SUPPORT DOCUMENT

Creating synergies: Local government facilitating learning and development through partnerships—Support document

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This document was produced by the authors based on their research for the report *Creating synergies: Local government facilitating learning and development through partnerships*, and is an added resource for further information. The report is available on NCVER's website: <http://www.ncver.edu.au>

Contents

Introduction

This research sought to document and better understand four evolving learning communities in Victoria. It was based upon an earlier study by the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) (Snelling 2003). The study was qualitative in nature, based on face-to-face interviews and case studies. This supporting document provides the literature review and the 4 case studies in full.

In summary, each of the four learning communities we investigated involved a range of industry, community, education and local government stakeholders. The stories extracted from these sites reveal the challenging complexity facing practitioners interested in creating the synergies required to facilitate and enable such learning communities. We conclude that in many respects new hybrid forms of professional practice are required. These new forms of professional practice move beyond the traditional work of many, perhaps all, of those involved.

Research questions & focus

The following research questions guided the study:

How have opportunities for partnerships been conceived and negotiated?

How has ownership among stakeholder groups been established and sustained?

What has been the role of VET and how could it further enhance the project/s?

What has been the role of local government and how has it support new projects?

How have the project/s maintained relevance as the pressures and drivers have changed?

What can these projects teach others seeking education and training partnerships to realize social and economic goals?

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Literature Review

This study is framed within a context of change and change management which sees new demands being placed upon adult and vocational education policy, providers and practices. There are now widespread concerns about the need for lifelong and life-wide learning. These concerns are articulated in the context of parallel and related concerns about perceived rifts in the social fabric.

Watson et al. (2003) articulate some of the key issues in *Fragmented Futures*. Their analysis is only one of many that highlight a set of inter-related concerns about:

Equity/inequity – perceptions of growing disparity between rich and poor

Environmental degradation and concerns for sustainability in diverse spheres of the environment, life, work and community

Diversity management, tolerance and racism

Globalisation

Responses to such issues include arguments for the development of so-called triple bottom line (TBL) evaluation and accountability policies and mechanisms. It is argued that adult and vocational education can not stand apart. As a social institution it is either part of the problem or part of the solution.

Government, Governance & Local Government

Within the context of the multiple changes and pressures briefly referred to above, there has been a tendency over recent times, for governments, particularly national and centralised governments to seek to devolve and decentralise a range of responsibilities. Whilst in earlier times communities may have looked to government to provide a range of services to support and sustain community, Governments now look to communities to provide their own solutions. Some researchers suggest there has been – or is taking place – a paradigm shift.

Seddon and Billett (2003) note that,

> There are different and complex roles for government … the shift is from government to governance (p.14)

They go on to note the need for "balance between central direction and local discretion" (p.14) The focus of this, and related studies, is upon the role that adult and vocational education may play in developing forms of governance which build social capital, resilience and community capacity to address the sorts of challenges referred to above. Within the Australian context recent VET policy initiatives have added legitimacy to this focus.

Learning Towns & Communities

One of the key themes emerging from the literature in response to this complex set of socio-economic-environmental-political and cultural challenges has been the concept of learning towns, cities and communities. Whilst Senge (1993) and others popularised the notion of the 'learning

organisation' or the learning enterprise, some researchers, academics and practitioners are now actively exploring the concept of entire populations characterised as active learners (Kearns 2004a&b, Morris 2001, Melville 2003, Beddie 2003).

The thesis is that a village, a town, a city or region can embrace learning as an active strategy to address local concerns and to build the community's capacity to solve its problems. Kearns (2004a) reports that a 'learning community' has been defined in the following terms:

> A learning community is any group of people, whether linked by geography or by some other shared interest, which addresses the learning needs of its members through pro-active partnerships. It explicitly uses learning as a way of promoting social cohesion, regeneration and economic development.   (Kearns, 2004a, p.18)

Kearns points out that learning communities "*may either develop in geographic terms (towns, cities, regions) or as networks without spatial boundaries*". The reference to networks without spatial boundaries signals the impact of new technologies, particularly digital communication technologies, which is another focus of his work (see also Kearns 2004b).

> The impact of technology means that virtual community networks are likely to become increasingly common and significant in the future and could be particularly significant in building bridging and linking social capital. All these forms of learning communities can be powerful instruments for building social capital. There has been a slow but steady development of learning communities in Australia since 1998 when Wodonga1 declared itself Australia's first learning city.   (Kearns 2004a, p.18)

 The initiatives cited by Kearns include state and federally funded projects as well as local projects initiated without government support. He reports the key role played by the Adult Community Education (ACE) sector, as well as the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). He reports,

> This accumulating experience since 1998 means that a good deal is now known about effective strategies for building learning communities, and a rich source of information on Australian and international developments is available through the web site established by Adult Learning Australia called the Learning Community Catalyst (www.lcc.edu.au). There is now a further opportunity for VET institutions across Australia to contribute to building social and human capital in communities through their active participation in learning community initiatives.   (Kearns 2004a, p.19)

The 'learning towns' movement has been given significant support through the Blair government in the UK and the concept has gained some hold in the Australian context as well. In both settings local governments are playing key roles in bringing together stakeholders, offering leadership and coordination and helping to build the vision.

Snelling (2003) notes that traditionally local governments in the Australian context have not had a key role to play as institutional providers of educational services – with the significant exception of pre-school education. Formal education, that is school and post-school education has been largely outside the local government mandate. However she also notes that viewing from a different perspective there has been a significant educational component in many – perhaps most of the work done by and auspiced by local governments. In this sense education has never been far from the focus of local government attention - although it has not always been explicit or formal.

When seen as part of the fabric of local community life, education far exceeds the boundaries of the school yard or educational institution. Education is rather a mechanism for social change and

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[1] the focus of one of the case studies in this project.

can potentially influence and contribute to change through community institutions, industry and government at all levels. It has a part to play in local initiatives that seek to build social and economic capital. VET in particular has a great deal to offer in these endeavours because of its vocational and employment focus, its flexibility and recognition of informal and work-based learning processes.

Snelling (2003) report provides a useful account of the inter-relatedness of education within different sectors of community life and governance. It introduces best-practice examples of Victorian learning-town/learning-community initiatives where local government has played a key role. This study aims to build upon Snelling's work through a more detailed investigation of four case study sites, with particular reference to the role of VET.

Another dimension of the learning-town concept warrants mention here. Research by Sanguinetti et al (2004) has recently highlighted the significance of 'the pedagogy of plACE' within the context of Adult Community Education (ACE). This study, conducted with a group of ACE practitioners, utilising an action-research approach, showed that examples of best practice in teaching and learning reflected the context, settings, purposes and values of the place in which the teaching and learning was happening. The sense of place pervaded the teaching and learning in important and valuable ways.

This finding is also reflected in work by Falk and Balatti (2003) & Falk and Balatti (2004) discussing 'identities of place' in VET. They argue place identity and theories of place may be much more important in VET than we have previously considered.

> Place theory in our view has an enormous and as yet untapped potential to further our understanding and improvement of VET practices. Place theory has considerable relevance in many VET related contexts, not only the Indigenous-specific ones.
>
> > (Falk & Balatti 2003, p.1)

Notions of place, place identity and pedagogy of place will be informative themes for consideration in this study.

VET & Social Capital

A comprehensive review of the broader literature on social capital is beyond the scope of this review. The term has become widely used over recent times and there are different theoretical interpretations. However Kearns (2004a) provides a most up to date and comprehensive overview and analysis of the role of VET in relation to social capital. He notes that,

> While there have been some individual initiatives, the VET sector overall has not been active in this area, and little prominence has been given nationally (in reports such as that of the Productivity Commission) to the role of the VET sector in contributing to social capital in communities.   (Kearns 2004a, p.i)

However, he argues the potential for the VET sector to contribute to the development of social capital, and the value of it doing so is highly significant. He discusses the multiple dimensions of these issues and aligns the social, economic and environmental benefits of taking seriously VET's contribution to social capital. In this sense, he argues, VET policy is seen as a dimension, not only of industry policy, but as a 'whole of government' issue with much wider, social, cultural and community consequences. Hence,

> A one-dimensional concept of VET serving the skill needs of business and industry is no longer sustainable in the dynamic and complex conditions of the global knowledge society and economy. The increased significance of the social context of industry in the knowledge society has fundamental implications for VET, including the VET approach to

> competence, as the five year OECD DeSeCo project on key competencies concluded.
>
> (Kearns 2004a, p.30)

The benefits of the vision he outlines include economic as well as social outcomes. He reports,

> Overall there is sufficient evidence on the impact of social capital on economic outcomes in a range of contexts for VET policy and practice to take account of the role of VET in building social capital in communities, and for VET research to contribute to the further development of the knowledge base in this area.
>
> (Kearns 2004a, p.10)

> At present there is a dearth of quality information on these relationships, so that the need exists for research to clarify these relationships as a basis for more holistic VET strategies in serving industry, individuals, and communities.
>
> (Kearns 2004a, p.22)

Kearns' paper addresses the shifting context within which policy relating to VET and social capital is evolving. Key factors he identifies include the changing nature and patterns of employment, the trends mentioned elsewhere in this review, towards new forms of governance, the need for innovation and change management across all sectors and the challenges of social fragmentation, inequity and environmental degradation. Against this backdrop he argues a compelling case for, and the significant potential of, the VET sector's involvement in building social capital.

He notes that , "*The strategic VET objectives and vision set for 2004-2010 which recognises the VET role in serving employers, individuals, and communities provide a window of opportunity for such a development*". We note that it remains to be seen how shifting arrangements for the national governance of the vocational training sector will affect the implementation of this important strategic vision.

Working with the OECD definition of social capital Kearns reports that

> Trends in VET policy and practice over the past decade include a number of ways in which VET contributes to building social capital in communities. Some of these strategies are at present under developed or in an early stage of development. In considering the VET contribution to social capital, it is useful to have regard to the sources of social capital identified by the World Bank, OECD and others. The World Bank list of key sources of social capital:
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> families,
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> communities,
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> firms,
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> civil society,
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> public sector,
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> ethnicity,
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> gender
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> It is evident that the VET contribution to social capital can, in principle, relate to each of these sources of social capital, although this contribution is more developed in some areas than in others … VET equity strategies for disadvantaged groups are particularly relevant to ethnicity and gender as sources of social capital, while much of the VET contribution under current policy relates to firms and communities.

More specifically he suggests, as a basis for discussion within VET constituencies,

eight areas for a VET contribution to building social capital in communities … Some of these categories of action by VET overlap, while they also involve a VET contribution to bonding, bridging and linking forms of social capital in various ways …

Types of VET Contribution to Social Capital in Communities

i.   Building social capital in firms.

ii. Building networks of businesses, especially in the small business sector.

iii. Developing employability skills which contribute to social capital in both firms and in civil society.

iv. Fostering values and norms that underpin social capital.

v.   Contributing to inclusive and cohesive communities through equity strategies for disadvantaged groups.

vi. Initiating and contributing to learning community initiatives.

vii. Innovating in the use of information and communication technology to build virtual communities that contribute to social capital in new ways.

viii. Contributing to civil society as a good citizen.   (Kearns 2004a, p.13)

In the spirit of appreciative enquiry Kearns also cites examples of good practice. Such as those, where,

> a VET institution has initiated a learning community project. A good example is provided by the role of the Hunter Institute of TAFE in the initiation of the Upper Hunter learning community project which then gained the support of the four councils in the Upper Hunter region.   (Kearns 2004a, p.15)

Kilpatrick (2003) also highlights the role of VET in building social capital. Drawing on a suite of projects she has been engaged in, with colleagues (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000, Kilpatrick, Bell and Falk 1999, plus references below) she highlights the benefits of collaborative approaches to the planning, development and delivery of training, particularly within rural communities. The research stresses the importance of networks, shared values and trust 'in generating superior outcomes for individuals and communities'.

