




**Nichols Point Community Plan
2012**






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Where is Nichols Point?



The Nichols Point area shown by the blue perimeter line has been defined for the purposes of this Community plan. Due to the boundaries of other adjoining Community Plans and a need to provide a Community Planning opportunity to all areas, the Nichols Point definition has been identified as Cowra Avenue and Eleventh Street to the water fronts of the Murray River and Kings Billabong. This is not a postcode or an Australian Bureau of Statistics area and there are other definitions of Nichols Point for a variety of other purposes. We welcome anyone who feels a connection with Nichols Point to get involved. Our plan has been created by the community for the community.



The Past

The naming of Nichols Point

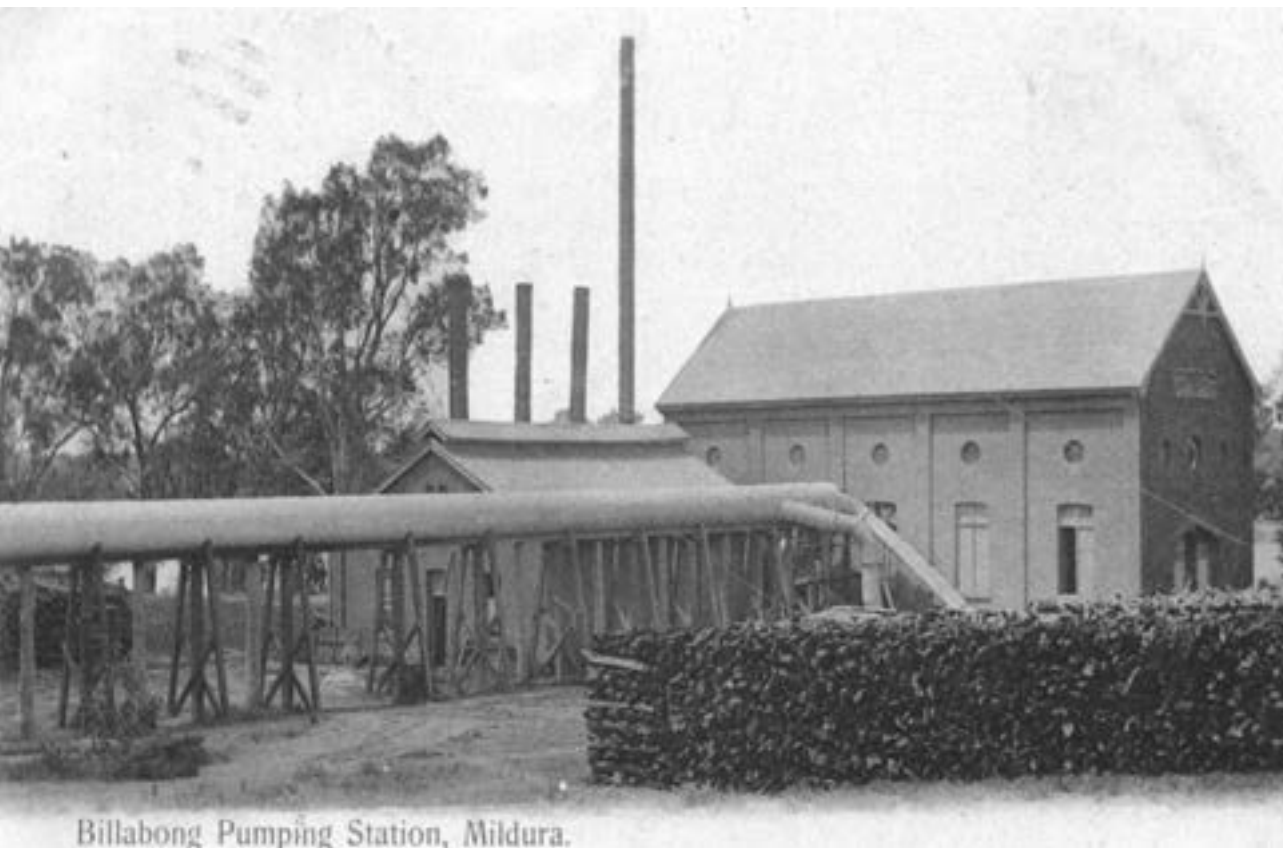
A young man called John Henry Nichols came to Australia on a sailing ship from England. He found a job as an overseer. He met and fell in love with Mary and wed in 1853. John Henry was an extremely hard worker and one day when he had chased some wayward bulls via horse, one of the mavericks turned and charged at him. With the horse now in a panic, he was bolted off and luckily fell only a few feet from a tree. He quickly scrambled up the tree to safety. John Henry stayed up in that tree all afternoon and well into the night to avoid a potentially disastrous meeting with the bull.

