Hello, I’m Sue from Laura in the Southern Flinders Ranges in South Australia

The FR are in the north of the state, the range is 430km long from north to south.

Famous to many for the Heysen Trail a 1200km walking trail from Cape Jervis 106km south of Adelaide to Arkaroola in the northern Flinders. The full trek takes 50 to 60 days, crossing coastal cliffs, farmlands, vineyards, and rugged outback ranges. Some walkers aim to do the lot others pick and choose.

There’s also the Mawson Trail a Bicycle trail 900-kilometers of off-road cycling and mountain biking once again in northern South Australia. It stretches from the outskirts of Adelaide through the Adelaide Hills, Barossa Valley, and Clare Valley, through southern Flinders and ending in Blinman in the rugged northern Flinders Ranges. There are maps on your tables for more information.

SF is the food bowl of the Flinders with guaranteed rainfall (most years) it supports broad acre crops and orchards.

This photo is over my back fence, Beetaloo Reservoir, part of the Great Southern Flinders National Park Wapma Thura on Nukunu country.

Key facts about Laura

On the edge of an adventure. Sitting on the edge of the Southern Flinders Ranges Laura is at the heart of all that this region offers.

We are a small town 224km north of Adelaide on a road that used to be called the Main North Road. This describes the road that goes through Laura perfectly: North along the eastern edge of the Flinders.

Laura's population in the 2021 Census was 765. I feel it has increased since Covid, watch this space.

Homes for sale or rent are snapped up very quickly and over the post covid years some interesting and energetic people have arrived.

Agriculture is our main industry we have no irrigation it is all dry land broad acre farming. Around 600mm of rain annually it is generally a reliable industry.

Average age of Laura is 48 much higher than the national average of 38. This I believe is a true resource. The energy level of those around my age and older are amazing. It seems it's our culture to get up each morning and feel the need to do something for our community.

The volunteering rate in Laura is around 34% where the state average is 17%. I believe these 2 stats are closely related but we also have a younger cohort who find time to volunteer. If there is a community activity you just ask for help and it happens. How much is it worth? This question just isn't in the community's vocabulary. Payment is not a word used often in our community. We are community, and a strong community.

What makes Laura Laura

Art has always been part of our history and still is today. CJ Dennis the statue who greets everyone heading north, was a writer and poet from early last century who grew up in Laura and wrote fondly and eloquently about our town.

Our town is fortunate to have a range of essential services enticing new people to move to Laura and allowing people to stay in their community. We have a hospital with an aged care wing included, Doctors surgery with 3 fulltime doctors, Pharmacy, Hairdresser, a Primary School, a High School 10 minutes south in Gladstone, Uni Hub an online Uni in Port Pirie 35 minutes away so students can stay at home and study. We have an IGA supermarket, 3 active churches, a good old fashioned country butcher, a florist, a resident artist studio and shop, an Art Gallery, a Hotel, a Mitsubishi Dealership, 2 service stations, post office, 2 cafes, a gift shop with cafe, a games and gaming shop, a brewery, power and water shop, many trades people and a volunteer run Information Centre.

An often-heard comment at the Information Centre is Laura is a pretty town. Our most attractive asset and noticed by all who visit is our median strip. This attractive setting is curated proudly by the community with Council supporting this with regular crews doing the tidy up chores.

An inventive and caring community

The lead in our community is the LCDTA and its 5 subcommittees:

Laura Community Caravan Park

Laura Information Centre

Laura Memorial Civic Centre

Southern Flinders Staying in Place

Friends Of Laura Mill

We have a strong history of art and craft which culminated in the Laura Folk Fair back in 1980 which then was a small event based around art with 6 stalls with a couple a hundred attendees. After over 40 years Laura has managed with volunteers only, an event which now attracts around 20k people from all over the state for the 2-day event in April each year.

The Fair has a budget of around $100k

Over 100 stallholders who come back year after year and say it is their best event for the year

With 3 stages of live entertainment throughout the weekend keeping them as local and varied as possible. All entertainers are SA based.

A Fireworks display on the Saturday night before a high energy band entertains into the night.

It has always been targeted as a low cost, fun experience for all the family. This event I believe was the start of the volunteering culture that is present in Laura today. Set up day usually attracts around 50 willing locals including businesses like a builder who pays his crew to build stages etc. A local electrician and his crew who sets up all the temporary power supplies for the whole area at no cost to the

committee. These businesses are of course heavily supported by community when a builder or electrician is needed.

It is one of the largest regional events is SA. Something we are very proud of.

Nature Playground

The nature playground committee's involvement has encouraged a group of younger volunteers into our community. The leadership of these 3 young mums has created a nature playground of regional significance.

They brought their idea to the DA who supported their endeavour with $40k to start them off. They then set about fundraising via slice trays and catering for funerals and the like. They then got a quote for several hundred thousand dollars to build the playground and were of the opinion their children would be grandparents before the playground could be ready by just making slices. They lost a bit of heart, but we then had 2 Laura couples who joined the Variety Bash and were able to put this project forward. With Variety's generous donation of $216k stages 1 and 2 have been completed and the committee are now well on the way to having the funds for stage 3.

