hub*

The Bellambi action plan identified the importance of the Neighbourhood Centre as a hub within the community.

Wollongong City Council, FACS, Community Industry Group, ASIT, and the ISSIT backbone team used their resources and knowledge to strengthen governance at the centre, coordinating the efforts to achieve the most favourable outcomes.

The collaborative approach ensured the organisation was in compliance with legal requirements and other statutory norms while also encompassing the right foundations for future growth and sustainability.



# Conclusion

## An Assessment of the First Two Years

The past two years have seen a significant coordinated investment by all agencies in Bellambi and some encouraging early signs of change. Improvements in the physical environment with the removal of graffiti and rubbish are now being maintained by residents themselves. While Bellambi residents say they feel better about their community and attribute this to the It's Our Place work, it is too early to see this narrative reflected strongly in the quantitative data. For this work to have sustainable positive impacts it requires a long term, minimum 10 year commitment. We will track data over time to measure the impact of this work on the lives of residents living in social housing in Bellambi and the benefits that also accrue for the broader community.

Our chief learning from this work is the importance of continually drawing on the public knowledge and holding the community at the centre. This ensures that the work proceeds at the pace of the community.

We genuinely appreciate the contributions of all partners in this work without whom the community would not have experienced improvements to their lives and to the life of their community.



## What's Next?

In mid 2018 we will meet with the community to co-design the next Community Action Plan.

We will be seeking to establish new partnerships with philanthropy and other organisations to extend the reach of projects and programs and to assist in making the work sustainable.

WHERE WE LIVE, LEARN

WORK, AND PLAY

# OUR PLACE

BELLAMBI COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

COLLECTIVE 2518

"The community garden hasn't had any damage in six months and the place has cleaned up probably 60% of the way in the last 3.5 years - but still has a long way to go."

OUR PLACE TO NOW.

WE ALL LIVE HERE.

THIS IS OUR MEETING PLACE.

BELLAMBI IS FOR EVERYONE.



"The community is "getting there."



"Every Friday we come here and have coffee with new people"

"We want help for parents so they can support kids who need help"

OUR THEMES!

SAFETY AND THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

OUR THEMES!

LEARNING, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

COMMUNITY FOCUSED SERVICES

BELLAMBI NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

LET'S REACH OUR FULL POTENTIAL!

EMPOWERING LEARNING FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS WITH TECHNOLOGY.



"I've been taking my kids down to the beach more lately. I can't quite put my finger on it, maybe something's been cleaned up down there, I'm not sure, it just feels more friendly."

THIS IS DEADLY!

OUR HOME!

OUR MOB LIVES HERE!



"It is good to see them (police) around. They have been doing more visits which is good"

"Maintenance are coming out quicker and doing the job better"

"The young people seem to be more included. The community lunch is more inclusive. We are starting some new groups, a couple of years ago you wouldn't be able to just get these groups together. The Neighbourhood Centre is helping this."

WE ❤️ BELLAMBI

"We need programs to get young people engaged in education"





[Itsourplace.org.au](http://itsourplace.org.au)

[Itsourplace@asit.org.au](mailto:Itsourplace@asit.org.au)