Early in the morning a search party came to find him settled up the tree. One of the lads in the search party then said "Let's call here Nichols Point eh mates; the bull has had a win." And ever since the area has kept its name.

John Henry Nichols died 8 March 1914 and Mary in December 1920. They both were laid to rest within the Nichols Point Cemetery.

Development of Nichols Point

According to official locality records used by Local and State Government, Nichols Point is a somewhat triangular shaped area bounded by Cowra Avenue, Eleventh Street and the Murray River. Nichols Point has a thriving community and is home to a dynamic primary school, general store and post office, recreation reserve and the popular tourist attraction Woodsies Gem Shop. It is also where you will find Kings Billabong Park, one of the most beautiful natural attractions in the region. The 2,153 hectare site borders a wide stretch of the Murray River and features a network of wetlands, abundant birdlife and is sheltered by a canopy of majestic river red gums.



Billabong Pumping Station, Mildura.

Kings Billabong and local history enthusiast Marjorie Donnellan says a permanent population of hermits and fishermen settled in the area more than a century ago. But the first signs of modern civilisation came in 1889 when pumping stations were built at Psyche Bend, Kings Billabong and Nichols Point as part of George and WB Chaffey's irrigation scheme for the region.

According to Andrew C Ward's *The Desert Blooms*, which recounts the history and development of the City and Shire of Mildura, the 'Billabong' system comprised of three pumping stations. The Psyche Bend Pumping Station elevated water from the river to Kings Billabong; the Billabong Pumping Station then pumped it to the Nichols Point station where it was dispersed to blocks throughout the region via a network of unsealed irrigation channels and other pump systems.

"After the pumping stations were built, many workers' cottages were built nearby," Marj said.

Two gorgeous little red brick homes stand side by side in Cooke Street, Nichols Point and offer a glimpse into the area's early days.

"There are a few different versions going round about what these houses were originally built for, but the Mildura and District Historical Society's book *Driving History* states that the Chaffey's erected some of them for pump engineers around the 1890s. One was also apparently the Customs House."



As the population of irrigators in Nichols Point increased, so too did the need for services. A primary school was opened for 42 students in May 1892. Classes were initially held in a 'bough shelter' structure before the school moved into the Methodist Church in July of the same year. This site, on the corner of Fifth Street and Koorlong Avenue was used until 1907 when classes moved into a newly built brick building across the road. The Nichols Point Post Office opened in 1908.



Kings Billabong Park- A rich history

Local Indigenous people have enjoyed the Billabong's rich life-supporting wetland food supply for thousands of years. Shell middens (kitchen hearths), burials and scar trees indicate a lifestyle celebrated on these banks for centuries. The Billabong was an important meeting place between Murray nations and travellers from the south.

Kings Billabong took its name from the indigenous word for still water - billabong, and its European name from Captain James King, who navigated the Murray River and its tributaries in the late 19th century.

The Chaffey Brothers from Canada selected Kings Billabong as the central water supply to establish the Mildura Irrigation Settlement. By 1891 a 1,000 horse powered pumping engine was installed at Psyche Bend to maintain the water level. The restored steam-powered pump at Psyche Bend can often be seen operating on key holiday weekends.

Today, the reserve is supported by the Friends of Kings Billabong who can regularly be seen helping to maintain the health and integrity of this special place.



The Present

Nichols point is primarily a grape horticultural producing area within a tranquil rural setting, which over the years has strongly been protected by local residents. Nichols Point residents proudly maintain a rural outlook whilst incorporating modern day activities. Progressively we have seen a growth in the number of residents and subdivision developments seeking our rural and community life style.

School

The reputation of the Nichols Point School is well known and respected across the region which has seen community members buying in the area to attend this school. To accommodate for this demand, the school was granted funds and has completed the construction of a new school. They continue to provide the same values and commitment, whilst seeking, implementing and developing new and innovative programs. The school executives, teachers, parents and students take pride in their reputation and strive to continually set new heights to achieve. This is evident in the commitment of their involvement in the community development surveys and the pictures the students submitted for display throughout this plan.