Since opening, the playground is utilised a lot by locals and people from far and wide. As Variety said their support would only come with equipment being provided for people with needs although already on the plan it became a slightly bigger target. The special school from Port Pirie now comes over regularly bringing a bus load each time and usually stopping for lunch or afternoon tea.

2 of these 3 ladies are now on the DA and one is the chair. Give them a reason and the tools to achieve and rewards can be

delivered for all. With encouragement young people will volunteer, just give them ownership and opportunities.

These lovely ladies went on to win the NAC Active Citizenship award this year. Which then led to their Commendation for the Active Citizenship award at state level which was presented to them by the Governor. Something they are rightfully very proud of.

Laura Community Caravan Park

Laura Community Caravan Park is as the name says, community managed and has been for over 50 years. An 8-member Sub Committee of the DA who employ park managers, have a volunteer army of 15 regulars who maintain the park and work on upgrades like the recent “walk” out the back which includes more drive through lawned sites and a new ablutions block. They have built a bike repair station, 2 camp kitchens and spent hours building park furniture and features.

Just this year the park won the Parks SA silver medal award for best CP. Votes came through social media and was a complete surprise to management but a proud moment for the park and our town.

They are now looking to expand with either more cabins or motel style units as their cabins occupancy rate is over 90%. Drive through sites sit around the 90% occupancy too.

Golden North

Golden North make the best ice cream which the Canstar awards attest to, they have won this for 6 consecutive years.

The local Dairy industry is no longer able to support the factory due to changes in climate, we haven't had a local dairy for over 10 years. GN made the regretful business decision in July last year and have now moved to greener pastures in Murray Bridge a town situated on the lower Murray River near Adelaide and freight routes.

Golden North had become a generational employer. There were always jobs for school leavers and uni students returning home for summer jobs. Not all workers came from Laura they came from far and wide. At the time of leaving, Golden North employed 80 workers.

Unemployment was always low due to GN so losing that was a blow. Laura mourned the loss of GN but after a couple of weeks it was: where to now? We believe the SiP model has the potential to replace local jobs with 7 workers already involved. Our local Brewery has now employed 2 GN workers to fill the need for their very successful and growing business.

A resilient community

ABC radio came to Laura on the 7th August to live record their breakfast show. Learning about where Laura is 12 months after GN's announcement. Several locals were interviewed and the resounding common theme was strong community. It has been the reason for new people to stay, a reason why locals are proud of Laura. We have some new families moving in 2 in particular, one has 5 children and the other has 6. It certainly boosts the numbers at our local schools. A couple of other comments were kids are safe to ride their bikes and hangout, and if you have an issue you can call on a neighbour, we are there for each other.

Craig from LBB told the ABC how he and his wife found and decided to stay in Laura. They began a Caravan trek looking for the perfect town. Laura's attractions were its old school values. Community. Community spirit. Businesses working together adding value to each other, supporting each other. Tight and friendly. Evolving – never sitting still. This is what drew them to Laura to set up their business. Since starting he also sees value in the bimonthly Markets which have only been running for 2 years but its vibrant and draws people into town and region. Show and Shine at Meryle's cafe every month now is a growing event. Craig believes it's the 100% optimistic outlook that makes Laura the vibrant and energetic town it is and will keep it moving into the future.

2MP again travelled looking for the perfect town for a gaming shop to play board games, sell board games and a sci-fi / fantasy library.

Their idea of perfect was a main street with inventive shops, showing a forward-thinking town. A cute little town, which once they moved in other businesses embraced the new didn't see them as a threat. Businesses now create a network for visitors to explore.

Gamers stop for lunch to go to the café or stop for dinner and a brew over at the brewery which has a food van in place each night. These businesses are all close to the caravan park on the main street.

Our hotel's motel units just up the road from the CP are basically booked out for the next 2 years.

Laura into the future

All talk these days is about the Future Fund of $1m offered by State Govt for Laura after the announcement from GN. After several community meetings Laura is looking at possible projects like a CRC, CP upgrades, finish Nature Playground. This is still to be determined by State.

The potential for the SFSiP model, although in its infancy in our district, has the potential to benefit our communities well into the future.

New businesses also include those without a shop front like Stony Acre puddings and cakes, CocoaLaura Chocolate and jelly makers selling at local markets and online, a new shop front and online business The Neighbour officially opening just 3 weeks ago, offering giftware and clothes with a café for locals and tourists alike.

The GN site has many possibilities, with limited industrial space around, there have been several industries showing interest in the sight. We will have to wait for GN to put the premises up for sale but maybe in the future there will be another larger employer in our town again.

Craig from the Brewery said – Laura is on the way up!

I believe Laura will be a better town without GN, we had become complacent and now we need to continue to be proactive.

Tourism in the Flinders Ranges is also looking to increase even more after Lonely Planet declared it in the top 10 destinations in the world. We know a location will draw in tourists but to make it a destination more is required. One business does not create tourism it is a joint effort with many options which will see success and SF has this and explores it in spades. Come and visit this region and

don’t forget to stay in the LCCP and experience the scones, jam and cream on arrival.

Thank you!