

The Australian Journal of University Community Engagement

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The Australian Journal of University Community Engagement is a refereed journal published twice a year by the Australian University Community Engagement Alliance, which is a not for profit organisation dedicated to enhancing the engagement capabilities of staff and universities by developing expertise, fostering collaboration and building their communities across Australia.

The interests of the Journal include University Community Engagement in terms of social, environmental, economic and cultural development. Articles will be refereed by a peer selected Editorial Panel, with extensive experience in community engagement and higher education. Thus the Journal is designed to promote and develop the scholarship of community engagement.

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Editorial

Launch of the Journal

The scholarship of university community engagement is well established in Europe and North America. In Australia university community engagement is happening in all universities but the scholarship of this engagement is only in its infancy. The first article of this edition shows all the 9 Victorian Universities in the study are committed to engagement policies and practices with multiple communities. But they are at different stages of implementation and the scholarship of engagement is not well established.

Through this Journal AUCEA is providing a vehicle to firmly establish the scholarship of university community engagement in Australia by bringing the academic rigour of peer review to the publication of community engagement research. In this way community engagement can be linked with the traditional strengths of universities namely research and teaching. This means that there is a means of transforming the important work of engagement into a form that can be recognized by the university for career advancement.

University-Community Engagement in Victoria: Achievement, Possibilities, Challenges and Dangers

Alexandra Winter, Victoria University

Abstract

Drawing on a study of Victorian universities, this article gives an overview of the policies and strategies of community engagement in nine universities. It was found that all Victorian universities have, or are in the process of, implementing university-community engagement initiatives. While similar themes (such as engaged teaching and learning) emerge across universities, strategies of engagement differ across institutional history and mission, and between campuses. The article goes on to discuss community engagement in the context of policy debates and discussions that are current in Australian higher education. While there is, in general, a favourable policy climate for engagement, the impact of changes in accreditation and the proposed Research Quality Framework on an engagement agenda need further investigation.

Community engagement literature provides a rich sample of case studies and reflections on practices and processes of engagement, much of it in a US context. This article, based on the findings of a recent study, discusses community engagement in an Australian educational and policy context. The “Universities as Sites of Citizenship (Victoria)” study aimed to sketch in broad and preliminary terms, similarities and differences in community engagement strategies and principles across nine universities in Victoria. The study was commissioned by the Victorian Department of Education and Training, and was based on similar projects undertaken in the United States and Europe⁴. In the context of concerns over a civic deficit, particularly among younger voters, the US and European studies were strongly influenced by the engaged university as a site for the development and socialisation of democratic citizens (Boyte and Hollander, 1999; Council of Europe, 1999; Teune and Plantan, 2001; Plantan, 2002; Colby et al, 2003). The adaptation to an Australian context focuses on community engagement as a strategy of local participation for community development and support. As evident from the discussion below, community engagement in Victorian universities tends towards the pragmatic, with an underlying commitment to social justice and equitable access to higher education. These tendencies are perhaps consonant with Australian culture more broadly (Duke, 2004). All universities have, or are in the process of, establishing community engagement policy and practices. Reflecting historical mission and purpose, these vary across

⁴More background information can be found in the final report of the project, *Beyond Rhetoric: University-Community Engagement in Victoria* (Winter et al, 2005).

campuses and institutions. This article gives an overview of the findings of the study, and goes on to flag some issues facing community engagement in the context of current policy directions in Australian higher education.

The study consisted of a self-review of engagement and partnership policy and practice, undertaken by a chief investigator in all participating universities.⁵ The self-review involved a desktop audit of mission and policy directions and a series of interviews with internal and external stakeholders. While the project highlighted core elements of community engagement identified by leading theorists, the structure was left open enough to capture difference across and within institutions. Each chief investigator produced a report summarising findings from their university,⁶ which formed the basis for the final project report *Beyond Rhetoric: University-Community Engagement in Victoria* (Winter et al, 2005).

Victorian universities, although at different stages of implementation, all demonstrate a commitment to engagement policies and practices with multiple communities. Community engagement is increasingly being embedded in mission statements and overall university direction, while some institutions are developing distinct community engagement policy and strategies. Major themes emerging in this study included engagement in teaching and learning; research; economic, social and cultural development; professional, business and industry links; and, pathways between schools and universities.

Engaged Teaching and Research

The concentration of engagement activities around teaching, learning and research builds on and extends the traditional strengths of universities to meet the needs of various communities (Holland 2001a, 2001b). Likewise, one Vice-Chancellor remarks:

"I do not believe that the University can become the economic development agency of the region, nor can it take the primary role as the social welfare agency of the region, we cannot usurp, we are not in a position to usurp or take over major social and economic services. We must have a definition of engagement which ultimately is founded in our core business activities of teaching and research. And if we can't constantly ground our engagement work back in that core business, we run the risk of spreading ourselves too thin and becoming something we're not".

⁵ Chief Investigators were: Anne Badenhorst (RMIT), David Birch (Deakin), Catherine Burnheim (Monash), (Brian Galligan and Winsome Roberts, (Melbourne), Ann Gervasoni (ACU), David Jones and Maureen Rogers (La Trobe), Anne Langworthy (Swinburne), John McDonald (Ballarat).

⁶ Individual reports can be found on the Victorian Department of Education and Training website at http://www.highered.vic.gov.au/news/australian_uni.asp. These offer a more detailed account of the variety of community engagement strategies than can be covered in this article.

Many Victorian universities have work-based or industry-based learning as a part of the curriculum (Swinburne, ACU, RMIT and Victoria University). Work-based learning offers practical job skills training, and has the potential to expose students to different social contexts, thereby increasing their social/civic engagement through study. With the exception of ACU, work-based or industry-based learning does not appear to be framed by a set of values in the way that US service-learning is, but emphasises vocational experience. This may well change in the future as service-learning principles are applied to less vocationally or professionally orientated courses, as is occurring at RMIT.

A further dimension of engaged teaching and learning is evident in curriculum design that addresses the specificities of community and/or regions. La Trobe discusses the importance of rural social work offered by regional campuses; Melbourne University also offers medical training specific to rural areas through its Goulburn Valley Initiative; Deakin, RMIT Hamilton and the University of Ballarat offer professional development training that caters to local needs and interests; programs offered at Deakin Warrnambool reflect regional demand; Swinburne's Croydon campus focuses on youth programs, and offers a range of literacy and language courses that reflect the needs of the culturally diverse community, while the Healesville campus provides educational services to the Indigenous community.

Another important focus for universities is linking engagement and research agendas. Engaged research can take multiple forms, including applied research to address a specific issue, locally orientated/community driven, and partnered research. While applied research has long been part of university research output, it is increasingly emphasised both by an engagement agenda and by current Australian higher education policy which is interested in measuring the impact of research (DEST, 2005b; Expert Advisory Group, 2005). Research driven by the needs and interests of local communities and partnered research are gaining increasing momentum under community engagement initiatives. The University of Ballarat, for example, is part of a socially disadvantaged neighbourhood renewal project, Swinburne University has a Centre for Regional Development, while Victoria University's Institute for Community Engagement and Policy Alternatives was established to facilitate research that extends the university's engagement policies and focuses on social and cultural diversity, a salient demographic feature of Western Melbourne. Several other universities (RMIT, La Trobe and Ballarat) are conducting research on water use and sustainability in regional areas. Partnered research offers an opportunity to address issues that require interdisciplinary analysis and solutions. It also has potential as an alternative source of research funding. For some institutions, research influenced by community requirements and applied outcomes is a continuation of past trajectories. Others note a tension between regionally engaged research and academic autonomy (Jones and Rogers, 2005).

Social, Cultural and Economic Impact

While teaching and research are central to a community engagement strategy, Victorian universities are seeking to extend university resources in other ways. Most institutions in this study discussed the social, cultural and, to a lesser extent, economic impacts on communities. Social and cultural engagement includes access to art galleries, public lectures and contribution to public debate/education. La Trobe comments that such social and cultural engagement has been credited with a revitalisation of Mildura. In broader social terms, Victoria University has a particular commitment to cultural diversity, while RMIT provides health and sporting facilities to the under resourced City of Whittlesea in Melbourne's north. Economic impact, for the most part, has not been extensively measured. Swinburne University reports a study which finds a positive economic impact in the region (Langworthy, 2001), and a purchasing preference for local Yarra Valley produce, while RMIT and Ballarat suggest in more general terms that their institutions have a positive economic impact.

Partnerships with Schools and Industry

Community engagement strategies may also have economic and other benefits to the universities themselves, including research funding and local support. Most universities have partnerships with local schools which facilitate access to higher education through alternative access programs, particularly for indigenous students, culturally and linguistically diverse students, and students from lower SES backgrounds, who have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education. Several universities also encourage enrolment among local students through prizes and scholarships. Although engagement with schools develops local allegiances and furthers the educational outcomes of a region, some reports identified a tension between accessibility of education and other markers of prestige, such as ENTER scores. Clark Kerr has described this as a tension between meritocracy and equity (1994).

The development of industry, professional and other business links are an important part of community engagement strategy in most universities. Such relationships also overlap with other community engagement strategies, including work based learning and partnered and regionally relevant research. Some universities point to enduring industry links that lead to practical and commercial outcomes (Swinburne and RMIT for example), while Melbourne University specifies social reform outcomes resulting from professional links and lobbying capacity.

Academic Communities and Engagement

It is argued that to be effective, community engagement strategies must be embedded at all levels of the university, including within the academic community itself (Boyer, 1990). Victoria University and ACU, for example, are

including engagement as part of their staff appointment and promotion criteria, while RMIT aims to involve staff through its emphasis on engaged teaching. This is a source of potential contention, between the academic as disinterested researcher, and the academic as driven by community need.

Engagement also incorporates a participatory and democratic mode for students and community members who sit on advisory panels and are represented on various university boards and committees. At the time of writing, student representative councils offer students an opportunity for representation and political participation in university affairs.⁷ Although Deakin University includes citizenship as a graduate attribute, and ACU strongly encourages volunteering, several universities comment on waning student participation and politicisation linked to increased need for part-time work, the increasingly prevalent view of students as consumers, and the vocationalisation of higher education (Jones and Rogers, 2005; Langworthy, 2005; Burnheim, 2005). One student interviewee expresses this as follows:

“The place you go for the free exchange of ideas, social justice and getting revved up about the work, and I think that’s what university should be like. There should be people on soap boxes in the hall [saying] “Homelessness is wrong!” or something, but . . . there isn’t”.

History, Mission and Engagement

In general, community engagement strategies and policy are closely connected to the individual institution’s mission and history. Thus the post-Dawkins universities are orientated toward technical and vocational forms of engagement, and highlight work based learning and partnership with business and industry. Half of the universities studied are dual sector institutions, which perhaps influences the forms of engagement profiled. One investigator notes that “the push for community engagement has been almost exclusively a higher education phenomenon in Australia. Many within the TAFE system would claim that universities are merely discovering what they have been practising for years” (McDonald, 2005). Engagement strategies are also closely linked to place, so that while this study found convergent forms of engagement across universities, these were divergent within universities and across campuses. The intersection between location and types of engagement also depended on university history: newer universities (sometimes as part of their enabling Act) are more regionally focussed, while older institutions have a broader national or state jurisdiction.

The meaning of ‘community’ is a malleable term. In this study it was predominantly used to describe local or regional communities:

“The overall concept of ‘Deakin’ University was not, for most of these interviewees, of any particular importance. They wasn’t a

⁷ The so-called Voluntary Student Unionism bill is currently being debated by Commonwealth parliament.

local university; they want it to act locally, and they all acknowledged the importance of 'their 'local' University as a community leader" (Birch, 2005)".

In contrast, Melbourne University resisted the notion of local community, preferring the concept of multiple communities which span local, national and international in which the idea of a place apart remains salient as a space for critical distance from the local (Galligan and Roberts, 2005). Most university reports implied multiple communities of engagement, which covered communities of place, communities of interest, and academic communities. In accordance with this, the internationalisation of knowledge and universities is also reflected in university representations of community. Monash University, in keeping with its international profile, understands community in both regional and international terms while The University of Ballarat aspires to be a regional university of international standing.

Community Engagement and Current Policy Directions

A favourable policy climate for engagement is evident in many recent higher education policy documents and discussions, particularly *Higher Education at the Crossroads* (Nelson, 2002), and "Varieties of Excellence: Diversity, Specialisation and Regional Engagement" (DEST, 2002). The recent release of the Expert Advisory Group's Preferred RQF Model places third stream funding on the agenda for Australian higher education. While these are important developments for practitioners of engaged teaching and research, it is also necessary to consider the role of engagement as part of broader policy directions and discussions, and how they may work with or against a community engagement agenda.

In general terms, the recent policy discussion papers *Rationalising Responsibility for Higher Education in Australia* (2004) and *Building University Diversity: Future Approval and Accreditation Processes for Australian Higher Education* (2005) are suggestive of potentially dramatic changes in the Australian higher education sector. The *Rationalising Responsibility* paper, which outlines some pros and cons of Commonwealth control of higher education, offers the possibility of a uniform commitment to an engagement agenda across all states and territories. The discussion paper, however, also acknowledges that measures would have to be put in place to protect the regional diversity of institutions. Given that much community engagement activity occurs in locally specific ways, the Commonwealth legislative control of universities has the potential to impact significantly upon community engagement and state/territory leadership in regional areas.

Building University Diversity canvasses changing the protocols by which universities are accredited in order to create a diverse higher education sector that reflects a changed social and economic context. Diversity includes the possibility of teaching/research only, boutique institutions, and private providers having access to the title 'university' in Australia. From the perspective of a community engagement agenda, the question is one of the

desirability of diversity: if engagement, service or third stream activity are a historic feature of teaching and research universities, or *de facto*, part of a public higher education system, it is unclear what will happen in institutions in which teaching and research are separated, or in private providers of higher education. This issue is important in that there may be a separation of engagement from research, or universities will be categorised as engagement specialists. The consequences of this need further consideration.

One finding of the study was the need for adequate resources for community engagement. The recent release of the preferred RQF model has given third stream funding a national profile. The Preferred Model gives in principle support to third stream activities, but argues that these should be funded by a separate pool of money. This position is underpinned by the EAG's definition of research, based on that developed by the OECD, as "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge" (EAG, 2005, p.7). Third stream activity is regarded by the EAG as research dissemination, rather than the production of new knowledge. The distinction between research impact and research dissemination, however, may not always be clearly demarcated. Moreover, an RQF has the potential to bifurcate institutions into research and other 'types' of institutions, in which community engagement becomes the prerogative of a few, rather than a feature of higher education more generally. The Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies suggest that "one trap that must be avoided is the political temptation to create a 'second prize'—a slush fund for universities who might be 'losers' in the RQF process" (Barlow, 2005, p.20).

The proposed changes to accreditation and the potential changes in higher education policy pointedly raise the question of what a university is, its role and function in Australia. The rise of an engagement movement (Benson and Harkavy, 2003) and the development or re-examination of engagement policies and practices implicitly question the purpose of higher education, whether it is argued that engaged teaching and scholarship are part of the historic function of universities (Harkavy and Benson 1998; Boyer 1990), or that the massification of education and the increase in knowledge production beyond universities puts additional pressure on universities to prove their relevance (Association for Commonwealth Universities, 2001). The final report of the study supports this need for debate about the role and function of universities, and sees an opportunity for the articulation of a community engagement agenda in such a debate.

To conclude, community engagement is emerging as an important part of all Victorian universities policy and strategy. This study found that engagement functions as a marker of university identity, is foundational for teaching and research, and benefits local communities and regions through social and economic infrastructure. Community engagement in a Victorian context (and this is perhaps applicable to a wider Australian context) tends toward the pragmatic, and has an understated commitment to equity and accessibility of higher education. This is in contrast to some of the US models which explicitly foreground values, morals or ethics. Community engagement is influenced by the specific mission and history of universities, and the location

of individual campuses. Thus communities are understood in variant spatial terms, including local, regional, national and international. Recent policy discussions explicitly raise questions about the structure and function of universities. This is also a question implicitly asked by community engagement. While potential changes to higher education may negatively impact upon community engagement strategies, there is also the possibility for adequate recognition and funding of engaged teaching and research.

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The Laverton Project: Developing and Sustaining a Mutually Beneficial Cross-Cultural Learning Experience

David Platt

Abstract

Engaging with diverse cultures, sustaining partnerships, ensuring mutual benefit

Engaging in and with diverse regional communities is increasingly difficult for universities based primarily in metropolitan areas. In addition to developing a number of regional campuses around Western Australia, Curtin University of Technology has initiated a number of other projects and programs that focus on building sustainable connections with people in rural and remote communities. In particular, the *Laverton Project* serves as a model for how a university can work with other regional partners to overcome the challenges of location.

Over the past seven years, Curtin has worked closely with the Wongatha Wonganarra Aboriginal Corporation, the Laverton-Leonora Cross Cultural Association, Placer Granny Smith and Anglogold Ashanti to create a sustainable partnership that clearly addresses needs of the indigenous community living in the rural West Australian town of Laverton. Founded in 1998 on the principle of mutual benefit, the program uses the resources of the five partners to bring the Wongatha Wonganarra people together with university students and staff each weekend of the academic year in an environment of mutual respect, learning and inspiration. In addition to connecting the children and youth of the community with young adult role models, the partnership immerses university students and staff in a rich and challenging cross-cultural learning experience.

In order to share much of what has been learned over the past six years, we will first explore the history of the partnership and the contributions of the five partnering organizations, before moving towards an in depth examination of the program and its impacts. We will identify the objectives of the program and illustrate how the resources of each organization allow for those objectives to be realised. Additionally, we will detail the intricacies of the design of the partnership, focus on the key elements of sustainability and explore the challenges inherent in maintaining the relationship and producing relevant and meaningful outcomes. Finally, we will look at the future of the project particularly in relation to how it can continue to grow and change in concert with the needs of the partners.

Introduction

Since 1997, Curtin University of Technology and the Wongatha Wonganara Aboriginal Corporation have been working together in a rich and meaningful service and learning partnership. Through this partnership, Curtin students and staff are immersed in an authentic cross-cultural learning experience centred around activities and projects that are of real benefit to the local community. Overtime, this notion of *mutual benefit* has become entrenched as the bedrock principle on which the partnership is based.

In practice this means that week in and week out, the program activities are structured so that they work to address the needs of the local community as identified and expressed through the WWAC. Likewise, program participants are intentionally exposed to a people and a culture through experiences, activities and perspectives in ways that are respectful, educational and inspiring.

Seven years on, Curtin and WWAC have recognised that reflecting on the experiences thus far will help shape the future direction of the partnership and will ensure that the potential of the project continues to be realised. With that in mind, this paper will: detail the history of the program, outline current program design and objectives; highlight the critical elements of the partnership; examine some of the challenges inherent in this particular model of engagement; and explore the future of the program.

History

Founded in 1994, Curtin Volunteers! (CV!) has played a significant role in creating community engagement opportunities for Curtin University of Technology. Every CV! project and program is based on the principle of mutual benefit and works to build respectful and constructive relationships with organisations and individuals in the wider community. The aim of CV! is to ensure that Curtin students and staff have the opportunity to engage with community through experiences that challenge and shape their perceptions of the world around them.

In 1997, an intern from Elon University in North Carolina (USA), Mr. Patrick O'Malley, spent six months working for Curtin Volunteers! During that time, Patrick travelled to the town of Laverton in the Goldfields region of Western Australia and while there developed a relationship with the current CEO of the Wongatha Wonganarra Aboriginal Corporation (WWAC), Ms. Jan Douglas. Together they created a program for CV! called Christmas Wish with the aim of connecting Curtin and WWAC through the collection and distribution of gifts for the WWAC children.

As the relationship progressed, Curtin and WWAC continued to explore how the depth and meaning of the partnership could evolve and began to

“evaluate what other activities could be developed for the community that would be beneficial to the WWAC community and meaningful to CV! members. Once potential projects were identified, the main obstacles were getting people to Laverton cheaply and efficiently and housing them once they were there” (Fairnie and Newbold, 2004).

Once these challenges were identified, Curtin and WWAC were able to work with the Community Relations Manager for Placer Granny Smith Gold Mining Company to find space on company charter flights to and from the Mt. Weld airport at no cost to the Curtin participants. Jan also worked within the local Laverton network and was able to source some free accommodation, and thus was born the Laverton Project. In the ensuing years the project has developed into one of the hallmark CV! programs and the program partners have grown to include Curtin, WWAC, Granny Smith, AngloGold Ashanti, ESS, and the Laverton-Leonora Cross Cultural Association (LLCCA).

The Laverton Project now runs nearly every weekend of the academic year and has afforded hundreds of CV! members the opportunity to step well out of their comfort zones and into a rich and diverse learning and service experience. Likewise, on the ground in Laverton a number of projects and activities have come to fruition as a result of the program partnership.

As we believe that the Laverton project is somewhat unique in both design and operation, we thought it useful to further our exploration of the project by highlighting first the program design and then exploring how that design enables a number of key objectives to be met.

Program Design and Objectives

As with any Curtin Volunteers! program, the main objective of the Laverton Project is to engage in meaningful and mutually beneficial community-based relationships. The program design is intentionally grounded in a service-learning approach to community engagement and therefore focuses not just on the service relationship between CV! and WWAC, but also on the learning opportunities for all program participants. There is also the added focus on the cross-cultural learning elements of the Laverton experience and so both the design and objectives reflect an attempt to maximise the service and learning opportunities.

In sharing this project as a model of effective practice in creating authentic community-based learning opportunities, we thought it would be useful to first describe a typical (although most would argue there is no such thing) Laverton weekend. We have then followed with an exploration of how the program measures against a number of the established principles of good practice in combining service and learning.

Program Design

The program is managed by a coordinator employed through Curtin's Office of Campus and Community Life who administers the project and in this capacity liaises with WWAC and LLCCA to determine each weekend's program of activities. Additionally, the coordinator works with Placer Granny Smith and AngloGold to arrange flights as well as with ESS to organise catering when appropriate. The coordinator also has the responsibility for recruiting a group leader for each trip as well as up to 6 volunteers to work with that leader.

Each Friday, the upcoming weekend's group meets with their leader and the coordinator to participate in a pre-departure orientation. The group then travels to the airport via taxi (each participant contributes \$40.00 to cover the taxi fare and to ensure that the volunteer commitment is honoured). The group then flies to an airstrip at either Mt. Weld (Placer Granny Smith) or Sunrise Dame (AngloGold Ashanti) where a member of the WWAC or a local shire youth worker picks them up. Once in Laverton, the group stays in a shared accommodation rented through LLCCA. Each group normally self-caters, although when possible, the Sunday evening meal is provided at a mine site by ESS.

The only activity that is fixed from week to week and run by the volunteers is the Saturday morning kids' gym. The kids' gym is a structured set of activities designed to promote healthy living and fitness and is open to any young person in the community. The remainder of the weekend is taken up with projects that are identified through WWAC and LLCCA. Past projects have included: discos for local youth; help with swimming lessons; support for the Laverton Races; town clean-ups; school holiday programs and other activities as needed.

On some occasions, trips are reserved for students from particular courses of study and the weekend's activities are tailored to maximise the particular skills sets of the participating students. Examples of this work include: Occupational Therapy students working with school and town; Health Promotion students and staff working on nutrition, drug awareness and type II diabetes; and Architecture students working to design and build a memorial wall at the cemetery that commemorates individuals whose graves have been lost or burials were unrecorded. Students begin discussing and reflecting on the experience with the group leaders during the experience and continue the debrief process after returning to Perth on a Monday morning flight.

While the ongoing operation of the project is important to developing an understanding of the structure and function of the program, a closer look at how the Laverton Project measures against Kendall's principles of good practice in combining service and learning (1990) in achieving key outcomes serves as a framework for unpacking the overall effectiveness of the program as a model for community engagement.

Program Objectives: Combining Service and Learning

Engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good
The design of the program is specific to engaging CV! members in meaningful and beneficial activities as identified at the local community level. The kids' gym for example meets a real community need. The cross-cultural experience and the inherent complexities involved in trying to understand the life experiences of Indigenous Australians in a rural West Australian community presents a significant challenge and learning opportunity for every program participant.

Provides structured opportunities for people to reflect on their service experience.

The project is structured so that the participants spend much of their time in Laverton engaged in dialogue with local people as an avenue for reflecting on the experience. In addition, every individual who goes to Laverton as part of the program contributes to a collective journal that is available for all to use as a reflection tool. The reflective component of the project is particularly important in those instances when local circumstances create situations where the participants are confronted by some of the harsh realities of life in Laverton.

Allows for those with needs to define those needs

The coordinator maintains constant contact with WWAC and LLCCA so that each weekend the local activities always develop in direct response to local community need. It is important to note that recently we have determined that in the future we will also work to identify the skills and capacities of the members of each CV! group so that their work can be more closely matched with specific community needs.

Clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organisation involved

As the logistics of the program are quite challenging there has needed to be clear understanding between all program partners about roles and responsibilities. At times understanding operational boundaries is challenging (particularly for first time participants) and again, on-going communication ensures that there are always opportunities to revisit the roles and responsibilities of each partner and participant.

Matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognises changing circumstances.

This is particularly important to the success of the project. The local situation is constantly changing and as a result so too must the project parameters. The only fixed guide is that each weekend must be of benefit at the local level and meaningful to the CV! participants. Within these parameters, the established patterns of regular communication ensure that when possible even the make-up of groups can be tailored to meet local need.

Expects genuine, active and sustained organisational commitment.

The ultimate success of the project is grounded in the ongoing commitment of all program partners. Each organisation clearly understands its role and

willingness to contribute on the basis that the project is of clear benefit to all involved.

Includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.

Although all of these elements are critical components of the program design, it is also a clear place where significant improvements can be made to strengthen the future of the project. In particular we are identifying a greater need to be even clearer about program objectives and more intentional in our evaluation of our ability to achieve those objectives. Additionally, we are learning that there is a need to enhance the training/preparation piece of the program to ensure that the service and learning goals are more readily achieved.

Is committed to program participation by and with diverse populations.

A major focal point for the project is the relationship building that occurs between the participants and the Wongatha Wonganarra people. It is a significant aim of the project that Curtin students and staff are exposed to people and communities of diverse perspectives and experiences. Likewise, it is an important programmatic objective that members of the local community interact with Curtin students – many of whom are from diverse, international backgrounds themselves.

Partnership – Working Together for the Benefit of All

Ultimately, the success of the Laverton Project is deeply connected to the generous contributions of each program partner. In an effort to highlight the value achieved in maximising the use of available resources, we will use this section to outline the commitment each partner makes in support of the program. We will then undertake a critique of the current structure and processes in relation to the partnership benchmarking work undertaken in North America by Campus Compact in the late 1990's.

Program Partners and their Contributions

Curtin University of Technology

Curtin's contribution to the project is the provision of volunteers and volunteer support. Additionally, the Curtin-based program coordinator plays a critical role in ensuring that the program logistics are managed effectively on a weekly basis. Finally, the project has ongoing campus-based support through the Office of Campus and Community Life as well as within the School of Public Health.

Wongatha Wonganarra Aboriginal Corporation

WWAC is the critical partner in the Laverton. Their vision, guidance, openness and willingness to work with change and uncertainty ensures that the relationship is of real benefit to both the participants and the local

community. In particular WWAC provides critical on-the-ground organisational and logistical support (including transportation). Additionally, it is through the support of WWAC that we are able to ensure that the program meets its primary objective by ensuring that the participants engage with the Wongai people and culture.

Laverton-Leonora Cross Cultural Association

As a practical level, LLCCA works to source local accommodation at a very reasonable cost. Accommodation fees are paid by CV! but there would be no place to stay without the support of LLCCA. Additionally, the association assists with organising the direct service activities for each weekend, often in conjunction with youth workers from the Shire of Laverton. Again, much like WWAC, LLCCA also provides a critical link to the history, culture and people of the region.

Placer Granny Smith Gold Mining Company

Placer Granny Smith provides space when available on their charter flights to and from the airstrip at Mt Weld. This arrangement works because the last flight into Mt Weld on a Friday is normally quite empty. Likewise, the first flight out on Monday morning often has plenty of free space. Using the available space on those flights provides Granny Smith with an opportunity to leverage existing resources in support of the local indigenous community.

AngloGold Ashanti

Much like the arrangement with Granny Smith, AngloGold also provides travel support for the program. The AngloGold airstrip is at Sunrise Dam - about one hour out of Laverton. As flying into Sunrise Dam places additional pressure on the hospitality of WWAC and LLCCA, AngloGold often serves as a backup for the weekends when Granny Smith flights are full. Additionally, AngloGold recently underwrote the costs of producing a book capturing the history of WWAC (a project that will be highlighted as part of our exploration of the future opportunities and directions for the program).

ESS

ESS catering service will often provide a Sunday night meal for each group. This enables the participants to spend some time at an actual mine site as part of the effort to deepen their understanding about life in a rural mining community. This experience can be particularly informing for participants as they are often astounded by the critical role that good nutrition plays in relation to issues of occupational safety and health and the operation of a mine.

Elements of effective partnerships

In addition to outlining the logistical complexities of the Laverton Project and highlighting each partner's contribution, we believe it is important to examine the partnership in relation to some benchmarking work undertaken by Campus Compact (2000). By measuring the Laverton Project against these benchmarks we hope to further highlight some of the real strengths of the

program design as well as to begin to identify areas where the design, implementation and on-going management of the program can be improved.

Partnership Design

Genuine partnerships are: founded on a shared vision and clearly articulated values.

Without the initial synergy between Curtin Volunteers! and WWAC it is unlikely that the Laverton Project would have developed into its current form as a vibrant community engagement program. Both the CEO of WWAC and the initial representatives of CV! had a clear vision for how a cross-cultural immersion experience could be of benefit to all the partnering organisations.

WWAC's vision is that the Wongai people continue to benefit from the activities undertaken by the volunteers and that the volunteers in turn take a bit of culture and perspective back to Perth after a weekend in Laverton. From Curtin's perspective, the project provides a real opportunity for students to step outside of their everyday existence and into a rural West Australian community experience. The opportunity to learn about place and culture and people sits at the core of the program and is the single most important reason for engaging students in this sort of experience.

In addition, each of the other program partners also achieve part of their vision of working in harmony with the land and its people and of contributing something of value to a learning experience and to the traditional owners of the land in and around Laverton,

Genuine partnerships are: beneficial to partnering institutions.

From the inception of the program all partners have insisted that it be of tangible benefit to all of the contributing organisations. Without doubt, this project is a model for how the principle of mutual benefit can be achieved. Each organisation has had space to articulate the value in the project from their perspective and also to determine the most appropriate level and type of contribution that they can make to ensure that there is benefit on all sides. Again, it is particularly important to note that the direct service benefit to the community and the unique learning opportunities for the students are the cornerstones of the program.

Developing Collaborative Relationships

Genuine partnerships that build strong collaborative relationships are: composed of interpersonal relationships based on trust and mutual respect.

The relationships between the representatives of each partnering organisation are critical to the overall success of the program. In particular, the relationship between WWAC, LLCCA and Curtin Volunteers! centres on the personal relationships between the Director of Campus and Community Life at Curtin, the CEO of the WWAC and the Manager of the LLCCA. Over the past six years, these individuals have grown to trust and respect each other

and have extended that trust to other individuals within each organisation. The honest communication that is achieved as a result of these personal relationships ensures that issues are addressed as they arise and that the program continues to be of real benefit to all.

Genuine partnerships that build strong collaborative relationships are: multi-dimensional – they involve the participation of multiple sectors that act in the service of a complex problem.

It is our belief that the real strength of the project lies in the fact that the project is based around a number of disparate partners coming together in the service of a common problem – in this case the provision of appropriate services to WWAC within the context of a stimulating, meaningful and challenging learning environment. The challenge of limited resources is a common one in rural and remote communities. Leveraging the strengths of the various partners to provide additional resources to the Wongatha-Wonganarra community is one small step forward in addressing real needs. In particular, the notion of using young-adult role-models to provide support for both the young people and the parents of the community has the potential to make a lasting impression on the community. In much the same way, exposing participants to the complexities of the real-world, should have a lasting impact on each individual's approach to living and working in the world.

A potential negative inherent in this model however lies in each partner's perceptions of the problem. For example, the mining companies make their contributions to the program on the basis of addressing the peculiarities of the connection between a corporation, an indigenous population and their respective relationships with the land. Were this imperative to change, and the mining companies to identify other, more pressing issues, the partnership and ultimately the program would be in serious jeopardy.

Genuine partnerships that build strong collaborative relationships are: clearly organised and led with dynamism.

As repeatedly emphasised throughout this paper, the key to the Laverton Project is the nature of the relationships between the program partners. In particular, WWAC, LLCCA and CV! work very closely to ensure that the program activities are always aligned with the expected outcomes. The ongoing leadership for the project falls with these three organisations and the project's longevity is directly due to the dynamic and passionate leadership that can be within.

Sustaining Partnerships Over Time

Genuine partnerships that will be sustained over time are: integrated into the mission and support structures of the partnering institutions.

As we reflect on the structure of the partnerships that enable the Laverton Project to continue, there are some clear threats to the future sustainability of the program. In particular, it would be fair to say that at present the partnership is not integrated into the mission and support structures of all of the partnering institutions. For the program's industry partners, the organisational mission does not focus on the provision of effective, mutually

beneficial community services. Should the project reach a point where it is too taxing on the resources of those partners, it is likely that its future would be in serious jeopardy.

Genuine partnerships that will be sustained over time are: sustained by a “partnership process” for communication, decision-making, and the initiation of change.

At this stage, although there is a clear partnership process in place to ensure that each trip is run smoothly and effectively, the process probably does not extend much beyond the management of the logistical complexities of the project. Because the relationships are critical to the program, the loss of any one of the key individuals could again put the future of the program under threat. As we move forward into the next stage of the relationship, it is important for us to embed some of the processes within the institutions rather than within the individuals.

Genuine partnerships that will be sustained over time are: evaluated regularly with a focus both on methods and outcomes.

At present, the program is regularly evaluated against one basic criteria - the value for the program partners and participants. At present the evaluative process relies less on any formal undertakings and more on the communication between participants, the coordinator and CV!, WWAC and LLCCA

In addressing issues of sustainability, project evaluation is clearly an area where immediate, tangible improvements can be achieved. In particular, this could involve building into the partnership process a number of opportunities to more clearly define and articulate the desired outcomes. This could then be followed by the design and implementation of a number of outcome specific evaluation processes and reflection tools.

The Future

The future of the Laverton Project is a bright one – provided that a few of the aforementioned partnership issues are addressed. Despite some of the previously highlighted threats to the project, there are also significant developments underway in relation to the future of the relationships and activities. At local level, the program coordinator is working with CV!, WWAC and LLCCA to improve the quality of the outcomes on all sides of the equation.

Additionally, a new program partner, Tulane University, from New Orleans, USA has begun bringing students to Laverton for a once-per-year immersion experience. The first Tulane student group worked with WWAC to create a book that records the history and stories of the WWAC. Now published, that work is a concrete example of the real future of the relationship and the kinds of outcome it can generate. The book project also serves as a reminder to us that continually re-visiting and re-inventing the relationships between partners

will create a fertile and life giving space in which the program, the relationship and the partners can continue to grow and develop.

That being said, we would call attention once again to what seem to be the most significant issues/challenge for the future of the program; sustainability, relationship management and outcomes.

Sustainability

Certainly the sustainability of the program hinges on the relationships with the mining companies, WWAC and LLCCA in particular. Without the support of any one of the critical partners, the scope and shape of the program would be vastly different. Ensuring the sustainability of these arrangements is a real challenge to the future of the project. It is especially critical to note that the mining industry can be a fickle one and while the companies are able to share their resources at present, this could easily change in the future. Were that to happen, the remaining partners would need to seriously rethink how the program objectives and outcomes could continue to be achieved.

In the short term it is critical to the sustainability of the project that we continue to be diligent about articulating and measuring the outcomes. If we can clearly demonstrate to all partners how this project is of unique value and benefit to their organisation it is likely that we will continue to sustain the necessary arrangements. Failing that, the program would likely shift to a model whereby slightly larger groups of student would travel to Laverton for longer periods of time on a much less frequent basis – during semester breaks, winter/summer terms, etc.

Relationship Management

As mentioned above, perhaps the single biggest key to ensuring the longevity of the project lies in effective management of the relationships between all of the key stakeholders. If we continue to rely on the standing relationships between individuals and not between the partnering institutions, we will continue to place the project at risk. Should there be a change in the relationship between any of these individuals the foundation of the program could crumble. Likewise if any of the key supporters were to change their perspective about the benefits of this approach to community engagement the project would be at risk of losing significant resources.

Achieving Real Outcomes

Finally, it is critical that we continually re-visit the intended outcomes of the program. We need to be mindful of the varying ways in which we can achieve those outcomes and also about developing new community-based activities and new learning opportunities.

Conclusion

Although the Laverton Project is in many ways a unique example of how deliberate partnership and collaboration can result in a mutually beneficial cross-cultural immersion experience, it is critical to recognise that like any cooperative effort, there are real challenges to ensuring the future success of the program. In particular, at this juncture it is important for us to be a bit more critical in our examination of the program and its future in an effort to ensure that it continues to grow and develop and achieve every bit of its potential along the way.

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Networking the Networks

David Ensor

Keywords: Networks, university business relationship, regional development

Abstract

Businesses in regional areas tend to be comparatively small and might have difficulty effectively competing on the global stage.

La Trobe University in Bendigo has actively collaborated with businesses in regional communities to establish and support business networks to identify and develop import-replacement and value-adding opportunities that will:

- contribute to active growth of businesses and the region;
- provide opportunities for applied research and commercialisation of intellectual property;
- provide employment opportunities for graduates; and
- provide work placements for undergraduates.

The Central Victorian Business Network (CVBN) was established by a range of partners as a network of small businesses that collaborated to aggregate supply in, for example business services. The Bendigo Manufacturing Group has collaborated to develop a food precinct and undertake a gap analysis to identify new business opportunities. An olive processing cluster has been developed.

The development of collaborative models between the University and business networks has enabled La Trobe University to operate at a strategic level in growing business in its region by sharing its resources and networking networks.

Introduction

During an era of globalisation, universities are key community partners in helping forge and implement localised regional and rural community economic development strategies.

Regional economic development strategies, such as value adding and import replacement, need to be supported by data and community networks that share a common strategy and are mutually supportive.

Business in Bendigo

Businesses in regional Australia can be predominantly considered small to medium enterprises. There are 1,122,000 small businesses with less than 20 employees in Australia (ABS, 2002), and small businesses are significant in regional and rural economies such as Bendigo, which has 4 500 businesses.

Economic development initiatives in Bendigo endeavour to: reduce unemployment; increase regional income; raise Gross Regional Product; improve business competitiveness and profitability; stimulate business start-ups; attract investment; and, improve infrastructure.

In the context of relatively small businesses, it is estimated that only 1% of all Australian superannuation contributions are directed to regional Australia.

La Trobe University has been a key partner in developing sectoral economic development strategies, and is a common partner across sectoral networks and strategies.

Globalisation

There has been a trend of transition from national and regional economies to global economies. The movement of information technology, capital and people is of great significance to communities, and there has been increased global competition for jobs, residents and capital. Globalisation has introduced localisation, and framed community competition with the world (Johnston, 1997).

Globalisation (ARC, 2001) provides opportunity for business to identify, create and satisfy profitable customers.

The globalisation of economic activity and industry localisation are emerging trends that need to be considered by rural businesses, and the globalization trend has been matched by a trend of regional clusters development. As economic activity has globalised, so competitive advantage can be localised (Enright 2001). Universities are also increasingly linked to place (Gunaseara 2004).

Globalising and localising tendencies make “place” particularly important to a region’s economic wellbeing, and whether or not a region will gain or lose from globalisation. (Enright 1993, Scott 1998).

University community engagement strategies are often defined in terms of scholarship objectives and, more recently by HEFCE (2002), in terms of regional contribution.

Some of the La Trobe University Bendigo Campus activities have underpinned endeavours to offer quality higher education opportunities to our

communities, while being regionally relevant. In particular, the important role of networks in these strategies has been highlighted.

Charles et al. (2002) suggest a framework assessing a university's contribution to the economic and social development of its region.

The report identifies seven main groups of processes underpinning regional competitiveness. Some of these have framed aspects of the community engagement activity within the business community as:

- human capital development processes involving the development and retention of graduates in the region; and,
- interactive learning and social capital development encouraging the co-operation between firms and other institutions to generate technological, commercial and social advantages.

These processes align well with some of La Trobe University activity in Bendigo to support sustainable regional economic growth through networks. The University directly contributes to the short and long-term regional economic development of our communities. This economic development is important, but will also contribute to further development of opportunities for University scholarship and University commercial income.

Through the networks, we are supporting and encouraging key community activities that will contribute to local growth and are likely to result in higher level demand for university research and teaching, and develop appropriate Bendigo employment diversity of opportunities for graduates.

La Trobe University was, for example a co-founder of the Community Foundation of Bendigo and Central Victoria, which is hoped to aggregate philanthropic activity in the region. The North Central Greenhouse Gas Alliance, Education Bendigo, Chamber of Commerce, Primary Care Partnership, Young Professionals Network, Law Association, NGO Alliance, IT Alliance, BendigoPlus are networks that have formed to address particular challenges and opportunities in Bendigo. The University is an active, cross-cutting member of these networks, and attempts to identify key regional initiatives that will advance their respective agendas, integrate students into participant organisations, and develop critical mass to create opportunity to frame important research and teaching opportunities.

Communities that develop linkages among and between firms, universities and government, gain competitive advantage through information sharing (ARC, 2001) and product development (US Council on Competitiveness, 1998, in ARC 2001). In many communities, the lack of linkages between universities and small and medium business enterprises inhibits any significant innovation (ARC, 2001).

Locally concentrated networks are characteristic of industrial organisations in many parts of the world (ARC, 2001), and includes science parks and industry clusters.

Before discussing these networks, I provide some context to our community engagement strategies.

La Trobe University Community Engagement

Community engagement is often defined in terms of how university and community view each other and themselves. This also depends on how one specifies the role of higher education and universities.

Universities need to actively develop partnerships to survive politically and develop intellectually “...knowledge does not just reside in the university...there are many kinds of knowledge, developed and held by different sectors of society, and further advances of knowledge require joint activity” (Wiewel and Broski 1997: 16 in Hudson 2000)

The community engagement activity at La Trobe University, Bendigo has been crafted around and within the core scholarship activity and resources of the campus:

- Learning and Teaching – the development and support of relevant teaching programs such as the Regional Executive Education Program and short course programs that meet regional skills needs.
- Research – development of partnered research programs that align academic interest and expertise with community problems and opportunities. The ARC Linkage Grant scheme provides key support to such research programs.
- Infrastructure – creative use of infrastructure to support the community, such as hosting the Commonwealth Youth Games, and supporting high-growth IT business at the university's Central Victorian Innovation Park.

An underlying principle of the engagement has been to nurture partnerships to jointly develop, identify and implement projects and programs that will use university scholarship and infrastructure to add value to community programs and that contribute to community sustainability. The programs should also add value to core university activity and involve creating, sharing, applying and preserving knowledge for our communities (of place and of interest).

It becomes difficult to separate the concepts of engagement and commercial income development. As engagement activity becomes increasingly integrated across most areas of University activity, additional income to the University will result from many planned shared objectives. For example, a local foundry encountered a product challenge of critical commercial value. The University is currently assisting this foundry develop a technical and commercial solution that aligns with a particular academic's research interest, and which is being considered for further development as a funded Linkage Grant.

La Trobe University in Bendigo has been actively committed to growing our region as an integral basis of community engagement activity. Partnerships

with key stakeholder groups will directly and indirectly contribute to sustainable growth of our region.

These partnerships and regional growth will provide:

- opportunities to enrich academic study and increased opportunities to contribute to scholarship through collaborative research;
- increased student/graduate employment opportunities;
- work placements for students that are relevant to academic interests, for example through the BendigoStudent program;
- better integration of our communities into the knowledge economy;
- co-development of campus infrastructure – for example co-development of laboratories with industry partners; and,
- co-development of community infrastructure – for example co-development of Central Victorian Innovation Park with City of Greater Bendigo, Bendigo Bank and Victorian State Government.

Put simply, many of our collaborative programs have been either *demand-driven* (based on community need that is matched to academic expertise), such as the development of a local government sponsored Linkage project relating to the aging population and an academic expertise in statistics, or *supply-driven* (based on academic activity that is matched to community need), as in the case of the development of regional economic modelling software that is based on academic economic modelling expertise, and matched to the data needs of local governments.

Value Adding, Import Replacement and Exports

For countries in the centre of the world economy, knowledge has become perhaps the most important factor determining the standard of living - more than land, tools and labour. Some Australian regional economies could be termed “quarry economies” – economies from which raw materials and produce are extracted for subsequent value-adding, wealth creation and job creation elsewhere. There is limited regional processing of raw material into something of higher monetary value. The sustainable growth of these rural economies is vital for their survival in a global economy, and La Trobe University is an important partner to its communities in central Victoria facing these opportunities

Rural economies, for example, face the challenge of increasing the value and margin of the initial individual raw products. There is an opportunity to value-add to raw products to ensure farmers’ and communities’ sustainability in a global marketplace, where raw product prices are not likely to rise to match production costs.

One example of this aggregated supply and value-adding is SunRice, operating from Deniliquin, New South Wales, where 2,000 rice grower members have pooled their product in a shared value-adding chain. This is today the largest rice mill facility in the Southern Hemisphere with annual sales of close on \$750m and over 1000 employees.

Import replacement is the substitution of out of region produced goods and services with locally produced goods and services. Put simply, there are also opportunities to grow a regional economy through: buying and selling locally; plugging economic leakages through import replacement (La Trobe University has estimated that the import-replacement opportunity in Bendigo is \$315.4 million, (including a \$33 million import-replacement opportunity in the business and professional services sector alone); and, selling our goods and services to the world through active and collaborative exporting.

The Regional Economic Modelling Planning (REMPPLAN) Journey

To illustrate a key aspect of the nature of the La Trobe University business community engagement in Bendigo, and the importance of networks, I elaborated on one key program using expertise in regional economic modelling data and developed an application in the form of regional economic modelling software (REMPPLAN) to:

- contribute to the economic understanding of sustainable growth of our regions;
- provide opportunities to advance the academic research associated with economic modelling; and
- commercialise an application of intellectual property to supplement university income-streams.

This modelling software is used by a number of local governments in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria as an important element of local government economic planning.

The REMPLAN journey has, for example, been a blend of a useful application of academic research that has generated income for the university and opportunity for further academic research, with an active commitment to help leverage business growth of an economy through the development and support of networks.

Its success has relied on the willingness of an academic staff member, Ian Pinge, to stretch a research interest in regional input-output modelling to develop a product that has contributed to many levels of community activity, has withstood peer review and contributed to the academic study of regional economies.

Academic outcomes and regional need formed the foundations of engagement. In order to use an academic outcome (REMPPLAN) to support our commitment to participate in sustainable regional economic growth, we focused on the development and support of regional *value-adding, import replacement and export* strategies.

By making this modelled economic data meaningfully available to the community, we have supported the identification and development of import-

replacement and value-adding programs, and led the development of many opportunities to develop research programs.

But, again, is this provision of data sufficient to help in the sustainable economic development of our region? In the context of a commitment to support the growth of a sustainable regional economy, we chose to advance this regional economic modelling activity to another level, underpinned by the belief that a passionate, connected and informed business community could use the data to achieve positive community outcomes.

Central Victorian Business Network

Many rural business communities need a culture of deep collaboration to flourish in the global economy, and La Trobe University co-founded the Central Victorian Business Network (CVBN) to facilitate the development of links within the business community. In its second year, the CVBN has approximately 300 active participating businesses, and also supports the 250 strong (and two month old) Young Professionals Network.

Economists are showing increased interest in social capital in relation to economic development. Putnam et al (1993) have shown that social capital issues are significant in economic success and networks are of particular importance. Networks also facilitate coordinated actions.

Knowledge economies are strongest where rural communities build partnerships and think regionally (Henderson, 2004).

The Central Victorian Business Network has been developed as a vehicle for business collaboration. The network hopes to achieve a vision of enhancing the economic development, growth and sustainability of central Victoria; and enhancing central Victoria as the place to be for business innovation, attracting new businesses and growing existing businesses.

A key focus has been to support business networking through:

- A Business and Professional Services Group has developed with City of Greater Bendigo Council support to address the \$33 million professional services import-replacement opportunity identified by REMPLAN within the Bendigo economy.
- The Bendigo Manufacturing Group has used data to support a 30 year industrial land strategy, development of an integrated Food Precinct and gap analysis to identify the opportunities of developing additional businesses.
- Developed an Exporters Group.
- Developed a value-adding olive sector through facilitating partnerships with equipment manufacturers.

Some of the strategies being advocated and supported through the networks include:

- Aggregation of demand for the goods and services provided by sectors (eg business and professional services) and place in such areas of activity as banking (eg. Bendigo Bank Community Bank) and telecommunications (eg Bendigo Community Telco). Other opportunities such as energy, insurance, superannuation, aged care, transport and supply of infrastructure & equipment are also under consideration.
- Aggregation of supply for sectors such as: Grains (local niche flour production - Production, standards, supply chain, marketing); Olives (production, standards, supply chain, marketing); Tourism (trails, brand, marketing); and, Services (shared service provision)

OlivOz

Australia imports \$148 million of olive oil per year, \$34million of which is extra virgin olive oil (Australian Olive Association, 2004).