Scout Hall

The old hall located on the corner of Cureton and Karadoc Avenues was initially housed by the First Mildura Irrigation Trust as their original pump station. The Scout Association of Australia – Victoria/Sunraysia Branch took over in the 1960s. The Sunraysia Scout Association opens its facilities and welcomes a variety of clubs such as the Electric Light Theatre, Nichols Point Arts Group, Murray to Moyne Cycle Relay, square dancing and the Sunraysia Two Way Radio Association. This is a dynamic centre that engages activities for all ages particularly the youth of the Sunraysia district. The tireless and committed efforts from the volunteers of the Scout Association have ensured its continued patronage, growth and improvements.

Nichols Point Recreation Reserve

The oval currently accommodates a number of sports, including men's, women's and junior; soccer, rugby and cricket clubs which are welcoming and community based. Also located on the Recreation Reserve is the old Nichols Point Public Hall which is no longer in use by the community. Tennis courts were removed from the reserve in 2011 to make way for additional parking spaces.

Tennis Club

The local Nichols Point Tennis Club was relocated opposite the Riverside Golf Club. In recent times they have seen a demand and growth within the club.

Riverside Golf Club

The Riverside Golf Club boasts a luscious 18 hole course and welcomes visitors and members to enjoy its range of services including golf cart hire and a licensed club house overlooking the 18th hole. The club is uniquely run by a committee of volunteers and is renowned for its involvement in Sunraysia's major golfing events.

Horse Complex

The horse complex is on the grounds owned by the Department of Primary Industry and leased through the Mildura Rural City Council who relocated the Pony Club from the now Aero Ovals to the current area of approximately 32ha. The Horse Complex Inc was established in September 1986 in an effort to keep all of the Equestrian Sports Clubs together in the one area thus forming the affiliation of the Mildura Alcheringa Pony Club, Mildura Equestrian Club and the Sunraysia Harness Club. Due to hard work from volunteers of these clubs, the grounds were turned from an area of swampy looking ground covered with dead trees to a home for Equestrian Sports. In May 1989 a relocatable complex provided club rooms for the clubs to share. Now in 2012 the grounds are comparable to other Country Equestrian Centres, and it is improving all the time, thanks to the tireless efforts and commitment of the volunteers. The clubs provide major Equestrian and Racing events throughout the year attracting both locals and visitors.

Nichols Point Birds

The rural aspect of Nichols Point lends itself to residents to pursue hobbies that often lead to business opportunities such as Nichols Point Birds. A passionate hobby breeding and caring for Australian parrots has developed into a business of breeding, buying and selling primarily Australian parrots however has expanded to other breeds.

Kings Billabong Park

The tranquil billabong is a highly valued conservation reserve that supports a number of wildlife species and waterbirds. Whilst preserving its natural beauty it is alluring for the tourist, bird watchers, bushwalkers, nature lovers, campers, cyclists, fishing, canoeing, dog walking and horse riding enthusiasts. There are many ways that this wild and natural land attracts and captivates the varied uses of the reserve. It has three specific trails to accommodate a variety of needs ranging from a 200m loop, 3.5km loop to a 9.5 km loop.

Bruce's Bend

Whilst Bruce's Bend Marina houses a number of houseboats it also offers and accommodates a boat ramp for the fisherman and water-skiers to launch their boats. Similar to the Kings Billabong it attracts bushwalkers, bird watchers, nature lovers, campers, cyclists, fishing, canoeing, dog walking, horse riding, swimming and lends itself to accommodate any rural activities for the enthusiasts, tourists and locals alike.

Woodsies

Woodsies Gem Shop is one of the largest of its kind and caters for the whole family. It is a tourist attraction that provides educational sessions in jewellery making and gem information which supplies the gift shop. The playground caters for the young children whilst the maze keeps the family active and entertained for hours. The café offers a menu with lunch and light refreshments which is set in a cave overlooking the playground. From humble beginnings in the family shed in 1973, it is now one of Mildura's most renowned tourist attractions.

Nichols Point Store and Post Office

The local shop is the hub of the community and a meeting place based in the heart of Nichols Point and provides a variety of services to local residents. The store owners have a strong following from the locals earned by their generosity and support of locals and events. Services include; postal, giftware, newsagency, groceries, takeaway and beverages. The business also provides daily lunch orders to the local school.

Nichols Point Church

Nichols Point is the home of the only Presbyterian Church in Sunraysia. Whilst the original church burnt down many years ago, the current church enjoys a Sunday service at 10am each week with a congregation stretching far and wide outside of the Nichols Point area.

Nichols Point Cemetery

Nichols Point Cemetery is the resting place for many Sunraysia residents. Many have come home to rest in the peaceful and tranquil manicured lawns which boasts a wealth of history. It accommodates a range of cultural preferences.