She notes that *"The key to matching provision with local needs, particularly in the more rural and remote areas within the study sites, was collaboration and partnerships" (2003, p.1).*

Also important is the '*effective interactional infrastructure*' which provides '*mechanisms for interaction with relevant people and organisations outside the community*' (Kilpatrick, Loechel, Thomas and Woinarski 2002; Kilpatrick, Johns, Mulford, Falk and Prescott 2002). Summing up, she notes,

> The factors that enhance the effectiveness of the collaborations and partnerships are the elements of social capital identified from the literature: networks, shared values and trust and enabling leadership. While collaborations and partnerships drew on the social capital of the communities in the study sites, the collaborative activity built further social capital that became available for managing change by strengthening and extending networks, refining and sharing visions and values and building leadership capacity. Policy makers need to be aware of the benefits of involving institutions and other community stakeholders when identifying training needs, making provision for training and evaluating its effectiveness. This requires flexibility in policy rather than a uniform policy solution for all rural communities.   (Kilpatrick 2003, p.20)

Networks & Network Theory

Golding (2004) provides a useful overview of literature on network theory and its application to research on VET, learning and social capital. He notes the trend in the literature 'towards the analysis of larger scale network systems' (2004, p.4). His analysis parallels that of Seddon and Billett (2003) describing the paradigm shift from 'government to governance'. He notes,

> there has indeed been a move away from a focus on initial, school-based, centralised educational provision towards a facilitation of lifelong and lifewide learning in diverse contexts. The apparent advantages of networks to governments and policy makers involved in education goes well beyond the now widespread recognition of the importance of a wide range of situated learning over a lifetime, such as in the community, family settings and in the workplace. Networks allow effective transactional relations associated with learning to occur informally beyond the direct reach of governments and apparently at less public cost than if they were provided from a centralised, directive structure. Or put another way by Latham (1998) within arguments for encouraging social capital and the devolution of structures of governance, there may be a case for… more thoroughly resourcing the work of the non-state public sector … [to] allow more of society's answers to come from community and civic … [and] turning over its decision-making powers as much as possible to intermediary associations linking the power of government to with the capacity of citizens to engage in mutual trust.
> (cited in Golding 2004, pp.4-5)

Golding's discussion also highlights the distinction between two different forms of social capital characterised by Putnam (2000) as bonding and bridging. Bridging forms of social capital are particularly important for addressing the 'structural holes' in the social fabric. Drawing on work by Putnam (2000) and Burt (2000) he notes,

> This emphasis on the strategic importance of building 'bridges' between disparate individuals (and by implication, disparate groups), rather than simply strengthening the links between like individuals and like groups is reflected in the distinctions in some of the social capital literature (Putnam 2000) between bonding and bridging social capital. While 'bonding social capital … is useful and important, [it] can be insular. Cross-fertilization may not occur. Groups may turn inward, recycling memes that don't evolve. The countervailing influence is bridging social capital which connects dissimilar groups. This stuff is harder to create, but also more valuable.'   (Golding 2004)

Golding suggests that,

> There is also an argument, advanced by Field and Schuller, and encouraged by recent thinking about bridging social capital that adult and vocational education researchers, rather than looking at individual agents and measuring their capacity to learn through particular providers… might look at the capacity of society as a whole, or of social units within it, by investigating the nature of relationships between institutions which purport to make up a learning society … [and] ask how far people in different institutions share information, share values, and how far they are able to trust others to pursue common goals.
> (Golding 2004)

Such insights provide valuable guidance for the current study. Methodologically Goldings (2004) paper is also particularly useful for its discussion of network 'mapping' or network diagrams. He provides suggested conventions for the creation of network diagrams and suggests practical research protocols to optimise the value of the data gathered. (see pp. 7-15) The current study builds on his experience in this regard.

New Social Partnerships

Social partnerships of various types have been around for a long time. However Seddon and Billett (2003) argue that that "social partnerships are an increasingly significant feature of public policy" endorsed by governments at all levels, taking many different forms to address diverse needs. They stress that the new social partnerships do not provide a panacea to complex social problems and they provide their own complexities and challenges. Seddon and Billettt (2003, p.2) distinguish between 'community partnerships' which grow out of local community concerns and issues and 'enacted social partnerships' which are initiated by agencies (such as government) which may be external to the local community.

They discuss the importance and the challenges of engaging and working with the 'explicit or tactic expectations of partners, sponsors and auspicing organisations' (2003, p.2)

They also note that social partnerships are complex and multi-layered and require support – which may vary according the developmental stage of the partnership; whether it is new/establishing, developing, or in need of continuing maintenance. Significantly they also stress that the 'rigidities of bureaucratic process may need to be adapted to meet the needs of local communities. In particular they cite the need for tolerance of:

✧ Difference rather than uniformity

✧ Diverse patterns of participation and

✧ Decision-making and

✧ Localised needs and priorities. (2003, p.3).

They note that,

> "It seems likely that sustaining reciprocity will require some re-orientation of bureaucratic and market modes of governance towards processes that are sympathetic to the cooperative and voluntary effort that is the engine of social partnerships." (2003, p.4)

An important finding of the Seddon and Billett study is that the (internal) participants in social partnerships tend to view them differently to those (external) sponsoring agents. They sum up the difference with the terms 'project' and 'movement'. For the sponsoring agencies the social partnership, they argue, tends to be seen in terms of a project – "a means to a particular end." For the participating community however, the social partnership is part of the web of life, it is not seen as a 'project' so much as part of community life and activity.

Seddon and Billett suggest that,

> "VET social partnerships are being conceptualised as policy projects to be enacted without fully recognising their status as community movements or acknowledging and operationalising the reciprocity that must exist for partnerships to be sustainable. The danger is that over-emphasising project performance against narrowly defined outcomes will undercut the partnerships and the community relations on which they depend for their functionality." (2003, p.5)

They suggest there is considerable value in further research which investigates:

the nature of the capacity building workforce

✧ the character of learning within partnerships.

They also note that VET partnerships represent a sub-set of much broader social partnerships. In Australia such partnerships have been mostly government funded and 'top-down'. Often the

focus has been on youth and school to work transition, (which is a policy reflection of the disintegration and fragmentation of the youth labour market over the past two decades or so).

Seddon and Billett (2003) make recommendations for further research around several different dimensions of social partnerships

✧ Initiating and sustaining partnerships

✧ Partnerships as project and movement

✧ Capacities and commitments in partnership working

✧ Supporting a pedagogy of governance

They recommend detailed investigations of these issues. The involvement of Professor Terri Seddon on the reference group for this project was a strategic step to building on the previous work and maintaining a connection with her research.

Leadership & Capacity Building.

The last theme, although certainly not the least in importance, concerns issues of leadership and capacity building. Several recent studies have investigated issues of leadership and capacity building within the Australian VET context (Sefton 2000, Falk 2000, Falk & Smith 2003, Callan 2001, Mulcahy 2002, Seddon, Billett & Clemans 2004, Mitchell & Young 2001).

Mulcahy (2002) for instance, notes that,

> VE T managers are required to design change agendas, produce enhanced outcomes, grow market share and generally, act as educational entrepreneurs. This action is not necessarily the sum total of managerial activity, however. The press to practise commercially can coincide with a commitment to traditional educational values such as providing a second chance for 'reluctant' learners or ensuring access to education by certain communities and social groups (eg. regional communities, minority groups). What might be called innovative VET management is directed to creating conditions for the convergence of commercial and social/community values. Presenting a different vision for VET and different identity alternatives for VET providers, this management is exceedingly difficult to enact. It requires a radically different kind of manager   (Mulcahy 2002, p.1)

The need to 're-invent' VET practice – including VET management is reiterated throughout the literature, including a substantial body of work auspiced through recent Reframing the Future projects funded through ANTA. Mitchell and Young (2004) highlight the need for the national VET system to build its capacity to meet the changing industry and community needs. Much of their recent work has focused on issues of leadership, change management and change agency. They argue that it is essential for more VET practitioners to,

> develop expertise as change agents to meet many of the challenges presented by a demand-driven national training system. However, the change agent role is complex and not to be under-estimated, as change agents need the agility to adopt a range of roles which could include being opportunists, diplomats and networkers. Change agents need an advanced range of skills and knowledge – as well as a high level of judgment, courage and sensitivity – to effectively assist the change process. Change agents also need to be reflective and insightful while coping with resistance, apathy, exuberance or turmoil. Previous research (e.g. Mitchell & Young 2001; Mitchell 2002, 2003) indicates that significant structural and cultural changes are needed in VET organisations   (Mitchell & Young, 2004, p.1).

The key issue of leadership is also highlighted in Kilpatrick's (2003) work, cited earlier. She stresses the importance of 'enabling leadership'. She argues that,

> The type of leadership required for successful community collaborations that assist in managing change is leadership that encourages participation and interaction across a range of key stakeholder groups (Pierce and Johnson 1997). This type of leadership is termed 'situated enabling' leadership by Falk and Mulford (2001) because, firstly, it is situated in a particular community with its particular needs, and secondly, because such leadership must enable the participation and interaction of the diversity of stakeholders. Pierce and Johnson (1997… show that the hierarchical style of leadership is generally not functional in this situation …because its directive approach does not work when the need is for enthusiastic participation of a broad range of organizations that have their own needs, purposes, allegiances and power bases … Rather, leadership within these diverse groups must be encouraged and facilitated to enable them to make a greater contribution to the collaborative project. (Kilpatrick 2003, p.6)

These issues of leadership and management lie at the heart of the capacity building agenda and warrant further exploration in the context of this study.

Albury-Wodonga: A Tale of Two Learning Cities

Background

The twin, regional cities of Albury and Wodonga face each other across the Murray River, in separate states, but closely linked historically, culturally and economically. Albury has a population of 43,000 and is a major retail and service centre, while the younger Wodonga, with a population of 36,000, has a vibrant manufacturing base.

Federal and State Governments have, at various times, attempted to merge the two into one entity. However these efforts have not met with great success and traditionally, there has been a keen rivalry between the two centres. On the other hand, many people live in one city and work in the other and there are recent signs that the two City Councils are attempting to establish a more collaborative relationship.

There are many institutions and organisations which serve both communities although geographically based in one city or the other. These include a wide range of educational institutions, such as universities, TAFE institutes, schools, neighbourhood centres and other adult learning organisations, such as libraries. Prominent amongst these is the Wodonga-based Continuing Education Centre (CEC), which has been operating in the area for thirty years. Its origins predate the establishment of the universities and the TAFE colleges. The Continuing Education Centre currently attracts between 10-12,000 students per year, undertaking a range of courses. It has played a pivotal role in sustaining the Albury-Wodonga Learning Cities Project.

The Learning Cities Project

The Albury-Wodonga Learning Cities Project had its origin in an initiative by the Coordinator, Jim Saleeba, then Executive Director of the Continuing Education Centre, who, in 1998 was a delegate to an international adult education conference. On his return to Wodonga, he spoke to the Mayor of Wodonga, Councillor Graeme Crapp, who had a business and marketing background. They had been contemporaries at the Education Centre for some years. Cr Crapp was 'looking for something which would make Wodonga different'.

Cr Crapp seized on the idea of the 'learning city' as 'an opportunity to differentiate (this) local government from others'. He approached the then Victorian Minister for Tertiary Education and Training, Phil Honeywood, who proclaimed Wodonga as Australia's first 'learning city' in November 1998. Wodonga Council adopted the learning city concept as part of its strategic planning process and provided office space on the Council's executive floor for Jim Saleeba as the inaugural 'Learning City Coordinator', which he undertook on a voluntary basis until 2000. A Steering Committee was established, with Cr Crapp as the Chair.

An invitation was extended to Albury City Council to participate, but the historic rivalry between the two cities was not conducive to cooperation. While the Albury City Council passed a motion of support for the project and joined the Steering Committee, they did not provide the Project with funds or resources.

When the Labor Government came to power in Victoria in 1999, it had a policy of establishing 'learning towns' to 'form local partnerships between business, community-based adult education organisations, other education and training providers, community organisations and government agencies,' and named Wodonga as one of nine Victorian 'learning towns.'

The Project was funded by the Victorian government, through Adult Community and Further Education, with a budget of $75,000 per annum. The funds were provided on a six-monthly basis, and the contract scheduled to finish at the end of 2004. The funds flowed to Wodonga Council via the Continuing Education Centre as the 'authorised agent'. This enabled the Coordinator to be put on a salary, although there were no funds specifically allocated for projects. Wodonga Council charged the Project for the use of its office facilities and equipment and made a car available for use by the Coordinator

In order to involve other organisations, an advertisement was placed in the local paper, together with photos of Cr Crapp and Jim Saleeba, inviting 'expressions of interest'. A number of representatives of education organisations, businesses and other groups were then invited to form a 'steering committee', which later became the Learning City Consultative Council (LCCC). In the words of the Coordinator, it became a 'self- appointed body', since from then on it determined its own membership. The number of members since then has fluctuated around 10-15, with 'a fairly constant turnover of folk.'

At the end of 2004, the membership of the Consultative Council consisted of representatives of the two city councils, the Continuing Education Centre, Latrobe University , the Riverina Institute of TAFE, Wodonga Institute of TAFE, Charles Sturt University, the Australian Industry Group, G. Butler Pty Ltd, KPMG, North East Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN), Trinity College, the Australian Army Logistics Training Centre, Birallee Neighbourhood House, and with a private bereavement counsellor as the Chair.

