



Walhallow: Community in Place

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BACKGROUND

Walhallow Village is a small community of 160 people located on the eastern edge of the Gunnedah Local Government Area in north western New South Wales. Walhallow has also been known as “Caroona Station” or “Caroona Mission”. Walhallow is the site of a former Aboriginal Reserve.

In 1894, application was made to the Aboriginal Protection Board for a reserve to be dedicated where forty-seven Aboriginal people had been camping. A reserve of 150 acres was first gazetted in 1895 and then enlarged in 1899 to 230 acres.

Walhallow remained a reserve until 1962 when its reserve status was revoked. The residents were then permitted to remain under permissive occupancy for 12 years until the land was transferred to the Aboriginal Lands Trust under the *NSW Aboriginal Act 1973*.

HOUSING

Since 1979 all of the timber and fibro-housing, which had dated from 1948, has been gradually replaced with brick housing and a new Community Hall and Primary Health Post have been built. The church in the village has been restored and the Community Development Employment Program occupies the renovated former health post building.

There are currently 42 houses in the village, all of brick and tile construction. Thirty-seven houses replaced the earlier dwellings directly on the same sites. Management of housing is divided between Walhallow Local Aboriginal Land Council (23 houses) and Walhallow Aboriginal Corporation (19 houses).

EMPLOYMENT

Approximately thirty years ago the majority of adult males of working age were employed in unskilled or semi-skilled labouring roles in three main fields - the NSW railways, the agricultural sector in the region and with Quirindi Shire Council. The residents of Walhallow have been affected by the widespread changes in employment patterns in rural areas and past employment options have now disappeared. The major source of local employment is the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP). Through the CDEP the community run three small enterprises - the village shop, a cattle herd and a worm farm. In addition, maintenance of community facilities is undertaken using CDEP participants.



TRANSPORT

No public transport is available for the residents of Walhallow, apart from a school bus service, which transports children to high school in Quirindi. To access services located outside the village residents are essentially dependent on private vehicles. The community has a small community bus that is used primarily to transport people.

HEALTH

The Walhallow Health Post currently holds programs such as Men's Issues, Women's Issues, Diabetes Awareness, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Hearing Tests, Early Childhood Prevention, and Drug & Alcohol Awareness; and includes visits from the Dentists (weekly), Doctor (weekly), Dietician (Monthly), and Mammogram Unit (Annually).

The Health Post has an Aboriginal Health Worker and a Aboriginal Health Education Officer employed on a full-time basis.

HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITY PROGRAM

In 1996, Walhallow Community was successful in obtaining funding from the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission to complete the last eight original "mission" homes, upgrade the water/sewerage system and to upgrade the roads in addition to the construction of four units.

This being found from a needs survey conducted by the Aboriginal Health Education Officer/Aboriginal Health Worker on the condition of the water after complaints were received from members of the community in regards to itching, rashes, scaly skin etc.

Meetings were held with the Gunnedah Shire & Quirindi Shire Councils; Public Health Unit, Department of Health; and the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND THE WALHALLOW LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

An application was submitted for the completion of the last eight original 'mission' homes, which were built in 1940 out of fibro and weatherboard. These houses were badly de-capacitated with maggots falling from ceilings (due to dead birds); and the fibro walls were a health hazard due to the asbestos in them.

Because the Health Infrastructure Priority Program is a National Program with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, it was decided to apply for the houses, sewerage & roads because the demanding need, and because of environmental issues.



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CONCLUSION

In 1998, the small community of Walhallow has been completed with housing, water, roads and units.

Since its establishment in the 1880's, Walhallow has been a small community. Walhallow has a neat and tidy appearance and was a finalist in the small towns category of the "Tidy Towns" Award in 1997.

"Today Walhallow is quite a model reserve, as anyone who has visited other reserves will know. Its people are on the whole a proud people, a happy and generous people mostly able to integrate with the white people in surrounding areas, although they do not always choose to do so." (Levett in Levett & Baker 1990, p.6)