The Future

Definitions

Robust - full of health and strength, vigorous, hardy, powerfully built.

Posterity - future generations, all of a person's descendants.

Our Future

Nichols Point is a vibrant, diverse community located approximately 4km east from Mildura. It borders on the bank of the Murray River with its billabongs and wildlife, enrapturing all the beauty and tranquillity that suggests.

Nichols Point has a thriving community and is home to a dynamic primary school, general store and post office, recreation reserve and the popular tourist attraction Woodsies Gem Shop. It is also where you find Kings Billabong [Wildlife Reserve], one of the most beautiful natural attractions in the region. The 2,153 ha site borders a wide stretch of Murray River and features a network of wetlands, abundant birdlife and is sheltered by a canopy of majestic river red gums. Mieka Symes 2012 (editor Mildura Living Magazine)

We need a Community plan to envision a way forward so that we do not lose what we treasure most, our peaceful little rural outpost where busy people can relax and unwind in a healthy way. We hope to include and inspire the community whilst respecting the rights and privacy of all. We will work in with existing groups and encourage new groups to utilise the facilities we already have.

In order to form a more robust community, promote safety and transport, preserve and improve the natural environment and waterways, increase pride in our town, increase and improve recreation and leisure activities, celebrate and promote the history and culture of Nichols Point/Kings Billabong and secure the blessing of living in our little piece of paradise for ourselves and our posterity, we, as a community group, endorse the Nichols Point Community Plan.

Our plan aims to expand our existing assets and add to them by such projects as increasing and connecting the network of bike/walking tracks, establishing more services in order to better provide for the current and future residents of Nichols Point, and also to enable Mildura's city population to sample what this area has to offer, beautifying our streets with native plantings to create a living link with our waterways and the establishment of more community events, activities and a community area and moreover, to promote community connectedness and pride, to ensure all who live in the area can feel they are a part of the community.

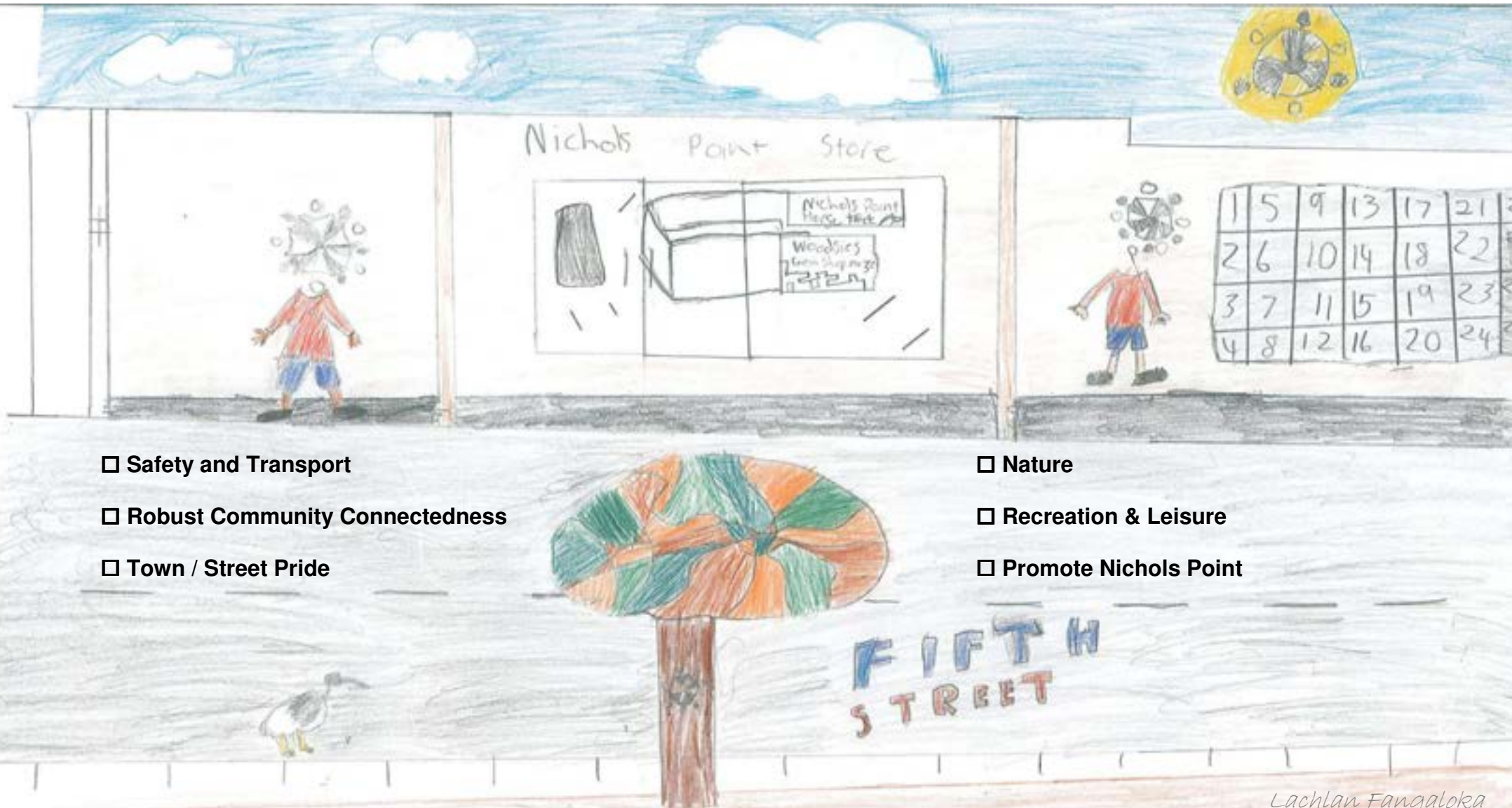
There are numerous walking/bike and horse trails around the area which could be linked to improve access to, and the enjoyment of, our rural paradise. A consideration when linking these tracks would also be increasing the safety of users.