Initially, the Coordinator drafted a vision statement or 'charter' for the Project, which was endorsed by the consultative council, with provision for it to be reviewed annually. The charter commits the cities of Albury and Wodonga to:

Promoting the value of learning in developing informed and participating citizens

Promoting lifelong learning for community cohesion, social and economic well-being

Providing equitable access to learning opportunities

Celebrating the varied achievements of the learner

Encouraging each individual to share their knowledge and skills

Publicising the opportunities that are available

Supporting existing programs and encouraging new initiatives.

Within the Project charter, a range of long-term and short term strategies were developed. These included:

The promotion of learning for community cohesion, informed citizenship and social and economic well-being – including networking, incorporation of Learning City objectives into Council strategic plans

The encouragement of the provision of learning opportunities to be accessible to everyone and of processes to identify such opportunities – including enhancement of school networks

The encouragement of partnerships between education sectors, and between education and business – including promotion of a Learning City Network within Australia

The encouragement of all business houses and organisations to adopt principles underlying leaning organisations in line with their own needs and directions – including initiating a Learning City Alliance program including a leading company

The provision of readily accessible information – including establishing a Learning Shop and promoting the Festival of Learning

Regular reflection on and learning from the experience of its annual activities.

Specific strategies were later incorporated by the Consultative Council in a 'Learning City Operational Plan' to promote learning opportunities for the older aged, and to 'improve the image of VET'. From the 2001 Operational Plan onwards, the issue of sustainability was addressed in a specific objective:

> Objective 7: 'Securing the sustainability of the Learning City Program – including 'the continual search for funding.'

This objective became increasingly important as the deadline for stepping down the funding at the end of 2004 approached without any visible sign of alternative funding to that previously provided by the Victorian Government through ACFE. Funds were sought from both Federal and State Government sources, as well as local government, business and other community organisations.

As the Plan evolved over time the Goals were modified, so that by 2003 the 'Overall Goals' had become:

Government Partnership Goal: Develop and maintain a partnership with all levels of government and other stakeholders to grow the investment through sustainable lifelong learning initiatives

Network and Partnership Goal: To extend and maintain the range of organisations partnering in planning and implementing learning activities

Social, Economic and Technological Goal: To continuously improve the environmental, social economic and technological circumstances of people living in our community through learning

Promotion of learning and Communications Goal: Engage in dialogue and secure learning outcomes through interaction with Government, Education, Enterprise, Community and Media sectors

Performance Management Goal: To implement measures that have rigor and reliability and that demonstrate that Learning Towns, and in particular Albury Wodonga Learning City, make a positive difference to local communities

These goals remained the same in the 2004, with the search for a 'sustainable funding base' contained within the first Overall Goal.

Part of the Victorian government funding was devoted to paying the salary of a part-time coordinator of what was known as the 'Learning Shop'. This was conceived as a one-stop information centre in Wodonga, designed to provide the community with information about available learning opportunities in the Albury Wodonga area. When the 'Learning Shop' failed to attract sufficient visitors, it was replaced by an outreach program, called 'Learning Connections', with the part-time coordinator visiting businesses, community centres and events to promote learning 'pathways'. This initiative proved more successful in reaching a larger number of people and a wider cross-section of the community. An estimated 3,500 people used the service in the 12-18 months prior to the interviews for this research.

Project Structure and Operation

Rather than beginning with the establishment of a coalition of interests, including community representatives, Wodonga Council had declared itself a 'Learning City', then sought to attract partners. A result of this 'top-down' approach was a lack of representation of community-based organisations in the membership of the Consultative Council. While it continued to act as a forum for discussion of broad strategy and for the exchange of ideas, according to some members, day-to-day control remained in the hands of the Coordinator and, to a lesser extent, the Project's co-founder, Cr Crapp.

While the Project's funding was devolved to Wodonga Council, the Continuing Education Centre, as the lead authority, retained responsibility for reporting to the State Government. According to Rodney Wangman, Chief Executive Officer of the Continuing Education Centre, this had the effect of screening the Consultative Council members from an awareness of the true extent of the burden of meeting the State Governments compliance requirements.

Local government was represented on the Consultative Council through a councillor from each city council. The manager in charge of social planning at Wodonga Council, Patience Harrington, who had a direct responsibility for community development projects, was not included as a member of the Consultative Council. However she was later invited to give a presentation on work the city Council was doing in Wodonga. The project Coordinator and the social planning Manager had a close working relationship and it may have been desirable to avoid the appearance of over-representation of Wodonga Council on the Consultative Council. however the absence of this key community development manager from the Consultative Council may have deprived it of an important potential contributor.

A number of members saw their involvement in the Consultative Council as primarily representational. For example, Gerry Pels, from the Australian Industry Group, saw it as an important forum in which his organisation needed to participate:

> 'the motivation (for joining the Consultative Council) was for Australian Industry Group to be recognised as the largest industry sector, to have a voice and be seen as community-conscious… to be a good corporate citizen.'

A similar view was expressed by Dougald Frederick, who represented KPMG on the Consultative Council. He cited KPMG's support for lifelong learning and having 'community involvement' as part of its corporate business strategy.

While not all local organisations could be represented on the Consultative Council, the absence of some, such as the regional library service and the network of neighbourhood houses, seem surprising omissions. Although the Chief Executive Officer of the Murray Valley Regional Library had expressed an interest in being involved, she was advised that the library 'didn't have a role to play' at that stage as the 'key players' were involved, and the Library's involvement would be looked at 'later'. She expressed surprise at this response, given that regional Library service, with an annual visitor rate of something like 100,000 people over eight centres on both sides of the border, could be seen as 'integral to the learning area'. At the time, she was also a member of the Board of the Continuing Education Centre, as was the Coordinator of the Birallee Neighbourhood Centre, which was also not invited to participate.

The CEO of the Continuing Education Centre, Rodney Wangman, saw the Consultative Council as a 'useful forum', where ideas could be exchanged, strategy developed and 'invited guests could talk about the esoteric virtues of life-long learning'. He took the view that the main mission of the Learning City Project was laying the groundwork for long-term developments. It was, in his vision, essentially strategic in nature.

'Thinking about how to create learning precincts and learning hubs, and how best to utilize community facilities... the fruits of those labours will probably not be seen for 10-15 years. You can't really touch that and say what this is going to mean.'

For others, like Albury Mayor, Cr Arthur Frauenfelder, participation in the Consultative Council was a vehicle for their own personal development, and an opportunity to be exposed to new ideas.

'The Learning City is a concept which materialises when everyone is there and someone comes and tells us what they are doing'.

He also described it as an 'elite group' and as a 'practical, intellectual group'.

For Lynne Makin, the Chief Executive Officer of the Upper Murray Regional Library, the elitism was a limitation. Although she was eventually invited to join the Consultative Council, she felt that the partners needed to do more than attend meetings:

'Collaboration needs nurturing… there needs to be someone out working with people, coalition-building, building relationships.'

In her view the participation of a wider range of businesses was critical to the Project's success:

'If it's going to be sustainable, it has to be a partnership with business – that's where the money is going to be coming from – and start with one community group, then look at another partnerships. eg Uncle Ben's, or the Library Service…you need a cross section of the community, rather than being reliant on the education sector, then build on that….(if) business had been involved from day one… you would have got something that is a lot stronger, balanced and more focussed.'

The coordinator of the Birallee Neighbourhood Centre, Di Mant, who was involved with the predecessor to the Festival of Learning and was on the Board of the Continuing Education Centre, felt that the Consultative Council was,

'top-heavy with academics ... (so that) … it was difficult for groups like youth groups to identify with it.'

For her, the key measure of success of the project was 'increased community involvement and participation.'

Community involvement

Besides the outreach 'Learning Connections' initiative, several other attempts were made to involve the wider community. The most visible was via the annual Albury Wodonga Festival of Learning. This is a two-week program of events which involves a large number of education and other institutions opening up their activities to the general public and generally promoting community involvement in learning. A version of the Festival, in the form of an 'adult learners' week', was in place before the advent of the Learning Cities Project, which 'adopted' it and used it as a vehicle to promote the Learning Cities concept.

Another initiative was the awarding of Learning City 'recognition' to organisations for their contribution to learning in Albury Wodonga. This was essentially a process of self-nomination and in return the organisation would display a sign incorporating the Learning City logo which they could use to promote their own activities. In Lynne Makin's view, this approach overlooked much of the adult learning which took place in the community through organisations such as Rotary, which did not meet the formal criteria.

The Project was also associated with another initiative called 'The Way We Live,' which was a joint activity by the Learning City with planners, architects, surveyors, environmentalists, and business people looking at planning and environmental issues in the area.

For Rodney Wangman, the Learning City Project offered

> 'direct support for adult community education ...(it provided) …discretionary funding to support innovative and new ideas that were not linked to student contact hours, so a level of freedom and initiative … was possible, that required people to…test the boundaries of what was possible"

He saw it as 'beneficial…to the wider community because it helped to put adult education at the forefront of the community's mind'.

However, in his view, the main outcome of the Learning Cities Project will be long-term and he stressed the strategic nature of the concept as a planning tool.

> 'Some people talk about Mr and Mrs Joe Blow – what does it mean to them? Give them a one-off course, they remember it for half a moment. The people who remember it for a long time are the people who say, yes, we debated that five years ago and now I can see the Wodonga TAFE, the catholic college and other schools have got together wit the Council and are planning their next education precinct out at Baranduda'

He saw the Learning City Project as having 'influenced the strategic thinking of decision makers' – although it had not impacted as much as he would have liked on small business. He also cited the decision by Albury City Council to make education and learning one of the eight new platforms for its 2020 Vision. He argued that this provided evidence that the learning city concept had influenced the council policy, despite the apparent lack of commitment to the Learning Cities Project.

A similar view was put by Jim Saleeba, who saw the Project as being concerned with 'long-term change.' While he saw Learning Cities as a 'front end to VET,' he was against judging the Project purely in terms of the numbers of people involved. He referred to 'group collaboration' and the 'strengthening of links' between partners as more appropriate measures of success. However he saw the short-term funding cycle as a barrier to long-term change. As he noted,

> 'the learning community is not an easy concept to communicate.'

Most of those interviewed agreed that the Learning City Project could not have evolved without the involvement of local government, particularly Wodonga City Council. Rodney Wangman took the view that local government's primary focus was on service provision and, unless funding was available, 'it (the learning city concept) will only hold their interest for a short time'. However, local government's role in the project had been critical because it gave the project 'credibility' and helped to attract other organisations and 'senior people'.

In the end though, he was of the view that, once State government funding ran out, it was unlikely that the Project could be sustained. Despite the involvement of quite a number of people on the Consultative Council, representing a range of organisations in Albury-Wodonga, the high turnover of people meant that they 'did not have an understanding what was involved'. He felt that it would have been better if the members of the partnership had been encouraged to make a financial contribution from the outset in order to sustain the project in the long-term.

According to Patience Harrington, Wodonga Council's Director of Community Development, the key to the sustainability of the Learning City concept was to locate it in a community development framework and build on existing community-based projects. While she conceded that Consultative Council had 'created an agenda which will remain in our city for a long time to

come,' she saw the lack of a community development framework as a fundamental deficiency of the approach taken:

> 'The Consultative Council was very much education-based … in those days…(with) no real community development focus – it was all around 'learning' in the traditional sense.'

From her perspective, the project never really shifted from the strategy and policy level down to the operational, community level, to build on 'what exists already'.

A similar demand for an on-the-ground approach was expressed by Graeme Crapp:

> 'I take the view that if I can't see a project where this (Learning City) is working, I don't think it is worthwhile. I have got to see outcomes.'

Lynne Makin echoed that view as the basis for her resignation from the Consultative Council because she

> 'couldn't see it going anywhere…(it) needed more runs on the board'.

The publication of the Victorian Minister for Education and Training, Lynne's Ministerial Statement on Adult Community Education (Kosky 2004), had major implications for the Project. The Statement declared that the Government would henceforth be supporting 'community learning partnerships', with a 'refocussing of funding of Learning Towns' to concentrate on learning and meeting identified learning needs of particular learners. The new strategy sought to target 'specific groups of learners' such as young people over 15, people over 55, men over 45, people with disabilities, Koories, and people of cultural and linguistic diversity. It would also seek to deliver the training components of various state government programs and strategies such as Neighbourhood Renewal.

Graeme Crapp was faced with the difficulty of demonstrating the practical benefits of the Project to his fellow Councillors. With the imminent cessation of State Government funding, he supported a decision by the Wodonga Council in October 2004, to relocate the part-time coordinator back to the CEC, 'where he can get on with the theoretical stuff' and for the Council to 'take over and run its own learning city structure'. The revised plan was for Wodonga Council to directly fund a limited number of projects aimed at getting people involved with learning and with direct community involvement, including that of business. In his view, the wider business community would only participate if the approach was project-based so that employers and business people could

> 'see the evidence of increased productivity … The only way this is going to thrive is if we market it to the people and they market it back to the council'.

