

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**TITLE: Inglewood community hub takes shape**

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Plans are taking shape to breathe new life into the quiet corridors of one of Inglewood's finest heritage buildings.

The imposing 1883 town hall, distinguished by its memorial clock tower and iconic palm trees, is a historic jewel, but over time some parts of the building have fallen into disrepair.

The building and grounds are owned by Loddon Shire and administered by a committee comprising Council and community representatives.

The town hall has been part of the fabric of the Inglewood community from its earliest days.

Town hall committee chairman Don Walker, 82, has had a long association with the building and knows every corner of it.

"The town hall was the centre of the Borough of Inglewood for close on 100 years before the borough merged into the Shire of Korong," Mr Walker said.

"I was the projectionist for the pictures there for more than 13 years.

"That building has also housed the kindergarten and infant welfare centre – I remember taking my kids up there.

"It's been the place for dances, balls and concerts and the committee working on the Blue Eucy Festival used to meet there.

"Even today, the Salvos and Lions Club put on a Christmas event for the kids in the building and grounds – and the Good Friday Appeal usually runs out of it."

This rich history of local ownership is the backdrop for the latest moves to cement the town hall's place in the life of the Inglewood community.

In October last year, a Project Working Group picked up the reins of a new push to create a community hub in the town hall precinct.

This group has seven members representing community interests, the Bendigo Bank, State Government and Council, one of whom is Loddon Shire Mayor Cr Geoff Curnow.

Council's Manager Community Planning, Tim Jenkyn, said the town hall was a building highly valued by Inglewood residents and an ideal site for the proposed community hub.

“The Project Working Group is looking at what can be done and hopes to build a plan for the future to take back to stakeholders,” Mr Jenkyn said.

“What is needed is to bring the building back up to standard – doing upgrades and repairs and putting facilities in suitable for community tenancy.

“These could be meeting rooms, computer rooms or training spaces, but any work would need to take into account the heritage aspects of the property and ensure any changes enhanced those aspects.

“We would envisage such a hub could incorporate community centre programs and some business activity and, potentially, attract a range of events. There are six or so of these a year at the moment, but the building could handle more.”

Mr Jenkyn said the input from Inglewood residents had been excellent.

“This undertaking has produced the highest level of community engagement of any Loddon Shire project I’ve seen,” he said.

“The town hall is such a gracious old building. It’s the only two-storey building Council owns and a community hub would make good use of this through a range of activities.

“This could enhance what is already the main public square in the township of Inglewood.”

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John McLinden, Chief Executive Officer

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