We hope Nichols Point will remain a place for everyone, which includes horse riding on trails of their own, and people of like-minded healthy outdoor pursuits, including dog walkers (on leads), bird watchers, photographers, canoeists, anglers, and the list goes on. These activities are all currently enjoyed and are done in harmony with the wildlife we care for. We feel it is very important to keep the current links to nature and the wildlife both now and in future generations.

We have already begun the connecting our community with regular community meetings held at Woodsies Gem Shop supported by Mildura Rural City Council's Community Development Officer and we invite all who are interested in helping to improve our area to come along and get involved with the Nichols Point Community Plan. We hope to see as many residents as possible attend these meetings in order to gain a wide scope of community input, as a robust community we can achieve anything. Nichols Point community, we hope to make you proud!

THEMES

Feedback from the community was obtained through a number of different methods including one on one chats, existing group meetings, open invitation public meetings, community BBQ's, drop in sessions at the store, surveys, as well as electronically via email and online surveys. The following six themes emerged from this feedback.



☐ Safety and Transport

☐ Robust Community Connectedness

☐ Town / Street Pride

☐ Nature

☐ Recreation & Leisure

☐ Promote Nichols Point

Lachlan Fangaloka



SAFETY & TRANSPORT

Safety and Transport includes traffic management, public transport, children safety and awareness. Many respondents to the Community Plan survey felt there is a need for improved public transport. We will investigate and encourage this in the form of a passenger bus with stops focusing on where the majority of the population reside, and also locations that would be of convenience, such as stops close to the existing walking tracks which lead to the billabong. We would like to see the establishment and maintenance of bus shelters to cater for present and future bus services.

Proposed actions / projects:

- ☐ **Establish and maintain bus shelters**
- ☐ **Investigate a community bus**
- ☐ **Increase and maintain bike / walking tracks (connecting)**
- ☐ **Promote safe cycling / horse riding**