Council gave the 'new generation' learning projects twelve months to prove themselves. Meanwhile, the Project Coordinator Jim Saleeba, continued to work with the members of the LCCC to identify other project areas and possible partnerships which could maintain the learning city 'idea'.

Summing Up

While the Ministerial Statement on ACE has signalled the end of direct funding for the Albury-Wodonga Learning Cities Project, the project has offered the possibility of a new beginning for ACE and VET in the Albury-Wodonga area. While in one sense the Project can be characterised as the exercise of ownership and control by a single organisation, that is, the city council; in another sense the 'ownership' of the learning city 'idea' has been more widely shared than might appear.

The idea which the Coordinator, Jim Saleeba brought from an international conference and sold to his colleague Cr Crapp, has become embedded in the Council's culture and to a lesser extent in the Wodonga community. This is evidenced by the growing success of the Learning Cities Festival and the links with other projects such as ' The Way We Live'. According to Rodney Wangman, from the Continuing Education Centre, the legacy of the Project will live on. Patience Harrington, Director of Community Development at Wodonga City Council, and a critic of the project's lack of a community development focus, agrees that the Project 'created an agenda which will remain in our city for a long time to come'.

Ultimately, who owns the learning city 'brand' may not be as important as the fact that the idea of the learning city appears to have become embedded in the life of Wodonga. This is perhaps a testimony to stewardship of project initiators, Jim Saleeba and Cr Graeme Crapp. Each had a separate vision of the project: For Jim Saleeba, a vision of Wodonga as the first of a network of learning cities, delivering adult learning opportunities to communities across the state and, indeed, the whole nation, and for Cr Graeme Crapp, a more pragmatic, market-focussed vision of putting Wodonga on the map as a learning city, which would attract business investment. Despite the difference in their focus, their joint dedication and nurturing and their ability to engage others in their dream, enabled the learning city concept to take root in Victoria's northeast.

The project would not have survived and thrived without the involvement of local government, particularly Wodonga City Council. While it took ownership of the Project and took the lead in providing resources to support it, there was a sense in which other community groups and organisations, remained 'silent' partners. Had a broader base of support and involvement been established at the outset, with more sharing of ownership and responsibility, then it is arguable that the project might have become more sustainable and independent of government funding.

Nevertheless, the project has put lifelong learning on the regional map. It now remains to be seen how the various organisations and interest groups will respond to the continuing challenges of promoting and enabling life-long learning with Albury-Wodonga's communities.

ICE in the City of Casey

ICE is a snappy acronym used to describe a cluster of projects designed to develop skills in Information, Communication and Electronics (ICE) within the City of Casey. The program consists of a number of players with the City Council the overarching and consistent player. The ICE program grew in response to the skills demographic information collected by the City of Casey and skills shortages expressed by local electronics, information technology (IT) and telematic industries. The City of Casey activated the ICE program and became the conduit to bring together local schools and industry in partnerships which have resulted in the innovative, educational programs that characterise the program.

The Motivation

The Council Perspective

The City of Casey is an outer region of Melbourne some 50 klms South East of the CBD. Its former rural character has now been urbanised, enveloped by the sprawl of the Melbourne suburbs. The city's identity however is still emerging. It has been described as 'on a knife's edge to know which way it should develop.' It's current evolution has been seen as problematic and the council is intent upon influencing its direction.

Council sources describe the City of Casey as a skills monoculture. It is a blue-collar community. But the younger generation is generally not interested in following in their parents' footsteps – youths are not taking up apprenticeships. Nor has the academic option appealed to many. While 22% of Melbourne's population over 15 years of age, have tertiary qualifications, only 6.4% of Cranbourne's[2] population are tertiary qualified. Casey's youth tend to be employed part-time mostly in the retail sector. There are limited employment opportunities. The council is the largest employer and contractor in the area.

According to Council planners, Cranbourne was established some years ago as the town planners' solution to a single issue – that of providing affordable housing to relieve the pressure of urban density. Hence the City has inherited a number of 'planning mistakes' that the Council is working to ameliorate. These 'mistakes' have resulted in a lack of diversity and connectedness in large parts of the community.

The population of the City is expected to quadruple to a figure of 350,000 within the next 25 years, but it is not well aligned for jobs of the future. Industry development is likely to be in commercial sectors that are not dependent upon massive capital investment and infrastructure. Telecommunications, information technology and electronic development are the highest contenders. Development in this field offers the promise of prosperity and it is here that the Council has centred its business development plan. The ICE program is a strategic arm of the plan.

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[2] Cranbourne is the largest centre in the City of Casey.

The Industry Perspective

The electronics, IT and telematic industry is desperately short of skilled employees. Peter Cocciardi is the inaugural president of the Victorian Institute of Steel Detailers and a manager of Precision Design Australasia. He remarked that skilled labour in the industry was previously sourced predominantly through the state owned electricity commission and a few private companies. With the demise of the major government utility company and the trend towards contracting, there is very little in-house staff development. According to Peter, there has been virtually no training in the industry for 15 or 20 years. The staff crisis took 10 or 15 years to hit but now 'there is a huge gap between what is demanded by the industry and what is available.'

> The industry is screaming. We are now importing draftsmen from overseas to fill our positions because we can't grow our business without them … WA is about to put ten billion dollars into mining. The drafting will be done, because there is no capacity in Australia, will be done off-shore in India, in Pakistan, in China, in the Philippines, because we no longer have a viable capacity within drafting …

John Perrin, when he was director of Motorola Australia, became involved in the ICE project. He was motivated by the same need to build a skill base within the electronics, information technology and telematics industry from which to draw future employees.

The Educational Institution Partners

Industry has captured the attention of schools as vocational education has become more prominent. In the assessment of a local teacher, the careers focus went to sleep after the technical schools were closed down and Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) became almost exclusively academic. But 'now we are back to what we were' and schools are gradually developing a profile in industry. John Pech, the principal of Hampton Park Secondary College, affirmed a growing vocational education program with over 100 students involved at the senior level of his school. These programs included VET in Schools subjects enabling secondary students to gain nationally recognised vocational credentials as part of their school program; and studies towards the Victorian Certificate in Applied Learning (VCAL), a more vocationally oriented course of study, offered as an alternative to the VCE. With the assistance of Victorian Chamber of Commerce, schools within the area have put together a data base of local industries. They have suggested ways that industry could engage with schools and 'the response (from industry) has been overwhelmingly positive'.

In 2001, when the Berwick Secondary College project was active, Terry Trevena was the assistant principal. He was motivated to become involved because he believed that work placement arrangements were too tokenistic. He was looking for opportunities to bring industry and schools closer and hence became the champion of the ICE project at Berwick.

Government incentive schemes, both state and federal, have nurtured interest and have catalysed many of the projects that make up the ICE program. However the issues for the schools are clearly different from those of industry or local government. In discussion with principals and staff, the recurrent concerns that spurred their interest in industry were

school retention - VET and industry involvement have been an instrument to keep students in the education system

curriculum enrichment – industry offers the potential to add interest to the school curriculum

sponsorship.

The Information, Communication & Electronics (ICE) Projects

Back in 1998, Motorola began to ask questions about the poor up-take of courses in information technology at university level. They decided to take this question to a group of Year 9 students at Berwick Secondary College to find out what would attract them to the industry. The students talked about more hands-on learning and more interesting projects. In fact it was this group that came up with the term ICE.

At the time, John Perrin, the director of Motorola was then a member of the school council at Berwick Secondary College. Following an exchange between John and Halvard Dalheim, the manager of planning and economic development for the City of Casey, the first ICE projects emerged at Berwick. It was 1999 when Motorola became involved in supporting Year 11 and 12 information technology programs by providing input from experts and sponsoring industry site excursions.

In 2000, teachers at Berwick were considering a number of proposals for a government grant aimed at bringing industry and schools together. What emerged in 2001 was a project based on radio propagation. Motorola donated a number of specially adapted CB radios and trained two science teachers in radio signals. The course amalgamated knowledge of basic wave motion, electricity, magnetism, and communications. An elaborate transmission device was erected with the government grant money which also paid for teacher release. The two teachers visited Motorola for 3 to 4 hours per week over an 8 to 10 week period. At Motorola they had exposure to world experts in the field, and with their assistance, they developed a curriculum made up of principles of telematics, electronic data collection and transmission with a strong emphasis on hands-on activity.

Terry Trevena talked excitedly about the exchange between the 'real-life technicians and scientists' and the teachers as they wrestled with the topics from the perspective of their different disciplines:

> As soon as you mention waves, the engineer is thinking how does this best fit with the thing we are manufacturing and the teacher is thinking how can I best teach kids to understand what's happening …It is like if you were to get a chef, a buyer and a diner together. When I mention 'radish', the person who is dining thinks what it tastes like, the person who is buying thinks where to get the best radishes and the person who is cooking thinks how can I best prepare the radish so you've got these totally different perspectives.'

The project culminated in a racing car adventure, with the assistance of John Perrin's business networks. NRC's race team engineer visited the school and brought his racing car with him. He explained the electronic communication system (telematics) that linked the car and the pit during a car race. The next day the class went off to the race track at Phillip Island to observe what happened in action. With the help of the experts, they interpreted the performance of the car. They measured g-force, body roll, braking and cornering in real time, then they adjusted a few things and observed the new information.

Teacher Ms Ingrid Scharer (left) watches as
students Lauren Hollick and Rhen Montgomery
test the new equipment

Berwick students learn the wonders of
telematics applied to racing cars

Needless to say, the course was a hit, but it ran only once. At the end of the year, both teachers left and Terry could not find others to replace them.

Cranbourne Christian College

The project at Cranbourne Christian College coincided with that at Berwick and again involved Motorola. The story goes that Motorola was upgrading their computers. The old ones were being off-loaded to a green scrap collector. The storeman, one Jock McCragie, refused to junk them and put them aside in the store. The idea of using them for computer training bubbled its way through the company and one staff member, Ron Reeves, took up the suggestion. Ron was approaching retirement and, with the support of the director, was allowed time to devote to handing on his knowledge. He made a class set of similar models and put together a curriculum based on the idea of dismantling the computers, putting them together again, loading software on to them and seeing if they still worked.

Mr. Ron Reeves identifies some of the components in a
computer

Rachael & Jessica nearing completion of reassembly of
their computer

From Left: Rhen Montgomery (student Yr 10) , John Perrin (Motorola Australia), Lauren Horricks (student Yr 10) and Kim McFarland (Strategic Planning Dept, City of Casey) share a frivolous moment as they scan the frequencies for a good music radio station. Kim's not sure this is what the equipment was donated for.

It was Halvard Dalheim (Council's Manager of Strategic Development) who contacted surrounding schools. It seemed that most schools were unable to incorporate the program into their curriculum but Cranbourne Christian College had the flexibility to do it. Ron Reeves commenced teaching the subject to Year 9 students in 2000. The subject had a strong practical component and, despite initial resistance from some of the girls, it inspired interest and enthusiasm. But it was 'Ron's baby'. He was the expert and his knowledge could not be matched by the regular information technology staff. He put enormous energy into the course and many hours of his own time. When he was recalled back to Motorola, he became less available and the course began to flounder. In the meantime John Perrin was moved off-shore and Motorola's zeal flagged. Added to this were a number of practical considerations – the school's staff did not have time to build the knowledge to take over from Ron, the equipment storage became an issue and the set up time for the classes was impractical without special time allocation.

Ron offered his course to two groups of Year 9 students, but after that it was discontinued. Motorola offered the Jock McCragie award for the best performing information technology student at the school but that also ceased when Motorola no longer had an involvement in the school.

The Hampton Park – Precision Design Partnership

A further iteration of the ICE program unfolded when Peter Cocciardi became involved with Hampton Park Secondary College. The school became aware of government funding available for industry – education partnerships. Steven Silestean from the College headed a working party intent upon presenting a unbeatable submission. The project had commenced the previous year (2002) when a similar submission was put together and failed. The new working party addressed the points of criticism from the previous submission and with the assistance of Kim McFarland, one of Halvard's staff, an approach was made to Peter Cocciardi as the industry partner.

As the president of the Victorian Institute of Steel Detailers, Peter was keen to increase the professionalism of his industry and establish a career path for new employees. Most steel detailers are not formally trained although they may have a range of related qualifications in information technology. Steel detailers use complex technology to produce three dimensional drawings for the construction industry. Detailers usually work in small businesses in contract arrangements to the construction industry. There are only 3 or 4 major companies in Melbourne with more than 20 employees and Peter's is the only one with International Standards Organisation (ISO) quality accreditation. As well, there are several sector streams that make up 'the industry' including design, fabrication and merchandising.