Olives are currently grown in central Victoria and exported from the region for value adding in Melbourne and Wagga Wagga, New South Wales. Over 160 olive growers have formed a cluster to locally produce, market and distribute high quality extra virgin olive oil, Latitude 37, and so locally increase the value of their product.

La Trobe University in Bendigo has established relationships with Corporazione Dei Mastri Oleari, International School of Oil Masters (ISOM), and, Uniiversita Degli Studi Di Udine in Udine, Italy that are being encouraged to support the development of this industry in Bendigo through education programs and collaborative research.

The University has collaborated with an international equipment manufacturer, AlfaLaval, to support the establishment of an olive processing plant in Bendigo. This is at no direct cost to the olive cluster, and will result in an annual contribution of \$33 000 by the cluster towards a research and development fund to further develop their value-adding business and consolidate the relationship with the University. This fund will be used to leverage research grants and is expected to double within one year.

The program is anticipated to provide research, teaching and student placement opportunities in: marketing; cooperative business models; supply chain; food technology; and, agribusiness management,

Bendigo Manufacturing Group

Manufacturing is Bendigo's largest sector, with an output of approximately \$2.2billion per annum. The Bendigo Manufacturing Group is a Bendigo group of manufacturers, local government and university representatives who collaborate to: Develop strategies relating to industrial land strategies;

aggregated purchasing; strategic cluster development; new industry development; and, other strategic projects.

The Group has been a key driver of the development of a food precinct that will provide key shared resources to food processors which individually do not have the critical mass to develop individual freezer facilities, water recycling processes or food processing lines, or employ key human resources, management and marketing skills.

The University has developed a work placement program with the Manufacturing Group that encourages students to work in the sector within positions that align with student academic interest and business need. It is hoped that this will: Expose students to local relevant employment opportunities and business networks; encourage possible postgraduate research projects and partnerships; develop new student-driven business partnerships with academic staff; and, provide opportunities for students to share developing expertise with local businesses.

The REMPLAN economic gap analysis has identified key opportunities to aggregate \$12million purchasing in transport services. The possibility of developing local transport operators is also under consideration.

Commonwealth Youth Games – Bendigo 2004

Support for the Commonwealth Youth Games resulted from a partnership between the City of Greater Bendigo, Commonwealth Games Association and Victorian State Government. La Trobe University hosted the Games Village for over one thousand athletes and officials and provided opportunities for physiotherapy and podiatry students and staff to work alongside local professionals in the support of elite international athletes.

This partnership, which leveraged off the creative use of La Trobe University's campus facilities has, amongst other things: Contributed over \$9 million to the Bendigo economy; developed student and staff placement opportunities and consolidated and developed professional relationships in these academic fields; developed a close and integrated relationship with a key local government that is being used as a basis for further collaboration; and, firmly positioned the University as a key partner in an event of which the community is significantly proud.

Conclusion

Not all research and teaching is, or should be, relevant to regional engagement objectives. There is a challenge to match community need, academic expertise and curriculum relevance in developing community engagement activity that achieves mutual objectives for internal and external university stakeholders.

Research, learning and teaching and infrastructure have formed the basis of many community engagement activities at La Trobe University's Bendigo Campus, and relationships have been extended to identify opportunities to support University scholarship activity, while actively supporting regional growth through strategic partnerships.

In the context of relatively small regional communities, a predominance of relatively small businesses, and the opportunities and challenges posed by globalization, networks have been important to provide critical mass and social capital for opportunities to advance a quality research and teaching profile, while actively contributing to our regions' growth in a global economy.

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Towards a Sustainable Partnership in Crime Prevention and Community Safety

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Keywords: Partnership, Sustainable, Crime Prevention and Community Safety.

Abstract

The Centre for International Corporate Governance Research (CICGR) at Victoria University in partnership with Crime Prevention Victoria (CPV) received an Australian Research Council grant for the project: Evaluating the Community Governance of Crime Prevention and Community Safety (2002-2004). The authors draw some conclusions that enhance the feasibility of sustaining partnerships. The present paper reviews the achievements of the project over the past three years; reflecting on the research process and products and the partnership process. It identifies some of the challenges involved in working in partnership with government departments (e.g., major policy changes, staff secondments, departmental vs. academic aims) as well as the major barriers to sustaining the partnership (e.g., contract arrangements, funding). Finally it questions whether the initiative is a worthwhile one to maintain and what are the avenues and opportunities towards a sustainable partnership in crime prevention and community safety.

Introduction

Governments are increasingly turning to local communities to resolve such problems as crime, drug addiction, and youth alienation. The rationale behind this move is that local communities are best placed to resolve local problems and that assuming responsibility for such problems enhances the development of social capital and the general well-being of the community. At a government level co-ordination of various government activities can be more productive than 'silo' attempts by individual departments trying to address what are often complex problems with many causes and ramifications. "Whole of government", "joined up government" and "partnership" initiatives harness the combined resources of different government departments, the corporate sector and local citizens.

"Whole-of-Government" policies seek to build partnerships across levels of government that allow functional departments to focus on common problems.

Joined-up-government is the sharing of data, information and knowledge across government agencies and community groups. The term “partnerships” is used in a broad way in the current context to refer to relationships, collaborations and networks involving a range of stakeholders in a community. Much research into partnerships has focussed on mapping the networks of partnerships and other linkages, attempting to explain them in terms of concepts such as growth coalitions, urban, regional and institutional thickness, modes of regulation, their application in meeting policy decisions, (see for example, Bassett et al., 2002, Crawford, 1999) and as a central facet of community governance (Armstrong et al., 2004, Armstrong and Francis, 2004).

Recently interest in managing partnerships has also received increasing attention as a key element in integrated governance. The report “Working together – Integrated Governance” (IPAA 2002) presents a sequence of processes for integrated governance based on the degree of change and commitment required.: networking, cooperation, coordination, collaboration and partnership. At the lowest end of the continuum networking and cooperation imply a dialogue over issues, with little loss of autonomy by the participating organisations. Co-ordination can mean allocation of authority and market mechanisms such as contracts. Collaboration and partnerships in this hierarchy represented integrated governance.

Structures for managing partnerships were found to include several models depending on the context in which they operated: a statutory partnerships model, a Model for meeting funding conditions, contractual partnerships and voluntary quasi-contractual models. Despite the different models, successful partnerships had the characteristics: organisational commitment, honesty and trust, with a common agenda of shared objectives and understanding of partners’ priorities. It is these attributes that are promoted in the Commonwealth and State governments’ partnership policies.

Government Policy Supporting Partnerships

Peter Shergold (Shergold, 2004) in his speech launching “Connecting government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia’s Priority Challenges” in 2004 described ‘whole of government’ as a commitment to ‘joined up government’ combined with ‘seamless delivery’ of government services. The difference to previous efforts to coordinate activities “lies in the behaviours that are brought to the conference table. A collegiate leadership, driving an ethos of cooperation, and bound by effective lines of communication, can achieve outcomes that are far more than the sum of the parts that have been brought together” (p.13).

An example at State government level is the Victorian policy, Growing Victoria Together, now in its second iteration. Note that The Contract Guide for the Victorian public sector is called Partnerships Victoria. In this publication, governance is largely about risk management and accountability and

partnerships refer to contractual arrangements. Noted in the rhetoric in the Victorian document are references to cooperation, collaboration and trust. Most government departments now have partnership arrangements of one kind or another in place. Our partner in our project was Crime Prevention Victoria (CPV).

CPV and Partnerships

Partnerships are central to the operation of Crime Prevention Victoria. When the current project began, a new Crime Prevention Victoria policy, the Safer Streets and Homes, had just been developed. Central to the broad strategic direction to improving safety in streets and homes were initiatives to strengthen the capacity of communities to address specific crime, violence and community concerns. As the report said:

“Strengthening the capacity of communities needs a multi-faceted whole-of-government approach, which includes State and Local government, local agencies, non-government organisations and community members. Partnerships (were formed) with organizations such as Victoria Police, the Victorian local government Association, the Municipal Association of Victoria, Department of Justice, Department of Infrastructure, Department of Human Services and the Department of Education.” (2002, p.21).

Before describing the partnership between Victoria University and CPS, it may be useful to note that promotion of partnerships between universities and external organisations is also a central tenet of the federal Government’s Higher Education funding model.

Research Partnerships

A significant impetus to universities to become engaged with partners is that a major component of university funding is also tied to receipt of external funding. Commonwealth Government policy is directed towards the promotion of “user” relevant research and a major role for industry in directing what research should be funded. The purpose of the industry partnerships is to:

- Encourage funding from industry groups;
- Provide research back-up for Australian industry;
- Do research that is useful; and
- Support economic development and sustainability

The premier research funding bodies in Australia are: the Australian Research Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council. A condition of the Linkage grants from ARC is a contribution in cash or kind from an industry partner.

The Victoria University and Crime Prevention Victoria Partnership

The Victoria University and Crime Prevention Victoria partnership began in 2002 following an Australian Research Council (ARC) award of funding to the institutions over a three-year period. The major aim of the project was to evaluate the role of community governance in crime prevention and community safety in Victoria. CPV expectations were to inform policy by identifying local community governance issues and structures that enhance or inhibit the development of safer and less crime prone communities. The longer term aim of the research team was to question the theoretical assumptions underlying community governance, identify cost-effective governance structures that enhance or inhibit a community's capacity to participate in and respond to community safety initiatives. Specific objectives of the project were to:

- Evaluate the CPV crime prevention program
- Determine community-based factors and other characteristics of the implementation to which success could be attributed
- Evaluate the contribution of the programs to the well-being of the communities
- Identify the factors that enhance or inhibit the development of community capacity
- Develop models of community governance that can guide ways to most beneficially build community capacity

The project was guided by a theory which posits the relationship between crime and community well being (see Figure 1). This framework suggests that dysfunctional communities have high levels of community need and that this is reflected in high levels of crime, which has a negative effect on community well-being. The potential of communities to respond to crime prevention strategies is moderated by their community capacity. The balance between community needs and community capacity is reflected in community well-being (Armstrong, et al., 2002b).

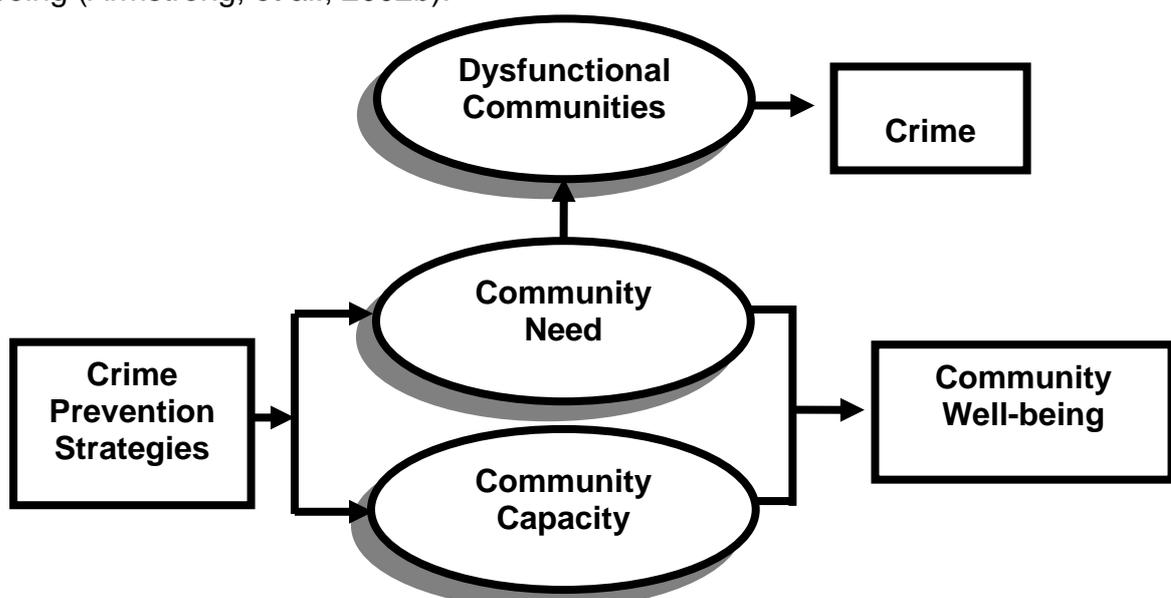
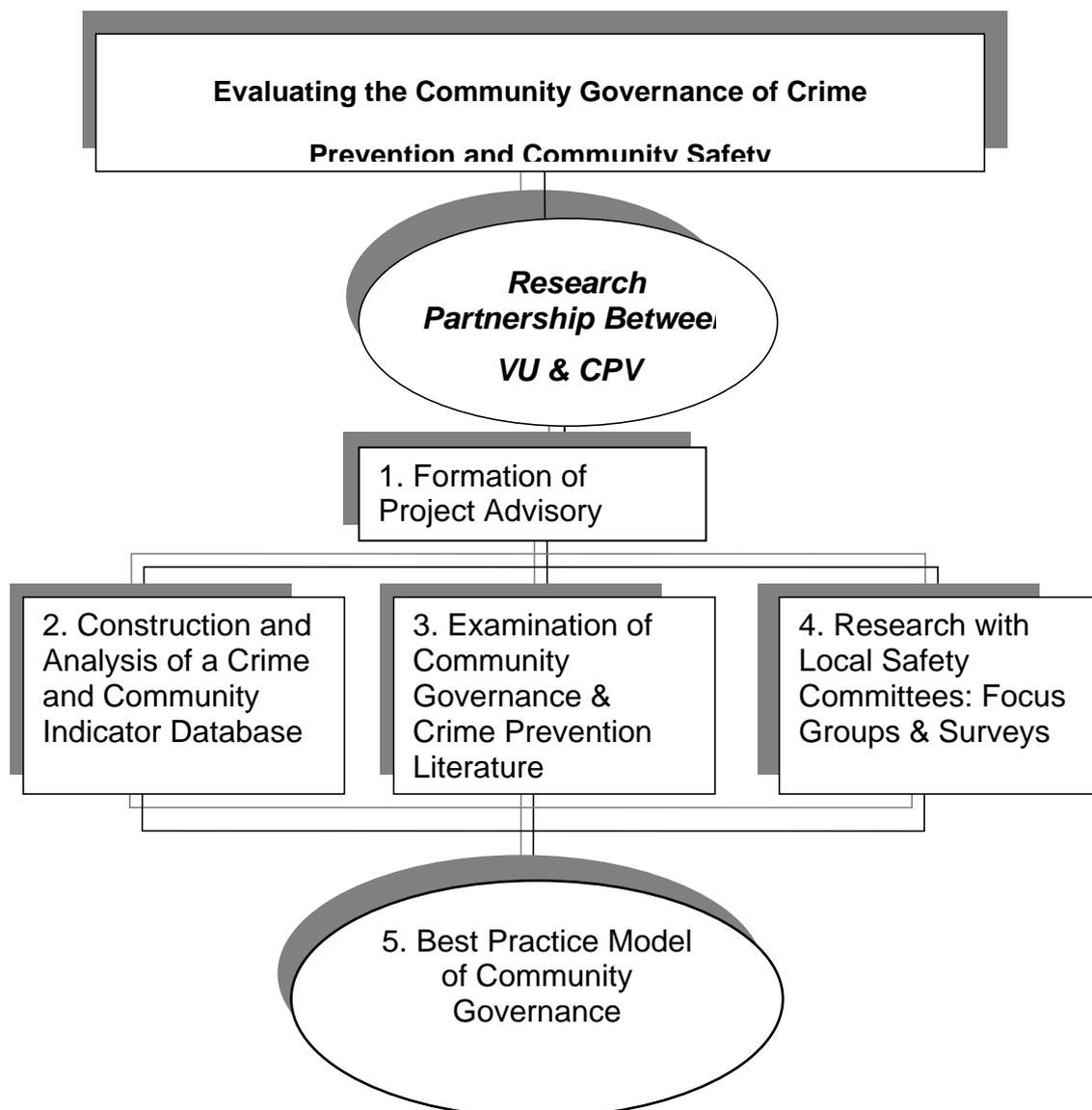


Figure 1. Crime and Community Well-being Model.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the project took an evidence-based approach and was undertaken in five distinct stages to achieve outcomes that would meet the above aims and objectives. The design was consistent with a proactive evaluation which utilises various methods such as needs assessment, reviews of research, literature, best practice and data bases, questionnaires and focus groups to provide evidence to assist the synthesis of programs and knowledge about an identified issue or problem (Owen & Rogers, 1999).

Figure 2. Research design showing the stages/methodologies employed in the evaluation.



Research Outcomes

In order to meet the above aims and objective, the project was designed and undertaken in five stages. The stages are:

- Stage One: Project Advisory Committee
- Stage Two: Data-base Construction and Analysis
- Stage Three: Collection and Examination of Community Safety Strategies and Literature
- Stage Four: Research with a sample of LSCs (Focus Groups and Follow-up Survey)
- Stage Five: Development of a Model of Community Capacity

Stage One: Project Advisory Committee.

The Members of the Project Advisory Committee were selected to add expertise and advice and to facilitate networking with Victorian Government Agencies and other organizations involved in community crime prevention. The committee members included 10-14 representatives from CPV, Neighbourhood Watch, Victoria Police, Local Government and Victoria University academics with backgrounds and interests in law, corporate governance, ethics, community psychology, community engagement and social policy. The meetings were held on a bi-annual basis for the whole committee, with more frequent meetings held between the members of research team from both VU and CPV.

Stage Two: Data-base Construction and Analysis.

A major aim of the second stage of the project was to investigate the relationships between crime and various community indicators. The state of Victoria consists of 79 Local Government Areas or geographical “communities”, which differ in terms of crime rates and social and demographic characteristics. While there is an increasing agreement that crime is the result of a combination of factors such as disadvantage, dysfunction and lack of community capacity and social capital (Armstrong, Francis, Bourne & Dussuyer, 2002a), systematic investigations of the relationships between crime rates and other community characteristics are rare.

One reason for this is the cost and difficulty of building an appropriate and comprehensive data base.

The first task was to develop a database of quantitative data from various sources and to construct social indices at Local Government Area level. The paper: ‘Towards developing an evidence based database for the evaluation of the community governance of crime prevention and community safety’ describes the development of the theoretical model that guided the selection and analysis of information from the data-base used to construct, for each LGA, comprehensive social indicators relevant to the crime prevention needs and capacity in LGAs in Victoria (Armstrong, et al., 2002b).

Community need, community capacity and community well-being are not unitary concepts as shown in the community well being model but rather consist of many factors and issues which concern a community. Following a review of literature in this field, models consisting of numerous needs, capacity and well-being indicators were developed (the full lists may be seen in Armstrong, et al., 2002b). These indicators guided the development of the subsequent database, which has been named the Crime and Local Community Indicator Database.

The theoretical and practical issues involved in developing social indicators are discussed in several other papers developed as part of the present project (Armstrong et al., 2002b; 2002c; Armstrong & Francis, 2003; Armstrong & Rutter, 2002). Two empirical papers have also been developed. One of these: 'Crime Rates and Community Characteristics: Implications for Crime Prevention' consists of empirical research on the relationships between police recorded crime rates and the various community need and capacity variables from the database. The second one entitled: 'Ethnicity and crime: A statewide analysis by local government areas' specifically explores the relationship between various cultural variables and crime rates.

The quantitative data collected during this stage of the project also enabled us to develop comprehensive community and crime and safety profiles for the six LGAs. And causal analysis of associations between for example, community socio-economic status and crime, and ethnicity and crime (Armstrong, Francis and Totikidis (in progress).

Profiles of this kind can be extended to all LGAs and are essential to evidence based crime prevention activities. As listed earlier 'Developing demographic and need profiles of Local Government Areas' is one of the major initiatives supported by the Safer Streets and Homes Program (CPV, 2002b). The importance of community profiles has also been outlined in the Victoria Police policy and guidelines LSC Resource Kit (2002). According to this publication a community profile provides an overview of the local safety issues and acts as a planning instrument to assist police and LSCs "in identifying and developing strategies to address those issues" (p.18).

It must be acknowledged that whilst many local governments in Victoria have already developed profiles of their LGAs, the structure of these profiles are not consistent across LGAs and do not necessarily consist of crime and safety data. The profiles of the six LGAs developed in the present project include Community Profiles covering Geographical Features, Population Characteristics, Income, Cultural Diversity, Families, Education, Employment and Employment Type in these areas. The second profile is a Crime and Safety Profile of the six areas covering Recorded Crime Rates, Crime Rankings, Change in Crime from 2001-2003, Victimization Survey and Local Safety Survey.

Stage Three: Collection and Examination of Community Safety Strategies and Literature.

A thorough examination of community safety strategies and literature is essential to understanding and improving community safety. During the course of this project, we built up a small library consisting of literature and website information related to crime prevention and safety infrastructures and activities in Australia and internationally. Some of the specific topics covered in our collection include articles on the evaluation of crime prevention programs, community governance and related issues such as community capacity, community well-being, social capital, community participation and ethnicity and crime.

As well as informing the present work, the information collected will be useful to further work aimed at promoting community safety and improving well-being. One of the projects underway within this stage has been the construction of the Local Crime Prevention/Community Safety Infrastructure Database. This consists of a database with numerous fields of information at the Local Government Area, including information about LSC structures, issues covered in Local Safety Plans, current CP&S initiatives and completed activities. This database will be a valuable resource for crime prevention practitioners when completed.

Stage Four: Research with a sample of LSCs: Focus Groups and a Follow-up Survey.

A full report of the focus group research appears in chapter six of the report (Armstrong, Francis, & Totikidis, in progress) and a shorter discussion appearing in Armstrong, Francis, & Totikidis, (2004). In summary, six focus groups were undertaken to gain an in depth understanding of the functional structure of LSCs. A total of 41 people (18 females and 23 males) from the six LSCs/LGAs: Boroondara, Brimbank, Glen Eira, Port Phillip, Greater Bendigo and Greater Shepparton participated in the research. The participants consisted of police officers and local government workers (59%) as well as community service providers, road safety officers and local business. Most were aged between 36-55 (71%), were born in Australia (91%) and lived in the local area (56%).

An interview schedule consisting of 30 questions and prompts (see Appendix F) guided the research. These questions addressed issues associated with community governance: leadership, participation, representation, skills, partnerships, decision making, policies and implementation of programs, accountability, networking and collaboration.

Stage Four: Research with a sample of LSCs: Follow-up Survey with LSCs.

Following the undertaking of focus groups with LSCs and data analyses, two questionnaires designed to explore emerging assumptions and hypotheses were also developed. The first questionnaire (the Local Safety Committee Questionnaire) was directed to each LSC member while the second (Local Safety Committee Questionnaire to Examine Hypotheses Relating to Reduction of Crime in LGAs) was directed to the chairman and committee as

a whole. A total of 34 LSC members from the Bendigo, Boroondara, Brimbank, Port Phillip and Shepparton LSCs participated.

Stage Five: Development of a Best Practice Model of Community Governance.

Stage five proposed the development of a best practice model of community governance. The model is described in the Report: Guidelines for Best Practice in Community Governance.

Research and the Partnership Process

As indicated above the term partnership applies not only to the partnerships between VU and CPV.

Our experience of partnerships showed that the characteristics of a good research partnership are:

- Contributions of both parties to the project;
- The development of a good networking frame.
- Shared understanding of the problem;
- Realistic expectations;
- Enthusiasm;
- Relevance of the problem to 'user' decisions;
- Accessibility of the outcomes of the research to 'users'; and
- Trust, co-operation, sustained interest;

Contributions of both Parties to the Project

The partnership was a partnership. The research officer at CPV who had initiated the project had a major role in developing the proposal, briefing the VU team and maintaining contacts with the relevant people at CPV.

The Development of a Good Networking Frame.

Membership of the Advisory committee represented people who were interested in Crime Prevention and the opportunities offered by the research. The team collaborated with CPV, attended their research seminars and meetings held with LSC officers.

Shared Understanding of the Problem

The issues were well understood by the project team but less so by those on the ground who seemed to assume, prior to our visits, that we were evaluating their performance and only subsequently came to understand that we were trying to identify structures and processes that facilitated governance.

Enthusiasm

In the CPV and VU project, the early enthusiasm stimulated the appointment of an Advisory Committee, provision of data and positive assistance in obtaining data from other sources.

Realistic Expectations

People have very little idea of the time taken to produce research results. An example was an investigation of participation and crime. Investigation of

previous studies showed that conclusions were often based on dubious measures of communication. The research team searched for and tried to gain access to various data bases and then tried a number of different variables and numerous analyses before arriving at any conclusions. The time taken in this pursuit was not evident in the production of a final paper.