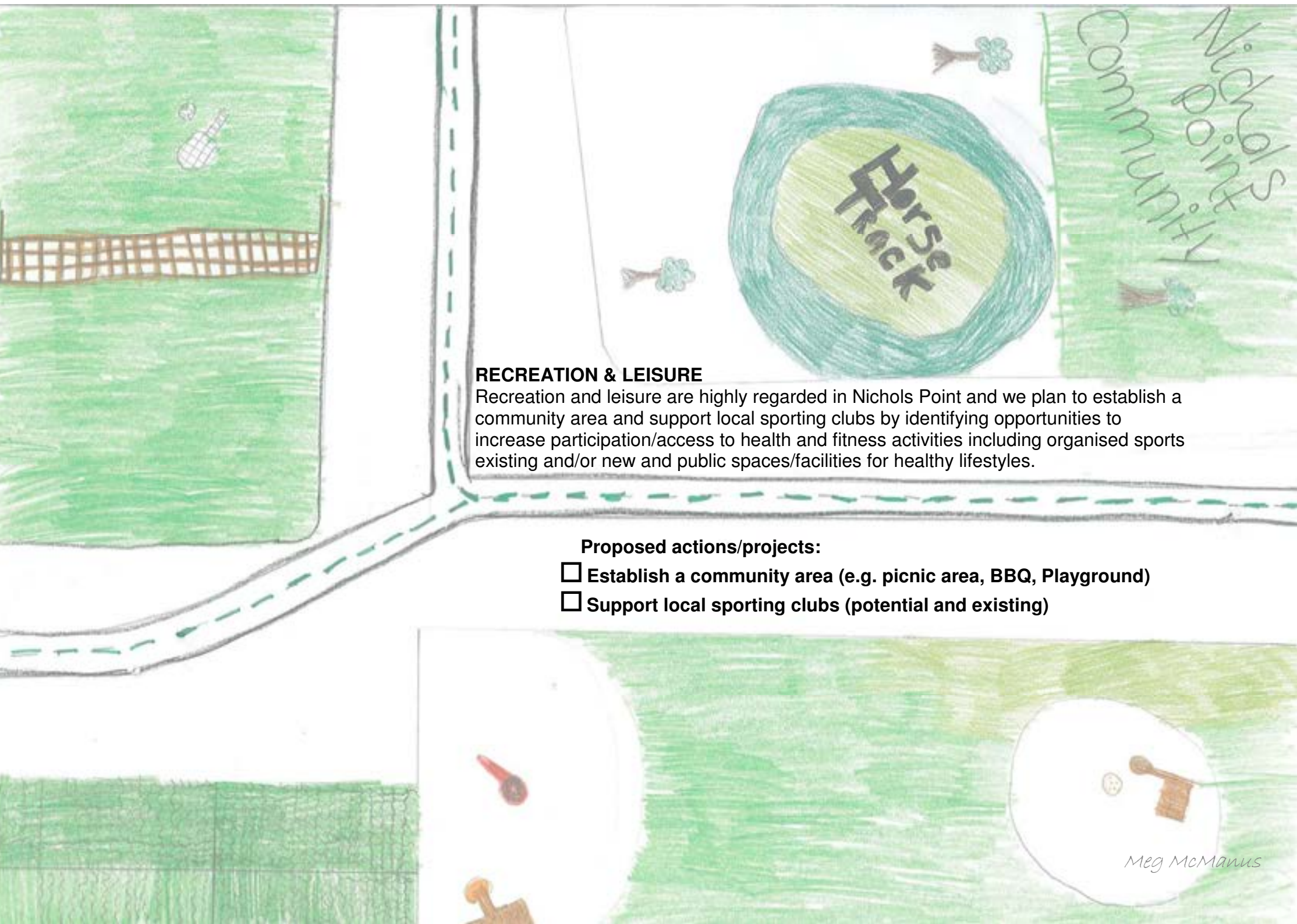
TOWN/STREET PRIDE

Town/Street pride and planning includes beautification works, maintenance and awareness. The beauty and tidiness of our street scapes will be a reflection of our community pride.

Proposed actions / projects:

- ☐ Weed control
- ☐ Promote tidiness in streets
- ☐ Tree plantings and maintenance of trees
- ☐ Beautification of street scapes





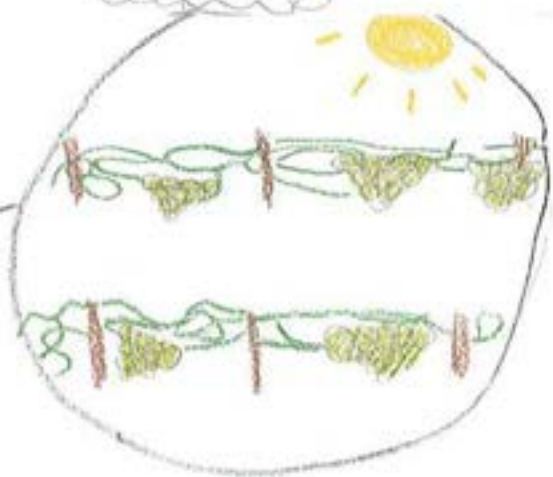
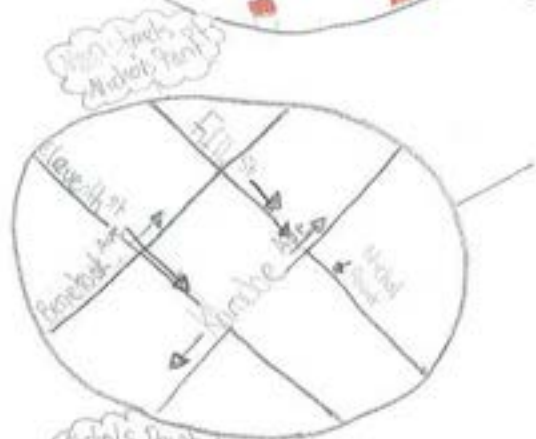
RECREATION & LEISURE

Recreation and leisure are highly regarded in Nichols Point and we plan to establish a community area and support local sporting clubs by identifying opportunities to increase participation/access to health and fitness activities including organised sports existing and/or new and public spaces/facilities for healthy lifestyles.