The technology had made a 'quantum leap' over the previous 8 years and, in Peter's opinion, the programs taught in TAFE and universities were not sufficiently practical or up-to-date to meet industry's needs. Peter wanted a training program that was focused on the future so he drew upon all his networks to identify industry skills, to locate the latest equipment and to channel resources into a training program that would produce excellence in the field.

The idea was for a 12 month apprenticeship-style course. It would be offered to 20 Year 11 graduates from the surrounding area and would be located at a skills centre to be established at Hampton Park Secondary College. The course would involve regular work placement in a range of workplaces that make up the industry.

The vision was ambitious. Software packages alone cost $55,000 to $100,000 and Peter knew the school could not pay. The program would require enormous support from the industry in providing placements and training, in sharing expertise and in providing software and equipment for training.

Peter began by contacting all the software companies. He found 4 prepared to donate software packages. He secured 20 licenses for software which would normally cost between $8,000 and $30,000. The software companies were motivated to disseminate their packages and train people to use them thus favouring their acceptance in industry.

Peter spoke at industry forums and secured promises from 20 companies willing to take students for placement. For some companies, such as steel fabricators, this commitment put constraints upon work activity because OH&S regulations demand that students be accompanied at all times while on site. But the industry was keen and Peter was in a strong position to call upon their good will.

Peter secured the support of companies involved in the electronic processing of steelwork who agreed to involve students in material ordering and handling and the loading and transport of products. He wrote Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) stating costs and timelines for the promise of materials and equipment – an exercise he estimated would have cost a million dollars had the school commissioned the services and purchased of equipment. Perhaps the prize of them all was an electronic plate profile cutter to be transported and reassembled at the school, worth at least $50,000. The industry offered 20 places for graduates to work for at least the first 3 months after graduation.

The school was to provide the skills centre and a teacher who would be fully trained by the industry in the software. Added to this were two industry retirees willing to work alongside the teachers.

The submission cost many a weekend over 5 months in drafting and redrafting. The final product requested only 28% of the actual cost of the program – a figure of $123,000. This was a dramatic drop from the 71% contribution requested in the previous application. The submission was put into the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) in July. In December there was still no answer when plans for the new school year had already been committed. In October students select courses, teachers are appointed and timetables are prepared, all well ahead of the training authority's December decision making schedule. And the answer? The application was recognised as outstanding. But despite the high commendation, government priorities favoured regional development. The submission failed and the bubble burst.

The triad – school, industry and local council were very disappointed, but perhaps there was hope for the following year. But no. The school announced it would not be applying again.

Seeking an explanation, I visited the principal, John Pech. John pointed out that the training authority timeframes were not conductive to school planning requirements. The national

authority worked to inflexible timelines that were unsympathetic to the pressures that compel decision making in schools. Within the given timelines, the school would need to source teachers and train them over the summer holidays in order to have the program ready for the new year. Students likewise had insufficient lead time. Furthermore the school was required to contribute $13,000 and the school council was questioning the allocation of the budget:

> We have a growing VET/VCAL program that strains our resources to the limit and to enter into partnerships with local industry that call upon other resources inside the College is a huge effort. It costs elsewhere … The resources for the College by and large are disproportionately weighted to the top end of the school and the issues to do with literacy and numeracy are firmly embedded in years 7 to 9. That's where resources need to go.

As Steve explained 'everyone argues about what they want from a school'. Industry is only one of the contenders.

For Peter Cocciardi, the failure of the program was an inexplicable blow:

> For $123,000, to see that course not go ahead. Even if it was $250,000 or $300,000, to not have 20 kids in this industry, given the support the industry was giving, is an absolute crime … Why can't you charge the kids? … How hard is that? Five grand each… the kid will pay it back in the first three months out of guaranteed employment with a drafting company.

In Peter's opinion, the good will he had mustered had been dishonoured. 'People just don't keep coming back to the trough.' For Peter, the moment had passed and he had moved on to other things. His sentiment was reminiscent of John Perrin's:

> I was disappointed. I got burnt out. I have gone elsewhere.

The Skills Centre at the school was required to be secured and separate from the school with its own entrance and car park.

Putting it into Perspective

From Halvard's perspective the ICE experience is not a litany of failures; it is rather a grindingly slow learning experience that is inevitably full of frustration.

> We (at the Council) are good at rates and rubbish because we have been doing it for a long time, but we are still learning this …6 years ago we put the 'environment' into our mission statement and council has since put resources into dealing with the environment. Two years ago we put the word 'education' in as an outcome and I now have Kim and an education and employment officer down at Doveton.

Halvard explained that it has taken a long time to understand how schools work. Their bureaucracy is daunting and 'even finding the right person to speak to is a huge task'. He has also

learned that school programs are dependent upon individuals and once they move on, projects fail. Furthermore, there is very little institutional history. As a researcher seeking out the story of the ICE program, I experienced this frustration. Very few school staff had any information or records to assist and the whereabouts of past staff were also unknown. In Kim's view:

> The biggest problem we find is the consistency and longevity of the education system. You just can't spend very large amounts of money and a lot of people working on a project, particularly in partnership with industry, then find out it only lasts 12 months or less.

Kim cited the example of another ICE related program which involved a home based online learning program about running small businesses. The project absorbed a grant of $80,000 and took 6 to 9 months to set up at a local TAFE. It ran for less than 12 months.

The learning from these apparent failures is captured in the following principles:

Structuring networks

Issues of ownership

Managing the cultures

Structuring Networks

Halvard believes that some of the solutions lie in a more structured approach in working with schools:

> As long as we are playing one on one with schools it is hard yards …We need to build alliances between schools working in the same curriculum areas. We need network support to orient new teachers into the area.

Teachers would then support each other and source new staff from their networks when others moved on.

Issues of Ownership

The Council's Council's Learning and Employment Officer believes the problem lies in the ownership of the programs. Local government, she considers, could learn from community development models. Community development is oriented to sustainability. In her view,

> the community needs to own the project from the start which means locating the ownership with the parents and the school rather than the principal and the teacher… The business sector does not see the relevance of the community sector.

She went on to explain that the fracturing of local government does not support sustainability. The business, community and youth services do not speak to each other.

It was clear from research discussions that the youth and parents were not part of planning for these projects and attempts to involve students in the research were seen as unnecessary. Who should be the players at the planning stage and the implementation stage? This question was never fully investigated.

Terry Trevena mused at the demise of the Berwick program:

> I don't think the school was left with anything except the equipment … but it taught me a huge lesson. I thought I knew lots about running things but I have now discovered that almost from day one you have to build the sustainability in.

He explained that the science department at the College was never deeply involved in the project which he now sees as a mistake in his leadership:

> Either I've got to sell the project better or it wasn't a good project from the start. Selling it means not getting people to agree with it but being willing to do something about it … The important step is to get people to realise they can contribute and get something out of it themselves.

While the ICE project offers outstanding examples of industry ownership and local government leadership, the school ownership was relatively weak and the community ownership was almost entirely absent.

Managing the Cultures

Industrialists have at times expressed considerable frustration in dealing with educationalists. Local government officers have also been rejected by industrialists as overly bureaucratic. However in this instance there was only praise for the resourcefulness and professionalism of the Council officers. But as third parties they are in a position to observe the cultural clash:

> Timeframes for industry are very different from that of schools. Motorola will invent, design, produce, market and sell a new phone every year…John Perrin originally thought you could go into a (school) meeting and sign off on something. Rather than agreeing with the school to teach this subject next semester, the school would agree to set up a committee to consider whether teaching this subject is a good idea.

Throughout his 6 years on the Berwick School Council, John became conversant with the education culture:

> I sat in on a few interviews for assistant principal … and it was a major cultural shock for me because we were looking for senior people to take up senior positions in a very big school at Berwick and the vast majority of people we interviewed talked to us all about procedure and almost nothing about outcome. When I do an interview in industry, the first and most important thing is about outcome and, if I am interested, I will ask about procedure.

John has great respect for the work of teachers but he acknowledges it is a world apart from that of industry:

> With my background as an engineer, my results are either a red light or a green light and there is nothing in between… but teachers never know when their job is finished, they never know whether they have done enough… People who are good at those people skills, caring, nurturing are not the type that take easily to the abrupt 'that didn't work, fix it'.

The cultural gulf widens with an understanding of the 'unbearable pressure' on teachers that John observed:

> In the 6 years I was at Berwick, we had 5 different accounting procedures imposed on the school and 3 different curriculum requirements. So the poor bloody teacher who used to teach subject A in 1998 had to rewrite everything to teach it in 1999 or 2000. So they are flat out, busy, busy, busy standing still.

John perceived that teachers are seeking help and industry is a fantastic resource but, he believes, it will not be accessed through the language and structures in which education operates. Industry has no stomach for the hours of educational philosophy that precedes a decision. John has come to understand that for teachers 'if you don't get the philosophy right, then the tactics and the procedures that follow from that, can't be right.' Despite his empathy he has found it necessary

on occasions to 'take some leadership' in order to cut through the forest of words and drive to common goals.

Terry Trevena recognises that you have to manage the interface between teachers and industry:

> Industry don't want to come and just talk. They want a result. So what we found was that when we wanted industry to come along we had very specific things we wanted done. …With Motorola… we wanted hands-on involvement with the technology. They could deal with that.

Terry became a master of identifying the points of interface and putting clear parameters around them so that industry could be insulated from the school processes. He advises that the people who manage the interface must be people who speak both languages.

While this advice is helpful, it does not dissolve the cultural clash. Both John and Terry acknowledge that conservatism is inherent in government systems. Even John Pech agreed that there was 'more than a bit of justice' in the observation that schools do not understand entrepreneurialism. There is little space for taking risks in the public service system and yet there are some principals and teachers who are entrepreneurial. Halvard believes that 'greater autonomy in schools will make for greater adaptability.'

In the meantime the work of getting industry and education to work together is too important to give up on. The parties need to better manage their journey together so that these great pearls of vocational wealth do not continue to roll off the table and into the bin while educationalists are preoccupied with internal debates and struggles for personal survival.

Horsing Around in Melton

Melton was a rural township 45 klms from Melbourne. However its identity has changed. The tentacles of the urban sprawl have reached out and affordable housing in the area has attracted a growing population. Local councillors claim that it is the fastest growing township in Australia but it is beset with the same problems of many fringe communities. There is a significant imbalance between jobs and housing. Council sources have established a ratio of less than one job per household across the shire, (0.45:1 jobs per household). Of those that are employed, 80% travel outside the shire to go to work. Much of the local earnings are therefore spent outside the shire. The outcome is that Melton 'is totally dependent on metropolitan Melbourne' (Suzane Becker, Planning Manager). Housing development is ahead of economic development and of the provision of services such as health, education and other social services.

There are many young families in the community but there are few opportunities for youth. Public transport is scant as are local jobs. The average school leaving age is low. Youth workers observe that without adequate education and skills many young people quickly become isolated and disengaged or leave the township. Melton is therefore faced with the choice of achieving 'real' development or languishing as a disadvantaged community. 'Real' development will bring a range of manufacturing and service industries, educational institutions, a hospital, another railway station and a diverse socio-economic profile:

> If we can't get proper growth in this township, we probably don't want any more growth [in population] because any more is just perpetuating the problems we've already got. If we're going to get growth, it has to be on a large scale to really change things. We want a developer that will plan a community rather than just plan houses.
>
> (Suzane Becker, Planning Manager)

The Equine Industry

In the mid 80s, the shire recognised the equine industry as an important feature of its identity and adopted the motto 'Heart of the Thoroughbred Country'. In fact the equine industry in the area goes far beyond thoroughbred racing and breeding. There is a large harness racing and breeding interest in the area. The Melton region accounts for 20% of Victoria's harness racing horses and 17% of Victoria's licensed harness racing trainers (MEIDP 2003). There are 242 trainers within a 30 klm radius of Melton (ibid) and 100 private harness training circuits in Melton. The locality supports 1100 horse properties which include recreational riding, equestrian activities and other equine interest groups.

Members of the equine community have expressed a concern for the future of their industry. Flemington, Cranbourne and Caulfield race tracks are filled to capacity and cannot accommodate any new thoroughbred or harness training. Good training facilities are paramount for a successful horse racing industry. Local industry experts reported that one third of scratchings in the racing industry are due to leg injuries from horses training on unsafe tracks.