Research is not consulting. The outcomes are not always clear and not are they always what is desired. One problem was the term 'evaluation'. People were reluctant to give us the results from previous evaluations of various projects and a review of previous projects had to be abandoned.

Relevance of the Problem to 'user' Decisions

Because of the lack of funding and the need for CPV to build partnerships to be effective the organisation had a real need for knowledge about how to manage their partnerships. The findings and the 'Good Guide to Best Practice in Community Governance' met this need.

Accessibility of the Outcomes of the Research to 'users'

The Advisory Committee was intended to represent the interest of stakeholders and to be communicators with their respective constituencies. The major communication of results was directed through the Advisory Committee Meetings and Reports and secondly through our papers published on our web site, at conferences and in journal articles.

The research team produced comprehensive reports every six months and a final summary report. CPV also asked for a 'user friendly' brief report for wider distribution, which resulted in the 'Guidelines for Best Practice in Community Governance. News of the project appeared the University Research Report, several papers were presented at conferences and have been (or are in progress of being) submitted to journals. Project papers are also housed on the CICGR website.

Trust, Co-operation, Sustained Interest

One of our problems was that the membership of the Advisory Committee changed. New members not familiar with the project felt that they had to 'start again' and had a confused idea of what the purpose of the project was. For example, Ethics Approval had been obtained at the beginning of the project from the University and from the Department of Justice. However, halfway through the project, a changed representation from Victoria Police meant a new request to submit an ethics application to Victoria Police.

A major problem was the change in the CPV representatives on the project. During the three years there were four changes of director, and the original liaison person was assigned to a project which took her away from the department. Data was also not compatible across all the government Agencies which each had their own boundaries and consequently data from each source had to be adapted and collated.

There are also unresolved issues about the power structures in partnership relationships with research institutions. In analysing power, theorists note that

an imbalance of power can cause both satisfaction, among those with the higher power, and dissatisfaction in those without if needs are not being met. In a research partnership, there is a balance between those providing the funding and support and exercising control of information and resources, the industry partner, and those researchers achieving academic impact and institutional recognition and whose independence and autonomy are vital to their academic freedom. Issues arise about access to people and data, levels of disclosure, and how much effort goes into satisfying user requirements, and the balance between these and, for example, publications requirements, of the researchers.

When trust in partnerships is high, the partnerships are more likely to arrive at decisions through consensus and compromise and to achieve mutual benefits for both partners (Figure 3). Achieving these is the foundation of long term sustainable partnerships.

What are some of the skills needed by researchers in building partnership? Key differences between successful alliances and networks are the skills and attention given to building and cultivating networks of friends and allies. Control of the agendas and ability to influence direction is important. Membership of Advisory Committees can be crucial in building support for various projects.

Important, too, are the capacities of research team leaders for charisma, political skills, verbal skills and the capacity to articulate the research vision – and in real life to ‘sell’ the vision to both funding agencies and end users. Equally important will be their credibility with the partner and in their own institution. In partnerships it is the foundation of trust, in their own institution it is leads to understanding of what will be judged socially and politically worthy of institutional support.

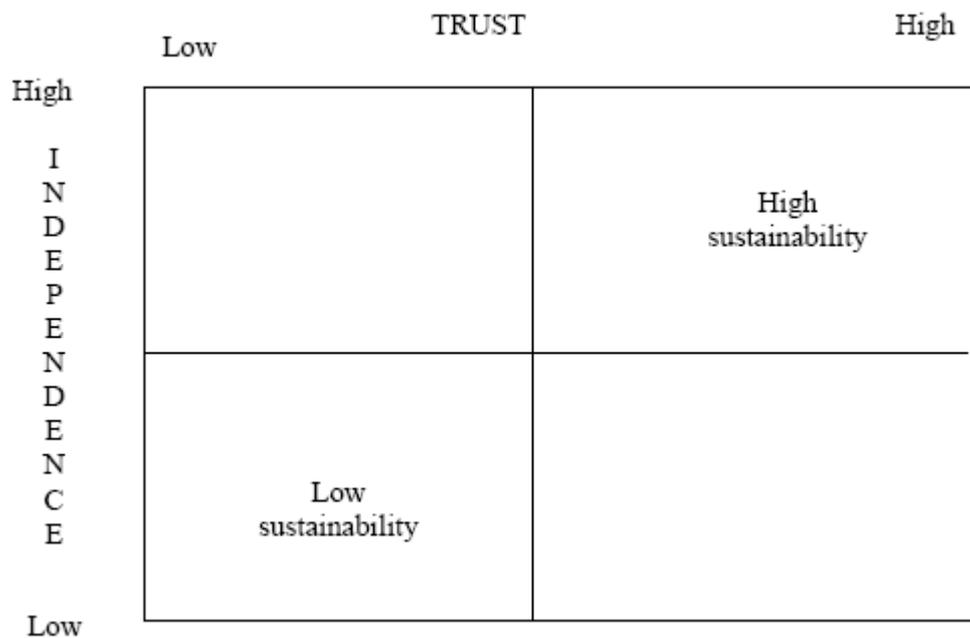


Figure 3. Trust, academic independence and sustainability

Benefits and Implications of our Partnership

Among the benefits derived from this study are:

- The development of a large and comprehensive database of significant value.
- The production of a comparative database of value to future researchers.
- The development of partnerships and fostered collegial relations.
- An endorsement of the value of cross-disciplinary work.
- Building partnerships is a complex task, and one for which this present study affords some useful additions. Among the conclusions drawn, and thus giving rise to recommendations, are that the collegial spirit and networking are crucial components; that the availability of comprehensive databases is an invaluable resource; and that those gifted at running projects are not necessarily the same people who are gifted at obtaining finance for such projects (or in appropriate reporting).

The theoretical structures outlined in this paper are the conceptual explanations of the community governance issues that lead to better understanding.

Conclusion

Despite the difficulties, our experiences were extremely positive. Working with a partner added enormously to the relevance of the project as well as giving it legitimacy and some accountability. There was a sense of teamwork with CPV and in an atmosphere of trust, an acceptance of our findings. Both CPV and the CICGR team brought their unique competencies and capabilities to the project. CPV gained some insight into how their partnerships were working and CICGR added significantly to the body of knowledge about community governance. This paper illuminated some of the necessary characteristics for a good research partnership. While some challenges were identified, the biggest challenge involves the question of how to maintain a sustainable partnership in crime prevention and community safety beyond the life of a research project.

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Policies May be Made in Heaven but Sustainable Partnerships are borne, Nurtured and Maintained through Good Relationships between the Partners.

Shelley Burgin

Keywords: Cooperative Program, collaborative research, sustainable partnership

Abstract

The charter and mission of the University of Western Sydney (UWS) is to achieve excellence through scholarship, teaching, learning, research and service. Although the target audience includes international communities, there is a strong regional emphasis and a particular focus on the people of Greater Western Sydney. Similarly, the strategic direction for Penrith City Council (PCC) encourages links with educational providers in the immediate Local Government Area. However, whilst the imprimatur from the upper echelons of power in both institutions provides strategic direction, partnerships are developed, nurtured and sustained by the researchers and practitioners in middle management.

The UWS Cooperative Programs Unit mentors such partnerships. This paper describes its role in connecting PCC with UWS research staff and students in a sustained relationship that began a decade ago and has involved over 60 students undertaking a diverse range of research projects for PCC. As a case study we will use environmental projects, undertaken by four Honours students annually, to exemplify the PCC and UWS partnership.

The characteristics of the partnership are explored to identify the reasons for its development into a trusted, resourced, sustainable, and mutually beneficial, relationship. The personalities of the protagonists, the quality systems developed to ensure that the goals of the parties (PCC, UWS and students) are met and the measures taken to sustain the partnership will be discussed. The UWS and PCC relationship will be compared with that of other universities and their local Councils, as evident in contemporary literature.

The relationship's benefits are described with emphasis on its multiplier effect. There is reference to other relationships which co-exist between UWS and PCC (invariably developed by middle management staff from both organisations) which create synergies and generate additional ventures for both parties, with other organisations or authorities and educational institutions - the evidence of thriving, sustainable partnerships.

The Partnership

The University of Western Sydney (UWS) prides itself on being a university that engages with its region (Duke, 2000). The UWS mission affirms the importance placed on community engagement by stating that it aspires to be “a university of international standing and outlook, achieving excellence through scholarship, teaching, learning, research and *service to its regional, national and international communities, beginning with the people of Greater Western Sydney.*” (Italics added; <http://www.uws.edu.au/about/university/mission>). The University has six major campuses with additional satellites and some 37,000 students enrolled in 2005. The two campuses that have historically had the strongest environmental focus are in north western Sydney at Penrith and Richmond.

There has been an historical relationship between UWS and Penrith City Council (PCC) that emerged within the Nepean College of Advanced Education (Penrith) before three such Colleges were merged into the UWS in 1989. Indeed PCC, along with other western Sydney councils, strongly lobbied for the formation of a federated university in the region.

Before 1992, there had been many *ad hoc* links between UWS and PCC. Since that time there has been considerable effort to establish a unified, strategic partnership which has included PCC and UWS signing a formal joint statement pledging continued support and commitment to pursue common aims and objectives for the growth and development of the educational, cultural and economic life of the City of Penrith.

Whilst the imprimatur from the upper echelons of power provided the strategic direction, we have observed that it is the relationships between partners, developed and nurtured by the researchers and practitioners in middle management that has made the commitment a reality. The UWS Cooperative Programs unit has played a critical role as a catalyst in establishing these relationships in middle/senior management within both organisations, strengthening the partnership, ensuring its maintenance, and stimulating further links.

An Exploration of the Cooperative Programs' Model

Cooperative Programs was introduced at UWS in 1995 with the dual aims of helping to provide students with valuable industry research experience which would enable them to gain an edge in the competitive job market; and building new, and strengthening existing, links with organisations particularly in Greater Western Sydney. Over the last ten years Cooperative Programs has become a flagship program of UWS. It has arranged placements for over 1,000 students and established partnerships with over 400 organisations, mainly in Greater Western Sydney (GWS).

There are two main types of Cooperative Programs: vacation programs that provide students with paid research experience where they work

independently within an industry and without academic supervision over a vacation period; and academic session programs where students work on an industry sponsored project during one or two academic semesters with academic supervision to gain either a credit or a grade for their work. The academic session projects are more intensive, over a longer period and students receive the additional support of academic supervision. These projects permit a more sustained relationship with the partner organisation and most frequently are the basis of theses or dissertations at the Honours and Coursework Masters level, although they may also be the basis of independent learning within the final year of some undergraduate programs.

Organisations provide funds for Cooperative Programs to identify potential students and supervisors for projects and students are provided with an award to undertake the project. It has been observed that the exchange of money has raised the quality of the programs: students are more accountable and professional in their behaviour (no absences due to late nights!) and industry partners have a higher expectation and, in turn, they sponsor projects that are useful to the host organisation and treat students as consultants, rather than voluntary workers who are sometimes given trivial and/or routine tasks.

It should be noted that the majority of UWS students, which incidentally is also representative of the population profile of the Penrith Local Government Area, are the first members of their families to gain entrance to university and they are often from a lower socio-economic background than students who enrol in the “sandstone universities” of Eastern Sydney. Taking the student profile into account, along with UWS data which indicates that for most students a Cooperative Programs’ project is their first professional experience, it is evident that a good student support program is imperative for the success of the collaboration.

In response to feedback, an extensive support program has evolved for every stage of the student project. For example, before the project commences, students are required to attend a professional development course which includes project planning and business communication. While more generally the University offers a range of support initiatives for students, during their Cooperative Programs’ project students attend courses on project review, report writing, presentation skills and other more specific topics such as survey design and support to learn to use specific statistical packages. Individual assistance is given when required. Cooperative Programs’ staff also monitor projects and keep in touch with students, industry partners and academic supervisors (if applicable). Most importantly, Cooperative Programs’ staff establish a rapport with students who turn to them for professional and personal advice and assistance.

Penrith City Council is one of the most loyal of all the Cooperative Programs’ industry partners. They have participated in Cooperative Programs since its inception and have provided more opportunities than any other organisation. In recent years PCC have funded a range of environmental projects through the Cooperative Programs to support their stormwater management program.

Case study from the Stormwater Management Program

The NSW Environment Protection Authority issued a Direction under Section 12 of the Protection of the Environment Administration Act (1991) in 1998 for all Councils in NSW to prepare Stormwater Management Plans (SMPs) for their urban areas. These SMPs were to be reviewed after 3 years. Penrith City Council was required to be involved in the preparation of 4 SMPs: the Blue Mountains, Upper Nepean River, Middle Nepean River and South Creek. These were prepared and adopted by PCC in July, 1999.

A major failing of these SMPs was that they were only required to deal with stormwater runoff quality issues from urban areas. No account was taken of flooding, agriculture, rural activities, sewage overflows or point source discharges from activities such as Sewer Treatment Plants. All of which had the potential to contribute to the poor quality of storm water in the area. To overcome these shortcomings in the original Section 12 Direction, PCC embarked on a series of reviews of its SMPs in 2001. These reviews were aimed at identifying specific actions to manage stormwater runoff using an Integrated Total Catchment Management approach, based on a number of sub-catchment stormwater management plans within each of the 4 urban SMPs.

The Stormwater Coordinator contacted UWS Cooperative Programs to see if students could assist with audits of the drainage networks. The academic session program was considered the most appropriate where Honours students could undertake the audits with academic supervision. The cost of participating in this program would be far less than employing a new staff member or contracting the work out. The University has a well-developed and internationally recognised Centre for Integrated Catchment Management and very good Science and Engineering faculties that are well versed on catchment management issues in the Hawkesbury-Nepean River catchment. Consequently the strengthening of the partnership between the two organisations was a logical step for PCC which had to update its SMPs, and UWS which was in need of opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate students to undertake major research projects.

In 2001 PCC and UWS embarked on a cooperative program of sub-catchment audits utilising the skills of final year students in Engineering and Science. These audits were collated and ranked into a series of Action Plans that were incorporated into Council's Management Plan. Funding for the continuation of the partnership has been provided through an Enhanced Environmental Program (EEP) that has been financed through a General Rate Rise, the justification for which was based largely on the preliminary sub-catchment audits carried out by UWS students.

Whilst the sub-catchment audits provide information upon which Council is able to make operational decisions with regard to stormwater management issues, the audits themselves do not provide a sufficiently rigorous scientific research component to satisfy the requirements of an Honours Degree. Consequently it is necessary for some students to complete a research

project, linked to an important issue, associated with the sub-catchment SMP that they are preparing. These research projects have included:

- A critique of the Section 12 Direction and the guidelines for preparing Stormwater Management Plans issued by the NSW EPA;
- The role of watercourses in the spread of weeds and their degradation post urban development;
- A methodology for assigning an economic value to natural assets;
- The role of legislation in the approval of stormwater management practices in NSW;
- The impact of urbanisation on the peri-urban areas of the Claremont Creek catchment;
- Water Sensitive Urban Design and its application in Western Sydney;
- Determination of an appropriate width for riparian areas using vegetation ecotones;
- Comparison of urban and rural community attitudes towards stormwater management in western Sydney;
- Evaluation of the success of the South Creek Stormwater Management Plan;
- An economic analysis of the value of the South Creek Riparian Corridor;
- Study into change in societal attitudes towards stormwater management in North St Marys;
- Assessment of erosion and accretion in small watercourses as a consequence of urbanisation.

Apart from these research projects, which are aligned to catchment management issues, PCC has undertaken a major research partnership with UWS investigating the abundance, diversity and bio-remediation potential of freshwater mussels in the Hawkesbury-Nepean River and its tributaries. To date these investigations have led to 3 scientific research projects through the Cooperative Programs Unit. They include investigations into:

- The categorisation of substrate and the presence or absence of freshwater mussels;
- The categorisation of riparian vegetation and the presence or absence of freshwater mussels;
- Guidelines for the construction of freshwater mussel habitat in constructed stormwater pollution control ponds.

The freshwater mussel project has received considerable attention from the media – local and regional newspapers and radio stations as well as the ABC and TEN television networks, and has attracted additional logistical and financial support from NSW Maritime, NSW DEC, NSW Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Sydney Catchment Authority, Penrith Lakes Development Corporation, Hawkesbury City Council and Wollondilly Shire Council. In addition to the support for the project from external organisations, Sydney University has provided additional research collaboration through A/Prof Maria Byrne, which has added to the scientific rigour of the investigations.

This environmental program provides the students with the opportunity to complete a worthy investigation that results in the award of a higher degree. The recommendations of their investigation are included in Council's Management Plan for implementation on a prioritised basis. Apart from the obvious benefit of fulfilling the need for students to carry out a major research project as a requirement for their Degree, PCC benefits from the completion of a review of the Urban Stormwater Management Plans, as required by the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and the students gain valuable work experience and industry exposure.

The Multiplier Effects

The Action Plans that are produced by the students, as part of the preparation of the sub-catchment SMPs, have been used to prepare an Implementation Strategy for Capital Works projects within PCC's EEP. This is updated each year as more sub-catchments are audited and the Action Plans are completed. The Implementation Strategy in the EEP, funded through a 4.8% General Rate Rise, was approved by the NSW Department of Local Government in 2002. This means that the recommendations made by the students through their sub-catchment based Action Plans will be implemented shortly after the completion of their audit.

A reliable funding source and a pre-determined long term Implementation Strategy has allowed PCC to apply for grants to assist in the implementation of the EEP. Since the EEP commenced in 2002, PCC has received in excess of \$400,000 of grant assistance for actions identified in the EEP. It is doubtful if this level of funding support would have been forthcoming if the actions and funds had not already been earmarked in the PCC Management Plan.

Whilst working with PCC the students gain experience in the way in which local government operates and are required to make presentations to industry and government on the progress of their projects. The benefits of this approach to 'on the job training' are twofold: knowledge of the workings of local government and exposure to potential employers through their industry presentations. Generally PCC employs 4 students through Cooperative Programs each year, and since the audit of the sub-catchments began in 2001 5 students have been employed by local government, 2 by private industry, 1 has been employed by UWS as a research assistant, and 3 have enrolled in PhD programs, whilst one other has taken the opportunity to travel abroad. A further six or seven Cooperative Programs students work on projects for other departments of PCC each year and many of these students have also continued to work at PCC beyond graduation.

Apart from working on their projects the students are also encouraged to participate in the Penrith Council Open Day, held annually, where PCC opens its doors to the public and invites the local community to engage in dialogue with staff. Displays featuring Council projects and works in progress are presented for public scrutiny and critique in an informal forum and the

students have always been keen to actively participate in interacting with the community on these days. Each sub-catchment based SMPs incorporates a community survey component targeted to the local catchment area. The Open Day provides the opportunity for the students to further interact with the community and at the same time disseminate the findings of the community surveys. Both the community and the students have reported on these days in a positive manner. The experience allows students to develop their skills as well as providing them with a unique opportunity to expand their community network. It also provides an opportunity for PCC and UWS to showcase one way in which each is fulfilling their strategic plans.

There are also other advantages for the University through the Program. During their projects students often are required to work with other local governments, state agencies and the local community. Through this process their abilities reflect on the University's reputation and also contribute to its commitment to Greater Western Sydney. In addition, it provides opportunities for researchers to build collaborations which enhance their ability to obtain funding.

It should be noted that PCC has partnered Cooperative Programs for students from various disciplines to undertake a range of research projects in addition to the environmental ones. Projects sponsored by PCC include economic analyses, web design, recording local history, social research, enhancing information technology capability and engineering studies. PCC and the local community have benefited in varying degrees from the completion of all these projects.

The collaboration is a 'win win win' for PCC, students and researchers of UWS who are fostered by Corporate Programs.

Replicating the Model

The concept of students' learning being enhanced by work in their discipline is well established in areas such as teacher training (Charles Sturt University, Green *et al.*, 2004; Singapore National Institute of Education, Wong & Chuan, 2002); various medical disciplines (eg. medical students, University of Toronto, Hennen, 1997; oral health, Lalumandier & Molkentin, 2004; pediatrics, University of California, Sidelinger *et al.* 2005), engineering (Pollitt, 2004) and geoscience (Liu *et al.*, 2004). The concept has a substantial history within UWS (eg. agriculture, Bawden, 2005; teacher training, Vickers *et. al.*, 2004). However, the focus of most previous initiatives has been to provide a specific discipline group with training within a recognised profession with funding support for the learning experience within a clearly defined target profession with funds provided by governments (eg. medical and teaching training) or multi-national companies with substantial resources (eg. geoscience, engineering). Within these industries the concept of 'on the job' training is well entrenched.

The students advantaged by Cooperative Programs' initiatives tend to be from less well defined disciplines and generally funds are obtained from a diversity of small to medium sized companies and agencies that are only able to absorb, at most, a small number of students annually and need to obtain 'value for money' for their investment. The program therefore relies, to a large extent, on building and maintaining networks among large numbers of local industries, often without a culture of providing student funding. It is beyond the ability of the academics to develop and maintain such a network of organisations and researchers. The success of such a network is derived from having a dedicated team, such as Cooperative Programs, who seek out potential collaborators and nurture the network.

The Benefits of Cooperative Programs

There are numerous and varied benefits for all the Cooperative Programs participants. Some are obvious, direct benefits while others are indirect, long term benefits. Both are equally important to the long term success of the collaborators.

There are many benefits to PCC in using the Cooperative Programs to run their environmental science projects. In the selection process the academics on the selection panel have a clear understanding of the students' skills background because of their knowledge of the courses the students come from and, generally, the individual students are known to the academics. This minimises the chance of inappropriate selection. In selecting a student, PCC obtains the services of experienced researchers to support the research they wish to have undertaken at minimal cost to PCC. Flexibility is thus provided to PCC to choose among the students and research expertise of UWS, dependant upon the project skills required in any one year. Where expertise is required over the longer term for a particular project, PCC is able to 'try before they buy' and they thus reduce the potential to make inappropriate appointments. As a consequence, PCC is able to target specific skills from the University (students and researchers) for relatively short-term specialist research projects, saving the cost of employing full time staff to undertake the equivalent tasks. Further savings are provided because Cooperative Programs' students are insured by UWS and are on the UWS payroll, PCC also saves on salary on-costs.

Besides the skills flexibility provided by students, PCC staff build a working relationship with researchers that has endured over many years, despite constant changes in students and research projects. This retains continuity that is fostered by Cooperative Programs. Thus, although the familiarity is maintained, different dynamics are introduced each year, unhampered by the workplace culture. Exposure to research students provides on-going access to the cutting edge research from the scientific literature which may otherwise be missed by practitioners busy with day to day management priorities. This knowledge partnership has also meant that decisions made by PCC are underpinned by quality research. This in turn has benefited the local area.

Many of the Cooperative Programs' students have been employed by PCC where they are immediately able to take on their designated role without a 'settling in period'. This has been well demonstrated by a recent retirement in PCC and his replacement by one of the Program's past students. Those not required by PCC are often employed by associated local government areas, agencies or consultants and thus become advocates for PCC within their broader network.

It is the 'learning-knowledge partnership' between PCC and UWS that is probably the paramount benefit of the relationship between the two organisations. The stimulating mix of academic staff, practitioners and bright students generates new ideas and keeps all of the parties at the cutting edge of research in environmental management. This is evidenced by the substantial media coverage and scientific interest in the freshwater mussel research project. The collaboration in this project has provided for a much broader approach than would have been possible if the partnership did not exist. Researchers have been able to review the current knowledge base and undertake the day-to-day ecological research on the mussels while innovative practitioners are able to identify the potential for these animals to act as bio-remediators of storm water. Neither party in the partnership could have achieved their desired outcome without the skills and knowledge of the other. Academic staff are sometimes described as living in their ivory towers, but these projects ensure that researchers and students are kept in touch with the 'real world'.

The academic supervisor plays an important role in the knowledge partnership, providing information that leads to a cross fertilisation of ideas. The supervisor also acts as a conduit for the PCC to access resources from the university and to link with other staff in related disciplines. As Marina Peterson succinctly commented in Ennever (1997):

"The program delivers the 'lateral thinking' of academic brainpower which is unique to the University environment. A particular problem can be viewed collectively by experts from different disciplines such as civil engineering, chemistry and biological sciences. It's also good to be in a position to simply call up an expert in your field of interest and ask 'what do you think' without having to approach a consultant or pay exorbitant charges. This program offers the industry, academics and students an opportunity to network and nurture contacts for future ventures".

The learning-knowledge partnership has the added benefit of increasing the credibility of the research over similar research undertaken by either PCC or UWS independently. Frequently PCC and UWS staff and students publish papers and present their research at both national and international conferences which raises the profile of both institutions. For example, the research work on the freshwater mussel project was presented at the Ecological Society of Australia's Annual Conference in December 2004. On a previous occasion presentations on stormwater projects were made at a

DOTARS workshop on "University-Regional Community Engagement Policy Directions" in Canberra in July 2001.

Small Cooperative Programs projects have built the framework which has almost serendipitously led to other projects. As Chris Duke (2000) in his paper Regional partnership – building a learning region stated: "The sense of trust and common purpose built up through continuously talking and working together on many sometimes small projects proves essential. One activity and partnership supports and cross-fertilises others. Players find that their multiple public and private roles intersect in useful ways." This is certainly true of the stormwater project. Once the high standard of work of the students and their quality reports were recognised by PCC, further projects were sponsored in related areas. The stormwater management projects easily led to other projects such as the freshwater mussel investigations.

When the neighbouring Blacktown City Council became aware of the stormwater management conducted by UWS students, they also sought to participate in UWS Cooperative Programs and sponsored two students to work on a riparian management plan in 2003. Wollondilly Shire Council and the Department of Planning and Natural Resources have similarly sponsored projects after observing the standard of research undertaken by UWS students for PCC. These organisations have also employed Cooperative Programs students beyond graduation.

The learning partnership influences the region in many ways. The environmental science projects involved community education and the students met members of the community and discussed environmental issues. Anecdotal evidence has indicated that these students raised the general awareness of the community on issues such as water saving and environmental management which had a greater impact than would have been achieved through more formal directives.

The impacts of the various relationships between the Council and the University are extremely important as Penrith City evolves into a 21st century city. Chris Duke (2000) referred to this change as "the transition from a historically quite parochial, not to say red-neck, country town and railway depot, to an internationally recognised, networked and prosperous...university city"

A Recipe for Success

An analysis of the essential elements of this program can provide the basic framework for involving academic institutions and industry to deliver community outcomes. These elements include:

- Fostering good relationships and trust between the industry partner and academic institution;
- Identifying community projects that fit within the capabilities of the academic staff and the curriculum;

- Structuring the project to provide academic credits for the students whilst meeting the requirements of the industry partner and achieving the needs of the community;
- Viewing the project as a commercial venture, where the students are treated as employees and are remunerated for their work. The agreement takes the form of a consultancy with the benefit of independent academic review to maintain rigour and industry supervision to ensure relevance to the industry partner and the community;
- Selecting students on the basis of their ability to deliver the outcomes and subjecting them to a rigorous interview and culling process;
- Involving the industry partner in the interview process, during which time the project is explained in detail and the student is encouraged to provide input into developing the project outline and milestones;
- Encouraging the successful student to make presentations to industry, academia, fellow students, the community and politicians;
- Convening regular meetings between the academic staff, industry partner and the students to ensure that the project is kept on track and the needs of all parties are met;
- Linking student payment to project milestones;
- Adopting the outcomes and recommendations from the project.

A very important component of these programs is that the student's work is recognised as a consultancy by the industry partner and that their work is given the same status. For the student this is seen as the fulfilment of the years of study and validation of the vocational relevance of their course. It is the recognition of the value of the students' work and the implementation of their recommendations by the industry partner that guarantees the continuance and success of these programs.

Conclusion

The Council and the University have had a long standing 'town and gown' relationship in various spheres. For example, UWS has representatives on Council entities such as the Penrith Regional Gallery and Lewers Bequest and the Whitewater Stadium. They are partners in the Data Sockets project which led to the establishment of the Centre of Advanced Systems Engineering. They had a key role in the development of the Western Sydney High Performance Computer Node project; involvement in Community Olympic Cultural Events and participation in a delegation to Xicheng District of Beijing City with which Penrith has a formal relationship, based on mutual cooperation for the purpose of economic and business development. These and other partnerships have all played an important role in the relationship and 'value added' for both organisations.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Cooperative Programs partnership, as compared with many others, is its sustainability. Cooperative Programs has developed and nurtured the partnership over time and has assumed the role of a catalyst in bringing the two institutions together. It takes

on the task of finding suitable academic supervisors and links them with appropriate staff at Council. They identify enthusiastic staff who are committed and likely to get on well together. This is crucial to the success of the program. The right mix results in projects achieving far more than the original brief and triggers new ideas and further developments – the ‘ripple effect’. It is this role of Cooperative Programs that has ensured a thriving, sustainable partnership between the University of Western Sydney and Penrith City Council that has strengthened over the past decade despite changing personnel, institutional restructures and shifting political priorities.

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The Challenge of University-Regional Partnership in a Period of Structural Adjustment: Lessons from Southern Adelaide's Response to an Automobile Plant Closure

Andrew Beer

Abstract

Contemporary regional policy and theory emphasises the significance of universities within regional economies as a source of skilled labour, innovation (Saxenian 1994) and technology transfer (Beer, Maude and Pritchard 2003). Over the last decade governments and higher education institutions have awarded greater attention to the links between universities and their regions but the relationship between these institutions and the regions remains relatively undeveloped. A survey of over 500 regional development organisations across Australia found that while three quarters of these agencies reported partnerships with universities this rate was significantly lower than comparison groups of organisations from England and the United States (Beer, Haughton and Maude 2003).

This paper examines some of the issues and challenges that arise out of partnerships between universities and regions. It draws upon the experience of Flinders University in working with a range of regional agents in responding to the closure of the Mitsubishi Motors Australia Limited plant at Lonsdale in Adelaide's southern suburbs. The paper suggests that there are a number of hurdles to the establishment of effective partnerships that include: the perception that universities behave in ways that are different to either public sector organisations or private sector companies; the absence of universities from the networks and communication protocols central to the work of economic development practitioners; the sporadic nature of university engagement with regional issues; and, the gap between university funding models and local economic aspirations.

Introduction

Over recent decades academics and policy makers alike have given greater attention to the role of universities in encouraging the development of regions and their economies (Garlick 1998). In many instances this development has focused on the capacity of universities to generate Intellectual Property (IP) that can be commercialised and contribute to the establishment of new enterprises and industries (Stephen *et al* 2004; Feller 2004). Silicon Valley in California is commonly held up as an example *par excellence* of the capacity of universities to serve as a source of regional innovation and technology-based growth (Saxenian 1994) but comparable processes are observable in other North American locations such as Tuscon, Arizona (Wright 2004) or the M4 Motorway in England (Cooke and Morgan 2000). Universities not only contribute to regional growth through their capacity to serve as a focus for new business formation, they also perform a valuable role in boosting the human capital within their region; they serve as a significant employer of skilled and unskilled staff; and, there are significant multiplier effects associated with their daily operations. Universities are therefore a potentially significant driver of regional economic growth but the relationship between these institutions and their regions is often clouded by processes and circumstances that result in outcomes not meeting expectations. These factors include the absence of a history of engagement with regional institutions; nationally-based funding models that privilege relationships with national and international organisations over regional bodies; a focus on 'pure science' or theoretical research instead of applied research; and, strained university budgets that significantly restrict the capacity to collaborate with public and private sector bodies.

This paper explores these issues through the examination of Flinders University's participation in regionally-based responses to the closure of the Lonsdale Plant of Mitsubishi Motors Australia Limited (MMAL) and the loss of a further 300 jobs from its Tonsley Park assembly plant. The paper reports on the outcomes of a survey of the attitudes of key decision makers who are members of the Southern Suburbs Industry Development Working Group (SSIDWG). The paper demonstrates that these decision makers have well developed views about the role universities should play in the development of their region and that the relationship between the university and regional actors is confounded by differences in focus, communication styles, the difficulties both parties experience in realising their expectations and the challenges of dealing with an emerging agenda within a fast-moving policy environment. The paper also shows that universities are somewhat marginal to the communication networks embedded within regional development practice in the southern part of metropolitan Adelaide. This peripheral position is a significant impediment to a more productive relationship between the university and its region.

The Relationships between Universities and Regions

Since the 1990s the relationship between universities and regions has experienced profound change. The 'Dawkins Reforms' massively expanded the university sector by increasing the number of universities and raising the number of undergraduates such that 35 per cent of school leavers now attend university, compared with 10 per cent a generation earlier. The increase in university participation and the number of universities was accompanied by a rise in the number of campuses as universities sought to secure market share amongst undergraduates by increasing their presence in distinctive geographic markets. In Australia this resulted in a significant increase in the number of non-metropolitan campuses (see, for example, the Dubbo campus of Charles Sturt University; the Hamilton campus of RMIT) as well as some expansion in metropolitan sites. More recently, there has been some contraction in university presence within regions, with Melbourne University, for example, foreshadowing the closure of some of the former agriculture colleges it incorporated into its operations in the 1990s. The growth in regional campuses has contributed to a growing interest in the role universities can play in advancing the well-being of their regions (Garlick 1998). At the same time there has been a greater awareness of the importance of universities as a driver of growth, both as a source of broad scale social and economic innovation through the education of the population, as well as the more immediate and tangible benefits associated with the commercial development of research outcomes. Much of the well known literature on this issue (see, for example, Saxenian 1994) highlights the positive aspects of university/regional engagement but the relationship between university academics and their communities is not always positive, especially in non-metropolitan regions (Millmow 2005). It is important to understand, therefore, how universities relate to regions (and vice versa) and what constitutes models of good practice in this field.

Universities, Regions and Economic Growth

Research suggests that universities have the potential to contribute to a regions' economic, social and cultural development through processes that extend beyond the multiplier effects from the university's day-to-day operations (Garlick 1998). The benefits for universities and regions alike can be substantial as the tertiary education sector represents a significant part of the national economy. Cabalu *et al* identified three major ways of measuring the economic impact of a university

- the income and employment generated in the nation through its teaching and research activities (including the generation of export income);
- the enhancement of the nation's human capital through its education of university graduates; and
- the creation of wealth through the spill over effects to government and business of its research and developments activities (Cabalu *et al* 2000 p. v).

Phillips Curren applied this approach to South Australia in 2001 and estimated that the university sector in that state contributed \$1,738 million to Gross

State Product in 1999. Universities can also significantly contribute to the community's social and cultural development.

Garlick (1998) argued that universities must take a more active role in the economies of their region if they are to achieve an economic benefit beyond the multiplier effects associated with direct employment. Lambert (2003, p.65) identified several reasons why universities should seek this engagement with regional economic development including:

- the need for improving a regions' competitive advantage by being more innovative;
- the decline in manufacturing and the rapid expansion of higher education have elevated the relative importance of universities within regions;
- universities form a critically important part of the science base;
- more often than not, research-active universities are to be found at the heart of a successful business cluster.

Partnerships between Universities and their Regions

Partnership is an important dimension of strategies designed to maximise the economic outcomes associated with universities. However, partnership development remains problematic because of the differing expectations, incentive structures and 'languages' of economic development practitioners and academics. Often genuine partnership is difficult to achieve, a fact recognised by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation which noted that

“Engagement – real engagement – in which institutions of higher education and communities form lasting relationships that influence, shape, and promote success in both spheres is rare. More often than not we see evidence of unilateral outreach from universities, rather than partnerships based on true mutual benefit, mutual respect and mutual accountability (W.K.Kellogg Foundation 2002)”.

Effective engagement of universities and their communities can be described in many ways. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2002) list five lessons for effective community programs

- community ownership;
- targeted foci;
- rigorous selection processes that include community readiness;
- achieving early results by harvesting low-hanging fruit to achieve early results that maintain motivation of participants; and;
- having patience with the way the communities work and honouring the pace of change.

Successful partnerships between universities and their region need to be built on a mutual understanding of expectations, roles and preferred outcomes. However mutual understandings take time to develop and require a strategic approach by all parties. Often the community will have higher expectations of the university than it can deliver. This unrealistic expectation of universities can lead to tensions in the partnership. Goddard (1998, p12) noted the need

for a community to develop a better understanding of its university and the university's need to understand regional dynamics in order for effective dialogue to take place.

Successful partnerships which are built on research can lead to distinctive partnerships in community service. These opportunities allow universities to contribute more broadly to national, regional, social and cultural agendas. McKinnon *et al* (2000) noted that 'until recently few universities had developed a formal strategy of community service as a means of enhancing their external impact'. Many universities now recognise an academic's service to the community as part of the formal promotion process.

An additional way of expanding this community service partnership is through student involvement. There is considerable scope for growing partnerships through student work placements and volunteering schemes where students work with schools, the disabled, the unemployed and the sick. The increased emphasis on workplace learning for students has often involved professional associations. This in turn has helped to enhance the partnership between universities and professional bodies, however these partnerships bring with them similar tensions to those identified between universities and businesses. It is important that universities cultivate these partnerships as a substantial percentage of university teaching is directed towards the professions, with many degrees requiring professional accreditation.

A university's engagement with its community is multifaceted and complex and the relationship is not always effective. A successful partnership will require a detailed understanding of the operations and expectations of each partner; a mechanism for meeting and working together; a commitment by the university to the region and the region to the university; a process for sharing outcomes and engaging mutual learning; and, a focus for the partnership – research, community development or environmental action – that meets the needs of both parties.

Context: Job Losses from Mitsubishi and Regional Responses

In April 2004 Prime Minister Howard – flanked by South Australian Premier Mike Rann and Mr Tom Phillips, CEO of MMAL – announced that the Lonsdale plant of Mitsubishi Motors Australia Limited (MMAL) would be closed with a loss of 700 jobs, with a further 300 voluntary redundancies to be pursued at MMAL's Tonsley Park assembly plant. The loss of just over 1,000 jobs in the southern part of metropolitan Adelaide was recognised as a major shock to the regional economy. The Federal Government responded by announcing a \$45 million assistance package for the region – called the Structural Adjustment Fund (SAF) – as well as enhanced employment assistance for retrenched workers. This assistance was to be delivered via the Jobs Network, Australia's network of Federally-funded labour market providers. In addition, the South Australian Government committed \$10 million of assistance to displaced workers, mainly in the form of enhanced access to services.

The announcement of job losses from MMAL was accompanied by the establishment of a new institutional structure to deal with the consequences of the plant closure and employment loss. A new body was established – the South Australian Government Advisory Group – to provide the government with industry-relevant advice under the chairmanship of a former President of General Motors Japan (see Appendix A). Four sub-committees were also established:

- Lonsdale Facility Assets to advise on the best possible use of the vacated Lonsdale Plant;
- Outplacement Opportunities to provide guidance on labour market programs and issues;
- The Southern Suburbs Industry Development Working Group (SSDIWG) to assist with the further development of the southern region economy, and,
- Tonsley Park Utilisation which was charged with identifying strategies to ensure the on-going financial viability of MMAL's remaining factory.

From its inception considerable importance was attached to the work of the SSDIWG. The closure of the Lonsdale Mitsubishi plant was seen as a significant loss for the regional economy, and one which compounded the adverse impacts of other processes. The southern region of Adelaide – defined as the jurisdictions of the City of Onkaparinga and the City of Marion (Figure 1) – was perceived to be economically vulnerable as a consequence of the MMAL job losses because:

- the labour force being shed was mature and tended to be concentrated in neighbourhoods close to the MMAL factories. There was therefore a real prospect that those who left Mitsubishi would not find paid employment and that the consequences of employment loss would be confined to a relatively small area;
- the region as a whole does not have a strongly developed manufacturing base, with the majority of new manufacturing enterprises established in northern Adelaide;
- businesses within the region tend to be small-scale and relatively mature (Kearins 2002);
- the Mobil refinery also at Lonsdale had closed two years previously with significant loss of employment; and,
- the wine industry is a substantial employer in the southern part of the City of Onkaparinga (McLaren Vale) and began to falter in 2004 and 2005 as the national supply of grapes for wine production exceeded demand.

SSDIWG commenced meeting fortnightly in May 2004 and began to address an ambitious program of work including:

- planning for a Southern Summit to raise the profile of the challenges confronting the Southern Region;
- preparation of a regional economic development strategy that embraced the two council areas – The Blueprint for the Future;
- research into the availability of land for further industrial development;

- contact with businesses and other organisations interested in investing in southern Adelaide or in applying for money from the Structural Adjustment Fund; and,
- planning for an Innovation Centre in the south.

In many ways SSIDWG is typical of the forms of regional governance that have sprung up across Australia (Martin and Eversole *forthcoming*) as central governments have struggled to deal with the challenges of a globalised economy and its unequal spatial impacts (Beer and Maude *forthcoming*). SSIDWG has attempted to operate both as a co-ordinating agency and as a regional *animater*, encouraging others to invest, looking to enhance information flows and reduce bottlenecks to development. Significantly, it does not directly control resources, nor does it have a mandate to take direct action towards furthering the growth of the region.

SSIDWG's membership has changed and grown over time such that by April 2005 there were 15 members compared with the ten or so who participated in the first meeting. Initial membership comprised almost entirely of state government officers and local government officials, as well as one union official and an academic. Its membership has now broadened to include at least two private sector representatives, members from other parts of the state bureaucracy and Australian Government officials. However, the membership of SSIDWG remains dominated numerically by senior state and local government officers. Flinders University had representation in the initial meeting of the Working Group, but that membership was meant to reflect technical knowledge on regional development processes, rather than serving as a delegate of the University. It was not until September 2004 that a member of Flinders University's senior management group joined SSIDWG.

The establishment and operation of SSIDWG raises important questions about the relationship between universities and their regions. Flinders is the only university in the southern part of Adelaide and it is the second largest employer in the region. Its participation in the Working Group should therefore serve as a model of regional engagement. However, the processes of engagement have not resulted in appreciable outcomes for either the university or the region, or improved communication flows between the University and other actors within the region. This research therefore set out to investigate the attitudes of the non-university members of SSIDWG to the university sector as a whole. Universities have changed substantially since 1990 and the research investigated whether attitudes established in the 1970s and 1980s – when most SSIDWG members completed undergraduate degrees – continued to influence the perceptions of SSIDWG members. It also examined their views on the role of universities within society and their possible contribution to the growth of individual regions. Finally, the research sought to measure the strength of the relationships between individual members of SSIDWG, in order to assess the pattern of communication and information flows.

Methodology and Outcomes of the Survey

Methods

Interviews were sought with all non-university members of SSIDWG with 12 of the 14 members agreeing to a confidential interview. The interviews took the form of a semi-structured questionnaire that contained both closed and open questions and the survey was applied by research assistants who had not previously participated in SSIDWG activities. The confidentiality of the respondents was therefore maintained. The data collected from the closed questions were entered into SPSS while the responses to the open-ended questions were kept in their textual form. All the questions included in the survey related to universities as a whole, that is the entire tertiary sector. However, many of the respondents provided answers that referred to Flinders University alone, either because it is the sole university within the region or because the respondents appreciated that the research was being undertaken by that institution.

The Nature of the Respondents

The gender division of 12 respondents to our survey was 11 men and one woman. Four were employed in local government, five were state government officials, two were from the private sector and one was from the Trade Union movement. All respondents occupied senior – and influential – positions including two Chief Executive Officers, as well as General Managers, Directors and Policy Officers. Of the 12 respondents, eight indicated that their responsibilities included policy formation, six were involved in organisation leadership; nine indicated that they had responsibility for economic development functions and seven had some responsibility for networking.

Consistent with their senior positions, only three respondents had worked in their current field for five years or less, while five had worked in their industry for over 15 years. All but one respondent had attended university, and as a group the respondents had diverse academic backgrounds. While the largest number of respondents held the types of degrees one would anticipate within economic policy environment – with two respondents holding a degree in Economics, two with Commerce degrees, and one Law degree – others held MBAs, there were Bachelor of Arts degrees and one PhD in the management sciences. Importantly, many SSIDWG members had engaged in post graduate study and in many instances this study took place relatively recently. Their experience of universities, therefore, is likely to have been more contemporary than the authors anticipated in establishing the research design.⁸

Many of the respondents had experience of universities that extended beyond their membership of SSIDWG. As noted previously, 11 SSIDWG members had studied at university, of these four had been a member of a university committee or Council, and three had worked at a university at some stage.

⁸ It could be argued that study towards an MBA within a commerce or business school is not necessarily indicative of the broader university experience. However, this point may well be lost on – and irrelevant to – the general public.

Fully two thirds of SSIDWG members had been a partner in a research project with a university and seven reported other forms of intense interaction with a university. SSIDWG members, therefore, are senior decision makers who could be expected to have good knowledge of the operations of universities.

The survey asked SSIDWG members about their views of universities and whether they believed that universities had changed since they completed their degree. Eight of the twelve respondents agreed or agreed strongly that universities had changed since they completed their degree (Figure 2) which suggests a growing appreciation of the shifting realities and expectations confronting the higher education sector. Moreover, most respondents clearly based their perception of change within universities on recent experience, with nine of the twelve indicating that they had had contact with universities over recent years (Figure 3). However, eight of the respondents agreed, agreed strongly or agreed slightly that they found universities difficult organisations to understand and this suggests that university processes and dynamics remain opaque to informed external observers (Figure 4). Seven SSIDWG members agreed strongly or slightly that universities are out of touch with modern realities – although five disagreed with that sentiment to a greater or lesser degree (Figure 5).

Figure 2. Universities Have Changed Since I Completed My Degree

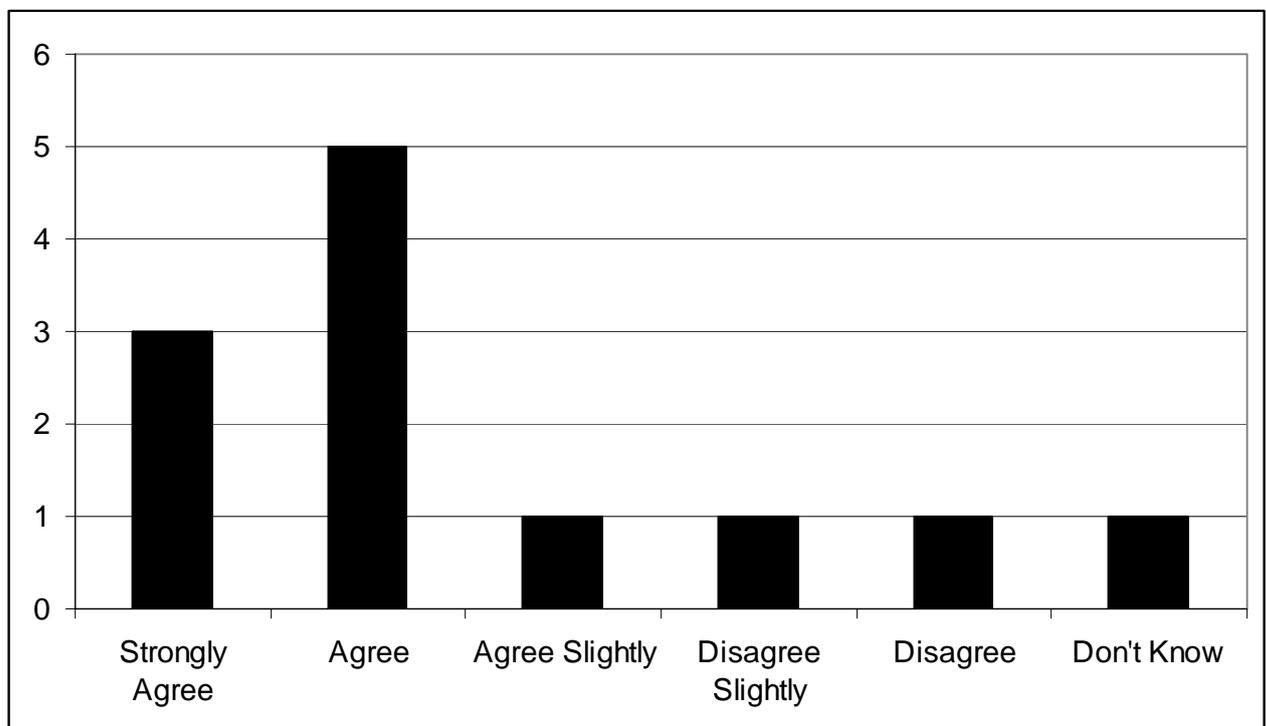


Figure 3. Over Recent Years I have Had Little to Do With Universities

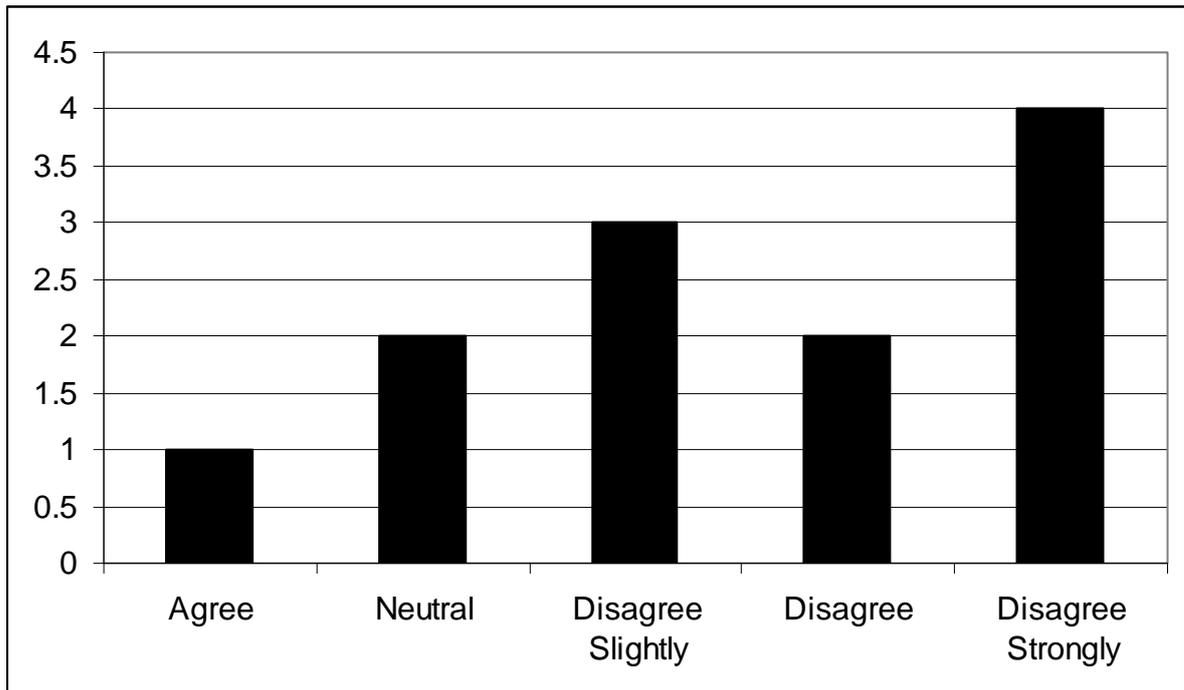


Figure 4. I Find Universities Difficult to Understand

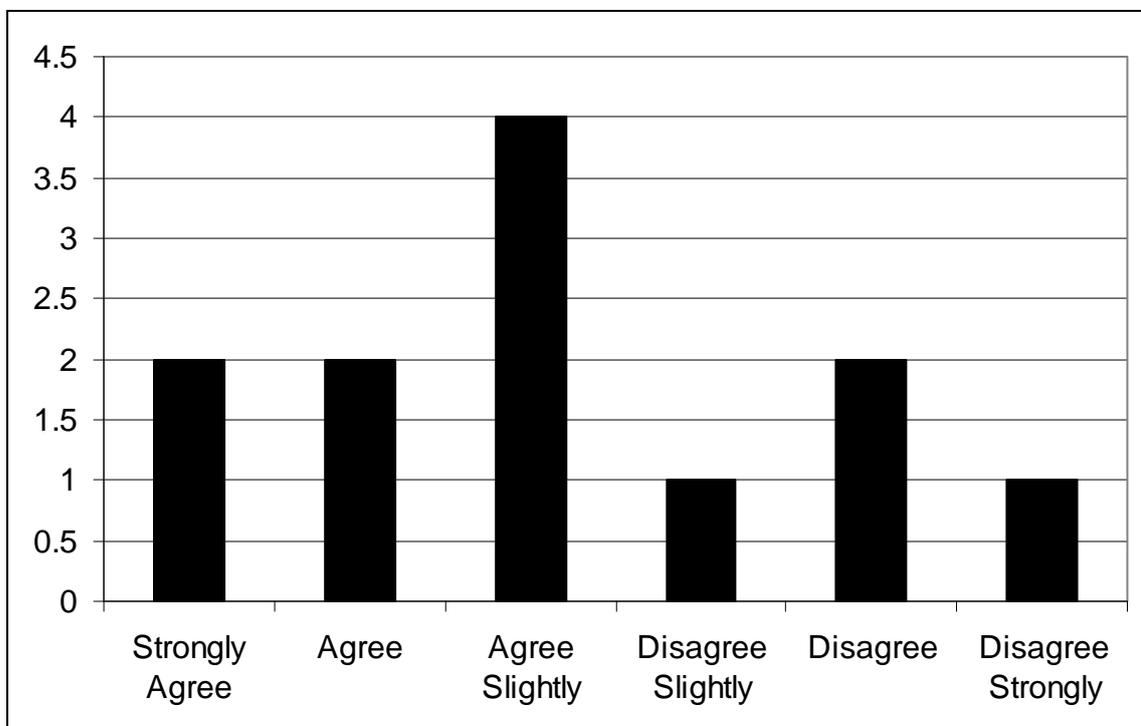
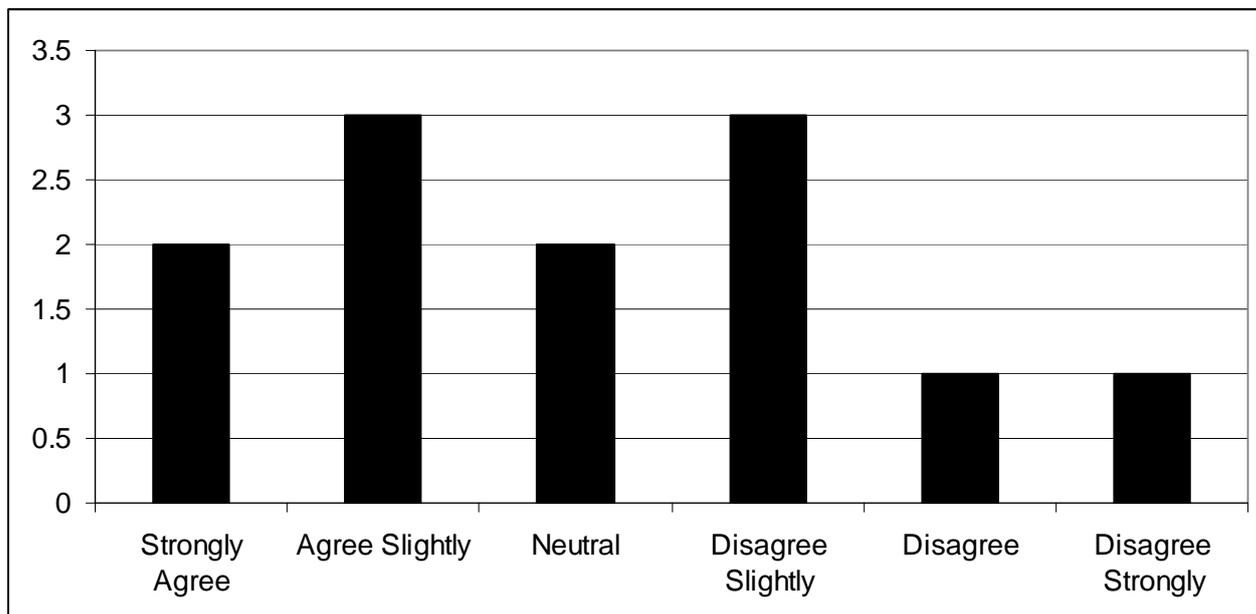


Figure 5. Universities Often Appear to be Out of Touch with Modern Realities



SSIDWG members were asked to compare the behaviour of universities with other public and private sector bodies (Figure 6 and Figure 7). Interestingly, while there was no clear consensus as to whether universities behave like public sector agencies, there was a clearly formed view that they do not behave as if they were private companies. This result needs to be examined with reference to the substantial export revenues generated by universities through the sale of education services and research to international customers. This outcome may reflect a perception of universities that is not consistent with their present circumstances, or it could indicate a direction for further reform within the sector.

Figure 6. Universities Behave Like Any other Public Sector Organisation

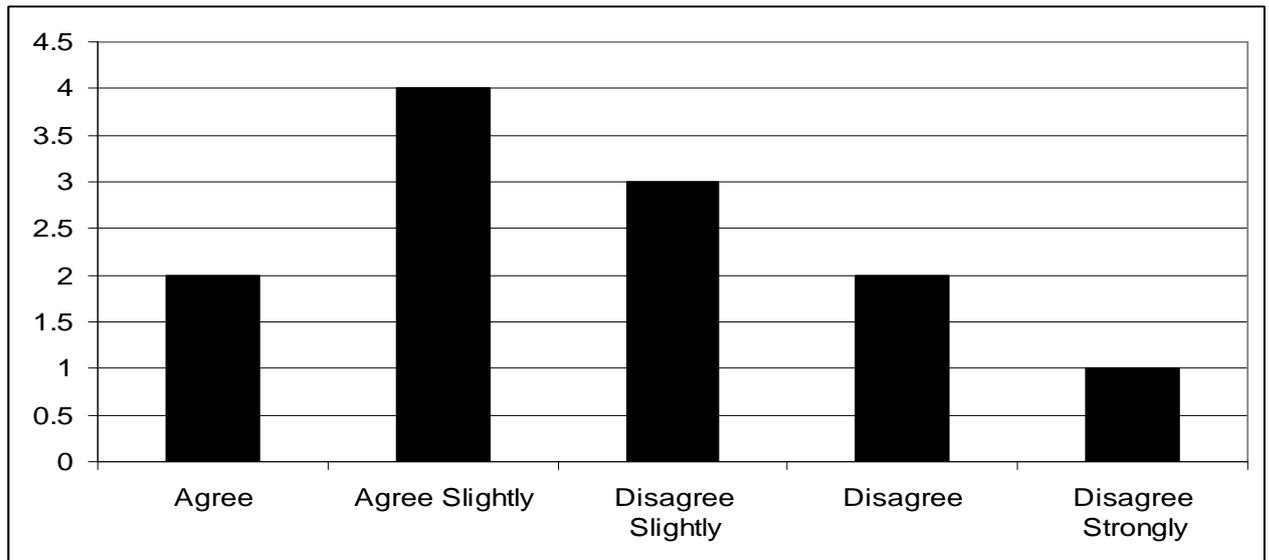
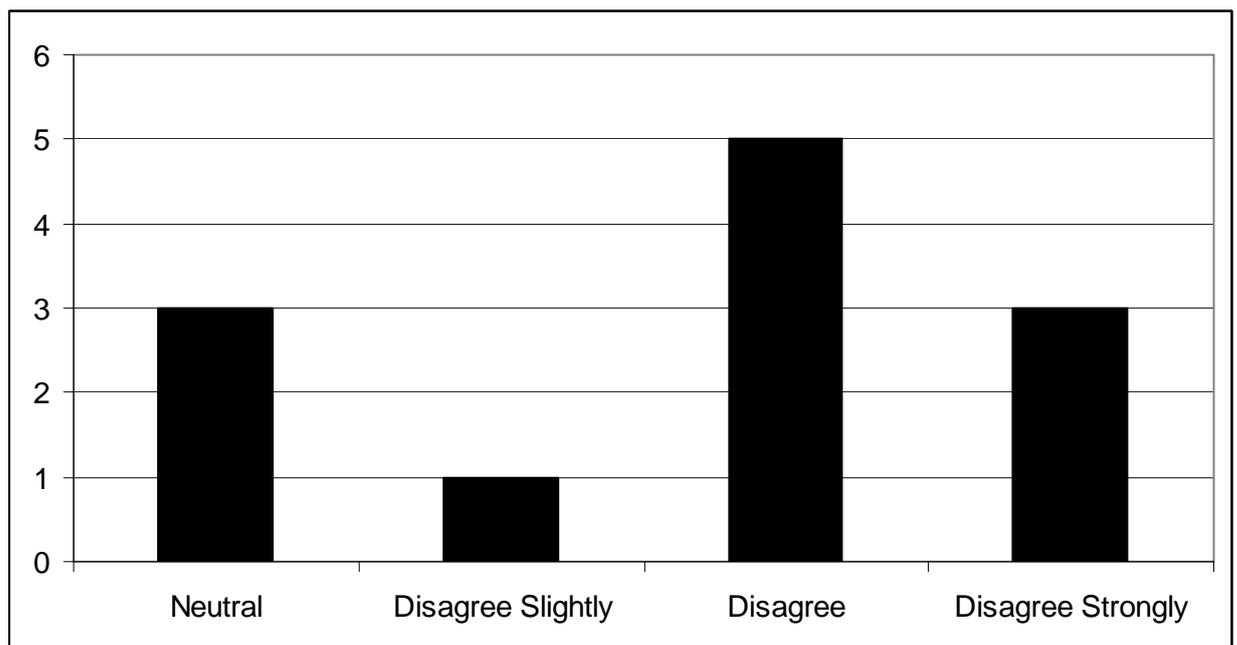


Figure 7. Universities Behave Like Any Other Private Sector Organisation



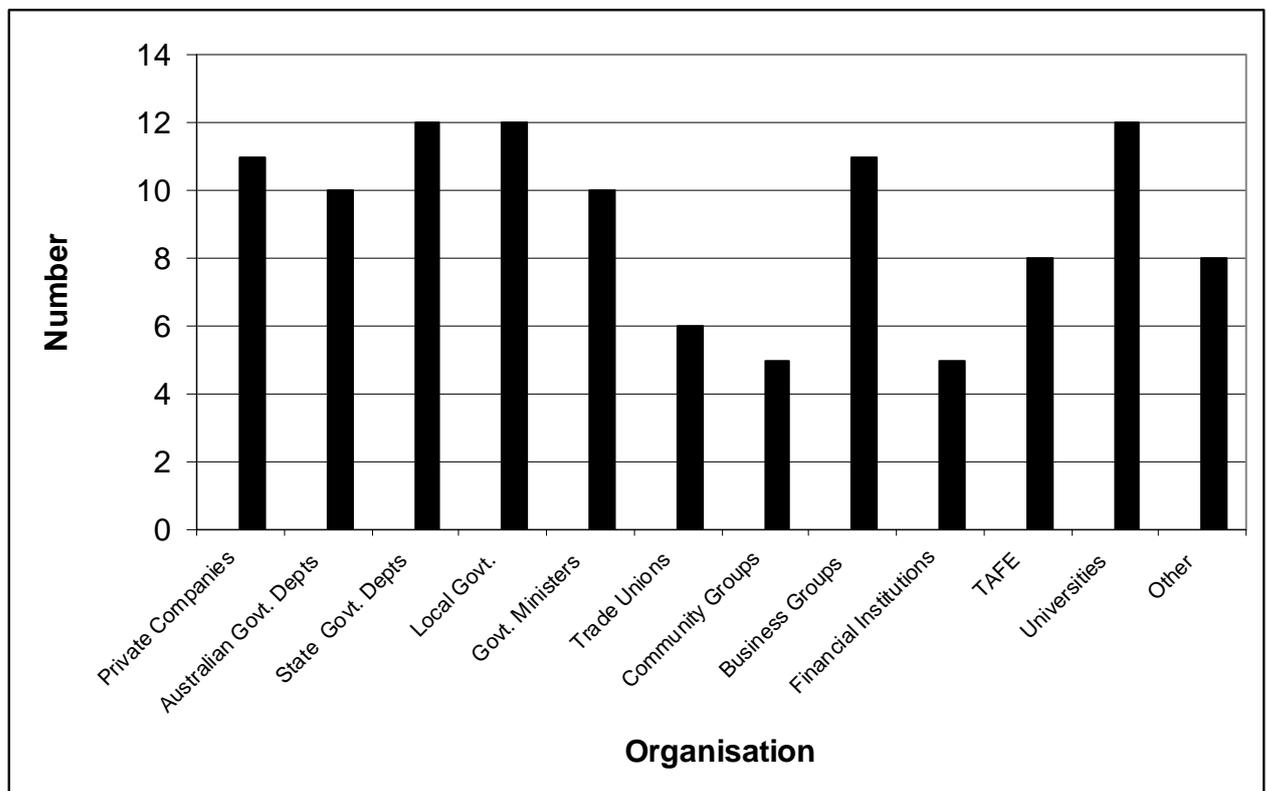
The picture that emerges from the analysis of data is complex. Amongst the SSIDWG members there is a diversity of opinion and experience with respect to universities. There is a general appreciation of change within the university sector and some, though not all, respondents feel that universities remain difficult institutions to understand. For some, this reflects organisations out of touch with modern reality. There is a clearly formed view that universities do not behave as if they were for-profit companies, but a significant minority of SSIDWG members felt that they did not behave as if they were public sector agencies. The capacity of universities to operate in ways that are not

consistent with either public sector or private sector organisations may be an impediment to the development of effective partnerships between universities and other regionally-based actors.

Functional Relationships with Universities

All respondents indicated that universities were a key organisation for their work. Participants in the survey were asked if different types of organisation were important in their professional duties and all respondents indicated that universities were a key organisation for their work (Figure 8). Private companies and local government departments were the only other two types of institution to be adjudged important by all respondents, with community groups and trade unions relevant to the work of only half the respondents. Interestingly, when asked to rank the eight most important entities for their work, universities featured in most responses, but were not the most important organisations. Across the respondents State Government organisations constituted the most important working relationships, followed by local governments, private businesses, business associations and the education sector – including universities. The Australian Government was important for some – but not all – respondents. Working relationships with labour organisations were only important for the Trade Union official who participated in the survey and some of the State Government officials. For the majority of respondents the most important relationships were with State Government Departments, local governments and the private sector. These priorities need to be considered when we later examine communication within SSIDWG.

Figure 8. Number of Respondents Reporting Each Type of Organisation is Central to their Work



All 12 respondents to the survey indicated that their organisation had previously had dealings with universities. The nature of those relationships varied significantly, reflecting both the broad roles performed by universities within society and the range of bodies represented within the survey. For some respondents, universities had been a source of technical advice for their industry sector or a provider of training. Others had been research partners or had accommodated students on industry placement. Some local government respondents reported that universities had participated in their community education initiatives or had been involved in specific projects – such as the establishment of a business incubator.

Ten of the 12 respondents indicated that universities had been important for their work as individuals. The responses varied considerably across the participants in the survey with some indicating that universities had contributed to the specific programs of their employer – for example, The City of Marion’s Community Learning Charter – through to more broad ranging relationships that emphasised the capacity of universities to offer critical thought and input in the development of strategic plans. Two SSIDWG members believed universities had not been important for their work, with one arguing that universities have not been relevant to small or medium sized businesses (the sector within which the respondent works) and that they have been too traditional in their focus. The second respondent believed they were too slow in responding to the needs of industry and therefore lacked relevance. Ten respondents believed that universities will become more important to their work in the future and in large measure this reflected an appreciation of the importance of education and technology transfer for building prosperous regional economies. As one respondent said ‘universities help underpin today’s commercial world’ (State Government official). However, this positive assessment of the potential role of universities was qualified by a belief that universities need to become more responsive institutions in order to meet the needs of their region:

“they have the opportunity to be more important in the future but whether they do is another matter. The ingredients for a successful region involve many things. Integral to this is a strong regional university or technical learning centre which seeks out how it can add value to the region. Universities should actively consult and seek out where they can add value to the region. Value is having graduates that match the needs of the region and stay in the region, starting businesses etc. Universities may have a business plan that may not mirror the needs and wants of the region which means they sit outside the region in a sense. (State Government official)”

A private sector member of SSIDWG responded to the question whether universities will become more important to his work in the future by saying

“it depends on whether universities become more focused on meeting the needs of customers and trying to meet the challenge and change accordingly. If they don’t the answer is NO.”

The education role of universities was emphasised by one of the local government respondents. He felt that

“although Flinders marketing of its services is weak, it is still viewed as a major asset for the region, and as a resource which will enable a larger number of residents to increase their skills and knowledge. This increase in learning is seen as a foundation on which to build a more sustainable community – a community which understands and supports economic and environmentally sustainable initiatives.”

Fully three quarters of respondents to the survey believed that there had already been change over time in their dealings with universities. Some responses reflected a broader sea-change in the relationship, while others focused upon changes brought about by engagement via SSIDWG. One of the local government respondents took the longer term view, noting that

“this change is a reflection of changes in council. 1999 saw the Local Government Act changed which broadened expectations and role of councils. They are expected to take a longer term view of residents’ desires and their own (council’s) viability – and universities will therefore play a broader role in achieving this.”

A second respondent from the State Government provided a similar response, noting how changing policy frameworks for the development of new technology and new technology enterprises placed greater emphasis on universities. The changing framework of governance and government policy has therefore had a significant structural impact on how government decision makers view universities. At a more immediate level, participation on SSIDWG itself was seen as an avenue or catalyst for change. For example, one of the State Government respondents considered participation in SSIDWG had a positive impact on his dealings with the Flinders University.

“dealings have become more personal with Flinders – through SSIDWG and the development of joint initiatives and through gaining a better understanding of the goals, objectives and culture of the University. This makes it easier to match up or marry some of those goals with those of the region.”

Others, however, felt that the university’s involvement with SSIDWG and its associated activities had not been sustained. As one local government officer commented

“withdrawal on Flinders part. Gone into projects and haven’t kept debate going. Flinders not a major driver. There was a flurry at the beginning.”

And this view was echoed by a State Government official who felt that

“contact fluctuates. Other matters – short term priorities – are distractions.”

In summary, respondents to the survey felt that universities are important for their work and for the development of their region. Most respondents felt that universities will become more important within their profession into the future and that there was already some evidence for change. In part, broader social and governmental changes have facilitated this shift in attitude. However, the relationship with universities – and Flinders in particular – was seen to include some problematic elements. It was felt that universities need to become more customer-focussed (ie industry focused) in order to better meet the needs of their region, and that a sustained debate – and action – around the role of universities in the region is necessary.

The Role of Universities within Society and their Regions

The survey asked SSIDWG members to describe the role of universities and the responses indicated the multifaceted nature of these institutions. As would be expected, many of the responses reflected the particular perspectives of State and local government officials with responsibilities in economic development. For example, one State Government manager believed that universities are:

“a facility which enables people to achieve their immediate and lifelong learning experiences. They can also present business with opportunities that can provide enormous potential to a developing region/developing community – and to a degree shape the social fabric of the region.”

One of the other State Government respondents focused on the changing role of universities

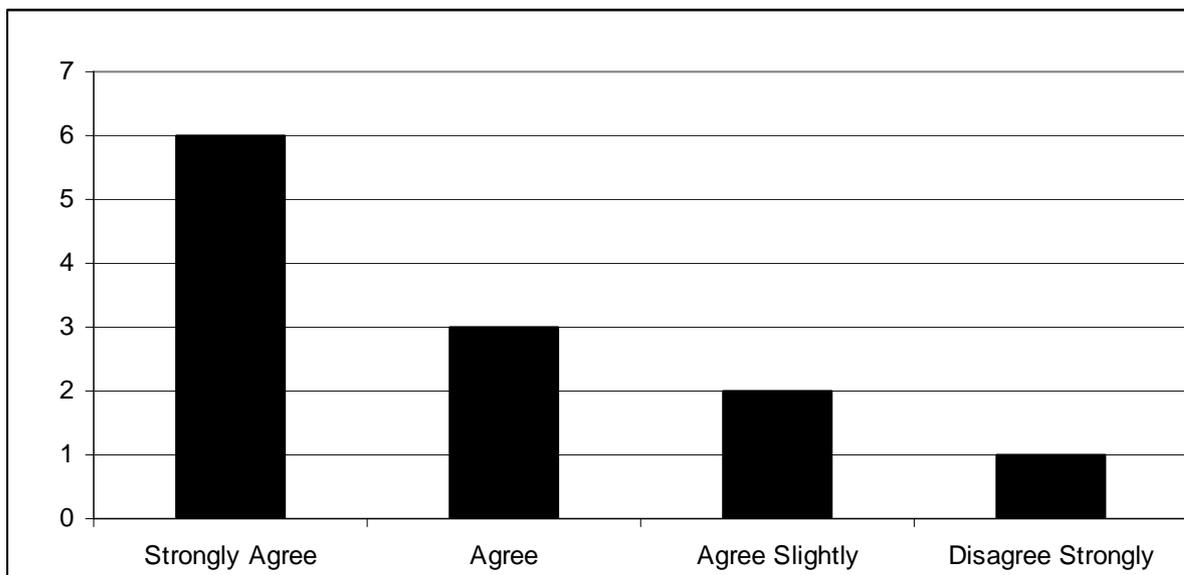
“traditionally 1) student turnstiles; 2) research to keep up and get more students. Now they are more involved, they supply a changing mix of students appropriate for the business community. They are a resource for the business community, not just students but now there is more partnering.”

Most respondents recognised that universities have an important role in raising skill levels amongst the community and that their role as research organisations is also important. Technology diffusion was an important theme in many responses with some arguing that ‘universities have immense technical resources’ and that the commercialisation of Intellectual Property was an important potential contribution universities could pass on to their regions. While recognizing the potential of universities, a number of SSIDWG members focused on the specific problems of transferring that knowledge into the broader community. For example, one local government officer saw universities

“as remote, although valid. Available only for a certain group of people. Universities put too much emphasis on research and not enough on teaching. Measured by research grants, therefore input oriented, yet not enough known about this research and its relevance to the community.”

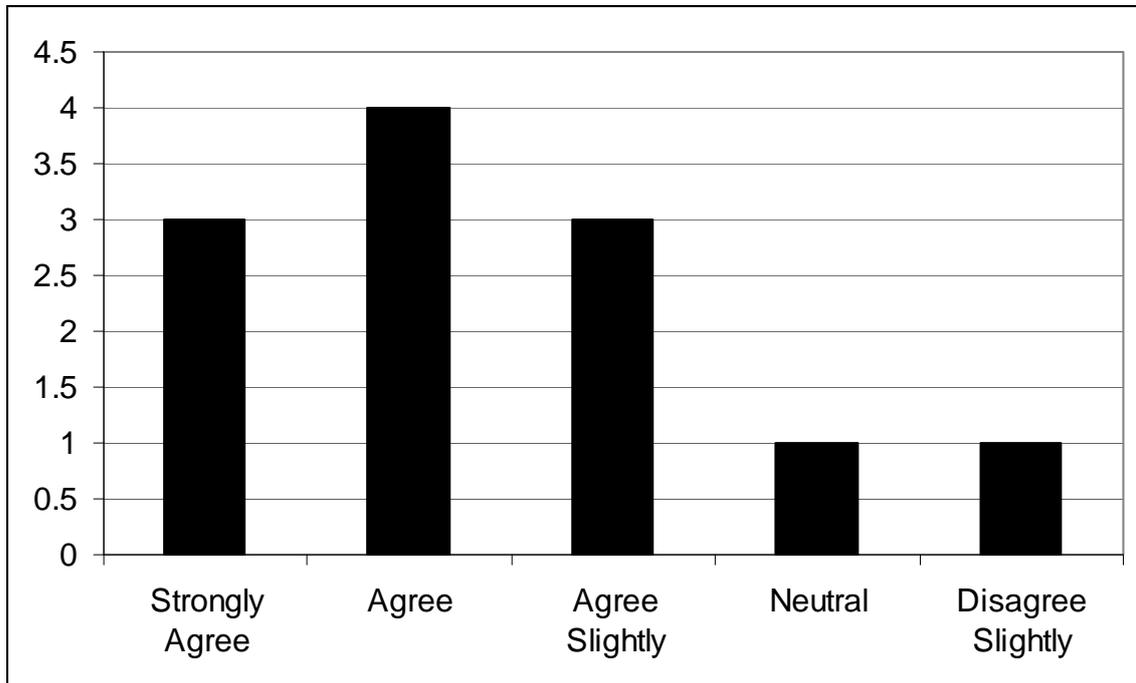
The SSIDWG members were asked to evaluate the potential contribution of universities to their region. As would be expected from the discussion above, the majority of respondents felt that universities made a substantial contribution to the economies of their regions through the provision of education (Figure 9). Surprisingly, however, one respondent disagreed strongly with this response, a view that would appear to fly in the face of contemporary labour market and education paradigms.

Figure 9. Universities are Valuable to their Region for their Contribution to Education



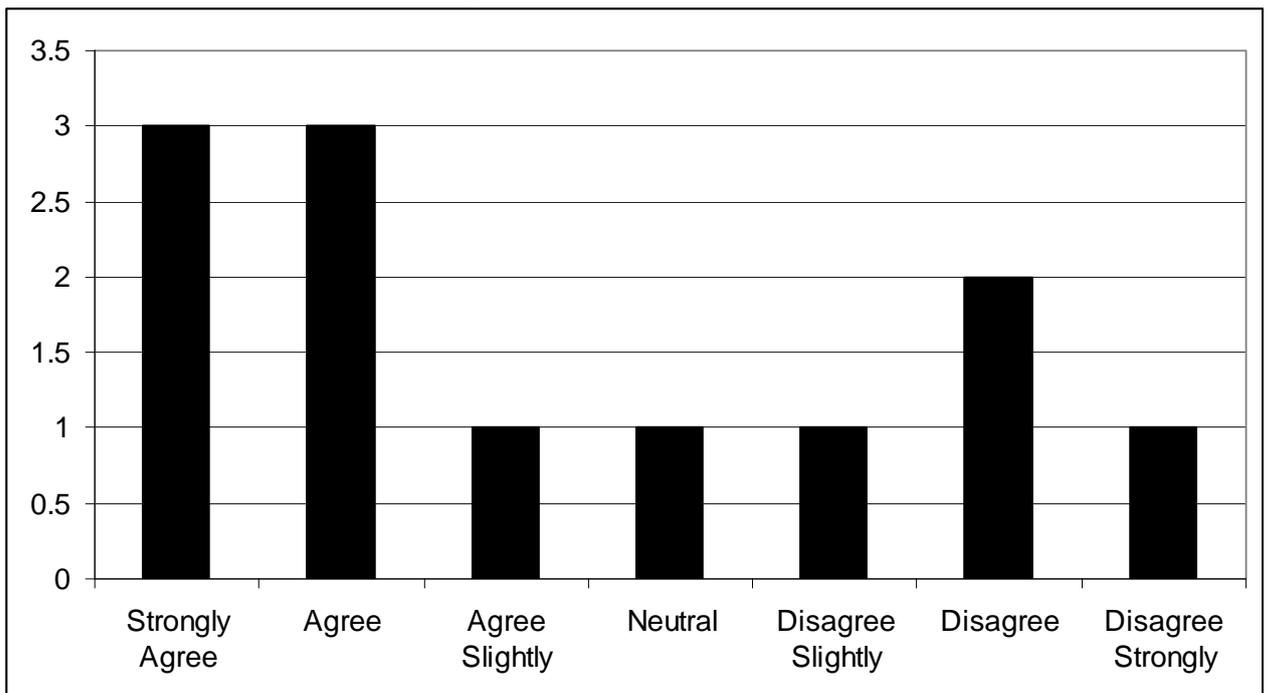
The majority of respondents to the survey also agreed that universities are important to their region in their role as an employer, though with one dissenter (Figure 10). Interestingly, more agreed with this view than agreed strongly and it may be that this group of policy makers does not award appropriate priority to the employment impacts of universities, both in terms of direct employment and multiplier effects

Figure 10. Universities are Valuable to their Region in their Role as an Employer



There was reasonably strong agreement that universities can be important for their region through the commercialisation of the Intellectual Property that they produce (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Universities are Valuable to their Region for their Capacity to Generate New Technologies that can be Commercialised.



The commercialisation of emerging technologies was a more important theme when respondents were asked directly whether universities were important for their region, and if so, in what ways. As expressed by one State Government officer the important issue was the transition from research to commercialisation. Expertise, technology base, management and engineering needs to be accessible to industry.

One local government respondent saw the universities as an important potential partner within the region. He felt that universities could contribute to growth by creating/enhancing meaningful partnerships around agreed objectives.

and

- 1) commercialisation of research could be improved. Suspect a lot of potential commercial opportunities being missed/not effectively evaluated.
- 2) building stronger links into the local community in terms of partnering with other education providers so as to inculcate a sense of education being more socially acceptable.

A State Government officer felt that

“the single most significant contribution to economic growth in SA is better leverage of our research assets through enhanced linkages with the government and private sector.”

Universities, therefore, were seen as critical sources of economic opportunities for their region, and potential partners in further development. Respondents to the survey, however, recognised that establishing these partnerships may be difficult because the measures of university achievement and economic sustainability – undergraduate enrolments, overseas students, and research performance – are not necessarily focused on regional concerns or needs. One of the State Government respondents enunciated this concern clearly

“universities are critical as they can offer a sense of leadership, especially when this is lacking in a region. However, universities can be frustrating due to the fact that their core objectives are not supportive of the region.”

Future engagement with universities, and Flinders in particular, would be improved if they were less insular, less low risk and less introverted. Strong leadership is required and a willingness to take up opportunities presented to them. At present I feel there is no commitment to regional development nor any passion for engaging with communities at all levels.

The culture of universities is one of teaching curriculum materials that do not encourage engagement with regions or meeting regional needs, business or otherwise.

However, the same respondent had some sense of the difficulties that confront universities in initiating regional engagement, and this is reflected in his comment that

“universities need to work in with community strategic plans – if councils had one.”

Overall, the SSIDWG members – as professionals concerned with economic development – highlighted the economic potential of universities. They believed that universities play an important role in raising education levels and in generating a culture change that contributes to a greater acceptability of education. They also consider universities are potentially very important sources of new technologies and partners. Universities, however, are seen to be distant from their region in that their priorities do not match the priorities of the region.

Communication Networks

How frequently we communicate, and the ways in which we communicate, are clearly important for the strengths of our relationships in partnership building for economic development. Respondents to the survey were asked to list the SSIDWG members they have professional dealings with outside SSIDWG and score that relationship on a scale of one to five.

Ten respondents provided data for this question and the results are shown in Table 1 below. Critically, academics did not rate highly in the network of communication flows and working relationships. Two local governments and one State Government official dominated the *ex officio* interactions within the group, whereas the university participants appear to lie outside the on-going business of the group. This may be an inevitable – and indeed desirable outcome – from the perspective of the academics given the strong focus on quantifiable outcomes within the university environment. However, it does inevitably raise questions about the capacity of university staff to participate in the debates and processes associated with regional development. Informal group interactions reinforce group cohesiveness and shared goals. The absence of university staff from these less structured dealings effectively casts them as an outsider within the ‘business’ of regional development. Ironically, of course, the university is one of the key stakeholders in the region and ultimately its interests are best served through a business community and general population actively engaged with tertiary education and the services it provides.

Table 1. Rating of Key Relationships

Person	Cumulative Score
Local Government 1	14
State Government 1	27
Academic 1	10
Private Sector 1	8
Local Government 2	38
Local Government 3	27
Private Sector 2	4
State Government 2	7
State Government 3	9
State Government 4	6
Local Government 4	6
Academic 2	6
Trade Union	3

Conclusion

In Australia there is a very limited evidence base around universities and their ability to form productive regional partnerships. Most of the literature is comprised of normative descriptions of what should be done, or institutional hagiographies of the 'success' of one initiative or another. One of the fundamental, structural challenges in developing regional partnerships in Australia is the absence of a dedicated funding stream attached to regional engagement. The UK Government provides separate and substantial funding for regional partnerships – including the delivery of business assistance – while the Land Grants universities of the United States were established with a charter to serve the needs of their local community. These processes have not been evident in Australia. Our review of the literature on regional partnerships has emphasised the potential – and real – impact of universities on regional and national economies, as well as the mutually beneficial factors needed to establish a long term relationship.

Our research has shown that there are significant hurdles to overcome in engaging with a range of partners in the region in response to the loss of employment. Regional partners have high expectations of universities. They believe that they can generate technologies that can be commercialised, that they can serve as a regional leader, that they can contribute to culture change within the region as a whole; that they can respond to the needs of individual businesses and groups of businesses; and that they can contribute to the education of the population. In addition, there is an expectation that universities will behave like public sector bodies – rather than the complex hybrid organisations that they have become as a consequence of reform in the sector. The research has demonstrated that external observers find universities to be opaque organisations with structures and management processes that are difficult to comprehend. On the other hand, universities

could make the same critique of those who lead the regions within which they sit. Universities may fail to engage with their regions, but at the same time we could argue that regions fail to embrace their universities. This is an unfortunate failure on the part of both parties as it is the community within the region and the nation as a whole that carries the cost of this less successful relationship. This cost finds expression in the form of a less educated workforce, missed opportunities for commercial development and a culture of dis-engagement by both parties.

This research has contributed to the evidence base around university-based regional partnerships and shown that universities may need to change if they are to establish more productive relationships with agencies that address economic development. Universities, however, must confront the question of who genuinely represents the region as other organisations in the field of health, community development, sporting associations or environmental groups could make equally valid claims on university engagement. These are complex questions and long term solutions are needed. For Flinders University identifying the challenges in its dealings with others will need to be a first step in establishing a better set of relationships.

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Evaluating a Model for Engaging Multicultural Communities in Dialogue about Community Improvement

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Keywords: Engaging Multicultural Communities, Community Well being, Community Wellness.

Abstract

In 2001, researchers from the Wellness Promotion Unit at Victoria University in partnership with the community welfare organization Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service received an Australian Research Council grant to explore community wellness in a disadvantaged multicultural suburb in the Western region of Melbourne (St Albans). As part of this broader project, the present author conducted qualitative research with culturally diverse community members. The research included interviews and focus groups with Maltese, Vietnamese, Italian and Anglo Australians and utilised a holistic model of well being designed to explore the personal, relational and collective aspects of well being/wellness. The purpose of the current paper is to present some of the main findings of the research and to evaluate the utility of the model for engaging multicultural communities in dialogue about community improvement. In summary, the research: 1.) Produced valuable information about the community's perceptions of personal, relational and collective well-being; 2.) Highlighted some of the positive strengths of the community; 3.) Helped us to identify community needs and barriers to wellness and 4.) Pointed to ways to improve well being in the community. The current paper focuses mainly on the first and fourth outcomes. The paper also presents quantitative data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics relating to the region as a contrast to the qualitative information gathered from the community members. The paper will be a resource to anyone wanting to embark on research and community development work in culturally diverse communities.

Introduction

University Community Engagement

The importance of community involvement, participation or engagement is becoming widely recognised in the public and university sectors. Engaging community members in the decisions that affect their lives, can contribute to a more relevant and responsive service or program, and may be seen as a democratic and human right.

The Democracy Collaborative within the University of Maryland (USA) sees university-community involvement as central to questions about democracy and community building and universities as strategic agents to advance global democracy. Affiliates of numerous “citizen engagement organizations” and universities have joined this Collaborative, including the Australia National University and University of Queensland from Australia. Another Australian university association known as the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA) is committed to university-community engagement in order to promote the social, environmental and economic and cultural development of communities. While AUCEA have recognised the difficulties in defining community engagement some of the definitions cited on the AUCEA website were:

- *“The engaged campus is involved in community relationships, community development, community empowerment, community discourse, and educational change”* (Delaforce, 2005).
- *“The engaged university ... is considerate and responsive to community identified needs and works in active partnership with its communities in order to help achieve those needs”* (Temple, 2005).
- *Another aspect of community engagement is that of “mutually beneficial exchange”... “These interactions enrich and expand the learning and discovery functions of the academic institution while also enhancing community capacity”* (Holland, 2005).

The term community engagement overlaps with many similar concepts. Terms such as community/public participation, involvement, consultation, collaboration and partnerships may have subtle differences in meaning but all imply an inclusive attitude towards working with community stakeholders. According to Gahin and Paterson (2001) an emphasis on community participation emerged during the late 1980s and was related to the Healthy Community and Sustainable Community movements and a host of quality-of-life initiatives, which also shared an interest in developing and using community indicators to collect data on which to base discussion and decisions. Social and health indicator efforts can be traced back even further to the social reform movements of the 1800s in Belgium, France, England, and the United

States with more recent efforts aimed at community well-being (Gahin and Paterson, 2001). Community engagement is also central to community building and community governance efforts.

Viewed within the context of these community movements, University Community Engagement may be seen as an attempt by universities to apply their knowledge and skills to real world concerns and issues. University academics are also suitably positioned to take advantage of research funding and to disseminate research findings for the betterment of society. While the desire to do the best for community may underlie community engagement many definitions and models of engagement are possible. Models and goals can vary, with community engagement serving as the means towards some ideal or objective. The community engagement strategy will undoubtedly be different depending on whether it was designed by an engineer, nurse or community development worker, for example. The model discussed in the remainder of this paper has its roots in the discipline of community psychology but may inform and guide the work of community development workers, social workers and other social scientists interested in improving community well being.

Engaging for the Purpose of Community Wellness/ Well Being

In 2001, researchers (Professor Isaac Prilleltensky and Ms Heather Gridley) from the Wellness Promotion Unit at Victoria University in partnership with the community welfare organization Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service received an Australian Research Council grant to explore community wellness in the disadvantaged multicultural suburb of St Albans. St Albans lies within the Local Government Area of Brimbank in the Western region of Melbourne and is the locality of both institutional partners.

Three students with community interests were invited to undertake various parts of the project. Shown in the top left and right squares above the horizontal line in Figure 1, a first stage of research began in late 2001 and consisted of two qualitative research studies involving diverse community members (Totikidis, 2003) and health and community service professionals (Robertson, 2003) from the St Albans region (see also Totikidis & Robertson, 2005).

The first stage involved the development and use of a model for engaging multicultural communities in dialogue about community improvement known as the Community Wellness Cycle of Praxis (Totikidis & Prilleltensky; in press). This model also served as a basis for the second stage which began in 2002 and involved longer term collaboration with youth under the name of Social Action with Youth (Morsillo, 2002). The present paper discusses only the research with community members.

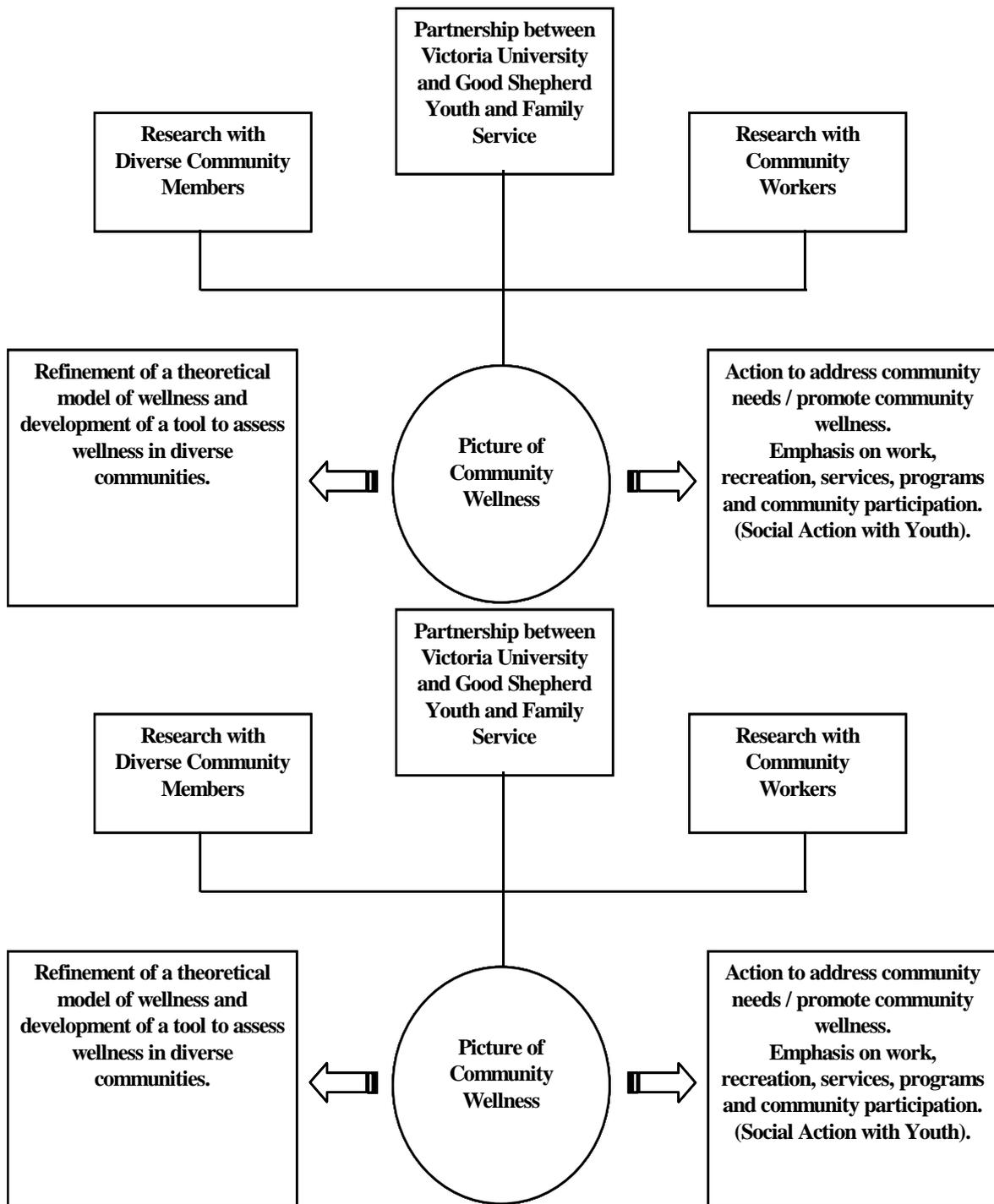


Figure 1. Map of the Community Wellness Project

The major aim of this paper is to discuss the way in which the model was utilised in qualitative research with culturally and linguistically diverse community members in the multicultural suburb of St Albans. Another aim is to evaluate the suitability and limitations of the model in light of a community profile and indicators relating to the broader Brimbank region and the results of the project. The profile and indicators are presented next to provide a background to the research and are followed by details of the research methods used in the study, the findings and the conclusion and evaluation.

Brimbank Community Profile

A brief profile of the Brimbank region consisting of information on country of birth, languages spoken, education and employment is presented below. The data were drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2001 Census of Population and Housing 'Basic Community Profile' (BCP) Series (2002).

Country of Birth

Basic calculations of the census statistics showed that 82,831 (50.84%) of the people in Brimbank were born in Australia while 52,902 (32.47%) were born overseas in a 'Non-English Speaking' (NES) country. The Indigenous population for Brimbank was recorded as 490 persons, which constitutes .29% of the Brimbank population and 1.95% of the total Indigenous population in Victoria. The top ten NES countries of birth are shown in Figure 2 with the greatest number of people from Viet Nam, Malta, Italy, Macedonia and Philippines.

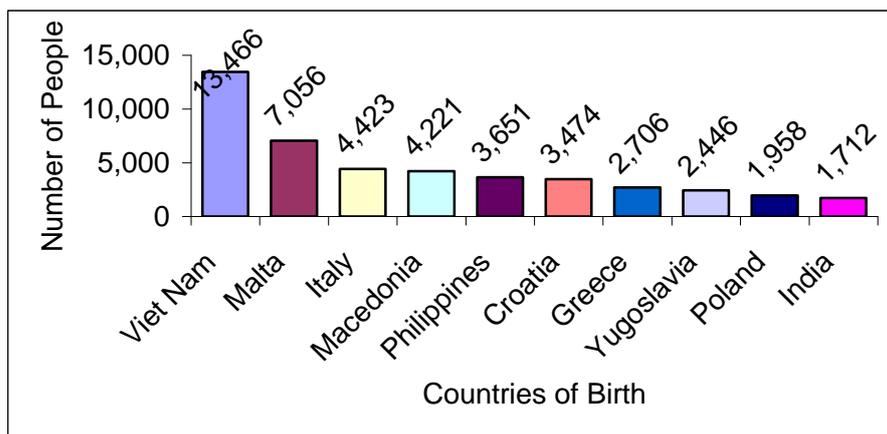


Figure 2. Top Ten Countries of Birth in Brimbank languages Spoken.

Language Spoken

The BCP for Brimbank showed that 67,161 (41.22%) of the population speaks English only while 80,239 (49.25%) speaks a 'Language Other Than English' (LOTE) at home. As shown in Figure 3, the most widely spoken LOTE in Brimbank included Vietnamese, Maltese, Italian, Greek and Macedonian.

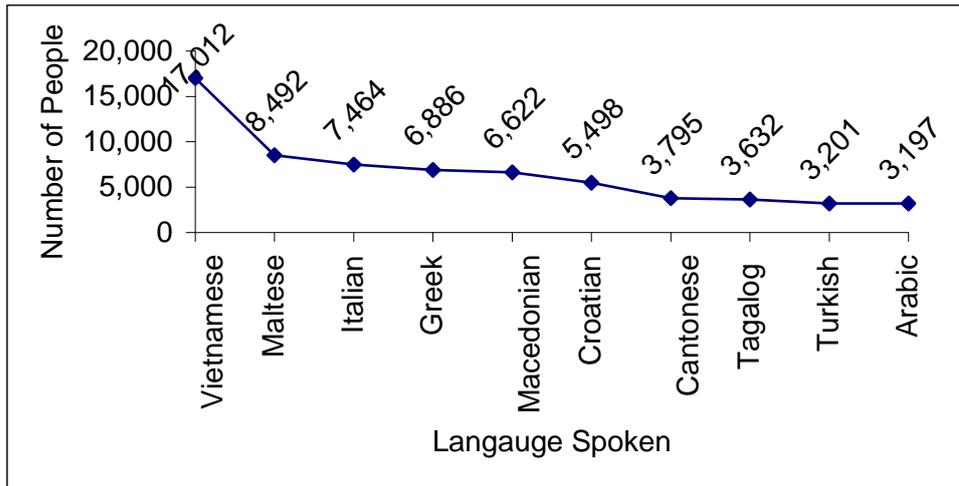
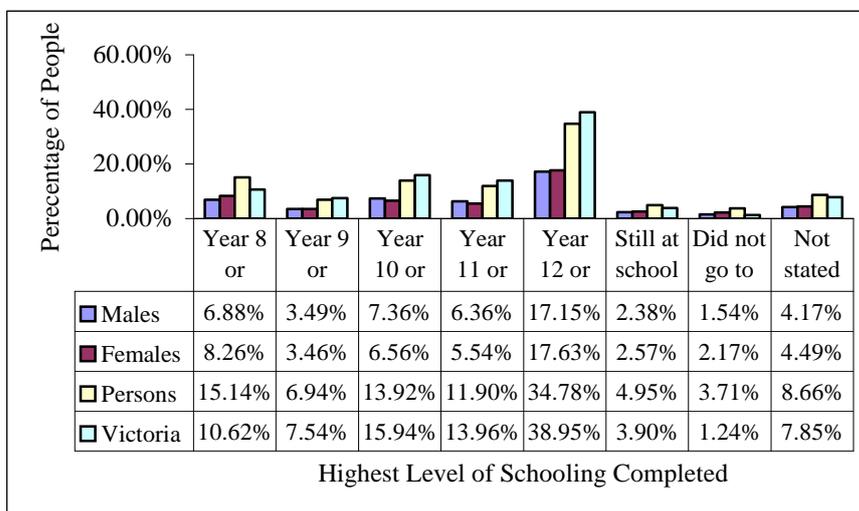


Figure 3. Top Ten LOTE in Brimbank

Education

The level of schooling completed by males and females in Brimbank and total who persons in Brimbank and Victoria may be seen in Figure 4. This shows a lower percentage of people in Brimbank who completed Year 9, 10, 11 and 12 compared with the state averages for these levels while the rate of people completed only year 8, were still at school or did not go to school were higher than the state percentages.



Notes. Constructed from B12 of the BCP for Brimbank. Data refer to persons aged 15 years and over (excluding overseas visitors) (ABS, 2002).

Figure 4. Highest Level of Schooling Completed in Brimbank and Victoria

Employment

Table 1 shows the employment status of males and females in Brimbank. Basic calculations of the ABS employment data showed that 43.36% of the total Brimbank population are in the labour force (73,635/169,839). Of these, only 25.80% are employed in full-time positions and 11.11% in part-time positions, with an unemployment rate of 11.00%. Unemployment is greater for people in Brimbank (10.99%) compared to the Victorian rates (6.8%).

Table 1. Employment and Unemployment Rates in Brimbank

Employed	Males	Females	Persons	LGA Labour Force	Victorian Labour Force
Full-time	28,970	14,854	43,824	59.52%	60.64%
Part-time	6,775	12,101	18,876	25.63%	29.69%
Not stated	1,707	1,139	2,846	3.87%	2.88%
Total	37,452	28,094	65,546	89.01%	93.20%
Unemployed	4,644	3,445	8,089	10.99%	6.80%
Total labour force	42,096	31,539	73,635	100.00%	100.00%
Not in the labour force	18,116	29,891	48,007	65.20%	57.20%

Notes. Constructed from B22 of the BCP for Brimbank. Data refer to persons aged 15 years and over. Full-time is defined as having worked 35 hours or more in all jobs in the week prior to Census night (ABS, 2002).

Brimbank Indicators

Out of 78 LGAs in Victoria, Brimbank ranks within the top ten or so on a range of indicators related to disadvantage/special community needs. The indicators together with the ranking, rate and average LGA rate are shown in Table 2
Table 2. Indicators Related to Community Needs

Indicator	Rank	Brimbank Rate	Average LGA Rate
Population (2001)	3rd	169,839	61,827.74
Rate age 15-24	6th	147.98	120.11
Number on Low Income	2nd	103,137	34,330.03
Rate of women as one parent families	11th	69.57	53.14
Rate still at school	4th	37.02	29.82
Rate did not go to school	2nd	27.76	6.53
Rate low English proficiency	3rd	100.25	18.36
Total household rate	4th (lowest)	307.80	421.48
Gender disparity in income	9th	0.62	0.48
Rate born in non-Engl spkg country	2nd	380.55	100.90

Notes. Source of data: ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing 'Basic Community Profile' Series (2002). Calculations by Totikidis: Rates were calculated per 1000 of the population. Gender Disparity in Income was calculated as the difference between the percentage of males on high

income and the percentage of females on high income. Low English Proficiency consisted of two summed categories (Speaks other language and speaks English: Not well or Not at all).

In summary, the profile shows that Brimbank is a culturally and linguistically diverse region with lower rates of education, higher rates of unemployment and various unmet needs related to disadvantage. This information complements the research presented following.

Research Methods

The research with community members, involved four focus groups with a total of 29 Vietnamese, Maltese, Italian and Anglo-Australians (15 women and 14 men) and two pilot individual interviews with a Maltese and Serbian woman. The general aim of the study was to ground the Community Wellness Cycle of Praxis in qualitative research with diverse community members from the St Albans region in order to gain a theoretical and practical understanding of well-being from a multicultural perspective. Specific research questions were:

1. What are the community wellness ideals (a); needs (b); and strengths (c); of St Albans community members?
2. What actions can be undertaken to improve well-being in this community?

The Community Wellness Cycle of Praxis may be described as a model of community engagement that seeks to understand the ideals, needs and strengths of the community in order to improve well being (see Figure 5). The model was an integration and adaptation of earlier wellness and praxis models and also pays attention to needs theory as proposed by Roth (1990).

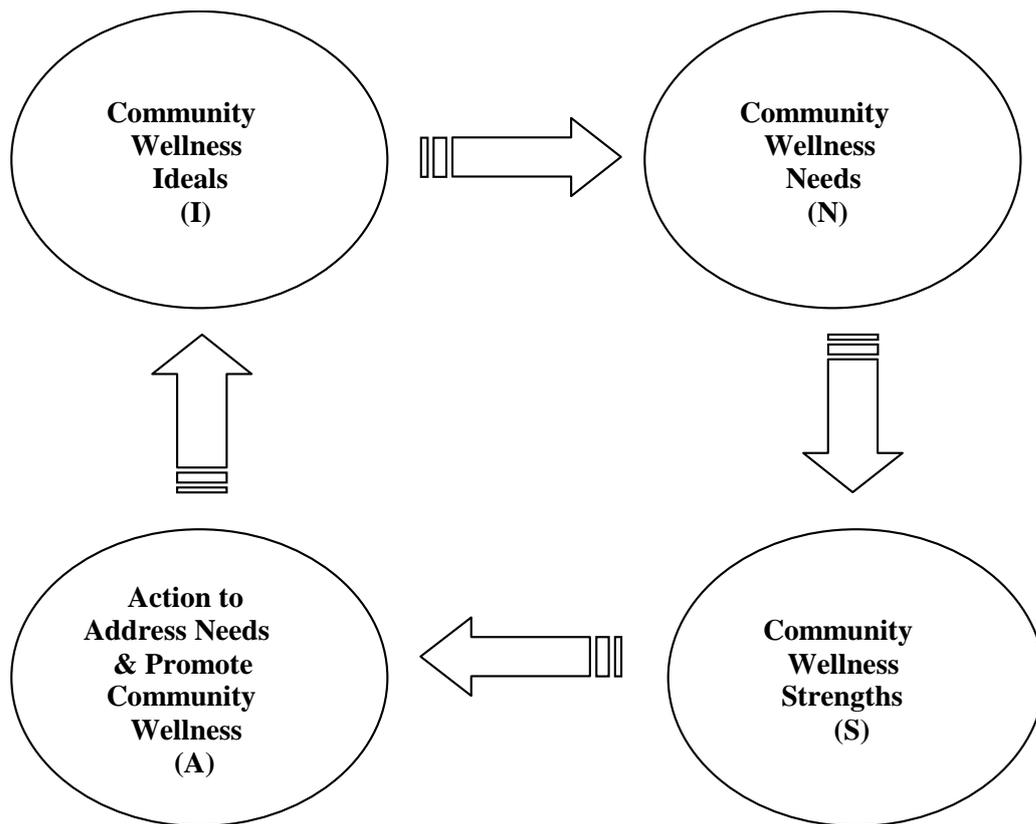


Figure 5. The Community Wellness Cycle of Praxis (Adapted from Prilleltensky, 2001a, b & c)

Wellness as denoted by this model is a holistic state of affairs, brought about by the simultaneous and balanced satisfaction of personal, relational, and collective needs of individuals and communities alike (Totikidis & Prilleltensky, in press). Needs may be viewed as the negative or missing aspects of well-being while strengths are positive and existing aspects of well-being (e.g., low crime, adequate educational facilities, good health). The model proposes that positive action (A) that aims to maintain and further develop community strengths (S) and address community needs (N), leads to an ideal state of community wellness (I).

A semi-structured questionnaire/interview schedule consisting of four sections or themes (A-D) and ten questions was developed from the model above. The 10 questions are shown in Table 3 with the corresponding parts of the praxis model (ideals, needs, strengths and actions) and research questions in column two. The participants were recruited from local community centres, ethnic clubs and the St Albans shopping precinct following communication between the researcher and a key person from each cultural group or by referral from GSYFS staff.

Each focus group session began with informal conversation and introductions over morning tea to facilitate discussion between participants. Name-labels were distributed, and the format of the session together with matters of confidentiality, privacy and other rights were explained when participants were seated. The questions were presented to participants both verbally and

visually using transparencies and an overhead projector to assist understanding. All the discussions were tape-recorded and verbatim transcriptions were produced.

Table 3. Questions Employed in the Interviews and Focus Groups, Parts of the Praxis Model and Research Questions

Interview and Focus Group Questions	Praxis Components & Research Questions
Section A: The meaning of well-being and the lack of/or opposite of well-being 1). What does well-being mean for you? 2). What does the lack of/or the opposite of well-being mean for you?	IDEALS 1.a. What are the community wellness ideals of St Albans community members?
Section B: Positive things about your present state of well-being 3). What is good about your present state of personal well-being? 4). What is good about your present relationships with other people? 5). What is good about the present conditions in your life and community?	STRENGTHS 1.b. What are the community wellness strengths of St Albans community members?
Section C: Negative things about your present state of well-being 6). What is not so good or missing for your personal well-being at present? 7). What is not so good or missing in your present relationships with other people? 8). What is not so good or missing in terms of the present conditions of your life and community?	NEEDS 1.c. What are the community wellness needs of St Albans community members?
Section D: Actions or changes that could improve well-being in St Albans 9). What are some of the things that you and other people who live in St Albans could do to improve well-being in the community? 10). What could other people (health and community service workers, governments, researchers) do to help us improve well-being in this community?	ACTIONS 2. What actions can be undertaken to improve well-being in this community?

Following the first two questions, a simple diagram illustrating the personal, relational and collective levels was shown and explained to participants (Figure 6). The model was explained simply to allow participants to apply their own definitions and to avoid biasing the research. Personal, relational and collective well being were described as well being relating to one self; to self and other people; and to one's surroundings or environment.

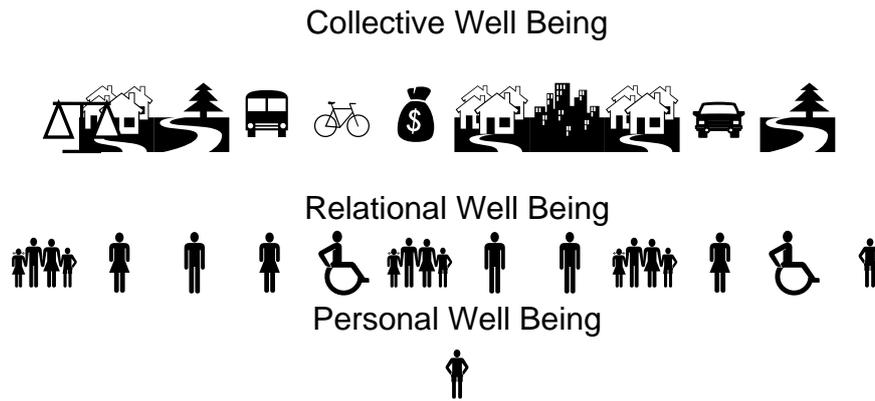


Figure 6. Diagram Illustrating The Personal, Relational And Collective Levels

Findings

The research with community members 1.) produced information about the community's perceptions of personal, relational and collective well-being; 2.) highlighted some of the positive strengths of the community; 3.) helped us to identify community needs and barriers to wellness and 4.) pointed to ways to improve well being in the community. The present paper focuses mainly on the first and fourth outcome with the others discussed in detail elsewhere (Totikidis, 2003; Totikidis & Prilleltensky, in press; Totikidis & Robertson, 2005).

Multicultural Perceptions of Personal, Relational and Collective Well-Being

Three tables illustrating participants perceptions of personal, relational and collective well-being are shown following. These tables show the combined responses from the individual interviews and the Vietnamese, Italian, Maltese and Anglo-Australian focus groups and are for this reason referred to as a 'multicultural perspective' of well being.

The term multicultural is not intended to imply that all participants necessarily identified as such or shared a multicultural perspective. Indeed when one participant stated that she was multicultural during one of the focus group sessions, another participant replied that she was not multicultural but Italian. In another focus group, a couple of participants made comments that seemed to express racist or 'anti' multicultural attitudes. In contrast to the multicultural tables presented following, separate tables for each of the cultural groups can be also be seen in the previous works mentioned.

Table 4 shows the participants' perceptions of personal well being. Due to the wealth of information generated, the responses from column 2 were further analysed and summarised into common themes as may be seen in column 1. In summary, the community members responses point to three common

themes for personal well being: Physical and Psychological Health; Positive Thoughts and Feelings (towards oneself and others); and Spirituality.

Table 4. A Multicultural Perspective of Personal Well Being

Issues discussed on the topic of Personal Well Being	Summary of Emergent Themes/Ideals
<p>Authentic self. Balance between home/external activities. Caring. Confidence. Contentment. Control. Coping ability. Coping with death of loved ones. Cultural integration (mental). Education. Emotional strength (ability to cope with stresses and problems). Feeling complete. Feeling relaxed, not nervous, not stressed, comfortable. Happiness. Not worried. Peaceful. Physical and emotional health. Physical health and absence of pain. Self care. Spirituality. Transcendence. Well organised. Emotional well-being. Empathy. Faith, religion and spirituality. Feeling good. Feeling safe. Free will. Fun. Good health. Good life. Health: physical, psychological, mental, spiritual and social. Healthy mind, body and soul. Hope, faith and motivation. Inner peace (vs inner conflict) Learning Opportunities. Love. Loving yourself and self-acceptance. Maintaining activity levels through physical work and recreation. Not being greedy. Not being isolated. Not having fear. Not having pain. Pleasant distractions from boredom and pain. Positive adjustment. Positive sense of identity. Positive thinking. Realistic expectations. Realistic expectations regarding pain/ageing. Relationship with God. Resilience. Satisfaction of basic needs (food, rest, shelter, procreation). Satisfaction with life. Secure (supportive) family. Self-acceptance. Self-esteem. Success. True happiness. Trust.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical and Psychological Health 2. Positive Thoughts and Feelings (towards oneself and others) 3. Spirituality

Table 5 shows a multicultural perspective of relational well being. As with the previous table, a summary of participants' responses are shown in column 2 with common themes in column 1. Community members' responses point to five common themes for relational well being: Family; Friendship and Social Support; Intra Cultural Harmony; Inter Cultural Harmony; Community Cohesion and Participation.

The terms intra and inter cultural harmony were developed to reflect a distinction between two types of cultural harmony identified in the research (Totikidis, 2003). Intra-cultural harmony was broadly defined, as harmony in relation to ones own culture and can include positive cultural identity, adjustment and self-acceptance. Inter-cultural harmony was defined as harmony between cultures and is related to tolerance and respect for cultural diversity (Totikidis, 2003). The term community cohesion and participation is used in a general way in the present context to refer to participants'

comments relating to concepts such as sense of community, neighbourliness, community belonging and involvement.

Table 5. A Multicultural Perspective of Relational Well Being

Issues discussed on the topic of Relational Well Being	Summary of Emergent Themes/Ideals
<p>Caring for others. Caring/helping others. Celebrations with family. Children behaving well. Collectivism (community). Communication with neighbours. Community acceptance of cultural diversity. Community cohesion (vs. individualism). Community participation and protest. Community spirit. Compromising. Connectedness. Cross-cultural communication. Cultural integration. Cultural maintenance and contact with own culture. Cultural maintenance or connection to roots. Cultural reconciliation. Democratic participation. Family health and well-being. Feeling accepted in the community. Feeling connected. Friendship. Golden rule. Good communications – family and others. Good friendships. Good relationships with immediate and extended family. Good relationships with neighbours. Good relationships with partner, family and extended family. Intercultural cohesion and mingling. Intercultural interactions/integration (vs. cultural segregation). Joy in watching children grow. Kindness to others. Loving parents and family. Loving partner. Many friends. Multiculturalism. No discrimination. No racism or racial conflict among youth. No racism/stereotyping. Not blaming others. Not having fear of others. Part of community. Political participation by community. Positive peer relationships. Reciprocal relationships. Reciprocal relationships with adult children (not being taken for granted). Relationship with God. Respect for diversity (of culture and personality). Respect for elders' needs. Respect for everyone. Respectful relationships. Responsibility. Safety. Sense of belonging (community). Social activities. Strong (extended) family connections. Strong identification with friends. Supportive social group. Tolerance. Tolerance and friendliness with others. Trust. Trust with partners. Understanding. Understanding partner.</p>	<p>4. Family 5. Friendship and Social Support 6. Intra Cultural Harmony 7. Inter Cultural Harmony 8. Community Cohesion and Participation</p>

Table 6 shows the participants' perceptions of collective well being. The responses are shown in column 2 with the common themes again in column 1. The issues of importance for collective well being raised by community members were categorised into seven common themes: Human Rights; Safety; Employment; Education; Community Services, Resources and Information; Community Development; and Good Government.

Table 6. A Multicultural Perspective of Collective Well Being

Issues discussed on the topic of Collective Well Being	Summary of Emergent Themes/Ideals
<p>Access to free legal services. Access to support services: welfare, housing, transport. Adequate education and hospitals. Adequate income. Adequate infrastructure: education, hospitals, shops, higher education, employment, transportation, ethnic clubs & services for elders. Adequate meeting places. Adequate opportunities (e.g., career, education). Adequate parent, family and mental health support services. Adequate parks, gardens and public meeting places. Adequate policing – crime and safety. Adequate recreational facilities. Adequate response to community issues: drugs, gambling, smoking, violence, graffiti, dental health care, education, GST (goods and services) burden, poverty trap, rich/poor gap, cost of living, employment. Adequate response to vandalism. Adequate shopping facilities – variety and ‘quality’ shops. Adequate support for migrants. Availability of specialist services (eg, optometrist). Awareness of global issues/ecology. Basic necessities (roof over head). Being informed about the community. Clean environment (no rubbish and beautification). Community festivals and cultural events. Community information and education. Drug free kids. Education for responsible adolescence (eg, respect, morals, graffiti, vandalism). Egalitarian government funding to community. Employment opportunities. Employment: basic human right. Equality. Fair system. Financial security: (money, property, car). Free health care. Free youth facilities (recreation and places to go). Funding to local community groups. Good government - responsible, effective, honest, democratic. Home ownership. Information regarding services to non-English speaking people. Low crime rate – safety. Multicultural church. No GST. Peace (no war). Policing of drug risks to residents and crimes against elders. Policy response to gambling. Quality teaching/mentoring. Responsive local government. Responsive/representative government. Safety. Safety in community. Safety on transport. Services to accommodate elders and diversity. Social well-being: being able to walk out on the street freely. Staying alive in St Albans (no racial or turf wars). Support/funding for ethnic elderly clubs, churches. Temples and churches.</p>	<p>9. Human Rights 10. Safety 11. Employment 12. Education 13. Community Services, Resources and Information 14. Community Development 15. Good Government</p>

Actions or Changes that Could Improve Well-Being

Table 7 shows a summary of issues in response to the two questions on what community members felt they could do and on what they thought others (health and community service workers, governments, researchers) could do to improve well being in the community. The table shows considerable wisdom and good will by the community as well as intimate knowledge about community issues and community improvement. As with the previous tables only the combined multicultural perspective is shown.

Table 7. Multicultural Perceptions on Actions or Changes that Could Improve Well-Being

Community Action	Action by Others to Help Improve Well-being
<p>Address transport issues.</p> <p>Be more collective, work on collective basis.</p> <p>Build relationships with neighbours.</p> <p>Children need to be taught about respect.</p> <p>Communication with neighbours. Community is apolitical – more people should be interested in politics.</p> <p>Community needs to communicate more.</p> <p>Community needs to have a special day (e.g., festival) to bring people together. Extend kindness and generosity to others. Contribute to improvement of education and hospitals. Need to keep religion going.</p> <p>Not judging others.</p> <p>Participation in protests.</p> <p>Safety needs to be improved.</p> <p>Security. Smile.</p> <p>Social support for elderly.</p> <p>Support family members and community – help one another.</p> <p>Talk to neighbours.</p> <p>Visiting an elderly person.</p> <p>Volunteer (“put back in the community”; “do something for people”; “planting trees”; “helping at schools”).</p> <p>Welcome newcomers.</p>	<p>Address cultural integration issues. Address traffic problems in St Albans. Awareness of services. Better monitoring by council and council services (e.g., hard rubbish collection) needs improving. Better representation of community in local government. Broken glass on bus stops. Cease fire in St Albans (conflicts among youth). Cleaning of public areas. Community education on environmental issues. Cost of living for low income should be addressed. Different religions are an issue. Discount for pensioners at shopping places.</p> <p>Education. Effort from migrant groups to mix. Employment. Free dental services. Funding for beautification of region. Gambling issues need to be addressed to protect peoples’ livelihood. Giving services back to certain areas.</p> <p>Government revenue (from penalties & fines) back into the community. Graffiti needs to be stopped. Improve medical services. Improve services and recreation to youth (14-18 years). Information about services needs to be disseminated to community. Local community groups need funding. More discipline in schools and education on respect and morals needed. More mental health services needed. No more tokenism from government. People have to have courage to speak out against bad policies. Policing, reduce crime and promoting safety. Preventative community education (health). Robberies need to be stopped. Safety of community needs to be addressed.</p> <p>Safety on transport. Security in trains. Sense of community. Shopping services need improving – more quality shops and bring it closer to the people. Social support groups. Staffing of stations. Support and help for families. Support for families with mental illness and more activities for people with mental illness. Teaching techniques need to change. Trust and friendship between agencies and community needs to be built up and language issues need to be addressed. Unemployment issues need to be addressed in this area. Work needed to guard peoples dignity and pride.</p>

Recommendations

Another outcome of the research was the development of a list of recommendations for community improvement. These were developed following analysis and summary of the responses in Table 7, transcripts and issues of concern that were raised in the research with community members. The twelve recommendations were that:

1. Culturally appropriate family services and support to migrants be set up in the community.
2. Information regarding existing community services, resources and benefits reach migrant communities.
3. Mental health and other services in the area be strengthened and made more accessible.
4. Strategies to curb negative inter-cultural attitudes are implemented by government and services.
5. Local government, policy makers and community workers engage in ongoing consultations with the community to resolve community problems.
6. Policing of certain areas should be increased and crime prevention measures developed.
7. Strategies to enhance business and employment opportunities should be a priority.
8. Community events, celebrations and festivals be valued and encouraged.
9. Elderly clubs receive adequate support and funding.
10. Youth services, recreational activities and opportunities be improved and extended.
11. Affordable education and learning opportunities be provided to everyone in the community.
12. An ongoing community wellness group be set up and run by community members to identify emergent areas of need, initiate projects and monitor progress.

Conclusion and Evaluation

Overall, the praxis model was successful in that it stimulated interest and rich discussion about wellness from community members. The model was a useful way of determining community needs from various perspectives and was easy enough to use with people with low English fluency. The community wellness model and results of this research may be of use in various areas including university-community engagement, local government, community development, social work and applied community psychology work. The 15 common ideals generated may be used to guide the assessment of individual and community well-being as well as a model for action. For example, in assessment we can ask questions such as: Is this individual or community physically and psychologically healthy? Does this individual or community have cultural harmony, safety and adequate education, employment, community services, resources and information? In action, we can design

programs, services and structures that address the needs of the community and build on their strengths.

One limitation of the research was that it was not sustained. The model was applied as a research instrument rather than as a model for ongoing community engagement and so had a definite start and finishing time. Although the second stage of the research went on to develop social action strategies with youth, the first stage involving diverse community members ended. The action stage was not formally implemented. However, as suggested by recommendation 5 and 12, strategies should be 'ongoing'. A community wellness group could be set up and run by community members (in collaboration with university and local community organisations) to identify emergent areas of need, initiate projects and monitor progress.

Engaging with the community in this way could also be complemented by ongoing development and analysis of community profiles and indicators to encompass issues in the community that are not recognised or known by community members. Such a design would have the benefit of being practical, sustainable and comprehensive and would contribute sincerely towards improving personal, relational and collective well-being for communities.

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