Proposed actions/projects:

- ☐ Establish a community area (e.g. picnic area, BBQ, Playground)
- ☐ Support local sporting clubs (potential and existing)

Meg McManus



NATURE

Nature provides the paradise that is Nichols Point and we plan to promote and facilitate responsible community use of our natural environment and support local environmental groups to do the same.

Proposed actions/projects:

- ☐ Promote and facilitate responsible community use of natural environment
- ☐ Preserve and maintain natural waterways

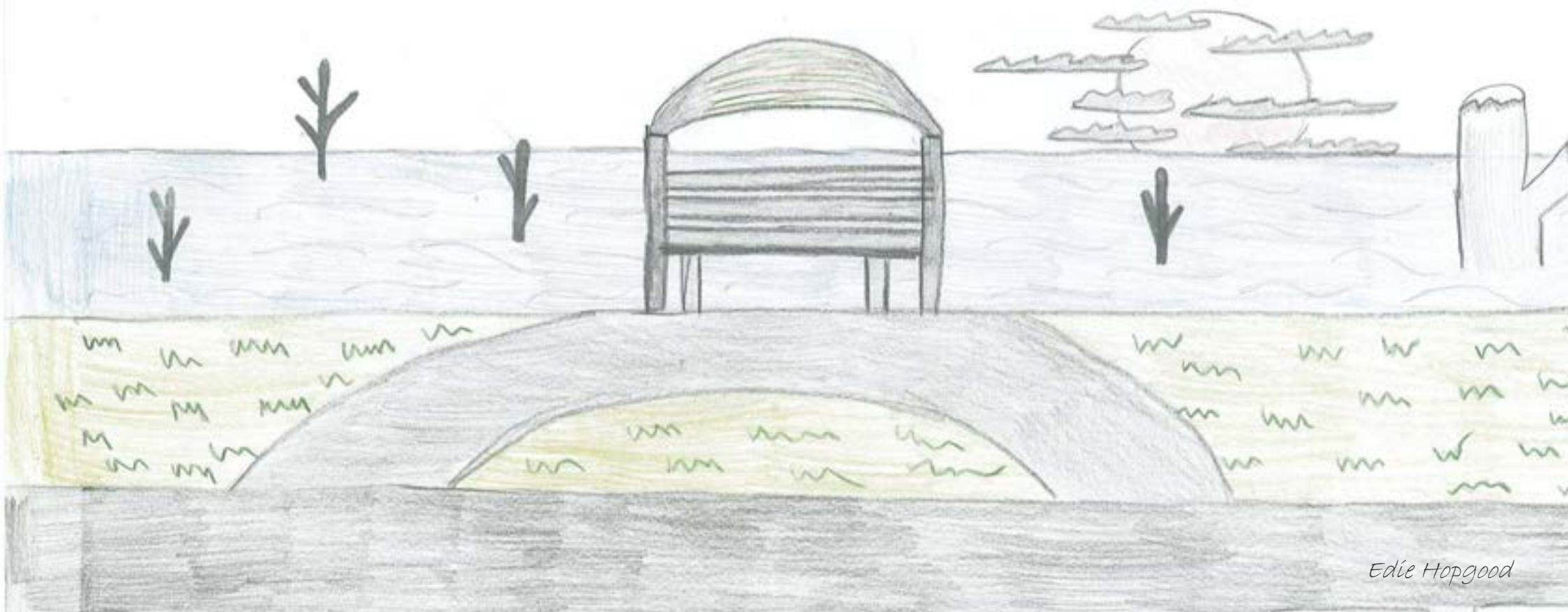


PROMOTE NICHOLS POINT

Already a proud community, we hope to broaden this feeling by embracing our diversity, respecting the rights and privacy of the individual, providing information to the whole community about local events and local businesses. There is also a strong desire to discover, record, celebrate and promote the history and culture of Nichols Point/Kings Billabong. This has been a very rewarding experience for our group in the compilation of our plan and has proven to be a great community building exercise for both the interviewers and the interviewees.