The Melton region is hailed as well suited to the industry because of the availability of affordable land, the climate and soil, its access to Melbourne and the international airport and its proximity to support services such as Werribee Veterinarian services. However the industry has been hampered by a number of limitations. One significant limitation is that of the skills shortage. Horse owners can only run as many horses as they can manage and train. A broad range of skills are required to assist owners run their businesses. They are looking for skills in horsemanship

and in farm maintenance. Jobs such as tending fences, controlling weeds, maintaining drains, roads and tracks call for skills that are not given prominence alongside those of training horses. They are however essential in the running of a horse business. While there are horse trainers in the locality, they are highly specialised in their skills. There are few able to gear and ungear horses, tend horses' teeth and general health, groom and exercise horses and provide general animal husbandry. Owners cannot grow their business without skilled labour resources.

There is also a need for more track work riders to exercise horses. The Flemington facility brings track work drivers from overseas to satisfy the demand. Over the last two years about 40 overseas riders have taken up the offer of a working visa in Australia. Local trainers have requested many more. (Racing Victoria, Flemington)

Aside from the skills gaps, other limitations of the area are giving rise to thoughts of relocation for some members of the Melton equine industry (Business Plan 2003). The local and state government commitment to the industry is one question along with inadequate telecommunications, roads and water, added to queries about planning guidelines. The lack of training and racing facilities has been the most clearly articulated and pressing demand.

Responding to these pressures, the Shire formed the Melton Equine Industry Development Committee (MEIDC) bringing together representatives from all sectors within the industry. It sought funds to undertake an equine business and marketing plan which was completed in May 2003. The project produced an industry analysis consisting of seven sectors. Each sector was ranked as follows

Industry sector	Ranking
Harness Racing Training	A
Thoroughbred Racing Training	A
Thoroughbred Breeding	B
Recreational Codes	B
Education and Training	C
Tourism	C
Quarantine	D

A – very high priority, strong interest, excellent growth prospects, short lead time
B – high priority, underlying interest, good growth prospects
C – medium opportunity, underlying interest, requires significant development time, medium growth prospects
D – low priority, opportunistic opportunity only

The report concluded that the 'opportunities for further developing the Melton region's equine industry are very encouraging. It recommended that 'the commercial viability of a multi-sector 'centre of excellence' be pursued' and a 'fully fledged business case be developed'.

The business case was completed in April 2005. The cornerstone of the proposal was that a world class multi sector centre of excellence be developed which would house facilities for all equine racing interests including horse training resources such as a swimming pool, all manner of arenas, horse maintenance services such as farriers and veterinarian services. The proposal is ambitious and extends to facilities for special events, entertainment and hospitality services.

The centre, as proposed, would cost a handsome sum. The business case also put forward a plan to raise the funds. The plan involved the rezoning of a sizable portion of council land and the sale of the land to a developer who would build a housing estate and the centre as well.

Here was more than a partial answer to the problems of the Shire and local industry - a synergy that could bring employment, population diversity and prosperity to the region. The business

case researcher, Toni-Anne Collins, estimated that there is one job to every 1.8 horses. Aside from the range of equine industry jobs, the proposal envisaged jobs in tourism, turf management, finance and marketing.

The energy of the Melton Equine Industry Development Project was captured by a vision of tangible outcomes – tracks, grandstands, arenas. Vocational training is far less glamorous an aspiration. The Melton Shire has no equine training and education is not generally regarded as a high priority. However this is about to change it seems. The original vision was for a complex with strong connections to vocational and educational institutions. As the Shire sponsored vocational training pilot program gained prominence, the training link strengthened from an arm's length connection to a facility within the centre where apprenticeships and learning would be intertwined.

Developing Equine Vocational Training

Alongside the application for the business plan and business case was another application to the Department of Victorian Communities for a Community Regional Industry Skills Project (CRISP). Members of the Melton Community Learning Board were invited into the Equine Industry Development Committee and a sub-committee was formed to oversee the CRISP project. The application was for a one-off 12 week training program for 20 local, unemployed youths who would graduate as farm workers for the equine industry. The Committee spent some months deliberating about the program – what course, what units of competence, what educational institutions? A set of short courses would perhaps answer the need and the short course manager at Victoria University provided input. Bendigo Harness Racing had equine educational expertise and had developed computer based materials that could be purchased for the project. The course was to be completed within six months from the start of the grant, but time slipped away and the original concept of a two day a week program became a more intensive four day a week program as the course schedule contracted to fit the approaching deadline. The Committee thought to appoint a co-ordinator who would recruit course participants and put together the program, filling out the gaps in the Committee's ground work.

John Wooding was appointed 6 weeks before the program was due to start. John was a member of the Equine Industry Development Committee. He agists horses on his property in the shire and had, for a long time, canvassed the possibility of a skills training program. John had retired as an ex-teacher having worked for 23 years at Victoria University in both the TAFE and university sectors within the engineering faculty. But, most of all, John was an educator. He knew the value of experiential learning and recognised the importance of exposure to living examples of expertise rather than abstract theory in isolation. He knew that good industry education programs are founded on an understanding of the industry and research into its needs.

Although there was no funding available for industry research, John activated his networks and conducted a hasty needs analysis. He transformed the work of the Committee into an interactive, hands-on training program dictated by the realities of the farm workplace.

Before John came on board, we said this was the rough course which we think we need to focus on. Then John came on board and did some pretty quick industry research…He's got enormous contacts in the industry. He spoke to the industry and then came back and put something together.

John's expertise was invaluable.

(Troy Scoble, Economic Development, Shire of Melton)

John's course was a hybrid made up of accredited modules from different courses moulded around the particular needs of the industry. In the final agreement with the Department of Victorian Communities, selected short courses became accredited units.

The original course was to operate out of Victoria University using computer based learning programs with Wednesdays dedicated to practical work where students would be placed on local equine farms. John saw the short-comings of this proposal:

(As an equine course)naturally horses have to come in there somewhere and as soon as you put horses in there, you can't deliver it in the university because they won't let you have horses in the classroom. (John Wooding, Course Co-ordinator)

John sourced and secured a suitable property (Cornwall Park Stud) with a range of stables and horse training facilities which the owners were keen to offer for vocational training purposes. But there were further complications. The horses on the stud were young, unhandled racing stock and were unsuitable for new entrants to the industry. John called upon his own resources and supplied more docile horses from his own property, along with lead ropes, head collars, lunge ropes and other equipment.

The facilities at the Cornwall Park Stud where the practical activities of the course were conducted.

Transport was another problem. The target cohort did not all have drivers' licenses or cars. How could they attend the Wednesday practical placement? Furthermore the quality of learning experience on different farms would be variable. John decided to replace that arrangement with a structured program on farm skills based at the stud. The industry had specified a need for farm maintenance skills so John involved local organisations in the training. He invited the State

Emergency Service to teach trainees how to use a chain saw; a local motor cycle training school to teach quad bike skills; and the Shire environmental department to teach weed control. Each expert needed training materials, 'because they're not teachers, they need help to structure a learning program'. This was another task John took on in the early weeks of his employment.

Communication was another essential part of the program that was transformed:

> Initially the course looked at OH&S, report and resume writing and first aid. No one in the equine industry was even interested in those because they didn't have horses in them.
>
> John Wooding, Course Co-ordinator

John also knew the original plan for teaching communication would not work for the learners:

> They are outdoors people who couldn't see the point of doing English

John designed an integrated program which went far beyond the original design:

> We took it up there (at the stud)…which meant they didn't know they were doing communications, which meant filling out horse identification charts…phoning through orders for materials, giving written and verbal instructions to other members of the group, working in a team…so I had to reinvent communications in an on-site, hands-on, you-really-need-it format rather than just talking grammatical English in a classroom.

While the industry was still seduced by the glamour of the 'centre of excellence', training issues received only secondary attention. But when John reported to the Committee at the end of the training program, the attention of the industry was captivated:

> The industry was blown away with what they'd done…Till then they thought it was going to be a traditional course like what's been offered in the past…This is the first course that they would be confident to employ someone straight out of, knowing they were really able to work on their property   Troy Scoble, Economic Development, Shire of Melton

Toni-Anne Collins, the consultant responsible for the business case, noted that the interest in education had changed following the resounding success of the project. Where the business and marketing report rated education and training as a 'C', its new found status would result in a higher rating if the measure was to be taken again.

The experience at Melton illustrates the divide between the community notions of a good training program and the almost invisible work of a good educator. Popular notions of vocational education are locked into institutions, units, topics and qualifications as the stuff of education. The ingredients of effective learning programs are in the planning of contexualised learning experiences that provide structure, challenge and authentic exposure to real work:

> What they hoped was that they could simply go to someone and say 'deliver it'. They thought that the work was in getting industry on board…and the work of the training was contained in appointing a co-ordinator.   John Wooding, Course Co-ordinator

John brought with him sound educational knowledge and experience along with an intimate understanding of the industry. The council and the sub-committee realised, in retrospect, that these features were indispensable:

> We didn't have the expertise in this area and we were required to submit funding applications and to draft up outcomes before the project started…(Without John) we would have ended up trying to deliver a course which probably would not have addressed the skill shortage issues effectively.
>
> Troy Scoble, Economic Development, Shire of Melton

Conducting an educational project was new to the Shire and plunged them into the unknown. Troy described them as 'feeling their way'. 'We prefer all programs to have predictable outcomes', but this one was full of surprises:

> It was just a constant weekly and fortnightly challenge to manage the project. We'd have a meeting on Friday. The next Friday we'd be in an entirely different area than we thought we were going to be…Within my business case project, the budget didn't change. With this project, I reckon we had, over a 12 week project, 7 budget changes.

The project was difficult and messy and might have been abandoned had it not been for John's determination to make it work. The program came in on budget but all parties acknowledge it was due to the relentless energy and passion of its co-ordinator and his ability to mobilise the good will of the industry. The stud charged only for the use of the power, Bendigo Harness Racing Training Centre supplied excellent computer based training resources for 'a very good price', Victoria University supplied enabled enrolments, student administration, certification and quality processes as in-kind partner support.

The learning from the experience amplifies the need to appoint a committed educator with strong industry links at the beginning of the project. This would have circumvented the flaying about and the time loss that dogged the beginning of the project. However there was another significant oversight at the planning stage. There was one crucial stakeholder had not been brought into the discussion – the disengaged youth who were to be the target of the learning.

John addressed the issue of student recruitment early in his appointment. He spoke to the local newspaper and had feature articles printed and put notices up at the employment centres but the response was poor. Days out from the commencement of the program, John had only four confirmed enrolments. The committee was frustrated and bewildered. It was not until youth workers were called in that they all learned that they did not know how to speak to youth. Young people do not read the newspaper. Youth generally are not willing to enter a training program over the Christmas period. Disengaged youth are not keen to attend work that starts very early in the morning in remote locations. Perhaps unemployed youth rather than disengaged youth are the more appropriate target group.

On the advice of the youth workers and employment officers, wordy advertisements were discarded for a simple, visual poster with minimal information. The posters were strategically placed in youth haunts. The course was postponed to correspond with the school year and the outcome was reversed with a full complement of starters in place in late January. Many however were from the fringes of Melton and not all were youth but the experience left behind some important learning about marketing and involving all stakeholders.

Where to from here?

The pilot course is completed. The Shire now sees its job as done. From Troy's perspective:

> The council's role was to get the seed funding, create the idea, show how it can be done and invigorate industry to take it on board. Local government's role is to light the fire and industry's, to keep it going.

But it is not just industry that keeps the fire burning. It needs buy-in from vocational education institutions.

For industry, ownership was the key. The council and Equine Industry Development Committee had done that work. Toni-Anne's passion for her business case project fired the industry. This

was fuelled by John's strategic development of local equine partners in running a program that the industry was proud to own. At this stage the industry is fully engaged but the education sector has different fidelities. Educational institutions are subservient to bureaucratic values underpinned by policy and notions of viability.

From a policy perspective, Victoria University is well placed to get involved. Belinda Quantock, the university's community programs liaison officer, verified that there has been a shift in university policy that has prioritised local involvement. A centre for community engagement has been formed at the Melton campus. Kevin Roche, Deputy Director of TAFE, at Victoria University, explained:

> The university's objective is to interface and service local communities in ways which are relevant and consistent with the university's objectives and in line with local needs and requirements.

Victoria University is already active in the Community Learning Board, but the equine industry project has presented a considerable risk:

> The industry itself is not one industry, it is three or four. There is a danger that John's course is driven by his enthusiasm rather than the needs of the industry in which case industry will not pick up the graduates.

Kevin went on to outline the constraints of the TAFE funding arrangements:

> Opportunistic possibility is difficult to respond to within the funding structure unless it meets the quantum requirements. Where you are working in a broader environment of a developing community, feeling their way, working with an industry sector that is not highly organised and there are a number of stakeholders, the training element is only a small component of the total.

As a representative of a large educational institution such as a university, Kevin has to find a middle course between a policy that invites community programs with their happenstance and uncertainties against procedures and systems that are held rigidly in place. This can be very frustrating to entrepreneurial stakeholders who describe government workers as 'risk averse' and 'lacking vision'. 'You do it, we'll think about it' is the oft quoted accusation. Entrepreneurs thrive on opportunities and see them as fleeting and fickle. Synergies are crafted but alignments are momentary. Bureaucracies however work in stages and hierachies and missing a step in the process is intolerable.

From the perspective of procedures-driven organisations, the whirlwind of entrepreneurial enthusiast threatens to blow apart the carefully constructed framework that keeps everyone protected and accountable. One of the primary tasks of managers in these institutions is to safeguard the systems.

The conflict of cultures needs careful management because of its contradictions. The adoption of economic rationalist structures in education results in an uncomfortable mismatch. John Randles from Bendigo Harness Racing expresses it like this:

> Education administrators seem to want the outcome directly associated with the input and education doesn't work like that. Never has. Never will. And I think when we get administration being **educational** administration and not just administration, we might actually prove a point.

John Randles worked within the TAFE system for many years. He found himself severely constrained working in a horse racing environment where competing and owning horses was essential. He finally set up Bendigo Harness Racing to provide the flexibility he needed to respond to the industry.

John Randles recognises that the public service, whether that be education or local government, is not freely able to be entrepreneurial. Dynamic, flexible, smaller organisations have to carry the risk and make the path for the established organisations to follow. In the long term, it is the larger organisations that will sustain the program:

> A large part of what we are doing is to identify the risk and take it out for the other players and leave it behind.

Pilot projects expose the risks and provide space to resolve them. Toni-Anne is an entrepreneur and a risk-taker. Her role was not only to conceive of the vision but to anchor it to the ground by making it 'do-able'. If the ownership is to be shared with the stakeholders, the balance between exciting the imagination and keeping the project achievable is the management challenge during the initiation stages.

> These are difficult projects. They are a seven day commitment and hard and dirty at times. Unless they (the stakeholders) feel they are respected and are gaining out of it both personally and as a community, they have no reason to stay so we push very hard to make sure everyone is respected and gets ownership.
>
> John Randles, Bendigo Harness Racing

John Randles takes a broad community perspective. Victoria University is an important player for the sustainability of the vocational education part of the project. Its presence in the community is important if Melton is to realise the full vision. Local government authorities expressed concern that currently the campus at Melton is languishing with few courses and poor community involvement. As a member of the Melton Equine Industry Development Committee, John Randles promotes a more prominent role for the university:

> I want them to have the certificate. I want them to have their name on the system. I want them to have the notoriety locally because it gives them ownership to this area and the return on that is that we can assure the community we deal with to recognise VU as the supporter of their needs.

In this project, John Randles believes locality is a key to success:

> The naming of the project is local, the products will be local, our involvement is that of a partner underneath a local banner.

John Randles offers a model of stewardship where projects are nurtured but owned by a community rather than possessed by individual or single organisations:

> We will facilitate it and you will own it and if you don't own it, I'm not going to be there.

It is time now for the Shire to move on, its stewarding role achieved.

> Whilst we don't plan to abandon the equine industry, it is only one of six key directions for economic development. We've done quite a lot for the equine industry over the last couple of months so we have to be making sure we are addressing our other key directions as well
>
> Troy Scoble, Economic Development, Shire of Melton

The vision has a broad horizon, far beyond the locality of Melton. If all goes to plan it will unfold leaf by leaf, under the direction of the industry. Not only will it reach out into schools through Victorian Certificate in Applied Learning programs, it will fulfil the needs of an international market:

> Macau, the Arab Emirates, Dubai, Hong Kong have no equine training facilities. The centre could provide international courses run through Victoria University
>
> John Wooding, Course Co-ordinator

The market has to be expansive if the centre of excellence is to be sustainable.

Summing Up

So far this set of projects has been a remarkable success because

The council managed its role as catalyst and auspicing body getting the right people together and maintaining a governance role

The industry has taken ownership as initiator and director of the projects

The training program exceeded industry's expectations because it was built on sound educational principles that allowed a close alignment of needs and outcomes

The industry had input and a role in the training program

The broad canvas of the cluster of projects responds to a suite of needs that has the potential to drive the industry ahead on all key success indicators

Those involved in the entrepreneurial roles were passionate about the vision and determined to drive the vision into reality

Respect was accorded to those in procedure-oriented organisations allowing them to fulfil their roles

Procedure-oriented organisations were largely shielded from the risk of experimental projects

Along the way there have been some important lessons in understanding and managing partnerships:

Educational planning and design is best undertaken by good industry educators who must be involved in the beginning and allowed time and resources to do their job.

At the initiation stage, key protagonists need the 'fire in the belly' to drive through the barriers and make it work

All stakeholders need to be involved all the way

The challenge lies in the knowledge that in fuzzy projects such as this, problems are not foreseen and stakeholders may not be recognised until well into the project. The project therefore needs a flexible management structure willing to redraw the boundaries, review the budget, stretch the timelines and grasp the opportunities wherever possible.

Governance Plus: Group Training in Inner Melbourne

Introduction

As with the other case studies in this project, this study does not attempt to provide an evaluation of the outcomes of the services provided by the 'learning community' being examined; in this case, a Group Training company. Rather it is an attempt to understand the processes by which the underpinning partnerships have evolved and changed. As with our other stories this case involves local government taking an active role in vocational education. Like the other stories there are also industry and community partners and stakeholders involved.

However this story is somewhat different to the others for two key reasons. First, its establishment predates our other cases by more than twenty years. This is the only one of our case studies which can clearly demonstrate an 'institutionalised' partnership that has successfully stood the test of time. For more than two decades the company has offered a suite of employment and training services to its constituent communities with 96% of its graduating apprentices going onto full-time employment in their chosen fields (Apprenticeships Plus 2005). Secondly this story concerns a single provider – although it operates in multiple sites and through a range of partnerships. Given the company's substantial history, and the changing circumstances affecting group training operations and local government, we do not attempt here to tell the 'whole story' of Apprenticeships Plus. This would not be our story to tell and we suspect there would be not one, but many stories to hear.

In this case study we explore some of the issues faced by the Board of Management of Apprenticeships Plus, in overseeing the partnership and the particular role played by local government. We report on the difficulty of managing the tensions between commercial operations and the development of what might be termed a social justice bottom-line. Finally, we discuss the factors which may be important for the long-term sustainability of the partnership.

As with the other case studies, this must necessarily be a 'snapshot in time'. The organisation, and the environment in which it operates is undergoing significant change in response to the demands of stakeholders and the larger forces of economic, social and political change at work in Australia and on the international stage. As the interviews for this study were undertaken between November 2004 and February 2005, the study discusses developments up to the beginning of 2005.

Background

Apprenticeships Plus is part of the network of about 180 Group Training Companies in Australia which together employ over 40,000 apprentices and trainees servicing the needs of over 35,000 businesses. At the end of June 2004 there were approximately 400,000 apprentices and trainees in-training (NCVER 2004) in Australia of whom about 120,000 were in-training in Victoria. Like

other Group Training companies, Apprenticeships Plus employs apprentices and trainees and places them with 'host employers', currently numbering nearly 500. These are usually small- to medium-sized enterprises. Currently, Apprenticeships Plus employs about 470 apprentices and trainees, a number of whom are placed with local governments in Victoria. Through its associated entity, Work and Training Limited, it employs a further 440 apprentices and trainees in Tasmania.

As with other Group Training companies, Apprenticeships Plus selects the apprentices and trainees, places them with appropriate employers; it arranges and monitors their on- and off- the job training and provides them with a range of programs leading to nationally recognised credentials. In addition, Apprenticeships Plus provides advice to employees and counselling to apprentices and trainees. It also undertakes the administrative work involved in providing wages, allowances, workers' compensation, superannuation, and so on.

Apprenticeships Plus employs apprentices and trainees in a wide range of industries, including the traditional trades. They include school-based apprentices as well as mature-aged people. And, rather than place the apprentices and trainees with one employer or at a single workplace, they may work in a variety of workplaces, covering different aspects of the field of training, trade or industry.

Like other Group Training companies, Apprenticeships Plus is an independent and separately incorporated, not for profit organisation, run on commercial business lines. It receives financial support from state and federal governments to assist with administrative overheads - about 3 to 5% of turnover. There is also a small cost recovery charge for the host employers - this is the company's main source of income.

Also like other GTC's, the company is actively involved in the employment placement market, and it has accredited workplace assessors. However, unlike some of its competitors it does not employ specialist staff from the Aboriginal community, from specific ethnic groups, or staff who are specifically trained to work with people with disabilities.

Of particular interest to this research is how the company came into existence. Apprenticeships Plus was established in 1982 by the former Brunswick, Coburg, Northcote, Preston and Fitzroy Councils. The company was originally 'Inner Northern Group Apprenticeships' (later Inner Northern Group Training Limited or INGTL). The councils were 'concerned about unemployment and a lack of training opportunities for local youth.' Since then, the company has grown to become a national business with major interests in Victoria and Tasmania and an annual turnover of $25 million.

The group training company is governed by a Board, which initially included councillors from the five councils. Following the local government amalgamations in 1994, the same councillor representatives continued as Board members, although the five councils had by then been merged into three new Councils (Brunswick into Moreland; Preston, Northcote and Coburg into Darebin and Fitzroy into Yarra). Legally, the company is now co-owned by the three city Councils. The Board currently consists of seven directors, five men and two women, three of whom represent the three member councils. There are four independent directors, two of whom have continued from the pre-1998 Board and one of whom is the Chairman. The three council members are not councillors, but senior managers from each council.

The initial impetus from the original five councils arose from the 'common interest' which they had in responding to the need to develop employment opportunities in the inner northern Melbourne area. This region traditionally had a strong manufacturing base, which was already showing some signs of decline through the pressures of industry rationalisation and restructuring. It was a time when many young people expected to leave school and move into an apprenticeship or some kind of trade training.

The purpose of the partnership was, as it continues to be, the 'promotion of apprenticeships as worthwhile career paths.' Links were established with local businesses, which undertook to take on the apprentices, with support from the group training company. The member councils, for their part, had 'a commitment to take the apprentices if industry did not take them'.

It is worth noting that, at the time of this study Yarra Council differed somewhat from Moreland and Darebin in relation to this commitment to employment of apprentices. Yarra lost much of its manufacturing base in the 1970s and 80s. Its circumstances were further changed by the outsourcing of Council services, which came with council amalgamations under the Kennett government during the 1990s. This led to much of the outdoor workforce being contracted out. As a consequence Yarra, unlike the other member councils, had not hosted any apprentices or trainees in recent times. However, there was a commitment from Yarra Council to employ at least 11 individuals through Apprenticeships Plus in 2005.

As well as the three member councils, Apprenticeships Plus also has links with a number of other local governments: Hume, Whittlesea, Banyule and Nillumbik Councils and the Shire of Macedon Ranges are all host employers for apprentices and trainees from Apprenticeships Plus. Hume and Whittlesea Councils also provide office space for Apprenticeships Plus.

The company has links with schools, through the New Apprenticeship scheme and maintaining relationships with schools is a key strategy in maintaining the 'supply'; that is, the flow of young people into apprenticeships and traineeships. There are also strong working relationships with a wide range of host employers within local business and industry networks. The concept of partnerships is central to group training operations.

Apprenticeships Plus has two other important 'partners'. The first is through a joint venture with the 'New Apprenticeships' provider MAS National. This relationship has proved very positive for Apprenticeships Plus, making a significant contribution to company revenues. The second joint venture is with a Tasmanian-based Group Training Authority and Registered Training Organisation, Work and Training Ltd. Apprenticeships Plus now has a controlling interest in the Tasmanian organisation which has over 440 apprentices and trainees on its books and has strong links with local government (although only as host employers) and with businesses in Tasmania.

The role of the local government partners

Prior to the restructuring of the Board, as a consequence of the local government rationalisations mentioned above, the local government members involved with the company appear to have been content to attend meetings and receive reports on the progress of the business. There was relatively little contact between the member councils regarding the operation of the Group training company and less between the member councillors and other partners such as business, industry, unions and schools.

However, there were a number of changes to the environment in which local government in Victoria operated following council amalgamations. These included:

the requirement for improved standards of governance and greater economic accountability

the need for greater responsiveness to community needs, and

the development of council policies in areas like economic development, employment and education.

By virtue of the relationship with their residents and ratepayers, local government began to take a renewed interest in consulting with, and being seen to be responsive to, the needs of their

community. In particular, traditionally neglected groups, such as members of culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Koorie communities, were identified as priorities.

Individual Councils varied in their approaches to economic development strategy for their municipalities. In 2000, for instance, the City of Darebin put in place an employment strategy and became actively involved in employment creation. Yarra adopted an economic development strategy in 2004. However this strategy does not refer directly to Yarra's involvement in Apprenticeships Plus.

While individual councils had the interests of their own areas as a main focus, they nevertheless saw economic development a 'regional responsibility'. In this case this interest is also indicated by their membership of a northern Melbourne regional industry and enterprise development network (NIETL/Northlink) which includes Moreland, Darebin, Hume Councils and the City of Whittlesea. There is also local government membership of the Federally-funded Northern Area Regional Economic Development Consultative Committee, which includes seven municipalities in or bordering the northern metropolitan region. Other links between the member councils included participation in the Inner Northern Local Learning and Employment Network (on which Moreland, Darebin and Yarra Councils are represented). The Local Learning and Employment Network in particular, highlights a focus on vocational education and training as a key element of social policy at the local government level.

Nevertheless, up until the beginning of 2005, there was no formal agreement between the council Board members about how they should operate on the Apprenticeships Plus Board. There was no 'sense of coordination except for informal discussions between the directors'. The need for improved coordination between the Council members was subsequently acknowledged by them and they set about developing such an agreement.

The Board and management

Following his appointment in 1998, the CEO brought it to the attention of the ongoing councillor Board members, now representatives of the newly-amalgamated Councils, that they did indeed have a responsibility for the company.

A report on Apprenticeships Plus undertaken in 1998 by PricewaterhouseCoopers also emphasized the legal responsibility of the Board for governance issues.

The Council members began to recognise that they had other priorities arising from council policies and responsibilities in relation to the economic, social and cultural needs of their municipalities, which were not necessarily reflected in Apprenticeships Plus policies and practices. As one council Board member put it:

(We) need to have one eye on the success of the company and another on the benefit for member councils.

This gave rise to a demand by the council Board members that Apprenticeships Plus develop a 'social' policy, which would direct some of the substantial profits held by the company (nearly $3 million dollars at the end of 2004), into projects and activities which were in line with the councils' own policies and priorities. As one Board member put it:

Apprenticeships Plus… needs to look at returning … a social dividend back to the host communities.

Another put the view that: 'this is high on the agenda of the member councils'. Council Board members were also concerned that Apprenticeships Plus was not well enough oriented towards the needs of minority groups in the area, such as the significant Koorie community. They began to put pressure on management to address the issue. This met with some resistance as

management saw that effective responses would require resources which would detract from the company's 'bottom' line responsibilities. In the view of one council Board member,

> management's responsibility is to manage up to the Board to secure the required level of resources to meet the needs of these 'hard to reach' groups.

There were clearly differing values and perceptions of 'success' carried by the different stakeholders. One informant defined 'success' for the organisation as

> having a full book of apprentices and providing for the needs of business and industry partners and reinvesting money appropriately – that, hopefully, will be equally as important as the employment-servicing role.

However in their concern to improve the level of accountability, the council Board members were clear that they did not wish in any way to inhibit the company's ability to 'act in a business-like way.' In their view, the requirement for higher levels of corporate governance, together with the Council's newly-identified requirement for the company to return a social dividend, demanded a new 'balance' to be struck between the potentially competing requirements of the business versus the needs of the 'host' communities.

Both management and the council Board members identified this difference in emphasis between the 'independent' Board members and the council Board members. The Chief Executive Officer referred to the non-council directors as being 'more market-oriented', while the council Board members 'required more detailed accountability.'

One of the council Board members described 'a creative tension' between the 'private' and council Board members. He suggested the councils were acting as a

> governor, in one sense, impeding progress, but (the councils) also bring to the relationship a whole range of different subtleties.

This tension between the entrepreneurial, business-oriented emphasis and the need for accountability and good governance was seen as an inevitable, and perhaps desirable, consequence of the partnership. As one council Board member put it:

> that tension in there about progress and opportunism and the drag of governance and accountability, and also the bits that maybe the other side doesn't think about – the social policy and youth development …with that is a whole mix of benefits and challenges.

Noting that this particular partnership is not new, but has a history spanning two decades, he added

> It would [now] be very, very difficult to get something like this operating in this environment in terms of the permissions you would need and the partnerships you would need to establish and the history that it has.

There was a general view among the council Board members that the partnership is still sustainable. However, in their view, the necessary accountabilities and governance structures must be put in place and a long-term strategy developed which takes account of the needs of the key stakeholders:

> Ultimately, the practical implementation of a partnership takes a degree of maturity that is often not present in the relationship. This partnership… because of the lack of social and economic policy, because of the lack of agreement between the member councils….is more frail, brittle, more exposed, (with) a potential for conflict. Once we have all those things in place, everyone has got a lot more certainty of where their boundaries are and where people have a degree of comfort or discomfort, and that will define the field of play.

Summing Up

It is noteworthy that this study reveals the continuing challenges of managing comfort and discomfort, certainty and doubt, frailty and maturity in a 'partnership' over twenty years old. The Apprenticeships Plus story makes it clear that some of the tensions do not go away. At its simplest this story highlights the tension between generating a social return and operating as a profitable, commercially viable business. This tension is one recognised by all businesses with some form of social conscience. However this is a particularly sensitive and important issue for a not-for-profit organisation with multiple owners carrying explicit mandates and responsibilities for social policy and community development.

The tensions are real, they need to be recognised, articulated and managed – with respect for the differing values that will almost inevitably be surfaced. The sense of stewardship discussed elsewhere in this report is necessary to enable individuals to set their particular representational interests aside and develop forms of governance which will work for the future of the organisation and for the greater good. The challenges are considerable, for the Directors and Board members involved and for the managers and practitioners at the coal face, trying to reconcile the different, sometimes conflicting agendas in their day today practice.

This story highlights the difficulty of 'managing change' and the need for continuous reinvention. Were it not for significant changes in the structure and mandate for local government these key stakeholders might not be pushing for change at the provider level. However shifts in the 'sands' of policy and organisational structure cannot be ignored even if they are not self initiated, or even desired. On the positive side however, we note that even changes which are not sought after can create new spaces and new opportunities for learning and development. Much depends upon the mindset in which they are approached. .

For Apprenticeships Plus the economic future of the company seems to be relatively assured as long as government policies supporting Group Training companies in the vocational training market remain broadly along current lines. The way the Board as a whole deals with the issues of governance, accountability, coordination between member councils and the 'social dividend', is likely to provide one of the continuing tests of the company's future sustainability.

Postscript

Since this case study was compiled we have been informed that the Chief Executive Officer at Apprenticeships Plus has resigned. We understand the Board has provided "in principle" support for the creation of a community foundation that will provide an enduring legacy from this business venture. A proportion of the company's revenue may be directed into the fund and allocated to projects, scholarships and other initiatives, thus making explicit the company's commitment to providing a 'social return' for its constituent communities. We note that these events are not related to the conduct of this study.

Research method

This research was qualitative in nature, based upon four case studies at sites suggested by the earlier work by the VLGA (Snelling 2003). In each of the four chosen sites the local government had played a key role in facilitating community learning. Data for the case studies was gathered through on-site visits and face to face interviews with the key stakeholders involved. Persons interviewed included: industry and employer representatives; local government managers and officers; adult and vocational educators, managers and program coordinators; school teachers and principals; and community development activists and facilitators. In all approximately 45 face to face interviews were conducted across the four sites. Field notes and audio recordings were made during interviews and field visits and in some cases digital images were also recorded. Further supplementary telephone conversations and emails were employed to clarify the data gathered and or to seek elaboration as required.

Documentation relating to each of the sites was also gathered where possible. Examples included: policy statements; local research papers and reports; curriculum and or course information; and advertising and promotional material relating to programs and providers. Web-sites relating to the providers and other stakeholders involved in the projects were also scanned for relevant information.

The four descriptive case studies were each developed in draft form based upon the field data. In each case an attempt was made to tell the story of the community learning development at the local level, based upon the different accounts provided by the stakeholders involved. Of particular interest were the dynamics of the cross-sectoral partnerships involved, how they were facilitated and how they evolved over time. With the case studies in draft form, the research team came together to consider the emergent themes and to compare and contrast the stories. The approach involved inductive data analysis, that is an interpretive and iterative process through which patterns and themes emerge from the data as it is processed, written and re-written.

At this point the field data from all four cases was also interrogated in light of the review of research literature which had been conducted. (A version of the literature review is included in this supporting document.) Key themes from the literature were seen to be reflected in the case studies; issues of governance, community capacity building, networking, the generation of social capital and so on. The team also observed how the stories from the field illustrated the challenges of initiating, facilitating and sustaining these complex cross-sectoral partnerships. It was during this phase of data analysis that the research team's conception shifted from notions of 'capturing community potential' (which was the original working title for the research project) to the concept of 'creating synergies'. The later concept seems to more accurately reflect the creative and proactive work demonstrated in these case studies. The results of this inductive data analysis, considering the qualitative data across the four sites, formed the basis of the final report.

Drafts of the case studies, and selected excerpts from interviews were returned to the informants for correction, clarification and approval prior to being included in the final report.

The project was conducted in accordance with the guidelines for ethical research developed by the Australian VET Research Association and endorsed by NCVER. The research was overseen by a Reference Group whose membership is listed below.

Reference Group membership

The research team is indebted to the members of the project Reference Group who willingly donated their time and considerable expertise to the project. The group met face to face on two occassions and the research team solicted their strategic input via telephone calls and emails throughout the life of the project. The Reference Group members also commented on the draft case case studies and the draft final report. Their collective sense of stewardship, their wisdom, critical insights and constructive criticisms added immeasurably to the project.

Notwithstanding their commitment to the project and their support however, the Reference Group are not responsible for the project report – for this the research team accept full responsibility.

The members of the Reference Group were:

Leigh Snelling: Director Policy & Projects Victorian Local Governance Assoc:

As Project officer with the Victorian Local Governance Association, Ms Snelling was appointed to conduct the research that culminated in the report *It Takes a Village to Raise a Child* (Snelling 2003). The project was a response to the reconstruction of local government that took place as a result of the council amalgamations instigated by Premier Kennett. As a consequence of the Kennett driven reforms larger councils attained larger budgets and larger policy understandings. Education became a key part of the picture. Ms Snelling's work provided a basis for this research and she was instrumental, particularly in the early stages of this project, in facilitating contacts to enable data gathering.

Professor. Terri Seddon: Faculty of Education, Monash University

Professor Seddon was a member of the team that conducted the Victorian government evaluation of the first phase of the Local Learning Education Network which was a community development initiative. She is well known for her research in the field of vocational education and training and has recently completed a study of vocational education partnerships with Stephen Billett from Griffith University (Seddon and Billett 2003). The Australian Research Council has also funded Professor Seddon to conduct a study to investigate new 'learning spaces'. With the decentralisation of governance and the culture of marketisation, new spaces for learning have emerged. Professor Seddon's group are investigating the impact of these reforms and the kinds of learning taking place in these new spaces. Professor Seddon's involvement on the reference group ensured the team was aware of recent research literature and her critical insights on research method and the draft report were enormously valuable.

Merrill O'Donnell: Community Education Officer, Colac Vic

Merrill O'Donnell has spent 10 years in promoting vocational education and training, including substantial time working for a Registered Training Organisation. More recently she has been actively involved in regional Victoria with an Adult Community Education provider. Ms O'Donnell is currently working in community development, in particular, on a Neighbourhood Renewal project. Within the South West Local Learning and Employment Network energy has been concentrated on VET in Schools. Ms O'Donnell has been working on changing the community culture so that it provides more effective spaces for learning. Her insights, experiences and and contributions on the Reference Committee, particularly in relation to community development and community education, were of extremely helpful.

Kevin Breen: General Manager of Strategy in Governance, City of Darebin.

Kevin has a background of 17 years in local government. He is also a director of Apprenticeships Plus, the inner northern group training company, which is one of the case studies documented in this report. The City of Darebin is developing new policies particularly in relation to more inclusive employment practices. Added to this the City is one of the state based community development sites which is directed towards community capacity building. Mr Breen has also been involved in the Yarra/Darebin project in Bacau, East Timor – a project based on fostering friendship and community learning links. Mr Breen brought to the Reference Group a unique perspective with considerable depth of experience across both the local government and vocational education sectors. His support and constructive input was much appreciated.

Anna Hall: Director, Springvale Community Aid & Advice Bureau, City of Greater Dandenong.

Ms Hall has had a long history of involvement in local government and community development through her work in a range of management and facilitation roles. She has been a member of the City of Greater Dandenong management team for several years and is intimately familiar with the regional and community context which was the setting for another of the project's case studies. Ms Hall has also had experience as an adult educator and has a continuing interest in the VET and ACE sectors and their contribution to community development and sustainability.

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