Proposed actions/projects:

- ☐ Celebrate and promote the history of Nichols Point / Kings Billabong
- ☐ Support and promote local businesses



Edie Hopgood

ROBUST COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

We have already begun connecting our community by forming a community group in the process of developing this plan. We are a diverse group of local people whom have learnt so much about the place we call home, both from each other and our neighbours throughout the research for this plan. We hope to see as many residents as possible attend our meetings in future to gain the widest scope of community input possible. As a robust community we can achieve anything. Nichols Point community, we strive to make you proud!




Alicia Muir

A photograph of a rusty, weathered metal boat floating on a pond. The water is covered with a thick layer of green algae. In the background, there are trees and a small wooden structure on the shore.

Where to from here ?

Following the endorsement of this Community Plan our Nichols Point Community Group will become incorporated and begin applying for funding to action the objectives in this plan. We will work closely with Council to align with existing plans such as the; Recreation Master Plan, Tracks and Trails Strategy and the Residential Development Plan.

The role of our group is to progress the actions in the Community Plan while enjoying all that Nichols Point has to offer. We look forward to seeing the plan come to fruition and taking part in making it happen – and most importantly meeting people, learning new skills and having FUN while we do it.

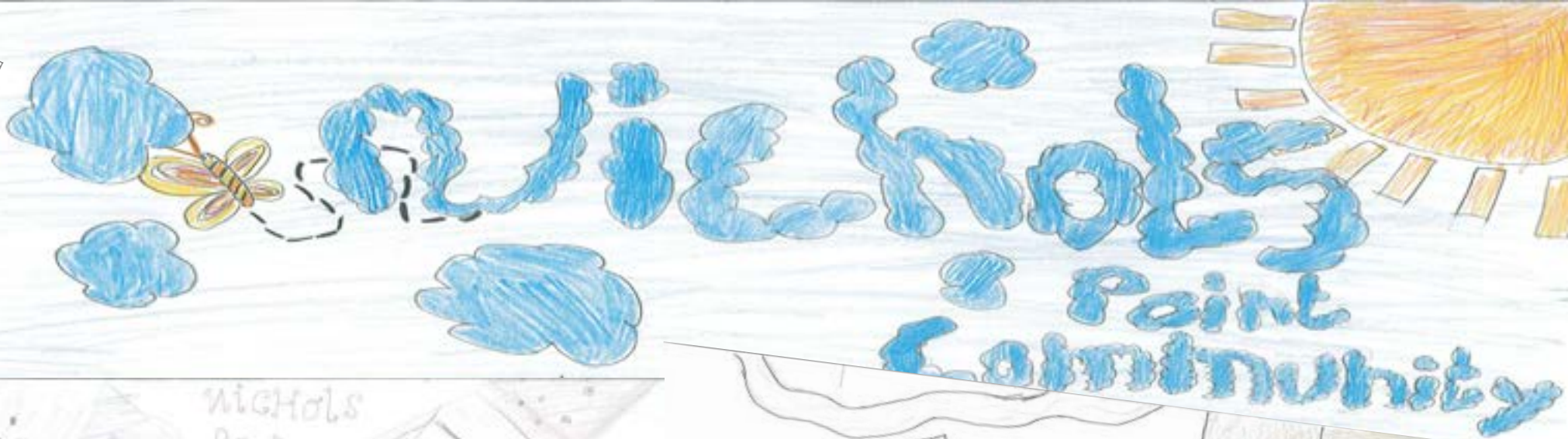
A photograph showing large, gnarled tree roots extending from a bank into a body of water. The roots are dark and textured, and the water is calm and blue.

How can I get involved?

Our community group meets regularly and welcomes all Nichols Point people to get involved either casually or regularly. Meeting or contact details can be requested from our supporting Community Development Officer at Council.

Mildura Rural City Council
Community Futures Department
76-84 Deakin Avenue
Mildura Victoria 3500
(03) 5018 8321
community.planning@mildura.vic.gov.au

Grace Costa



Rachel
Haby



Bobbi-Jo Taylor

Art work designed by Nichols Point Primary School Grade 5/6 Art Students 2012: Alicia Muir, Bobbi-Jo Taylor, Edie Hopgood, Elise Riordan, Grace Costa, Lachlan Fangaloka, Meg McManus, Rachel Haby and Riley Baldock.
Photography by Ebony Cetinich, Chris Woods and supplied by Mildura Historical Society.



The Nichols Point Community Plan was written by members of the community and is proudly supported by:

